

Since 15M: the technopolitical reassembling of democracy in Spain

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Signature

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A mi familia, especialmente, a mi madre.

Al 15M, segunda alma mater.

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Abstract

The thesis explores a 5-year period in the political history of Spain. It looks at a series of political processes and projects, beginning with the 15M/Indignados social movement. These projects go from 15M in 2011 to the creation of new digital platforms for participatory democracy for the city of Barcelona in 2016. The thesis defends the idea that these cases add up to a cycle of political contention, which is defined as “the 15M cycle of contention”. It supports the idea that a core thread throughout the cycle has been the challenging of the liberal representative model of democracy and some of its key social forms, primarily in discourse, but also in practice. The cases within the cycle vindicated, and experimented with, alternative forms and practices of democracy. Concretely, they tried to move away from the current liberal representative model, preeminent since XVIII century, towards a more participatory one. The thesis also defends the argument that a key driver of these democratic experiments has been “technopolitics”, otherwise, practices and processes that hybridize politics and technologies (particularly, information and communication technologies).

The thesis focuses on three paradigmatic cases of the 15M cycle of contention: 15M itself, a social movement born in 2011; the X party, a new party created in 2013 by 15M activists; and Decidim.barcelona, a digital platform for participation, launched in early 2016 by the Barcelona City Council, designed by people involved in previous projects within the 15M cycle. The first of these three cases covers the sphere of social movements and civil society, the second, that of political parties, and the third, that of the State at the municipal level. I look at the discourses and the practices of democracy in these processes and projects, and whether they innovate or not in relation to pre-existing political forms in social movements, political parties, and the State. In every case I look at the technopolitics deployed by the actors involved. For analyzing such technopolitics, I look at three main elements: discourses, practices, and technological infrastructures. These are used, respectively, as the main entry into the semantics, the pragmatics and the syntax of technopolitics.

As a complementary view, I look beyond the cases and into the cycle. Concretely, to the variations in discourses on democracy and technopolitical practices. I suggest that the cycle as a whole can be conceived as: a) a process of “reassembling of democracy”, a reassembling oriented towards a democratization of the political field

(and society more broadly) beyond the liberal representative model; and b) as a case of “technopolitical contention”, in which political struggles have been organically connected to technological practices. Since, differently from traditional democratization processes from XVIII century onwards, this one has not been oriented to establish but to challenge the structures of liberal representative democracy (f.i.: the current structure and centrality of representation, traditional political parties, Parliaments, etc.), I define it as an attempt at “alter-democratization”. I also show that this alter-democratization process challenges not only the forms, but also the ontology of liberal representative democracy, concretely, some of its key subjective and collective forms, as well as its key modes of political relation. By looking at civil society, parties and State institutions I try to map changes in various areas of the political field in liberal democracies. In that sense, the cycle has pointed towards (although has not always succeeded in bringing about) alternative political ontologies and forms of life.

In order to analyze both the cycle and the three key cases under study, I have resorted to a multi-method and multi-disciplinary approach. I have primarily relied on qualitative methods, such as participant observation, fieldwork, interviews, and digital materials (blog posts, journals, etc.). I spent more than 5 years as participant in various 15M cycle projects. Secondarily, I have used quantitative methods: along with fellow activists and researchers, in 2014 we ran a digital survey that gathered 1000+ responses among 15M participants. Finally, I have also used social network analysis methods to map activity on social networks.

In terms of disciplines, I primarily draw resources from political science, sociology, philosophy, and STS.

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Declaration of joint research

The present work includes results from joint research.

First, from Monterde, A., Calleja-López, A., Aguilera, M., Barandiaran, X. E., & Postill, J. (2015). Multitudinous identities: a qualitative and network analysis of the 15M collective identity. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(8), 930-950. From the first I take images by Arnau Monterde (Figure 31) and Miguel Aguilera (Figure 32). Many or most of the concepts, arguments and conclusions were primarily my own in the paper.

Second, from the Encuesta 15M2014 and from Monterde, A., Calleja-López, A., Blanche, D., & Fernández-Ardévol, M. (2017). 15M: the movement in its third anniversary. UOC working papers. From the #Encuesta15M2014 and Monterde et al. (2017) I take results and the section on methodology in Appendix I. All partners involved were equally responsible for the design and launch of the survey.

What is more important, the present work tries to complement works such as Toret et al. (2015) and Monterde (2015), it leaves out some of their central findings and only repeats some of their arguments or insights to the extent that is crucial for the central argument here.

List of abbreviations

Barcelona en Comú	BeC
Comisiones Obreras (Workers' Commissions)	CCOO
Convergencia i Unió	CiU
Democracia Real Ya!	DRY
Democracia y Punto (Democracy, Period)	DP
Instituto Municipal de Informática	IMI
Izquierda Unida (United Left)	IU
Juventud Sin Futuro (Futureless Youth)	JSF
No les votes (Don't Vote for Them)	NLV
Office for Research, Development and Innovation in Democracy	ORDID
Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party)	PSOE
Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform of Affected by Mortgages)	PAH
Partido Popular (Popular Party)	PP
Resource mobilization theory	RMT
Unión General de Trabajadores (General Workers' Union)	UGT

Chapter 1. Introduction.

“We are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers. Real democracy, now!”; “They do not represent us!”

Slogans at the demonstrations on May 15th, 2011

“To me, what is most important is that an upgrade of the political dimension of life has taken place. Like an upgrade, like in software, when you move to the superior version [...] It upgrades politics. Not completely. I mean, it's not finished, it's not a solution, like completely designed, it's not something closed, but it is a change in the situation. It is an event that changes the situation. Because it is accused of not getting results, and that is true and, at the same time, it is not true, because everything remains the same, and everything is different.”

Margarita Padilla (2012)¹

“We must move towards a system where the people may define how society works. We could decide that what we want is to put a tax to transactions, that we want to rise up the minimum wage, that we want to do something with renewable energies... that, for me, is a step afterwards. Because they are concrete victories that are lost as soon as they are gained. I believe we should focus on the essential: that they stop deciding for us, that people begin to be the ones who decide how they want the world to work. Moreover, I find amazing that, in the technological moment we are [...] politics remains like in XVIII century”.

Miguel Arana (2012)²

“We want the people to take the reins and decide what they want to do with Madrid”, “We are in a democratic revolution”.

Pablo Soto³

“I called it Democracy 4.0 because I thought it would take 40 years to implement”.

Juan Moreno Yagüe⁴

¹ Margarita is a software developer at the Dabne cooperative, 15M activist and author of books such as “The toolkit for the struggle on the Internet”.

² Miguel is co-founder of Labodemo, 15M activist, and innovation advisor at the Participation Council of the city of Madrid.

³ Pablo is a software developer, 15M activist, and Participation Councilor of Madrid. His comments come from two interviews after the launch of the new Open Government digital platform for the city of Madrid (Cúneo, 2015; Riveiro, 2015).

⁴ Lawyer, 15M activist, and elected member of the Parliament of Andalusia in 2015 with Podemos.

1.1. A short introduction to a long cycle.

Yagüe thought it would take forty years, however, ideas similar to his democracy 4.0⁵ were ready to rule in a bit over four. This could only happen because of an acceleration of historical and political time. The gate to that wormhole was the 15M movement and the cycle of contention it opened. The key date was May 15th 2011, the first day of the movement, which gave it its name. On that date, a citizen demonstration hit 60 cities across Spain, and ended up igniting a series of direct actions and multitudinous mobilizations. In the following years, these gave way to a series of political experiments spanning from civil society to political parties and municipal institutions. I believe these constitute a cycle, the 15M cycle, which remains open and transformative six years later.

This cycle has involved the reassembling of important aspects of democracy and the modern polity. Modern liberal representative democracy, in crisis for the previous two decades at the very least (Norris, 1999; Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Tormey, 2015), haunted by the aftermath of the 2008 global recession, has been challenged and tinkered with in search of a more real one. Key innovations resulted from creative entanglements of politics and technologies, which I generically label “technopolitics”. It is because of this entanglement that I define this cycle as one of “technopolitical reassembling of democracy”.

Since⁶ 15M happened, other things became possible, not only possible but plausible, not just plausible but feasible, not merely feasible but done. Many others did not⁷. The core aim of this thesis is to disentangle some of the defining threads and displacements resulting from this cycle of contention, concretely, those connected with its most innovative and key feature, its technopolitics, and with its main general aim, its search of a more real democracy. I explore each of these matters of concern in the following sections.

⁵ Very simplistically, democracy 4.0 is a combination of the existing representative system with a digitally-enabled form of direct democracy. I explain this system in chapter 4.

⁶ This “since” could be understood in a threefold sense: as “thenfore”, because 15M is a day; as “therefore” because 15M was an event that made historically and politically possible what came after it; and “thereby” because 15M became a constellation of actors driving the process. The key is to point to the performative role of 15M in what came after it which involved the constitution of something like an event and a movement.

⁷ It is relevant to notice that, at each stage of the 15M cycle, there were things that became impossible, implausible, infeasible or unrealized, sometimes because of the very initial constitution of 15M and its tensions. There were no few internal and external conflicts about what should or shouldn't happen, between different views and groups in the 15M scene. That will become manifest when analyzing the case studies, in the frustrated plans and ideas that will be discussed.

1.1.1. Metaphors, displacements, movements

To start thinking through the historical and political displacement brought about by this cycle, metaphors can be a good starting point. Metaphors (from the Greek *metapherein*) displace things, usually to bring them together. Revolutions, movements and other transformative political processes may be thought as wild political metaphors in action, swift displacements and coming together of what is and what may be, the real and the possible. Perhaps more importantly, metaphors displace and bring forth the entangled realities into language. In this light, Marga Padilla's quote above, tying software and politics, points to the convergence of those two realities into technopolitics. Her talk of a deep political change in terms of a software upgrade bespeaks (as Wittgenstein 1958 may put it) a “form of life”. In this case, an emerging lifeworld that both displaces and intermingles politics and technology, particularly, ICTs. These are collective worlds⁸, worlds of practices that, in the case of 15M (as epitomized in Arana's or Yagüe's quotes), speak of a more real democracy.

That such technopolitical worlds may move from being partially lived and partially called for by a group of outsiders and activists (specially hacktivists and cyberactivists) in 2011 to become the official position of key public institutions in 2015 (such as the city councils of Madrid or Barcelona), to be present at many others institutions (such as Regional Parliaments and dozens of smaller cities), or inscribed in programming and legal code (such as the participation platforms and regulations of Madrid's and Barcelona's city councils), is a huge displacement, a political metaphor in practice, a semiotic-material movement, perhaps a “revolution”, as Pablo Soto suggests in his quote above. The displacement from Real Democracy Now's slogan on May 15th 2011 to Pablo Soto's declaration in September of 2015 may be both part and result of an “upgrade of the political dimension of life”, one that begun with 15M.

1.1.2. From revolution to reassembling

Calls for and projects of citizen participation and Open Government (Lathrop & Ruma, 2010) had been on the institutional agenda of actors such as the European

⁸ Political displacements have a collective character, they are metaphors that become common; that was particularly obvious in the case of 15M and the process it opened. To use other metaphors: 15M's music had a thousand authors, but not a score, it was an open melody with a rhythm, the rhythmic flow of multitudes improvising. It is because of this multitudinous character of the movement and what came after it that I had to start with five quotations, at the very least.

Commission (Kohler-Koch, 2001; Kohler-Koch & Rittergberg 2006) in the previous decade, as an answer to the crisis of representative democracy mentioned earlier. Furthermore, 5 years after May 15th 2011, in the midst of what Soto calls a “democratic revolution”, some people may have the ambiguous perception that “everything remains the same”. This is the equivocal condition of metaphors, but also of the history they contribute to forge. It may well be the signature of any revolution, perhaps one suggested by the term “revolution” itself⁹. Initially applied to the translations of celestial bodies around the sky, revolution was the proof of the compatibility of perpetual movement and perpetual stability, like in Copernicus *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*. By noticing this ambiguity, I do not want to fall into the reactionary, pessimistic “futility thesis”, as presented by Hirschman (1991), suggesting that “it was all ineffective, nothing changed”, but rather to question what I may define as the progressive, optimistic “fruitfulness thesis”, according to which “it was all effective, everything changed”. Against the notion of revolution, I prefer the term “reassembling” to name a process that is transformative, and yet not violent and *ex novo* as suggested by the modern idea of political revolution, but rather closer to the 15M practice of assemblies, or to the notion as developed by Latour (2005). Real democracy was surely one of the most conspicuous frames for this reassembling. However, there was not a single “ideology” in 15M, but rather there were sets of sometimes incompatible discourses. Perhaps more importantly, at the core of 15M there were innovative practices and processes¹⁰ of collective action. As I analyze in the thesis, a generic label for these practices is not just “prefiguration” (the enactment of the world that one is struggling for in the struggle towards it, as in the anarchist interpretation, Graeber, 2013), neither was it mere “prophecy” (as in the populist reading, Gerbaudo, 2016) nor the development and execution of a plan (like in the traditional Marxist-Leninist formula) but rather a work of prefiguring *out*. Otherwise, much of 15M and what came after it has been about figuring out what (real) democracy is and may be. It has been about how to articulate it in practice, as it is reassembled, as a slow way out of¹¹ the current political and economic

⁹ In my inquiry into 15M I will try to move beyond the revolution metaphor, and to take distance from the linear (Judeo-Christian and Modern) as well as from the circular (ancient) views of time. I will do so through the metaphor of our “Zeitgeist”: the network, as the metaphor of a multi-directional, polycentric, and somehow “spatialized” becoming.

¹⁰ There was a “process” group, or an analogous one, to organize assemblies in every big camp.

¹¹ This means leaving behind the current crisis, but also building from its condition and from its materials.

predicament. The image of historical time¹² changes as a result: it is no more the linear progress of political modernity, but rather the non-modern and emergent time of net-work, a continuous and contentious construction that connects and remixes elements that the idea of revolution divided in old and new, past and future.

In standard historical terms, 15M is a social movement¹³ born on May 2011, in Spain. Using the generic term for movements, revolutions, and other processes of sociopolitical struggle, it is a case of “contentious politics” (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001). The series of processes and events that it gave way to amount to a “cycle of contention”¹⁴, a multi-linear and multi-year process that is the main matter of concern, the main “unit of analysis” of this work, its primary, although not exclusive, field of exploration and mapping.

To map and untie the central elements and dynamics of this contentious reassembling I combine references coming from STS and non-modern perspectives on history and time (Latour 2005; Pickering 1995, 2010) with the definitely modern literature on “contentious politics” (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001; Tilly & Tarrow, 2006), which has been used to understand both social movements and democratization processes (Tilly, 2007). Insofar as 15M has been considered a social movement, I draw upon the tradition spanning from Marx to Mill, from Olson (1965) to Melucci (1996), up to Castells (1996) or Bennett & Segerberg (2012, 2013). In synthesis: the general shape of this cycle, its breaks and transitions, and its actors and relations (as well as various literatures relevant for thinking it through), compose a first key thread of this work.

1.1.3. The 15M cycle as a technopolitical reassembling

The analysis of this reassembling is tied to two concrete matters of concern (Latour, 2004a) indicated in the title of this work, as well as in the quotations above: technologies and politics. More concretely, if the reassembling period 2011-2016 is the space-time and process to be explored in this thesis, the shapes and entanglements of “technologies” and “politics” are also “things” to be thought (Heidegger, 1954). To put it in broad terms: this thesis is an exploration of the contentious and connected becoming of technologies and politics in Spain after 15M. The process of reassembling can be thereby characterized as a cycle of

¹² The time of the Ancient Greek *historein*, of the narration of “what one has seen and heard”.

¹³ I provisionally use here the standard terminology, although I will be discussing it in later chapters of this thesis.

¹⁴ Here I consciously use the notion in a heterodox way. For a discussion on the matter, see chapter 2.

“technopolitical contention” (rather than simply “political contention”, as is usual in the literature (f.i.: McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001). This means technologies were key for political construction and conflict during the cycle, so much so that the two cannot be disentangled analytically. From n-1, an activist, digital social network to Decidim, a digital political network launched by the Barcelona City Council and developed by 15M activists

In order to explore the various displacements, entanglements and translations of technology and politics involved in “technopolitics”, I recur to the abundant literature in philosophy of technology, STS, and, to a lesser extent, broader sociology and political theory. The political condition and becoming of technologies, and their relation to democracy, has been thoroughly studied by authors such as Langdon Winner (1986, 1992), Richard Sclove (1995), or Gabrielle Hecht (1998). The technological condition and becoming of politics since the late XX century has, in turn, been the object of attention of authors such as Manuel Castells (1996, 1997, 1998 2009), Bruce Bimber (2003), or Wiebe Bijker (2006), with some, such as Stephano Rodotà (1997) and Douglas Kellner (1997,1999, 2001), systematically using the notion of “technopolitics” for analyzing it. Particularly, I am interested in the approaches that help to look through the practical, multi-agential and multi-linear couplings and becomings of technologies and politics, such as Donna Haraway (1997), whose work I use for conceiving the various aspects of technopolitics. Finally, I get inspiration from the work of Andrew Pickering (1996, 2010) and Dimitris Papadopoulos (2010) when it comes to think what, following the second, I may call the “constituent ontologies of technopolitics”.

The exploration of technopolitics constitutes the second key thread of this thesis, after the analysis of the 15M cycle of contention and reassembling.

1.1.4. The technopolitical reassembling of democracy as alter-democratization

That second thread is complemented by a third one, which is no more than the key question at stake in 15M itself, as posed by the slogan of the demonstration on May 15th: real democracy. “Real democracy”, whatever it means, has been 15M's key matter of concern, the concern that gave it its “tone”, that served as a referent for any other associated struggles, either economic, cultural, gender-related, or otherwise. Democracy has been the meta-question (Offe, 1985), so narratives and conflicts around it composed a, if not “the”, master frame (Snow & Benford, 1992) of

the processes opened by 15M. Differently from anti-cut and anti-privatization struggles in the areas of healthcare and education, or against mortgage effects in housing, which frequently resulted from a reaction and were oriented to stop market or governmental action, the call for a real democracy seemed to primarily point towards an horizon of open alternatives, one that both crossed and connected with the rest of frames and demands. As Arana suggests in his quote above, the popular desire of retaking personal and popular control over common life was at the core of it. That desire was a symptom and a response to the long-diagnosed crisis of representation (Norris 1999; Hay, 2007).

A recurring pattern of the cycle has been the emergence of citizen driven and technologically hyper-mediated initiatives. I use the generic term “reassembling of democracy” to indicate how these initiatives challenged and remade different foundational coordinates of democracy as a “civic activity, a regime, a form of society, and a mode of government” (Rosanvallon, 2011: 225)¹⁵, as it was institutionalized in Spain during the transition to democracy in the 70s. The 15M movement, and the ensuing cycle of contention¹⁶, has been considered the opening of a new epoch in Spanish politics (Subirats, 2015a, b), the most relevant political period since the transition back to democracy after Franco's dictatorship. Differently from forty years earlier, the result this time has not been to catch up with democracies elsewhere, but rather seems to be pushing democracy forward, to places it may have not been yet. Democratic experiments such as those taking place around the participation councils of Madrid and Barcelona and their new free software digital platforms cannot be understood without looking back to several years of 15M cycle. The insertion of these experiments within the cycle, and all that it implies, differentiates them from top-down, market-based “Open Government” (Lathrop & Ruma, 2010) projects and may make them more radically democratic.

These experiments seem to be situating the 15M cycle at the problematic forefront of democracy in the XXI century. This forefront is marked by the crisis of liberal representative democracy in the last decades (Crouch, 2004; Keane, 2009; Tormey, 2015), especially under its neoliberal predicament, a crisis that worsened in the

¹⁵ As noticed by Rosanvallon (2011: 225), democracy “can be separately, concurrently, or simultaneously a civic activity, a regime, a form of society, and a mode of government. Furthermore, each of these four dimensions can be perceived in several different ways.”

¹⁶ As I argue in the theoretical section, to say that the goal and crux of the cycle was a democratization does not mean that it always succeeded, that it was always a way forward, or even most of the time. Democratization was both happening and at stake.

aftermath of the 2008 global recession. In the face of such a representative crisis, the 15M cycle can be interpreted as a case of re-democratization (Tilly, 2007) of an emptied democracy, with one central difference: the aim of many actors has not been the constitution or recovery of a more or less developed form of liberal representative democracy, but rather the explicit challenge to and experimentation (sometimes, the combination) with alternative models of democracy, such as the participatory, the direct, or the deliberative. This potential democratization process presupposes liberal representative democracy, as well as its long-term crisis. It aims to go beyond it, towards alternative models, on the basis of factors such as technopolitics. It points, I believe, towards what may be called a “technopolitical alter-democratization”.

For exploring the meanings of such a challenge, and the experiments opened up since 15M (after, by, and because of it), I use two lenses: political sociology and political ontology, the former serves me to look at changes in sociopolitical forms, and the latter to look at changes in ontological ones. As a result, the first focus of attention will lie on three key spaces or institutions of the modern polity as framed by liberal theory, with one chapter devoted to each: social movements (chapter 4), political parties (chapter 5), and the State (chapter 6). The second focus of attention, the ontological, will serve to outline the central features of what I call the “political ontology of liberal representative democracy”, and will attend to subject and collective forms, as well as modes of relation. In order to articulate this double approach I make use of authors that have outlined the various forms of representative democracy (Held, 2006), dissected the concept of political representation (Pitkin, 1967), forms of social movements (Diani, 1992, Melucci, 1996, Tilly, 2004) and representative government (Manin, 1997), conceptually clarified the origins of parties and party systems (Sartori, 2005; Katz, 2006; Scarrow, 2006), and classified their types (Gunther & Diamond, 2003; Wolinetz 2006). Since 15M and the projects after it appealed to alternative forms of democracy, I map and find their ties with the political ontologies of participatory (Pateman, 1970; Barber, 1984), deliberative (Habermas, 1996), and what are frequently labelled as “radical” versions of democracy, be they antagonist (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2005) or autonomist Marxist (Hardt & Negri, 2000, 2004, 2009). Mapping these various models will allow me to situate conflicting positions towards democracy within the 15M cycle itself, which will account for some of the dynamics in the 2011-2016 cycle (as suggested by Touraine, 1981).

Democracy joins “technopolitics” and the “reassembling” as the third key analytical and theoretical thread of this inquiry. So, to put it simply: this thesis explores the coupled making and unmaking of both technopolitics and democracy in the cycle of contention opened with 15M. This is not a full story, but is indeed a key story to understand the 15M cycle and to see its centrality for rethinking politics, democracy and technology today.

1.1.5. Recapitulation and anticipation

In what was outlined so far, I have already pointed the key matters of concern of this thesis (reassembling, technopolitics, democracy), and the space-times of study (2011-2016, within which I include various cases). Now I want to point out some of its motivations.

1.2. Motivation and justification

The motivation and justification of the present work has three connected sources: historical, scholarly, and biographical. Its relevance resides, I believe, on both the object of study as well as on the study itself.

I will touch upon the historical first. As I noticed in the introduction, 15M has opened a new time in Spanish politics (Subirats 2015a, b). For many, the movement and the political period after it has been the most relevant in the country since the restoration of democracy in the 1970s¹⁷ (Subirats 2015a, b). This already gives both 15M and its cycle a special prominence in Spanish political and social movement history. But its relevance is not merely local or national. Differently from the transition to democracy in the 1970s, when Spain was trying to catch up with polities elsewhere, this time the technopolitical experiments in the reassembling of democracy are not primarily oriented to make up for delays in modernization, but are rather situating the country at the problematic forefront of activist¹⁸ (chapter 4), party (chapter 5) and institutional

¹⁷ In 2016, less than five years after its inaugural moment, Madrid's major (belonging to a 15M tied citizen candidacy) approved to write down a plaque in Puerta del Sol (the site of the first 15M camp and key square of the capital) with the Sol slogan “We were asleep, we woke up”.

¹⁸ 15M has been considered a driving movement of the international cycle of contention opened in 2011, in which it was preceded by the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings in early 2011 and followed by Occupy Wall Street in the US and internationally, in 2011 and 2012, YoSoy132 in Mexico in 2012, and the June protests in Brazil in 2013, as well as OccupyGezi in Turkey in 2013 and 2014, OccupyHongKong in 2014, etc. (Tejerina et al., 2013; Gerbaudo, 2016). Many of the practices generated in 15M, from the systematization of the camp form to many of the innovative uses of social media, were taken by later movements. It probably was the first to have clearly global features and orientation: camps or assemblies by Spanish emigrants fleeing the crisis were formed in dozens of European and Latin-American cities, in some cases of considerable size (like in London) or directly influenced local groups to camp (like in Syntagma Square, in Athens). Spanish emigrants were at the root of Occupy in the US, connecting it to 15M before its inception (Castañeda, 2012), and 15M

(chapter 6) experimentation globally¹⁹. That has turned the 2011-2016 reassembling process into a global referent for democratic innovation, especially for people on the left side of the political spectrum²⁰. When a growing literature asks whether democracy can be saved (Della Porta, 2013), and others even declared it dead (Keane 2009); when some say this is a time of post-democracy (Crouch, 2004), after the coming of post-politics (Žižek, 1999; Rancière, 2001), or, more cautiously, others diagnose the end of representation and the arrival of post-representation (Tormey, 2015), attempts to build a more “real democracy” since 15M surely have a special historical relevance. Actually, many of the directions explored since 15M resemble the ones Della Porta (2013: 2) suggests as key for “saving democracy” from its representative death. The 15M cycle is, undoubtedly, historically relevant and worth of attention.

Between the historical and the scholarly justification, I believe the theoretical and practical critique of modern democracy, as well as the different and conflicted experimentations with technopolitics for transforming or surpassing it, are two characteristics that merit special academic attention. Otherwise, this thesis is a narrative and theoretical exploration of “how democracy looks like” in, and how it may look like after, the 15M cycle²¹. The fact that the “look” moved from an anti-representationalist (or representation-questioning) and an autonomist (or movement-autonomy) oriented slogan such as “they do not represent us” into the emergence of new parties, electoral citizen platforms and coalitions²², as well as State-based

activists were the first promoters of its main global day of action, on October 15th 2011. The influence on the Mexican YoSoy132 movement was equally remarkable.

¹⁹ A key factor for that experimentation, with all its limits, failures, and betrayals, has been time. Unlike its counterparts in most other countries (US, UK, Mexico, Brazil, Turkey, etc.), its metamorphic impulse has lasted in time and its impacts have been broad and deep. The only referent that may be compared was Tunisia; in other places where the uprisings of 2011 achieved major institutional change, such as Egypt, the final winners were on opposite sectors of the Egyptian society, especially the military, thereby cutting the potential process of transformation.

²⁰ See recent articles by renowned *The Guardian* journalists on Podemos (Mason, 2016) and Barcelona en Comú (Hancox, 2016) as international referents of an emergent renewal of progressive politics. On this, the current status of Spain as a global referent for progressive politics should be taken as a referent no so much the transition of the 1970s (deeply questioned by 15M) but to the much-discussed times of the II Spanish Republic in the 1930s, where zones of Spain, especially in Catalonia, Aragon, and Andalusia held some of the most ambitious experiments with direct democracy and anarchism.

²¹ Much of this work focuses on the critique of representative democracy articulated since 15M, which has been the defining feature of the ongoing global cycle of contention, started in 2011 (Roos & Oikonomakis, 2014), but nowhere as centrally and carefully articulated both in thought and practice as in the Spanish case. In Occupy, for example, the 99% gave preeminence to the dimension of economic inequality.

²² Of these, some directly aligned with 15M, such as the X-party, and others less so, such as Podemos, with intermediate cases, such as Barcelona en Comú or Ahora Madrid.

institutional change²³, makes it a particularly rich period for thinking transformations in the very ontology of democracy. In academic terms, its value holds for areas ranging from sociology and STS up to political science and philosophy, and so I bring the four of them to bear on this study. Furthermore, because it connects theory and practice, militant research with militant action, the thesis may be of value for both sides, academic research and political action.

When it comes to the purely scholarly value of this thesis, most of it resides in the exploration, mapping, theoretical situation, conceptualization, and discussion of the critique of modern representative democracy and the associated experimentations with technopolitics since 15M. Otherwise, a key value of the study builds upon the interest of the phenomena itself, but its lines have forced me to connect to and innovate upon existing literatures. In relation to this, part of the value resides in the variety of areas of scholarly literature that I draw from and put into dialogue: sociology (specially, social movements theory), STS (specially, discussions on ontology, but also on technology and society), philosophy of technology (specially, critical theory of technology), political science (especially, political philosophy), and network science (specially, in relation to social media and networks). Another central element is that I take and address, but also aim to innovate upon, problems, concepts and methods from those areas of knowledge.

Finally, or perhaps firstly, 15M transformed my life. I had never been systematically involved in political projects, and my earlier political positions had some flavor of the distant, modern or postmodern self. By May 2011, I had been a few months back in Spain after a two years research stay in the US. In the face of the situation of the country, I was ready to move, but in my small town in the South of Spain things looked rather static. It was online that I first found my way into 15M, two months before the demonstration. 15M and Occupy (Occupy London, concretely) offered me a space of political transformation and action. My case was not singular: according to an online survey launched by our research group (Monterde et al., 2017), 15M was the first political experience for almost 20% of the participants. Only as a result of my experience, only because it was a matter of concern, I decided to turn it into a matter of research. This is a long-diagnosed feature of contentious politics: it educates people politically; sometimes, whole generations. As a tradition that goes back to, at

²³ As is the case, even if with plenty of contradictions, of Barcelona's and Madrid's Participation Councils.

least, Rousseau suggests, the exercise of citizenship, politics and democracy is its own finest school.

1.3. Research objectives, questions, and strategy

1.3.1. Research objectives

In order to address the motivations behind this research, the dissertation pursues the following four objectives:

The first is to look, in detail and on a case by case basis, into the rethinking and remaking of modern, representative democracies and their alternative forms (direct, participatory, deliberative, etc.), especially, in connection to technopolitics.

A second objective is to figure out what “technopolitics” means in theory and in practice, mapping out its genealogy and its central features in the 15M cycle.

A third objective is to provide a general reconstruction of the process of technopolitical reassembling of democracy in Spain during the period 2011-2016. This third objective implies two sub-objectives: a) to register the features and becoming of various actors in social movements, parties and State institutions in Spain; b) to follow the struggles and branching involved in this process.

A fourth objective (which is transversal to the previous ones and thereby, unlike them, is not articulated as a set of questions in the next section) is to contribute to and innovate, conceptually and methodologically, upon existing social movement theory, political theory, and STS.

1.3.2. Research questions

In order to fulfill those objectives, I have articulated three main research questions. These three main research questions outline three areas of interest, each of which contribute differently (from the viewpoint of discourse, practice and the cycle, respectively) to the three objectives above. It is worth noticing that the aim is to answer the 3 main questions, and not to answer in detail all of the sub-questions into which they can be broken down. These sub-questions, nevertheless, help to orient the investigation.

The first central area of interest concerns discourses, concretely, those on representative democracy and its alternatives, as well as on technologies. The central question is:

1. What are the key discourses on democracy and representation from 15M to

Decidim.barcelona? and on technologies?

This question, in turn, involves three sub-questions:

- 1a) What were the democratic models (representative, deliberative, participatory, autonomist, etc.) involved?
- 1b) What were the technological models (autonomist, participatory, technocratic, etc.)
- 1c) Did they change in the period 2011-2016? If so, how and why?

The second area of interest concerns practices, concretely, technopolitical and democratic ones, and the second main question asks:

2. What are the key technopolitical and democratic practices and processes from 15M to Decidim.barcelona?

This question is sub-divided into three sub-questions that help to articulate it:

- 2a) What were the key features of these practices? What were their central strengths, limits and challenges?
- 2b) What were the forms of organization and relationality?
- 2c) Did these factors (2a-b) remain or change in the period 2011-2016? If so, how and why?

The third area of interest is the reassembling process itself, and the main related question, which somehow makes the previous two converge into a general landscape is:

3. How does the reassembling period 2011-2016 looks like from a historical, political, and ontological perspective?

This core question connects to the issue of the “reassembling” and has different ramifications:

- 3a) What were the key changes in social movement, party, and State/institutional forms?
- 3b) What were the key actors, factors, and struggles involved in that becoming?

3c) Do they outline new forms of political ontology? If so, what are their core elements and how do they relate to previous models?

3d) What have been the characteristics of the process as a whole?

3e) Could it be understood as a cycle of technopolitical contention oriented towards an alter-democratization? If so, how did it go?

1.3.3. Research strategy

I was involved in 15M before I began to research it. Much of the driving questions of this study derive from that situation. Although the materials, as well as many of the methods and concepts, for this dissertation came to my knowledge and practice via my experience in 15M (and Occupy Wall Street), in the present text I carry on a theoretically informed reconstruction. The 2011-2016 processes coming after 15M were multi-linear (I will focus on one, but other lines of action could have been chosen, and other initiatives followed), multi-eventual (from 15M to the local elections of 2015), multi-actored (as already seen in the quotes at the beginning of the introduction), multi-narrated (although with a predominant *ritornello*: democracy), multi-level (reconstructing the personal, inter-personal, local, and State levels), and multi-sphere (I will focus on politics and technology, primarily, but economics or research could have been equally worth of study).

The phenomenon of study and the objective of answering the questions formulated above have justified to essay a multi-approach, multi-method, and multi-source exploration. I have tried to give some systematicity to it, though. To do so, I have recurred to Donna Haraway's (1997) analytic threefold of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of technoscience. I can now briefly describe the approaches used to dig into these three aspects of the cycle.

Syntax corresponds to the technological and organizational structures of social relations in the 15M cycle. For deciphering 15M cycle syntaxes, I have primarily deployed an infrastructure approach (Bowker et al., 2009). It looks at the dynamics below, around and above organizational and technological infrastructures, attending to factors such as their materiality, their construction, their property regimes, their functionalities and their affordances. I look at them from two viewpoints: that of politics of technology (otherwise, infrastructures as embodying different politics) and that of technology for politics (otherwise, infrastructures as affording different forms of political relations).

Semantics corresponds to the meanings articulated in discourses within the 15M cycle. To analyze 15M cycle semantics I have used a discourse approach (Fairclough, 2013; Riessman, 2008) that looks at how 15M texts construct actors, actions, situations and the cycle itself.

Finally, to study pragmatics, I have deployed two approaches: a practice one and a network-systemic one. Pragmatics corresponds to the flow of practice emerging and re-defining syntax and semantics. The practice approach (Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina & Savigny, 2001) puts the focus on the heterogeneous world-making in which embodied and material action plays a central role. Differently from the typical, human-centric view of social movements, my approach to practice must be understood in the light of posthumanist views (Haraway, 1997; Pickering 1995; Schatzki, 2001). On the other hand, the network-systemic approach (Barábasi, 2002) attends to the interaction activity on digital networks.

This differentiation of three aspects (syntax, semantics, pragmatics) repeats itself in every chapter, helping to structure them, and has been crucial for providing systematicity to the polyhedric approach essayed in this work²⁴. Otherwise, every empirical chapter (4, 5, 6) includes three sections devoted to these three aspects.

From the viewpoint of research dispositives and resources, to build this “trinocular approach” (infrastructures, discourse, practice) has involved to hybridize and traverse between qualitative methodologies (thick description, fieldwork, conceptual analysis, discourse analysis, etc.), quantitative methods (surveys), and network analyses (which involve big data mining and visualization).

From a broader research *methodos*²⁵ or practice, this work has implied to essay different research positions and dispositions, which are intertwined into what I call a form of “movement research”. This research becoming is defined by multi-perspectivism: I essayed multiple positions (situated analyst, militant researcher, activist, interested observer, detached scholar, etc.). A key lesson from this implies to recognize that both 15M as a movement and what came after it are constructs of the analyst, on the one hand, and of the actors, on the other, who they themselves frequently operate as analysts²⁶ (Melucci, 1996). The research network

²⁴ Some of these approaches, though, are either connected (f.i.: our look to infrastructures connects at points with the practice or the network approaches) or based on similar methodologies and epistemic dispositives.

²⁵ In the Greek sense of “way through”.

²⁶ The concrete boundaries that the movement and the cycle take in this thesis result from analytical choices (which begin by using the very categories “movement” and “cycle”), but also from dialogues

@datanalysis15M (a critical data oriented research group based in Barcelona), to which I belong, is an example.

If Robert Nisbet (1993) situated the French Revolution at the origin of sociology, and Alain Touraine (1981) aimed at transforming it around the notion of the “social movement”, the challenge was to take advantage of the 15M cycle of contention in order to experiment with new hybrid research approaches and methods, as well.

1.4. Plan of the work

The dissertation is divided in 7 chapters. The first chapter is the present introduction. The following two chapters serve as a theoretical and historical introduction to the empirical cases, which are analyzed in chapters 4, 5, and 6. Chapter 8 is a conclusion.

Chapter 1. Introduction.

Chapter 1 presents the general coordinates of the thesis. It defends the idea that the 15M social movement opened a cycle of technopolitical contention and reassembling of democracy. Differently from the usual model of democratization, guided by the liberal representative model, this one challenged representation and thereby could be considered an alter-democratization. A series of research objectives and questions are posed, aimed at disentangling the becoming of democracy (looking at sociopolitical forms and political ontology) and technopolitics (its syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) during the 2011-2016 cycle, as well as the structure of the cycle itself.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework and methodology.

Chapter 2 lies down a series of theoretical coordinates and discussions that serve to situate both this research and 15M projects. It is divided in five parts. The first is devoted to politics, and outlines various models of democracy (representative, participatory, deliberative, etc.) and democratization (including what I define as alter-democratization). Particularly, it outlines the liberal representative model, including

with fellow activists and researchers. Our analysis is an interested reduction of the daunting richness and multiplicity of the 15M cycle and, at the same time, one more story that connects and dissolves into that richness, into a historical becoming that involves the contentious becoming of its living interpretations. This work is not a mirror nor a picture but, at the most, a map that provides orientation in a territory being formed and that it somehow recreates; it is also a palimpsest that combines both practices and stories around it.

forms of government and political parties. The second part is devoted to discuss various positions towards technology and technopolitics. The third attends to sociological theories on social movements (particularly networked social movements) and contentious politics and suggests new coordinates to understand both of them. Part 4 explores the STS literature that may be useful to think through the reassembling process in the 15M cycle, with a particular attention to ontology. Part 5 discusses methodologies and the research itself.

Chapter 3. Between crisis and critique: economic, political, and technological conditions in the ongoing reassembling of democracy in Spain.

Chapter 3 serves as a general entry to the case studies. It reviews various discourses on the political and socioeconomic conditions at the time of the emergence of the 15M movement, and throughout the cycle. It suggests that a key step in the formation of 15M was the displacement from a passive condition of crisis to an active critical condition, and that such a step relied in a critical rendition and a net-work that was heavily mediated by ICTs and technopolitical practices. It also presents a simplified and somehow linear outline of key moments within the 15M cycle.

Chapter 4. Becoming 15M: a networked movement of the squares from Real Democracy Now! to the dismantling of the camps.

Chapter 4 discusses discourses, infrastructures and practices that played key roles in 15M. It traces various strands of anti-representationalist and alter-democratic semantics present in relevant DRY and camp discourses. It also notices how the assembly model rose to be 15M discursive paradigm for democratic organization. These discourses remained central references (usually for agreement, but also for disagreement) for the whole cycle. Then I look at its syntax and show how another organizative model, that of the networked assemblage, was both equally anti-representational and (at least) equally important in practice as the assembly model. Key 15M technopolitical practices are described. The chapter also outlines some of the challenges and changes these discourses and practices brought to both the social movement form and the modern liberal representative ontology. The concept of multitudinous identities appears as central on both regards.

Chapter 5. The X Party: making a 15M in the electoral space.

This chapter opens situating the X Party within the cycle of contention opened by 15M. After reaching the peak of opposition between 15M initiatives and the space of political representation in 2012, the X party was launched in early 2013 and opened a line of action that (re)turned towards the political arena: the so called “electoral assault”. The semantics of the X party, its proposal for a new democracy, is studied by looking at its political program “Democracy, period”, as well as to its own self definitions as a party. Then I look at its syntax, otherwise, to its organizational forms and infrastructures, and show how these symptomatically differed from the idiosyncratic ones among earlier 15M projects. Then I look at its pragmatics on issues such as media policy, program elaboration, or campaign funding. Afterwards I outline some of the key challenges of the X party to the party form and to the liberal representative ontology. With regard to the party form, I underline its proposal of a networked democratic or wikicratic party. With regard to liberal representative ontology, I underline its construction of the networked expert citizen, its appeal to federation, and its insistence on competences as central political unit.

Chapter 6. Networking democratic cities: the rise of local “governments of change”, common digital infrastructures, and new codes of technopolitical participation.

After the success of the “electoral assault” at the local level on May 2015, which brought citizen candidacies connected to the 15M cycle to power in big cities such as Barcelona or Madrid, an “institutional moment” opened up. Crucially for our story of technopolitics and democracy, some 15M technopolitical activists formed groups of innovation in democracy in the Participation councils of those cities and created new digital platforms for citizen participation. I analyze the discourses (semantics) and practices (pragmatics) around Decidim.barcelona on two main fronts, technopolitical participation on Decidim and technopolitical production of Decidim itself. In the section on syntax, I confront the Decidim model of public-common digital infrastructure for distributed democracy to the corporate open government model of Civiciti, a platform developed by Spanish corporations Telefonica and ScytI. I show how Decidim challenges traditional elements of the State form by constructing a half complementary and half alternative space to representation. I also underline the figures of the technoacrat and the recursive citizenry as two challenges to the

ontological forms liberal representative democracy.

Chapter 7. Conclusions.

Recounts the trajectory of the thesis and synthesizes the responses that the work provides to the three initial questions of the research concerning the shapes of democracy (its old and new models, both in terms of sociopolitical forms and political ontology), technopolitics (its syntax, semantics, and pragmatics), and the process of reassembling and contention during the period 2011-2016. It also puts these in a broader, theoretical perspective.

As a closing to this introduction, I want to notice that the structure of the empirical chapters (4, 5, and 6), which repeats itself in all of them, is the following:

Part 1. Introduction.

Part 2. The case and the cycle. This section outlines the situation within the 15M cycle at a given point in time, and situates the case to which the chapter is devoted.

Part 3. Semantics. Attends to actors' key discourses.

Part 4. Syntax. Attends to central technological platforms and modes of organizing

Part 5. Pragmatics. Looks at actors' practices.

Part 6. Alternatives. Analyzes the changes or challenges to political forms and ontology by the case analyzed in the chapter.

Part 7. Conclusions. Recapitulates the case, connects it back to the cycle and outlines what comes next.

Chapter 2. Theoretical and methodological framework.

2.0. Structure of the chapter.

This chapter is divided in five parts: 1-Politics, 2-Technopolitics, 3-Sociology, 4-History, and 5-Research. The work in the Politics part of this theoretical framework is oriented to both reopen and map the various meanings and models of democracy. I do this not only as an abstract theoretical work but as a historical reconstruction, as well as a preparation for situating the organizations, narratives and practices of the 15M cycle. Particularly, I discuss some of the conceptions, models and political ontologies of democracy that have been in some cases denounced and, in others, defended, explored and experimented with, during the 15M cycle. The first section opens with a discussion of the modern conceptions of “democracy” and “democratization”, where I outline the challenges that the notion of “alter-democratization” poses to them. Then, I sketch the history, forms and key elements of liberal representative democracy from an ontological viewpoint. This part is oriented to outline a normative (Habermas, 1994), standard (Castiglione and Warren, 2006) or ideal-typical (in Max ’s terms) model, which underlies much of modern political ontology²⁷. Afterwards, I present a number of alternative democratic models: the participatory, the deliberative, the antagonist, and the autonomist.

In the second part of this theoretical framework I elaborate upon the notion of “technopolitics” recurring to a variegated bibliography. As mentioned in the introduction, the second thread of this thesis concerns the coupled becoming of politics and technology since 15M, as it intertwined with processes of alter-democratization and reassembling of democracy. In this theoretical framework, I have decided to essay a multi-disciplinary approach (STS, media studies, philosophy, etc.) to the hybrid concept of “technopolitics”, rather than to their problematic components separately, politics and technology.

In the third part, “Sociology”, I attend to sociological and political theory, focusing on

²⁷ Operatively, I will distinguish two declinations of the notion of ontology: in one of them the emphasis falls upon the “*logos*”, thereby, upon the concepts and narratives on the being and beings of politics; on the other, when speaking of practice, I will be emphasizing the “*on*”, the becoming of those being and beings. This distinction is, obviously, only analytical, but it remains relevant for the purposes of this inquiry. For reasons of space, I present a standard model or account of modern political ontology in the form of a conceptual and partially historical disquisition on representative democracy. On the other hand, my taking on 15M cycle’s challenges to that ontology will be first and foremost based on practice.

social movement and contentious politics. This third section can be divided in two halves. In the first, I outline some of the main threads of analysis in sociology, social movement theory, and contentious politics, which are deployed in the empirical chapters to study 15M and the process of alter-democratization it opened. I include discussions coming from media theory, as well. In the second half, I indicate some of the novelties associated with networked social movements such as 15M and the wave of movements in the last years. One of the key conclusions is the emergence, in the 15M cycle, of what I define as “contentious technopolitics” or the connection between technological and political processes and struggles.

The fourth part, “History”, is also divided in two sections. In the first I make the case for understanding the 15M cycle as a reassembling rather than as a revolution. In the second I briefly discuss STS references that help to think through such reassembling from an ontological perspective.

As a closing to the chapter, I outline the methodological approach of the work. I notice my intention of focusing in explorations rather than explanations, I also comment on the various possibilities of *methodos* beyond modern methodological formats. Finally, I detail the methods and materials in this research.

Each of these sections builds upon, and tries to contribute to, different, albeit sometimes overlapping, disciplinary literatures. Through all of them I try to dialogue, primarily, with three different strands: that of political theory, particularly, democratic theory, that of sociology and social movement studies, particularly, ICTs and networked social movements, and, finally, that of Science and Technology Studies, particularly, works on ontology.

2.1. Politics: the representative synecdoche and alternative political models

2.1.1. 15M, democracy, and the representative synecdoche

Before and probably beyond anything else, the 15M cycle has been about democracy; it has been democracy. This priority was already anticipated and framed by the name of the platform coordinating the demonstration on May 15th, 2011, that served as a starting shot for the movement. Its name was “Real Democracy, Now!”; before being “15M”, May 15th already was about democracy.

But what is democracy? And what is democracy now? In the empirical chapters of this thesis I analyze 15M and post-15M concrete meanings for “democracy”, what

actors said and made of it in practice. Since “the history of democracy itself is contained in the history of the word “democracy”” (Barber 1984: 195), I try to “hear the struggle that is at stake in the word” (Rancière, 2006: 93), but also in the world, because “the history of real democracies has always involved tension and conflict” (Rosanvallon, 2008: 3).

Part of that political, wordy and worldly struggle around the meaning and practice of democracy is anticipated in the May 15th demonstration slogan, which said “We are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers. Real democracy, now!”. Two aspects are worth stressing of it: politicians stand for the “representative” character of contemporary democracies; bankers, for its “market” and neoliberal side. The banners denounced what I believe is a historical synecdoche of sorts: in modernity, democracy has come to be seen and practiced in relation to two social forms, representation (Pitkin, 1967; Graeber, 2013; Rosanvallon, 1995) and the capitalist economy (Polanyi, 1944). As a result, modern democracy has become identified with liberal representative democracy. That synecdoche speaks of wide, Modern, systemic processes and struggles that have reduced the field of possibilities that democracy and, more broadly, politics, can embody. According to 15M cycle initiatives that I analyze in the empirical sections, the second adjective or condition (representation) has been undermined by the first (liberalism): socio-economic liberalism would have first contributed to establish and then, especially in the last decades, undermined representation. It did so, first, by limiting the role and reach of politics and the State under neoliberal, corporate globalization, and second, by making it dependent and encroaching—legally and illegally—into it (DellaPorta, 2013; Held, 2006; Lindblom, 1977)²⁸. Unsurprisingly, for the last three decades, different authors have spoken of the crisis of representation (for a synthesis, see Tormey, 2015), and, following the representative synecdoche, many have identified it with a crisis and even death of democracy itself (Keane, 2009).

According to 15M cycle diagnostics, representative democracy in Spain has become a mere representation of democracy, and a reductionist and corrupt one at that²⁹. In

²⁸ Barber (1984: 256) clarifies: “the relationship of capitalism to democracy may remain problematic and controversial, but the relationship of the multinational, monopolistic corporation to democracy involves no such mysteries. The corporation is incompatible with freedom and equality, whether these are construed individually or socially.”

²⁹ That is a diagnostic shared by other contemporary movements about their own contexts: Occupy in the US and the UK in 2011 and 2012, the Arab uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011, protests in Greece in the last years, #OccupyGezi in Turkey in 2013, the June protests in Brazil on that same year, and a long list (Mason, 2012; Roos & Oikonomakis, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2016).

two of the most chanted slogans on May 15th, which I analyze in the empirical sections, demonstrators denied the status of their elected representatives shouting “they do not represent us!”, and denounced that “they call it “democracy”, but it is not”. The struggle at stake in the word and the world were quite obvious from the beginning of the cycle. My hypothesis is that, in the face of the liberal and representative synecdoche reduction of democracy, the 15M cycle essayed a critique, reopening and exploration of the modes of being of both democracy and politics³⁰. They did so through the innovative articulation of ICT mediated practices and processes. I devote the following sections to situate such diagnostic from a theoretical standpoint.

2.1.2. Democracy and its becoming: traditional democratization and 15M alter-democratization

2.1.2.1. Challenging democracy and democratization indexes

More than defining democracy, a relevant question for political science has been that of finding, measuring, comparing, and explaining the causes of its coming to be, that is, of democratization. Giving that “democracy is the appraisive political concept par excellence” (Gallie, 1956: 184), this has frequently been a theoretically and politically contested task. Nevertheless, many approaches have tended to share some conceptions of democracy. These conceptions usually were, firstly, procedural and minimalist in character (Collier & Levitsky, 1997), and secondly, based on very specific elements of the liberal representative model hegemonic from mid-XXth century onwards, such as competitive, free, fair, and frequent elections of a representative government by a wide franchise³¹. The appearance or disappearance of these features has been considered an indicator that a process of democratization or de-democratization was taking place³².

³⁰ That triple endeavor of critique, reopening, and exploration was anticipated by movements such as the alter-globalization, and is shared by other contemporary movements, such as Occupy Wall Street or Nuit Debout (the sometimes called “Real Democracy movements”, Roos & Oikonomakis, 2014). Unfortunately, I cannot attend to them here.

³¹ A classical list includes six institutions: “elected officials; free, fair, and frequent elections; freedom of expression; alternative sources of information; associational autonomy; and inclusive citizenship” (Dahl 1998: 85, Dahl 2005: 188–189, as resumed by Tilly, 2007: 10). As Tilly points out, these are a list of discrete institutions and not “continuous variables”, so they don't allow to easily measure the increase or decrease of democratic quality in established liberal democracies. Also, it omits the fact that the performance of these institutions sometimes conflict, and their preeminence must be decided. According to Collier & Levitsky (1997: 434), there is a “procedural minimum” definition that presumes fully contested elections with full suffrage and the absence of massive fraud, combined with effective guarantees of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, and association”.

³² Tilly (2007: 13-14) proposes a measure for judging processes of democratization: “a regime is democratic to the degree that political relations between the state and its citizens feature broad,

Among theories of democratization, there have been different characterizations of democracy and democratization, distinguishing it from other regimes (or situations, governments, and State forms) as well as differentiating subtypes of it (such as parliamentary vs presidential), but they almost always take as a reference the liberal representative model (Collier & Levitsky, 1997, Collier & Adcock, 1999), rather than a multi-model approach more common in other areas such as democratic theory (f.i.: Held, 2006). Although this trend has been changing, as reflected in the rise of new indexes such as the “Varieties of Democracy Index”, the classical list of democracy indexes promoted by the Freedom House Index still remains predominant (for a review of indexes and criticisms, Doorenspleet, 2015)³³. Nevertheless, when analyzing 15M's calls for “real democracy”, the democratization that it called for and that it may have given way to, it will become clear that these definitions are inappropriate.

We have defined the 15M's cycle of contention as a potential case of “alter-democratization”, since it is characterized by discourses and practices involving various combinations of participatory, autonomist, deliberative, and other models of democracy³⁴, which, at the very least, stretch the liberal representative framework.

2.1.2.2. Challenging democratization actors and factors: connecting democratization and contentious politics

The stretch has not been only definitional, though. In my understanding, the 15M cycle has not only challenged relevant features, attributes, or practices of liberal representative democracy and democratization, but also the list of driving actors and factors to look at in these processes. As shown by Rossi & Della Porta (2015: 9), theories of democratization have usually focused on “economic preconditions, elites' behavior, or the geopolitical situation”. As a paradigmatic example, “modernization theory” had a structural character and focused on the economic preconditions of democracy, always under the guidance of the liberal representative model: economic development brought about democracy and maintained it (Lipset, 1959), while working class struggles did little or even had a negative effect (Huntington, 1965,

equal, protected and mutually binding consultation. Democratization means net movement toward broader, more equal, more protected, and more binding consultation.” De-democratization entails a movement in the opposite direction. Interestingly, Tilly recognizes what is left out of this view: issues of welfare, law-abidance, or citizen empowerment.

³³ This is something especially relevant when the matter at stake, deciding whether a State is democratic or not, and to what extent, has implications for international relations, history books, and international aid sectors.

³⁴ I characterize these models later in this chapter.

1991). Historical class analyses (Moore, 1966; Bendix, 1964) had a similarly structural and economic purview: even if showing the relevance of classes as social actors, they did not dig into the logics of social movements and contentious politics.

Differently, “transitology” has attended to “transactional” processes among elites, which gives more room to actors' agency, but subordinates the roles of unions, movements and contentious politics to elite (parties, governments, the military) bargainings and conflicts, underlining the role of concrete leading figures. Interestingly, the case of the “negotiated reform-negotiated break” during the Spanish transition to democracy in the 1970s has served as a model of sorts for this approach (O'Donnell et al., 1986; Linz & Stepan, 1996)³⁵.

Symmetrically, Rossi and Della Porta notice, social movement studies have not attended much to democratization processes: they analyzed the role of movements in established democracies rather than in their constitution. Since the late 1990s, different authors (Bermeo, 1997; Collier & Adcock, 1999) and the tradition of contentious politics (Tilly, 2004; Tilly, 2007)³⁶, have approached both literatures and shown the relevance of mobilized grassroots actors in the constitution, preservation and deepening of democracy. Even the Spanish case has been re-presented as resulting from “a cycle of protest intertwined with elite transactions” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001: 186). Tilly (2007) has distinguished two views of the role of social movements in democratization. A “populist approach”, which stresses how social movements crucially nurture public spheres, spaces and settings for political deliberation, or influence State power change, and an “elitist approach” (epitomized by Huntington, 1991), for which successful democratizations are and must be top-down, since excessive mobilization usually brings back authoritarianism as elites fear drastic changes.

In his analysis of social movements from the XVIIIth to the XXIst century, Tilly (2004) suggests that there exists a correlation between democratization and movements, but in a majority of cases it is the former that nurture the latter, with others where shared conditions and processes favor the two, and others (less frequent and limited) in which movements promote democratization. My empirical analysis of the

³⁵ Linz & Stepan (1996) have developed a model of extended transition that attended to the features of the previous regime, that of the actors, and the process aftermath; they also distinguished various transition axes: political regime only, regime plus economic system, or regime, economics, plus nation-State structure.

³⁶ I expose this later, in the third part of this theoretical framework.

15M cycle shows how 15M and what came after it is a case of this last type. Following the literature on the promotion of democracy at the transnational and national scale by the alter-globalization movement (Baiocchi, 2005; Santos, 2005; Della Porta, 2013), my hypothesis is that 15M opened a process that I define as “alter-democratization”. Otherwise, the 15M cycle proposed and promoted a democratization of the political field and society more broadly that followed models alternative to the paradigmatic model of democracy and democratization in XXth century reality and academic research, namely, the liberal representative.

2.1.2.3. Challenging the viewpoint on democratization.

Analyzing the 15M cycle of alter-democratization implies, then, firstly, to consider alternative definitions of democracy, and, secondly, alternative actors, to the mainstream ones in democratization theory. This study also implies a third distancing from classical approaches to democratization: instead of basing the analysis on elite viewpoints—be that of representative political actors or that of scholars, who usually represent processes according to their own definitions of democracy, in which representative elites usually play key roles—I agree with Doorenspleet (2015) on the need to “democratize” (and not only problematize) concepts and measurements of democracy and democratization. The core idea, then, is to approach democracy and democratization from the viewpoint of the *demos*, the *hoi polloi*, the many, rather than only from that of the few, be they the political or academic elites. Following Doorenspleet’s lead beyond her own word, I believe that her call for a shift in viewpoint and attention to actors’ views cannot be based only on a change in the type of survey questions, but rather in the appeal to a deployment of alternative methods, to an anthropology or ethnography of democracy (Paley, 2002).

What I discussed so far points towards a triple opening—even democratization—of “democracy” in democratic theory: definitional, actorial, and epistemic, opening its definition and models, opening the array of actors bringing it about—making social movements central—, and reclaiming the epistemic value of movement actors’ viewpoints. Through this triple emphasis the “struggle at stake” in the word and the world becomes even clearer: democracy is the construction and conflict of and around democracy, which engulfs definitions, practices, actors and visions.

2.1.3. Democracy and representation: historical and normative political ontology

Democracy may be as old as human intelligence itself (Graeber, 2013), and representation may date back to the beginnings of human culture (Brown, 2009), but their systematic hybridization into the main model of modern government is a rather recent achievement³⁷. In this section, I begin by clarifying the five central senses of representation, which help to disentangle its various aspects. Then I sketch three forms of representative government, in relation to their typical party forms, and point out their critical transitions. Afterwards, I combine some of the key elements in the previous three points, along with others, into an outline of what I may call the political ontology of liberal representative democracy. Finally, I sketch other models, concretely, the participatory, the deliberative, the antagonist, and the autonomist. Given the amplitude of this reconstruction, I will rely on a classical, historical-juridical and conceptual narrative, rather than on one focused on practices of governmentality (a la Foucault, 1997; Rose, 1999) to which I may punctually recur to. Otherwise, I look at the conceptual, ontological and institutional forms of representation. It is these forms that have been submitted to situated critique and experimentation in different projects of the 15M cycle.

2.1.3.1. The five senses of political representation

As Hanna Pitkin (1967) classically showed, political representation, and representation in general, have multiple, historically earned meanings. Clarifying these various senses of political representation will help in the reconstruction of the various takings on, attacks to, and elaborations on, and beyond, political representation within the 15M cycle.

In its first sense, delineated by Thomas Hobbes in the XVI chapter of his milestone work *Leviathan*, representation refers to the authorization of a person to act for

³⁷ In the US, the term “democrat” was a term of abuse up to the 1840s (Graeber, 2013), and although in France it had positive currency around the 1790s, it was only one more adjective to refer generically to people opposed to the Ancient Regime (Rosanvallon, 1995) rather than a name for advocates of a concrete form of government. The men who claimed to have freed themselves and their compatriots from all powerful, ontologically distant, absolute monarchs, deemed necessary to establish a new gap between governors and governed, what I may call the “mediated gap” (or “disjunctive synthesis”, Hardt & Negri, 2004) of representation between representatives and represented. As a government form, democracy seemed odd and old, fully and briefly developed only in Ancient Greece. The latter gained definitive track in the 1840s, particularly with the first conquest of male universal suffrage in 1848 (Rosanvallon, 1995). By mid-century, “democracy” was a mainstream term to define the type of political order and government in both the US and France, but no change in the underlying, Republican, representative structure of the political field (in constitutions, decision making processes, etc.) guaranteed this shift in denomination (Graeber, 2013), beyond the progressive extension of the franchise.

another, with the representative being entitled to act with few constraints—albeit within certain limits—and the authorizing party bearing the responsibility and obligations derived from those actions³⁸. In the case of Hobbes's writings on the origin of the Commonwealth, the authorizers, individuals in the state of nature, are constituted as one in the figure of the representative: the multitude becomes one in the person of the Leviathan (Hobbes, 2010: 72), a representative invested with absolute power. The modern ideas of “the representative”, “the sovereign”, “representation”, and, more importantly, their interrelations, which operate as a model for discussion throughout the thesis, came to be associated and redefined thanks to Hobbes' work.

A second sense of representation studied by Pitkin is representation as accountability. As a reaction to the authorization view, what she considers an equally formal and partial view has been proposed, which suggests that representation takes place in so far as representatives can be removed from their position—usually, through elections. This approach does not define the representative's actions before removal takes place³⁹. The assumption, nevertheless, is that there is some connection, and that the possibility of removal will act as a deterrent against any strong disagreement between the will or interests of the represented and the representative's actions.

The authorization and the accountability senses of representation are formal; they focus on the actions preceding or following representation. To them, Pitkin contrasts three senses of political representation that she considers “substantive” because they appeal to aspects of representation relevant in and during its exercise: the “descriptive”, the “symbolic”, and the “active” senses. The first two are focused on the way representatives “stand for” those they represent, while the latter defines “representation as activity”, as “acting for”.

The descriptive sense of representation (the third in the list so far) metaphorically presents representative people or institutions as mirrors, maps, painters or pictures of the represented. Some authors, Pitkin notes, speak of the legislature as an “accurate reflection of the community, or of the general opinion of the nation, or of

³⁸ According to Pitkin, this theory of authorization combines and confuses four different actions: 1-the attribution of the action of a person to another; 2-the attribution of the normative consequences derived from the attributed action; 3-receiving authorization for acting for another person; 4-to have authority over somebody. Only the third element, according to her, is essential to the concept of representation.

³⁹ This is a falsationist view, a form of political Popperianism—or skeptical minimalism (Barber, 1984).

the variety of interests in society” (ibid.: 61). As an alternative, others conceive it as a representative sample of the nation, which can be constructed by statistical means or by lot, in order to make it resemble or even be composed by the average citizen or its interests. Under this aspect of representation, correspondence in attributes (background, thoughts, etc.) between representatives and represented is as or even more relevant than the acting or doing of the former⁴⁰. It is also assumed that being-alike (a usually passive attribute) implies to act-alike. A barely questioned link is established between identity resemblance, feeling-and-thinking resemblance, and action resemblance, be it potential (acting as people would act) or ideal (acting as people would act if they had the knowledge or expertise of the representative). Therefore, the key is to potentiate such resemblance, reflection or correspondence in modes of being between representative and represented, in the hope of potentiating them in the ways of acting of the former⁴¹.

A fourth meaning of political representation (a second form of “standing for”) is the one Pitkin defines as “symbolic”. Here the framing metaphor is the flag. In symbolic representation, the representative entity (not necessarily human) points not only towards some entities (to the people, the voter, the State, etc.) but also towards the cultural codes and reactions (feelings, attitudes, gestures, words, etc.) of the relevant audiences towards those entities, as well as to the relation between those various elements. Unlike the case of the descriptive sense of representation, it does not need to provide information about the symbolized entities. The connection is not statistical or epistemological but rather historical, psychological, and behavioral⁴². In this fourth sense of representation the role of the audience is key: the symbols must be recognized and treated as real by somebody, otherwise, they stop representing. Usually, the represented are also the audience of representation, but that is not

⁴⁰ This is the model of some “politics of recognition”.

⁴¹ As in the case of authorization, here there is a collapse of different aspects: being representative (say, typical of a group), being elected as representative, and having a representative activity. Critics (Pitkin, 1967) point out that proportionality atomizes opinion, generates factions, prevents the constitution of majorities and impedes operative government—otherwise, they feed inaction, the opposite of the function of representation, according to Hobbes. Pitkin also notices that following this sense of representation there is no way of evaluating performance: whatever the average citizen or the whole of the people would do is fine. Moreover, it would make of representation something too dependent of a supposedly pre-existing reality that is not clear that exists: f.i. people haven’t got opinions on all matters Parliament legislates upon.

⁴² According to Pitkin, most symbolic politics must stand over political conflicts, like the King is over party quarrel as symbol of the nation; but it is important to notice how left and right parties do, in many countries, stand for or play the role of a symbol of the difference of interests or opinions or identities within the nation, between classes, ethnic or ideological groups, etc.

always the case (f.i.: flags in international relations). In some cases, Pitkin notices, it is powerful leaders who, through symbols and affects, make people symbolize them (and the nation): millions of people willingly going to war in the name of their country or its symbol, the leader, are an extreme example of this.

For Pitkin, a common characteristic of the four senses of representation analyzed so far is their limitation for guiding and judging the activity of the representatives. A fifth sense, which she defines as “acting for”, attends not primarily to the moment of authorization or removal, nor simply to the modes of being of representatives and represented, but rather, to representatives' action. The five senses⁴³ of representation move along what she defines as a mandate/independence axis, which she understands as an irresolvable tension: while the strong mandate position sees the representative as a mere agent, a delegate, a subordinate actor, the independence position sees it as a free agent, administrator or expert who should be just let alone to do its job. For Pitkin, the fifth sense of representation, the more complete one, is embodied by a representative that, on the one hand, acts in the interest⁴⁴ of the represented, and, on the other, responds to their expressed desires, otherwise, is “responsive”⁴⁵.

TABLE 1. ASPECTS AND SENSES OF REPRESENTATION

Aspect		Sense of representation
Formal		Authorization
		Accountability
Substantive	Standing for	Descriptiveness
		Symbolization
	Acting for	Action

⁴³ Pitkin (1967: 119) somehow tries to bring the four meanings enumerated so far together with representation as activity by enumerating multiple expressions and analogies, and trying to find similarities among them. On expressions, she notices: “we have been using the basic expression ‘acting for’ another, but besides that writers have used acting ‘in’ or ‘on behalf’ of others, acting ‘in their place’ or ‘stead’ or ‘instead of’ them, ‘supplying their place,’ acting ‘in their name,’ ‘on their authority,’ ‘for their sake,’ ‘in their interest,’ ‘in accord with their desires’ or ‘wishes’ or ‘wants,’ pursuing their ‘welfare’ or ‘needs,’ so as to ‘please’ or ‘satisfy’ them, or acting ‘as they would have acted themselves.’” When it comes to analogies, for Pitkin nor substitution (by an actor, an agent, a lawyer), nor caring (by an administrator, an expert) nor subordination-delegation (by a deputy, a delegate, an ambassador) can be considered as cases of political representation in this fifth, complex sense.

⁴⁴ Pitkin (1967: 156) makes an interesting distinction between objective and subjective interests. While the former can, in principle, be deduced from the conditions of the individual and the context—and idea that comes from the legal sphere on the XV century—the latter appeal to psychology and appeared as a notion much later. Objective interests can then be sub-divided, they can be “attached” to a person (f.i.: “it is in my interest all that preserves my life”) or “unattached” (f.i.: “it is in the interest of economic growth to cut wages”).

⁴⁵ Normally—she notices—there should be no conflict, at least in the mid/long term. If there is a punctual deviation, the representative must rationally justify this and ultimately wait for the verdict of the represented. The result of the process of addressing this deviation must be decided, according to Pitkin, in practice, case by case.

For Pitkin, each version or sense of representation speaks of an aspect of it, and is connected with a set of practices. None of these can exhaust the possibilities neither of the concept nor of the practice of political representation. This idea will be central when I analyze the potential meanings of 15M cycle challenges to political representation, narratively and practically.

On top of—or, rather, below—these five senses, as a first conclusion of what has been said so far on representation, it is relevant to notice that representation is a form of relationship, and it is composed of three basic poles or moments: the representing pole, the represented pole, and the process of representation itself—with an eventual fourth element, the “audience”, which may or may not coincide with the represented pole. The relational quality of representation and the ambiguity of each of its four poles means that its “ontology is contextual” (Pitkin, 1967, Castiglione & Warren, 2006). Representation is a construction, and an ambiguous one at that. This remark gives centrality to the field, of much interest to us, of the practical ontologies of representation, central to my questioning of 15M and post-15M practices⁴⁶.

2.1.3.2. Three models and crises of representative government: democratic polities, political parties, and party systems

If above I have described its five senses, in this section I summarize and better define the political-institutional forms of representation. Otherwise, I outline a model of representative government and political parties. These two, along with social movements, are the sociopolitical forms taken by 15M cycle processes, forms challenged by those very processes. This section helps to outline a framework for seeing the sociopolitical structures that the 15M cycle may be transforming, and thereby helps to situate and understand the cycle itself.

In his classic work on *The Principles of Representative Government*, Bernard Manin (1997) distinguished three forms of representative government⁴⁷. He uses four criteria for comparing them: bases for election, independence of representatives, relation between representative institutions and public opinion, and the role of discussion in decision making (Manin 1999: 197). Following this fourfold (which I

⁴⁶ Things get even more complicated when non-humans and materiality are included into the lot, as the “construction” notion suggests and STS studies are showing, from Latour's (2004) *Parliament of Things* and cosmopolitics to Brown's (2015) *constructed and material representative democracy*.

⁴⁷ Our primary reference throughout this section is Manin (1997), when I make use of other references, primarily Sartori (2005), I introduce a quotation in the sentence.

may re-label as the axes of “inclusion”, “mandate/independence”, “social autonomy”, and “deliberation”), he distinguishes Parliamentaryism⁴⁸ (preeminent from late XVIIIth century to the mid XIXth century), party government (predominant from the 1870s to the 1970s), and audience democracy (operative since the 1970s). Here I focus on the last two forms and complement his narration with remarks on the constitution of parties and party systems (Sartori, 2005; Katz & Crotty, 2005), and a typology of parties (Gunther & Diamond, 2003) based on three differential criteria: organizational, programmatic, and relational⁴⁹.

Party Government

Even though “the emergence of party-organized politics was an unanticipated, and even unwanted, side-effect of the liberalization and democratization of politics in that century” (Scarrow 2006: 23), parties progressively became a respectable element of the XIXth century polity in countries such as the UK and the US. According to Manin, this was tied to the emergence of the “party government” model, which came to predominate in liberal representative polities from the second half of the XIXth century till the last third of the XXth. This came to replace the late XVIIIth and early XIXth century “Parliamentarian” model.

In early Parliamentary democracies such as England, the “right to opposition”, “liberalization”, as well as “representation”, were first granted to the few, then slowly and contentiously gained by the many, increasing the “level of inclusion” during the XIXth century (Dahl, 1971: 4). This is one of the paradigms of liberal representative “democratization” process. As the struggle for representation intensified and the franchise grew, the gap between people and parliamentarians⁵⁰ did so too. The emergent solution was to construct bureaucratic organizations able to organize the recently enfranchised masses, new, organizationally wider and thicker parties: mass-based parties, which replaced earlier “notable” parties. The process legitimized, involved and familiarized thousands of people with the party form in the second half

⁴⁸ Parliamentaryism was defined by characteristics such as the census suffrage, the independence of Parliament from public opinion, and of representatives from their weak “notable parties”, as well as by the centrality of deliberation in Parliament.

⁴⁹ Those three criteria appear subdivided. With regard to organization, a distinction is to be made depending on whether it is formal or informal, thick or thin, etc. In the case of programs, the differences reside on whether they are well-defined, stable, and principled or rather diffuse, variable and pragmatic; within the first group Gunther & Diamond (2003) distinguish between religion-based, nation-based, class-based programs, among others. With regard to relations, their key division is between pluralist and hegemonic parties, between more or less loyal to the rules and permanence of the polity as it exists.

⁵⁰ In qualitative (elites vs commoners) and quantitative terms (multitudes vs the very few).

of the XIXth century (Scarrow, 2006).

This went hand in hand with the rise of the rule of the activist and the party bureaucrat: the vote collectors and the vote seekers, the fund raisers and the organizers of these new mass forms of political association. This quickly turned into and manifested the so called “iron law of oligarchy”, classically formulated by Robert Michels (1915) by which “who says organization says oligarchy”. The organization of mass parties involved both specialization and the creation of elites of decision makers and hierarchies: this was the only way to achieve efficiency in mass decision and action. Parties took the form of an interactive tripod made of a mass of supporters, party organizers, and a body of notables (Katz 2005), partially overlapping with V.O. Key’s (1964) tripod of “the party-in-the-electorate, the professional political group, the party-in-the-legislature, and the party-in-the-government”.

With party government, party systems, which resulted from the competition between different parties (Sartori, 2005), begun to crystallize. These systems have taken a variety of shapes, from two party-systems (a predominant form in countries such as the US and the UK) to extreme multi-party systems (Siaroff, 2000). Party systems can be characterized on the basis of the number of parties with an ability to reach a majority to govern, which defines the “fragmentation” of the political field (Sartori, 1975/2005: 110), but also by other factors such as the structuration or the openness to new relevant formations of that system (Mair, 2005).

According to Manin, the centrality of parties made itself felt in the dependence of parliamentary action on party rule as well as in their penetration of society and public discussion. Representatives' action become both less independent than in Parliamentarianism, and yet not immediately attached to the people's will, opinions, etc. As a result of party alignment with socioeconomic cleavages, and their penetration in society via party organizations and media, public opinion tended to resemble parliamentary divisions. As a consequence, political opposition was not so much framed in terms of inside-outside of Parliament but rather of majority-opposition, left and right, etc. under a party logic⁵¹. Finally, deliberation was displaced to the interior of parties themselves or to conversations between them, usually out of Parliament and without necessarily involving public opinion.

⁵¹ Inverting Manin's image, the Marxist narrative suggests that the party (specially, socialist parties) are the expression of the class division of society.

The long period of party government saw an explosion in the types of parties. According to Gunther & Diamond, a wide variety can be found between mass-based parties, in terms of their basic ideology (primarily galvanized around class, nation, or religion) and their tolerance towards diversity (depending on whether they are pluralist or hegemonic). So, the period between late XIXth century and mid XXth century saw the emergence of class-mass (mixture of class and pluralist), Leninist (class and hegemonic), pluralist nationalist (nationalist and pluralist), ultranationalist (nationalist hegemonic), denominational (religious and pluralist), and religious fundamentalist parties (religious and hegemonic).

Audience democracy

The third model of representative government or polity, that Manin calls “audience democracy”, emerges in the 1970s and is marked by the crisis of the mass-party model and the rise of mass media (TV, especially). This is the period that various authors (Touraine, 1981; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Melucci, 1996) have identified with the rise of new social movements, along with an increasing economic diversification and fragmentation of previous social classes and thereby the classical Marxist analysis and narrative. This connected to the rise of neoliberalism as a mainstream system and discourse, which particularly affected the role and standing of mass class parties in the West after the 1970s.

The rise of TV brought about the rule of media and media experts, the attention to electoral spectacles and offers, as well as the centrality of concrete representatives (Manin, 1997). This is the birth time of organizationally thin “electoralist party” genre, which includes the “personalist” and, more relevantly, the “catch-all party” (Kirchheimer, 1966)⁵², both of which run on broad and adaptable (rather than neat and ideological) programs, oriented towards aggregating the broadest possible constituencies for winning elections (Gunther & Diamond, 2003).

According to Manin, under audience democracy there is a growing independence of the representative from popular mandates, since campaigns messages and even political programs are broad enough for maneuvering and conceived as a marketing

⁵² The personalist party is oriented to facilitate the promotion of a very specific person into public office, to the point that the party is sometimes created or completely remade *ex profeso*, as it happened with Berlusconi's Forza Italia. Catch-all parties are leader-oriented, but not so leader-focused or even leader-based. Gunther & Diamond (2003) also list the “programmatic”, which although sharing the “thin organizational model” gives weight to the ideological program, which is not only election but also government oriented, and usually relies upon and aims to mobilize a narrower constituency.

tool. The party also detaches itself from the activist constituencies more typical of mass parties. Public opinion and constituencies are constituted through mass media (what implies an encroachment of media into the public sphere, in Habermas 1980' terms) and explored in focus groups and polls, that, reported by media, influence public opinion again.

All of this opens up alternative media—and, I may say, objectifying, sociological, rather than political—spaces of public representation, outside of both parties and parliaments. Usually opaque negotiations between institutions and group interests (particularly, lobbies), on the one hand, and media debate, on the other, become central venues for political discussion and the ever-rarer deliberation, with “new” social movements operating as counterpoints.

Crises and alternatives to representative government

Manin's three “models” (Parliamentarianism, party government, audience democracy) are models that predominate at a given time but that always appear combined, rather than as full-blown systems of government. No less important than these models are the historic breaks that mark shifts in predominance between them, which Manin finds tied to “crises of representation” (Manin 1997: 195). During the transition from Parliamentarianism to party democracy, the growth of the franchise represented a considerable organizational problem, and along the new subordination of representatives to mass parties, it ignited arguments about the gap between representatives and the people (debates around authorization, accountability, “acting for”, in Pitkin's terms), about decline in parliamentary deliberation (debates around representatives' “acting for”), as well as about the value of choosing representatives with worker-background rather than elites of talent and wealth (debates around increased “descriptiveness” or “resemblance” of representatives).

Manin suggests that similar quandaries emerged in the transition to audience democracy, many of whose characteristics seemed like a return to Parliamentarist forms. The shift in socio-economic cleavages undermining the stability of party bases forced parties to appeal to a more heterogeneous and mutable constituency moving through a media rich environment and prone to be moved by media-savvy, charismatic representatives, increasingly independent from party structures and membership (a hypertrophy of the symbolic aspect of representation, with a decline of internal accountability): these factors were at the roots of the emergence of the

catch-all party. At the same time, the displacement of deliberation towards usually private media outlets, or the use of focus groups and closed surveys, mark an informalization, when not an impoverishment, of public deliberation, of the role of representatives and their relation with the represented.

There is something completely missing from the picture of the crisis-and-transition periods provided by Manin: the counter-history of alternatives. For instance, during Manin's crisis-and-transition from party government to audience democracy, which was related to the proliferation of catch-all parties in the US and Europe (including the cases of the Spanish Working Socialist Party and the Popular Party in Spain, as noted by Gunther and Diamond 2003: 186), a number of processes took place: from the counterculture to the calls of the New Left for a participatory society to democratize not only government and the State, but also the economic realm (Pateman, 1970; Carnoy and Shearer, 1980; Barber, 1984).

The combination of these participatory demands with a new strand of new social movements, especially environmentalism, resulted in the emergence of the "movement-party" genre (Kitschelt, 1989), paradigmatically exemplified by the German Green Party in the 1980s and 1990s⁵³. Differently from class mass-parties, the ideological program of the Greens and similar left movement-parties in the 1980s and 1990s was markedly "post-materialist" rather than economic-centered (Kitschelt, 1989: 62), uniting heterogeneous constituencies in their "negative consensus" against both markets and bureaucracies, promoting solidarity and participatory institutions outwards and inwards, organizing around minimally formal, anti-hierarchical, decentralized grassroots networks with an assembly profile (ibid: 64-66), and prioritizing complex "constituency representation" over electoral competition. Kitschelt (2006: 280) has defined them as "coalitions of political activists who emanate from social movements and try to apply the organizational and strategic practices of social movements in the arena of party competition". From the calls for a participatory democracy to grassroots movement parties, these alternatives within audience democracy serve to think (for similarities and differences) some of the party initiatives after 15M.

Especially in moments of crisis of modern representative democracy, actors and authors have called for, and sometimes experimented with, a re-appropriation,

⁵³ Even if other parties had already taken this form in their initial stage, such as Labor in the UK (Gunther & Diamond, 2003: 188). Here I leave out of consideration the "post-industrial extreme right party".

relativization or abolition of representative politics (Graeber, 2013; Tormey 2015). As shown below, some 15M cycle initiatives follow a similar pattern: they diagnosed a contemporary crisis of representation and called for alternatives. However, the issue is whether projects and possibilities in the 15M cycle point towards a fourth model of representative government (after the parliamentarian, the party democratic, and the audience democratic) or, rather, towards alternatives to representative government and the liberal representative ontology, more broadly. Another option is that they do both. A complementary issue, then, becomes that of registering the existence, depth and breadth of transformations, if any.

In order to see whether a form of alter-democratization has come about since 15M, and to define the profile of such a process, I had first to outline the sociopolitical forms of liberal representative democracy (parties and representative government; I analyze social movements in part 3 of this chapter).

I move now to a second set of features, namely, to characterize the normative or standard model of the political ontology of liberal representative democracy.

2.1.3.3. The normative political ontology of liberal representative democracy

In order to outline the break in terms of political ontology that initiatives within the 15M cycle may embody (or not), a referential frame is required. In this section I elaborate what, using Habermas (1992) or Castiglione & Warren (2006) adjectives, I may call a “normative or “standard” account of the modern, liberal and representative political ontology. Since I have explored “representation” as a concept as well as a set of sociopolitical forms, I focus here first on the liberal pole, and then come back to the representative one. In order to elaborate such a sketch, I rely upon the work of key authors in the tradition of democratic theory and STS⁵⁴.

Ontology: basic elements

As Barber (1984) resumes beautifully, the liberal ontology is starred by atomized individuals that, be they more creative and autonomous (in the anarchist model of Nozick, 1974), fearful and aggressive (in the realist or Hobbesian model), or moderate and skeptic (in the minimalist and legalist⁵⁵ model of Locke and Popper), bring into politics a set of usually fixed and competing interests. Above all, they bring their interest to preserve their life, their freedom and, in the case of Locke, especially,

⁵⁴ I do not pretend this sketch to be complete, since it has been built in a situated manner and “afterwards” so to speak, that is, after witnessing the main questions around representation posed within the 15M cycle.

⁵⁵ Barber uses only “minimalist”. I prefer to add “legalist”, following Held (2006).

their private property. These three result either from the individual's natural endowment or from his work on Nature. Property is presented as something "he" becomes owner of, and entitled to, previously to any exchanges with society or the State, by work only.

Following the classic Hobbesian image, in their natural state individuals enjoy a natural freedom and live a selfish life that is unchallenged up to the moment they run into another individual, which usually results in collision (a sort of collision of atoms) and conflict. The frequency and violence of the encounter varies among these three models, with Nozick been the most optimistic, and Hobbes the less so. In the foundational liberal argumentation, this situation appeals, logically and ontologically, to a peace covenant, the now classical social contract, which since Hobbes' Leviathan marks, for the liberal and much of the modern political tradition, the step from Nature to Society, the emergence of a new order, that of the State and political representation. In the tradition of Hobbes and Locke (shared with Rousseau and others), for individuals, that covenant means, primarily, to surrender, delegate or contribute some or all of their natural rights to the collective as a whole, represented by the sovereign. By this shared gesture and agreement, the multitude becomes one, a whole, in the figure of the representative, in the representative body, be it a committee of one person (monarchy), a few (oligarchy), the whole (democracy), or a mixture of them⁵⁶. From then on, the relations between the irreducible individuals become, firstly, regulated by law⁵⁷, a law whose legitimacy derives from the consent of those affected by it, and, secondly, less physically violent, since the legitimate use of violence (to use Max Weber's later classical formula) becomes the prerogative of a single actor, the State. The State can then be defined by its securitarian, tolerant-legalist, or minimal character, depending on whether the model is Hobbesian, Lockean, or Nozickean⁵⁸. Individuals keep pursuing their interests (safety, property, freedom, etc.), that still implies conflict, but now it takes the form of a regulated and rightful competition under the supervision and ruling of the Law⁵⁹ established by the

⁵⁶ The former is Hobbes' favorite formula while the mixed government option, which facilitates the possibility of people to challenge the rule of the executive power, was preferred by Locke, Montesquieu and Jefferson.

⁵⁷ The liberal tradition insistence in "law", from Locke, via Montesquieu up to modern democracies, which became to ground the legalist model of democracy (Held 2006), has its roots in Ancient times, especially in the tradition of the Roman republic.

⁵⁸ The position advocated by Robert Nozick (1974) can be considered a good representative of a strand of the neoliberal mindset.

⁵⁹ The liberal tradition insisting in the centrality of "law", that flowed from Locke, via Montesquieu, into the legalist model of democracy (Held 2006), has its roots in the framework of laws in Rome.

sovereign, the representative of the people, who is also responsible for executing it, or ensuring their execution. This protective, negative, approach to the State is, for some, the essence of liberalism (Pettit, 1997: 175). The relation between individual and State is primarily based on negative freedom, non-interference, the inviolability of the private realm.

In the process of constituting Society, a third, crucial element in the political ontology of liberalism, emerges between the individual and the State: the sphere of the market and civil society. The aggregation and management of individual interests at the collective level are the main tasks of the market in the (primarily, economic and private) realm of civil society and of government in the political, representative and public one. In the ontology of liberalism, the sphere of the market is to be safeguarded and expanded, in order to promote the rights of individuals, while the sphere of government is to be limited and controlled, in order to ensure those rights. Reduced to its bare minimum, this could be the basic building blocks of the liberal representative ontology.

TABLE 2. POLITICAL ONTOLOGY: LIBERAL REPRESENTATIVE

Political ontology	Subject form	Collective form	Modes of political relation	Key political elements
Liberal representative	Selfish, calculating individual	Market/ civil society/ representative government	Representation, competition, aggregation	Private interests & rights

This standard—albeit historically shifting—model will be a *referential frame* (rather than “inertial”, as suggested in Barber, 1984), for situating and understanding some of the key 15M cycle critiques and offshoots from the viewpoint of political ontology.

After characterizing the political ontology of liberal representative democracy, there are new tokens to be looked at in order to situate a potential alter-democratization: subject forms, collective forms, and modes of relation. This could be considered a more neatly “ontological” approximation to 15M cycle initiatives. In combination with the exploration of sociopolitical forms, I believe to have a rich frame to look at 15M’s

process of reassembling and alter-democratization.

2.1.4. Alternative political ontologies

So far, I have been circling around the liberal representative political ontology that has underline the main model of modern democracy. Much in this model was challenged in discourse and practice by 15M initiatives. But from where did this critique speak? The meaning of democracy does not lie before or beyond its various models and shapes. It is from the viewpoint of a concrete constellation that one can, at some point, denounce one or another form of democracy as a “fake”, in the way 15M did, when it criticized the Spanish political order and declared “they call it democracy, but it is not”. In the following sections I touch upon different models of democracy, as well as upon their basic ontological elements. I do it in much less detail, since they represent alternatives to the currently preeminent liberal and representative model.

2.1.4.1. Two traditions of republicanism

Republicanism was an inspiration for different key actors in the constitution of modern, liberal and representative States. Two traditions can be found within classical republicanism, though. The first, which Held (2006: 37) defines as “developmental republicanism”, derived primarily from Ancient Greece⁶⁰ and was defended in modern times, among others, by Rousseau. This tradition puts “emphasis on the intrinsic value of political participation for the enhancement of decision-making and the development of the citizenry”. In this tradition, liberty (positive or ancient liberty, in terms of Isaiah Berlin and Benjamin Constant) is the possibility to participate in the political and to reach political self-fulfillment as a citizen, something necessary for being a full human being, famously defined by Aristotle as *zoon politikon*. Different from the liberal one, this tradition begins with the “whole”, the Republic, with the “citizenry as a collective actor that reflects the whole and acts for it” (Habermas, 1994: 8). It presupposes and nurtures the idea of interdependent and solidary citizens aiming at their common good, rather than that of competing individuals only integrated by either the State or the market (Habermas, 1994). It portrays citizens enjoying and exercising positive freedom, through participation in a civic state.

On the other hand, “protective republicanism”, first outlined in ancient Rome and

⁶⁰ For the sake of simplicity, I omit here the various differences between the Athenian and the Roman ideals of State, government and citizen.

renewed by Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and Madison, with “its primary stress on the instrumental value of political participation for the protection of citizens’ objectives and interests” (Held, 2006: 37), brought about a weaker (although not liberal) paradigm of freedom as non-domination⁶¹. According to Pettit (1997: 175) “on the republican construal, the real enemy of freedom is the power that some people may have over others, whereas on the liberal understanding, asymmetries in interpersonal power are not in themselves objectionable”. Even though many American and French Enlightened men and revolutionaries shared republican ideals and forms tied to protective republicanism, such as the mixed constitution—reframed as division of powers by Montesquieu or the “check and balances” model of the American Republic—, the rising liberal discourse on which they narratively grounded it became increasingly independent of those ideals, as it relied on an ontology pivoting around possessive individuals, private interests and, crucially, freedom as non-interference. This tended to fall short both from the “protective republican” emphasis on the citizen, participation in the *res publica*, and non-domination (Constant, 1988; MacPherson, 1962; Pettit, 1997), and even more from the “developmental republican” ideal of the full citizen, community, and politics as self-fulfillment (for the distinction, Held, 2006 and Pettit, 1997).

The 70s saw the liberal-protective and the developmental versions of republicanism to occupy complete opposite camps of the political field, particularly in the US. On the one hand, authors such as Robert Nozick, which I have already mentioned, and Friedrich Hayek, called for a radical minimization of the State and public intervention, in favor of private life and market economics (Held, 2006) giving base to political neoliberalism. These positions were to be defended by politicians such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Since this approach is mostly a derivation from the original liberal and representative tenets, I will not devote time to it here. Rather, I will focus on an opposed approach born around the same time, and sometimes as a response, in relation to the so called New Left. It was a view of a participatory society close to the developmental version of republicanism outlined from Ancient Greece to Rousseau and even Marx (Pateman, 1970; Barber, 1984, Held, 2006). Thanks to this

⁶¹ According to Pettit (1997: 170), this is “the freedom that goes with not having to live under the power of another”, which he convincingly distinguishes from the liberal idea of noninterference or negative freedom (as posed by authors such as Berlin, 1969). According to Pettit (1997: 175), right wing liberals tolerate power imbalances and left wing primarily reject them as they affect to other values such as equality or welfare.

alternative approach, since the 1960s, “the word 'participation' became part of the popular political vocabulary” (Pateman, 1970).

2.1.4.2. Participatory democracy

“Participatory democracy’ was, from the early 1970s to (at least) the early 1990s, the leading counter-model on the left to the ‘legal democracy’ of the right” (Held, 2006: 209). Barber (1984: 113) synthesizes nicely this view:

“Strong democracy is a distinctively modern form of participatory democracy. It rests on the idea of a self-governing community of citizens who are united less by homogeneous interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions rather than their altruism or their good nature”.

This involved a critique of both liberal representative democracies and totalitarian socialist States. According to Barber (1984: 119) while “liberal democracy understands politics as a means of eliminating conflict (the anarchist disposition), repressing it (the realist disposition), or tolerating it (the minimalist disposition), strong democracy also aspires to transform conflict through a politics of distinctive inventiveness and discovery”. Differently from “consensualism” as well, strong democracy emerges and nurtures from conflict.

Pateman's hope (1970) is that, by bringing participation to proximate, but always wider spheres of life, society as such will be changed. She follows Cole (1920: 12) in calling to apply democracy “not only or mainly to some special sphere of social action known as "politics", but to any and every form of social action, and, in especial, to industrial and economic fully as much as to political affairs”. This is a sense of democratization clearly distinguishable from the one that defines the liberal representative endeavor.

A crucial thesis of the participatory tradition resides in the relation between citizens and institutions, as stated by Barber (1984: 152): “politics becomes its own university, citizenship its own training ground, and participation its own tutor. Freedom is what comes out of this process, not what goes into it.” Participation is a school of democracy, aimed at creating and transforming both modern citizens and

institutions as they are⁶².

This self-transformation has an ontologically collective character. Participatory democracy creates “publics” able of public deliberation, decision, and action, debunking both the myth of atomic individuals creating society contractually (or aggregating interests to find public interest, a fallacy of composition), as well as that of a given organic community supra-ordinated to its members. Politics generates identities, rather than presupposes them, freeing humans from historical or biological determination. In synthesis, “community, public goods, and citizenship thus ultimately become three interdependent parts of a single democratic circle whose compass grows to describe a true public” (Barber, 1984: 133-4).

Barber (1984: 206) warns, though, that “democratization conducted within the confines of thin democracy work only to further polarize elites and masses while cloaking oligarchic manipulation in a mantle of popular sovereignty”, this “new politics” (ironically, a frequent expression used in Spain to define post-15M politics) undermines the strengths of liberal representation (brokering, compromises, etc.) without improving the citizenry, its insight, judgment or responsibility.

I want to outline now the ontology of the republican and participatory model of politics.

TABLE 3. POLITICAL ONTOLOGY: PARTICIPATORY.

Political ontology	Subject form	Collective form	Modes of political relation	Key political elements
Republican, Participatory	Active citizen	Citizenry/ community/ publics	Participation, contestation	Political practices and citizen rights

2.1.4.3. Deliberative democracy⁶³

In the 90s, what has been defined as a “deliberative turn” (Dryzek, 2000) took place in democratic theory. As posed by Held (2006: 231):

⁶² In Barber's (1984: 154-155) words: “Masses make noise, citizens deliberate; masses behave, citizens act; masses collide and intersect, citizens engage, share, and contribute. At the moment when “masses” start deliberating, acting, sharing, and contributing, they cease to be masses and become citizens. Only then do they “participate.””

⁶³ On top of the materials coming from Habermas (1994) and Gutmann & Thompson (2004), this section (specially, several quotes and references) has been built on the basis of Held (2006). The term “deliberative democracy” seems to have been coined by Joseph M. Bessette (1980), although its earlier predecessors seem to be works, as early as the 70s, by John Rawls and Habermas.

“a spectre haunts contemporary democratic politics, namely, that while entrenching the accountability of rulers to the ruled, and extending the scope of the demos across all facets of public life, politics could be reduced to the lowest possible denominator - to governance by the masses who are neither well informed nor wise”.

That fear is not new, nor modern, but rather ancient: it was the same fear of Socrates and Plato towards mob rule. The most common answer among deliberative democrats such as Jürgen Habermas has been to summon, back to Socrates, dialogue and reason, *logos*, or, in a more contemporary formula: dialogical reason.

A key difference with the previous model lies in the fact that deliberative democracy may, in principle, be fully compatible with representation. According to Gutmann & Thompson (2004: 4) “deliberative democracy affirms the need to justify decisions made by citizens and their representatives. Both are expected to justify the laws they would impose on one another”⁶⁴. The key is, according to them, the “reason-giving requirement”. What legitimates political decisions and laws is not the “predetermined will” of the individuals, their fixed interests, but rather “the process of its formation, that is, deliberation itself” (Manin, 1987: 351). The deliberative approach aims to inform opinions, to reveal and test interests, and to shift those opinions (sometimes even interests) by “no force except that of the better argument” (Habermas, 1976: 108). Habermas (1994) has nicely presented a view of deliberative democracy, but in relation to the two previous alternatives (liberal representative and republican/participatory):

“In the liberal view, the democratic process takes place exclusively in the form of compromises between competing interests. Fairness is supposed to be granted by the general and equal right to vote, the representative composition of parliamentary bodies, by decision rules, and so on. Such rules are ultimately justified in terms of liberal basic rights. According to the republican view, democratic will-formation takes place in the form of an ethical-political discourse; here deliberation can rely on a culturally established background consensus shared by the citizenry. Discourse

⁶⁴ Furthermore, they suggest that “deliberative democracy makes room for many other forms of decision-making (including bargaining among groups, and secret operations ordered by executives), as long as the use of these forms themselves is justified at some point in a deliberative process.”

theory takes elements from both sides and integrates these in the concept of an ideal procedure for deliberation and decision-making [...] In the final analysis, the normative content arises from the very structure of communicative actions” (1994: 6).

These differences have also implications for political ontology, that is, for the kinds of beings, relations, and processes existing in politics. According to Habermas, the Republican view begins with a macro-subject, the political community, which helps to define individuals, whereas, in the liberal view, the order is the reverse, and the source of order and law derive from atomic individuals and their interactions. “Discourse theory works instead with the higher-level inter-subjectivity of communication processes that flow through both the parliamentary bodies and the informal networks of the public sphere” (1994: 8). In this way, civil society turns from a market-first space into the basis of “autonomous public spheres”, independent from both the market and the State administration. Although public opinion “cannot rule of itself”, it orients the exercise of State administrative power.

According to Habermas—in what may be an excessively legalistic view of the liberal representative ontology—, while in the liberal model the constitution operates as the last ground of the whole, and in the republican-participatory it is the sovereign, active citizenry, his portrait presents “the image of a decentered society”⁶⁵. Against participatory democracy, Habermas suggests that the political system is not the center nor the “formative model” of society, “but just one action system among others”, even if, through law, it connects to the rest.

I synthesize now the ontology of the deliberative model of democracy.

TABLE 4. POLITICAL ONTOLOGY: DELIBERATIVE.

Political ontology	Subject form	Collective form	Modes of political relation	Key political elements
Deliberative	Rational, dialoguing citizen	Public sphere	Deliberation, dialogue, communication	Public, dialogical reasons

⁶⁵ Against participatory democracy, Habermas suggests that the political system is not the center nor the “formative model” of society, “but just one action system among others”, even if, through law, it should connect to the rest.

2.1.4.4. *Antagonist democracy*

An alternative approach is the one outlined by Ernesto Laclau's (2005) populism and the "democratic agonism" defended by Mouffe (2006) against deliberative democrats such as Habermas. For Mouffe, deliberative democrats insist on the centrality of rational deliberation, or even consensus, in the hope that it will serve to secure democratic institutions. But although agreeing on the aim, she disagrees on strategy, which should not be to substitute "the dominant "means/ends rationality" by another form of rationality, a "deliberative" and "communicative" one, but rather to work in the "constitution of an ensemble of practices that make the constitution of democratic citizens possible. This is not a matter of rational justification but of availability of democratic forms of individuality and subjectivity" (Mouffe 2006: 10). She frontally opposes the postulation of rational subjects (be they utility maximizers, as in the liberal political ontology, or dialoguing consensus seekers, as in the deliberative one) and stresses the relevance of passions, and the need to nurture those that favor democratic institutions and projects. Crucially in my view, she calls to displace the discussion from issues of rationality and legitimacy, like is usual in Habermas, towards "practices and language games"⁶⁶. That means to attend to and to care not so much for arguments and ideal speech situations but rather for passions and forms of life. These are not mere empirical factors to be taken into account while tendentially aiming at ideal communicative situations, but rather the ontological fabric of politics.

According to Mouffe, the political is defined by antagonism, by Carl Schmitt's friend-enemy divide, and politics is the practical task of constructing order in the face of it. To Mouffe (2006), the defining feature of democratic politics consists in turning antagonism into agonism, and the enemy (which, by Schmitt's definition, is the one that may kill me, and that I may kill) into an adversary, a legitimate enemy⁶⁷. This transformation of antagonism into agonism is at the root of democratic tolerance. It connects with a view of democratic consensus as "conflictual consensus", since different groups interpret core democratic values such as liberty and equality

⁶⁶ These will be two basic, although not excluding, lenses through which I look at 15M and post-15M projects.

⁶⁷ That is "somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question [...] with whom we have some common ground because we have a shared adhesion to the ethic-political principles of liberal democracy: liberty and equality. But we disagree on the meaning and implementation of those principles and such a disagreement is not one that could be resolved through deliberation and rational discussion" (Mouffe, 2006: 15).

differently. Any consensus is temporal, and, moreover, it is tied to a concrete political hegemony. A key question for both Laclau and Mouffe, then, is that of how a hegemony is constructed.

Criticizing (not unlike Habermas above) methodological approaches focused either in individuals or in social wholes⁶⁸, individual-centered political ontologies such as the liberal, for which collectives are mere aggregates, and whole-centered ones such as the republican, which pose communities and republics at the center of the political order, Laclau & Mouffe (2001) suggest that their approach “is grounded in privileging the moment of political articulation”. Any group results from articulation, and more precisely, from the articulation of demands. Demands are Laclau's basic unit of analysis, equivalent to traditional “interests”, but without a fixed form nor being anchored on a stable subject. Rather, interests (specially, collective ones) result from articulation. In the process of articulation, actors discursively tie demands of various groups, obliterating some of their differences and linking them, finding their similarities, into “equivalential chains”⁶⁹. As part of this process, a concrete actor or group can make a claim to be representing the whole of society: that amounts to an attempt at establishing a hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: xiii). This “hegemonic universality”, contaminated by particularity and “always reversible”, is the only one a political collective can reach. Social and political ontology are thereby limited and unstable, as hegemony is always open to decay.

Any hegemony is tied to the construction of what Antonio Gramsci defined as a “common sense”, or shared coordinates on the social and the political. On the other side of the spectrum there is what Gramsci called an “organic crisis”, what Laclau defines as a “conjuncture where there is a generalized weakening of the relational system defining the identities of a given social or political space” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 136). If the constitution of a hegemony is tied to the construction of a “common sense”, an “organic crisis” is tied to its unravelling.

Laclau (2005: 171) accounts for a central category in political theory, that of “The

⁶⁸ Laclau's critique points first to sociological approaches, rather than to traditions of political thought.

⁶⁹ Although I cannot stop on this point, I will come back later to Laclau & Mouffe's (2001: 130) distinction between the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic poles of discourse, as well as the one between logic of difference and equivalence: “the logic of difference tends to expand the syntagmatic pole of language, the number of positions that can enter into a relation of combination and hence of continuity with one another; while the logic of equivalence expands the paradigmatic pole—that is, the elements that can be substituted for one another—thereby reducing the number of positions which can possibly be combined”. The logic of equivalence is one of simplification, the logic of difference, one of expansion and complexity of the political space.

People”, in terms of these analyses: he explains that “an ensemble of equivalential demands articulated by an empty signifier is what constitutes a 'People’”. The People is a central weapon of political discourse, but not always a given group can make a claim to represent it: “popular struggles only occur in the case of relations of extreme exteriority between the dominant groups and the rest of the community” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 133). In popular struggles (unlike in “democratic” ones, which are limited to a specific issue), the whole of society divides in two political camps: The People and its enemy, usually, an elite. But the identity and attributes of The People are up for grabs, like the constitution of society and politics are.

Here, a table synthesizing some of the key ontological tenets of the antagonist model of democracy.

TABLE 5. POLITICAL ONTOLOGY: ANTAGONIST.

Political ontology	Subject form	Collective form	Modes of political relation	Key political elements
Antagonist	Common man, Agonist citizen	The People	Antagonism, agonism, articulation, hegemony, conflictual consensus	Demands, affects

2.1.4.5. *Autonomist democracy*

The trilogy of *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2004), and *Commonwealth* (2009), by Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, provides an autonomist, networked, commons-oriented counterpoint to Laclau & Mouffe's insistence on hegemony, agonist democracy, and discursive populism⁷⁰. Although several elements of their analysis would be worth of attention, it will be the notion of “multitude” that will be at the core of my taking.

“Multitude” is the term used by Hobbes to refer to a group of people in the state of Nature before becoming a Commonwealth, subjects of a State, otherwise, people before the step of representation. The conceptual step of representation, as a form of organizing the collective in which a few act in place of the rest, grounds the emergence of figures such as “The People” and “the nation” in modern political

⁷⁰ It is important to notice how these works were written around two decades after Hegemony and socialist strategy, coinciding with the rise of networked social movements such as the alter-globalization movement rather than with the new social movements.

thought.

In Hardt and Negri's diagnostic, the represented, sovereign People, and the nation, appear as decaying forces under globalization. In ways connectable to Castells's (1996, 1997, 1998) theses about the network society and communication power, Hardt & Negri (2004: xii) describe a world where globalization is tied to the expansion of the rule and "network power" of States, transnational and supranational actors (such as corporations, the IMF, or the European Union). They establish a new form of sovereignty and order, Empire, characterized by capitalist extraction, control and conflict at a global scale. Simultaneously, globalization processes are tied to the growth of worldwide networks of cooperation and collaboration from below. These networks are the basis of the emergence of the multitude, which looks beyond the existing globalization towards a more radical democracy⁷¹, "in which we are all together permitted, able, and willing to rule" (Hardt & Negri, 2009: 378).

The promise of the multitude for such a democracy, according to Hardt & Negri, is based on two conditions. The first is economic, and results from the fact that new forms of production and commodities, what they call "immaterial labor"⁷², nurture a "commons", that is, a form of collective production and appropriation alternative to the modern private and public models; furthermore, these new forms dissolve strong identities, rigid labor structures and the uniformity of earlier social groups, including the old masses, nations or working classes. The second condition is political: the forms of articulating such commons and the multitude itself are increasingly democratic, that is, result from peer to peer networking, which Hardt & Negri describe as decentralized and autonomous, respectful of diversity and encouraging creativity⁷³.

To bring about a "global democracy" beyond current forms of representation, poverty, and war, the marks of "Empire", is the project of the multitude (Hardt & Negri, 2004: 269-270). But in order to reach that it is necessary to mobilize affects, such as the existing "desire of democracy", and even more importantly, "indignation [...] the raw

⁷¹ In Hardt & Negri's (2004: xvii) reading: "Whereas Hobbes moved from the nascent social class to the new form of sovereignty, our course is the inverse—we work from the new form of sovereignty to the new global class. Whereas the nascent bourgeoisie needed to call on a sovereign power to guarantee its interests, the multitude emerges from within the new imperial sovereignty and points beyond."

⁷² Hardt & Negri (2004: 108) define it as "labor that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response".

⁷³ This second point was present in the insistence on democratic and autonomous processes of decision making, as well as creative direct action, in the alter-globalization movement (Graeber, 2009; Della Porta, 2013).

material of revolt and rebellion” (Hardt & Negri, 2009: 236). Negri & Hardt (1999) interpret affect⁷⁴, through a sometimes optimist reading of Spinoza, as a “power to act” (obliterating the fact that affect can also diminish that power, as noticed by Grattan, 2011). The joyful affects of the multitude must be catalyzed, guided by the desire of democracy. In Hardt & Negri’s work affect plays a central role, similar to the one played by interests in the liberal representative political ontology, or dialogical reasons in that of deliberative democracy.

But what is “the multitude”? Hardt & Negri counterpose the multitude to classical political metaphors, forms of collective subjectivity and the body politic, such as The People, the mass, the working class, the crowd and the mob. Here I recapitulate all of them, since they amount to a valuable—albeit narratively abstract—morphological taxonomy of political collective subjects. The first, crucial difference is the one Hardt & Negri (2004: 99) establish between The People, the crucial subject in Laclau’s proposal and much modern thought, and their own proposal. In modern thought, “The People” unifies, via representation, a usually diverse population into a single identity, that of subjects of the State, members and body of the nation, which become the represented sovereign of the modern political ontology⁷⁵; differently, the multitude is internally diverse, composed of singularities which are irreducible to sameness.

Hardt & Negri also distinguish the multitude from the masses, in which internal differences remain, but clumped and indifferent (Hardt & Negri, 2004: xiv). I may add that, throughout modernity, the very notion of “masses” has evoked heaviness and inertia: matter motionless on its own, a double motionlessness, without and against movement.

Then Hardt & Negri question another common target of criticism since the 1970s, namely, the working class. Albeit by definition more “active” than the masses, the “working class” has become an exclusive notion for referring either to industrial

⁷⁴ In their work, affect plays a central role, similar to the one played by interests in the liberal representative political ontology, or dialogical reasons in that of deliberative democracy.

⁷⁵ According to Hardt & Negri (2004: 99): “The people is one. The population, of course, is composed of numerous different individuals and classes, but the people synthesizes or reduces these social differences into one identity. The multitude, by contrast, is not unified but remains plural and multiple. This is why, according to the dominant tradition of political philosophy, the people can rule as a sovereign power and the multitude cannot. The multitude is composed of a set of singularities—and by singularity here I mean a social subject whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different”. In an earlier passage they precise: “different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires” (Hardt & Negri 2004: xiv).

laborers, to distinguish them, not only from capitalists, but also from other laborers and social actors in general, or for referring to waged laborers, to distinguish them from poor people, unwaged laborers, etc. Differently, “multitude” is an open and inclusive concept, as open as networks, according to Hardt & Negri, since both lack categorical⁷⁶ boundaries and are, in principle, easily and infinitely reconfigurable and extensible. The working class and its representative incorporation in Marxist theory, the mass class party, ended playing central roles in XIXth-XXth liberal representative democracies, and even more in authoritarian regimes such as the Soviet Union. Differently, multitude points towards radical democracy.

Finally, Hardt & Negri (2004: 100) differentiate the multitude from other social forms that have been recently the object of much attention in social theory, crowds (Surowiecki, 2005) and mobs (Rheingold, 2003): they suggest that these types of collectives are indifferent aggregates, unable to recognize what they have in common, incoherent and passive to the point of needing leadership and being prone to manipulation, Differently,

“the multitude, designates an active social subject, which acts on the basis of what the singularities share in common. The multitude is an internally different, multiple social subject whose constitution and action is based not on identity or unity (or, much less, indifference) but on what it has in common” (Hardt & Negri, 2004: 100).

This clearly differs from collective forms discussed in earlier sections⁷⁷.

Economically, their appeal to the commons goes on to challenge the hegemonic (neo)liberal status quo. Hardt & Negri (2004: 204) state that “the common does not refer to traditional notions of either the community or the public; it is based on the communication among singularities and emerges through the collaborative social

⁷⁶ “Categorical” should be understood here both as depending on a category and as non-changeable.

⁷⁷ This distinction is particularly relevant in the case of antagonist approaches. Even if Laclau & Mouffe are convinced democrats and pluralists, the populist gesture has a clear anti-pluralist charge, situated at the core of the hegemonic strategy. This is a basic point because, according to Laclau, a central element of the populist strategy is precisely for a part or party to claim universality, to claim to stay for the whole. The gesture tends to apply not only externally, in the alignment of The People against the elite, but also to be repeated internally, so that groups, struggles and identities within movements or parties are ranked, subordinated, and hierarchized, when not reduced, into discursive, but also very practical, chains of equivalences. That is precisely what multitudes deny: the possibility or desirability of reducing difference to sameness and to a single order. Instead, using Deleuze’s and Guattari’s notions, we may say multitudes aim to avoid trees and definitive ranks, to circumvent hierarchies and unified representatives. Actually, rather than back to unity, they try to push freedom and difference beyond pluralism, through multiplicities.

processes of production”. They find and call for “post-systemic” forms of organization: “a transparent and democratic self-organizing network of plural subsystems, each of which organizes the norms of numerous private (or, really, singular) regimes” (idem: xv). It is through their “communication, collaboration, and cooperation” that they generate common norms and common wealth.

TABLE 6. POLITICAL ONTOLOGY: AUTONOMIST.

Political ontology	Subject form	Collective form	Modes of political relation	Key political elements
Autonomist	Singularity	Multitude	Autonomy, networked collaboration and communication	Affects, immaterial labor, commons

2.1.4.6. A synthesis of models

In this section, I just present the result of my review of models of democracy so far. The table is a small overview of the key elements of different models of political ontology.

TABLE 7. POLITICAL ONTOLOGY: SYNTHESIS.

Political ontology	Subject form	Collective form	Modes of political relation	Key political elements
Liberal representative	Selfish, calculating individual	Market/ civil society	Representation, competition, aggregation	Private interests & rights
Republican, Participatory	Active citizen	Citizenry/ Community	Participation, contestation	Citizen practices & rights
Deliberative	Rational, dialoguing citizen	Public sphere	Deliberation, dialogue, communication, consensus	Public, dialogical reasons

Antagonist	Common man, Agonist citizen	The People	Antagonism, agonism, articulation, hegemony, conflictual consensus	Demands, affects
Autonomist	Singularity	Multitude	Autonomy, networked collaboration and communication	Affects, immaterial labor, commons

2.1.4.7. Recent theoretical developments around the liberal representative ontology, in brief

Castiglione and Warren (2006) have opened up the meaning of representation to encompass an “ecology of representative practices”, within which social movements can be partially situated, going beyond the individual- and State-centrism of the standard model of representation since Hobbes. This attention to broader ecologies and systems is not exclusive of recent representative theory, but also appears in the deliberative literature. The case of Habermas, above, is paradigmatic. More recently, Mansbridge et al. (2012) have appealed to a “systemic approach to deliberative democracy” and spoken of socially distributed “deliberative systems”. I may think of others: “participatory systems”, “representation systems”, etc. integrated into what may be called “ecosystems of democracy”, or just of ecologies of political practices. These ecosystems would include as subsystems other systems or ecosystems. One may say the 15M cycle enriched the ecosystem of democracy previously existing in Spain with alter-democratic discourses and practices.

2.2. Technopolitics: the coupled becoming of technology and politics

In a structural homology with the previous section, this one is oriented to outline what “technopolitics” (as above with the case of “democracy”) may mean, and to map some traditions and approaches for thinking about it⁷⁸.

In the last years “technopolitics” has come close to be a buzzword in Spain⁷⁹ in some

⁷⁸ It will take much less than what it took to do so for politics and democracy, though. This is due to two main reasons: the first is that the focus of the present work lies mostly on the technopolitical becoming of the old politics rather than on the technopolitical becoming of the old technology, otherwise, I attend much more to the shifts in politics and political ontology rather than to those in technology and technological ontology; the second, connected to it, is that there has been less theoretical reflection and elaboration (and, thereby, differentiation of traditions, schools, debates, etc.) on technology than on politics. As we will see, this is no coincidence but rather a bias whose roots can be traced back to the beginning of Western thought.

activist and political circles. A variety of actors, usually from an analytical perspective, have used the term as an adjective to qualify different 15M processes, actors and organizations (Sánchez, 2013a, Gutiérrez, 2017), strategies, tactics, and more (Toret et al., 2015). It has become a key term in the rising research literature around 15M (f.i.: Serrano et al., 2014). It has been matter of some dispute, but mostly it has become a comfortable umbrella term to name the hybridization of technology and politics, especially since 2011.

As suggested by the quotes in the introduction, like in Marga Padilla's metaphor of an "upgrade of the political", and as I show in the empirical analysis, the 15M cycle has involved narratives and projects that implied a technological becoming of politics (networked social movement organizations, campaigns, political parties, etc.), while others brought about a political becoming of technologies (reappropriation of commercial social media for collective action, development of alternative political platforms, etc.). The double, usually converging, becoming of technology and politics I just mentioned may be a provisional definition for "technopolitics" as a phenomenon. A relevant aspect is the iteration of these becomings: struggle around the politics of concrete technologies may affect their uses and associated political practices, which may, in turn, involve further rounds of technologies and uses.

2.2.2. Technology and politics in STS: a first approach to technopolitics

My exploration of technopolitics begins with STS and its critique of usual understandings of technologies. Bijker (2006: 683) suggests that the "standard view" of technology today, inherited from the Enlightenment, sees it, similarly to science, as "objective, value-free, and discovered by specialists. Technology, similarly, is an autonomous force in society and technology's working is an intrinsic property of technical machines and processes."

Far from this neutral and substantialist view, STS has long theorized the relation between technology and politics. Some STS authors have concluded that "it is too weak a position even to see technology and politics as interacting: there is no categorical distinction to be made between the two" (MacKenzie, 1990: 412–13) and that "all technology is political and all politics is technological"⁸⁰ (Bijker, 2006: 701).

⁷⁹ As an illustration of this, the Socialist party has organized workshops on "Technopolitics" attended by its Secretary General at the time (Rubalcaba, 2013), or books by usual contributors to mainstream newspapers such as Antonio Gutiérrez-Rubí (2014).

⁸⁰ This goes against the grain of much more usual "boundary work" carried on by actors (primarily, experts and politicians, but also plenty of activists) and analysts oriented to separate political and technological matters, spacetimes and processes (a clear example of this are Collins & Evans 2002,

But general positions on the matter, such as these, have been (Brown, 2015) and will be problematized here, for three reasons: the first, that it is only within a concrete setting (as Bijker himself 2006 reclaims) that one can decide whether the identification of technology and politics is strongly or weakly justified; the second, that what really matters is “what politics” and “what technologies, how, by whom”; and third, because much 15M activist work—as the quotes in the introduction to this thesis already suggest—had a teleo-technopolitical edge, that is, it explicitly aimed at framing and working technology and politics together. This requires not only to attend to the concrete cases of empirical technopolitics but also account for this normative-proactive aspect. Technopolitics did not merely happen but was thought and acted upon: there was not only a *de facto* technopolitics (being played out) but also a reflexive (being thought and debated over) and a deliberate technopolitics (in the sense of being worked for and, sometimes, decided upon through deliberative action and interaction⁸¹). That is clear in chapter 6, with regard to the digital platform Decidim.barcelona.

In spite of Mackenzie's and Bijker's calls to dissolve all boundaries, for exposition purposes, I maintain the distinction. From the viewpoint of the role of technologies in politics, I am interested in how STS insists on the heterogeneous material practices, involving humans and nonhumans, that bring about any political system. In this they clearly depart from most approaches coming from political science and political theory, which tend to share a human-only-focused (humanist) narrative, and, in many cases, an idealist tone too, which attends to the concepts and narratives of other theorists only. Differently, STS approaches usually attend both to non-humans and to materiality, questioning positions according to which “anyone can be an actor. Only a citizen can be a political actor” (Barber, 1984: 126). For instance, Mitchell (2011: 109) has suggested to “think of democracy not in terms of the history of an idea or the emergence of a social movement, but as the assembling of machines”. I try to essay these three possible approaches in the thesis.

From the viewpoint of the role of politics in technology, my narrative oscillates between the critical theory of technology position (Feenberg, 1999) and the constructivist one (Latour, 1987, 1992, 2002; Pickering, 1995, 2010). It presents

2008, but also 15M related processes). The separation has usually favored subsequent instrumentalist and de-politicizing positions: technologies are conceived as mere “tools”; experts are mere “technical truth tellers” (Foucault, 1984).

⁸¹ For the threefold “de facto”, reflexive, and deliberate, see Fisher (2007).

technologies as assemblages of means and ends, politically contentious and emergent in their becoming, and at various points re-situates the human in those processes in a posthumanist manner. This position goes primarily against the usual instrumentalist view of technology, in which the human appears as a self-conscious subject controlling a tool that is value-neutral and transparent to its well-defined goals. Beyond blurring the boundaries in a classical STS fashion, or evaluating this predicament with general techno-pessimist or techno-optimist evaluations, the key is to follow what concrete technopolitics have been aimed for, built and practiced, how, and by whom. This is what I would name as a “techno-critical” and “techno-alternative” position.

2.2.2.1. A STS framework for the politics of technology in projects within the 15M cycle

According to Papadopoulos, five positions can be found in STS for analyzing the politics of technoscience. I believe these five positions are useful to outline the politics of technology, and resemble the various models of democracy and politics we analyzed in the previous part of this chapter. According to Papadopoulos, a first position is a “formalist” view based on the political ontology of democratic liberalism, that recurs to a contractualist framework to assign (experts in) politics and (experts in) technology to concrete, well-demarcated places in sociotechnical processes. The crucial task is to find a normative framework for expertise, which draws new boundaries and assigns clear places to various, sometimes new, types of experts. This position is advocated by authors such as Collins and Evans (2008, 2010).

A second viewpoint portrayed by Papadopoulos, a “participatory” view approach to politics in technoscience, based on a republican⁸² political ontology, appeals to a potentiation of civil society and its presence in sociotechnical processes. According to Papadopoulos, its key lies in stressing the value of deliberation and the inclusion of the public, as advocated by authors such as Lengwiler (2008), Irwin and Michael (2003), or Wynne (2005).

Third, Papadopoulos distinguishes a “posthumanist assembly” view based on a governance political ontology (Latour 1993, 2004; Callon, 1987; Law, 2004; Mol, 2002), where there is no central political actor *a priori*. It stresses the productive relations between heterogeneous (human and nonhuman) actors and has a clear

⁸² Papadopoulos uses the term “communitarian” but, as I noticed when discussing modern political ontologies, communitarianism is a derivation from a broader republican view, which I believe is closer to the positions he describes.

and key anti-foundationalist character.

Fourth, Papadopoulos situates a “grounded” approach to the politics of technoscience, based on an antagonist ontology, which stresses the role of contentious politics in technoscience, and has situated experience and action as its key focus. Here he situates authors such as Donna Haraway (1997) or Andrew Feenberg (1999).

As a complement and an alternative to the first three positions (formalist, participatory, posthumanist assembly), which play within a “constituted” political order, he appeals to a fifth approach, a constituent politics of technoscience, tied to the creation of alternative forms of life⁸³, based on the constitution of “new socio-material realities” in relation to new languages and “skilled practices”. These bring about what Papadopoulos calls “alter-ontologies”, which I find a very valuable concept to think through some of the experimentations in democracy and technopolitics essayed during the 15M cycle⁸⁴.

TABLE 8. MODELS OF POLITICS OF TECHNOSCIENCE.

Politics	Key	Process	Political ontology
Formalist	Normative definitions of expertise	Contractualism	Democratic liberalism
Participatory	Deliberation and inclusion of the public	Invigoration of civil society	Communitarianism
Assembly	Anti-foundationalism	Relational productionism	Governance

⁸³ “Technologies as forms of life” is a formula first used by Winner (1986).

⁸⁴ To complement the mapping, I recur to his indirect synthesis of the central strength and weaknesses of the first four positions (Papadopoulos, 2011: 194): “Constituent politics in technoscience cannot but emerge out of the different accounts of politics already existing in STS. They draw from the formalist approach its democratic sensibility towards non-contributory experts, from participatory politics its bottom-up citizen perspective on science, from assembly politics the agency of nonhumans, and finally from grounded politics – of which constituent politics are obviously a direct continuation – the importance of a situated view of complex asymmetrical lifeworlds and the transversality of neglected experiences. At the same time constituent politics evolve from the limitations of these approaches: the neglect of the conflicts which underlie technoscientific controversies in the formalist approach; the reduction of public deliberation to the extent to which given institutions allow participatory politics; the ignorance towards radical divergences which do not comply with relational networks of governance in assembly politics; the reification of the experiences of marginalized actors in early notions of grounded politics.”

Grounded	Situated action	Contentious politics	Social and ecological antagonism
Constituent	Creation of new forms of life and ontologies	Socio-material production	Autonomist

Four of the five positions can be reconnected to the models I outlined earlier. The formalist, to the liberal representative ontology, the participatory, to the republican, the grounded to the antagonist, and the constituent ontology to the autonomist.

2.2.3. Between technoscience and a grammar of technopolitics

In order to dig further into the notion of technopolitics, I recur to Donna Haraway's (1997) threefold articulation of technoscience into “syntax”, “semantics”, and “pragmatics”. I believe that many aspects of 15M technopolitics can be grouped around these three axes⁸⁵. However, differently from Haraway, I do not take this threefold as defining an “anatomy of meanings” but rather as an “anatomy of practice”, an anatomy of the practice of technopolitical contention within the 15M cycle.

Within the rubric of “syntax” I primarily attend to two aspects of technopolitics within the 15M cycle: first, to the politics of (infra)structures⁸⁶, otherwise, to discourses and practices involved in the construction of infrastructures (f.i.: n-1 or Decidim.barcelona), second, to infrastructures for politics, otherwise, to the regimes of relationality, action and appropriation resulting from such infrastructures. Although these two aspects are intertwined, I focus on the former and leave the second (f.i., the analysis of affordances of social networks such as Facebook or n-1 as developed by Gil, 2012) for a later work.

Within the rubric of “semantics” I attend to the discourses generated by actors within the 15M cycle. Otherwise, I look into 15M cycle discourses on what democracy should be and how to get there.

Finally, within the rubric of “pragmatics” I look into the democratic and technopolitical practices deployed by 15M cycle actors. These intertwine, but can analytically be distinguished from, the previous two. Technopolitical practices frequently combine

⁸⁵ With the possible addition of a fourth (which may count as a specific subset under pragmatics): prosody.

⁸⁶ I use this formula as an abbreviation of “organizational structures and technological infrastructures”.

various infrastructures and can generate new, hybrid regimes of relationality. Perhaps more interestingly, the attention to both discourse and practice serves to frame a recurrent issue within the cycle: the relation between what people say and what they do beyond speech.

2.2.4. Technopolitics: a problematic conceptual genealogy

After briefly exploring useful STS insights into the relation of technology and politics, I will now briefly recount different takings on the concept of “technopolitics”. “Technopolitics” is a polysemic and problematic word. Its uses have diverged widely. Here I present only a very resumed synthesis of those uses. I can distinguish the key areas in the development of the notion that are relevant for understanding the various dimensions and projects of technopolitics within the 15M cycle: technological regimes, citizenship, democracy, communication, and contentious politics.

A key aspect covered by the concept is that of the construction of technologies and sociotechnical systems. The concept of “technopolitical regimes” (Hecht, 2009: 56-57) points to

“linked sets of individuals, engineering and institutional practices, technological artifacts, political programs, and institutional ideologies acting together to govern technological development and pursue technopolitics (a term that describes the strategic practice of designing or using technology to constitute, embody, or enact political goals)”⁸⁷.

In a similar way, Langdon Winner's (1986: 54) noticed that “in our time, techne has at last become politeia--our instruments are institutions in the making”. Taken as a whole, according to Winner, technologies amount to a “second constitution”, superimposed on the political-judicial one. As this technopolitical constitution emerges, new forms of citizenship may be required. Winner (1992: 335) has advanced these arguments calling for “forms of citizenship appropriate to this way of being”, stressing that “citizen deliberation and action ought to be encouraged” (ibid.). The potential transformations of democracy, as noticed by Stefano Rodotà (1997) may be deep. In his “Technopolitics: democracy and the new technologies of

⁸⁷ As suggested by Nahuis & Van Lente (2008), different STS approaches allow not only to explore technopolitics, but also to map technopolities, otherwise “social regimes” tied to technologies.

communication” he stresses the relevance of a crucial possibility opened by technopolitics: while both representative and traditional direct democracy are episodic, information and communication technologies open the possibility of a “continuous democracy”⁸⁸, in which “the voice of the citizenry can rise up at any time and from any place and take part in the daily political concert” (Rodotà, 1997: 4, translation is mine). He also quotes Berardi (1996: 116, translation is mine) affirming how “the network is not an instrument of democracy (it may well be so, but in an absolutely marginal way). The network is rather the paradigm of a model of a new democracy, a democracy without references to the center”. According to Rodotà democracy may become “electronics plus participation”⁸⁹. Nevertheless, the key innovation resides not in the technologies but in the collective perception of the process, the multiplicity of technical instruments and their integration, all of them converging and nurturing a digital logic that pervades politics: this is what Rodotà understands by the generic term “technopolitics”.

In a similar way, Pierre Lévy (1997: 66) noticed that “the technopolitical problem of democracy in cyberspace is to provide a community with the means to develop a collective voice without the need for representation”. He described, with some techno-utopian tones, some key performances of what he calls “real time democracy” in cyberspace, where

“together citizens would elaborate a diverse political landscape that was not pre-constrained by the gaping molar separation among different parties. The political identity of the citizens would be defined by their contributions to the construction of a political landscape that was perpetually in flux and by their support for various problems (to which they give priority), positions (to which they would adhere), and arguments (which they would in turn make use of). In this way, everyone would have a completely unique political identity and role, distinct from any other individual, coupled with the possibility of working with others having similar or complementary positions on a given subject, at a given moment.”

At the turn of the millennium, Douglas Kellner (2001: 182) generically defined technopolitics as “the use of new technologies such as computers and the Internet to

⁸⁸ Something similar to what, in a positive light, Lévy calls “real time democracy”, and others have called “real-time politics”, with a negative emphasis on surveillance (Agre, 2002).

⁸⁹ The formula echoes Lenin’s presentation of communism as “Soviet power plus electrification”.

advance political goals”⁹⁰. He noticed that “to some extent, politics in the modern era has always been mediated by technology [...] What is new about computer and information-technology-mediated politics is that information can be instantly communicated to large numbers of individuals throughout the world who are connected via computer networks”. He stressed their possibilities for the empowerment of excluded voices and to nurture radical democracy, characterized by a strong and inclusive participation⁹¹. To him, it is key to develop a “radical democratic media politics” which includes a critique and a democratization of, as well as the development of alternatives to, the current media system, both public and private⁹², to “democratise computers and information” (Kellner, 1999).

In a similar line, technopolitics has been associated, especially since the 2000s, with contentious politics. In his text “Hacklabs, the collective assemblage of technopolitics as a social reality”, Xabier Barandiaran (2003), a hacktivist who participated in Internet struggles heading to 15M, 15M itself, and later came to be coordinator of the Decidim project (see chapter 6) suggests hacklabs, hackmeetings and the hacker attitude as a

“a way of (collectively) experimenting the limits of the codes and machines that surround us, in order to re-appropriate their possible and sociopolitically relevant uses; inserting them in the autonomous social processes where we situate our practices (*okupied* and self-managed social centers and grassroots social movements)”.

I take this as a form of what I would define as “technopolitical autonomy”, a collective (grassroots) reappropriation and production of technologies and politics⁹³. This view

⁹⁰ He added “the use of computer-mediated technology for technopolitics, however, opens new terrains of political struggle for voices and groups excluded from the mainstream media and thus increases potential for intervention by oppositional groups, potentially expanding the scope of democratization.”

⁹¹ According to him, radical democracy “defines democracy in terms of strong participation, including that of individuals and groups previously excluded, which requires both access to information and to the media of debate and discussion, and thus makes possible an expansion of the terrain and substance of democratic participation” (Kellner, 1999: 102).

⁹² Kellner’s insistence on radical democracy, and perhaps more importantly, on media politics, anticipates many issues to be discussed under the umbrella of 15M’s technopolitics, especially on chapter 4.

⁹³ While for “technological autonomy” the key resides on generating one’s own technologies according to one’s own rules, “technopolitical autonomy” involves political forms as well technological ones.

was brought to 15M⁹⁴.

Already in the 2011 cycle of contention, in their analysis of the 15M movement, Toret et al. (2013: 20, translation is mine) defined technopolitics as “the tactic and strategic use of digital tools for collective organization, communication, and action [...] The capacity of connected multitudes, of networked brains and bodies, to created and self-modulate collective action”. Like Barandiaran’s, this definition is tied to an autonomist and antagonist approach to democracy, but differently from the former’s approach, this time technopolitics goes beyond the alternative scene of occupied centers to open itself to the social majorities that took part in 15M.

2.2.4.1. Technopolitics resumed

As this resume illustrates, technopolitics has been constructed differently across time and positions. In the empirical chapters I try to characterize the shifting shapes that it took in practice, within the 15M cycle. When looking at it, I build upon the discussions here:

- 1-I cross, rethink, and look at the multidirectional entanglements between, abolish boundaries between, or look at the co-production of politics and technology (each of these options actually imply a different conception of technopolitics);
- 2-I attend to humans and nonhumans;
- 3-I look at its syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

2.3. Sociology: from social movements to contentious technopolitics

As I noticed in the introduction, the three key matters of concern of this thesis are democracy, technopolitics, and the 15M cycle. The 15M movement was the central event in the cycle attended in this study. Furthermore, social movement literature provides key tools for understanding the cycle itself. In this part I dig into social movement and contentious politics literature (as well as media theory, in a less intensive way) to provide a conceptual framework to understand the 15M cycle, as well as some of the sociopolitical transformations (in this case, in movements and contentious politics) it has brought about. In order to do so, I first present key theories on social movements and then see how recent “networked movements”

⁹⁴ The tandem of occupied and self-managed social centers plus hacktivists will be relevant for the emergence of the movement, especially in Madrid. They were also behind the construction and later diffusion of relevant 15M practices and platforms such as n-1, among many others (for a synthesis, Alcazan et al., 2012).

may be breaking with some of what were considered their basic tenets. I select key social movement elements (according to the social movement literature) that may be suffering a transformation in networked social movements such as the 15M movement: collective identity, frames, and organization. These will serve me to analyze the movement in chapter 4. I then discuss in detail the notion of "networked multitude", which I find valuable to understand 15M, and see how it connects with those systemic changes in networked social movements. In relation to it, I propose a complex "technopolitical approach" to 15M, which involves looking at syntax (infrastructures), semantics (discourses), pragmatics (practices), and multi-layered assemblages involving digital and physical spaces. I suggest the need of conceiving 15M as a "networked movement of the squares", which may be classified as an anarchopopulist or citizenist (to use Gerbaudo's 2016 formulation) within the wider genre of networked movements. Perhaps more crucially, I believe the cycle it inaugurated requires to move from earlier notions of "contentious politics" to that of "contentious technopolitics", in which technological contention appears indistinguishable from political contention: technology becomes political, politics, technological.

2.3.1. The "classical view" of social movements

In order to clarify key aspects of the social movement form, it is worth to start with Mario Diani (1992: 13) descriptive definition, according to which "a social movement is a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity".

According Charles Tilly (2004: 3-4), social movements emerged in the second half of the XVIIIth century, as an interactive synthesis of three pre-existing forms of political action: campaigns, repertoires, and displays of WUNC (worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment)⁹⁵.

⁹⁵ The full passage clarifies: "1. a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities (let us call it a campaign); 2. employment of combinations from among the following forms of political action: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in public media, and pamphleteering (call the variable ensembles of performances the social movement repertoire); 3. participants' concerted public representations of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies (call them WUNC displays)". Although Tilly's dating of the origin is based on this definition, the path he outlines has a broader acceptance, and thereby is somehow independent from it. WUNC stands for "worthiness: sober demeanor; neat clothing; presence of clergy, dignitaries, and mothers with children; unity: matching badges, headbands, banners, or costumes; marching in ranks; singing and chanting; numbers: headcounts,

A campaign goes beyond any single event and combines different elements ranging from petitions to demonstrations. It also goes beyond the actors involved⁹⁶. It is in the interaction between the three mentioned elements that a social movement emerges. Tilly goes on to characterize movements as contentious politics since

“they emerged as a form of contentious politics—contentious in the sense that social movements involve collective making of claims that, if realized, would conflict with someone else's interests, politics in the sense that governments of one sort or another figure somehow in the claim making, whether as claimants, objects of claims, allies of the objects, or monitors of the contention” (Tilly 2004: 3, from McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001).

On this last respect, movements involve “three parties: a group of self-designated claimants, some object(s) of claims, and a public of some kind”. On top of that, Tilly (2004: 12) clarifies that “social movements combine three kinds of claims: program, identity, and standing”⁹⁷. Each of them, and their salience, vary from one actor, phase, or social movement, to another. They have varied historically, along with their interactive ensemble, the movement form.

2.3.2. Collective action from resource mobilization theory to contentious politics

2.3.2.1. Resource mobilization theory, political process and repertoires

As a social form, social movements are a paradigmatic case of collective action. Opposed to collective behavior, which does not imply any form of rationality, normativity or even intentionality, or collective/social choice, which results from the

signatures on petitions, messages from constituents, filling streets; commitment: braving bad weather; visible participation by the old and handicapped; resistance to repression; ostentatious, sacrifice, subscription, and/or benefaction” (Tilly 2004: 4).

⁹⁶ Tilly (2004: 6-7) has noticed that “analysts often confuse a movement's collective action with the organizations and networks that support the action, or even consider the organizations and networks to constitute the movement”. Following Touraine and Melucci, he criticized how this implies to take “the movement” as a single unitary actor, thus obscuring both a) the incessant jockeying and realignment that always go on within social movements and b) the interaction among activists, constituents, targets, authorities, allies, rivals, enemies, and audiences that makes up the changing texture of social movements.”

⁹⁷ He specifies that “program claims involve stated support for or opposition to actual or proposed actions by the objects of movement claims. Identity claims consist of assertions that “we”-the claimants-constitute a unified force to be reckoned with. WUNC (worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment) performances backup identity claims. Standing claims assert ties and similarities to other political actors, for example excluded minorities, properly constituted citizens' groups, or loyal supporters of the regime. They sometimes concern the standing of other political actors, for example in calls for expulsion of immigrants or their exclusion from citizenship”.

aggregation of choices by rational actors, collective action appears as “the effort to produce collective goods” (Tilly 1978: 27). A long XXth century social movement tradition opened by Mancur Olson (1965) sees a problem with this: in a group large enough, people can benefit from the result of the effort while not contributing to it, that is, actors in the group can “free ride”. According to the work of Olson, to free ride is rational for actors as the collective effort may not succeed, and others may be not contributing. If everyone is a selfish, calculating actor, how is it that collective action and goods actually exist? If social movements are forms of collective action, as Olson suggests, how are they possible? Olson provides three answers: a) Coercion and group pressure, b) the abundance of some actors of certain goods, which would neutralize the calculus, and c) “selective incentives”⁹⁸, what actors' leading the pursue of the collective good would enjoy on top of the collective good itself.

Oberschall (1973) stressed the availability and mobilization of resources as the key factor behind collective action⁹⁹. McCarthy and Zald (1977: 1217–1218) defined movements as “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society”. According to them, leading activists are entrepreneurs that create social movement organizations that answer to this “demand”, not unlike companies do with demands in the economic realm. They are the suppliers, and collective action is the product for which consumers are willing to pay¹⁰⁰. Resources are “anything from material resources—jobs, incomes, savings, and the right to material goods and services—to non-material resources—authority, moral commitment, trust, friendship, skills, habits of industry” (Oberschall, 1973: 28).

This is the core of Resource Mobilization Theory. Leaders and strong organizations emerge as resource mobilizers. In order to mobilize anyone else into collective action, they need to mobilize resources first.

As a complement to the RMT, and particularly in the 1980s (McAdam, 1982), the

⁹⁸ When some suggest that these incentives are personal joy derive of some aspect of collective action, there is a clear stretch of the image of the selfish, interested individual. Others suggested that some sort of collective authority (a government) is the most frequent factor contributing to override this problem.

⁹⁹ Unlike collective behavior positions, resource mobilization is able to account for the usual emergence of movements in times of economic growth and political freedom: as opportunities, resources and benefits increase, and constraints and costs diminish, collective action increases.

¹⁰⁰ McCarthy and Zald describe the emergence of “social movement industries” and a “social movement sector”, in which different social movement organizations mobilize and usually compete for resources (human and material), trying to bring non-adherents to the movement and to their organization, to survive in time, to increase their power, etc.

“political process” (PP) approach emerged. One of its key tenets is the notion of “political opportunity structures” proposed by Peter K. Eisinger, “such factors as the nature of the chief executive, the mode of aldermatic election, the distribution of social skills and status, and the degree of social disintegration [...] the climate of government responsiveness and the level of community resources” (Eisinger, 1973: 11). Eisinger anticipates that protests will be higher in polities with a combination of opportunities and constraints, decreasing if the polity is or becomes too closed or too open to participation: the former represses social movements, the latter suppresses the need of them.

Charles Tilly (1995: 26) has proposed the notion of repertoires of contention to refer to “a limited set of routines that are learned, shared and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice. This is another relevant element to both understand movements and appreciate changes in their forms. Repertoires are learned cultural creations, but they do not descend from abstract philosophy or take shape as a result of political propaganda: they emerge from struggle”. The idea is that, in movements and social struggles, people begin to, and thereby learn to, articulate discourses, demonstrate, stage parades, sign petitions, use social media for campaigning, etc. There are concrete repertoires available at a concrete historical period, which both enable and constrain the choices of protesters.

2.3.2.2. *Frames*

Since the mid-80s, a crucial addition to the RMT and PP traditions was that of “framing”¹⁰¹, the contentious and active process of meaning making by actors in and around social movements. I use this notion (and others associated to it, with modifications such as those noticed below) when looking at 15M cycle actors’ discourses. According to Benford & Snow (2000: 614), framing “implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction”. They “simplifying and condensing aspects of the world out there” (2000: 614), and orient action, “mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (1988: 198). Perhaps narrowing down the notion excessively, they conclude that they are “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and

¹⁰¹ Up to that point, these issues had been “discussed descriptively and statically rather than analytically and dynamically [...] or they were dismissed as being largely irrelevant to the development of social movements, as in the early resource mobilization literature” (Benford & Snow, 2000: 613). They were subsumed under the “ideology” label. Ideology serves as “constraint and resource” for framing and collective action frames, which in turn renew, innovate upon, or go against it (Benford & Snow, 1992, Benford, 2000).

legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization (SMO)” (ibid.).

Snow & Benford (1988)¹⁰² distinguish three “core framing tasks”: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational. Diagnostic framing consists in the identification and attribution of problems and responsibilities. Prognostic framing is the development of potential solutions or plans for action. Motivational framing tries to foster “consensus mobilization” and “action mobilization” (Klandermans, 1984), otherwise, to get the agreement of as many people as possible and convince them to act. In my analysis, I break down “prognostic framing” (which is, I believe, a misnomer, since prognostic is a merely anticipatory statement) into two different discursive functions: the normative/ideal, that speaks of an ideal state of things, the “what” to be achieved in collective action, and the prescriptive/practice one, that turns around how to get to such a state, and, more broadly, concerns the “what to do”.

Frames sometimes connect to or build up into “master-frames” (such as those around “rights”, “choice”, or “democracy”), frames that stand out for their “broad interpretive scope, inclusivity, flexibility, and cultural resonance” (Benford & Snow, 2000: 619).

Any framing process faces processes of counter-framing (Benford, 1987), from outside and from within what is framed as “the movement”. These disputes are multi-actor, from activists to mass media, governments or general citizens.

2.3.2.3. Cycles of contention

Another crucial notion for my analysis generated within the RMT and PP tradition, particularly in the work of Tarrow (1989, 1994, 1995), is that of cycles of contention. A cycle of contention is a period of heightened contention and protest, in which “information flows more rapidly, political attention heightens, and interactions amongst groups of challengers and between them and authorities increase in frequency and intensity” (Tarrow, 1994: 146).

Frames are what the cycle “is about”, the cycle is the case-by-case becoming of the frames. According to Tarrow (1994), four reasons define the end of a cycle: exhaustion, institutionalization, factionalism, and repression or social control. According to Snow & Benford (1992) loss of resonance of master frames too.

¹⁰² They vary in problem identification and direction-locus of attribution, flexibility and rigidity, inclusivity and exclusivity, interpretive scope and influence, and resonance. Resonance is a particularly interesting concept, since according to Benford & Snow depends on credibility and salience.

2.3.2.4. *Contentious politics: from social movements to democratization*

An even more crucial concept for my analysis is that of contentious politics. Since the 1990s, authors such as by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly have joined together in a research agenda devoted to systematize and analyze a variety of phenomena usually studied separately, such as revolutions, strikes, demonstrations, social movements, wars, democratization, and more. Grouping them under the label of “contentious politics”, these authors refer to “episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants” (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001: 5)¹⁰³. In one sentence, this new agenda looks for the “explanation of contentious politics by identifying crucial mechanisms and processes¹⁰⁴ within and across episodes” (idem, 84). Interestingly, they call to connect the study of social movements with that of other political processes (Tilly, 2004). They also suggest to look for their general patterns and analogies, rather than for causal mechanisms. For the present work, it is the attention to processes of democratization and their relation to movements that holds more promise. As I mentioned in the part 1 of this theoretical framework, the literature on democratization dismissed social movements until fairly recently, and the same did social movement theory with democratization processes.

Crucially, though, I believe it is necessary to open up the concept of contentious politics and that of cycle of contention to hold more than traditional, discontinuous, movement and WUNC displays. Contention and construction are at the core of all the projects that I analyze in the empirical chapters. Even when 15M activists went on to form political parties (such as the X Party, analyzed on chapter 5) or new institutional infrastructures (such as Decidim.barcelona, analyzed on chapter 6),

¹⁰³ The first trait stands for its political character, the second, for its contentiousness. Since these processes must be episodic, regular and well-established political processes are excluded, and since they must be public, organizations such as companies, churches or clubs are discarded as well. The generality of the definition fosters the extension of the content and thereby the possibilities for finding differences, similarities, connections and other relations among a variety of political forms.

¹⁰⁴ Among the mechanisms they include: a) collective attribution of threat and opportunity, which “involves (a) invention or importation and (b) diffusion of a shared definition concerning alterations in the likely consequences of possible actions (or, for that matter, failures to act) undertaken by some political actor” (95); social appropriation, the “active appropriation of sites for mobilization” (44); brokerage “the linking of two or more previously unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with one another and/or with yet other sites” (26); certification and decertification, the “validation of actors, their performances, and their claims by external authorities” (121); category formation, “a set of sites that share a boundary distinguishing all of them from and relating all of them to at least one set of sites visibly excluded by the boundary” (143).

many of the core people, discourses, practices, and political enemies were the same. These initiatives clearly composed a “cycle”, which I have labelled as “the 15M cycle”. Dividing it by declaring an “institutionalization” break implies to cut with an analytical sword the Gordian knot of an entangled and shifting, contentious and constructive, becoming. What I call “the 15M cycle” of contentious and technopolitical reassembling of democracy in Spain is more complex than a “movement and its impacts” (as framed by Gerbaudo, 2016, and Monterde, 2015), it is a transforming but continuous process that cuts across the divisions between civil society and State, movements and institutions, individual and collective, as well as between different projects and initiatives (f.i.: 15M, the X party, or the Offices of innovation in Democracy in Madrid and Barcelona) always mutating and bringing different problems and possibilities. In the Anglo-Saxon model (Goldstone, 2001), the strategy (and the aim) of movements is usually to change minds and mobilize civil society to press institutions to adopt their demands, thereby adapting to, and adopting more or less unchanged, institutions as they are. Instead, in the 15M cycle we see a wish, from the early 15M period, to remake those institutions, sometimes, from their constitutional ground up¹⁰⁵, when not to build others as alternatives.

2.3.3. Old and new social movements

As a movement, 15M has exhibited original features. As a reference for comparison, I resume here some aspects of an earlier genre of movements: new social movements. In the late 1970s and 1980s, authors such as Touraine (1981) and Melucci (1980) used the later widespread formula “new social movements” for labelling movements such as the student, ecologist, indigenous, feminist, LGBT, or hippie, which, since the 60s, were not articulated in and around economic narratives and goals nor around the subject-figures of the worker and the factory, in the traditional Marxist fashion, but rather in and around cultural narratives and goals, a variety of identities (gender, race, ethnicity, age, etc.) and spheres (media, culture, knowledge, etc.). These shifts were related to the progressive decline of (already a century old) mass class parties and the rise of other party formats such as the electoralist “catch-all” (already in the 60s), and the movement-parties (particularly, from the 80s onwards), which I analyzed in the “political section” of this theoretical

¹⁰⁵ This radicality helps to differentiate 15M projects, and even its already milder and institutionalized offshoots (such as Podemos or the local candidacies) from other examples of the so called “new politics” after 15M, such as the softly reformist, liberal party Ciudadanos.

framework.

Struggles around “identity”, which became common at the time, nurtured a strand of studies based on Melucci's central notion: “collective identity”.

2.3.3.1. *New social movements and collective identity*¹⁰⁶

In conceptual terms, a key contribution from the “new social movements” tradition to the social movement literature, was to open an alternative paradigm to the “strategic” or RMT one¹⁰⁷: the NSM and collective identity paradigm¹⁰⁸ (Cohen 1985). Influenced by Touraine, Alberto Melucci (1988, 1995, 1996) was the main proponent of the “collective identity” concept. Melucci (1996: 63-66) suggested that identity, as a choice of what to be, implies an “incalculable” that outflanks Olson's liberal logic of calculation in collective action: it becomes the very condition for any cost-benefit analysis. The new social movements tradition stressed dimensions of social movements under-attended by the Anglo-Saxon tradition: culture, emotions, informal relationships, and, identity. Identity was analyzed from the micro to the macro level (Flesher Fominaya, 2010; Opp, 2009; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Snow, 2001). He provided a system- and network-friendly definition of collective identity by presenting it as “an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level) and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place” (Melucci, 1995: 44–45).

Criticisms have been raised, suggesting that the concept has been ‘overextended’ and ‘forced to do too much analytically’ (Polletta & Jasper, 2001: 284–285). The result would have been a ‘slippery concept’ (Flesher Fominaya, 2010: 394), merely “orienting”, giving heuristic value rather than causal or “empirical informativeness” to Melucci's work (Opp, 2009). Later I comment upon my rethinking of this notion in relation to ICTs and 15M (Monterde et al., 2015).

2.3.4. **Views of networks in the social movement literature**

Work on various types of networks has been frequent within the RMT tradition, revealing the relevance of friends' networks (Snow et al. 1980, McAdam 1982) or segregated communities and “catnets” (or category based networks) in cases such

¹⁰⁶ Most of our elaboration on collective identity here is based on a paper that we co-authored (Monterde et al., 2015).

¹⁰⁷ It also influenced by research on frames (Benford & Snow, 2000).

¹⁰⁸ Voices coming from the Anglo-Saxon tradition have tried to make of it just another factor in individuals' calculations, from a RAT viewpoint (Opp, 2009), while others merged it with frame theory (Benford & Snow, 2000 for a synthesis).

as the civil rights movement (Tilly, 1979). Their “network argument” (Crossley, 2002) went against Durkheimian styled assertions that root social movements in a state of social atomization and anomie. Crossley (2002: 97) goes on to suggest that networks are both at the origin, but also at the end, of movements, and interpret previous literature as suggesting that “movements are networks”.

2.3.5. Recent debates on social movement studies: the centrality of ICTs, new media, and technopolitical practices

In the last decade, deep innovations, challenges, or revisions in social movement practice and theory have taken place. The trend has accelerated since 2011. A crucial development in this period has been the rise to popularity of the internet in the 1990s, a plethora of cultural practices associated to it, and the correlative rise of the “network metaphor” to social prominence.

For my purposes, a key impact was a modulation of the “social movements” formula. Jeffrey Juris (2004) defined the “global justice movements” of the 2000s as “networked social movements”, a formula that has spread (Castells 2012). More recently, Bennett & Segerberg (2012, 2013) have grouped emerging forms of collective action as “digitally networked activism”. Toret et al. (2015) and, especially, Monterde (2015) have used the expression network-movement to stress the relevance of the “network”, putting it on the same foot with the “movement”. For a variety of reasons¹⁰⁹, obvious in the empirical chapters, recent movements are “sociotechnical”.

But the number of changes brought to social movement theory by ICTs, networks and the sociotechnical practices associated to them have gone much further than the general label: different authors analysing movements in the last fifteen years have found and debated new logics of action and organization (Juris 2004, 2008; Bennett & Segerberg 2012, 2013), framing (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013), relationality (McDonald 2002), identity (McDonald, 2002; Monterde et al. 2015), as well as the previous notion of “network” in social movement theory. I touch upon each of these in turn, to outline some of the differential characteristics that seem to be associated with networked social movements, such as 15M, which may be stretching previous forms.

¹⁰⁹ Pervasiveness of techniques and technologies, to the point where they appear as ever-present nodes in every collective action network; second, their presence in the narratives, symbols and imaginaries of these movements, shared many collectives, protests and projects—from anonymous to demo4.0.; third, the relevance of advanced forms and logics of networking (Juris 2008)

2.3.5.1. The new meaning of “networks”

A key difference the meaning of “networks” in earlier movements and XXIst century ones has to do with the rise of “networks” to social prominence as a technological reality (the Internet), as an epoch tied to it (Castells 1996, 1997, 1998, 2001; Lessig, 2002; Sassen, 2002), as well as an onto-epistemic transcendental (Newman, 2010)¹¹⁰. Related to these, there has been the rise to prominence of “network approaches”, of which I can distinguish two key ones: the “formal” (or syntax-centered) approach epitomized in network science and the “practical” (or pragmatics-centered) one deployed in actor network theory.

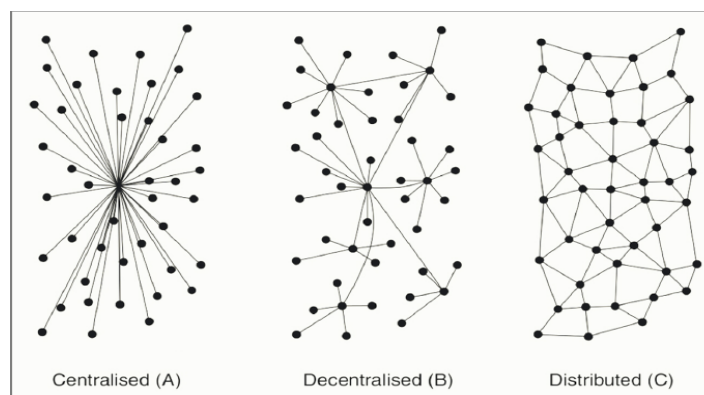


FIGURE 1. TYPES OF NETWORKS. SOURCE: BARAN (1964)

The formal is the preeminent one in the literature in network science (Barabási 2002; Newman, 2010). It puts the focus on the “net”, that is, on the “shape” or “form” of concrete objects or phenomena¹¹¹. This approach goes back to the early roots of network science in Leonhard Euler's graph theory, and is primarily applied to structures and organization. The image below resumes three main types of networks classically distinguished by Baran (1964)¹¹²: centralized (or mono-centric), decentralized (or polycentric), and distributed (or a-centric). It also synthesizes some basic aspects of many communication networks today. A second formulation of the

¹¹⁰ An example of this is Barabási's (2002: 16): “Computers linked by phone lines, molecules in our body linked by biochemical reactions, companies and consumers linked by trade, nerve cells connected by axons, islands connected by bridge...Whatever the identity and the nature of the nodes and links, for a mathematician they form the same animal: a graph or a network”.

¹¹¹ As indicated by Juris (2008: 316, ff 22), this emphasis on networks as forms and technologies has been subjected to different criticisms, for giving a “sense of rigidity, order and of structure” instead of a “sense of unevenness of the fabric and the fissures, fractures and gaps that it contains and forms” (Barry 2001: 15), or for excessively underlining digital relations, with less or little regard for embodied ones (McDonald 2006).

¹¹² The relevance of this distinction lies in the fact that this was one of the first strong argumentations for the ideal architecture of what later became the internet.

“network approach” comes from STS. Latour (2005: 132) suggests a double difference to rethink the network metaphor: first, an inversion of elements, to think of work-nets, in order “to see the labor that goes on in laying down net-works”; second, to think of actor-network as a method to study things that may not have a network shape¹¹³. In a similar direction, Thacker (2004) has contraposed an “Eulerian”, geometric, structural, static view of “networks”, to a “Bergsonian”, temporal, fluid, living view.

Something similar to those two views can be found in social movement studies. From an anthropological viewpoint, Juris (2008: 316) has essayed a critical, practice oriented and complex reading of the network metaphor. In a rounded formula on the triple presence of networks in XXIst century networked movements, he affirms that “anti-corporate globalization movements involve an increasing confluence among network technologies, organizational forms, and political norms, mediated by concrete networking practices and micropolitical struggles” (Juris 2008: 2)¹¹⁴. On the other hand, Bennett & Segerberg (2012) outline what I may call social network science approach¹¹⁵ which attends to net forms on social movements, usually tied to social media. I try to combine those two approaches, pragmatics/practices (which tend to cover the ANT or Juris' approach) as well as syntax/infrastructures (which covers the social networks science approach).

As I show in the empirical chapters, the advance of sociotechnical networks towards the core of sociopolitical realities bring about transformations in these forms (and vice versa). In the analysis of the 15M cycle I look at cases ranging from social movements to State institutions.

2.3.5.2. Transformations of communication, societies and politics

Different analyses have shown the centrality of information and communication technologies and networks in politics and, specifically, contemporary contentious politics. Bruce Bimber (2003: 8) has stressed the relevance of information (its costs, how it is produced, circulated and distributed), more than “communication” or “technology” as such¹¹⁶, for democracy and politics more broadly. According to him,

¹¹³ Latour notices how a building or a concert can be described in actor-network ways without having a network-form at all, and vice versa, a network shaped circuit, object or the like may be described in other ways than as a network.

¹¹⁴ Juris also speaks of the “network metaphor” but without unfolding the conceptual possibilities of the expression.

¹¹⁵ A combination of sociology, media studies, and network science,

¹¹⁶ He suggests information regimes and revolutions have been key for the constitution of different political periods in the US. He states the relation as follows: “A set of technological changes becomes

the communication and organization of information has shaped modern politics in the US, which he divides in four regimes punctuated by information revolutions. Each regime is defined by the relations between information (f.i.: costs), organizations (f.i.: hierarchies), and democratic structure (f.i.: political actors and institutions). The revolutions from one into another have been marked by regime disruption resulting from “technological developments, institutional change, or economic outcomes”, which result in new opportunities to communicate politically and organize collective action (Bimber 2003: 18). He situates several information revolutions in the US polity that broadly align with Manin's reconstruction of periods of representative government: a) in the 1820s and 30s, an information revolution based on the rise of newspapers and postal services gave way to a national system of political information and prepared the emergence of (notable) parties; b) from the 1880s to the 1910s, coinciding with the industrial revolution, there was an increase in the number of political actors and information, increasing the costs of processing it, which favored the constitution of interests groups (as Bimber suggests) but also, and more crucially (I may add) bureaucratic mass parties; c) from the 1950s to the 1970s, tv broadcasting can be tied to the emergence of catch all parties, while the fragmentation of information (f.i.: via cable tv) was related to pluralism and group-based politics and (I may suggest) new social movements; finally, d) from the 1990s to the present, the internet revolution, Bimber suggests, the internet information regime will contribute to the emergence of post-bureaucratic organizations, a tendency that can be found in the case of social movements and NGOs (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) or, in chapters 5 and 6, in political parties such as the X Party or even municipal institutions such as Decidim.barcelona.

Dispelling any trace of determinism, I coincide with Bimber that information conditions are only a factor among others bringing about these changes, and that the multiplication of information has not coincided with an increase in traditional political engagement but, rather, as I show in chapter 3, with a crisis of democracy, particularly, in its representative form. Nevertheless, I believe it is useful to deploy Bimber's schema on information regimes and revolutions as a complement to

revolutionary when new opportunities or constraints associated with political intermediation make possible altered distributions of power. These new capacities and possibilities are a function of the political and social context in which technology evolves” (Bimber, 2003: 22). The shifts would have depended not simply on technologies, but on wider socio-economic processes such as the industrial revolution; technologies change frequently, without necessarily bringing about changes in these regimes.

Manin's schema of types of representative government. In the concrete area of contentious politics, the centrality of information and communication is remarkable. Much depends on the ability of activists to generate and process information, as well as to communicate with various publics. From Kellner's technopolitics to Bennett & Segerberg's connective action and digitally networked activism (which I analyze below), this is increasingly clear.

According to Kellner (1999), modern politics has always been technologically mediated. To him, the difference of recent technopolitics and earlier forms of activism resides in the possibilities afforded by the web for things such as increased multimedia interactivity, archived discussion, and, more importantly, for moving from a one-to-many broadcasting model of communication, which was also initially synchronous¹¹⁷, centralized, controlled by the State or big corporations, and usually reflecting elites' views (be those of the owners, managers or sponsors), towards a "computer-mediated communication [that] is highly decentralized and makes possible many-to-many communication" (Kellner, 1999: 103). Under this communication model, anyone can circulate messages to many people, who can then resend them, multi-directionally, without the necessary filtering of big corporations or the State. This undermines their power, and means "political communication is more decentered and varied in its origins, scope, and effects" (ibid.), according to Kellner. As shown in chapters 4 and 6, many of these possibilities will depend on factors such as the ownership, governance and affordances of the infrastructures on which such processes take place.

Manuel Castells (2009a) has built upon this intuition about the many-to-many communicative structure enabled by the internet and, later, social media. This generates a phenomenon he defines as mass self-communication: "mass communication because it can potentially reach a global audience [...] it is self-communication because the production of the message is self-generated, the definition of the potential receiver(s) is self-directed, and the retrieval of specific messages or content from the World Wide Web and electronic communication networks is self-selected" (55). Although I find value in Castells' notion of mass self-communication, after Hardt and Negri's critique to the notion of the masses, and in the face of the structure of communicative networks in 15M that we have analyzed before (Toret et al. 2015, Monterde et al. 2015) and analyze again in chapter 4, I

¹¹⁷ Until tape- and video-recording were developed.

prefer the notion of “multitudinous self-communication” as an alternative way to think the complexity of communication in 15M and beyond. I agree with Castells (2009: 55) that the central novelty of contemporary communication systems in the interaction and combination of interpersonal, mass, and mass self-communication.

Andrew Chadwick (2013: 4) has developed the idea of the combination of communication models with his notion of the “hybrid media system”, that is “built upon interactions among older and newer media logics—where logics are defined as technologies, genres, norms, behaviors, and organizational forms—in the reflexively connected fields of media and politics”¹¹⁸. Media logics are “co-created by media, political actors, and publics” (20). Hybrid media systems are ensembles exhibiting various media logics (Dahlgren, 2009), where any media can be better understood in relation to the rest. The patterns of these interactions are complex, field and case specific, and empower or disempower various actors in different ways at different times, in relation to shifting media practices¹¹⁹ and struggles. Chadwick stresses the continuing predominance of powerful actors, such as media corporations or political parties, which try to both adapt to and co-opt new media logics and actors. In this sense, studies (Dahlgren, 2009) have shown how the recent becoming of mass media has ambiguous relations with democracy.

In terms of my narrative of movements, technologies, and democracy, a key question at stake is whether these dynamics, steered by new actors, could pose a challenge to the representative regime in government and media under audience democracy. Whether a new form of representative government or a rather a new form of networked democracy, with both new possibilities and new limits, could be emerging.

¹¹⁸ Media logics as “the imperatives that shape the particular attributes and ways of doing things within given media and even within specific genres [...] pertains to the procedures of selection, form, tempo, informational density, aesthetics, contents, modes of address, and production schedules” (Dahlgren, 2009: 52).

¹¹⁹ According to Couldry (2012: 37, emphasis in the original): “A practice approach starts not with media texts or media institutions but from media-related practice in all its looseness and openness. It asks quite simply: what are people (individuals, groups, institutions) doing in relation to media across a whole range of situations and contexts? How is people’s media-related practice related, in turn, to their wider agency?”.

TABLE 9. PARTIES, MOVEMENTS, STATE, COMMUNICATION.

	PARTY GOVERNMENT 1850s-1960s	C	AUDIENCE DEMOCRACY 1970s-2000s	C	NETWORKED DEMOCRACY 2010s
Types of Party	Mass Parties: class mass; Leninist; pluralist nationalist...		Electoralist parties: personalist; catch-all party; movement party		?
Types of movements	Worker's & civil rights movements		New social movements: ecologist, feminist, indigenous		?
Types of State	Bureaucratic representative		Neoliberal representative vs Social-democratic		?
Relations Society-Parties-State	Party penetration of society and the political system		Media politics and society, personalism		?
Information & communication technologies	Press, Radio		TV		Internet, social media
Model and practices of communication	Mass communication One to many		Mass communication One to many		Multitudinous self-communication Many to many One to many Peer to peer

2.3.5.3. Distinguishing 15M technopolitics from cyberactivism and clicktivism

The recent international wave can only be understood in relation to social media and the internet. A strand of heated debates around movements in the last ten years had to do with the relevance, role and results of the deployment of social media (Sullivan, 2009; Ghonim, 2012; Morozov, 2011; Gladwell, 2010; White, 2010). Some positions not only relativize the role of TICs, but frequently reduce most internet related activism to “clicktivism”, further despised as “slacktivism” (Morozov, 2009).

Nevertheless, the literature attributing a remarkable relevance to social media in movements such as 15M and Occupy is abundant (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 2013; Gerbaudo, 2012, 2016; Toret et al., 2015; Monterde, 2015) and includes those that suggest negative effects (Zuckerman, 2014). Rather than reconstructing in detail debates around the relevance of social media in movements such as 15M, today difficult to doubt, in the following sections I dig into some of the debates around their types, roles (first) and their results (second).

The generic category of “digitally networked activism” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 2013) includes internet-supported and internet-based activism (Vegh, 2003). 15M movement’s technopolitics is a case of the former, which involves both online and networked offline actions, while cyberactivism limits itself to digital spaces. It is in the former, and not in the latter (a situation drastically different of the one described in Earl et al.’s 2010) that has been at the center of the innovation in recent networked movements, markedly 15M, both in practice as well as in the ensuing academic literature.

The practices associated with 15M technopolitics have been differentiated from those associated with cyberactivism and, especially, clicktivism (Toret et al., 2015). “Clicktivism” should be situated within the lower threshold position of internet-based activism, has been used to label a subset of online, usually low-engagement, set of political practices: discrete acts, situated online, impulsive, non-committal, relying on non-specialist knowledge, easily replicated, and engaging with a political object, as defined by Halupka (2014). Clicktivism (signing an online petition, or liking a post on Facebook) would be an ideal type of the lowest point of a gradient in which cyberactivism (online advocacy, organization, and action, from creating an online petition to mail bombing or culture jamming) would occupy a middle ground, up to hacktivism, whose strong forms of action (f.i.: data breakages) remain beyond the normal scope of cyberactivism. Halupka (2014) has called to stop moral dismissals of clicktivism as “slacktivism”¹²⁰ (Morozov, 2009; White, 2010), and try to analyze its multiple, not only negative, possibilities. I add the need to distinguish them from cyberactivism, and these from technopolitics, in movements such as 15M. As the

¹²⁰ These authors tend to see in this only a desire for instant (self) gratification, to feel moral justification without the requirement of actual engagement (Lee & Hsieh, 2013). Thereby, clicktivism would primarily be a force reducing engagement and solidarity to minimal (even non-existent) forms, undermining “engagement culture” by potentiating very easy yet rarely effective political action (we could see here some of the traces of the “technology culture” feared by Borgmann, 1999), if not apathy.

data from our survey (Monterde et al., 2017) show, clicktivist practices played a role in 15M, but usually along within an ecosystem of technopolitical practices.

2.3.5.4. A post-organizational turn? Organization in networked contentious politics

A key question in social movement theory, recrafted with the advent of networked movements, is that of organization. The reduction of the costs of participation and organization brought about by digital media makes possible new forms of “organizing without organizations” (Earl & Kimport, 2011; Nunes, 2014). This goes against RMT approaches (Zald & Ash, 1966) that made of leaders and social movement organizations (SMOs) key actors ensuring the operativity and sustainability of movements and campaigns in the long term.

As a challenge to this tradition, Bennett & Segerberg (2013) have distinguished three ideal types of organizing in contemporary social movements. The first, most traditional one, gravitates around “organizationally brokered networks”, which are characterized by a strong organizational coordination of action, communication centered on collective action frames, with organizations managing individual action and expression, and form coalitions through bridging based on high-resource, brokering leaders and organizations, which appear in the foreground. A second type of organizing form, “organizationally enabled networks”, are defined by a loose organizational coordination of action, their communication is centered on action frames that are personal and inclusive, but generated by organizations, which also play a role in the moderation of individual action and expression, operating in the background, linked in loose networks. Finally, “crowd-enabled networks” are characterized by little or no formal organizational coordination of action, communication centered on emergent, inclusive, personal action frames, with higher personal expression on social networks, and forms of organization frequently independent, when not opposed, to involvement of formal organizations.

Crowd-enabled networks are the paradigmatic case of “organizing without organizations”. In the context of connective action, the classical problem of organization is reposed by authors such as Bennett, Segerberg, and Walker (2014: 234) as a matter of “how crowd organization is produced”. One of their answers are “stitching mechanisms [...] These elements of peer production include: the production, curation, and dynamic integration of various types of information content and other resources that become distributed and utilized across the crowd” (ibidem).

I believe others, such as multi-layered practices, are equally important, as I show in chapter 4.

2.3.5.5. *Thinking through networked multitudes*¹²¹

I find the notion of multitude (Hardt & Negri, 2004) to be the most fruitful to think the kind of collectives operating behind the 2011-2016 cycle of contention. According to Hardt & Negri (and here they follow most Western literature until the early 2000s¹²²) masses, crowds, or mobs do not run assemblies nor deliberate¹²³, nor do they coordinate across cities and States. People under those social forms are not empowered singularities expressing themselves and countering established and formal, as much as emerging and informal, forms of representation. But that is what plenty of participants involved in 15M did¹²⁴. Furthermore, early slogans by DRY and camped participants already showed a rejection of reductive identification with earlier identities such as “the working class”, “The People”, or “the Left”¹²⁵.

I speak of “networked multitudes” to speak of 15M collectives and networks of them¹²⁶. The adjective “networked” makes explicit its character as an active social subject, as well as the various mediations (primarily, but not only, technological) involved in its composition. One of its key challenges is “for a social multiplicity to manage to communicate and act in common while remaining internally different, without reducing it to a unity (like the masses) or a single identity (like the people)” (Hardt & Negri, 2004: xiv). This aspect has been explored by 15M in practice¹²⁷.

Previous works have talked of network-systems (Toret et al., 2015) and networks of networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) to define the inner structure of these multitudes. I prefer the notion of “assemblage”, or “wholes characterized by relations of exteriority” (De Landa, 2006), made of heterogeneous components, which are not

¹²¹ “Multitudes” because of doubts about the portrayal of a unitary and somehow ready-made multitude by Hardt & Negri (2004), to recognize their plurality, multiformity and required construction.

¹²² In the last years there has been new, more nuanced and positive, to the concept and the phenomenon of crowds. See, for instance, Surowiecki (2005) or Gerbaudo (2012, 2016).

¹²³ This is what Barber (1984: 154-155) said of citizens to distinguish them from masses.

¹²⁴ The same has been found in Egypt during the Arab Spring, or Turkey during OccupyGezi (Tufekci, 2014).

¹²⁵ In its aim of reaching transversality, the Real Democracy Now manifesto for the demonstration on May 15th said “some of us are more progressive, others, more conservative”.

¹²⁶ Toret et al. (2015) have used the term “connected multitudes” (earlier used by Pérez de Lama, 2006), I prefer the adjective “networked” to emphasize the work that goes in their articulation, and to connect with a more systematic vocabulary.

¹²⁷ If Hardt and Negri have been criticized for their scant or misconceived development of organizational and communicational matters (Laclau, 2005; Dyer-Whiteford, 2007), this challenge of organization is one of the central ones addressed by the sociology of social movements and collective action. My hypothesis is that a crucial element in and since 15M (apart from general critical conditions that I comment on chapter 3) have been technopolitical practices.

“purified” (Latour, 1993) into systems-and-environment (as suggested by Luhmann, 1995), nor reduced to a network-form (as in a network-centered approach). Since these components are only externally related, they can be plugged and unplugged from a give whole, and plugged into a different one, while both that whole and its components remain able to operate, even if they operate differently as their respective compositions vary. The associations between components and with their assemblage are “contingently necessary”, performative and historical, rather than logically or internally necessary. I take the “network of networks” formula to define the structures of communication within the multitude (a syntactical concept), and “assemblage” to appeal to speak of it in broader performances (a pragmatic concept)¹²⁸. From an analytical perspective, units in this study take two basic forms: singular and collective assemblages¹²⁹.

2.3.5.6. Transformations in movements: identity, framing, organizations

In previous sections I have mapped the terrain of social movement theory, then, the increasing centrality of information and media in society, along with their general relevance for politics and social movements. Then, I have noticed their increasing role in activism, and their associations with new forms of collective action such as cyberactivism. Finally, I noted how the reductions of costs of participating and organizing may be bringing about new forms of “organizing without organizations”, or transforming preexisting ones. According to a growing literature, the changes reach the very core of collective action, social movements, and the theories around it. In the following sections I analyze, in turn, the new forms of identity, framing, logics of organization, and power in relation to recent networked movements. As I show in chapter 4, 15M has exhibited many of these features.

Networked challenges to RMT and collective identity

The traditional logic of collective action was presented by Olson as facing the challenge of its very possibility: why would people act collectively to reach common goods when they may free ride instead. There were two central answers to that question: one suggested it depended on the extra benefits granted to actors able to mobilize resources and coordinate action for everyone else, these became the

¹²⁸ More broadly, I will use the notion of “assemblage” collective formations in 15M, and “network” to refer to their organizational structures.

¹²⁹ Although we believe, with De Landa (2006), that any collectivity (or assemblage) can be taken as a singularity, and that any singularity can be seen as a collectivity (or several of them), we will generally stick to the common word use in social movements literature.

leaders of strong organizations, which were required for the achievement of collective action (Olson, 1965); the second answer suggested it was the construction of collective identity, the symbolic and affective identification with a (thereby constructed) group, what either suspended cost-benefit analysis or favored collective action in the calculation (Opp, 2009). But ICTs bring about a drastic reduction of the costs of organization and participation, posing a challenge to RMT and bringing about the possibility of “organizing without organizations” (Earl & Kimport, 2011); similarly, it brings about challenges to traditional collective identity theory, either because it makes less necessary to build collective identities and easier to create personalized ones (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Bennett & Segerberg suggest that what they call the “logic of connective action” (defining feature of digitally networked activism) breaks with the traditional logic of collective action tied to “high levels of organizational resources and the formation of collective identities”. In chapter 4 I show the challenges to collective identity brought about by 15M.

From collective identity and frames to connective identity and personalized frames in connective action

A key corollary of ICT-related practices and the ensuing connective action has been the relativization of collective identities and action frames. Similarly, Bennett & Segerberg's (2012, 2013) analysis of movements such as 15M and Occupy emphasize the rising centrality of personalized communication and action frames, which they characterize as being “symbolically inclusive” (allow easy inclusion of personal reasons for mobilization) and “technologically open” (facilitating sharing among friends and trust networks). This implies, again, a relativization of the role of collectivity (in this case, collective action frames) in recent movements, of which 15M is taken as a paradigmatic case (Bennett & Segerberg 2012: 755).

However, in approaching the discussion over the actuality of “collective identity”, I build upon a previous work where we tried to move beyond the dilemma between new forms of connective action and collective identity (Monterde et al., 2015).

Rather than suggesting that collective identity simply dissolves with the coming of ICT-enabled practices, in the paper we empirically supported the idea that a (digital) “systemic” dimension should be added to Snow's list of dimensions of collective identity¹³⁰, in order to attend to the technology-based, informational and communicational circuits from which identity emerges in networked movements. On

¹³⁰ As we noticed there, Snow (2001) has shown that collective identities are multidimensional, involving emotional, moral, and cognitive aspects.

this we partly followed Melucci's network- and technology-friendly definition of collective identity¹³¹. We took a network analysis approach to such a dimension, and deployed it to understand the collective identity of the 15M movement at the social movement "scale". I show and discuss some of the results on chapter 4.

Differently from that paper, here I believe what emerges out of these communication net-works could be labelled a "connective identity". I leave aside Bennett & Segerberg's (2012, 2013) emphasis on "personalized action frames", which they believe somehow replace collective identity in new forms of connective action, and on which my approach is agnostic¹³². Connective identity is one that emerges out of interaction, activity, and channels of communication in a digital medium. This notion tries to stress the network dimension, and gives a digital and informational reading, to the traditional sense of collective identity in social movement theory¹³³. In the paper, we also proposed a new label for the type of identity characteristic of 15M: "multitudinous identity", which exhibits many of the characteristics associated to Hardt and Negri's multitude.

Organization, power, and leadership in social and networked movements.

I already touched organization and identity, frames. A connected issue is that of power. The question of "power in movement" (Tarrow, 1994), the power of movements (outwards) and within movements (inwards), is a recurrent one in the literature. Networks, which have traditionally played a role in the analysis of social movements, have a crucial role in the configuration of their internal and external power (Kahler, 2009; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; 2015). Analyses that attend to the outward-power of movement networks look at how they intervene in agenda setting

¹³¹ Quoted in my exposition of elements of social movement theory, above.

¹³² Here I build upon Bennett & Segerberg's terminology and tie it to the identity notion. It is the kind of identity that emerges out of the activity on a circuit of digital communication. To approach it more to Bennett & Segerberg's original meaning, the frames being circulated should be personal rather than collective ones.

¹³³ Before closing this point, I want to make some points on "connective" and "collective" identities: first, that in a Latourian sense, all identities are collective, as they emerge from the performances of shorter or longer networks of humans and nonhumans; second, that calling something "connective" tries to stress both its essentially relational and its digital character (this latter point differentiates it from earlier cases of collective identity construction in social movement theory); third, that it can be generated by both collective and singular digital actors, even if, in 15M, the former were preeminent; fourth, that it can result from, and support, the circulation of both collective and personalized action frames; and, fifth, it is thereby agnostic with regard to the type of frames, actions and even identities built on top of it (they may be collective or connective, in Bennett & Segerberg's sense, depending on various factors, such as the types of frames). With regard to this last point, it is worth noticing that frames are in many cases directly correlated to network structure, and different sub-networks are tied to different approaches to reality, generating a networked, ontological multi-perspectivism (Regattieri et al., 2014). All of this is part of the conceptual network associated connective identities.

processes, achieve policy changes, or transform people's beliefs, minds, or lives (Sikkink, 2009; Keck and Sikkink, 1998). According to Castells (2009) the proliferation of "digital networks of communication" is transforming power in technologically developed societies, particularly, with the emergence of counter-hegemonic communicative networks such as those of movements' radical alternative media and technopolitics (Kellner, 1999). They challenge the power of established actors.

But networks, including movements', construct internal forms of power as well. Thereby, a different thread of analysis focuses not on their external activity, performances and results, but on their structure and relations to the actors composing them. On this regard, Castells (2009) has distinguished "networking power", which can derive from the ability to construct, program and reprogram networks and their goals (this is what "programmers" do), or from the connection of different networks, their goals and resources (this is what "switchers" do) (Castells, 2009: 42-45). But positions such as those of "programmers" and "switchers" may be shared by various actors and vary with the structure of the network, so that, recalling Latour, Castells suggest that ultimately "the power holders are networks themselves" (idem: 43). Crucially, as noticed by different authors (Cowhey and Mueller, 2009; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 2013), networks are not immediately horizontal or egalitarian. Actually, the opposite is frequently the case (Barabási & Bonabeu, 2003). As I noticed above, a relevant question in the literature has been that of how the structure (of power) within movement networks relates to the outward power of the network (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Sikkink, 2009; Diani, 2015). Bennett & Segerberg (2012, 2013) logics of connective action challenges the RMT (up to Diani, 2015) idea that powerful networks rely on centralized structures and deliberate construction by purposeful and resourceful actors. Contrarily, they have shown how networks with diffuse, flexible and decentralized structures (on the internal) have equally powerful impacts (on the external).

To assess power in relation to network's organizational structure, Bennett & Segerberg have proposed the notion of "power signatures". With that they refer to "the degree to which recognition (prestige and influence) is concentrated or dispersed among actors in a network"¹³⁴(Bennett & Segerberg, 2013: 152). Bennett &

¹³⁴ As they themselves recognize, other structural properties, from network centrality, to betweenness or structural holes are better proxies for detailed mappings of political opportunities, resources, or other aspects (Monge & Contractor, 2003).

Segerberg distinguish four types of signatures in movement networks: power law, moderate variation of power law, dispersed, and disorganized (156).

For Freeman (1972), when informal elites cover themselves with the “myth of structurelessness”, the appeal to “leaderless structureless organization” (to which, she suggests, they usually recur) “there can be no attempt to put limits on the use of power”¹³⁵ (idem.: 157). Movement “structurelessness” in a media environment—she notices—makes well-known movement members end up playing the role of unofficial and unaccountable spokespeople.

But although some of Freeman's criticisms and proposals are pertinent, informal structures have shown their potential to stir both movements and revolutions (McAdam, 1982; Goldstone, 2001). Gerbaudo (2012) has noticed that, in spite of all the stress on “horizontality” and “leaderlessness”, there were leaders in 15M and Occupy; perhaps because of this stress, they were “reluctant leaders” or “anti-leaders”. Tilly (2004: 13) has suggested that social movements have traditionally depended on “political entrepreneurs for their scale, durability, and effectiveness”, but that a good part of their work has been to “disguise” that effort by favoring images of “spontaneous” collective action. Reasons for doing this are multiple, from Freeman's internal power plays to external image and narrative (to evoke ideas of popular empowerment and self-organization, because of distrust of mainstream media, etc.), from political conditions (strong repression) to ideology (stress on horizontality, anti-authoritarianism, and the like). Frequently, these reasons and conditions combine.

Social media enables informal and flexible forms of sociotechnical organization, thanks to the personal character of communication within them (specially, in the case of Facebook) generating “diffuse spheres of friendship and intimacy characterised by a vibrant emotionality” (Gerbaudo, 2012: 14). But here leadership and power asymmetries reappear (Gerbaudo, 2012) as a result, among other factors, of the strongly asymmetrical architecture of participation of spaces such as Facebook fanpages (Van Dijk & Poell, 2013).

This portray seems to both transform and maintain traditional elements of leadership in social movements, based on concrete figures, this time not public leaders (or unofficial spokespeople) in mainstream media, but networked ones in social media.

¹³⁵ In terms of the tradition of Weber and Habermas, this is not a “rational” or “legitimate” power. Its shape and limits are set up by other mechanisms.

Trying to enrich this view, we (Toret et al., 2015; Monterde et al, 2015) have stressed the collective and temporally distributed character of leadership of 15M and post-15M actors in social media. Furthermore, key profiles were collective ones. There were several ones driving the dynamic at any point in the configuration of the 15M communication networks on Twitter, and that these leading constellations varied across times, into what has been defined as “temporally distributed leadership” (Toret et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the collective control of these profiles was also a source of problems and power struggles, as I analyze in chapter 4.

As time passed, though, different media spokespeople emerged within the 15M cycle. Positions towards representation and organization changed too. I comment it on chapter 5.

2.3.6. Framing contentious technopolitics in the networked movements of the squares

2.3.6.1. A binocular view onto multi-layered assemblages

I have touched upon matters of collective organization, frames, identity, and power. An unaddressed feature of recent movements, key in defining their shape as well as their action and communication power, is the creative and continuous hybridization of online and offline practices and spaces. For Toret et al. (2015) this was the key difference of technopolitics against those other forms of digitally networked activism. The interplay between dynamics in social media, urban spaces, as well as mainstream mass media, gave 15M, and also later experiences in the 15M cycle of contention, an idiosyncratic morphology that hybridized online and offline spaces. The concept of “multi-layer” tries to capture that (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 2013, 2014; Toret et al., 2015). It suggests a number of differentiated¹³⁶ and yet connected¹³⁷ spaces. The formula “multi-layered networks” is frequently used in the literature trying to analyze complex networks (Boccaletti et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, for the purposes of visualization, I describe such multi-dimensional, heterogeneous networks as a series of bidimensional orthographic projections. This is what I may call a “systemic” or “panoramic” approach (Latour, 2005), applied to the understanding multi-layered networks at the core of much action, information and

¹³⁶ These are independent spaces, and there are locked-in differences among their associative and interactive regimes, f.i., between different social media (such as Facebook and Twitter), or between them and urban spaces. So much so that some have defined social media as “walled gardens” (Berners-Lee, 2010), which are growing increasingly isolated.

¹³⁷ An interesting aspect of this is that there is no pure, original or independent space, be it digital or physical, thereby avoiding both physio-centrism (or physical co-presence) and techno-centrism.

communication activity in the 15M cycle, especially suited to understand the “macro” scale of whole networks and assemblages. Such activity involves intra-network (f.i.: within Facebook) and inter-network (f.i.: between Facebook and Twitter) dynamics.

A first element in the construction of a panorama of a multilayered technopolitical assemblage is a basic “technopolitical score”. It is a visual schema of the various layers pervaded by the action, information and communication activity in 15M cycle processes. Since 15M, numerous, new sociotechnical networks were articulated on the internet, primarily on social media (with sublayers such as Facebook and Twitter), as well as on multiple spatial locations (such as squares, activist social centers, universities, etc.). They intermittently interacted with mainstream media (tv, radio, press). All of these fields would appear as layers from an “elevation view”. Using the “technopolitical score”, it is possible to analytically break down, register and visualize different indexes of individual or collective activity (depending on the actor one decides to choose). Activity operates in different layers in different ways and at different moments, which help to visualize the multidimensional magnitude of a given action or event.

Recurring to a second typical, architectural analysis, one can take a “plan view”, which outlines the networks of interaction, either structural (stable) or functional (eventual), of a given layer. After outlining these two views, a challenge comes into view: that of how the actors, networks or actions are connected or circulate across layers (or not), and how these layers are thereby connected so that the whole multi-layered network of networks and its powerful performances can hold. Bennett, Segerberg, & Walker (2014) have shown the relevance of “stitching mechanisms” connecting different layers to be relevant for the maintenance of what they categorize as “network-enabled crowds”. But I believe that a complementary approach could be more relevant. A central factor keeping multi-layered networks together are actors' practices. But that implies to move away from talk of “mechanisms” and the “panoramic approach”. I believe it is more interesting to articulate a second, alternative approach, in order to dig further into the complexity of movements: that is what I call the “practice approach”—inspired in STS literature (Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina & Savigny 2001). This approach attends to human and nonhuman actors' situated performances. It primarily relies not on macro, network-images but on narrative and experience. It cannot be registered in social network activity indexes. In relation to it, I propose the notion of “multi-layer practices” to

define another, probably more relevant, process of composition of these multitudinous networks. A typical example of this type of practice is that of a participant operating on one or several social media while in a protest. These practices are particularly, although surely not exclusively, relevant at times of collective action on the streets. A provisional definition would group these practices as “actions involving (including or connecting) people, things, and technologies in more than one medium or place”¹³⁸. These practices circumvent any definitive distinction between digital and analogical, online and offline, so their relations have not been simply of feedback between activity in digital networks and in physical demonstrations, or even only of concomitance between digital and analogical networks of squares (Martínez Roldán, 2011), but rather a plethora of variations involving alignment for action, amplification, registration, conflict, distance, criticism, and more. Among them it is worth stressing too what I defined as “multi-layering practices”: actions in a given media promoting action in a different one. The notion of practice serves to clearly avoid the potential reification of processes in systemic/panoramic approaches. They stress the variety of discrete actors, their heterogeneity and problematic associations, their human and non-human conditions, and the relevance of performance, rather than simply representing their modeled, usually informational, traces.

Participants, and surely core activists, recurred to what I may call a “technopolitical module or kit for self-organization” (Toret et al., 2015), basic not only to organize their own participation but also that of the collectives they belonged or founded. Such a kit was part of what I would call a technopolitical habitus, and contributed to nurture and define the syntax of the multi-layered assemblage.

Streams of practice, syntactically articulated by these kits, sometimes involved multiple people, and thereby the streams of practice converged into streams of collective action¹³⁹.

The streams of action (be it individual or collective) operate syntagmatically and paradigmatically, they can multiply the number of components not only within a given

¹³⁸ Under current conditions, almost any type of action that acts in two places at once involves technological mediation and usually happens in, at least, two different layers (say, the urban space and the digital space).

¹³⁹ It is worth noticing that, following Latour (1993), I consider all actions collective. By that I mean that all involve humans and nonhumans. Yet, in order to distinguish an action in which a human mobilizes multiple non-humans, from those in which various humans are directly involved and have to coordinate among themselves, I maintain the expressions “action” and “collective action”.

technopolitical regime, such as that of relations in one or another layer but also across them into hybrid syntax.

Multitudinous, multi-layered dynamics are at the base of “augmented events” (Toret et al., 2015), in which a concrete set of actions are discursively and practically connected to thousands of others by thousands of other actors across heterogeneous media, which point towards them. Involving not only both multiple spaces and multiple times (past and future).

After outlining some of the possibilities of both the panoramic and the practical view, I have what I may call a “binocular view”, an approach that, using the perceptual metaphor, allows to see things in three dimensions¹⁴⁰. The technopolitical score (in its multiple versions and perspectives) and the streams of action (and their related notions) compose the “technopolitical model”. One whose first view (the panoramic/systemic) is both complemented¹⁴¹ and challenged by the second (the practical), and is thereby an internally processual model (as well as externally, by the variation of its contents).

To these two I may now add a third: the narrative or discursive approach (Fairclough, 2013; Riessman, 2008), which attends to the texts and narratives generated by movement actors. It opens up the exploration of the discursive construction of the movement, its actors, its enemies. A key point is how the semantics of a movement, particularly clearly presented in discourses, connects with new technopolitical syntaxes and pragmatics. Discourse is surely the main entry point into frames.

The discursive approach adds up to the sharpness of the stereometric analysis of technopolitical action. Furthermore, I can now recover Haraway’s threefold of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Some of the complex aspects of the emerging syntax of technopolitics would foremost be opened by the panoramic or systemic approach;

¹⁴⁰ More interestingly, it allows to see them in more than those, as the practical view remakes the various panoramic views, and vice versa.

¹⁴¹ It is worth noticing that both approaches have several things in common: they question the alternative primacy of either wholes (collectivities, blurring individuals) or parts (individuals, reducing wholes); at the same time, they connect them to and add inferior, superior, and intermediate “scales” (primarily, interaction, but also assemblages of parts and wholes, dualities below the old individuals, etc.); moreover, both approaches turn all of these “units” and “scales” into ongoing outcomes of processes rather than ready-made realities (f.i. Luhmann 1995 for the system theory case; Schatzki 2001 for the practice one). Perhaps one of the key disagreements among them lies on their positions concerning the possibility of something like an identity and a system to emerge or not: obviously, systems theory believes it does while practice theory seems sometimes at odds with it—as an example, for the case of social movements, Juris (2008). As a result, the two approaches composing the binocular view I just mentioned generate patterns of interference among themselves, sometimes they potentiate each other, other times they neutralize or question each other, and still others display their respective powers alternatively—in a gestalt switch of sorts.

technopolitical semantics, by the narrative/discursive approach; the two would then be revisited and redefined in pragmatics, that is, in relation to the practice approach. This threefold, this trinocular approach, is a key analytical assemblage for analyzing the 15M cycle. It operationalizes my general technopolitical approach, and bridges over frequently fragmented research approaches.

2.3.6.2. Multi-layered assemblages and contentious digital networks

In order to further explore the structure of multi-layer assemblages that define collective action in the 15M cycle, I want to make some comments on two of those layers: social media and urban spaces.

Even if the squares were morphologically characteristic of the 15M cycle at the movement stage, digital networks proved more enduring and relevant in the long run: they allowed the mutation of the cycle of contention (as shown by Monterde, 2015), and have continued playing relevant roles in its representative or institutional stages. So, more than the so much remarked camps, what proved enduring during the cycle were its technopolitical networks. The relevance of digital networks was particularly prominent both in the formation of movements before 15M and after the end of the camps.

2.3.6.3. Technopolitics and contentious spaces: digital.

Facebook and n-1 as infrastructures for politics.

Urban and virtual sites were created or recreated through, as well as integrated into, collective action in the 15M movement. In order to analyze the technopolitical syntax of Facebook and n-1 (as technologies for politics) and its connection to 15M, I rely and build upon a previous study that, to my understanding, appropriately captures some its key elements. According to Gil (2012), the two most relevant dimensions of these platforms when it comes to the formation and maintenance of the movement were, on the one hand, their capacity to enable a self-organized and emergent mobilization, and on the other, their contribution to its maintenance in time. According to Gil, the first of those two dimensions are dependent on two key sub-factors: the capacity for diffusing information¹⁴² and the capacity to transform cyber-participation into real participation¹⁴³. In 15M, platforms potentiating self-organized, emergent

¹⁴² Capacity for information diffusion concerns the potential number of people reached by the movement's messages and the speed with which they are so. The optimal case of diffusion of a message is that of the "viral effect", in which a large cross-section of a network is reached in a short period of time as a result of the decentralized activity of the users.

¹⁴³ I believe information diffusion is key not only for the enabling of self-organized and emergent mobilization but also for the maintenance of the movement in time: it is a structural aspect for

mobilization are especially prominent for moments and processes of public display of WUNC, while those favoring organization become preeminent in times of latency. That said, both operate and combine at all times.

According to Gil such diffusion depends on three factors: the size of the networks of contacts¹⁴⁴, the size of the total virtual community¹⁴⁵, and the design of the platform¹⁴⁶. Here I can make an addendum: the internal structure of a given network of contacts is a factor as relevant, in principle, as its size (in many case, much more so). It is worth noticing that by pointing these factors I go beyond the attention to design affordances by pointing to the emerging affordances that result from the actual shapes of the circuits and communities of users that collective action processes generate. Furthermore, as underlined by Gerbaudo (2016), it is necessary to go beyond the view of digital platforms in terms of mere “diffusion” or “costs of organization” into “induced configurations” or “emerging symbolic and practical cultures”.

As noted by Gil, these Facebook and n-1 networks differ greatly with regard to their functions, size, material resources, number of users, the types of relations they allow to their users, the economic and social benefits they produce, the level of privacy they offer users or the territorial area influenced by them.

2.3.6.4. Technopolitics and contentious spaces: urban.

The “square stage” of 15M only occupied a few months. However, camps and squares occupy a core place within the 15M imaginary and practice. Since my narrative tries to span the whole cycle, I do not stop to analyze their dynamics in all the detail they may deserve. Camps and squares were only one of the embodiments of the politics of space and place related to the wider technopolitics in Spain in the 15M cycle, even if they were the paradigm of its “autonomist” possibilities.

Recently, some researchers (Halvorsen, 2012) have stressed the relevance of

information systems (Luhmann, 1995) and was a core feature of 15M networks since 2011.

¹⁴⁴ A key aspect of social media such as Facebook and n-1 is the creation of relational networks between users, networks of contacts to whom a user sends and from which it receives information. These networks are built on the base of multiple criteria, from common interests to personal relationships. In the case of 15M, networks are, in principle, based on shared political-activist and interpersonal interests (with the latter being closely connected to the former).

¹⁴⁵ A second key factor for diffusion is the size of the platform community, which amount to the total number of users that may potentially receive a given message, otherwise, the width of the potential audience and, thereby, the maximum potential reach of messages.

¹⁴⁶ Finally, there is the platform design. Gil notes the speed and easiness for making visible, publishing and resending messages, the multiplicity of message forms; information goal-alignment; varieties of content in messages, of shorter or longer type; register of support of a given message in the platform, as well as among the users' contacts.

“territoriality” in Occupy, as territories were relevant for its autonomous and pre-figurative politics, implied the taking, delimitation and defense of geographical areas, and helped to disturb flows and instaurate counter-temporalities (Adams, 2011) in specific city locales. As a consequence, Halvorsen reclaims the “multiple spatialities of activism”, which involve creating networks but also “(re)creating particular territories”.

Manuel Castells (1996) has distinguished between a traditional “space of places”, and an informational “space of flows”. For Castells (1996: 204), “space is the material support of time-sharing social practices”, the former is defined by the boundaries of physical contiguity, while the second is built upon “technological infrastructure of information systems, telecommunications, and transportation lines”. In the network society, the latter over-imposes itself on the former. One may imagine that, in multi-layer dynamics, there are multiple cases of emplaced flows, that is, the urban reassembling of online networks and activities, or flowing emplacements, with the broadcasting of local actions all over the world.

As Sennett (1978) noticed early on, under neoliberalism space becomes a space of transit and consumption, rather than of community building. These processes may have been accelerated with the advent of neoliberal informationalism (Castells, 1996). With others (Martínez Roldán, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2016) I believe recent movements have been an attempt at recovering both public and physical space, but unlike Gerbaudo (2016) I do not believe this recovery should be understood as a simple attempt at overcoming or getting the dispersion generated by the Internet, but rather as the construction of new multi-layered spaces (as suggested by Monterde, 2015). These spaces are the spatial correlate of “augmented events”.

Critical theories of space

As noticed by Lefebvre (1991), “space is political”, in the case of this study, technopolitical. Furthermore, his suggestions on a “science of formal space” implies his comment applies not only to physical, but even more to digital network spaces¹⁴⁷ and multi-layered ones, that hybridize digital and physical spaces via technopolitical practice.

¹⁴⁷“The science of space, therefore, must be assessed at several levels. It can be taken as a science of formal space, that is to say, close to mathematics; a science that employs such concepts as sets, networks, branches, lattices. However, the science cannot be situated at this level; it cannot remain formal. Critical analysis defines how and according to what strategy a given space has been produced; finally, there is the study and science of the contents, that is, of the contents which may resist the form or the strategy: namely, the users.”

David Harvey has suggested to combine Lefebvre's idea of a dialectics of space¹⁴⁸ with a renewal of the notion of utopia. Harvey (2000: 161) aims to recover "utopias as spatial play", where "the infinite array of possible spatial orderings holds out the prospect of an infinite array of possible social worlds", while remaining critically aware of its authoritative¹⁴⁹—when not authoritarian—consequences. However, utopias, as other spatial forms, have usually been driven or hijacked by the logics of the State or those of Capital. Harvey denounces the ruling utopianism: neoliberalism. Tweaking Foucault's (1984) terms, it is possible to see 15M cycle spaces as emerging in the tension between isotopies (normalized settings tied to the system or worlds we inhabit, continuously in the process of being reproduced), heterotopies (settings and ontologies "other" built in the shell of the old ones), and utopias (settings and ontologies "other" that emerge as "horizons of becoming" for the previous two ones in 15M narratives and practices), played and displayed in multiple, situated and fragile, and sometimes contradictory ways.

2.3.7. From new social movements to networked social movements: from contentious politics to contentious technopolitics

After summarizing some of the debates in the literature on collective action, identity, power, and organization, there seems to be room to affirm that there are relevant differences between networked movements and earlier, old or new, social movements. Furthermore, some of the discussions so far allows me to suggest—a hypothesis explored in the empirical chapters—that the cycle of contention opened by 15M has exhibited relevant variations with regard to previous forms of "contentious politics". As a recapitulation, I want now to clarify some points on this regard.

When referring to the wave of movements since 2010, I will be using the collective label "networked movements of the squares". With that I attempt to reflect the generic centrality of net-work as a sociotechnical practice, not only for the present

¹⁴⁸ To dig into these various types of space, Lefebvre offers a conceptual triad: he first situates spatial practice, which produces and reproduces a society's space. It is the "perceived" space, which emerges in the close relation between daily routine and urban reality. Differently, "representations of space" are "tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' that those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations" (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). Actors such as scientists, planners, urban planners, or social engineers, fuse (or over-impose) this "conceived space" to the perceived and the lived spaces. Then there are "representational spaces", "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols" (idem, 39). There is a conflict, a dialectics between "the perceived, the conceived, and the lived".

¹⁴⁹ The spaces some actors create usually remain operative for other actors for long periods of time—to put it with a formula attributed to Winston Churchill, "we shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us".

cycle, but, retrospectively, for the global justice or alter-globalization movement (Juris 2004), which may count as the first strong case of a broad genre of “networked movements”, be they social or political in character. Networking may be the core feature a social movement family populating, in spite of their differences, a cultural epoch of contention (Mattoni & Trere, 2014), defined by elements such as the centrality of the Internet and the emergence of connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

With this formula, I complement Gerbaudo's (2016) ideal-typical and simple label of “movements of the squares”, with the “square” operating as a differential-specific feature of the present cycle within the broader “networked movement” genre¹⁵⁰; I believe the “square” nicely stands for a space that is decidedly urban, physical, public, and problematically political¹⁵¹. Finally, I recur to a practice and organization centered formula, because these have taken priority over discourses and frames in terms of innovation within the current wave of protest.

A complementary argument of this thesis is that, when technopolitics moves to the center, contentious politics becomes “contentious technopolitics”. Technological opportunities become almost as crucial and dispute as political ones, or rather, intertwined with them, conditioned by and conditioning them. This turns technologies

¹⁵⁰ One of the most recognizable features of the international protest cycle begun between late 2010 and 2011 has been the proliferation of camps on squares all over the world. This has been sometimes presented as a distancing from previous “networked” movements and logics (Gerbaudo, 2012; Halvorsen, 2012; Juris, 2012). It also has made some (Gerbaudo, 2016) generically characterize the movements included in it as “movements of the squares”. The squares were a crucial element in a given period within the cycle of contention in Spain: the opening one, which coincided with the height of the 15M movement. And yet, even then, as I show in chapter 4, activity in camps and squares cannot be understood if detached from broader technopolitical practices, processes, and circuits. “Technopolitics” has been a more relevant and enduring element of the 2011-2016 cycle of contention in Spain. Thereby, after this elaboration, I can say formulas such as “networked movements” (Juris, 2004) or “network-movements” (Monterde, 2015) appropriately reflect their structure as networks of networks. But these movements are “technopolitical” in their performances, for their remaking of the spaces, subject-object fields of politics in relation to technologies and vice versa. Beyond their networkism or their assamblarism, beyond their online or their offline, it is necessary to stress their complex technopolitics as a crucial feature. This feature was later adapted to and adopted to the political field new parties and institutions, it has been part and parcel of the ongoing cycle of technopolitical contention in Spain. As I just mentioned the crucial, long-term pattern is not the square camp. Actually, after its failure in the long run, it has been challenged as an optimal protest form. Differently, the technopolitical (not just networks, but networks plus other mediascapes and urbanscapes) becoming has proven to be essential for the cycle, especially in 15M. Camps died early, the square did so too as well. Assemblies have been maintained for longer, and taken on board of emerging parties such as Podemos and the municipal candidacies. Networks are still operative, both structurally and functionally. Spatial fetishism no better than the network fetishism sometimes nurtured by network analyses. For this, I believe technopolitical analysis will remain key for studies on networked movements, as well as in politics more broadly.

¹⁵¹ This applies even if only through re-politicization did squares become “agoras” again, or even if, in many cases, the camp space was a park, or even private property.

into key sites of and resources for conflict and construction by traditional and new actors.

The “technopolitics” of the 15M cycle can be better understood in light of the formula used above (“networked” and “squares”), with the organizational dimension at the center of their articulation. As the cycle moved from activism to institutional politics, so the technopolitical ecologies, cultures and practices within the 15M cycle ended up including forms of collective action beyond Bennett's and Segerberg's digitally networked activism, involving institutionalized collective action, and what I may call digitally networked partidism and institutionalism.

2.4. Making and unmaking history: from political revolution to ontological reassembling through contentious technopolitics

2.4.1. From technological and political revolution to technopolitical reassembling

The cycle of production of always new and obsolescent generations of artifacts greatly accelerated in the XXth century (Bulow, 1986). It went hand in hand with the frequent use of the term “revolution” in advertisement. As the term “revolution” becomes recurrently used, so it becomes meaningless (Marquard, 1986). Ironically, it regains its original meaning of “recurring cycle”, now not under the image of the trajectories of natural stars (*De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, like in Copernicus) but of the technical production cycle of always new and always obsolescent artifacts (ever less new and ever more quickly obsolescent, for the sake of profit, Graeber, 2015). The revolutionary becomes practically indistinguishable from the upgrade, as Marga Padilla's quote in the entry of this thesis suggests. The early labelling of the events around May 15th as #SpanishRevolution is an interesting example of this; rather than granting the legitimacy of the term in a representative sense, otherwise, rather than legitimizing it as “a revolution”, it does something more revealing. The hashtag points, first, to the enduring performative value of the notion, and, second, to the technopolitically mediated character of the concept of revolution in the current predicament. The technopoliticization of revolution, be it based on fashionable narrative or innovative practice, was also suggested by contested narratives around 15M antecedents, such as those naming the Egyptian uprising as a “Facebook revolution”, or announcements that nowadays “the revolution will be Twittered”. Revolution or not, what happened on May 15th was called so by its participants, under a hashtag form, and (not less symptomatically) in English language.

The literature around the definition of revolution is, in itself, a growing and growingly debated area of research (Goldstone, 2001). As an overused concept, I find limited value in digging into it. Consequently, the inquiry into whether 15M is a revolutionary or reformist movement plays no role in my research. I believe and show that the cycle of technopolitical contention opened by 15M achieved a number of relevant transformations and reassemblings of democracy, but I will not spend time distinguishing whether they were reformist or revolutionary. Transformation and reassembling (in the sense of Latour, 2005), less historically and normatively charged concepts, makes them more productive notions than the traditional pair of revolution and reform to think through the 15M cycle of contention.

That said, there is another classical debate related to revolution, at the center of much activist discourse in the 2000s, namely, that of the seizure of State power. The question of whether taking the power of the State, be it through force or through the vote, is necessary for deep social transformation, became a matter of particularly heated debate after the publication of John Holloway's 2002 work "Change the world without taking power: the meaning of revolution today". According to Holloway, true transformation should be approached as a matter of abolishing "power over" and liberating "power to" (which he identified with collective human life freed from property and capitalism into alternative forms of doing things), rather than reaching power over the social embodiment of "power over", that is, the State apparatus. To the traditional Leninist insistence on the need of taking the Winter Palace, the source of political power, the experience of the Mexican Zapatistas seemed to show a revolutionary way away from the State, fixed hierarchy, and political representation. Looking at the conditions in the network society, Castells (2009: 412) has suggested that it is by "reprogramming the communication networks that constitute the symbolic environment" of people's minds how insurgents can bring "new information, new practices, and new actors into the political system".

Positions around these quandaries were diverse within 15M, they varied across actors and across times. Their positions towards State power shifted. They moved from a more Zapatista-like (autonomist) position towards a more Leninist one, and back. How these shifts took place is an object of attention in the empirical chapters. They illustrate a wider matter: social transformation frequently involves collective self-transformation, changing with experience, adaptation.

2.4.2. Reassembling as political ontology

Like other movements, 15M had the potential—in spite of numerous narrative and practical closures on this regard—to feed into the alter-globalization conviction that “another world¹⁵² is possible”. From the conviction that things must change, movements reopen the question of how and why the world and things are as they are, and why and how they could and should be different. Insofar as it concerns “world-making and unmaking” practices, it goes beyond shifts in “worldviews” into ontology (Pickering, 2010; Woolgar and Lezaun, 2013).

The present work situates itself within the heterogeneous yet growing constellation of STS works attending to ontology. A number of distinctions are mandatory here, though. Authors included in that “constellation” (Marres & Lezaun, 2013; Woolgar & Lezaun, 2013) have distinguished different approaches to ontology within STS and in relation to the tradition of ontological reflection. A first one, sometimes defined as “theoretical ontology” (Marres, 2013), is characterized and dismissed as an abstract discourse on what is (ens), on the kinds of beings, structures, and relations in the world. To mark a distance with the theoretical tradition, the label “empirical ontology” (the correlate of Latour’s 2004 “experimental metaphysics”) has been proposed as a tag for an approach characterized by the conviction that to think through the structural makeup of the world requires to attend to the practices where much of it is settled down. Such an exploration must be empirical in character. The call is to follow the actors’ practices of world-making.

The third ontological approach distinguished in the literature (Woolgar and Lezaun, 2013), the so-called “experimental ontology”, is characterized by attending to the “deliberate investment of non-humans with moral and political capacities” (Marres, 2013: 423) This would be understood as ontology, and thereby, politics and morality¹⁵³, “by design”, so to say. While the primary consequence of the empirical approach is to find politics in different socio-material settings and therefore brings about a “politicization of ontology”, the experimental one attends to the translation of political forms and categories in ontological terms, otherwise, an “ontologization of politics”. Given the centrality of spaces and software in the movements that I

¹⁵² “World” is a crucial category in the rhetoric of movements, as well as in the tradition of ontology, but—to my mind—it has not been thematized in STS discussions on ontology. I try to do so at different points in this work. As I mention below, for this I recur to the philosophical tradition.

¹⁵³ We use the term here knowing culture cannot be designed.

research here, I explore the possibilities of this third type of ontological discourse¹⁵⁴.

In general, I recur to the three types of discourses on ontology. With them I try to outline some key ontological features brought about by the 15M cycle. I do not aim to present a full-blown ontology, however.

2.4.2.1. Different ontological positions and constituent politics

Discourses on politics as a constituted phenomenon, as a normative ideal, continue being centered on the traditionally modern characters: “citizens”, “nations”, “dialogue”, “political systems”, etc. Even STS studies in “empirical ontology”, which have focused on finding politics in socio-material, “non-Political settings”, have frequently done so following obsolescent models of the political (Marres & Lezaun, 2013). Exceptions such as Latour have done something different, namely, they have offered alternative narratives, but at the cost of leaving practices out of question (Pickering, 2009; Marres, 2011). Even authors situated within the “experimental ontology” banner seem interested in tinkering and recording the tinkering with previous categories within political frameworks that are not further questioned—liberal representative democracies—even if the range of fields of attention is extended (the home, a ship, etc., Marres & Lezaun, 2013). Very few (Pickering, 2009; Papadopoulos, 2011) address both discourses and practices, appealing to ontology as a horizon of constitution of new thought and new realities, otherwise, as a form of “constituent politics”. Within the STS literature, Pickering and Papadopoulos are the two who more clearly play into the rebellious and even revolutionary positions¹⁵⁵ with regard to existing ontologies of technoscience. They

¹⁵⁴ I do so realizing the commonality and potential un-interestingness of it all, as one gets farther from “hard science”. There is not much discussion about the changeable condition of technological entities or moral norms. It is only the connection between both, and the stress on the different objects they outline what gives it a stronger appeal. Not even after these precisions do these cases hold as strong challenge to common views of ontology and knowledge as classical studies on scientific practice posed.

¹⁵⁵ Given the multiplicity of positions within the constellation of STS works using the word “ontology”, some distinctions may be in order. In order to make them, I will use the classical categorization of different forms of social constructionism (Hacking, 1999), although it is necessary to include the double level mentioned above: the one concerning narratives, and the one concerning non-narrative practices. Michael Lynch's (2013) position, with his insistence on the historicizing of ontological topics, focused on “ontological talk” or “ontotopics”, could be considered “historicist”. In spite of his remarks on the inherent normativity of the “ontological turn”, Woolgar & Lezaun's (2013) views seem to range between ironism and reformism with regard to both narratives and practices (according to them, one can preserve a cosmopolitical irony with regard to worldviews, but is obliged to make a cosmopolitical choice among worlds). He seems to have rather little to say on alternative practices. Reformism seems to be the strongest position one could attribute to Marres & Lezaun with regard to the practices they describe in their works (Marres, 2013; Marres & Lezaun, 2011) and their STS discourses. Interestingly, what Hacking called the “unmasking” position is the target of criticisms by several authors within the “ontological” constellation” (Latour, 2005; Woolgar & Lezaun, 2013). In the case of

criticize different discourses and practices of world-making, appeal to the need of alternatives, and even compose them into sketches of alter-ontologies.

2.4.2.2. Pre-figuring out democracy

The attention of the analysis is situated not only on the shapes of 15M collectives and projects, but also in their possibilities and relation to democracy and its potential political ontologies. As suggested above, “democracy”, as a word and as a world, is contingent and conflicted. Consequently, the portray of positions outlined in the part 1 of this chapter attempts to give a historic-philosophical setting against which to situate 15M cycle experiments. Following an old anarchist adagio, a central 15M aim was to experiment with how to “build a new world in the shell of the old”, a real democracy, now. Thereby the study casts new light on the notion and practice of “prefigurative politics”. The expression “prefigurative politics” usually refers to the work of “building a new world” in a way that tries to anticipate and resemble what is to come. But this thesis shows how 15M's prefigurative politics was also a process of *figuring and pre-figuring out*, of finding out how and what the worlds desired (as well as the ones confronted and brought about) are. In practice, there was no ready-made world to be projected out. Unsurprisingly, the country has been dubbed a “laboratory of democracy”¹⁵⁶ (Sandiumenge, 2015a) after 15M. Combining the first and the second meaning (prefiguration as anticipation of the democracy to come, and prefiguration as figuring out what democracy is and should be in practice) one gets Barber's (1984) vision of democracy as a form of living crossed by experimentation, by processes of figuring things out by an ever-wider array of actors in a richer array of ways.

2.5. Research and methodology: rethinking methods and sociology

As suggested above, if revolution can be tied to the origin of sociology, movements may be a good starting point to question and find new ways of going about it.

Latour, his transformative zeal focuses on the level of political discourse, but even there one could not call his position “rebellious”—after all, he self-describes as “non-critical” (actually, Latour 2013: 65 seems to appeal to a therapeutic position, simply calling for an alignment of practice and discourse-theory about it, whatever these two are).

¹⁵⁶ Three characteristics can be emphasized, one is that experimentation was exploratory, rather than guided or ran as a theory test, the second is that it was ran, sometimes in quasi real-time, by networked multitudes (rather than by inert masses or mobs, or well represented “peoples”), third, it was done—most of the time, and not without plenty of dysfunctions—in squares, opencast, and digitally networked.

2.5.1. From explanations to explorations

Rather than a work of explanation or interpretation—the traditional Diltheyan pair—my research tries to move between thick description (Latour 2005) and exploration. Otherwise, it follows practices of world-questioning and world-making within the 15M cycle, of self and alter making and unmaking, of transformation and experimentation. This approach is tied to a shift in research and narrative orientation. My inquiry attempts to invert or, rather, divert the path (the *methodos*) of traditional inquiry: it does not primarily go from the phenomenon towards the conditions or causes that may account for it, but rather tries to see projects associated to 15M as offering alternative ways of looking to and acting in the world, primarily, in the political and technological fields. They are presented as openings, as ontological theaters (Pickering, 2010), rather than as fixed and defined units that should be explained in terms of a fixed and ready-made order. I approach these movements and projects not only as topics but also as sources of (rather than as “resources” for¹⁵⁷) my research. Rather than focusing on the process of unifying and clarifying what they are I try to highlight their multiplying potential for what the world is.

Rather than assuming a fixed ontology, epistemology or methodology to explore a (presumably) unified movement I try to see what it enacts and proposes. In the words of Lefebvre (1969: 103)

“What matters is not to propose a theory of the movement, but to show the movement in its true character and elaborate the elements of a theory. There is a movement; there are therefore theoretical needs and requirements. A theory of the movement has to emerge from the movement itself, for it is the movement that has revealed, unleashed, and liberated theoretical capacities. No contribution to the elaboration of such a theory can lay claim to being an established doctrine; it can never be more than a limited contribution”.

2.5.2. Methods and movements: from participant observation to movement research

In order to achieve such as purposed, I had to choose a peculiar method. *Methodos*, in Ancient Greek, is “the way one goes through”. “The way” is also the English translation for the Chinese *Tao*. In both cases, “the way” includes what is understood

¹⁵⁷ “Sources” can be understood here as a number of flows wherefrom the research emerges, while “resources” appeal to the idea of a ready-made equipment or stuff to be used in it.

by “method” since Bacon and Descartes, but only as a concrete and limited variation. The word “Tao” also speaks of the wider worlds in which any method operates. In its fuller sense, the notion of *methodos* helps to think the situated pathways of this research. Those pathways were open in walking through “occupied” and “indignant” territories, offline and online. That walking, as the Zapatistas say in their adagio “caminando, preguntamos” (walking, we ask questions) is tied to the practice of asking questions. The questions resulted from my collaborations with those I found along those paths and territories. A good part of this research has gone along that of others and, in that sense, this research is *others’* too. In being others’ and others, it speaks, walks and asks differently on different passages¹⁵⁸.

This does not mean there is no method, but rather that there are several of them. And not exactly methods, but *methodoi*, approaches and dispositives whose deployment is tied to different settings, processes, reasons, conversations, or actors along the research path. From the methods of quantitative data mining to those of qualitative ethnographic work. Rather than “grounded”, surely rather than a sedentary tone, this inquiry has a nomadic character.

I first found and put myself into the stream of practice and then figured out what questions were relevant. I was enmeshed in 15M activities long before I started researching the movement. I took part in early demonstrations and assemblies, and weeks later I began to think in doing research on them. This has been sometimes called “observing participation” (Kaminski, 2004), and refers to participants in a given process or group that shift their disposition towards it, as its name indicates, towards an observing position. It partially connects to the so called “militant research” (Colectivo Situaciones, 2003), where the researcher gets its situated (practical and theoretical) hypotheses oriented by and towards the construction of an “alternative sociability” related to those of the subaltern. It is also oriented to connect to the ways struggles read themselves, but always from a position of questioning, of wondering and wandering, rather than from the frequently fixed positions, in and on the world, of the academic researcher or the classical XXth century militant. This approach both

¹⁵⁸ Perhaps the right words to put my research strategy are not mine, but those of Deleuze and Guattari in *One Thousand Plateaus* (161), when they advise: “lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continua of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO [body without organs].”

plays with and questions the frequent appeal to “critique” of social realities in the social sciences, which is based on a fixed set of principles and models of reality, on the bases of which realities are unmasked or evaluated.

Surely, one of my positions (as every position, a fully relational one) has been that of participant observer (Spradley, 1980), moving between a passive and a fully engaged participation. But observation has been only a possibility of my participation, and my participation has, in turn, been only one possibility of my research and activist engagement with the 15M cycle. Participant observation, which would be closer to the ancient sense of *theoria* (Gadamer, 2004), points only to one set of potential performances. This research has implied to go far from theory and even from research itself: it has been only a part of a wider stream of practice.

As noticed by Monterde (2015), the blurring of the inside and outside of the movement brought about by new participation modes, has a correlate for the positions of the researcher itself, that cannot be easily represented and located either inside or outside. This can be productively connected with the call of Deleuze & Guattari (1987), as well as of militant research, not to be “inside”, within the limits of the boundaries imposed by social or sociological representation, but to “work in the immanence” of action in which those boundaries, the *setting* of subjectivities and objectivities, is decomposed and recomposed.

More than a safe stay in “participant observation” or “militancy” positions, I have tried to both recognize and explore various modes, positions and perspectives, trying to avoid an “original position” or definitive perspective. I shifted between positions at various times and for a variety of reasons. Multiple modes and positions mean that, depending on the passage, my performances can be defined as “descriptive,” “normative”, “militant,” “investigative,” “interventive”, or otherwise. They do not proceed in a strict cumulative or progressive sense, but rather as different exercises of possibilities and impossibilities¹⁵⁹.

I would define this as a form not of militant, but of “kinetic” or “movement” research, a research in movement. Such an approach is not fixed by any concrete ethic-

¹⁵⁹ The inspirations for this way of approaching research are many, ranging from the “rhizome” metaphor (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) to the notion of “possibility” in Kundera’s *The Art of the Novel*. On a similar vein, Routledge (2004) points out, quoting Sun Tzu (1988, 125): “Adaptation means not clinging to fixed methods, but changing appropriately according to events, acting as is suitable”. In this case, a factor eventually (that is, in connection to the events) taken into account in that adaptation was the exercise and the will to exercise different possibilities.

epistemic position¹⁶⁰. This breaks the unity of the research gaze and the method in its Cartesian or “scientific” sense. It speaks of a shifting *methodos*, multi-positional and therefore alternating, becoming other. Ultimately, it points towards the relevance of that “alter”, the diverse others with which research put me in contact with, who changed me.

2.5.2.1. *Researching with others: networked participation and research*

I learned much of what I know about politics and technopolitics from actors. The actor-researcher positions appear only as “moments” in a wider, hybrid becoming of shared research and life. I tried to maintain both critical (Latour, 2005) and militant proximity with regard to actors¹⁶¹, many of which were actually friends of co-researchers.

I joined them in activist and research endeavors. One of these was the construction of the datanalysis15M research network, a network of activist-researchers interested in contentious politics and network science, based in Barcelona. I also became a member of the Networks, Movements, and Technopolitics research group at the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute of the Open University of Catalonia. As part of my participation in both of these collectives I have carried on collaborative, extensive and multi-method research on both 15M and Occupy. The results of those endeavors, such as a paper on collective identities (Monterde et al., 2015) or a survey (Monterde et al., 2017) are used in this study. Much of my knowledge of, and data for, network analysis also comes from those collaborations. This gives a different meaning to “participation” in both collective research and movements, as suggested by the Colectivo Situaciones. Both epistemic and political affinity intertwined, never without tensions and differences, like in friendships.

2.5.2.2. *Analyses in and on movements*

Political actors are continuously generating themselves and the movement, through views and narrations (Snow & Benford 2000) on what precedes, surrounds,

¹⁶⁰ As De Jong (2012) has interestingly pointed out with a more limited intention “A researcher is supposed to ‘choose’ a position prior to conducting fieldwork research [...] I argue, however, that the ethics regarding positioning should be approached as a continuous dynamic process in which a theoretical approach influences a researcher’s position which in turn may influence the theoretical approach.”

¹⁶¹ The potential charge of falling into the “ideology”, “viewpoint” or even the “world” of actors can only be sustained if one takes only a few viewpoints all oriented in about the same direction, thereby allowing some form of “consensual naturalization”, or if one assumes there is such a thing as an “ideology” (or several) speaking over and through them. Surely, there is much caution or, better, care to be taken on the part of the researcher, to the point of becoming a complementary thread to the one concerning the object and its possibilities.

confronts, or follows them. They self-analyze (Tilly, 1978; Touraine, 1981) for a variety of reasons, which go from public outreach to strategizing. The 15M movement involved thousands of participants with university studies (72% in the case of the 15M 2014 survey) and a research training. Objectifying self-analysis has played a prominent role in 15M as a generation of researchers enrolled in the movement. They have done so in a plurality of languages, a polyglossia that I try to reflect in my own text, trying to combine different materials (interviews, texts, images, datasets) forms of experience and writing styles (agitating, recording or recalling, advertising, research), etc.

This thesis should not be thought under the metaphorical coordinates of a mirror that reflects what the 15M cycle was, but rather under the metaphor of the palimpsest, the collage, or the more recent etherpad¹⁶². The cycle is rather the result of an iterative and collaborative construction than the presupposition the work.

As a general rule, the structure of the text-work follows the style of nomadic and ANT research (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Latour, 2005), following the phenomena without paying much attention to disciplinary boundaries. At the same time, it plays with disciplinary references and differences.

2.5.3. Methodologies and research approaches

The methods, in the traditional sense, deployed in this work come from the traditional repertoires of anthropology, political science, sociology, and STS, as well as from the more recent areas of digital humanities and network science.

2.5.3.1. Fieldwork

The key dispositives in my research was fieldwork. I may say that the fieldwork became indistinguishable from life. I spent five years of life in the field. I was immersed even as I was writing down this text, and I will remain there after finishing writing. “The field” included both offline and online spaces. Much of the material I used came from online sources. This is a timetable of my work

¹⁶² Etherpads are web-based, real-time, collaborative editors.

TABLE 10. SYNTHESIS OF FIELDWORK DURING THE RESEARCH PERIOD.

Collective or event	Observation	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
JSF	online	■	■	■	■	■	■
DRY	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
15M Demo	offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
Camps	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
15O	offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
Valencian Spring	online	■	■	■	■	■	■
Anniversary I	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
15MpaRato	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
25S	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
La PAH	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
Tides	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
X Party	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
Podemos	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
En Comú	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■
Demons	online/offline	■	■	■	■	■	■

2.5.3.2. Conversations and interviews

In depth interviews have long been a central tool in the ethnographic toolkit, as a way to enter into the lives and worlds of actors in their own terms. Semi-structured interviews hold particular value on this regard. Although I cite interviews in all of the cases and periods studied, I preferred to take notes after fluid conversations rather than to set up those conversations to answer my predefined questions. I tended to let those long and variegated conversations throw the answers, as well the questions, to me. I ran interviews for each of the different studied cases, but I also relied on interviews that many key actors had already given for different documentaries (specially 15m.cc) or researches (such as Monterde, 2015), which frequently published them under creative commons licenses. As I changed the focus of my thesis, I had to discard a good number of interviews that I ran between 2011 and 2016. In the end, I have worked with material from around 30+ interviews, 10 of which were carried on by me (the rest are mostly taken from the 15m.cc database, and my collaborator Arnau Monterde's thesis).

Here a list of 20 key interviews used in the thesis:

TABLE 11. LIST OF INTERVIEWS.

Name	Initiative	Year	Source
Alonso, Julio	Ley Sinde, Nolesvotes	2011	15M.cc
Arana, Miguel	15M, Podemos, Ayuntamiento de Madrid	2011	15m.cc
Dans, Enrique	Nolesvotes, Ley Sinde	2011	Nolesvotes.wiki
Franco, Marta	15M, Ahora Madrid	2011	15M.cc
Galli, Ricardo	Nolesvotes, Ley Sinde	2011	Nolesvotes.wiki
Grueso, Stephane	15M	2011	15M.cc
Huerga, Héctor	15M	2012	Me
Jurado, Francisco	15M, Partido X, Podemos	2012, 2013	Me, Arnau Monterde
Levi, Simona	X.net, 15M, Partido X	2013	Me, Arnau Monterde
Padilla, Marta	15M	2011	15M.cc
Padilla, Pablo	15M, Podemos	2011, 2014	15M.cc, Arnau Monterde
Salgado, Sergio	15M, X Party	2012	Me, Arnau Monterde
Sánchez, Manu	Periodismo Humano, 15M	2011	15M.cc
Sánchez Almeida, Carlos	Ley Sinde, Nolesvotes, 15M	2011	Me
Soto, Pablo	Ley Sinde, 15M, Podemos, Ahora Madrid	2011	15M.cc
Toret, Javier	DRY, Partido X, Barcelona en Comú	2012, 2013	Me
Vázquez, Daniel	Ley Sinde, 15M	2011	15M.cc
Zapata, Guillermo	15M, Ahora Madrid	2011	15M.cc
Zulo	15M	2011	15M.cc

Many of the conversations I refer to, though, took place online, so they overlap with the following set of materials. They were automatically archived as digital material by the platforms on which they took place.

2.5.3.3. Digital material

I have profusely recurred to digital contents in order to gather the materials that

ground this research. A key material on this regard has been social media contents, ranging from messages on Twitter and Facebook to images and videos in those or other platforms, such as Youtube and Livestream. An earlier technology that has remained crucial has been email, of which I have analyzed dozens, if not hundreds, of thousands. Instant messaging services such as WhatsApp and Telegram (promoted as a privacy friendly alternative to the former in 2014) have been very relevant too, particularly, from 2013 onwards. Many of these texts are written conversations, and exhibit their aliveness and style, but also the multiple defining characteristics of both digital and written media. I also include in this category of digital content a variety of blog posts, meeting notes, open group discussions, etc. that were posted in a variety of platforms, from commercial ones, such as WordPress, to alternative activist platforms such as n-1.

2.5.3.4. Surveys

The survey #Encuesta15M2014, which I launched along with collaborators (Monterde et al., 2017) had 51 questions concerning the respondents' participation in 15M, their previous experience in social movements, their use of ICTs during protests, the role of emotions, the evolution of the movement, and its impacts. My analysis is focused on respondents that participated in the movement (1014 of the total, which amounts to 76,8% of the sample), which seems a significative sample in order to illustrate the opinions and experiences of 15M participants.

2.5.3.5. Big data, network science and social network analysis

On top of traditional qualitative and quantitative methods and data, new network analysis methods and big data have gained traction with the advent of digitally networked activism. In principle, the formula "big data" refers to "data sets that are so large or complex that traditional data processing applications are inadequate. Challenges include analysis, capture, data curation, search, sharing, storage, transfer, visualization, querying and information privacy" (Big data, 2016).

Social network analysis data serves to explore, analyze and visualize these big datasets, and find the networks of relationships between the actors that generated such data. This is at the basis of my panoramic/systemic approach to 15M and contentious technopolitics more broadly. The three basic social media under study were Twitter, Facebook, and the Web.

2.5.3.6. Secondary and tertiary sources

For the present work, I have used different types of secondary sources. One of them are scholarly publications in a variety of disciplines: sociology, political science, philosophy, network science, biology, engineering, and more. Another set are handbook and encyclopedic articles, which include references to the Wikipedia and may count as tertiary sources. On the other hand, I recurred to hundreds of newspaper articles from mainstream media in Spain, the UK and the US, which covered, sometimes in detail, multiple events of the 2011-2016 cycle. Some of this blur the boundary between secondary and primary source. In a similar direction, further into the primary, I recurred to dozens of texts found on political blogs and wikis online, connected to the movements themselves in a variety of ways, ranging from reporting to militant research. Probably the paradigmatic case on this regard, a source of primary, secondary, and tertiary materials is the project 15M.cc, which includes interviews, a documentary, a 15M encyclopedia (www.15mpedia.org) and other valuable materials.

Chapter 3. Between crisis and critique: economic, political, and technological conditions in the ongoing reassembling of democracy in Spain.

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is oriented to give a general sense of the mid and short term socioeconomic and political situation of Spain and the global scene before 15M emerged. The chapter begins with an outline of the general features of the mid-term crisis of liberal representative democracy as constructed in the political science literature (Norris, 1999; Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Tormey, 2015). I connect this crisis to the rise of neoliberalism, and I list some symptoms, and their probable causes, as stated in the existing literature. Coming closer to the present, I reconstruct the short-term crisis that preceded 15M in its double nature, socioeconomic and political. Then I outline the origin, unfolding and crash of the Spanish economic (primarily, real estate) bubble in the 1998-2008 period. After that I move into the political crisis in Spain, where the State, like in the US, came to the rescue of big banks and other actors responsible for the economic meltdown. Furthermore, these rescues were quickly followed, already in 2010, by a new austerity discourse and logics, which accused of profligacy to governments such as that of the Spanish State, which had been an example of the opposite up to the hard hit of the crisis. Then I dig into a particular feature of the Spanish case: the extremely high level of corruption of the political system, especially, of the Popular Party, which played a crucial role in the boom and bust of the financial and real estate bubble. I reconstruct how the economic crisis feeds into an increasing political crisis from 2011 onwards. Afterwards I list some specific 15M motivations, and then attend to the shift from crisis to critique among the citizenry, otherwise, the transformation of a condition of crisis into a critical condition. A crucial element there was the counter-framing of the situation, against normalizing and people-blaming strategies led by key political and economic actors. Then, I outline the “chronic and evolving critical condition” that has underlined the cycle of contention opened by 15M, which has fed back with the processes and projects emerging from it. I close the chapter with a synoptic view of the cycle, from Nolesvotes to the scenario by late 2016, enumerating the key cases

that I will analyze, and why.

3.2. The crisis of liberal representative democracy: mid-term narratives

According to various authors, representative democracy has passed through periodic crises (Manin, 1997; Rosanvallon, 2011: 3). The last one may have been ongoing for the last two decades, at the least (Rosanvallon, 2008), and seems to be felt across the “ideological and methodological spectrum” (Tormey, 2015: 15). So much so that the crisis of liberal representative democracy has been identified with the crisis of democracy itself (Keane, 2011; DellaPorta, 2013). Different authors have denounced the technocratic tendencies and the neoliberal hegemony in this same period as heralding a stage of post-democracy (Crouch, 2004) or post-politics (Žižek, 1999; Rancière, 2001), while others, in a more limited way, have used the term “post-representation” to refer to the emptying of power and meaning of representative institutions, by dynamics ranging from globalization and the dismantling of the welfare state to citizen disaffection and dis-empowerment (Brito Vieira and Runciman, 2008; Keane, 2009; Rosanvallon, 2011; Tormey, 2015).

The readings of “post-representation” are multiple, though, connected with different political readings of the crisis and the potential ways out of it, from those that give conjunctural readings to those that tie it to the transformations of modernity, its subjectivities and modes of sociality (Tormey, 2015). Relevantly, the various attempts at potentiating participation and deliberation in the last decade have been considered insufficient to revert these tendencies (Keane, 2011; Tormey, 2015).

Interestingly, rather than taking the way of retreat into post-political inaction or the acceptance of post-democratic technocracy, 15M actors seemed to inaugurate a process of radical democratization of politics, a re-politicization of their own lives and their life in common. That process is 15M, and the cycle of contention it gave way to. As I mentioned in chapter 1, democracy, and, particularly, liberal representative democracy, is nowadays both more successful and more questioned than ever. As the quantity of countries that fit some of its basic traits increases, so its quality has been said to shrink where it is considered as already consolidated.

3.2.1. Representative symptoms of a crisis

Political scientists use different variables to check the health of representative democracy, among them “voter turnout, membership of political parties, trust in

politicians, and interest in mainstream electoral politics” (Tormey, 2015: 16).

Studies show be no definitive pattern in voting turnout¹⁶³. But when it comes to membership in political parties, the numbers are clear: the decline is marked, with mainstream parties' affiliates declining from 25-30% of the electorate to 2-3% in most developed democracies (Mair and Van Biezen, 2001; Hay, 2007; Whiteley, 2011). This has made parties ever more dependent on corporate money, in turn raising the suspicion of co-optation among their electorates and shrinking constituencies—for debates on the need of public funding of parties (Van Biezen, 2004). According to Manin (1997), a typical strategy of electoralist parties in audience democracies, in part responsible and in part caused by these tendencies, is to compensate the lack of grassroots with the nurturing of political personalities reaching people via mass media. But that goes hand in hand with an emptying out of parties as spaces of “participation in representation” and collective identification, a weakening of the role of political programs, and thereby of the sense of meaningful political choices¹⁶⁴ (Della Porta, 2013). As a consequence, research indicates a shrinking capacity of parties to mediate between civil society and State institutions, as they did for a good part of XIXth and XXth centuries (Manin, 1997).

According to numerous accounts (Dalton 2004; Flinders 2012; DellaPorta 2013), this, in turn, affects a third variable (after voter turnout and party membership): confidence in the political class, parties and government is also collapsing. Some authors indicate that even where politicians are approachable figures, such as in Australia or Northern European countries, they are still untrusted (Dalton 2004), and wonder whether the double-face of the political system (the need to act partisan while in elections or the opposition, and non-partisanly while in government) may have to do with this mistrust (Rosanvallon, 2011; Tormey, 2015).

Finally, the literature (Street 2001; Meyer and Hinchman, 2002; Corner and Pels, 2003) also suggests that a fourth variable, interest in mainstream politics, is in decline too, except when elections or crises happen, as can be appreciated in media coverage. Programs on politics have been forced to turn into “infotainment”.

¹⁶³ Voter turnout has been steadily declining in State elections of European countries in the last decades (Lane & Ersson, 1999). In the US, the pattern has been more varied, with a decline that receded in the 2000s, and a relatively stable turnout in younger democracies such as Spain's. Numbers have tended to be worse on both supranational (for instance, European Union) and sub-national (regional or local) elections. Differences aside, the general lesson seems to be that turnout rises when something seems to be at stake for the electorate—even though that lesson failed, precisely, in the State elections in Spain on December 20th 2015.

¹⁶⁴ In terms of Weber, rational legitimation recedes in favor of a charismatic type.

Different analyses have been rather pessimist with regard to the quality of democracy in advanced economies (Diamond and Morlino, 2005), including citizen's declining satisfaction with the working of political institutions (Pharr & Putnam, 2000). Other studies suggest that, while “reasonable satisfaction” increases when a range of meaningful options are available for choosing at elections, these choices are not frequent (Wessels, 2011). Ultimately, studies noticed that political apathy becomes a central feature of attitudes towards representative politics in places such as the US (Eliasoph, 1998) and across most Western democracies (Tormey, 2015).

3.2.1.1. Some features of the neoliberal melting of representative democracy

According to DellaPorta (2013: 23), neoliberal globalization undermines democracy and people's trust in it by catalyzing three central shifts of power: from representative organizations (such as parties) and institutions to executive powers, emptying party politics of its meaning; from State to market, emptying out public policy and government, more broadly; and from nation states to “international governmental organizations” such as the EU, the IMF or the World Bank, which empties both nation States and democracies of much of their legitimacy and power. According to Offe (2011: 457):

“causal narratives on the crisis of democracy include economic globalization and the absence of effective supranational regulatory regimes; the exhaustion of the left-to-the-center political ideas and the hegemony of market-liberal public philosophies, together with their anti-statist implications; and the impact of financial and economic crises and the ensuing fiscal starvation of nation states which threatens to undermine their state capacity”.

These analyses seem to point towards the limitation of democracy by representation and the undermining of representation by neoliberalism suggested in chapter 2.

Looking at 15M accounts, it seems Spain has been no different from other representative democracies. But looking at media and academic reports, the situation of Spain in the period 2008-2016 has been particularly bad, as it was one of the countries worst hit by all the various waves and dimensions of the crisis.

3.3. The economic crisis: short-term narratives

According to multiple reports (Duménil & Lévy, 2011), 2008 marked the beginning of

a deep economic crisis that came to shake the neoliberal hegemony. Here I focus on the Spanish case. I present a series of media and academic accounts that help to construct a general narrative on the economic and political conditions in Spain that preceded and underlined the 15M cycle.

3.3.1. The origin, unfolding, and crash of the Spanish bubble in the period 1998-2008

In order to reconstruct the origin, unfolding, and crash of the Spanish bubble in the period 1998-2008 I rely on two analyses by actors situated in the critical left and close to projects of the 15M cycle: López & Rodríguez (2010), Madrilian activists associated to autonomous projects and 15M, as well as Montiel & Naredo (2011), the second later became Podemos Secretary General in the Valencian Community. Both have resumed the origin of the Spanish crisis in this way: on 2008, a housing bubble, tied to a decade old development model, exploded. According to that narrative, the model had been set up by the government of the right wing Popular Party in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and was perpetuated by the center-left Socialist Party between 2004 and 2007. The cycle made the Spanish economy fly and crash in a decade.

López & Rodríguez, 2010 note that after the inclusion of Spain in the European Union in 1985, “convergence” with Maastricht's neoliberal economic union involved, along with the reception of EU development funds, the implementation of policies ranging from the liberalization of previously public sectors to the tight control of public deficit and wages, up to the adoption of the Euro in 1999. According to their account, in 1998, as part of those broad neoliberal policies, and in order to solve the shortage and high prices of housing, the right wing Popular Party declared a law on land that liberalized real estate development¹⁶⁵. As exposed in López & Rodríguez's reconstruction, between 1998 and 2007, peak year of the cycle, the housing stock rose by 30%, and construction came to amount directly (not to say indirectly) up to 13,3% of total employment in Spain (compared to 6,7% in Germany or 8,5% in the UK). In the meantime, housing prices, far from falling, skyrocketed.

Montiel & Naredo (2011) have pointed that, since Franco's times, in Spain, housing is seen as a safe investment, stable like bricks, one you can live in. Economists

¹⁶⁵ The law change paradigms: from requiring to authorities (local, regional, national) to justify why to classify a given land as “developable”, now the key was to justify and delimit what terrain was “not developable”.

closer to official circles (Arellano & Bentolila, 2009)¹⁶⁶, have suggested that economic growth, to a good extent due to the housing bubble, fed back with growing employment and immigration (usually working on, and requiring, housing), as well as sharply declining interest rates in borrowing resulting from the adoption of the Euro¹⁶⁷, reinforced with inter-bank competition that lowered credit requisites, when not promoted, borrowing. All of that pushed annual inflation in housing up from 1% in the period 1995-1997 to 18% in 2003-2004, to an average of 10% per year in the period 1995-2007, with a revaluation of houses up to 191% in the period 1997-2007 (the second highest in the OECD). According to López & Rodríguez (2010), these dynamics both promoted and were promoted by investment and speculation: the adoption of the Euro (and European unified interest rates) encouraged international investment as well as national borrowing during the period. National and international banks, and, especially, regional saving banks, got wide exposition, via credit, to the housing sector.

López & Rodríguez indicate that, in the midst of this economic growth, real wages (as Piketty 2014 has shown also for other countries, especially with the rise of neoliberalism) tended to remain stagnant, thanks, among other factors, to successive labor reforms; thereby, improvements in life status were primarily covered via credit and revaluation of stocks, especially, housing.

According to Arellano & Bentolila (2009), although warnings of housing overvaluation were out since 2002, the right wing Popular Party (from now on PP), which denied the existence of a bubble, and the Socialist Party (from now on PSOE), which recognized it late and did too little, contributed to its building up. According to them, three reasons for the reluctance to act strongly seemed to be the fact that the bubble pushed unemployment rates to historical lows, it benefited the median voter (via homeowner's property), and, crucially, it represented a key source of taxation, indirectly (via income taxes) and, more crucially, directly (via legal and illegal "taxation" of real estate transactions). Illegal taxes were at the base of much of the corruption that begun to hit the news after 2008, feeding into a radical political crisis. As noted by Montiel & Naredo (2011), in late 2007 housing prices began a decline,

¹⁶⁶ Manuel Arellano and Samuel Bentolila are professors at the Center for Monetary and Financial Studies, created by the Bank of Spain.

¹⁶⁷ As a result of the adoption of the Euro and the economic growth, interest rates dropped from 11% in 1995 to 3,45% in 2003-2005, which were even lower in real terms due to the inflation associated with growth and the shift to Euro.

connected to a number of causes, including a saturation of demand (in Spain there were hundreds of thousands of both overvalued and empty houses at the time, waiting for a buyer). In 2007-2008, the subprime mortgage crisis unfolds in the US, impacting lending worldwide, and triggering a rise of interest rates in Europe, pushing mortgage fees up, and triggering a “liquidity crunch” among both lenders and borrowers. Many real estate developers began to halt their activity, what in turn troubled them, as well as common people, in paying their debts for real estate assets now in decline.

By 2008 the situation hit the news. A crash in the housing sector was aired in the media: huge drops in sales, drops in prices, and the crash of big real estate developers (such as Martín-Fadesa, the biggest crash of Spanish history) (Cinco Días, 2008), a tendency that continued in 2009. This first and strongly impacted unemployment. Official statistics (INE, 2011) suggested that, in the following period, Spain moved from 7,93% of unemployment in the second quarter of 2007 up to 20,64% in the second quarter of 2011, with rates among young people rising even more dramatically, up to 45% in the ages 16-24¹⁶⁸.

3.4. The political crisis: short-term narratives

3.4.1. The State comes to the rescue but ends in austerity

I follow Rodríguez & López (2010) and media reconstructions of the ensuing State reactions. According to them, the rise in unemployment took place in spite of the countercyclical, stimulus of the Socialist Party, launched to stimulate economic activity, in late 2008 and 2009, the so called “Plan E”, which followed Keynesian principles. In spite of some temporary effects, struggling citizens, faced with unemployment, a devaluing of their assets (houses) or deeply in debt, began to feel the harshness of the crisis.

As these narratives point out, since 2008, the State accounts ran continuous deficits as unemployment soared along with the need to pay unemployment benefits, while economic activity and thereby tax collection plummeted. The situation worsened as the process came to affect banks dramatically. Starting in 2009, a series of banks, and especially, regional saving banks that heavily financed housing in previous years, started a process of partial crashes and State-steered fusions, with State and EU-backed support or bailouts lasting several years (Serrano, 2013b). In 2009 Spain

¹⁶⁸ With rates between 45% (16-24) and 26% (24-29) on the second semester of 2011, up from 21,3% and 11,3% respectively, in 2008 (Rocha Sánchez, 2012).

was the OECD country that provisioned the most money to save the banking sector, 2% of its GDP, four times the quantity employed by the US and six that of the UK. In 2010, the risk premium¹⁶⁹ of Spanish debt began to rise steadily¹⁷⁰. Along with the “risk premium”, international credit rating agencies, under heavy criticism for failing to warn of the risks of troubled assets that brought about the subprime bubble, began to play a central role, along with “the markets”, in the Spanish political and mediascape (Belío, 2013).

According to international critical economist, Mark Blyth (2013), as a response to this situation, in 2010, another neoliberal idea, a “dangerous one” one that was to drive much economic policy in the following years, began to gain force, first in international and EU circles, then in Spanish ones. That idea was economic austerity¹⁷¹.

The notion that States had overspent was blasted through economic media and official EU institutions (such as the ECB). According to Blyth (2013) this resulted from a generalization from the Greek case when, actually, for cases like Spain, the opposite was true, especially up to the crisis (Murado, 2010). The first social welfare cuts of a long series began in May, 2010, under the Socialist government (Garea, 2010), quickly followed by liberalizing labor reforms that potentiated precarity (Guamán, 2011). The 2010 social cuts were the biggest in the history of Spanish democracy up to that moment.

3.4.2. The corrupt fabric of the indebted man

From different media, including governmental ones, a narrative reconstruction, inaugurated by the PSOE and potentiated by the PP, especially after the access to power of the latter in late 2011, said that Spaniards had lived over their possibilities and thereby needed to tighten their belts (as suggested by the Government spokesperson, Socialist José Blanco (Recuero & Delgado, 2011), or by the president of the Valencian Community, Popular Albert Fabra (El Mundo, 2012).

¹⁶⁹ The risk premium is the interest rate a country pays to investors buying its State bonds, relative to the rate paid by Germany, in considered the safest bond of a EU country.

¹⁷⁰ This resulted from worsening conditions nationally (from all the elements mentioned, especially increasing State debt resulting from taxes-expenditures imbalances and bank bailouts) and internationally, particularly, perceptions about struggling EU countries such as Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Portugal (Medialdea & Sanabria, 2014).

¹⁷¹ In Blyth's terms (2013: 2), austerity is “a form of voluntary deflation in which the economy adjusts through the reduction of wages, prices, and public spending to restore competitiveness, which is (supposedly) best achieved by cutting the State's budget, debts, and deficits. Doing so, its advocates believe, will inspire “business confidence” since the government will neither be “crowding-out” the market for investment by sucking up all the available capital through the issuance of debt, nor adding to the nation's already “too big” debt”.

For critical voices of the left, such narratives were a product and mechanism of a “fabric of the indebted man” (Lazzarato, 2012), persuading people into subjectivities suited for accepting austerity, in this case justified as the proper punishment for collective excesses, deciphered as moral failures. For other critical voices (López & Rodríguez, 2010; Krugman, 2009, 2011), this narrative downplayed or obliterated references to crucial elements of the situation, such as the ones mentioned above: from land laws triggering the housing bubble, to labor reforms tied to real wage stagnation in years of sharp growth, the role of Eurozone imbalances and money flows, or its poor institutional design, which prevented key mechanisms of economic control at the State level, such as interest rates, while preventing welfarist tax redistribution.

Simultaneously, by the late 2000s, mainstream media (strongly partisan in Spain, Palau & Davesa, 2013; Baumgartner & Chaqués Bonafont, 2015) were flooded with news of corruption cases involving PSOE and PP, whose representatives alternatively dismissed accusations and accused each other of being responsible for the widespread corruption that was progressively unearthed. Media began to outline a portrayal in which corruption touched every layer of the political system, local, regional and State, as well as many other institutions, public and private. Furthermore, corruption scandals were usually directly connected to the housing bubble itself, fueling and fueled by it (Villoria, 2008; Villoria & Jiménez, 2012).

3.5. Surveying 15M motivations

3.5.1. The socioeconomic crisis as a political crisis and revelation

As economic conditions worsened, political measures made life harder for an increasing number of people, and political corruption was progressively revealed, in 2010 and 2011, the economic and social crises took a new form: a political one. According to the Center of Sociological Research, levels of disapproval of the political class rose steadily: from February 2010 onwards, and for the following few years, it became the third biggest problem of the country according to public perception, after unemployment and economic problems (only leaving that place with the arrival of “corruption and fraud”, in February 2013). The levels rose from 19,3% on December 2010 up to 22,1% in May 2011 and over 24% in June, the two months of peak activity of the 15M movement¹⁷².

¹⁷² These percentages of respondents correspond to people marking “Politicians in general, political parties and politics” in a multi-question survey ran by the Center of Sociological Research on a

As I show in chapter 4, 15M anticipated many of the perceptions that were later to become much more common among the general population with regard to economic and political issues. For instance, as I just mentioned, “corruption and fraud”, crucial for activists even before the beginning of the movement, became second in the list of big problems in the years 2013, 2014, and 2015. Campaigns such as Nolesvotes and 15M itself diagnosed a fake and corrupt democracy as centrally related to the economic crisis, not only in the response to it, but in its very emergence.

According to an online survey we ran on 2014 (Monterde et al., 2017), these were the key ones for people who participated in the movement

TABLE 12. PROBLEMS THAT DROVE PARTICIPANTS TO 15M

Factor	Percentage of respondents (%)
Lack of democracy	88,8
Corruption	77,6
Economic crisis	66,6
Social cuts	64,2
Unemployment	53
Housing	46,4
Others	28,9
No reason	0,5
DK/NA	0,4

The survey suggests that “lack of democracy” and “corruption”, two key elements of the political crisis, were more relevant to 15M participants than the economic situation. On this, 15M anticipated many of the worries that were to rise, months later, among the general population.

3.6. Between crisis and critique: the movement from a condition of crisis into a critical condition

The double crisis (socioeconomic and political) outlined so far seems to amount to what Antonio Gramsci (1971) defined as an “organic crisis”, namely, a process of weakening of an established sociopolitical hegemony, the debilitation of the commitment of wide majorities to the constituted order, its ruling groups, and its common sense. But, as suggested by RMT, a crisis may, by itself, may remain an inert condition. The multi-factorial socioeconomic crisis sweeping Spain since 2008 and its related political crisis, as well as the growing discontent, were crucial

monthly basis. Data available at www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Indicadores/documentos_html/TresProblemas.html. The Center for Sociological Research is an “autonomous center, dependent on the Ministry of the Presidency”.

conditions, but not sufficient ones, for the emergence of 15M.

A relevant political opportunity was constructed around the local and regional elections due on May 22nd, 2011. As repeated by numerous actors (as shown in Monterde, 2016), the demonstration on May 15th was oriented to display and galvanize the discontent with the situation, which no actor was canalizing (this lack was another element of the opportunity), around a relevant political date. The period of preparation for May 15th was one of construction of new subjects, collectives, and networks, especially, on social media (Toret et al., 2015). The months before, during and after 15M witnessed what I may define as a multitudinous movement, a displacement, from organic crisis to organized critique, from a situation of massive crisis into a multitudinous critical condition. Activist initiatives gave to the multi-factorial crisis a critical discursive rendition, a framing that they also promoted, that they themselves embodied in practice. In chapter 4 I explore this transition.

In broad terms, this relation between crisis and critique could be put into words by playing with a well-known Kantian formula: conditions without renditions are blind, renditions without conditions are empty. Against the possibility of a silent crisis being brutally “solved” by the mechanisms of the system in crisis (to put it in Klein's 2007 terms, via “shock doctrine”, austerity plans, silencing of exploitation and dissent, and the like—basically, the strategy of the European Union and the Spanish government, especially since the electoral victory of the right-wing Popular Party in late 2011), or that of a vociferous critique disconnected from broad constituencies and material reality (perhaps the type of critique that allegedly has “run out of steam”, according to Latour, 2004a), otherwise, against mere crisis and mere critique, what can be found, especially since 2011, in Spain, is the construction of a “multitudinous critical condition”: the critical rendition by many of a critical condition for many. This required the rendition of that double crisis, socio-economic and political, as a critical condition—in a passive sense, as something people were suffering—, and the deployment of that rendition as part of the articulation of a shared critical condition towards the situation—in an active and practical sense, as something people should exercise.

The displacement from crisis to critique is tied to affective mobilization¹⁷³, the construction of what I may call “critical affects”, such as “indignation”, but also “empowerment” and “hope” (Toret et al., 2015). In social movements, frames do not

¹⁷³ Melucci (1996: 71) was among the first in pointing “there is no cognition without feeling and no meaning without emotion”.

mobilize if they do not move, they have no effectiveness without affectivity. From conditions and crisis to critique (which involves critical renditions and affects) in relation to a critical organization.

As I analyze in chapter 4, this discursive rendition and organizational articulation, first articulated by a number of initiatives in the months preceding May 15th—initiatives such as Don't Vote for Them, ATTAC, Futureless Youth, HforHousing, and up to 200 more—culminated in Real Democracy Now and the organization of the demonstration on that day. The convergence of those various groups was a critical networked multitude, a multitude with a critical mass, able to act in over 60 cities and connect them via social media. It surely was to change and even dissolve in the later cycle, but many of its discourses and frames remained.

3.6.1. 15M counter-framing: elements of a critical rendition

Although I get into more detail in the empirical chapters, I briefly outline some of the main lines of the critical rendition, the critical, discursive counter-framing of the situation, galvanized around 15M.

To the general presentation of the crisis as a fate of the economy, first, and as a logical result of collective moral flaws, later, 15M contraposed a completely different assemblage of frames. Noticing the benefits for corrupt politicians, real estate developers and bankers in the face of increasing popular poverty and unemployment (which I mentioned in earlier sections), a diagnostic (re)framing in one of the most frequent 15M slogans was: “no es una crisis, es una estafa” (it is not a crisis, it is a fraud).

People had to break away from their self-blaming (we have lived beyond our means) and inert pessimist views (this is the generation that will live worse than their parents), usually blasted through mainstream media and government representatives: “before collective protest can get under way, people must collectively define their situations as unjust and subject to change through group action” (McAdam 1982: 51).

This diagnostic reframing appeared already tied to a denial to play a role in that fraud, as the banners heading the demonstrations on May 15th clearly stated, “no somos mercancías en manos de políticos y banqueros” (we are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers). These slogans transmitted several ideas: the first, that people had been, and were being, cheated, that they had been enrolled, in

a wide range of dispositions, from convinced to forced, to play a game that was ultimately to their detriment (it is a fraud); the second, that they already had realized it; the third was the rejection of it all, their rejection to become commodities or puppets in the hands of political and financial elites.

In the face of such a discredited system, which was leaving people out (crisis and unemployment) and then asking them what they did not have (via private or public debt), which turned its austerity measures directly against the small (by European standards) Spanish welfare state, 15M participants shouted “no somos antisistema, el sistema es anti-nosotros” (we are not against the system, the system is against us). Most participants were not earlier militants (Monterde et al., 2017), convinced promoters of alternatives, but people more or less adapted to the system, which felt it stopped working for them. These conditions have remained in the following years of the triple crisis (economic, political, social), with levels of youth unemployment sky-high. Statistics and media portrayed thousands of people “idle”, unrepresented, suffering, and yet competent, including “the best educated generation” of the history of the country (Cavero, 2011). A generation for which media sanctioned narratives anticipated an inevitable worsening of their life conditions, a generation that would “live worse than the generation of their parents”. Collectives such as Futureless Youth answered to these prognostics with emboldening slogans such as “Homeless, jobless, pensionless, fearless”.

Against a struggling population and youth, there were the financial and political elites. “No hay pan pa tanto chorizo¹⁷⁴” (there is no bread for so many sausages), said a popular 15M slogan to characterize these very elites, their corruption and their established “kleptocracy” (Monedero, 2011). On this adversarial framing, 15M did not make much difference between right wing and center left parties. After the cuts and reforms of the Socialist Party during 2010 and 2011, with numerous corruption cases and similar neoliberal policies to those of the PP, the 15M slogan “PSOE, PP, la misma mierda es” (PSOE, PP, the same shit it is) was indicative of a general rejection of the political establishment, which came to be popularized with terms such as “bipartidismo” (bipartidism) and “PPSOE” (combining the acronyms PP and PSOE), and whose alternation in power was compared with the forged “political turnism” of conservatives and liberals between 1881 and 1923.

With a worsening economic situation and party image, coinciding with widely

¹⁷⁴ “Chorizo” is a Spanish term to refer to thieves.

unpopular policies, the standing of representative democracy itself is put under question. Ultimately, as the double culmination of this critical rendition of the political crisis, the two central 15M slogans said: “no nos representan” (they do not represent us) and, finally, “lo llaman “democracia”, y no lo es” (they call it “democracy”, and it is not). These chants, sung on May 15th and repeated periodically in the following years, had a wide social echo. Against this critical rendition, the utopic call, the propositive framing of the movement, was for a “democracia real, ya!” (real democracy, now!).

3.6.2. The becoming of the double crisis 2011-2016

3.6.2.1. A long economic crisis

So far, I have focused on narratives around the conditions that set up the scene in which the 15M movement emerged. But the cycle has run way beyond the movement. In the period 2011-2016, the triple crisis did not go away. At many points, and in various senses, it got worst. Bad economic data and news of corruption cases were a continuous and recurrent feature of the socio- and media-scape.

To resume the 2011-2016 trajectory, I recur to the usual referents: statistics and chronologies. With them I try not to “prove” or “explain” anything but rather to “illustrate”, to cast and register an impression of some of the problems, scandals, and worries that tainted the period. I list key news and data on three factors: public perception of problems, economic performance (unemployment, especially, youth unemployment, and GDP growth), as well as political-institutional corruption cases and controversial decisions. These three coincide with the motives of 15M participants that I have listed above.

From a technical perspective, the “economic recession” begun in Spain in 2008 and lasted until 2014. It was a long, “double dip” recession. If numbers fit expectations, Spain will not recover its GDP previous to the crisis until 2017 (Mars, 2015).

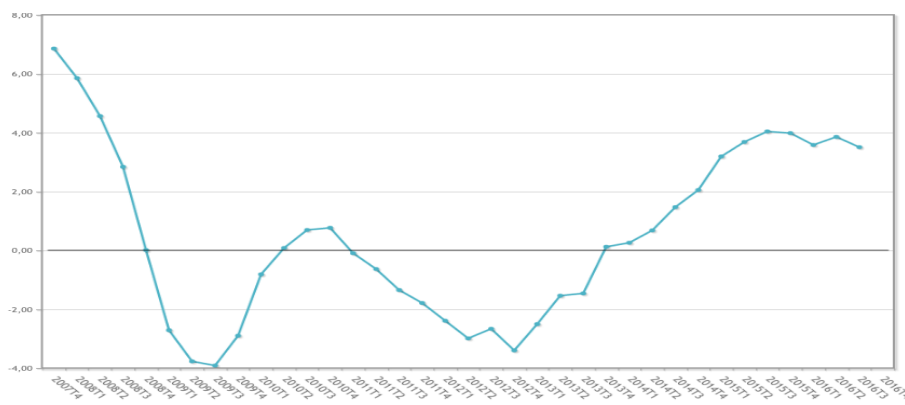


FIGURE 2. GDP GROWTH. PERIOD: 4TH QUARTER 2007-4TH QUARTER 2016.

SOURCE: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS (INE).

Unemployment rose dramatically, and it has remained very high, especially for those under 25, long after the country was technically out of the recession.

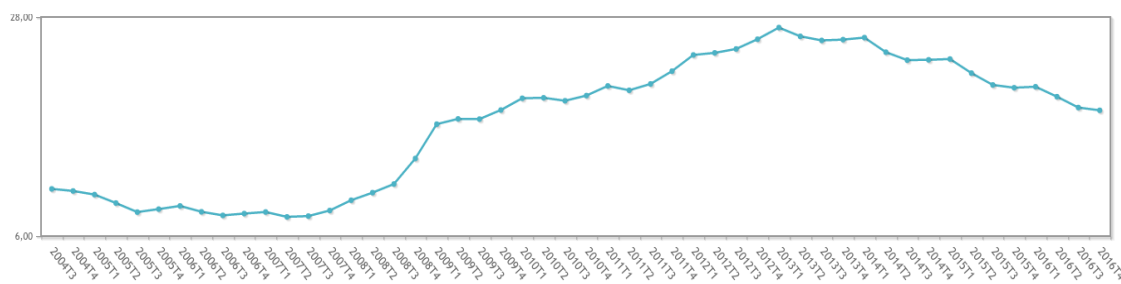


FIGURE 3. UNEMPLOYMENT (% OF ACTIVE POPULATION). PERIOD: 3RD QUARTER 2004-4TH QUARTER 2016.

SOURCE: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS (INE).

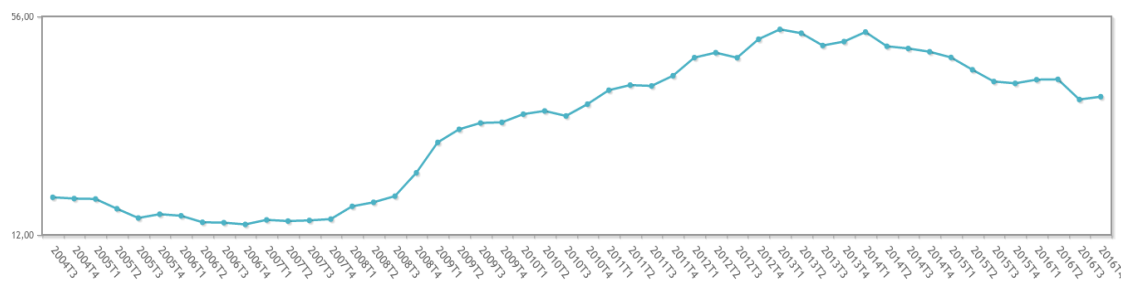


FIGURE 4. PERCENTAGE OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG PEOPLE UNDER 25. PERIOD: 3RD QUARTER 2004 – 4TH QUARTER 2016. SOURCE: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS (INE).

Since 2013 (El Mundo, 2013) the Popular Party in government insisted in the idea that the country was getting out of the crisis. According to different estimates, perceptions around economic performance began a tendency to improve, as well.

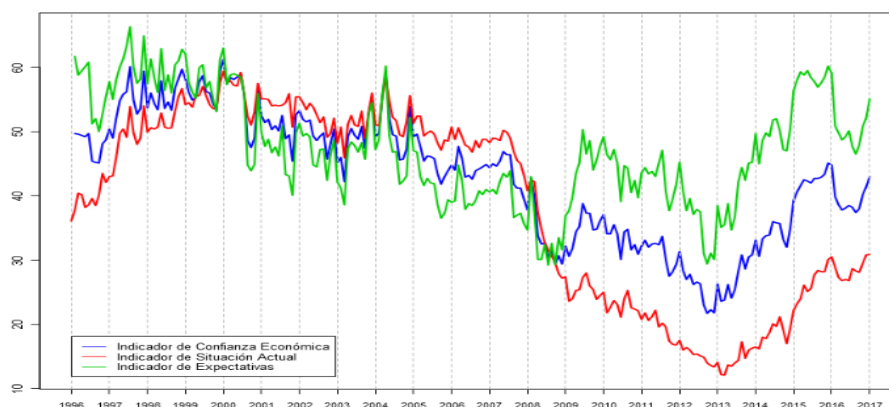


FIGURE 5. PERCEPTION OF THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY (RANGE 0-100)¹⁷⁵ INCLUDING “ECONOMIC CONFIDENCE” (BLUE), “PRESENT SITUATION” (RED), AND “EXPECTATIONS” (GREEN). PERIOD: 1996-2017.

SOURCE: CENTER FOR SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH (CIS).

Macroeconomic data confirmed the diagnostic with regard to the technical end of recession, but the general portrayal was more complex. A first aspect of this complexity concerns the alleged causes for the macroeconomic improvement. Even for the macroeconomic, GDP element, several accounts have been given: when it comes to external factors, variables such as loans from the ECB—with their budget strings attached—, low interest rates in Europe, the low price of the Euro and oil, have been stressed; internally, cuts in wages and workers' rights and benefits have been noticed as crucial. Between 2007 and 2014, average salaries dropped 22,2% (Ruiz & Alba, 2016). Different reports point out that reduction in unemployment has gone hand in hand with the rise of precarious jobs (temporal, partial time jobs, etc.), and related to the growth of long term unemployment and people dropping the search of employment, thereby losing their social benefits (UGT, 2015; CCOO, 2016).

A synthetic resume of the ensuing growth of poverty and inequality can be found in a widely publicized report by Intermon Oxfam (Ruiz & Alba, 2016). The report shows that, in 2014, a record 13,4 million people (29,2% of the Spanish population) were on the verge of poverty or social exclusion, 2,3 million more than in 2007. In 2015, 1% of the population concentrated almost as much wealth as the poorest 80%. In that year, the 1%'s lot grew 15% while that of the other 99% dropped by 15%. That

¹⁷⁵ The range 0-100 is broken down as follows: “0” equals “very bad”, “25”, “bad”, “50”, “average”; “75”, “good”, “100”, “very good”. The present situation index is built on the bases of answers to the question “Concerning the general economic situation of Spain, how would you rate it: very good, good, average, bad, or very bad?”. The expectation index is built on the bases of answers to the question: “And, do you think that, in a year, the economic situation of the country will be better, equal, or worse than now?” The economic trust index is built averaging the previous two indexes.

appears directly correlated with the mentioned increase of precarity, the permanence of high unemployment, the shrinking social benefits, as well as the rise in wages for the privileged few.

According to Intermon, a complementary factor is the low taxation to big patrimonies and companies, summed to their high fiscal evasion and avoidance, which have accelerated during the crisis, and the general weakness of redistribution mechanisms. That makes the effective fiscal pressure in the Spanish State one of the lowest in Europe, 8,2 points below the Eurozone average. As a result, the country ranks second among the countries with highest growth in inequality in the period 2007-2014, 10 times the European average, and 14 times that of Greece. This came to break the tendency since the 80s, leaving people “impoverished and more unequal” (Ruiz & Alba, 2016: 4).

3.6.2.2. A long political crisis

Then, along with these socioeconomic data, there has been a continuous political crisis, articulated discursively by mainstream media and 15M cycle initiatives. Its main driver has been the emergence and unfolding of corruption cases. From 2007 onwards, when some big cases involving major parties and institutions (such as the PP and the royal family) begun to surface, the flow has not stopped. After 2009, the number accelerated: the “Gürtel case”, opened on that year, remained open as of late 2016, involving dozens of Popular Party members, especially in Valencia, Madrid and Galicia, who were bribed by a network of companies in exchange for public assignments. In 2013, a line of this case evolved into the “Bárcenas case”, which in the following years showed how many of those bribing funds (and potentially, from other illegal practices) were funneled into a “B accounting”¹⁷⁶ (Pérez, 2015). On 2015, a judge considered proven that the Popular Party had been using a “B account” since, at least, the 1990s. Treasury reports indicate that the Popular Party used these unreported funds to pay for things ranging from bonuses to high profile party members to the restyling of its headquarters in Madrid, or political campaigns. In October 2014, new judicial operations such as Púnica (EIPaís, 2016) uncovered a similar bribing network associated to members of the Popular Party, and some from PSOE and IU (United Left), spanning cities in Madrid, Valencia, Castile and León, and Murcia. PSOE members were also on trial in dozens of cases throughout the Spanish geography, the most remarkable one being the “ERE” case

¹⁷⁶ That is, unreported to the tax authorities and receiving money from illegal operations.

(Ley et al., 2016). Opened in 2011, it involved members of the PSOE within the Andalusian regional government, members of the unions, CCOO, and UGT, as well as dozens of individuals and companies, in cases of fraudulent early retirement, formation courses, funding to companies not undergoing an ERE (labor force adjustment plan), over-inflated fees to government-workers intermediaries (insurance companies, firm lawyers, unionists, etc.), and a variety of other offenses and felonies amounted to an estimate of several hundred million euros. Members of the royal family were also involved in similar practices: since 2010, the “Nóos” case revealed how the King's son in law used a corporate plot to channel money to tax havens, money received from inflated bills for a variety of (sometimes non-) existent works to public institutions (Pinheiro & Cortizo, 2017). The King himself was at the center of different scandals, from the revelation of his personal wealth, coming from dubious sources, to his favors to different individuals, through his (mis)behaviors in a time of hardship (Anderson, 2014). So much so that he had to abdicate on June 2014 with a level of approval of 3,72 out of 10 in May (only slightly above the 3,68 of a year earlier, the lowest, coinciding with the imputation of his daughter in the Nóos case) (Medrano, 2014), symptoms of the rampant organic crisis.

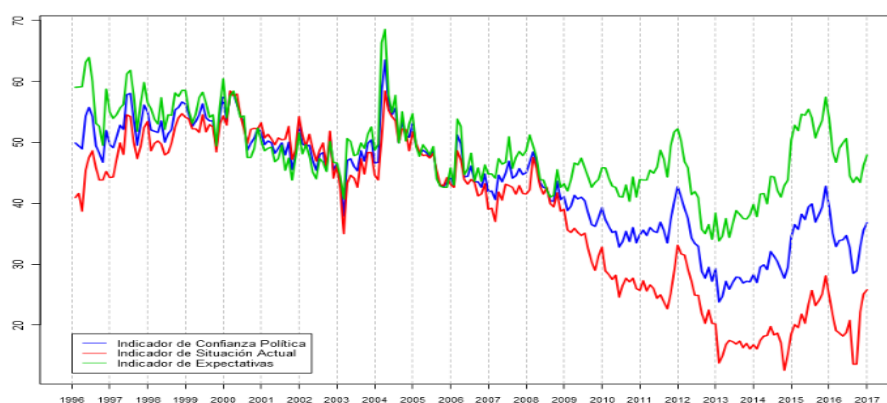


FIGURE 6. PERCEPTION OF POLITICS¹⁷⁷ (RANGE 0-100) INCLUDING “POLITICAL CONFIDENCE” (BLUE), “PRESENT SITUATION (RED), AND “EXPECTATIONS” (GREEN). PERIOD: 1996-2017. SOURCE: CENTER FOR SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH (CIS).

As these charts indicate, the perceptions around politics were much lower and

¹⁷⁷ The present situation index is built on the bases of answers to the question “Concerning the general political situation of Spain, how would you rate it: very good, good, average, bad, or very bad?”. The expectation index is built on the bases of answers to the question: “And, do you think that, in a year, the political situation of the country will be better, equal, or worse than now?” The political trust index is built averaging the previous two indexes.

needed much more time to recover than the ones on economics. Actually, the lowest political point coincides with the “Púnica” case, in late 2014—the other two lowest points coinciding with the first revelations of the “Bárceñas” case, in early 2013, and mid-2016, with new corruption revelations around the PP and the second elections in 6 months. Similar coincidences can be found looking at the survey on “the biggest problems of the country”¹⁷⁸.

Nevertheless, after several years of free fall, bipartisanship, as measured by vote intention, got some respite after 2015, as part of the initial enthusiasm for the new electoral force Podemos lost some steam. In the General elections on December 20th, 2015, the results left a fragmented parliament which was unable to compose a government¹⁷⁹.

The lack of inter-party agreements, in turn, forced the call of new elections, celebrated on June 26th, 2016. The crucial difference, for these elections¹⁸⁰, has been the coalition of Podemos and IU (United Left), into an electoral candidacy called Unidos Podemos, whose votes combine also those of Podemos regional “confluences” with other political forces—the strongest regional confluence being En Comú Podem, in Catalonia. The results, though, were similar¹⁸¹, but the slight rise of the Popular Party allowed them to form a government. Mariano Rajoy was invested President on October 29th.

3.7. An overview of the 15M cycle (2011-2016): from NoLesVotes to the post-general elections 20D

In order to situate the processes that I analyze in this thesis, I present now a brief outline of the 2011-2016 cycle, including key actors and events of my narrative. In doing so I follow and enrich an earlier chronology by Monterde (2015), who himself used a variety of materials¹⁸². Like in his reconstruction, I am interested in stressing “technopolitical” details. For simplicity reasons, the timeline is a single one, although

¹⁷⁸ Data retrieved from

www.cis.es/opencms/-Archivos/Indicadores/documentos_html/TresProblemas.html

¹⁷⁹ The right wing Popular Party got 6.215.752 votes, 28,72% of the total, and 123 parliamentarians; the Socialist Party, 5.530.779 votes, 22,01%, of the total, and 90 parliamentarians; Podemos and its regional confluences reached 5.189.333 votes, 20,6% of the total, 69 parliamentarians, and Ciudadanos (a liberal-right party, born in Catalonia and growing during this period within the national arena) came fourth, with 3.500.541 votes, 13,93% of the total, and 40 parliamentarians.

¹⁸⁰ The official data for the two elections can be retrieved at www.resultados2016.infoelecciones.es/99CO/DCO99999TO.htm?lang=es.

¹⁸¹ The Popular Party got 6.906.185 votes, 33,03% of the total, 137 parliamentarians; the Socialist Party, 5.424.709 votes, 22,66% of the total, 85 parliamentarians; Podemos and its allies, 5.049.734 votes, 21,1% of the total, 71 parliamentarians, and Ciudadanos, 13,05% of the total, 32 parliamentarians.

the processes mentioned are better described as multi-linear, multi-dimensional, and could be reshuffled in multiple ways.

TABLE 13. LIST OF EVENTS 2011-2016

Date	Story
January 27 th , 2011	The hashtag #Don'tVoteForThem is used in a Twitter message for the first time.
February 11 th , 2011	Badfare State is born. They create local groups calling for non-partisan mobilization against bipartidism and for participation.
February 15 th , 2011	Don'tVoteForThem launches manifesto and web, as the "Sinde Law" is approved in Parliament.
February 20 th , 2011	The "Coordination platform of groups promoting citizen mobilization" (later Real Democracy Now!, from now on DRY) creates its Facebook fanpage.
March 1 st , 2011	The "Coordination platform" launches a call for demonstrating on May 15 th 2011.
March 16 th , 2011	First tweet from the Real Democracy Now (with new name) on Twitter: "Democracia real ya! El #15mayo todos a la calle! No somos mercancía en manos de políticos y banqueros www.democraciarealya.es (Real Democracy, Now! On #May15 everyone to the streets! We are not commodities on the hands of politicians and bankers www.democraciarealya.es ."
March, 2011	Formation of first DRY nodes.
April, 2011	First face-to-face meetings of DRY nodes in big cities.

¹⁸² I base the reconstruction on chronologies used in 15Mpedia, the 15M encyclopedia, several Wikipedia entries ("Protestas Sociales en España 2011-2015"), projects such as Timeline 15M, and bibliography on the topic (Castells, 2012; Monterde, 2015).

- April 7th, Futureless Youth demonstration, under the slogan “homeless, jobless, pensionless, fearless”, gathers between 2000 and 3000 people in Madrid, finishes with clashes with the police and is reported in mainstream media.
- May 12th, DRY press release announcing the demonstration on May 15th.
2011
- May 14th, The hashtags #alacalle15M and #15Mpásalo become Trending
2011 Topics on Twitter.
- May 15th, Over 130000 people attend demonstrations in over 60 cities with
2011 the slogan “Real Democracy, now! We are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers”.
After the demonstration, several people stay to sleep in Puerta del Sol, Madrid. They create the account @acampadasol on Twitter, with the first tweet around 7pm “Acabamos de acampar en la Puerta del Sol de Madrid, no nos vamos hasta que lleguemos a un acuerdo. #acampadasol” (We just camped in Madrid Puerta del Sol, we do not leave until we reach an agreement”).
- May 17th, On the early morning of May 17th police evicts the incipient camp in
2011 Puerta del Sol. Calls are launched on social networks to meet at 8pm on Puerta del Sol and other 30 big city squares across the country. The multiplication of camps begins. Hashtags such as #SpanishRevolution, and #YesWeCamp used on Twitter.
- May 19th, The Central Electoral Commission prohibits the camps and calls for
2011 their eviction before midnight of the 20th, as they may interfere with the reflection day. Thousands gather in squares across the country. Hashtags such as #juntaelectoralfacts, #Nonosvamos (We don't move), #Notenemosmiedo (We have no fear).
- May 20th, Camp count grows from around 166 up to 480, on different
2011 accounts, with the proliferation of camps abroad, usually set by

young Spanish emigrants of the crisis.

May 21st,
2011 Reflection Day. Thousands of people defy the prohibition by the Central Electoral Commission in the night may 20-21st. On Twitter, the hashtag #EstoEsReflexión (This is reflection) becomes trending topic.

May 22nd,
2011 Local and regional elections in Spain.

May 24th,
2011 Decision to extend the Sol assembly and activity to the neighborhoods.

May 27th,
2011 Eviction of the camp at Plaza Catalunya, in Barcelona. Images of police brutality cope mass and social media. A few hours later thousands of people retake the square and rebuild the camp. Hashtags such as #BcnSinMiedo (Bcn fearless) serve to galvanize the spirit.

June 6th,
2011 The camp at Sol is lifted after a long-discussed assembly decision, and moves definitely towards the neighborhoods. To indicate this the hashtag on Twitter is #Nosmovemos (We move). The remaining camps will do the same in the following days or weeks.

June 15th,
2011 A demonstration with the name "Aturem el Parlament" surrounds the Catalan Parliament (the president arrives on helicopter), to stop the approval of the regional budget including (more) strong social cuts.

June 19th,
2011 Demonstration against the Euro Plus Pact in over 60 cities, which mobilized several hundred thousand people.

June 20th,
2011 Indignant marches towards Madrid depart from 8 different points of the State territory, which arrived on July 23. Demonstration abound

in the months of June, July, and August in cities such as Madrid and Barcelona for a variety of topics, from housing to health, education or the visit of the Pope Benedict XVI.

August 28th, 2011 Demonstrations in different cities against the first amendment to the 1978 Spanish Constitution since its writing. PSOE and PP had agreed to modify its Article n. 135, to ensure that payments of public debt will be prioritized over other concerns in State budget assignation.

September 17th, 2011 Demonstration to Occupy Wall Street takes place. A few thousand demonstrators fail to approach NYSE and camp at Zuccotti Park. The protest was to spread to other US cities in the following weeks.

October 15th, 2011 A Global Day of Action under the slogan "Together for a Global Change". Demonstrations take place in up to 950 cities in 82 countries. Several thousand demonstrators fail to occupy Paternoster Square in the City of London and set up a camp in the nearby square in front of the Saint Paul's Cathedral.

November 15th, 2011 Eviction of Occupy Wall Street camp at Zuccotti Park. In the previous and following weeks, systematic evictions of Occupy camps by police forces take place. Attempts at reoccupying in NYC fail.

November 20th, 2011 General and regional elections in Spain. In the midst of a worsening crisis and social cuts, the PP wins the general elections with an absolute majority; they also gain a majority of regional governments to which elections had been called.

February 15-24th, 2012 High school student mobilization triggers massive demonstrations in the Valencian Community, the "Valencian Spring", named after the Arab Spring and tweet saying «Vos tenim preparada una #PrimaveraValenciana, que vos aneu a cagar!», ¡Os tenemos preparada una #PrimaveraValenciana, que os vais a cagar!»

(We've got a #ValencianSpring for you you'll shit your pants).

February 28th, 2012 Saint Paul's Cathedral Occupy camp evicted, the longest-lived among the big camps of the Occupy cycle.

March 29th, 2012 General strike with post-15M forms of action and criticism of union by 15M actors.

May 12-15th, 2012 15M first anniversary, with the new forms of action (such as pot banging or building occupation for evicted families), definition of 15M demands approaching different social sectors (healthcare, education, housing, etc.), and massive demonstrations.

May 15th, 2012 15MpaRato, a judicial initiative by 15M and free culture activists to jail the ex-IMF director and ex-Minister of the Economy Rodrigo Rato and other bankers, is launched.

July, 2012 Call on Facebook to "Occupy Congress" on September 25 launched by the platform "¡En Pie!".

September 25th, 2012 Around 50000 people demonstrate around the Spanish Congress, heavily repressed by police forces.

November 14th, 2012 General strike coordinated with other countries in Europe. 15M initiatives such as "Toma la Huelga" (Take the Strike) call for alternative strike repertoires.

December 16th, 2012 March against the privatization of healthcare in Madrid, visibilization of the "White Tide". An informal citizen referendum about the privatization of healthcare in Madrid gathers around 500000 signatures in 3 days.

January 8th, 2013 The X party, mostly composed by 15M activist, is launched, with a program "Democracy, full stop".

February 2013 Popular Legislative Initiative (PLI) on mortgages, foreclosure and other housing issues reaches Congress with more than 1500000

signatures, tripling the requirement; new protest repertoires “escraches” (public shaming of representatives voting against the PLI).

May 9th, 2013 Toque a Bankia (Nudging Bankia). Decentralized direct action using a crowdsourcing mapping and action application, oriented to block Bankia offices, ATMs and phone lines.

September 29th The Green Tide (movement for public education) organizes the biggest demonstration on the Balearic Islands in decades, with 80000 attendants.

January 10-17th, 2014 Riots and demonstrations in Gamonal, a neighborhood of Burgos, in Castilla y León, against an urbanistic project, which receive strong support in social networks and other cities.

January 16th, 2014 Podemos, a new party, leaded by media commentator Pablo Iglesias, including members of the Anticapitalist Left and 15M activists, and inspired by Latin American bolivarian revolutions, is launched.

February, 2014 “Movement for democracy” or “Democratic Tide”, an initiative oriented to promote a constituent process is launched in Madrid, including core 15M activists for the squatting building Patio Maravillas.

May 24th, 2014 European Elections, Podemos obtains 1250000 votes and 5 seats, the X party, 100000 and no representation.

June, 2014 Amidst personal scandals King Juan Carlos I abdicates on June 19th. Multiple initiatives call for a referendum on the form of State (monarchy or republic), including online petitions and an informal citizen “real referendum now!” are organized, gathering the support of hundreds of thousands.

June 26th, Guanyem Barcelona, a citizen platform oriented for the local

2014 elections due on May 24th, 2015, leaded by Ada Colau, ex-spokesperson for the Anti-eviction platform PAH and 15M figure, is launched.

October 17- Podemos celebrates its Citizen Assembly, as part of a two-months long internal constituent process.
19th, 2014

January March of Change, demonstrations organized by Podemos with over
31st, 2015 300000 attendants.

March 9th, Ahora Madrid (Madrid Now) is created after a process that ran from
2015 Municipalia (itself tied to the Movement for Democracy), through Ganemos and—after the confluence with Podemos in Madrid.

March 22nd, Regional elections in Andalusia. The Socialist party in government
2015 retains power, Podemos gets a third place, which is read as a slight disappointment of expectations.

May 24th, Municipal elections and regional elections in 13 Autonomous
2015 Communities. Citizen candidacies win the elections or (via pacts) the government of dozens of cities, including Barcelona, Madrid, Zaragoza, Cadiz, Santiago de Compostela, A Coruña.
Podemos and another rising party, Ciudadanos, alternate in the third and fourth place of most regions, after the Popular Party and the Socialist Party, becoming key for the formation of several governments.

September Pablo Soto, Participation councilor of the city of Madrid, presents
7th, 2015 Decide.madrid, the new digital platform for participation of the city.

September Regional elections in Catalonia. Presented as a “plebiscite” on
27th, 2015 independence, the independentist platform Junts pel sí (Together for “yes”) wins with ample, but not absolute, majority.

December State elections in Spain. The right wing Popular Party gets
20th, 2015 6.215.752 votes, 28,72% of the total, and 123 parliamentarians; the

Socialist Party, 5.530.779 votes, 22,01%, of the total, and 90 parliamentarians; Podemos and its regional confluences reached 5.189.333 votes, 20,6% of the total, 69 parliamentarians, and Ciudadanos came fourth, with 3.500.541 votes, 13,93% of the total, and 40 parliamentarians.

February 1st, 2016 Gala Pin, Participation councilor of the city of Barcelona, announces the launch of Decidim.barcelona, the digital platform for participation of the city.

March 31st, 2016 People occupy La Republique square in Paris after a demonstration against the Labor Law promoted by the Socialist government in France. Occupations pop up in dozens of squares in other French cities. This is the last networked movement of the square of the global cycle so far, named Nuit Debout.

May 3rd, 2016 After the failure of the main parties to agree on the composition of a government, the King of Spain calls new elections on June 26th, 2016.

May 23-28th, 2016 Foundational meeting of the Democomunes network, during the Democratic Cities event in Madrid.

May 15th, 2016 For the 5th anniversary of 15M, demonstrations are called all over Spain and the world for a "GlobalDebout", a call that resulted from a connection between 15M and NuitDebout activists.

June 26th, 2016 In the General Elections, the Popular Party increases its vote percentage and with 6.906.185 votes, 33,03% of the total, 137 parliamentarians; the Socialist Party, 5.424.709 votes, 22,66% of the total, 85 parliamentarians; Podemos and its allies, 5.049.734 votes, 21,1% of the total, 71 parliamentarians, and Ciudadanos, 13,05% of the total, 32 parliamentarians.

October 29th, 2016 Mariano Rajoy, leader of the Popular Party, is invested as Prime Minister of Spain.

November 25-26th, 2016 MetaDecidim, the participatory process to redesign Decidim.barcelona, gathers 300 people in what may be one of the biggest non-technical participatory processes for the redesign of a public digital platform for participation.

3.7.1. The composition of a chronic, mutating, and multitudinous critical condition

In sociological approaches, it is common to provide general views on the socioeconomic composition of social movements. What is of interest to me is not so much to provide a view of the 15M movement or the cycle as a statistical aggregate (from a molar viewpoint, to use Deleuze & Guattari's term) but rather to see its composing multitude of initiatives, collectives, and networks. These are always more diverse, with diverse social compositions depending on the projects and the collectives (immigrant people in la PAH, retired people in Yayoflautas, etc.). The literature of social movement studies provides a fine tool for differentiation. A threefold distinction suggested by various authors (Gamson, 1991; Stoecker, 1995) is that between a "wider social movement community or solidarity group" of social support, a "social movement layer" identified with the movement itself, and an "organizational layer" composed by concrete actors and groups within it. It is worth noticing that the "solidarity group" may not be a "group", much less a "community", if by that it is understood a collective with a shared identity or "we feeling". I devote the thesis to analyze, primarily, the organizational scale¹⁸³, where discrete actors can be located, one that should not be confused with that of the "solidarity group" or that of the "social movement". I provide here a general glimpse into these other two.

There have been different studies that provide some insights on the width of the 15M movement's "solidarity group". The movement received high levels of public support for its demands (81% of the population in May 2011, 78% in May 2012, and 72% in May 2014) and slightly lower percentages of people feeling sympathy for the

¹⁸³ To avoid the risk of reification, I prefer to understand social movements as processes (perhaps even as campaigns, like Tilly 2004) or as assemblages of collective performances, whose construction and configuration is defined by social actors other than those "within" the social movement itself; otherwise, I prefer to think it as a scale of performance rather than as a "layer" or an object with an identity.

movement itself (66% in May 2011, 68% in May 2012, and 56% in May 2014) with public rejection ranging from 22% to 33%, and concentrating among right wing voters (Ferrándiz, 2014).

When it comes to the “social movement scale”, seen from a “molar” viewpoint, studies suggest that between 0,8 and 1,5 million people were intensely involved in the movement, while 6 to 8,5 million affirm to have taken part in it in some way, such as demonstrating, visiting assemblies, or the camps, between May and July 2011 (El País, 2011). By definition, such a huge number of participants involved a wide cross-section of society. Nevertheless, the standard participant in the demonstration on May 15th, mobilizations and square camps in the following months was that of a 20-something to 30-something person, with a level of education above the Spanish average, since most (around 70% in various surveys) had university studies (Calvo et al, 2011; Arellano et al., 2012; Likki, 2012; Monterde et al., 2017). Although most of them had a better economic situation than the Spanish average and perceived themselves as doing better than most (66%), they saw the future especially bleak (70%) and felt unjustly deprived in comparison with elites (76%) (Likki, 2012). In spite to its rejection of left-right divides and its appeals to transversality, standard participants were clearly in the left or far left of the political spectrum, with little affiliation with existing political organizations (parties and unions) but engaged with politics and its transformation (Calvo et al, 2011; CIS, 2012; Likki, 2012; Monterde et al., 2017).

However, as Marga Padilla suggests in the quote of the introduction, 15M was not a solution, it was not something closed, but rather something generative, an upgrade that changes the situation, that opens it up to new possibilities. Such a “perceptive upgrade” connected to millions of people, but it was still very much up for grabs. It opened a cycle of contention and construction. As the political and economic crisis continued, hundreds of 15M-related initiatives emerged between 2011 and 2016. The following image has been frequently used to represent some of the ramifications of 15M. In spite of the limitations of its star-like, centralized shape, its gives a sense of the sheer number of initiatives of the cycle.

from the eviction of the camps in June 2011 until the European Elections on May 2014, I focus on two cases or moments¹⁸⁴ that were crucial from the viewpoint of democracy, representation, and technology: the multitudinous direct action on September 25th, calling to “Surround the Congress”, and the first party initiative coming from the 15M milieu that had a relevant media impact, the X party. If “25S Surround Congress” first embodied the moment of a higher tension between 15M and the institutional space of political representation, the latter represented the culmination of 180 degrees turn of the cycle back to the representative space. However, it was a turn that claimed wanting to “make a 15M” inside it. I took part in both of these initiatives. I look to the X Party rather than to other cases, such as Podemos, for several reasons: firstly, the X party was the one that opened the electoral turn, secondly, 15M played an even bigger role in the discourse and practice of the X Party than in Podemos, thirdly, democratic proposals were much more central and innovative in the X Party than in Podemos, finally, the X Party connects more closely with Decidim, the case analyzed in chapter 6.

- **The network of cities of change, the institutional assault, and the new digital platforms for democracy**, studied in chapter 6. The choice of Decidim.barcelona and the “network of rebel cities” is based on their direct connection to the 15M cycle and their innovations in digitally mediated participation. In this case, though, the scale is municipal and inter-municipal, rather than that of the nation-state. The experiments in the Participation councils of cities such as Barcelona and Madrid already have a strong institutional weight, and thereby represent what probably is the most interesting case of the whole study from the viewpoint of technopolitical democratization.

¹⁸⁴ I refer laterally to two initiatives that were no less relevant: 15MpaRato, to jail ex-IMF director Rodrigo Rato, and the PAH (the platform of mortgage victims).

Chapter 4. Becoming 15M: a networked movement of the squares from Real Democracy Now! Todismantling of the camps.

4.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the key case of the cycle of technopolitical contention studied in this thesis: the networked social movement 15M. Part 2 begins by briefly noticing the connections of the movement with the economic, political, and social crises ongoing in Spain in 2011 (analyzed in more detail in chapter 3) as well as with previous activism, which 15M clearly exceeded in magnitude.

The analysis then moves into 15M's technopolitics by looking at its semantics (its discourses) (part 3), its pragmatics (its practices) (part 4), and its syntax (its infrastructures) (part 5). In order to disentangle some central aspects of 15M actors' discourse, section 3.1 analyzes key texts, which show a tension between alter-representationalist¹⁸⁵ positions, which called for improvements in representative democracy, anti-representationalist ones, which attacked representation, and alter-democratic ones, which reclaimed alternative democratic institutions, sometimes opposed to, and autonomous from, representative ones. These threads aimed at amending the established order, frontally rejecting it, and proposing alternatives, will run through the 15M cycle.

Then the exposition moves into some key 15M practices (part 4). This part is divided in two halves, which attend to the two most paradigmatic organizational forms essayed in 15M. Section 4.1. focuses on the most publicized one in 15M discourse and the general media imaginary on the movement: the assembly form. Section 4.2. focuses on a different model, which was as, if not more, relevant in practical terms, and is object of attention of a growing analytical literature (starting with Toret et al., 2015): what I call the "networked assemblage" involving urban spaces and digital networks. Section 4.1. describes practices of anti-representationalism and alter-democracy during the camp period, which centrally involved practices of mass assembling and camping in the squares of big cities like Barcelona and Madrid in May and June of 2011. Section 4.2. looks at the technopolitical practices at the core of 15M networked assemblages emerging around the camps. These technopolitical

¹⁸⁵ In general, I use the formula "representational" rather than "alter-representational", I do so in order to avoid confusion.

practices involved urban and digital spaces (4.2.1. and 4.2.2.), and will prove relevant for later stages of the cycle.

In part 5 I briefly analyze two paradigms of technopolitical infrastructures: Facebook, which nicely embodies a corporate technopolitical paradigm, and n-1, which embodies an autonomist technopolitical paradigm.

Part 6 is devoted to analyze the implications of the discourses and practices analyzed in parts 3 and 4 for social movement forms and political ontology. The technopolitical practices and processes described in section 4.2. brought about new forms non-representational collective identity, as I show in section 6.1. These new forms challenged traditional forms (representation, strong and centralized organizations, leaderships and identities) in social movements. Then, section 6.2 recapitulates 15M technopolitical challenges to the liberal representative political ontology both in discourse and practice. The chapter closes with a synthesis of earlier sections that set up the stage for the following chapters.

4.2. The case and the cycle¹⁸⁶

15M has been a networked social movement through and through. For many, social networks were their entryway into it. That was my case, and from our 2014 15M survey it seems this trajectory, from digital and social media out and onto streets and squares, was common among participants in the demonstration on May 15th, 2011.

In early April, 2011, I ran across a call to demonstrate on May 15th. I found it reading digital news of a demonstration that had taken place a day earlier in Madrid, organized by a collective called Futureless Youth (Gutiérrez & Santaaulalia, 2011)¹⁸⁷. I searched for the May 15th call on Facebook, and there I found the organizers fanpage¹⁸⁸. The initiative was exactly what I was hoping for since 2009, when I was following news on the socioeconomic and political crisis in Spain, while living in the US, lamenting the total lack of mass social mobilization.

¹⁸⁶ The origins of the 15M movement have been recounted in several works, among others, Gerbaudo (2012), Toret et al. (2015), Monterde (2015), and Monterde et al. (2017), thereby, I rely on my experience and those works for purposes of historical reconstruction, to which I do not devote much time. I also rely on them, at multiple points, for sociological purposes, and orient my analysis on areas less assessed by these works. Among these is the attention to matters of representation and alter-democracy.

¹⁸⁷ The attention by mass media to this call was catalyzed, among other things, by a demonstration on April 7th organized by the collective Futureless Youth, which gathered around 2500 protesters and ended with conflicts with the police.

¹⁸⁸ The fanpage can be found at <https://www.facebook.comAsociacionDRY>. Accessed November 20th, 2016.

The fact that I found the site on Facebook was no coincidence. From its very beginning, in March, the initiative behind the May 15th demonstration, first under the name of “plataforma coordinadora de grupos pro-movilización ciudadana” (coordinating platform of groups for citizen mobilization), later under the heading of Real Democracy, Now! (from now on abbreviated “DRY”), was primarily organized via social media such as Twitter and Facebook, through different groups¹⁸⁹ and fanpages (Alsedo, 2011; Tibusay & Covadonga, 2011).



FIGURE 8. MAY 15TH DRY EVENT ON FACEBOOK.

The DRY event on Facebook included a list of local demonstrations planned for May 15th in different cities all over the State, as well as a link to the official website. The list grew in time, as the dynamics on social networks and the local nodes multiplied. With local and regional elections due on May 22nd¹⁹⁰, the demonstration on May 15th was oriented to galvanize and publicly display the discontent with the situation of economic crisis and political ineffectiveness and corruption of the country, to move from a passive condition of crisis into an active critical condition (as described in chapter 3). A key mediator was a critical rendition elaborated by a number of initiatives in the previous months, including Don't Vote for Them, Futureless Youth,

¹⁸⁹ First as a “coordination group” <https://www.facebook.com/groups/coordinacionciudadana>. This coordination group, which remained “closed”, accepted only either spokespeople from other collectives or bloggers known for their denunciation of social problems. Accessed November 20th, 2016.

¹⁹⁰ Elections were taking place in thirteen out of the seventeen regions (autonomous communities) of the State, and all towns countrywide.

HforHousing, and up to 200 more, which converged in DRY and the organization of the demonstration on May 15th.

DRY succeeded in appealing to and connecting wider and more heterogeneous constituencies than these earlier activist initiatives (Alonso, 2012). On May 15th, around 130.000 people, according to DRY's Press release¹⁹¹, hit the streets in demonstrations in 60 cities all over the country. The demonstration was a huge and unexpected success (for journalists, Rodríguez, 2011, as well as for the police and organizers themselves, Jurado, 2014), the first of such a magnitude to happen in Spain without the support of a party or union. As shown in Toret et al (2015), the practices learned in earlier hacktivist and cyberactivist struggles around copyright laws (especially in the period 2006-2011), were crucial in this process.



FIGURE 9. PROTESTER WEARING AN ANONYMOUS MASK AT PUERTA DEL SOL, ON MAY17TH.

SOURCE: @ACAMPADASOL

Under the effects and affects generated by such a joyful surprise, inspired by Tahrir (key square of the Egyptian revolution earlier that year), and with the elections of May 22nd in mind, a few stayed overnight at Puerta del Sol, "the first forty of Sol" (Sánchez, 2011a).

¹⁹¹ The press release, of May 17th, is available in DRY's official website, www.democraciarealya.es/prensa/. Accessed November 10th, 2016.

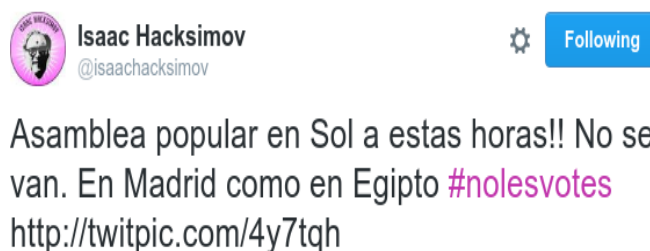


FIGURE 10. TWEET BY HACKTIVIST ISAAC HACKSIMOV ON MAY 15TH EVE. "POPULAR ASSEMBLY IN SOL NOW! THEY DON'T LEAVE. IN MADRID LIKE IN EGYPT #DON'TVOTEFORTHEM".

The police attempt at evicting the campers at Puerta del Sol, carried on the night from May 16th to the 17th, generated a series of massive mobilizations and "retakings" of the square in the following days. By May 17th the camping practice was being replicated in squares all over Spain and the movement had begun. I analyze some of its key characteristics in the following parts of this chapter.

Camps were dismantled in June 2011. Numerous networks, many of them rooted in social media, remained operative. They allowed the emergence of new initiatives, direct actions and demonstrations in the following months and years. They also contributed to pass on many of the discourses and practices forged at this time, helping to coalesce the 15M cycle of technopolitical contention around democracy. At its peak, the 15M movement involved dozens of squares statewide and digital networks that mobilized thousands of people in a matter of minutes. The critical conditions of the country, the capacity of DRY and 15M discourses to articulate aspects of the discontent with them, the new available information and communication technologies (CMT, 2011), deployed in creative technopolitical practices and processes, as well as the political opportunities and the contentious becoming around 15M (from statewide elections and earlier uprisings in the north of Africa or Iceland, to police evictions and politicians' dismissal) contributed to it. Many of these factors, discourses and practices remained both operative and mutating in the following years, galvanizing what this thesis defines as the "15M cycle of contention".

4.3. Semantics/Discourses

15M posed a challenge to the liberal representative model of democracy. That is particularly clear in the discourses on representation gathered around the

demonstration on May 15th. This discursive critique of representation combined its core attention to political representation with a diagnostic of its ties to the economic field and, even more, the field of media. As a complement, 15M actors also outlined a discursive ideal of a direct and deliberative democracy in practice, in the form of the assembly. This is a pattern that repeatedly appears in the discourses of key actors of the cycle: they essayed, first, a diagnostic critique of representative democracy, second, a normative proposal of alternatives to it and, third, a self-referential discourse on how practice should look like on the way there. In this section, I analyze each of them in turn.

4.3.1. The critical diagnosis on representation and the double (representational and anti-representational) reading of “they do not represent us”

4.3.1.1. A discursive precedent to 15M: the Don't Vote For Them manifesto

On February 15th 2011, the same day that the so called “Sinde Law” against copyright infringement passed in Congress, a web-manifesto¹⁹² and a wiki¹⁹³ were launched, calling not to vote for the parties supporting the bill: PSOE, PP, and CiU (a Catalan nationalist, right wing party). Nolesvotes (Don'tVoteForThem, from now abbreviated NLV¹⁹⁴) was a cyberactivist campaign oriented to intervene in the electoral space, concretely, in the local and regional elections dated for May 22nd 2011, with a punishment vote for the parties that had supported the passing of the Sinde Law. The first version of the NLV Manifesto¹⁹⁵, launched in mid-February, 2011 put the emphasis on both political corruption and the Sinde Law. For activists involved, the approval process of the Law was key in a shared experience of the flaws of the representative system in Spain¹⁹⁶ (Dans & Galli, 2011; Alonso, 2012).

After the tremendous online support for the first version, a second version of the document was issued in mid-March (Dans & Galli, 2011). It started, again, denouncing the levels of corruption, but this time it did not focus on the Sinde Law, but rather quickly moved to criticize the “perpetual alternation of political organizations clung to power for decades (PP, PSOE, EAJ-PNV, CiU) without permeability to new ideas, without allowing the active participation of the citizenry,

¹⁹² The web is accessible at www.nolesvotes.com. Accessed November 15th, 2016.

¹⁹³ A wiki is a web application for collaborative production of content.

¹⁹⁴ NLV is the acronym of the Spanish No Les Votes (Don't Vote for Them).

¹⁹⁵ The two versions are available at https://docs.google.com/document/pub?id=139G8EL1OOR-RtfhTstHb7qekZvBoJTz1oCImbGa_I48. Accessed on November 19th, 2016. Here I only summarize them.

¹⁹⁶ As the WikiLeaks cables revealed at the time, these flaws included the submission to US diplomacy and entertainment industry (Elola, 2010).

suffocating all possibility of democratic regeneration.” Active participation and democratic regeneration were later to become two key milestones of discourses within the 15M cycle, the former usually closer to the most participatory (alter-democratic) views, and the later to those appealing to milder (alter-representationalist) improvements upon the existing liberal representative system.

Then, the manifesto attacked the Spanish electoral law, on the charges of over-representing voters of certain parties¹⁹⁷ and concrete “media- or economically powerful minorities” while under-representing the rest, muting “the ideological diversity of Spanish society”. It also denounced the “professionalization of the particracy (partitocracia)”, promoting the rise of those “managing influences and imposing the discipline of the hierarchy” rather than of “the best”¹⁹⁸. The attack on party democracy is not directed against its elitism but rather towards its inability—or counter-productivity—for selecting the right elite. This meritocratic emphasis rose or fell at different moments within the 15M cycle; interestingly enough, it was usually emphasized by initiatives closer to hacktivism, free software and free culture activism, such as the X party, analyzed in chapter 5.

But the Manifesto moves on, denouncing how big parties recur to “closed and blocked lists”¹⁹⁹ and “to the fear campaign, to ask for the ‘useful vote’ so that the adversary—with whom it alternates in power—doesn’t win.” On top of that, the Manifesto denounces that closed lists make it virtually impossible to appeal to individual representativeness and responsibility. NLV denounces how, under party democracy, there is an identification of representative actions and party interests, the representative is “of” the party²⁰⁰.

In a Rousseauian fashion, the Manifesto denounces how elections are the “only space of participation” and the “blank check” practice, which allows governments to

¹⁹⁷ For different reasons, ranging from the structure of electoral districts to D'Hondt method, in the Spanish system, the parties' ratio of representatives per number of votes is much higher for the two traditional parties, PP and PSOE, and the nationalist ones.

¹⁹⁸ This point has a meritocratic tone that will be much less present in texts by Real Democracy Now! and the camps, but which will come back with the X party.

¹⁹⁹ Under the current Spanish electoral system, defined in the LOREG, the usual practice is for parties to provide a closed, ordered electoral list for each administrative district (local, provincial, regional or state, depending on the election) and the voter chooses the lot, rather than discrete individuals.

²⁰⁰ Given certain rules operating in the Spanish Parliament, such as the “party discipline vote”, by which the party can sanction anyone voting against the line marked by the organization for a given parliament voting, one can indeed say that the representative is primarily representative of the party. Following the “No les votes” argumentation, one could even say that, under its current form, Spanish parliamentary representation (not a strange case of party democracy on this point) is “of the party, by the party and for the party,” twisting Abraham Lincoln’s famous motto.

not attend to the “popular will” in the period between elections²⁰¹; otherwise, it denounces the temporal reduction of representation to its formal aspects, authorization and accountability, both targeted primarily at parties, not to individual representatives. In contrast, the Manifesto underlines (taking the Sinde Law as an example) that party and private interests do operate every day in governmental decision making.

This point on political temporality closes the circle opened with the comment on the “perpetual alternation” in power between PSOE and PP, which appealed to the images of the XIX century “turnismo” in Spanish politics²⁰². Blank check and turnism, along with the punctuality of elections, appear in the Manifesto as cornerstones of a chronopolitics enabling (and reinforcing) widespread corruption of democracy, based on, and feeding into, people’s apathy. As an alternative, most initiatives in the 15M cycle speak of the possibilities of a more continuous democracy, be it in the form of social movements, parties or State institutions.

In the two Manifestos, along with the flaws of the representative system—unperceived or dismissed for years—there was a strong denunciation of political corruption. More than a list of numbers, it was an image that served to make the case. One of the most original techno-imaging devices, a case of semiotechnics, a technosymbol of the campaign, was the “Corruptdrome”: a Google based map that charted the cases of political corruption trials (open or closed) throughout the country²⁰³

²⁰¹ Exactly what Madison hoped for and what Rousseau classically defined as the “slavery of the people” during the period of the legislature

²⁰² This was a XIX century mechanism of agreed alternation between a conservative and a progressive party in power.

²⁰³ Inserted in the nolesvotes.com website right before the Manifesto, it performed a syntactic and semantic connection between the representation of corruption and the corruption of representation, between an economically corrupt and an institutionally flawed representative space. The Corruptdrome as a linked, machine-like, operating, reference dispositive to which anyone could contribute. On the base of the Google-view of Spain, a sousveillance[#] collective built another, open and real-time image of the state territory. It was a lasting image of #Nolesvotes, which remained being updated in later years.

edge grew. At demonstrations such as the one in Seville that day, which I attended, along with slogans such as “lo llaman democracia y no lo es” (they call it a democracy, but it’s not) or “no es una crisis, es una estafa” (it’s not a crisis, it’s a fraud), from time to time people chanted “que no, que no, que no nos representan!” (no, no, they don’t represent us!). This *motto* amplified and radicalized the “NLV” logic: it announced a critique that went beyond denouncing different flawed practices and structures of the representation system, or a call for an anti-bipartidist (anti-PP and anti-PSOE) vote in the elections due on May 22nd; rather, it presented a questioning of political representation in a wider sense (at least, in the interpretation of key DRY activists such as Su Notissima²⁰⁷; see Jurado, 2014). Although the anti-bipartidism discourse maintained most of the attention, the extended critique of representation didn’t distinguish among parties, and even included the unions. In its manifesto and its official definition as organization, DRY declared itself “non-partisan and non-syndical”. This rejection connected to the discredit of parties and unions as representatives of the interests of citizens²⁰⁸ and workers²⁰⁹. The DRY platform was presented as a space for making politics alternative to the mediation (or mediatization) of political action embodied by those parties and unions. In their mainstream versions (PP, PSOE, CCOO, UGT²¹⁰), those organizations had become machines of transforming participation into fake representation²¹¹.

²⁰⁷ Nota is a PhD student in Law at Universidad Pablo de Olavide in Seville, he is co-director of the LIPPO (Investigation Laboratory of Political Practices) and is currently investigating the foundations of democracy and the changes brought about by TICs. “Nota” is Andalusian slang for “guy”, and “Su Notissima” is a nickname that invests the term some of the respectability of a judge, usually called “Su Señoría” (form of referring to a judge in court, equivalent to “your honor” in the Anglo-Saxon tradition) and a notary (notario). Both of these positions are usually filled in Spain by graduates in Law. I met Nota on Facebook, as he was the administrator of the two Real Democracy Now! groups in Seville. I started a virtual correspondence with him that has ended in different encounters and collaborations.

²⁰⁸ A poll by Metroscopia in March 2013 showed that up to 80% of the respondents believed that Congress does not represent them, a result that is practically identical when they were asked if it represented the rest of Spaniards (Ferrándiz, 2013). Several polls by the Center of Sociological Investigation since 2011 showed that Spaniards perceived politicians as one of their biggest worries (CIS, 2011).

²⁰⁹ Different polls confirmed this. According to a Metroscopia study (published as a post in the most read generalist national journal with the heading “less respect to those who rule”) in July 2011, the unions were one of the least valued institutions (Lobera, 2011). With even worse evaluation, by this order: bishops, bankers, parties and politicians.

²¹⁰ CCOO is the acronym for Comisiones Obreras (Workers’ Commissions); UGT is the acronym for Unión General de Trabajadores (General Workers’ Union). These are the two biggest unions in Spain.

²¹¹ Take some of the symptoms of the political crisis: politicians and politics appeared as one of the big problems of the country by 2010, furthermore, 51% of Spaniards thought PP and PSOE only followed their own interests and did not represent the rest of society, with only 19% thinking they represented the interests of the majority of the population, and 9 in 10 thinking they were far from the people and needed to be brought closer (Bravo, 2011). With a broader view, among 15M participants, “lack of democracy” appears as the most widespread motivation for demonstration (Monterde et al, 2017). Unions and political parties’ mediations are not only a way of generating identities or sense of

4.3.1.2. *The double reading of “they do not represent us”: representationalism and anti-representationalism*

The slogan “they do not represent us”, probably one of the key ones in 15M, can be read in different ways, though. The interpretation depends on the various senses of the subject, the object, and the verb of the sentence. The “they” and the “us” mark the slogan as an exercise in political antagonism. Nevertheless, both poles remain undefined, giving it an open character. It may be that the “us” are those shouting the slogan, or those demonstrating, or those agreeing, or people in general. On the other hand, it may be that the “they” refers to a group of politicians, concretely, those embodying and representing the corrupt status quo, or it may be talking of their parties; more broadly, it may also be talking of all politicians and all parties, or even including other representatives such as Union leaders, and unions themselves. Finally, it is not clear what is meant by “representing” there, whether it is “being alike” or “acting for”²¹², and, if so, what should be the attributes, opinions, or interests to be reflected or cared for by representatives. As expectable, there were different interpretations by different actors at different times, usually connected to the becoming of political contention.

In spite of this complexity, I believe there are two key readings that came to define the 15M cycle of contention, from May 15th to Decidim.barcelona²¹³: a representationalist (or alter-representationalist) reading, which asks for improvements and thereby remains within the semantic field of representation, and an anti-representationalist one, which frequently aims to go beyond it²¹⁴ (into participatory democracy) or out of it (in autonomist models²¹⁵) into alter-democracy. The former is conservative, the latter, transformative, with regard to representation. Anti-representationalism surfaced in other slogans of that demonstration on May 15th, as well as in the manifestos that were to emerge from the camps in the following days. Slogans such as “democracy is not voting every four years”, “our dreams do not fit in your voting polls”, or “they call it democracy, but it is not”, heard

belonging through cards, affiliations, contributions and retributions, but also for imposing orders, constructing a representable and controllable body, a strong unity around flags, secretary generals, and aggregated numbers and opinions.

²¹² See chapter 2 for a presentation of the various sense of representation.

²¹³ Decidim is the digital platform for participation, analyzed in chapter 6.

²¹⁴ Some of these possibilities can be hinted by proposals associated to them already in the NLV manifesto: while some called for putting an end to corruption, or reforming the electoral law, others pointed to the need of a more participatory democracy, 15M brought this latest call to a rather autonomist-anarchist position in practice.

²¹⁵ See chapter 2 for a definition of these alternative models

and read in the camps, point in this direction.

The distinction between representationalism and anti-representationalism can be used to group many of DRY's normative proposals for May 15th. The first block of DRY proposals for the May 15th demonstration²¹⁶, entitled the "Elimination of privileges of the political class", called for anti-corruption and transparency measures (elimination of political immunity, imprescriptibility of corruption offenses, publication of representatives' finances), along with others that would make politicians more representative (in Pitkin's "descriptive" sense, see ch. 2) of the general population: absenteeism control, equation of their salaries, taxation and retirement benefits with the average among workers, transparency in personal accounts, etc. Further in this direction, in the seventh block of proposals, entitled "Citizen liberties and participatory democracy", there is a call to "modify the Electoral Law to guarantee a truly representative and proportional system". All of these proposals clearly fall within the representationalist reading.

It is also possible to find a set of anti-representationalist and alter-democratic points in DRY's document of proposals for May 15th (DRY, 2011a). Here, the "they do not represent us" points beyond the semantic field of the representation game. The objection was towards politicians and parties in general, as embodiments of representation. On the mentioned block of "Citizen liberties and participatory democracy", DRY's proposals stressed the need for referendums whenever there is an important decision. Still, in DRY there seemed to predominate proposals for amending the existing institutions of representative democracy than for replacing it with something new. This was a direct connection to No les votes, a connection also evident in the fact that the first proposal on "citizen liberties and participatory democracy" was "no to the control of the Internet. Abolition of the Sinde Law".

More clearly, projects such as democracy 4.0., defended by lawyer Juan Moreno Yagüe and DRY activist Su Notissima (see Jurado, 2014 for an elaboration of his argument in favor of de-representation), advocated for the combination of the current form of representative democracy with a digitally enabled direct democracy system. Afterwards, they brought this proposal to later initiatives within the cycle (f.i.: the X Party). The proposed alternative to the "they do not represent us" was not a retreat into the anti-politics of authority, be it political (authoritarianism) or technical

²¹⁶ The document can be accessed at www.democraciarealya.es/documento-transversal/. Accessed on November 17th, 2015.

(technocracy), but rather a more participatory and real democracy.

4.3.1.3. The discursive critique of representation and economics

Some of the slogans on May 15th added a crucial element of economic critique to the discourse on the crisis of representation. For instance, after “take the street” and “real democracy now”, the third slogan in the heading banners of May 15th was “we are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers”. That slogan clearly outlines the core of the neoliberal representative model: the association of political and economic interests that expropriates agency from people for profit, turning them into commodities to be used.

Then the camps arrived, and the discourse on the crisis of representation remained strongly present and further tied with the economic critique. The manifesto of Acampadasol²¹⁷ (the camp at Puerta del Sol square, in Madrid), published on May 16th, calls for “a new society that puts lives above political and economic interests”, in a double critique of the political and economic vectors defining the neoliberal representative model of democracy. Similarly, in the Declaration at Acampada Barcelona (2011) (the camp at Catalunya square, in Barcelona), published on May 21st, it is affirmed that “we feel crushed by the capitalist economy, we feel excluded from the present political system which does not represent us”. In the same direction, the slogan “it's not a crisis, it's a fraud”, put into circulation a different form of naming and constituting the very essence of the economic and historical conjuncture. The interpretation of the crisis as a somehow objective fact, as a neutral, quasi-natural, economic process, was diagnosed and denounced itself as a fraud, a fraud that covered the wider fraud of wealth extraction through the mechanisms of finance and corrupt politics.

4.3.1.4. The discursive critique of representation and mass media

The emerging 15M critical discourse on representation not only touched upon politics and economics, and their representations, but also over media representation. The issue of how things are portrayed in the media was a relevant one during camp stage. This is so because movements are, among other things, media phenomena (as noted in chapter 2). Pitkin's “descriptive” sense of representation, the question of whether media contents “are alike” what they represent, is relevant here. The diagnosis on media by many 15M actors was insinuated in slogans such as “y luego

²¹⁷ The Manifesto is accessible at www.madrid.tomalaplaza.net/manifiesto-2/. Accessed on November 10th, 2015.

diréis que somos cinco o seis” (and latter you will say we are five or six), while another one went “televisión, manipulación” (television, manipulation).

However, the most interesting responses to the various threads of the discursive critique of representation, from the political to the media, were played out in practice. Otherwise, not in slogans and proposals but in the forms of organization and practices enacted after May 15th, in the camps and beyond. In part 5, devoted to pragmatics, they are analyzed in some detail. The practice of anti-representationalism and alter-democracy were defining features of the 15M stage of the cycle, initiated with DRY and deepened in the May-June camp period.

4.3.2. Beyond the represented subjects of the modern political ontology

Around May 15th, the discursive critique of representation just analyzed was combined with the emergence of (names of) political subjects that were not the classic ones of the modern political discourse and ontology. Terms such as “The People”, “the nation”, “right or left wingers”, “individuals” (closer to the liberal vocabulary) or “the working class” (on the left side). These terms had one thing in common: they were meant to name a collective entity defined by a collective identity that could be represented either by the State and State representatives (Parliament, government, bureaucrats, etc.) or by a party and party representatives. They resulted from a multitude constituted as one through the representation, as first suggested by Hobbes in Leviathan.

The most frequent expressions in texts calling for the demonstrations on May 15th (like the DRY manifesto), in texts coming from places such as Puerta del Sol (see the AcampadaSol declaration), and those writing massively on social networks²¹⁸ (Toret et al., 2015) rarely include traditionally modern concepts such as “the nation”, “The People” or “the working class”. Some did, but most did not²¹⁹. This extended to other symbols²²⁰ and was associated with DRY and 15M apparently successful

²¹⁸ In the vocabulary analysis by Oscar Marin Miró in Toret et al. (2015), which resulted from the analysis of hundreds of thousands of tweets between April and June 2011, the expression “el pueblo” (The People) does only rarely appear, while others, such as “gente” (people) do so extremely frequently. One of the potential reasons for why these two terms appear so prominently could be the frequency of expressions such as “many people” or “we are thousands of persons”, but the texts of the time suggest the preeminence of these concepts in more formal texts too.

²¹⁹ There could be many explanations for this fact, from the lack of previous political experience to the dismantling of class consciousness by neoliberalism (Graeber, 2013). A simpler one could be that they were associated with the discourses, practices and organizations that those very demonstrations and camps were trying to call into question.

²²⁰ In the demonstration of May 15th, party or union banners or flags were generally absent. This reflected the “nonpartisan” and “non-union” nature of the DRY platform and the call itself. The current national flag, symbol of the nation, was missing too (as noted by Gerbaudo, 2016). This was tied to

attempt at “transversality”²²¹.

This avoidance went hand in hand with the use of alternative, wider notions such as “personas” (persons), which was a term of choice for collective “self-definition” in the 15M vocabulary. This emphasis was, in texts such as the DRY manifesto, associated to the appeal to an “ethical revolution” oriented to recover human dignity. Concretely, the DRY manifesto for the demonstration on May 15th starts “We are normal, common persons²²². People like you”. It soon sets up a “transversal” or “beyond differences” vocabulary:

“Some consider ourselves more progressive, others more conservative. Some believers, others not. Some of us have well defined ideologies, others consider ourselves apolitical... but we are all concerned and outraged (indignados) for the political, economic and social panorama that we see around us. Because of the corruption of politicians, businessmen, bankers... because of the helplessness of the common citizen”

This gesture could be read in various ways. An interpretation á la Jacques Rancière (1999) points to the erasure of the separating names generated by and for social policing; a reading a la Laclau (2005) connects such erasure with the construction of a people (see chapter 2), which is then confronted with an elite of bankers and politicians. And yet, the only time when the expression “pueblo” appears in the DRY manifesto is, precisely, when they refer to the word “democracy”²²³.

In the case of the Acampadasol manifesto, the beginning is similar. To the heading question of “who are we”, the answer is “we are persons who have come here freely and voluntarily, after the demonstration [on May 15th] we decided to meet and continue reclaiming dignity as well as political and social consciousness.” The

the peculiar history of the current Spanish flag, which is associated within the current political culture of the left, as well as Basque and Catalan nationalism, with Franco's dictatorship.

²²¹ Both DRY and the camps aimed, with considerable success, at “transversality”, otherwise, they appealed to and mobilized a wide and heterogeneous constituency. According to Lobera & Sampedro (2014), the movement got higher levels of support than rejection across multiple categories such as sex, age, job situation, type of city and region.

²²² In this translation, I try to maintain the word “persons” for the word “personas” even though the most common translation into English is “people”. In the same way, there is no word difference in English between “gente” and “pueblo”, which are both translated through the word “people”. The defining element is the article “the” preceding its more political sense.

²²³ In a sentence that is not etymologically strict, the manifesto says: “Democracy starts with the people (demos = people; cracy = government) therefore the government must be of the people.” A shortened version of the famous Lincoln motto of a government “of”, “by” and “for” the people.

relevance of the terms “people” and, especially, “persons” was sometimes intended (as in the texts by DRY and Acampadas) and other times less so (as in the Twitter vocabulary), but the lack of centrality of notions such as “The People”, the total absence of terms such as “the nation” (and its individual correlate “Spaniards”) or “the working class”, the rejection of “left” and “right” divisions²²⁴, and the discursive critique of the notion of “representation” that I just analyzed, display a clear pattern of relativization of basic notions of modern political ontology. It is also true that expressions such as “citizen” or “common citizen” appear in those texts and some point towards “citizenism”²²⁵ (Gerbaudo 2016). Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that “citizen” is not the key nor the most innovative term nor in DRY’s nor in the camps’ manifestos; “person” and “persons” are.

At the level of narrative, another, connected notion at the time, used by 15M participants and analysts Fernández-Savater (2012) and Padilla (2013) was that of the “anybody”, the idea that “anybody” could be “15M”²²⁶, and that 15M was a movement of the “anybodies”. “Anybody” is an interesting notion because it speaks of an individual and, at the same time and very specifically, of none.

4.3.2.1. *The discursive critique of represented subjects and economics*

The discursive rejection of common discourses of representation of political actors had also an economic dimension. The most conspicuous case is the mentioned DRY slogan “we are not commodities in the hands of politicians and banksters”²²⁷. This slogan was a multitudinous rejection of what was perceived as an externally applied identity²²⁸. There was both a contestation and a creative representation of a bankers-politicians axis as, in turn, representing and, more widely, turning the citizenry into a commodity. This slogan was beyond the suggestions in the “NLV” campaign about the connection between the economic and the political system. It was an anti-representationalist objection to the political model of (neo)liberal representative

²²⁴ Several clear examples of this can be found in Sánchez (2011c) where he cites DRY tweets and comments noticing “those are ideals that divide those that are at the bottom of the pyramid”.

²²⁵ For the purposes of this argument, citizenism can be understood as political position similar to populism, in which the opposition between the people and a political or economic elite is substituted by an opposition between the citizenry and those same elites.

²²⁶ References in popular culture to this kind of idea are especially clear in a film popular in 15M networks, *The fight club*, and, somehow, in others such as *V for Vendetta*.

²²⁷ The bankers come here to occupy the role of the “culture industry” in the cyber-activist struggles around the *Sinde Law* as the reference enemy, considered another overrepresented minority supported by politicians in detriment of public interests.

²²⁸ This shout, along with the “they do not represent us” slogan, can be understood in terms of the Deleuzian critique of representation (Tormey, 2006) as saying “we are not what you say”, or further, “we are not what you make of us”.

democracy and the way it constructs subjects; the rejection by DRY activists, and those supporting the demonstration, to be represented and treated like commodities. This critical-economic view of representation can be found elsewhere too. For instance, in calls to circumvent the division of the representative field on the basis of an economic deconstruction: “to enter in “right” or “left” is a semantic debate. While political marketing is paid by the banks there will be neither” (Democracia Real Ya, 2011a). Other DRY tweets go further and suggest “those are ideals that divide those that are at the bottom of the pyramid” (Democracia Real Ya, 2011b), anticipating another key form of alternative form discursive collective subject: “the ones below”. As it was put in another 15M slogan: “we are nor right nor left, we are the ones below and go for the ones above”. The ones below and from below, that is the definition of a grassroots process such as 15M, as opposed to State or party organizations, or even to some case of social movements, that tend to take an approach from above to collective action. These tensions will become particularly obvious with the arrival of the “electoral assault” and the party period within the 15M cycle, which analyze in chapter 5.

4.3.2.2. The discursive critique of represented subjects, ethics and media

As a closing to this journey through some of the core semantics around May 15th, I want to dig into an aspect frequently overlooked in other analyses (Toret et al., 2015, Monterde, 2015, Gerbaudo, 2016), which was clearly present in the early stages of 15M and its cycle: ethics. According to the DRY manifesto: “We need an ethical revolution. Instead of placing money above human beings, we shall put it back to our service. We are persons, not products. I am not a product of what I buy, why I buy and who I buy from.” Beyond the denunciation of the commodification of the person, of its reduction and identification with a commodity, this outlines an ethical dimension that was relevant to the discourses and events around May 15th.

In its origin, the term “persona” was used to refer to theatrical masks. Masks also allowed the one behind them (with whom the term eventually became identified) to decide the mode of its manifestation²²⁹. In 15M, the concept of “person”, the idea of relating to other as persons, served to conjure the political divisions in right and left, somehow beyond the representation game that the slogan “they do not represent us”

²²⁹ The possibility of varying one’s own manifestation is key for being an actor, but also an author, the person before and behind the mask, somebody who is more and less than its character and that is the author of its actions (Goffman, 2002).

had called to question.

There is a connection of some of these references to “ethics” surrounding the figure of the “person” in the early days of 15M and some of the practices at the time. There is an emphasis on “active listening”, “respect”, “dialogue”, key notions of the deliberative democratic model of the assembly as a political-ethical ideal²³⁰, in 15M guides for assembly facilitation (Comisión Dinamización, 2011). The notion of “person” and ethics were raised in connection with both personal interaction in 15M assemblies and camps, as well as in connection with the rejection of forms of economic objectivation (commodification) and political representation (The People, parties, flags, etc.).

Ethics and morality also connect to one of the terms that gained traction as a collective identification of 15M participants: the label “indignados” (indignant, outraged). “Indignation” is a moral affect. Mass media²³¹ crucially contributed to the adoption of this term taken from a French bestseller, as a collective definition by many. This is, again, a collective name of an antagonist character that is not in the charts of modern discursive ontology.

As I show in part 5, the biggest innovation in terms of collective identity and subject formation though, was neither in the brief emphasis on the “person”, the new subject of “the ones below”, or even the collective name “indignados”, but rather the formation of networked and non-representational identities in social networks.

4.3.3. The discourse of the alternative: the assembly form and collective intelligence

Above I showed some of the general, alter-representationalist and anti-representationalist proposals in the DRY manifesto. But these proposals took a whole new dimension after May 15th. They became a discourse not so much of “demand” towards the State (in the populist model) but of practice within the movement (in a more anarchist and autonomist vein). At the camps, the ultimate ideal of democracy was not something to be granted by the government but practiced and constructed by the movement. The practical ideal of the popular assembly and the participation of everyone and anyone became a preeminent leitmotiv within 15M. As noticed in a brief statement published in tomalaplaza.net

²³⁰ The value of these notions is clearly connected to ethics in the work of XXth century philosophers that, usually with more of a theological than a secular vein, also insisted on “dialogue”, “active listening”, the “face-to-face” relationship, the “I-You”, “respect” etc., most clearly (and with obvious difference among themselves) Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas.

²³¹ Particularly, the mainstream journal El País (Ruiz Mantilla, 2011).

(the web of the Sol Camp in Madrid) on June 3rd and read in the Sol assembly on June 4th, entitled “What is going on in Sol?” and directed to any reader: “YOU ASK US FOR SOLUTIONS. The solution we give in the face of these problems also remains the same than when we arrived: the inclusive participation of everyone in the construction of the change we want.” Then it goes on to make discursively explicit several widespread tenets of most camps: “THE TIME. We had internalized their rushes, their rhythms, their speed. ENOUGH. We go slow because we go far. We go slow because we want to go all together. We go slow because we want to do it right. We go slow because the way is as important as the result.”

The last sentence is a clear example of “prefigurative” thinking (see chapter 2): “the way is as important as the result”, and ultimately aims to embody it. The world to come must be made present in the way towards it. But this emphasis appears as a response to public critiques of inefficiency and slowness towards 15M workings, paradigmatically embodied in the assembly model of decision making. The critical judgment, the passage suggests, is based on the usual timing of politics, on the chronopolitics of representation and media. By reducing the number of decision makers, time is accelerated (as suggested by Latour, 2004b). But the text calls for a break with the temporality of accelerating (and shrinking) representation, be it in the form of representative democracy or representation in mass media. Such a break is necessary because the process towards a real democracy must be radically participatory if it is to arrive to its destination. If the current representative system excludes most people of decision making, the first solution to such a problem is “the inclusive participation of everyone”.

The primary model for how to do so was the assembly. Its principles appear neatly resumed in a text by the Facilitation Commission on May 31st (Comisión Dinamización, 2011), entitled “Quick Guide for the Facilitation of Popular Assemblies”. There is a discursive idealization of an assembly:

“A participatory decision-making organ that looks for consensus. The best arguments are searched in order to make the decision that fits better with the different opinions, rather than opposing positions, as it happens in voting.”

In an anarchist fashion (Graeber, 2013), they define assemblies as primarily practical: “An assembly must not focus in an ideological discourse but on practical

matters 'What do we need? How do we get it?'. They also stress, also in a rather anarchist style, free association: "The assembly is based on free association, if you do not agree with what has been decided you are not bound to carry it on. Every person is free to do whatever they want." Furthermore, they stress the aim of collective construction and dialogue: "the assembly aims to generate collective intelligence, common lines of thought and action. It promotes dialogue, let's know one another."²³² The document exposes some of the basic principles of 15M's ideal of a direct and deliberative democracy. This model challenges the individualist ontology of the modern liberal representative model, as well as its competitive and aggregative model of decision making, epitomized in voting. Instead, it proposes a collaborative, processual and emergent view of collective decision making. As the text makes explicit

"Collective thinking is completely opposed to the actual system that guides itself by an individualist thinking. The objective in collective thinking is to construct [...] Therefore, it is not a matter of my idea or yours. It is the two ideas together that will provide a new product that neither you nor I did know a priori."

For this, it concludes, "active listening" is key. In this text, there are some of the central discursive tenets of 15M. There are central leitmotifs of deliberative democracy (dialogue, collective thinking, etc.) combined with others that came to be idiosyncratic of the movement and even the cycle, such as "collective intelligence" and "active listening".

15M articulated a multi-directional, critical diagnosis of representation in politics and media, and demanded more participatory alternatives in a normative fashion. But its ultimate direct and deliberative model, anarchist in nature, based on the ideal of the assembly, was more clearly seen on its prescriptive-normative discourses on practice, such as the one just analyzed. Even though references to direct democracy and deliberation remained relevant in later stages of the cycle, this model of the assembly as the paradigm of a more real democracy was to lose ground in the months following the experience of the camps. Part of this decline had to do with the practical results of the assembly form during the camping weeks.

²³² In the translation, I have tried to preserve the punctuation style in the original text.

4.4. Pragmatics/Practices

Part 3 analyzed the discourses on representation and democracy articulated by DRY and the 15M camps in manifestos, documents, and slogans. This part is devoted to see its experiments with technopolitics, new organizational forms, (anti)representation and alter-democracy in practice. The chapter is divided in three main parts. The first attends to practices of anti-representationalism and alter-democracy in camps and assemblies, touching upon some of the limits of the latter. The second looks at technopolitical practices of media alter-representationalism and autonomy. The third part analyzes the technopolitical assemblages of practice at the core of 15M during the camp stage, which encompassed both digital networks and squares.

This part looks at a movement that was able to mobilize thousands of people without formal, representative organizations or figures. It analyzes the experimental modes of organization and the practices that made it possible, and some of their limits. A crucial element, secondary as a topic at the semantic or discursive level (part 3), emerges as a result: technopolitics, otherwise, the entanglement of technology and politics in movement practice.

The centrality of ICTs and practices related to them for 15M has been repeatedly shown (Gerbaudo, 2012; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Toret et al., 2015; Monterde, 2015). Rather than trying to proof such centrality once again, I focus in some new aspects of this centrality, and relate them to matters of representation and democracy²³³.

In synthesis, this fourth part outlines two key models of non-representational political ontology: the assembly and the networked assemblage. The former speaks to the alter-democratic ontology of deliberative democracy, and appeals to a dialoguing citizenry; the latter speaks of a form of autonomist democracy, and to networked multitudes. 15M is presented as a technopolitical, multi-layered assemblage involving thousands of people, both locally and statewide, in political actions that mostly sidestepped representation and traditional forms of organization in social movements.

²³³ This means to take a look at the deployment of technologies for politics and not so much at the politics of technologies.

4.4.1. Anti-representationalism (and presentism) in practice: direct actions, camps, assemblies

Anti-representationalism and alter-democracy in camps and assemblies had a twofold direction. It was headed outwards, towards the media and the institutional political system (analyzed in section 4.1.1.). It was also headed inwards, it affected the practice of representation within 15M, and was connected to alternative forms of organization: assemblies (section 4.1.2.) and networks of assemblies (4.1.3.).

4.4.1.1. Anti-representationalism in images, direct action, and camps

Few images and symbols of 15M questioning of representation were more prominent than the picture in the first big banner hung in Sol²³⁴. It was May 18th, three days after the demonstration of May 15th and the decision of some people to stay overnight. The banner displayed an image of the Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler, with a euro sign and Mickey Mouse ears, with the heading “they do not represent us”. As commented earlier, the DRY manifesto had presented a critique of the mainstream political and media interpretation of the crisis as a somehow neutral, quasi-natural, economic process. Such a representation was denounced itself as a fraud, a fraud that covered the wider fraud of wealth extraction through the mechanisms of finance and corrupt politics. This impugnation of the alignment of money, politics, commodification, and spectacle was clear in the materiality of the banner.

The next example is closer to direct action. On the night between May 20th and 21st, 24 hours before the arrival of the election day, a huge multitude assembled in Sol. The Electoral Junta had ordered the eviction of the camps on that midnight, in preparation for the “reflection day”. Reflection day is a spatial-temporal practice sanctioned by law: in the 24 hours preceding an election, no political propaganda is allowed, so that a political silence leaves room for people to meditate on their vote. At midnight, after a silence only filled with the sound of the twelve strokes of the Puerta del Sol clock, hundreds of people waved their hands, and a deafening shout

²³⁴ The process of banner hanging is recorded in this video www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=h-Vxxa5a-4s (accessed on December 15th, 2015). Although, later on, there would be many others, in a space saturated with slogans, proposals, and images, it remains interesting the fact that the first banner, an element with great iconographic and symbolic charge, was precisely this iconic piece of iconoclasm and iconogenesis. The image of Himmler may evoke, perhaps, the kind of inversion of representation that, according to Pitkin, fascism embody. The Mickey ears—mark of both the Disney Brand and American entertainment industry—seem to point to both spectacle and entertainment, to political infantilization; the symbol of the Euro connects, in a rather obvious way, to the economic powers and the European institutions ensuring the rule of markets, capital and, within Europe, Germany—the figure of Himmler, after all, connects to the last German Project for the domination of Europe.

of joy followed suit. It was reflection day, the assembled multitude challenged the rule of the State right before one of its self-celebratory days. Then, right after the shout, a chant by hundreds of people, at unison: “they do not represent us”²³⁵. Images such as this one were a representation in a theatrical sense, a massive performance, a direct action trying to short-circuit the ritual of the elections, a key authoritative and symbolic moment within the liberal representative democracy, its legitimization ritual. Continuously threatened by State policing, this was a spatiotemporal counter-practice, a different, autonomist way of assembling the multitude and the agora in an election day, in the day of representation.

The demonstration on May 15th took advantage of the political process (in the classical social movement theory fashion) to maximize public attention. By their very existence, the camps short-circuited the ritual that they had taken advantage from: they enacted anti-representation. Differently from earlier initiatives such as NLV, the camps did not accept the representative circuit as the endpoint of the movement. They did not ask for a change in the vote, rather, they first asked for reflection, and, more importantly, pointed elsewhere in the political imaginary²³⁶. As a well-known slogan at Puerta del Sol pointed: “Our dreams do not fit in your ballot boxes”²³⁷. Elections are themselves an ontological performance of representative democracy; they are their fleeting embodiment. The social multitude, constituted as “sovereign people” and nation, mobilized, sociotechnical infrastructures deployed *ex profeso*, socioeconomic differences allegedly forgot or played out calmly, in a synchronized common set of gestures and allowances, ultimately synthesized in the act of voting, where all citizens are framed as equal. A formal process where all get formal, although not material, equality. All of that was being questioned by the autonomist, alter-democratic performances taking place—taking the square—in dozens of Spanish cities. 15M used the representation time, the election week, for displaying

²³⁵ The video capturing this moment is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=xp1VIDEnM9U (accessed on December 20th, 2015).

²³⁶ After the election counting it became clear that, despite some rise in white and null votes, and the increase in the minoritarian vote—the total voting rate actually increased—the right-wing Popular Party had won. This resulted, primarily, from the huge drop in support for the Socialist Party in office in most of the regions and city councils in dispute (Alcaide, 2011). From the “NLV” viewpoint, this could be considered a failure. From the viewpoint of the processes unleashed after 15M, the symbolic objection to the performance and to the very essence of representative democracy was there to stay. It became into a multiplicity of alternatives, in the form of both direct democracy and direct action, which were to spread in the following months and years.

²³⁷ As noticed by Foucault in his Preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, “It is the connection of desire to reality (and not its retreat into the forms of representation) that possesses revolutionary force” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: XV).

self-organization, for assembling autonomously, for constructing an anti-representational space and an anti-representational time, a presentist—albeit problematic and hybrid—sociality.

On the squares, things other than discussion of elections, even other than the deliberative discussions of the assembly, were going on. The camps were a huge assemblage of autonomous performances, one big direct action with many others within it. What blossomed inside that temporary autonomous zone were temporary autonomous forms of life. One of the most powerful expositions on this regard is Miguel Arana's (2011) (later participation innovator for the Participation Council of Madrid):

“That first week the government could fall. That first week squares all over the world could rise up and start something different. That week anything could happen because the power was inexhaustible” [min 38]

“All of one's own worries, all the problems, all the minor issues, suddenly, disappeared from your life. I recall the first days, evidently, nobody went to work. My PhD director was hallucinated, “well, where is this guy?”. Suddenly, everything had lost importance. It was like “we are changing the world, and we can change it for the first time”. That feeling of hope, of, really, we can change it, anything can happen and now the matter is to define it... that is something unique, something that is not comparable to anything I have lived” [minute 54]

The experience of those weeks was a life-changing process for many. For as many as 95% of the respondents to our survey, 15M was an important relevant experience. In places like Sol, personal and communal exuberance resulted in a plethora of autonomous groups and structures that proliferated rapidly, from plastic arts to legal services.

1. Graphic and plastic arts
2. Legal
3. Internal coordination
4. Nursery
5. Action
6. Communication
7. Camp
8. Immigration
9. Extension
10. Child zone
11. Study zone
12. Working groups
13. Respect
14. Feeding "A"
15. Feeding "B"
16. Feeding "C"
17. Infrastructure/Cleaning
18. Information, lost & found
19. W. C.
20. Assembly
21. Volunteers



FIGURE 12. MAP OF ACAMPADASOL.

SOURCE: TOMALAPLAZA.NET.

4.4.1.2. Assembling people and decisions deliberately and democratically: problems and solutions of deliberative alter-democracy in practice

One of the most celebrated practices within 15M camps was its experimentation with the practice of open, deliberative assemblies at a mass scale. The General Assembly became the embodiment of 15M's alter-democratic, deliberative and autonomist model (as seen in section 3.3.) and limits of the movement. 15M was an experiment with massive participation in assemblies. Massive in terms of the number of people that may attend any given assembly (20 Minutos, 2011), as well as in terms of the sheer total number (tens, if not hundreds of thousands²³⁸) of people who took part, many of them for the first time. It was an experiment and an experience.

According to the definition provided in a reference text published by the Acampadasol's Facilitation Commission on May 31st (Comisión Dinamización, 2011), entitled "Quick Guide for the Facilitation of Popular Assemblies", a popular assembly "Is a participatory decision-making organ that looks for consensus. The best arguments are searched in order to make the decision that fits better with the different opinions, rather than opposing positions, as it happens in voting."

²³⁸ Between 1,5 and 8 million participated either in demonstrations, the camps, or assemblies. Our own survey suggests that 65.6% of 15M participants participated in assemblies. Just in Madrid, the organizers estimated that the decentralized assemblies to decide what to do after the camp in Puerta del Sol was dismantled gathered more than 10000 attendees (20 Minutos, 2011).

Assemblies were oriented to let everyone speak and be actively listened to. They were meant to potentiate equality (the ancient Greek *isegoria*) and horizontality, breaking with the hierarchies and forms of power that DRY's and camp's texts associated with the neoliberal representative political-economic model that turned people into commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers. In 15M, the assembly was the primary method of discussion and decision making embedded in a variety of settings, not only the well-known general assemblies. As stated in the same document: "working group assemblies, commissions assemblies, neighborhood assemblies (each neighborhood, town, and municipalities), Acampadasol General Assemblies and Madrid General Assemblies." In spite of the appeal of the direct deliberative model, open and consensus based assemblies, especially massive ones, proved to have plenty of problems in practice. These, in turn, impacted the movement.

The range of these problems, which were explored in some journal articles at the time (Sánchez, 2011b) was wide. An alternative to representation mechanisms, the assembly had its own; anti-representationalism faced its own quandaries. One of them, difficulty to find consensus, may derive from what Pickering (2014) has called "the problem of the homeostat" which points to the ontological and mathematical difficulty of reaching stability (in political terms, consensus) among a big group of actors, especially under an open, non-coercive and horizontal process, a difficulty that increases when moving from simple homeostats to human differences in rhetoric styles, interests, and the like. Another was the problem of decision overload, otherwise, the sheer quantity of matters to decide upon. A third, connected to the previous two, was assembly exhaustion, otherwise, the excessive number and time length of assemblies, with some discussions extending over different sessions and days.

Some of these problems were partially and practically addressed by modifications in the internal structure and facilitation of assemblies. For instance, as an attempt to address non-consensus blockages, especially in the last days of Acampadasol, many defended moving from decision by consensus towards a majoritarian 80% system²³⁹ (Comisión de Extensión Internacional, 2011). As a response to the problem of decision overload, a good part of the collective decision making was by default

²³⁹ It is worth noticing that majoritarian systems were in place earlier in the assemblies at other camps (Sánchez, 2011b).

decentralized to semi-autonomous working groups and commissions, or even the social networks associated with a given camp or city. This decision making usually moved within the broad boundaries of what were considered the principles of the movement. Formal working groups had internal forms of peer review and frequently reported to and got feedback from the assembly (Zulo, 2011), but there was no centralized oversight of distributed collective action by any collective body. Forcing all the relevant decision making to pass through the assembly was impossible. As a response to the third problem noticed above, there were recommendations of clear agendas and timings, aiming to avoid excessively long meetings (Comisión Dinamización, 2011).

While decentralization and assembly time limits were set up earlier, the change to majoritarian rules was being debated at the time of the dismantling of the camps—actually, the assembly decision to lift the camp was one of the drivers for the change to majoritarianism. The general assembly form proved to be a block to many innovative proposals coming from working groups²⁴⁰, as well as to general decision making and action of 15M in Madrid (Sánchez, 2011b). So central was “process” and its problems in 15M that some would affirm “what is about to break Madrid’s 15M is not a matter of content (what to decide) but of system (how to decide)” (Sánchez, 2011b). Key debates moved from being debates in assemblies to be debates about assemblies, within the “facilitation” working group. But the group suffered from the same “unanimous consensus” problem, so that a participant would say: “we are trapped in our own dynamics and we are slaves of ourselves” (Sánchez, 2011b).

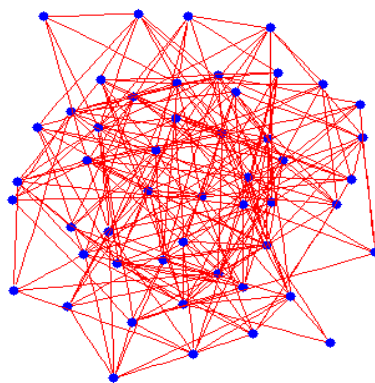
The combination of full openness and full consensus proved to be an inoperative one. A system of decision making more appropriate for smaller groups with previous affinity and common goals showed its limitations when scaled up to bigger and more heterogeneous groups (Gerbaudo, 2016) (including potential saboteurs). The discursive call (seen in section 3.3.) for “the inclusive participation of everyone in the construction of the change we want” was appealing in principle, but frequently brought practical problems to bring such a change.

4.4.1.3. 15M meta-assembling: anti-representationalism and practices of coordination and delegation

Popular assemblies were first and foremost an alter-democratic, deliberative and

²⁴⁰ Sánchez (2011b) noted: it is enough to take a look at the proceedings of the commissions of economy, healthcare, or environment to see that there is debate, that there are ideas, that there are concrete proposals in the underground of 15M. They just never get approved”.

autonomist space for direct participation of anyone and everyone. But they also involved delegation. Commissions and working groups usually sent delegates to them for reporting, discussing proposals, etc. Especially in assemblies devoted to inter-assembly coordination, such as that of the APM (Popular Assembly of Madrid), delegation was key (in my analysis I follow Comisión Barrios, 2011). The APM was probably the most complex collective body generated by the 15M movement across the country. It was attended by delegates from assemblies of all the neighborhoods of the city and dozens of cities and towns of the province of Madrid.



**FIGURE 13. 15M ASSEMBLY AND GROUP
STRUCTURE IN MADRID. SOURCE: COMISIÓN
BARRIOS, 2011**

Interestingly, though, the emergence of fixed representatives at the APM was countered by different techniques. First, the spokespeople participating in them were not only rotating frequently, even for every assembly (as were all of the roles of the assembly organization), but the spokespeople role was played by several people (the recommendation was between 2 and 5 per delegation). Furthermore, one of its relevant actors, the 15M Madrid Neighborhood Commission (Comisión de Barrios, 2011), saw the Popular Assembly of Madrid not as a supreme organ of decision but, under the alter-globalization model, as “a space of encounter and coordination: the important thing is that calls spread, that we put things in common with other assemblies, that we knit networks”. They saw the APM working “through an absolutely thick fabric of formal and informal interrelations between assemblies and working groups, but also between the inhabitants of towns and neighborhoods”.

This, according to them, is how the 15M network in Madrid looks like. Rather than being at the peak of a hierarchic system of centralized decision making, the APM

“must not take the role of “mediator” with power; assemblies are autonomous, but they can be the reflection of their collective will. We understand the APM is a tool (among many others)”. Under a climate of anti-representationalism such as the one described throughout the chapter, not only individuals were denied authority to represent the movement as whole, but also assemblies²⁴¹. No ultimate, centralized, representative body emerged in Madrid's 15M structures (even if Acampadasol the key node), but rather a plethora of interlinked spaces coordinating “in order to facilitate mutual aid and action”. In all of those different bodies: working groups, general assemblies or inter-assembly gatherings, the assembly form appeared as the preferred, alter-democratic decision-making form.

But if the local shape (the square level) was the assembly, the coordinating shape (at the APM level) was the network or the rhizome. This implied a partial recognition of an organizational dimension beyond the assembly itself, which was in practice as, if not more, relevant than the assemblies: the networked assemblage. But the normative, deliberative model around decision making, which prioritized the assembly, was expressed in the coda to the text: “all power to the assemblies”.

4.4.2. 15M alter-representationalist media practices

In section 4.1. I've portrayed direct action, assemblies, and camps, as cases and symbols of autonomist collective organization without representation; here the focus is put on the media field, which centrally contributed to portray (or not) them as such. As noticed in chapter 2, contemporary political representation, and politics more broadly, cannot be understood without media. As noticed there too, neither can social movements. Here I want to attend to two aspects: one is how 15M actors related to mass media, challenging its current forms of representing (or constructing) reality; the other is how they constructed their own media, its alter-representation channels.

²⁴¹ An example of that denial can be found in a blog post by Enrique Dans (2011) entitled “On assemblies, camps and their representativeness in the 15M movement” where he explicitly denies representativeness to people assembled in camps because “none has voted them [and] they lack qualifications of any kind to discuss these topics, and have no more merit that having decided to stay there sitting”. He further calls to “silence the assemblies. Let's deny all representativeness to their proposals because they simply haven't got it, they never had it”. He closes suggesting that the assemblies devote themselves to ensure the proper functioning of the camps and to serve as a people's agora, but not to try to amend the problems of the country or to represent the movement with these proposals. He demanded something that the assemblies had already integrated in their discourse: the rejection to be representing the movement.

4.4.2.1. *Challenging mainstream media representationalism and movement representatives*

Suspicion of media among 15M participants was widespread (as noticed in section 3.2.2. and explained here). A clear tension existed between media usefulness for spreading the movement's message and their ability for co-optation (Sánchez, 2013c). According to Sánchez, the three first reactions of mainstream media towards the movement were to ignore the it, then, to instrumentalize it (to understand it as something to be read only in terms of elections due on May 22nd—which included right wing conspiracy theorists that saw a hidden Socialist Party hand behind it), and then to over-cover it.

The camps and 15M anti-representationalism posed a challenge to traditional media. A plethora of events were going on at the same time and messages were generated and distributed through heterogeneous venues: assemblies, fanpages, personal profiles, working group profiles, etc. Lacking fixed representatives, mass media faced a situation that denied media representative totalization in practice, countering the position of transcendence it tries to grant over the field of political practice. As Sánchez (2011d, 2013b) recalls, journalists started to spend 8 hours in general assemblies to get their reports right... while missing all the rest going on in the camps. Neither could the activists, such as people in charge of press on information sites, pretend to know everything²⁴² that was going on in the camp, not to say on the movement as a whole, which included social networks and other cities.

The situation challenged the usual ways of media reporting today. According to Stephane Gueso (Sánchez, 2011d), 15M documentarist and streamer, “it was difficult to interpret but what was needed was to take the time.” Sánchez²⁴³(2011d) notices: “That is a luxury. We have taken the luxury of being hours in a square telling what was going on.” Human Journalism came to be the journal of reference for and about 15M (Periodismo Humano, 2011). New media, new representative hybrids, blossomed under these new conditions.

And yet, journalists “looked for structure” (Martínez, 2013), for referential figures that would help them to frame 15M. In the camps and, especially, in DRY, the ultimate strategy wasn't to deny all interviews but to make faces exchangeable, shifting,

²⁴² As 15M activist Marga Padilla points out, “Nobody can see everything”.

²⁴³ Working as a journalist for “Periodismo Humano” (Human journalism), a “communication media” with emphasis on human rights, of which he was co-founder and that was a reference for 15M supporters in the times of the camps, he gained both a great knowledge and acknowledgement of 15M circles www.eldiario.es/autores/juan_luis_sanchez/

never able to pretend to represent and thereby reify 15M. Camps went against representation. If the concept of “person” was key in many texts and tweets since the early days of 15M, “personalism” was the reverse, the attempt of stop being “anybody” and play under the coordinates of the modern politics of representation and leadership. Collective identities rather than individual ones, tended to have preeminence, nevertheless. The lack of long term public leaders of the movement and the preeminence of collective profiles on social networks such as Twitter (Toret et al., 2015) confirms this. On this regard, DRY and the camps tended to be different. Members of the first gained recognition in the days following the successful demonstration on May 15th. It is because of this that, five years later, newspapers could still talk of the “forgotten founders” of the 15M movement (Sáinz, 2016). But as the title indicates, they have been forgotten, either because they were not interested in maintaining such position or could not gather sustained legitimacy or prevent attacks undermining it.

The questioning of leadership was both a practice and a symbol, a representation of anti-representationalism, of the kind of forms of togetherness the movement aimed to achieve. Anti-representationalism worked with limitations, since journalist practice was hard to change (as commented by Martínez, 2013 and Sánchez, 2013c). Not infrequently, irrepresentability was externally perceived as a cacophony.

4.4.2.2. Technopolitics for alter-representation: constructing autonomous media

But beyond cacophony, there was contention. As pointed by Quintana (2013): there was a “battle of narratives” around 15M, what amounted to a conflict around representation and media discourse. 15M generated its own media, so much so that some have spoken of 15M as a communication media (Serrano, 2013a). 15M participants narrated and discussed what was going on the camps, on assemblies, and on social media. It is appropriate to say 15M generated a hybrid media assemblage within an emerging, wider hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013)²⁴⁴ in Spain. Section 4.3. attends to 15M participants deployment of social media, particularly, Facebook and Twitter. The present one focuses in collective and personal projects of media channels (in the tradition of alter-globalization model of alternative media, Kellner, 1999) aimed at bringing alternative representations of the

²⁴⁴ Castells (2012) contrasts them to networks allowing mass self-communication, such as those generated by 15M in Twitter or Facebook. In the camps, the question was probably more connected with unmediated interpersonal communication.

movement to the mainstream.

In most big camps Communication Commissions (or homologous structures)²⁴⁵ were created. The general rationale and aim of these commissions and groups can be synthesized in the Agora Sol foundational statement: “the need to give voice to the movement of the outraged. Especially, in light of how, many times, traditional media ignored (when not blatantly deformed) a nascent movement that could not be easily understood from the traditional schemes.”

I focus here one of the most innovative practices alter-representation popularized by 15M: streaming. Streaming is the practice of interactive audiovisual broadcasting, frequently in real time, based on internet services. Streaming is key to understand the use of live communication in 15M. Dozens of 15M streaming channels in platforms such as Bambuser²⁴⁶ (others, such as Livestream or Ustream were less relevant) were set up during 2011, 2012 and 2013, so much so that the growth of this media was directly related to the movement (Pérez Rioja & Gil, 2014). In the early days of 15M, this live and alive communication allowed Spanish emigrants to “camp via streaming” (Nanclares, 2011). During the peak years of 15M, it allowed between a dozen and two hundred profiles to involve hundreds of thousands of people in augmented events. Some indicative numbers can be found by the hundreds of thousands of views of key 15M channels, ran by individual 15M activists (such as @fanetin and @suysulucha) and by collectives (such as Audiovisol or Acampada Internacional Barcelona), or those gathered around web channels such as TomaLaTele or People Witness. The streams of Periodismo Humano and later in the camps web streams in the first days of the movement received thousands of thousands of views (Pérez Rioja & Gil, 2014; Pérez Rioja, 2014).

Syntactically, streaming is primarily a one-to-many media: usually a streamer that reports and interprets what she or he sees on the streets to an audience. And yet, the interaction with users on the online chat of the streaming itself (or in combination with other media, such as Twitter), which provide information, suggest, and discuss

²⁴⁵ In Acampadasol, the commission was created in relation to others such as the Commission for Networked Diffusion, which took care of social media profiles as well as of the madrid.tomalaplaza.net blog. Other crucial groups working on communication were Agora Sol (radio) and Audiovisol (audiovisuals), as well as, later, Take the TV, which served to create a citizen TV channel.

²⁴⁶ As a final note, it is worth noticing that Bambuser (as well as Ustream and Livestream) are for profit companies, and thereby fall within the “Facebook” side of the technopolitical struggle around the control of the technological media of political action. That said, debates in this case has been much smaller than the ones around Facebook or Twitter.

the events and the broadcasting itself, make for a multitudinous experience. 15M activists deployed different forms of peercasting, “narrowcasting or broadcasting, depending on the purpose and characteristics of the intended communication practice” (Castells 2009: 55).

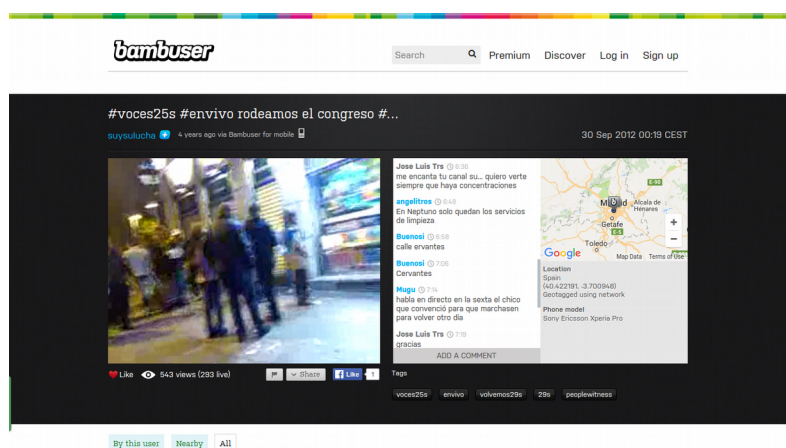


FIGURE 14. @SUYSULUCHA’S STREAMING OF THE #25S, SURROUND CONGRESS DIRECT ACTION.

Streaming has contributed to articulate real-time, first person (both individual and collective) narratives of events, sometimes used by mainstream media²⁴⁷.

Furthermore, in many cases, it has also contributed to register and publicize, defend from, or even prevent police abuses. With the proliferation of smartphones and digital devices such as tablets, and broadband connection, recording and streaming have contributed to different forms of distributed “sousveillance”, or vigilance from below (as a symbolic and synthetic example, the following image).

²⁴⁷The image ran in the front page of the Washington Post, which helped to break the relative silence of the Spanish mainstream media in the first days of the camp, was taken from Periodismo Humano’s stream (Pérez Rioja & Gil, 2014).



FIGURE 15. BANNER WITH THE SLOGAN “REALITY IS YOUR ONLY WEAPON. THERE IS NO POSSIBLE DEFENSE AGAINST IT. RECORD, PICTURE, SPREAD”.

SOURCE: PEOPLEWITNESS.NET.

What may be defined as “multitudinous sousveillance” was a very particular enactment of the possibilities of self-communication, one that frequently combined with forms of direct action and self-protection. 15M technopolitics included an attempt at democratizing media and constructing alter-representations of the movement, the kind of technopolitics advocated by Kellner (1999, 2001). They were inserted within a complex assemblage of practices that I briefly outline now.

4.4.3. Constructing networked assemblages in practice

Beyond the assembly, the key alter-democratic model (autonomist, rather than deliberative) that I consider idiosyncratic of the 15M movement is that of the networked assemblage. This implied forms of association that not only challenged representative politics but also social movement forms, it generated forms of collective action and discourse not driven by personal leaders, established organization or delegation but by flows of communication and performances that exhibited clearly cybernetic dimensions (Toret et al., 2015; Aguilera, 2015). I try to describe some of its characteristics now.

As noticed in the introduction and shown elsewhere (Gerbaudo, 2012; Toret et al., 2015), the construction of digital networks in social media was crucial for the organization of the demonstration on May 15th. As noted in part 2 above, DRY networks on the internet and in cities were over-flooded on that day. Then, events at Sol square on the nights 15th-16th and 16th-17th amplified and were amplified by those networks in social media (Borge-Holthoefer et al., 2011; Toret et al., 2015).

This went hand in hand with the replication of camps all over the country from May 17th onwards. Different forms of representation have been used to visualize the type of multi-layered network that emerged from and structured these dynamics. I present some of those visualizations to sketch a systemic or panoramic view of the matter.

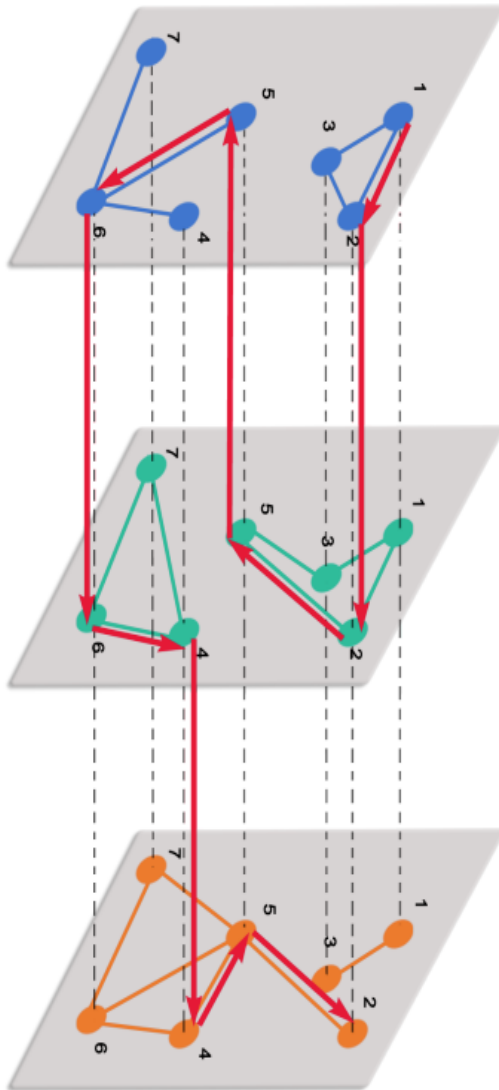


FIGURE 19. MULTI-LAYERED NETWORK. SOURCE: DOMENICO DI MANLIO 2013, CC-BY-SA 4.0.

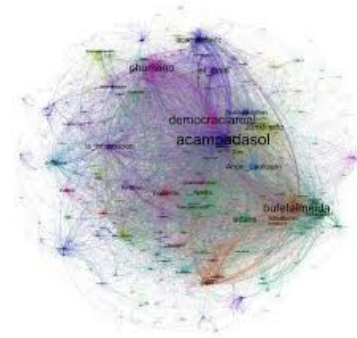


FIGURE 16. 15M RETWEET NETWORK. SOURCE: PABLO ARAGÓN, 2012, LICENSE CC-BY-SA WITH DATA BY M. LUZ CONGOSTO

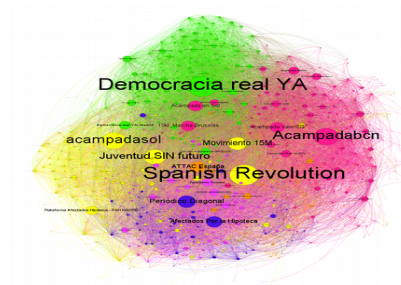


FIGURE 17. 15M FACEBOOK FANPAGE NETWORK. SOURCE: ARNAU MONTERDE 2015, LICENSE CC-BY SA 4.0

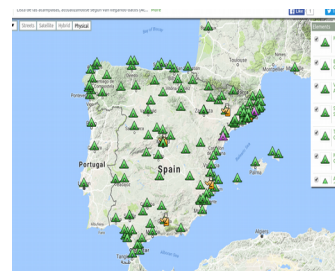


FIGURE 18. CROWDSOURCED MAP OF 15M CAMPS. SOURCE: IKIMAP.COM

They respectively show a multi-layered network (fig. 19), the functional or dynamic network of retweets (resending of users' messages by other users) between May 15th and 22nd around key 15M Hashtags (fig. 16), the network of "following" relations between different 15M fan pages on Facebook (fig. 17) and a crowdsourced map of 15M camps (fig. 18).

In the following sections I describe key, non-representational practices which these visualizations somehow hide. The two more general types of practices for the creation and maintenance of this assemblage were intra-layer interactions within a given space (f.i.: the retweets on Twitter, the mutual likes and crossed posts and comments on Facebook, or the interactions on the streets and squares) and the inter-layer interactions between different spaces (streaming from squares shared on Facebook, the hyperlinks to webs spread on Twitter, etc.), which also reshaped those spaces or layers. Earlier movement repertoires, such as demonstrating, assembling or camping (a practice already present, albeit with a different function, in the alter-globalization movement), as well as more recent, networked ones (such as posting on Facebook, tweeting, etc.) frequently operate in only one space or layer: a given city space or digital media. In the case of digital-only actions, this ends up into various forms of cyber-activism and clicktivism (as discussed on chapter 2).



FIGURE 20. TWEET BY THE DRY OFFICIAL PROFILE WITH A CALL TO FOLLOW OTHER ACCOUNTS (ABBREVIATED #FF)

In the formation of 15M, these mono-layer or intra-layer practices helped to construct networks in social media that were crucial in the building up for the demonstration. DRY twitter accounts and Facebook fanpages established structural and dynamic relations with each other (through “liking”, “following”, resending messages, etc.). But they were also crucially enriched by multi-layer and inter-layer practices that connected or played in several spaces, digital and physical.

4.4.3.1. *Tying the digital and the physical: multi-layered and multi-layering practices and settings*

Bennett, Segerberg & Walker (2014) have used the notion of “sticking mechanisms” for labelling the links between digital spaces that help to tie networked assemblages (which they call “crowd-enabled networks”). According to the results from our survey, 58.8% of 15M participants used social media while being in the camps or in a

demonstration. This type of practices may be defined as “multi-layered”²⁴⁸. A minimal definition of multi-layer practices would group “performances involving (including or connecting) people, things, and technologies in more than one media or space”. Streamings such as the ones mentioned in section 4.2.2. or the narration of demonstrations on Twitter are typical examples of these practices.

On top of practices of performing on several layers at the same time (f.i.: streaming or tweeting from a demonstration), there were performances that explicitly pointed towards a different layer from the one where they took place, which may be defined as “multi-layering performances”²⁴⁹. Two key sub-types of multi-layering performance can be distinguished, first, those that pointed from the net to the streets (which I may define as “agorotropic”, since they pointed towards the open spaces of the squares and streets), then, those that pointed from the streets to the digital networks, or from one digital network to another (which I may define as “digitropic”, since they pointed toward digital spaces).

Among the most relevant cases of multi-layering performance in the formation of the movement were the ones that pointed from digital networks towards the streets. A paradigmatic example was the “Facebook event” for the demonstration on May 15th, setup on March 11th.



FIGURE 21. MAY 15TH DRY EVENT ON FACEBOOK.

The event included a list of local demonstrations planned for May 15th, which grew to more than 60 cities all over the State, as well as a link to the official DRY website.

²⁴⁸ A minimal definition of multi-layer practices could be “actions involving (including or connecting) people, things, and technologies in more than one media or space”.

²⁴⁹ Interestingly, different from multi-layered practices, these inter-layer links could not only be articulated by human actors but also by nonhuman ones.

The list grew as the dynamics on social networks and the local nodes multiplied. Activity on Twitter also connected to other platforms such as webs, Facebook, or blogs via links. These, in turn, aimed to connect and redirect people to the streets.

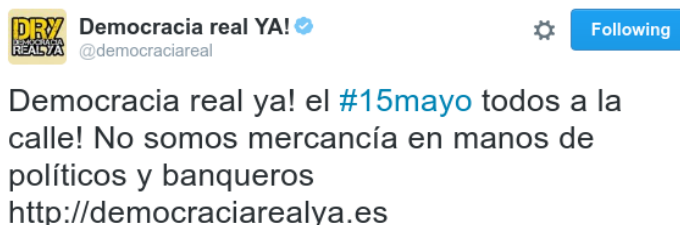


FIGURE 22. TWEET BY THE DRY OFFICIAL PROFILE (WITH LINK TO OFFICIAL WEB).

TEXT: "REAL DEMOCRACY NOW! ON #MAY15 EVERYONE TO THE STREETS!
WE ARE NOT COMMODITIES IN THE HANDS OF POLITICIANS AND BANKERS"



FIGURE 23. TWEET BY THE DRY OFFICIAL PROFILE (WITH LINK TO YOUTUBE CHANNEL).

TEXT: "WE HAVE BEEN THE CHANNEL WITH MOST FOLLOWERS IN SPAIN
IN THE LAST MONTH! ☺ LET'S GO FORWARD!! #MAY 15TH"

After this activity hit the streets, the flow also turned back. Internet language codes were deployed in the square: cyber-symbols, "dislike buttons", hashtags or internet addresses were introduced in banners and redirected by-passers to online conversations (Martínez Roldán, 2012). Twitter narrations of happenings on the streets were part of the common practices too (Toret et al., 2015). While commercial social media potentiated the dynamics of diffusion of events on the ground, alternative social networks such as n-1 contributed to long term organization and collaboration, and allowed uploading assembly notes and other materials (as noted by Zulo, 2011 and systematically analyzed by Gil, 2012). Action on the ground pointed towards digital spaces; digital activity pointed towards the streets.

But these inter-layer links and flows were far from being a smooth online-offline loop, as various works (Gerbaudo, 2012; Martínez Roldán, 2012; Toret et al., 2015; 15M.cc) have shown (and I could corroborate in my personal experience). There was concomitance (as when the setting up of the Sol camp ran hand in hand with the

setting up of Twitter accounts such as Acampadasol), gaps (as when estimates on a Facebook event did not match reality), exchange of properties (as when assemblies and assembly techniques were brought online), feedback loops (as when a hashtag invited people to the streets, and, once there, people used those hashtags again), the already mentioned multilayered and multi-layering practices (with online information serving activists on the ground or sending them there), circulation (as when information on the ground was passed on via social networks), autonomy (many process in the camp, such as planting flowers, were rather independent of dynamics on social media), several of these and more.

4.4.3.2. A network of connected squares and technopolitical modules for self-organization

Even if differently enacted, many of the practices found in Sol were present in other camps too. Sol was the first node in the constitution of a network of connected squares (connected to the Internet and connected among themselves, through the Internet). It contributed to such a network in a semiotic-material way (to put it with Haraway, 1997), as an initial symbol of technopolitical contention and center of technopolitical construction.

As an example of technopolitical construction, on the very first night of the camp, from May 15th to the 16th, activists with a long hacktivist trajectory such as Daniel Vázquez and Marta Franco bought the “take the square” domain and set themselves to the task to create online spaces where other camps across the Spanish state and beyond could share information and coordinate (Franco, 2011). The Extension Commission at the Sol camp was devoted advance this task.

Technopolitical contention skyrocketed on the second night, from May 16th to 17th (Sánchez, 2011a), around 5AM, May 17th, State police evicted the incipient camp, where there were around 300 people sleeping, with a display of violence.



FIGURE 24. YOUTUBE VIDEO OF THE FIRST EVICTION OF ACAMPADASOL.

The videos recording the violent eviction were first circulated by the profiles of those present at the site, including alternative media such as Human Journalism (Sánchez, 2011a), then recirculated by networks created around DRY and related initiatives in the previous months, jumping from there into still other communities and circuits, especially on Facebook and Twitter (Europa Press, 2011)²⁵⁰. A situated conflict in and around a space, between opposed practices and matters of concern (which may be synthesized as “policing” vs “politicizing”²⁵¹), suffered a sudden shift in the length of networks, it mobilized and enrolled more and more actors. This is what in usual terms could be framed as a shift in scale, from a concrete physical node located in Sol to a whole network with dozens of thousands of them. The event of the eviction was “augmented” in a process of networking, commenting, sharing, discussing, by thousands of people, which crossed circuits through different media, Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, alternative journals, community news platforms, and some TVs or radios (as analyzed in Toret et al., 2015).

²⁵⁰ As of October 2016, the most diffused video counts almost 230000 views and was shared 663 times. The data can be checked in the statistics of the video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Vm48Eeb_Y (accessed on January 20th, 2015) which also confirm how both the views and the sharing took place in the first hours after the eviction.

²⁵¹ State practices of policing a space defined for consumption (passing through, visiting, picturing, buying and selling, etc.), and the counter-practices of a bunch of demonstrators aiming at the temporal autonomization of Sol (for assembling, unauthorized demonstration, camping, etc.).

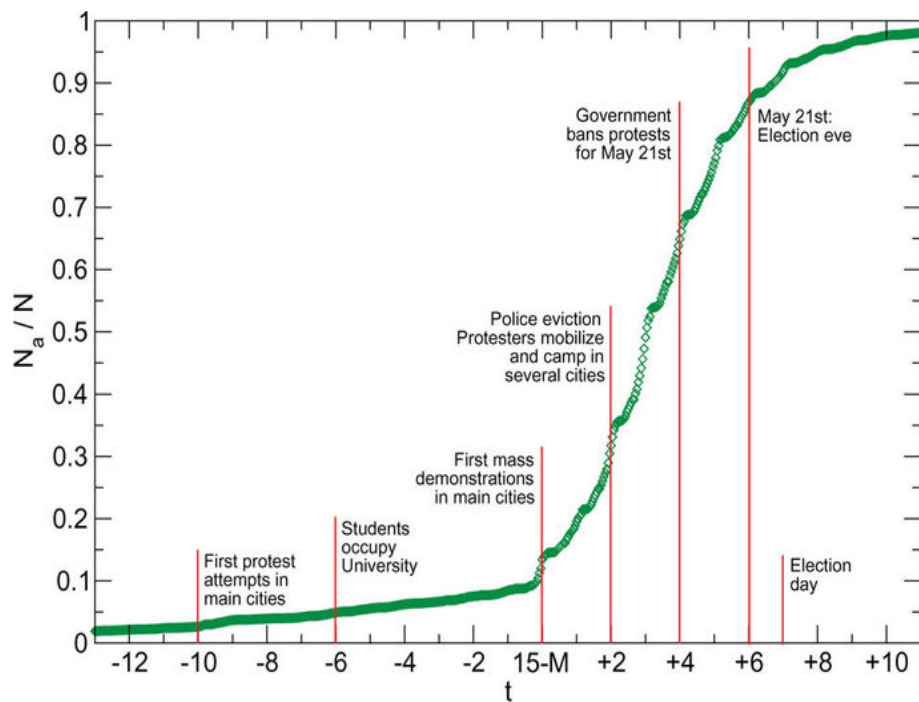


FIGURE 25. INCREASE IN SIZE OF THE 15M NETWORK ON TWITTER (FROM 0 TO 1) FROM 12 DAYS BEFORE MAY 15TH TILL 12 DAYS LATER. SOURCE: GONZÁLEZ-BAILÓN ET AL., 2011.

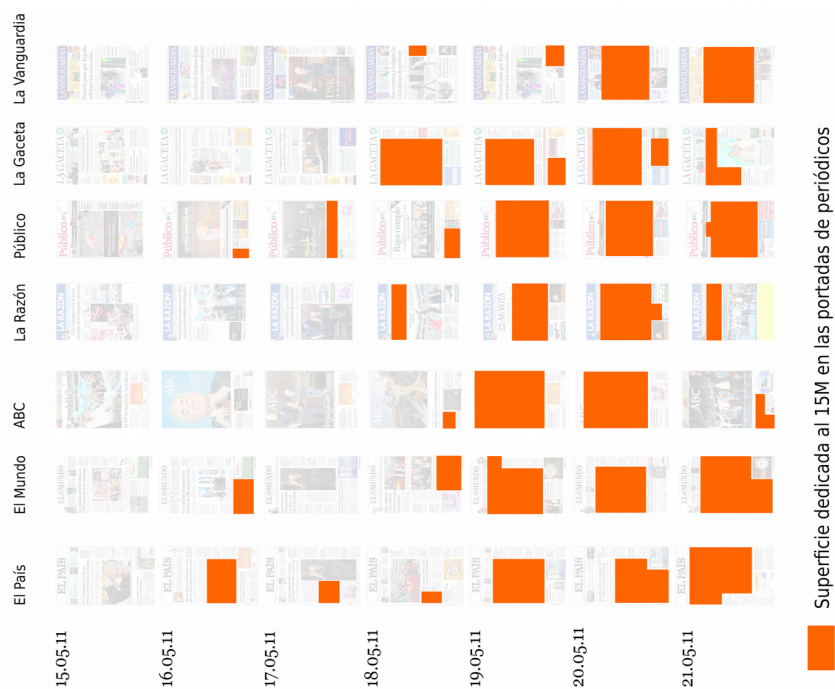


FIGURE 26. SPACE IN NEWSPAPER COVERS DEVOTED TO 15M BETWEEN MAY 15TH AND MAY 21ST. SOURCE: PABLO REY MAZÓN, 2011.

Earlier works (González-Bailón et al., 2011) indicate up to a six-fold increase in the size of 15M networks on Twitter between May 15th and 22nd. Surely, the growing coverage of mainstream media from the 18th and 19th onwards (when 15M

appeared in the cover of international journals such as Washington post and Spanish media begun to pay a much closer attention) played a relevant role there. But it was a consequence rather than the driver of the exponential growth of online and offline activity around the emerging networked assemblage, which it surely fed into. As an example of that autonomist priority of the connection between networks and streets can see that by comparing data from Twitter activity (González-Bailón et al., 2011) with a study on the covers of the main Spanish newspapers (Rey, 2011). Networked camps proliferated all over the country from May 17th onwards.

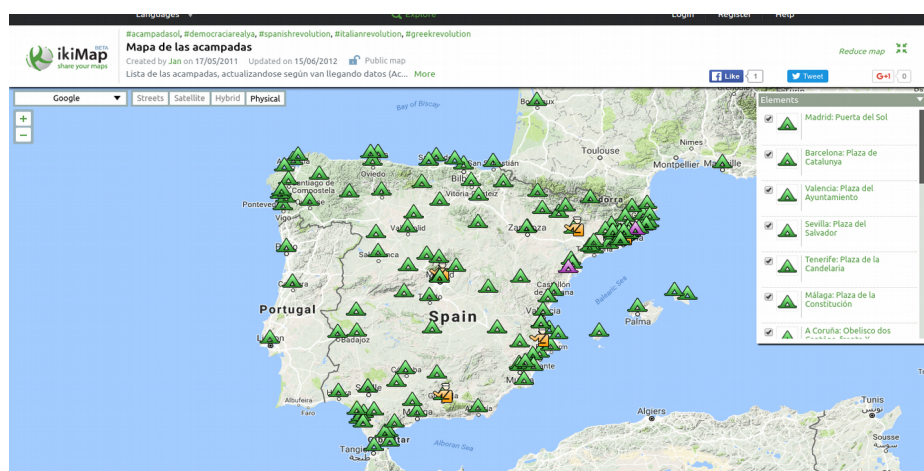


FIGURE 27. CROWDSOURCED MAP OF 15M CAMPS. SOURCE: IKIMAP.COM

Social media were a condition of possibility of this sudden proliferation and construction of a network of connected camps. However, differently from initial readings that defined this as a quasi-organic “technologically structured contagion” (Toret et al., 2015), I believe it is more interesting to speak of this process as one of multitudinous re-production based on multi-layered construction and contention²⁵². It is this process and its results that justifies the definition of May 15th as a “networked movement of the squares”.

Such a net-work was based on the frequent recourse to technopolitical modules for self-organization. As noted by 15M activists Pablo Soto (2011) “it’s not just Google, it’s not just Twitter, it’s not only the smartphones, nor SMS, nor Whatsapps, nor

²⁵² There are two key points to notice, the first is that its character is obviously sociotechnical or technopolitical, and it is not a mere contagion: it is not an automatic process but rather an always contingent process of contention, differently shaped on different sites (from those where camp was crucial to those where it was not allowed). More interestingly, there was layered and multi-layered (as well as multi-layering) contention: conflict between 15M activists and on the ground as well as on social media. This is, in fact, a way to understand the dynamic around the eviction in Puerta del Sol.

Google maps, nor n-1, it's all that, together". Key elements of this technopolitical modules had solidified during the creation of the DRY network, since most nodes had a Facebook fanpage and group, and a Twitter profile (Toret et al., 2015). Modules sometimes incorporated n-1 groups, etherpad(s), mailing lists, or blogs. They usually went along with pragmatic rules or netiquettes. These were synthesized on sites such as acampadasol.net (f.i.: its text on how to run an assembly, Comisión Dinamización, 2011) or take the square (f.i.: its site on "how to camp"²⁵³) which included more elements in time, but, in my experience, were also shared by other means such as activists circulating in camps or in online videos.

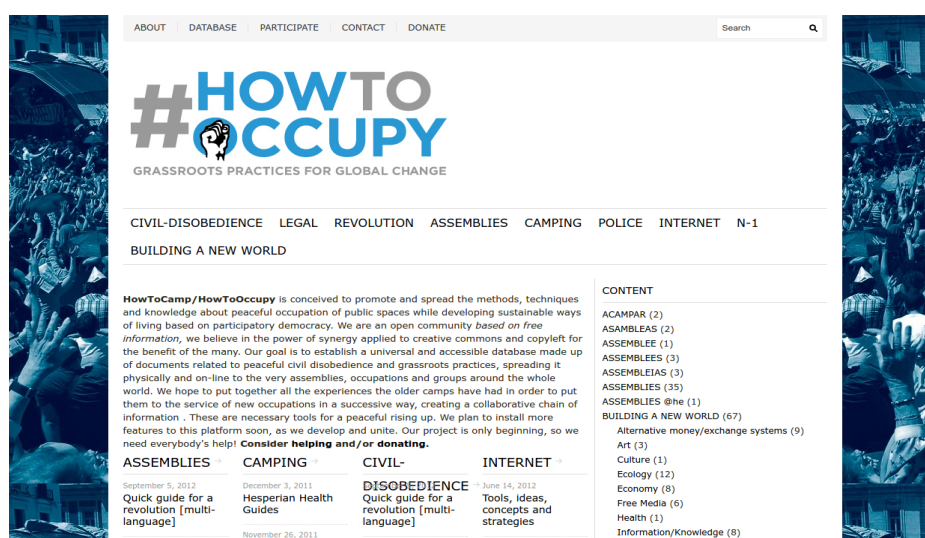


FIGURE 28. WEBSITE HOW TO OCCUPY.

The organization of 15M did not rely on any assembly nor deliberative decision-making process, but rather on heterogeneous forms of multi-layered networking. Deliberation and assembling, or even camping, was just one more practice among many others. Our survey shows the preeminence of demonstrations (79.5%) as the most frequent form of participation in the movement, closely followed by participation in assemblies (65.6%) and digitally mediated practices such as signing an online petition (63.3%), using social media (61.5%), and, as noticed, more crucially, using social media while attending face to face activities (58.8%). These practices, many of them technopolitical in character, served to outline an anarchist, autonomist and networked model of alter-democracy: the networked assemblage.

²⁵³ The site is accessible at www.howtocamp.takethesquare.net/. Accessed on December 3rd, 2015.

4.4.3.3. Networks after camps: movement latency and a shifting cycle

15M digital networks were central to the success of the May 15th demonstration. They were so after the camps were lifted up and the assemblies stopped, as well. Concerns have been raised that different aspects of 15M technopolitics at the syntactic level of infrastructure (f.i.: Facebook potentiation of real-time, continuous renewal of content and facilitation of diffusion instead of organization), discourse (f.i.: discourses related to concrete days, such as May 15th, which connected to historical claims), and practice (f.i.: calls trying to potentiate affects and enthusiasm, which tend to fade away quickly) may promote evanescence (Kreiss & Tufekci, 2013) and risk contributing to “rapid cycles of enthusiasm and disillusionment that might in turn just end up reinforcing the present state of political cynicism” (Gerbaudo, 2016: 270). And yet, as shown in the following sections, as well as in chapters 5 and 6, the networks generated around 15M, and many of the concrete people behind them, found ways to not just to “routinize” digital enthusiasm and turn it into a basis for more durable organizational structures and more lasting forms of “belonging and commitment” (ibid.), but make those structures to mutate and change.

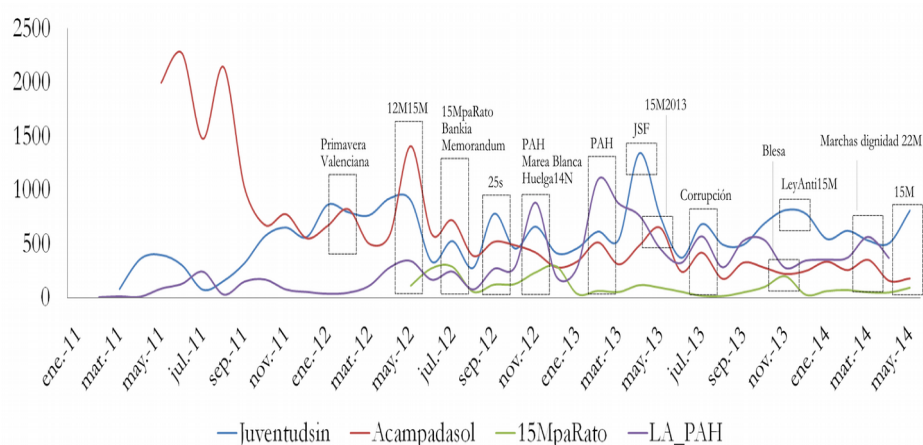


FIGURE 29. ACTIVITY OF KEY 15M ACCOUNTS ON TWITTER, IN RELATION TO PEAKS OF CONTENTION (01/2011-05/2014). SOURCE: ARNAU MONTERDE, 2015, LICENSE CC-BY-SA 4.0

Networks online remained active and were at the center of periodic outburst of activist action. 15M’s crystallized networks, especially the digital ones, remained active. They even displayed possibilities that challenge traditional tenets of social movement theory, as I show in part 6.

4.5. Syntax/Infrastructures

Before mapping those challenges, in order to explore an aspect of 15M's technopolitics, its syntax, I want to make some comments on the digital infrastructures underlying such networks. The variety of digital technologies deployed in 15M was remarkable. According to our survey, both commercial services, such as Facebook (78,8% of participants in 15M), Twitter (72%), or Youtube (46,9%), as well as alternative ones, such as n-1 (25%), etherpads (22,9%), or Mumble (16,9%), were frequently used. Here I focus on two social networks that were crucial for the 15M movement, which embody two different technopolitical paradigms: Facebook and n-1. They differ both in their politics of infrastructure as well as in their affordances as infrastructures for politics; since the latter aspect has been analyzed in detail in other works (Gil, 2012) I focus on the first token.

4.5.1. Politics of technology: corporate vs autonomous

4.5.1.1. Corporate technopolitics: social networks for profit



FIGURE 30. FACEBOOK LOGO.

Facebook is today a company that owns various digital applications beyond its original, digital platform Facebook. As in any other capitalist enterprise, a (if not "the") key reason behind multiple design features and affordances of Facebook is the mediate or immediate increase of the company's profit. Changes in the functioning and architecture of the site are decided in the typical top-down, non-democratic manner. As an example of relevance from an activist viewpoint, in the last few years Facebook has limited the reach of fanpage and group posts, allegedly, because of the increase in content creation and the resulting need of selection. The result is that the percentage of followers or the general Facebook community that any concrete publication reaches is heavily affected by how much the sender pays (Boland, 2015). This state of things severely limits the possibilities offered by the platform to activists

such as 15M's back in 2011. Furthermore, Facebook has enforced criticized policies concerning activist page and post elimination (Malik, 2011; Heins, 2013). On top of that, revelations concerning the collaboration of Facebook with the US government in cases of surveillance have been brought to the fore in the last years (Greenwald & MacAskill, 2013). Finally, Facebook itself operates as a huge field of social experimentation, without the knowledge or explicit consent of its users (Gibbs, 2014). All of these issues are aspects of Facebook syntax, of its particular politics of infrastructure, and characterize a corporate model that is far from the stated goals of movements such as 15M.

4.5.1.2. *Autonomous technopolitics: social networks of and for the people*

N-1 was designed under an opposite model. This self-labelled “free social network”, inspired by Deleuze's and Guattari's taking on n-1²⁵⁴, aimed to provide movements with an autonomous infrastructure for collective action. As the leitmotiv, quoting Audre Lorde, in its entry page, suggested: “For master's tools will never dismantle the master's house... Social networks of the people for the people!”. For many 15M hacktivists, potentiating technological autonomy was part of the creation of democracy (Randal, 2011; Fernández-Delgado et al., 2012), thereby, following the classic Lincolnian saying about democracy as the government of the people, for the people and by the people, the entry page of n-1 featured the slogan: “social networks of the people for the people!”.



FIGURE 31. N-1 LOGO.

²⁵⁴Passages such as: “The multiple must be made, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available— always n-1 (the only way the one belongs to the multiple: always subtracted). Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at n - 1 dimensions” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 6). The name was suggested by activist Javier Toret, one of its initial conceivers and promoters

N-1 was a member-funded platform aiming to guarantee privacy, security, and adaptation to activist needs, oriented by values such as horizontality and self-management. Furthermore, unlike Facebook proprietary and closed software, n-1 was free software, as suggested by its logo, which includes the Creative Commons syntax mark (cc). This clearly differentiated it from the non-democratic, free but for-profit model of Facebook, free like in “free beer”, and not like in “freedom”, to use Richard Stallman’s formula. This model combined the antagonist and autonomist views of democracy (see chapter 2) in practice, as a politics of infrastructure. N-1 was a platform generated by the multitude (or some within it) for supporting its processes of contention. Problems with issues such as resources for development or management (f.i.: control of servers or definition of priorities), though, plagued the history of n-1, which went down on 2016²⁵⁵. At the time, though, n-1 had passed to be associated to 15M as its key alternative platform.

4.5.1.3. Two technopolitical paradigms of social networks: Facebook and n-1

It is thereby possible to isolate two paradigms of syntax operating within 15M technopolitics, a corporate one embodied by Facebook and an autonomous or grassroots one embodied by n-1. Combining my brief review of the politics of infrastructure of Facebook and n-1 with with Gil (2012)’s analysis of their different infrastructural affordances for politics, I believe the Facebook model can be defined as a corporate and connective paradigm, characterised by its non-democratic character, its for-profit purpose, its resourcefulness, its individual-centric and its information diffusion orientation. On the other hand, n-1 embodies an autonomous and collective paradigm, defined by its autonomist democratic character, its activist purpose, its frequent lack of resources, its collective-centric and organizational orientation.

4.6. Alternatives

After analyzing key discourses, practices, and infrastructures, otherwise, the semantics, pragmatics and syntax of 15M’s technopolitics, this section is devoted to point out some of the challenges that they posed to both social movement and political ontology forms. I take social movements first.

4.6.1. Challenges to the social movement form: multitudinous identities and beyond

In the theoretical framework, I suggested two different paradigms could be found in

²⁵⁵ These are issues I cannot address here, though.

the social movement literature, a strategic paradigm, focused on resource mobilization, and a new social movement paradigm, centered on the notion of collective identity (Cohen, 1985). The former assumed that collective action is possible thanks to strong organizations, the latter, thanks to strong collective identities. From the viewpoint of my narrative on representation, both organizations and identities connect, albeit in different ways, with delegation and (self)representation. I already noticed that a growing literature suggests ICTs may be reducing costs of organization, to the point of making possible to organize without organizations (Earl & Kimport, 2011). In a paper I co-authored, we showed how 15M challenged the traditional sense of collective identity by both opening a digital, systemic dimension (which brackets semantic identification and, thereby, self-representation) and challenging the idea of a unified movement identity (and, thereby, unified representation). At the same time, it revealed the existence of a multi-polar, temporally shifting leadership without strong organizations. Both the collective identity and the resource mobilization paradigms were thereby challenged. For showing this, in the paper we deployed, first, a structural, and then, a dynamic characterization of the 15M connective identity on Facebook. The structural characterization served us to separate the 15M identity from its environment and to outline some of its properties, such as its high level of robustness and integration; the dynamic analysis served us to explore its performance in time.

For the structural (or “static”) analysis we mapped the 15M fanpage network on Facebook, extracting a network of the fanpages being followed by the 100 biggest 15M fanpages, as well as the one of those who were followed by former (what is called an affinity “depth-2 network”). The result of the structural analysis showed a differentiable, robust and integrated 15M network of networks (with unions CCOO and UGT networks operating as both environment and comparison)²⁵⁶.

²⁵⁶ More details on methodology in Appendix I.

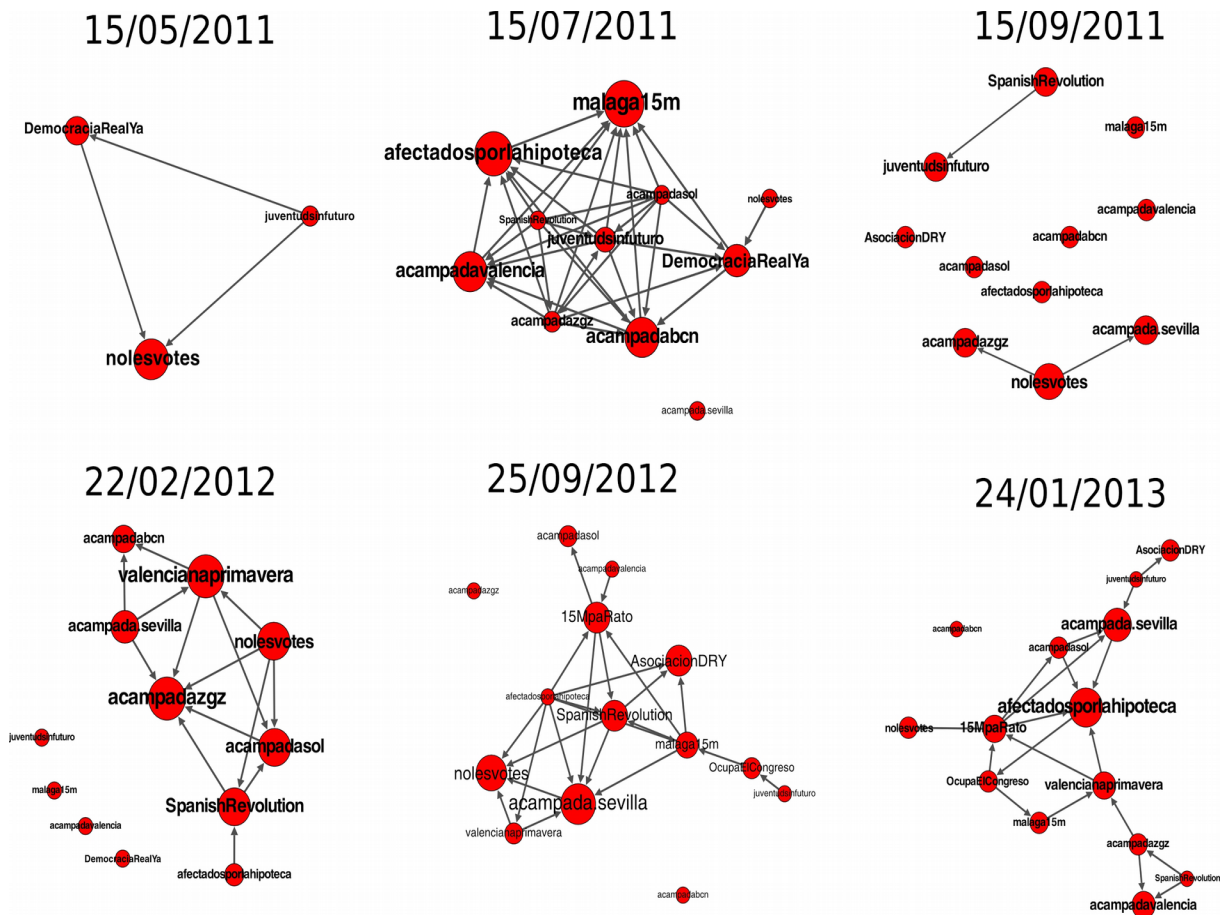


FIGURE 33. DYNAMIC ANALYSIS OF THE 15M COLLECTIVE IDENTITY. IMAGES SHOW LEVELS OF ACTIVITY (NODE SIZE) AND THE DIRECTION OF SYNCHROINZATION (DIRECTED LINKS) AMONG DIFFERENT FACEBOOK FANPAGES IN DIFFERENT 15M EVENTS (15/05/2011-24/01/2013). SOURCE: MIGUEL AGUILERA, 2014, LICENSE CC-BY-SA 4.0.

Going beyond the interpretation in the paper, I believe these results show that 15M generated: a) a form of what I would call “identity without identification” (at least, not necessary identification), avoiding the closure around a single, self-representational discourse, and b) a form of organizing without strong organizations, avoiding centralized, representative structures and leadership by an organization or person. The result is what, in the paper, we define as a multitudinous identity, an identity emerging from both the structural and the dynamic interactions between thousands of autonomous nodes. This is a clear innovation with regard to previous social movement forms, an innovation that may be shared by emerging forms of connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). The double undermining of strong organization by the lowering costs of organization and of strong identities by the emergence of forms of identity based on digital communication affects the centrality of representation in social movements in two ways: the circumventing of strong

organizations primarily relativizes the centrality of the authorization and substantive senses of representation (as defined by Pitkin); the circumventing of strong collective identities relativizes the centrality of the symbolic sense of representation. And yet, despite the undermining, as I have shown throughout this chapter, massive collective action took place, during the camp period and beyond. In 15M, networks were the very structure of the multitude, of the emerging subject of an autonomist politics.

4.6.1.1. Recapitulating innovations

The main challenges to traditional social movement forms came not only at the level of multitudinous identities. They can be grouped in four interrelated categories: technopolitical communication, practices, organization, and identity.

In section 4.2.2. I noticed the experimentation with multitudinous self-communication (social media, streaming) in 15M, a feature present, but surely not with the pervasiveness of 15M, in earlier movements such as the alter-globalization (Gerbaudo, 2016).

Section 4.3. was devoted to describe multi-layered and multi-layering practices, performances, and settings, which appear as an addition to repertoires of contention. More interestingly, the addition of forms of participation implied a democratization of sorts, since it multiplied and eased the ways in which people could enroll themselves into social movements²⁵⁷.

In terms of organization tied to those practices, I have also described the emergence of networked assemblages which, albeit a feature common to other movements in the wave of networked movements of the squares, seems to have taken a new dimension with 15M (and then, Occupy), as technological penetration in countries such as Tunisia or Egypt was smaller. Temporally distributed leadership appears to be a related innovation in dynamic organizational forms, coming with 15M. This fed back with the rejection of the figure of the strong, representative organizations and leaders (as mentioned above, reluctant ones continued to exist), although this has been a gesture recurrent since the 60s. Finally, in 6.1 I've analyzed the shape of 15M connective, multitudinous identities. Most of these challenges to the social movement were non- or anti-representational, were autonomist in character, and had technopolitics at their core.

²⁵⁷ Leaving out the evaluative question of whether these are click-only forms of participation or clicks are just a complement or entryway into stronger forms of collective action, the main issue is that those new venues were opened and widely explored.

4.6.2. Ontology

What has been outlined throughout this chapter points towards an alternative form of enrolling in political life, that challenged basic practices and tenets of liberal representative ontology. First, anti-representationalism. For thousands of people, the activities on the election week before May 22nd, and the weeks that followed, did not consist of the usual attention and discussion of pre-packaged political programs and speeches, but of assembly discussions, demonstrations, activity in and out of social media. When these activities looked at the political system, it was to launch discursive and practical challenges to representative politics (section 4.1.). As shown here also targeted mainstream media (section 4.2.). Furthermore, these challenges were turned inwards and also challenged representation within social movements. 15M articulated a temporary autonomous ecosystem of anti-representationalism that circumvented the liberal representative political ontology.

Simultaneously, 15M actors essayed alter-democratic practices (the assembly, direct action, networked communication). 15M ignited both contention and construction around democracy. At the level of the discourse, the political figures of the “person” and the “anybody”²⁵⁸ moved outside of the political ontology of “nations”, “the working class” or even “The People”. The figures of the indignant or the common citizen, different from the private individual of the liberal representative model, gathered some aspects of the critical condition being forged.

Nevertheless, even deeper innovations took place in practice. Assemblies rejected the liberal-representative tradition that makes of zero-sum competition among fixed individuals, interests and ideas the beginning and the end of all political process. Instead, they relied on rational construction and dialogical transformation. On the other hand, I noticed the emergence of networked assemblages and multitudinous identities. These derived from technopolitical practices and networked interactions rather than from representation or self-representation. The ontology was a hybrid of the antagonist model, with common citizens demanding and challenging elites, and of the autonomist model of singularities connecting in multitudes that generated alternative forms of being together.

As noticed earlier, two different alter-democratic models could be traced in the around the camps: the deliberative democratic model of the assembly and the

²⁵⁸ This notion is also connected with that of transversality, with that which allows many to come together either in being or practice.

autonomist of the networked assemblage. Both were tainted by the antagonist model.

TABLE 14. 15M: POLITICAL ONTOLOGY.

Model	Political ontology	Subject form	Collective form	Modes of political relation
Assembly	Deliberative Antagonist	Person Indignant Common citizen	Popular assemblies Citizenry	Dialogue, active listening, contentious demanding
Networked Assemblage	Autonomist Antagonist	Singularities Anyone	Multitudinous identities Networked multitude	Networked, technopolitical communication & collaboration

4.7. Conclusion

In this conclusion, I briefly recapitulate earlier parts. In part 2 began by briefly recounting some aspects of the emergence of 15M and my entryway into it, emphasizing the role of DRY and briefly commenting some details of the overflow that turned a networked demonstration into an augmented event and then a movement. In part 3 I analyzed key discourses that preceded and defined 15M. I showed how pre-15M and 15M actors outlined a critique of political representation and its “subjects”, while proposing alternatives to both of them (as seen in sections 3.1 and 3.2). This critique included an attack to mass media representation and an appeal to create alternative media (3.1.4). Furthermore, 15M discourses outlined an alternative model, of anarchist inspiration, which combined deliberative, autonomist, and populist democratic elements: the assembly (3.3). This discursive model was practical, it was the one the movement aspired to embody, but also appeared as a prefiguration of the real democracy to come. 15M actors' taking on representation, democracy and technopolitics in practice was, in fact, much richer than its discourse. Beyond the assembly, practice clearly outlined an alternative metaphor: the networked assemblage.

15M embodied anti-representationalism and alter-democracy in direct actions, camps and assemblies, which contested the legitimacy of the elections ongoing at the time (4.1.). Furthermore, they internally challenged the primacy of representation as a mechanism for collective organization and decision making in social

movements. The assembly, though, also displayed its own limits (4.1.2.). On the plane of media, 15M actors both challenged media establishment and created their own media, aiming at an autonomous alter-representation (4.1.3.). Perhaps the most relevant innovations came not around assemblies but around the networked assemblages emerging with the movement (4.3.), which had multi-layered and multi-layering practices (4.3.2) at their core. Interestingly, even after the camps were dismantled and the assemblies stopped, multitudinous identities in digital networks (4.3.3.) remained operative and enabling further collective action. Both multilayered practices and multitudinous identities challenged previous social movement forms. 15M actors also challenged and proposed alternatives to some key elements of the modern, liberal representative ontology. The movement articulated critiques and alternatives to representation, with more or less success, both in discourse and practice, outwards, towards the political system and media, and inwards, in its own composition.

The camps were lifted in June 2011. But the movement maintained its public support and its activity thanks to the numerous networks that remained active. They displayed periodic outburst of multi-layered collective action, such as the global demonstration on October 15, 2011, the Valencian Spring and the 15M anniversary in early 2012, or the action of Surrounding Congress on September 25th, 2012. The limits of the assembly were found already in its first weeks of life. On the other hand, the limits of the autonomous networked assemblage, tied to the self-limiting field of civil society (Cohen & Arato, 1994), were to be diagnosed much later. Such a discursive diagnosis was at the origin of a qualitative new stage of the 15M cycle, the stage of the electoral assault, which explored in the next chapter. The contention with established actors and social forms did not stop, quite on the contrary, the challenges rose as 15M activists set up to themselves to “make a 15M” in institutions that were created to prevent such alter-democratic experiments (as noted by Graeber, 2013), such as the fields of representative politics and State institutions. In those later stages, as in the case of 15M, it will be clear the centrality of innovative, technopolitical practices of and for alter-democracy. Otherwise, how 15M experimented with alternative forms of (techno)political democracy.

Chapter 5. The X Party: doing a 15M in the electoral space.

5.1. Introduction

This chapter analyzes key aspects of the semantics, syntax, and pragmatics of the X Party, as well as its challenges to the party form and the liberal representative ontology. The X Party was a political party launched on January 2013. Part 2 analyzes political conditions, within the 15M cycle, that made possible the launch of such a party. The rise in protest from 15M onwards reached a peak of opposition to the established representative system on the direct action “Surround Congress”, on September 25, 2012. On early 2013, the X Party opened a (re)turn towards representation: it opened the “electoral assault”.

Part 3 attends to the key elements of its discourse, analyzing some of its texts. Section 3.1. analyzes its political program, entitled “democracy, period”, which outlines some basic aspects of a new, alter-representational and alter-democratic form of government. Section 3.2. attends to its self-reflective discourses around its own organization and rules as a networked party.

Part 4 moves to scrutinize some of the key technopolitical practices of the party, particularly, attending to how it applied its “method” in its own internal processes. Tensions emerged between the rules of the political field and some of its practices, as well as between the latter and some of its own discourses. Section 4.1. attends to the media attacks for combining a strong discourse on transparency with anti-representational practices of visibility and anonymity. Section 4.2. moves into the ways in which it applied its ideas on legislation crowdsourcing to the drafting of its own political program. Afterwards, in section 4.3., I attend to the tension between its internal meritocracy and its defense of democracy. Finally, section 4.4. looks at its innovations in campaign crowdsourcing.

Part 5 looks at the X Party’s political syntax, concretely, to its organizational model.

Part 6 explores how X Party discourses, practices and organizational structures challenged both the party form and some aspects of the modern political ontology.

Part 7 recollects previous parts and situates them in relation to the 15M cycle. Looking backwards, the practices of the X Party both maintained and discarded many of the ones essayed by the 15M movement; looking forward, some of its ideas

(partly inherited from 15M) were implemented thanks to Decidim.barcelona (chapter 6).

5.2. The case and the cycle

5.2.1. 15M's mutations: from movement to cycle

The two years following 15M saw a spectacular surge of social protest. 2012 was the year with the greatest number of demonstrations on record in Spain, more than 40.000 (Martínez i Coma, 2014). With economic and employment data in a free fall, an increasing debt, EU sponsored austerity policies under way, and the rising 15M critique, the Socialist Party suffered a huge drop in votes in the State elections of November of that year. The right wing Popular Party capitalized the fall and, with barely half a million votes more than three years earlier, got an absolute majority in Parliament. The application of austerity policies, initiated by the Socialist government of Rodríguez Zapatero, was radicalized by the Popular Party after they got into government; so did social protest.

After the dismantling of the camps in June and July of 2011, 15M networks remained active. An international demonstration on October 15th, promoted along with Occupy Wall Street activists, gave the movement a global edge, and drew people to the streets of Spain in the hundreds of thousands (Gabbatt, Townsend, O'Carroll 2011).

15M digital networks were active on a continuous basis, and operated as enabling platforms for a number of initiatives (Monterde, 2015). 2012 and 2013 witnessed not only an increase, but also a diversification of protests and protest repertoires, with activist initiatives and protest movements emerging in different social sectors. Slowly, from being a networked movement, 15M became the basis of a cycle, something both more diffuse and richer. The following sections explore initiatives that turned 15M from movement into a cycle of contention.

5.2.2. 15MpaRato

On the first anniversary of the movement, celebrated from May 12th to May 15th 2012, numerous events were set up in various cities of Spain, with special intensity in some, such as Madrid and Barcelona. While camps, assemblies and demonstrations in the 15M style took place in cities such as Barcelona, new types of initiatives popped up, as well. A key one was the 15MpaRato initiative. 15MpaRato²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ The direct translation of the expression is "15M for Rato". Playing with the meaning of the word "rato" ("a period of time", "a while"), the initiative suggested it would give Rodrigo Rato a 15M, but also that there would be 15M for a while. An expression of self-confidence for the first anniversary of the

was a 15M citizen campaign launched on social media and the Internet to bring to court Rodrigo Rato, Ex-IMF director, ex-minister of the economy (symbol of the economic model that generated the housing bubble described in chapter 3), and ex-CEO of Bankia²⁶⁰. The lawsuit accused him of being connected to the falsification of Bankia accounts and the fraudulent sale of shares in the stock market debut of the bank in July 2011, which went bankrupt and was nationalized in 2012.

15Mparato began with a call out on Twitter to make donations through the crowdfunding platform Goteo²⁶¹, in order to cover the lawyer costs of the trial. The hashtag #15MpaRato was trending topic for hours on Twitter the day the campaign was launched (it was trending topic 11 times and 55 hours in the following weeks, Toret et al., 2015), and the initiative exceeded the required funds in less than 24 hours. On its website and email, the initiative also gathered questions from people to pose to Rato in court, as well as leaks and testimonies that may help to further the cause against him. The lawsuit, which ramified in time, ended up getting Rodrigo Rato and dozens of Bankia directives (including the CEO preceding Rato) on a trial that is ongoing as of late 2016. This initiative implied a mutation of the 15M contention repertoire, which completely obliterated the camp form and mass demonstrations, but still displayed a creative and an even more intensive use of digital networks and social media. It was a clear example of the doocracy, hacktivist culture that characterized hacktivist and cyberactivist struggles preceding 15M and that later defined the X Party, many of whose members were behind the 15MpaRato initiative.

5.2.3. 25S: Surrounding Congress

Only three months after the launch of 15MpaRato, the platform En pie! launched a call aimed to radicalize the protests, a call to “Occupy the Congress”. With a name that clearly reflected the impact of the Occupy movement in the 15M discourse and imaginary, in their Facebook fanpage²⁶², the organizers defined themselves as “people reunited in a social, anti-neoliberal, anti-capitalist, and democratic movement”, which included a “15M current” along with “Marxist”, “anti-patriarchal”, “anarchist”, and “ecologist” ones. The action was oriented to “demonstrate

movement.

²⁶⁰ More information is available at www.auditoriaciudadana.net/en/2012/09/22/15mparato-second-season-begins/. Accessed on November 17th, 2016.

²⁶¹ The platform can be found at <https://en.goteo.org/>. Accessed December 18th, 2016.

²⁶² The fanpage can be found at https://www.facebook.com/pg/OcupaElCongreso/about/?ref=page_internal. Accessed December 13th, 2016.

indefinitely surrounding the Congress until achieving the resignation of the Government and the opening of a Constituent Process”.

The initial call was “reinvented” as new 15M activists joined the initiative, forming the Coordinadora 25S (25S Coordinator) and turned it into an “inclusive and horizontal” action to surround Congress, with an explicitly pacific outlook²⁶³. If during the 15M period collective action in Madrid concentrated around Puerta del Sol and essayed alter-democratic forms of being together, frequently pressed by police forces and opposed media, in this case the center of contention was displaced a few hundred meters down the “Carrera de San Jerónimo”: the 15M multitude came to surround the State Congress.

This clearly displaced the center of the cycle from the 15M logics of autonomy and alter-democratic experimentation into a frontal confrontation with the symbol of representation, otherwise, into a logic of anti-representational opposition to Congress. 25S may well count as the peak of anti-representationalism within the 15M cycle. As austerity policies were accelerated and protests more strongly repressed in 2012, the centrality of the political problem had become even clearer. The idea that “they call it democracy but it is not”, that politicians “do not represent us” but rather spurious economic interests, got at the center of the conflict. Political representation was publicly reduced to its bare “authorization” meaning after the Socialist Party introduced the first amendment to the 1978 Constitution in August 2011 in a summary process, without referendum, to ensure that payment of public debt would be prioritized to any other budget concern (Cruz & Remírez, 2011); later that year, the Popular Party used its absolute parliamentary majority to run policies that contradicted their main electoral claims, policies that, through alternative forms of representation (mainly polls) and contention (political protest) were rejected by much of the population (Ferrándiz, 2012). The 25S action was the embodiment of such rejection.

The demonstrations on September 25th and the following days, especially, September 29th, generated a politics of the visible (mass media images such as the one above): the State framed in its essence as police, on one side; on the other side, an assembled multitude that objects to such a legitimacy, and that calls for a

²⁶³ The differences between the initial call and the one by the Coordinadora 25S can be found at <https://coordinadora25s.wordpress.compreguntas-sobre-el-25s/>. The manifest of the Coordinadora 25S can be found at www.takethe-square.net/2012/09/25/democracy-is-kept-hostage-on-25s-were-going-to-rescue-it-coordinadora25s/. Both links were accessed on December 13th, 2016.

constituent process to recover sovereignty and remake institutions from the ground up, as suggested in the 25S manifesto. This performative politics of the visible displayed the space of representation as a policed void confronted with the presentation of the 15M multitude, gathering at the gates. Unsurprisingly, the cycle ran into a moment of Hobessianization of politics. The day of the action ended with heavy police charges on an overwhelmingly peaceful crowd (Wearden & Quinn, 2013). As we said, 25S may well count as the peak of anti-representationalism (anti-representational presentialism) within the 15M cycle, but also as a display of representation in its strongest Hobbesian sense.

5.2.4. The PAH: from mortgage victims to engaged activists

Another key process of the 2012-2013 period was the Popular Legislative Initiative promoted by the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages, from now abbreviated PAH). The initiative reclaimed a number of law changes on the housing sector, primarily, the establishment of the legal figure of the “giving in payment” (the elimination of any mortgage debt with the turnover of the house). At its core, the platform gathered people either unable to pay their mortgages or under an eviction process as a result, as well as activists concerned with the matter. The rise in numbers of people in this situation resulted from the rising unemployment after the housing bubble burst and the ensuing crisis, when many buyers found themselves unemployed and with a mortgage for a house whose value was plummeting (Alemany & Colau, 2013). The platform had been created in 2009, in Barcelona, in connection with earlier housing protests such as *V de Vivienda* (H for Housing), but it was with the rise of 15M cycle that it reached its highest level of social impact. This non-partisan social platform developed a rich and evolving protest repertoire, which involved the promotion of citizen legislative initiatives, the stopping of hundreds of evictions, physical and digital campaigns of shaming (*escraches*) as well as charity work, which included the reallocation of evicted families.

Its spokesperson, Ada Colau, was to play an even more important role in the following, electoral period of the cycle, and somehow anticipated it. For the first time, an initiative associated with 15M had a very recognizable figure as its head.

The PAH's citizen legislative initiative reached Congress on February 2013, with almost 1,5 million signatures, a level of citizen support of up to 87% of the

population, and connected to both big demonstrations and direct actions (20 Minutos, 2013). There, the Popular party used its absolute majority to change the initiative to the point the PAH drew it back (Castro & Román, 2013). PAH mobilizations did not stop, but the diagnosis around the closure of the representative system was confirmed once again.

5.2.5. The (re)turn to representative politics

On January 8th, 2013 a year and a half after the beginning of 15M, after the 25S action, and a year ahead of European Elections due on May 2014, a political party deeply rooted in the 15M cycle was launched. The X Party never got any explicit support from the movement, not only because 15M networks and projects remained in the non-partisan disposition defended since the DRY manifesto, but also because there was not a representation place, a spokesperson position, from which such a support may have been univocally expressed. That said, the party was strongly rooted in the 15M cycle in several senses. Firstly, because this anonymous dispositive was composed by people that had been part of some of the Barcelona, Sevilla and Madrid 15M hubs. The Barcelona X Party node, which led the initiative, was rooted in a trajectory of activism, especially hacktivism and digital activism, dating several years back. X.net, initially an activist initiative working on free internet and free culture issues (later came to cover areas such as network democracy or anti-corruption), had been launched in 2008²⁶⁴. Its “X” is behind the “X” in the X Party.



FIGURE 34. X.NET LOGO

²⁶⁴ This information can be found in its website <https://xnet-x.net/en/>. Accessed January 21st, 2017.



FIGURE 35. X PARTY LOGO

The collective played relevant roles in the struggle against the Sinde Law that preceded and contributed to 15M. Conservas, its space at the multicultural neighborhood of El Raval, in the old city center, served as a meeting point for the Real Democracy Now! node in Barcelona, as well as for many 15MpaRato meetings, among other 15M initiatives. A second reason that justifies the connection is that (as I show in the forthcoming pages) X Party members had relevant positions in 15M social networks (on Facebook and, especially, Twitter) and they used those positions to grant the project some recognition. Thirdly, because the project made much use of the discourse and practices of 15M projects.

Unsurprisingly, this combination meant that with only a few videos in Youtube, launched in the early days of 2013, the project received massive attention on social networks (especially among 15M communities), gained thousands of followers on Twitter and Facebook, enough to get coverage in mainstream media, nationally and internationally²⁶⁵. In its main video, full of jokes²⁶⁶, a man and a woman claim to come from the future to announce that the “the party “X”, the party of the future, has won”. Then the video clarified the objective of the party was “to win everything: referendums, right to real and permanent vote” and the rest of elements of its political program, “Democracy, period”²⁶⁷ (from now on abbreviated DP).

²⁶⁵ A week after its launch, its account in Twitter reached 20000 followers, more than the rest of Spanish political parties except for PP, PSOE, IU (United Left) and UPyD (Union, Progress and Democracy). By then it had also appeared in several dozen national and international mainstream media. A dossier of TV appearances of the party can be found on its website, at <https://partidox.org/prensa-videos-x/>. Accessed January 15th, 2017.

²⁶⁶ After a while, both confess to be “unemployed actors” hired via a job announcement by an “X Party, a party of the future which, since it is in the future, it cannot assist to its own press releases”. Jokes included references to the high levels of youth unemployment in the country.

²⁶⁷ The document is available at <https://partidox.org/pdf/democracia-y-punto.pdf>. Accessed July 20th, 2016.



FIGURE 36. X PARTY: DEBUT VIDEO²⁶⁸.

Reactions ranged from joy to wrathful attack²⁶⁹. Much of both can be explained by its problematic relation to 15M. For many within the 15M ranks, the idea of a party being associated to 15M was a completely unthinkable.

The spirit of the relation of the party to the movement, though, had been nicely synthesized by a slogan proposed by Ciudadano Zero, 15M activist, in a general meeting of the group in late October 2012, at Conservas, which I attended: the X Party, the party of the future, planned to “to do a 15M in the electoral space” (“hacer un 15M en el espacio electoral”)²⁷⁰. The first step was to launch the party, the second, to propose a political program with “a single point: Democracy, period.” This somehow brought the discussion of representation where it was at the time of “No les votes”, to the electoral arena, yet the changes in the terms of the discussion had been radical. After 15M, the X party brought with it a strong view of what a “real democracy” should look like.

5.3. Semantics/Discourses

In order to reconstruct the semantics of the X Party I divide this part in three main sections. The first attends to the diagnostic discourse of the party on the 15M cycle, the second, to its normative discourse on the democracy to come, the third, to its prescriptive discourse on how the party itself should work.

²⁶⁸ The video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90deuJiQfTw>. Accessed July 20th, 2016.

²⁶⁹ As can be appreciated already in the “comments” section of their videos, on Youtube, such as <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90deuJiQfTw>. Accessed July 15th, 2016.

²⁷⁰ The formula was eventually discarded, as it was understood it suggested an illegitimate appropriation of the 15M “meme” for a very polemical project.

5.3.1. The X Party's diagnostic and prescriptive discourse on the cycle: breaking the crystal ceiling

5.3.1.1. *On the pertinence and problems of returning to representation*

The idea was to do a 15M in the electoral space, to begin an “electoral assault” (this was another recurrent expression) onto the representative system. The cycle-situated justification of the party, exposed in the video of its public debut²⁷¹, was to “break the crystal ceiling” that many 15M proposals and demonstrations were finding. The crystal ceiling was the closure of the political system and the State, manifested in reactions ranging from police repression to parliamentary dismissal of citizen demands (as seen in part 2, above). The X Party was also presented as an attempt to do, in the game of political representation, what other projects aligned with 15M were doing at the time elsewhere: the “Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca” (PAH) (Mortgage Victim’s Platform), in the sphere of housing; different “mareas”²⁷² (tides) in the spheres of education (green tide), healthcare (white tide), employment (red tide); and campaigns such as 15MpaRato in the sphere of justice. To put it in terms of the FAQs in the official website of the X Party “from all the fronts that society has opened to change things, this is the method that covers the front of the renewal of democracy²⁷³”. The X Party was to treat representation and the political system, to put it in Deleuzian terms, as part of a plane of immanence, as just one more space for 15M logics and networks to cover in a rhizomatic way²⁷⁴. In doing so, 15M logics and practices were “to undergo a change in nature”. The liberal

²⁷¹ The video, with English subtitles option, is available here www.youtube.com/watch?v=90deuJiQfTw. Accessed on July 20th, 2016.

²⁷² These were massive sectorial citizen mobilizations, the so called “tides”: green, in defense of public education; white, in defense of public healthcare; blue, in defense of public water; purple, against the emigration of the Spanish youth; and others. They involved massive mobilizations in late 2012 and 2013, and different processes of self-organization in spaces such as hospitals (Sánchez, 2013a).

²⁷³ This is a case of synecdoche, since “democracy” stands here for “institutionalized, representative democracy”.

²⁷⁴ To put it in the words of Levi (2012: 3) in a somehow prescient text: “We occupy and operate in all of the possible spaces, but we respect the identity formation that each dynamic requires.” In terms of Deleuze & Guattari (1987): “The point is that a rhizome or multiplicity never allows itself to be over-coded, never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines, that is, over and above the multiplicity of numbers attached to those lines. All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a plane of consistency of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this “plane” increase with the number of connections that are made on it. Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities. The plane of consistency (grid) is the outside of all multiplicities. The line of flight marks: the reality of a finite number of dimensions that the multiplicity effectively fills; the impossibility of a supplementary dimension, unless the multiplicity is transformed by the line of flight.” N.B.: Throughout this text I prefer the expression “plane of immanence” to that of “plane of consistency”. The choice is allowed by Deleuze (1987: 281), which consider them synonyms: “But on the other plane, the plane of immanence or consistency”.

representative model of democracy was also to be challenged in the process.

As recognized in the meeting in late October 2012 at Conservas, the project posed a bi-frontal challenge: to established parties and to 15M itself. For the former, the challenge resided in the kind of party and the kind of proposals (DP) it brought into discussion; to 15M the challenge resided in the fact that it was a party, and thereby reconnected the 15M cycle to the representative arena. But representative politics, power, and corruption were exchangeable for 15 M's anti-representationalist diagnostic. Some of the strands of 15M and the multicolor tides (Lara, 2013) seemed headed towards a transformation of democracy in the sense of Hardt & Negri (2004), towards autonomist forms of joint production and decision making where representation is either abolished or minimized. The logics of DRY and, especially, the camps, oscillated between alternativity and opposition, autonomist alter-democracy and anti-representationalism with respect to the political system. The X Party logics was one of infiltration, "hacking" and "resetting", to stir change from the inside of institutional politics. Such an option faced many difficulties.

As noted, the first problem was that the idea of launching a party seemed against the grain of many 15M explicit principles and practices. To this question, the answer agreed in the October 2012 meeting was that the X Party would not claim to be representing the movement, so the launching video on January 2013 denied the X Party "to be the 15 M's party".

5.3.1.2. Catalyzing the electoral assault: discursive diagnosis and prescriptions

The discursive answer of Simona Levi (2014), tacit leader of the X Party, was more developed, since it involved a rich construction of the stage of the cycle. In a talk²⁷⁵ on July 2013, Levi articulated a strategic, self-reflective and historicizing view of 15M. Her response was a discursive, diagnostic reconstruction of both the contention between movement and political system, and the stage of the 15M movement itself. In there she distinguished two forms of 15M organization: the

²⁷⁵ She delivered it at the 15MP2P meeting in Barcelona (which I co-organized) on July 4th, 2013 at the meeting 15Mp2p, and entitled it "Fight and let fight: observations on the life of hermit crabs".

herd²⁷⁶ and the catalyzer²⁷⁷. The former, which she identified as the mode of collaboration of many actors and networks around May 15th 2011 and the following months was defined by its multitudinous, powerful yet not very “agile nor precise” character. The second form of organization took the form of “catalyzers”, defined as small groups able to accelerate certain processes, “focusing the attention” of the various actors and networks already existing. For Levi, these two modes of organization corresponded to the first two phases of 15M, but there was a third. In her politically strategic reconstruction of the 15M cycle, the first phase corresponded to 2011 and implied to “meet each other and display potency”—under the herd and beehive forms—, with DRY and the camps. In 2012, a number of initiatives to “attack objectives” was launched, which included PAH (in the sphere of housing) and 15MpaRato (in the sphere of justice). According to her, these initiatives, which followed the catalyzer model, were also successful. As of 2013, she believed, 15M²⁷⁸ was in a third phase where “we have them surrounded” and “it’s time to reset the system”²⁷⁹. In her presentation, she launched her proposal for undertaking such a resetting at the current stage of the cycle: the X Party.

Levi stressed the need to work following a “method”²⁸⁰, bracketing, in the vein of some forms of anarchism (Graeber, 2009, 2013), free software culture (Kelty, 2008)

²⁷⁶ Levi (2014): “Herd (Wikipedia definition tuned by me): it is constituted by a great number of simple agents that interact among themselves and with their environment. Their collective behavior is decentralized and self-organized. The herd acts as a unity in continuous movement, but its function emerges from the non-coordinated behavior of individuals looking for their own welfare. In the herd, each individual finds spontaneously and according to its aptitudes covering different functions for short periods of time. Each individual can be the leader for a few instants or center or can be the most exposed edge for a few moments, until another individual takes the place... (See also ‘hive intelligence’, although somehow different from the metaphor I want to use). The herd cannot act with agility and precision, but it has great powers of expansion and aggregation.”

²⁷⁷ Levi (2014): “Catalyzer (definition from Wikipedia tuned by me): the term “catalyzer” is used to design that agent or device that serves to accelerate a specific process. In chemistry catalyzers are small sets of molecules that alter the speed of a reaction, accelerating (or retarding) it. Through catalyzers, less energy is required for a given process. Catalyzers amplify power, they direct it. They are small and agile groups that direct the “shared attention”. They are not composed by more than 20-50 molecules. There are epochs when history asks us to be herd and epochs when we have to be catalyzers. We must not fear to be few when we only can or must be few. Nor should we attribute to a herd the qualities of a catalyzer. In this stage of 15M it is evident that the time has come to accelerate processes working like many small nodes, independent and sovereign in their decisions, which know what to do and that, when necessary, and only when necessary, support each other, knowing each other by the results for the work of each one and basing on this their reciprocal trust.”

²⁷⁸ The use of the tag as referring to something unified—in this case, unified as a process or movement with 3 stages—is frequent among both activists and others (journalists, for example).

²⁷⁹ Notice that the word “resetting”, coming from the computer language, appeals more to a kind of “restarting” than to a “R-evolution”, another of Levi’s favorite word in some of her texts.

²⁸⁰ The notion of “method” is applied to the internal organization and the external staging of the work and the political program. Surely, this term comes from Nota, who has used it profusely in his conversations with me almost since we first wrote to each other back in 2011. The X Party was frequently defined in this way in its official website.

or even 15M assembly documents (Comisión Dinamización, 2011), questions of ideology and focusing on clear, pragmatic objectives. To her, those insisting in earlier forms of organization (herd, beehive) and logics (opposition, alternative) that have proven insufficient, or in commemorative rituals such as massive demonstrations for 15M anniversaries, are like hermit crabs, inhabiting dead shells.

5.3.1.3. Federations and dynamic nuclei for the electoral assault

In opposition to both 15M's assembly and leftist parties' organizational models, her discourse (elaborated beyond that concrete talk²⁸¹) underlined the need of exploring new forms of collective organization for the electoral assault: on the inside, it insisted in meritocracy, group affinity and "competence federation" rather than on the horizontal, fully open, and assembly-centric principles of organization typical of the camps and many initiatives connected to 15M; on the outside, it appealed to collaboration in networks without unification, preserving autonomy rather than stifling diversity into narrow centralization around a wide electoral front led by the United Left Party, main defenders of the idea²⁸². In the talk at 15Mp2p, her final response to those promoting the "left front" agenda was strong: "lucha y deja luchar" (fight and let fight)²⁸³.

The idea of the unity of the left was also rejected by other actors close to the X Party²⁸⁴, such as the Pink Noise collective, who questioned the operability and even the very sense of the idea of "left unity"²⁸⁵. For the stage of the cycle as of 2013, they proposed a model of organization based on dynamic nuclei. Under this model,

²⁸¹ During the Q&A after the talk, a target of her criticisms were those who, both from within (15M assemblies, collectives, people, etc.) and from without (parties), reclaimed the constitution of a transversal electoral front, similar to SYRIZA in Greece, in order to gain power in representative institutions, starting with the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament, in 2014. This proposal came, especially, from Izquierda Unida (United Left), the traditional left in Spain, and, in her mind, it repeated the old narrative of the convergence around the "left" and the "useful vote".

²⁸² A risk, noted by 15M activists Marga Padilla and followed up by Fernández-Savater, who was among the public during her talk at 15Mp2p, concerned the nature of the electoral space, where there seems to be a need to compete for a scarce resource: the vote. While software (the analogy she used) is a non-rival or non-exclusive good (people can share it without none of the parts losing anything) that is not the case of the vote.

²⁸³ When, back in 2012, Levi was talking about catalyzers she was thinking in the campaign 15MpaRato. In 2013, many of those ideas were applicable to the X Party.

²⁸⁴ The collective Pink noise revolution (a formula inspired in a study by Miguel Aguilera on patterns of activity and synchronization in 15M) published two papers exposing these theses on May www.azofra.wordpress.com/2013/05/26/pensar-y-actuar-mas-alla-de-la-unidad-de-la-izquierda-creatividad-politica-distribuida-y-sin-etiquetas/ and June, 2013 www.madrilonia.org/2013/06/unidad-sin-convergencia-modelos-de-auto-organizacion-politica-de-multitudes-hiperconectadas/.

²⁸⁵ A key point of the attack underlines the multiplicity of irreconcilable views and groups identified with the "left", while the other criticizes the notion of unity understood as convergence, which implies forms of organization through representation old banners and symbols, and that, more importantly, have a centralized or, at least, hierarchical functioning that makes them undesirable and inoperative.

varying sets of nodes within a changing 15M network drive the dynamics of the movement at different times, with the action of the rest of the network synchronizing around them. This was interpreted as typical of dynamics in 15M networks (as shown in chapter 4, section 6.1.). Ontologically, the model was the decentralized functioning of consciousness in the brain (Tononi & Edelman, 1998; Edelman & Tononi, 2000); politically, the implicit suggestion was that the X Party (along with other initiatives) could drive the dynamic around the electoral assault without centralizing it. This approach clearly recalls the appeals to federation and decentralization of much anarchism and autonomism.

Behind the X Party there was a set of discourses that combined a diagnostic of the situation of the representative system (a diagnostic to a good extent shared with “No les votes”, DRY, and the camps) with a diagnostic of the becoming, modes of organization and limits of 15M itself. In relation these, the prescriptions were clear: federation, autonomous action, decentralization.

5.3.2. A diagnostic and normative discourse for democracy: Democracy, period

In this section, I dissect the key X party text when it comes to its normative discourse on democracy: its political program for the 2014 European Elections. The X Party discourse took much of its discursive diagnostic of the state of representative democracy from hacktivist struggles and 15M, so, I only touch upon this aspect in passing and instead focus on its normative discourse on what democracy should become. Of its key four points, namely, first, “transparency in public management”, second, “wikigovernment (Government with Citizen Control) and wikilegislations (Citizen Legislative Power)”, third, “Right to Real and Permanent Vote”, and fourth, “Binding and Mandatory Referendums”, I will focus on the first three, especially the second and the third, which are the most innovative ones.

5.3.2.1. Democracy, period: transparency

The first point of the X Party program is “transparency”. The opening of the point regarding transparency in the DP text says: “The essence of democracy is the knowledge, by the citizenry, of the decisions taken on all questions that may affect their lives as well as of the process of that decision making, of the data and circumstances that converge in their resolution.” This proposal, strongly defended by Nolesvotes and DRY, can be understood as a call to make the State and, ultimately, many of the practices that articulate political representation, transparent or even

representable, in a more epistemic sense, to the citizenry²⁸⁶.

In the text of DP, representative democracy is seen as a progressive reduction of politics (of which different actors, including the citizenry appear as responsible) to a punctual voting process that allegedly provides a direct connection between the popular will and representative action. Against this, the text stresses that in its model “the citizenry will be the necessary vigilant of all decisions that affect them and of all public expenses. That is the only effective way of putting an end to corruption”, an exigency that is surely not new in the tradition of modern democracies, and is rather close to Jefferson’s (1986) formula according to which “the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.” The request for transparency is both an exertion of vigilance and its future enabler, the possibility of its future, deeper exercise and advance. As the episode of the Sinde Law made clear for Nolesvotes activists before 15M, under the current system people don’t know who are the ones represented by their representatives, how decisions are made, or following what interests.

Against the rhetoric of democracy “ready-made” and ideal discourses that dwell in the plane of authorization and symbolic legitimation of representation, transparency appeals to the trackability of political representation in action: to the materiality (in the monetary sense, especially) of political practices, to the processes of decision making, budget allocation and the long etcetera of the political and bureaucratic machine of the State.

Transparency would help to see the complex fabric²⁸⁷, the reality (or the absence) of the kind of substantive representation that Pitkin spoke about. Some of the asymmetries and deficiencies in representation (the over representation of powerful minorities and under representation of majorities denounced by “No les votes”) can be traced back to the types of practices allowed by public acquiescence facilitated by opacity²⁸⁸. As an example, the actions of the Spanish government became clearer for

²⁸⁶ Independently from whether it ends the practice of corruption, which appears as one of the main references for most 15M projects since the “No les votes” manifesto, it would potentially open the space of a constructivism of representation of the sort essayed in much literature.

²⁸⁷ This could be considered as a step to bring political representation, at least formally, to a plane of immanence and practice instead of letting it rely on narrations and institutionalizations of transcendence, based on the obliteration of the real mediations, their short-circuiting in different forms of corruption, and the quasi-metaphysical affirmation of the connection between representatives and representation by voting.

²⁸⁸ When someone can, with relative easiness, hide details about party financing or the exact and concrete influence of lobbies on public representatives, when the exact expenses are not known or the concrete deliberations and reasons cannot be scrutinized, it is easier to operate arbitrarily or following private interests, to represent badly, represent interests other of those of the voters, or not to represent at all. Today, the public in Spain is surely not a phantom, the point is whether government

the campaign against Sinde Law when everyone could read that the American embassy was directly behind the pressures for the passing of the law. In a way, the X Party position appeals to the logics of the Benthamian panoptic, now definitely turned towards those that play the roles of power in a new State architecture²⁸⁹. However, this point of transparency, even if bringing about new forms of practical realism with regard to political representation, will remain rather limitedly modern if its focus only on knowledge, vision, surveillance and control, all of them oriented to fix political representation by adding forms of inverted, alter-representation.

5.3.2.2. Democracy, period: wikigovernment and wikilegislation

The second point in DP proposed the idea of wikigovernment, “A wikigovernment allows the citizenry to prioritize the different initiatives presented by governments or state, autonomic, and local institutions. In the same way, it would allow the citizenry to have the venues to present articulated legal initiatives to be transformed in government action.” This form of government would allow the citizenry to both prioritize and elaborate executive and legal initiatives. Prioritization is a top-down mechanism; the latter, a bottom-up, both with feedback mechanisms.

The correlate of a wikigovernment is the institutionalization of mechanisms of wikilegislation, “laws constructed in sight of everyone, in a collaborative and transparent way, between citizenry and government” (idem). This would be a “democracy that includes the participation of the citizenry for elaborating and managing common matters” (idem).

These appear as complementary modes that outline different possibilities of relation between those governing and those governed, to the point where those two categories seem to lose some of their modern traction, a closing of the representation gap, anticipating a variety of possibilities.

5.3.2.3. Democracy, period: real and permanent vote.

A third key innovation in DP lied in its third programmatic point. It was an anti-

will remain opaque. In 2012, the Popular Party launched a “transparency law” only after the pressures from EU instances, since it was one of the few countries that had none on this point. The text has been widely criticized for its many limitations by the X Party, 15M networks, and other political actors in Spain.

²⁸⁹ Despite Foucault’s (1997) suggestion, no architecture would be enough. As the quote above shows, the matter is not only creating new instances of control and citizen vigilance, but also ensuring social articulation and participation. In this context, one could expect that, as happened with the costs of political action (Earl & Kimport, 2011), the cost of vigilance will eventually be reduced too, that, as the text suggests, the means for implementing could be granted by the State and distributed across society, perhaps in different forms of crowdsourcing.

representationalist or alter-democratic mechanism of direct democracy and “de-representation” (as Jurado, 2014 calls it): “the real and permanent vote” (abbreviated RPV). The core of this programmatic point can be synthesized in a formula included within the “X Party definition” in its official website: “The only party that doesn’t want to represent you. You won’t vote parties. You will vote and make laws”. According to the text (DP: 21) “the citizens reclaim the right to vote in a permanent fashion, to use it when we consider it fit.” What happens under representative democracy is “not voting but choosing. To choose, every four years, those that vote for us, without any way of making them know our opinion in concrete voting: as a blank check” (ibidem). The weak mandate that elections currently embody, especially in cases of absolute majority, guarantees the possibility of unfulfilling every point of the political program, a sort of almost arbitrary independence, as was Popular Party’s one from late 2011 to 2016.

To the current chronopolitics defined by “blank checks” and “turns” (as appeared in the NLV’s diagnostic of the representative system in Spain), DP opposed the following:

“voting is to directly show a political will on a concrete issue, be it approval, disapproval or indifference. For making this possible, it is established the possibility of voting all laws debated in Parliament, be it on the Internet using an electronic ID, be it with the traditional vote in paper, in the voting points permanently habilitated in towns and post offices.”

This proposal is an adaptation and renaming of the Demo 4.0 project, launched from the Sevilla hub of Real Democracy Now in 2011²⁹⁰. It implies an additive combination of representative and direct democracy in real time²⁹¹. According to Juan Moreno Yagüe²⁹² and Francisco Jurado, original promoters of both Demo4.0 and early X Party promoters explain, that is exactly what this proposal does: to provide an

²⁹⁰ For information on this point I have recurred not only to the official website of the initiative, but also Jurado (2014), which presents demo4.0 in detail.

²⁹¹ People that go from anarchists (Graeber, 2013) to defenders of technological fixes (Weinberg, 1967) have insisted in the value of a principle of political and social intervention: change only what is strictly needed; to the extent possible, don’t subtract, add.

²⁹² Juan Moreno Yagüe was the lawyer representing the accusation in the trial against Rodrigo Rato launched by 15MpaRato, promoter of Demo4.0. and other 15M initiatives such as OpEuribor, that denounced the fraudulent construction of the Euribor index, which has begun to get traction in courts (Opeuribor, 2016).

opportunity that first, fits with both the word and the spirit of the Spanish constitution (therefore, there is no need to change it), second, may be technically feasible, and third, does not detract anything from those who want to delegate in representatives while it allows to those who prefer to directly express their will to do so via direct vote. That is what the self-called “hackbogados” (hack-lawyers) define as a “juridical hack”, but could also be referred as a “juridical fix”: it does not only allow new forms of participation within the current juridical framework but also potentially makes the increasingly discredited and dysfunctional representative structure to survive by combining it with a direct democracy option²⁹³.

Taking distance from the 15M vocabulary, the discourse around the real and permanent vote used traditionally modern concepts in political theory such as “sovereignty”²⁹⁴. Unsurprisingly, this happened in connection with the attention to the institutions of representation (primarily, Congress, but also parties). The traditionally modern notion of sovereignty, profusely present in the Demo 4.0 proposal, also appears in different passages of the DP text, as an example of the ambiguous “hack-fix” logics. The concrete formula used by Yagüe, is that of “sovereignty quota”, which appeals to a strange, liberal individualistic view of sovereignty, where each citizen becomes an infinitesimal sovereign, exercising her power at will²⁹⁵, though direct vote, in real time. At a time of authoritarian (at least, in the sense of authorization-centric in Pitkin's sense) absolute majority of the Popular Party in Spain, the possibility of having a real and permanent vote promised to put an end to the rule of “formality” (authorization or end-of-term accountability) and its “blank checks”. It promised to allow the modern sovereign, The People, to emerge in ways that not even the French philosopher considered. Such a recovery of sovereignty was a need in the face of what Jurado (2014) called “sovereignty leaks”, which go “upwards, as processes of political integration advance, as is the case of the European Union, where the impositions from institutions such as the Commission or the European Central Bank gain more and more strength” and “outwards, when the pressures of

²⁹³ Although I cannot discuss it here, underlying Yagüe's and Jurado's view of representation, which can be hinted in the demo4.0. narrative, there are some arguments for direct democracy at play that can be found in XVIII century authors such as Rousseau. Although it seems to fall out of the modes of representation as normally understood (including Pitkin's five senses), the process of expressing a political will so that it can be counted in Parliament somehow enters into the logics of representation and identification.

²⁹⁴ As appears in DP: “The point is to recover and exercise sovereignty, through the vote, whenever we want.”

²⁹⁵ Some of the attacks to this position, concerning the formation of political agreement and groups, have been partially (only partially) addressed by Jurado in his master thesis.

organizations such as the IMF, the OECD, or the WTO are accepted by governments in spite of coming from totally extra-democratic entities.”

While renovating the notion of sovereignty, the real and permanent vote proposal challenged a central aspect of the political ontology since XIX century. Real and permanent vote means, according to Francisco Jurado (2014), an attack on deep structures: it undermines what he defines as “the block politics” or logics settled by modern forms of party-based representative politics. With RPV the voter wouldn’t need to “select” every four years neither a closed package of political proposals (a political program) nor representatives included and subordinated to a party discipline, who usually vote following directives from above²⁹⁶. Rather than choosing representatives²⁹⁷, citizens could vote directly, law by law. Jurado believes this would allow people to cut across the left-right divisions, embodied in the Spanish case by the PSOE-PP distinction. Following the 15M diagnostic, this is today, to him, mostly a symbolic distinction, which covers their basic agreement on policies usually dictated by lobbies or supranational institutions—a diagnostic identical to that of “No les votes”. To put it in Pitkin’s terms, the PSOE-PP difference is mainly played out at the level of symbolic representation, rather than at the active-substantive one.

In my view RPV brings two new meta-logics: one that allows the choice between representative and direct democracy logics, and one that allows the choice between block and singular logics. One can not only choose something or someone or avoid doing so (first order democracy), but also choose to delegate or to vote directly, to select a political block or a concrete proposal (second order democracy). In this sense, RPV generates a sort of alter-democratic meta-logics, the possibility of a choice of logics, which establishes a second order in the logics of choice of liberal democracies²⁹⁸. This would be a new form of political freedom of the modern, that of choosing between alternative (even if fixed) models of democracy to exercise.

Full transparency, wikigovernment and wikilegislation, and real and permanent vote: DP outlined a radically new view of the relation between citizens and government.

²⁹⁶ In the current Spanish system, the so called “party discipline” usually implies different sorts of penalties for representatives voting in Congress against the line decided by the party.

²⁹⁷ In the arguments crafted by Jurado for DP he carefully distinguishes between “voting”, what the representative does in Parliament, and “selecting” a representative that votes, which is what he notices electors do.

²⁹⁸ At the same time, ironically, it seems to leave the practice of representation un-thought, if not unchanged (structural changes as the ones described guarantee changes in the logic and practice of representation).

5.3.3. An experimental, networked party: networking citizens, federating competences

5.3.3.1. Representation and anti-representation in one organization: X party and communication guerrilla

The X Party aimed to be an experiment with the party form. It challenged or blurred some of the key features of traditional parties. Conspicuously, it contested the centrality of public leaders. As stated in its FAQs, in its first definition presented itself as a “method” for the instauration of DP and

“As a method, we are constituted by two entities:

1-the X Party, Party of the Future, is duly inscribed in the registry of political parties of the Ministry of the State. This will allow us to concur to the elections, but for now it is in latency.

2-the active, operative part, which you are seeing, the web, the twitter, the Facebook, the citizen network, we are a working group of communication and action: a great lobbying group specialized in matters of conquering a true democracy in the XXIst century.”

In more normative or programmatic terms, in the same FAQs the discourse connected with some of 15M leitmotifs²⁹⁹:

“We want to depersonalize politics. We don’t want to fall in the personalist logic of the parties, where only what the leader does and says matters. The important thing are facts, not names. They have made us believe that the system of leadership in parties is the only one, that there is no other possible, but that is not the case.”

Instead of leaders, names and words, the key is “solutions to problems”. According to X Party’s to work on solutions, to fight corruption and lobby for democracy, required anonymity of party members. Connecting with examples in the hacker culture running from Anonymous to WikiLeaks (an opaque dispositive except for its main figure, Assange), the text adds: “transparency is a tool of control of the political

²⁹⁹ Although not included in the FAQs, a recurrent argument was: we know Rajoy’s name, and yet that doesn’t make him any less corrupt.

class by the citizenry, and anonymity reinforces the capacity of society as a whole to exert it". With the relevance of personal figures in "audience democracy", such a gesture represented an obvious challenge. The bottom-line of the discourse was that while the "communication guerrilla" half of the project was, could, and even should be anonymous, the "party" half of the dispositive (as was sometimes called), were it to be activated, could be not. As I show in the pragmatics section, this remained a controversial issue both outside and inside the X Party. Bringing the hacker and 15M anti-representationalist logics of doing to the party form stretched it beyond its liberal representative possibilities.

5.3.3.2. The citizen network model: federation of competences vs assemblies

Interestingly, the X Party model did not only reject representation, it rejected also deliberation as crucial to its construction. In that way it explicitly broke, within its internal functioning, with one of the two 15M models described in chapter 4: the assembly. Instead, it proposed an autonomist, alter-democratic model. According, to its FAQs, the party:

"...is not a space of discussion. It is a network of co-responsible citizens who federate their competences to be able to get out of the hole they had got us in... It is not a hierarchic functioning nor it is an assembly one; it is a federation of competences regrouped in nodes (as the nodes forming the structure of the Internet) where priority is given to the competences and implication of people, on top of the respect and trust on the work capacity and competence of the rest."

The suggestion that there was no hierarchy or that the network had "the structure of the internet" seemed to be in tension with their FAQs, according to which there existed a "kernel", "a group of people that carries on more work, it serves as a support to the network and takes care of the coordination between different groups and nodes, and watches over the accomplishment of objectives and deadlines." The "citizen network" valued competences and implication above everything else. It declared itself "meritocratic" (rather than "democratic"), a rule explicitly inspired in the hacker or free software culture in which X.net had been so thoroughly involved.

5.3.3.3. A new discursive subject: a networked and federated expert citizenry

Probably two of the great innovations of the X Party in terms of discourse on

organizational forms and political subjectivities were the twin ideas of federation of competencies and expert citizenry. Both outlined a new kind of alter-democratic model with a primarily autonomist edge. On the plane of the party, the federation of competences meant to give to each the task that she can do best, and to understand the X Party as a space of political work and collaboration. Those participating in the project did so trying to contribute in certain tasks according their abilities and expertise. On the plane of the State, wikigovernment and wikilegisative forms of governance appealed to a similar form of organization and to the same expert citizenry. DP suggested that in society “exists a constructed knowledge, that must be taken advantage of and potentiated. That is the function of the X Party. We are not the solution, we are a catalyzer of the solutions”.

The figure of the expert citizenry is an autonomist contribution of the X Party to the narratives around both forms of organization and subjectivities in the 15M cycle. The proposal brings the figure of the expert citizen to the fore as the DRY manifesto and the camps had brought about the primacy of the “person” or the “common citizen”. Correlatively, it goes beyond the call for debate and responsible voting in “No les votes” as well as the practice of direct democracy in the camps and other projects by recognizing and stressing the need to mobilize citizens’ expertise and experience around social and political problems.

The X Party discourse suggested that “nobody knows of everything but anyone knows something”, and there is always somebody (other than formal, hired experts) that knows about a given topic. In this light, the possibility of a double contribution, both political and technical, by the citizenry, especially (and here the reading of the social conjuncture comes in) in a time with millions of overqualified unemployed people, would be to waste those capacities.

5.4. Syntax/Infrastructures

This “syntax” section differs from the ones on chapter 4 and 6. Since the X party did not innovate on the essential politics of infrastructures outlined in the 15M movement period, there is no section devoted to them here. Instead, I focus on some key structures and technologies in their affordances for politics. Attention is given at how some of the structures and infrastructures denote the stage of the 15M cycle. Differently from the 15M period, in which the question of the organization of the

movement could not be “posed”³⁰⁰ and rather emerged from the very networking activity of the movement actors, in this case the issue of organization resulted relevant from the beginning. If within 15M digital networks gave the structural backbone to the movement, in this case digital networks appear within a well-defined sociotechnical organization.

5.4.1. Organization and the technopolitical module

5.4.1.1. X Party's experimental organization

In 2013, still in the building up towards the May 2014 European Elections, Miguel Aguilera, researcher and X Party member, shared this image of the network:

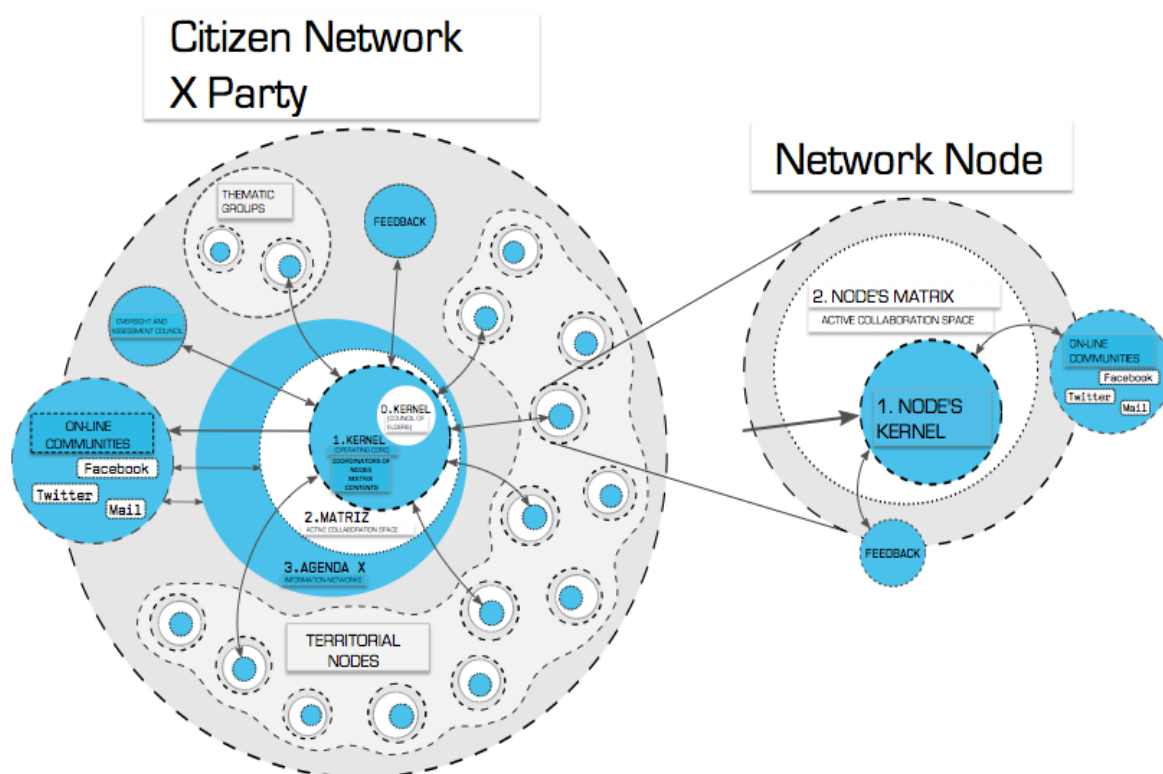


FIGURE 37. X PARTY: STRUCTURE. SOURCE: MIGUEL AGUILERA, 2013, LICENSE CC-BY-SA 4.0³⁰¹.

The image shows the distinction between two types of nodes, thematic and territorial. Nevertheless, both types had a kernel or reduced group that carried the

³⁰⁰ There was no center from which to “design and implement an organization”, even if there was, there was as an excess of complexity that prevented unifying representation, finally, there were forces that would have resisted formalization, as happened in the internal conflict around the institutionalization of a much better-defined entity such as DRY (Elola, 2012).

³⁰¹ To have an idea of the basic shape of the X Party at the moment of its launch, the best drawing is probably that of the local node appearing amplified, on the right side of the picture. Except for the “Matrix” circle.

most work and that, except for the initial nodes, such as Barcelona, Sevilla or Madrid, had to be approved by the citizen network's kernel. Around the node kernel, a "matrix" space was composed of collaborators. Every kernel also connected to a "feedback space" of more external collaborators. Concrete kernel members managed social media accounts in every territorial node; in the case of the whole network, some members of the "matrix" did so. The network's kernel included coordinators of territorial nodes and was thereby connected to all territorial nodes' kernels. Differently from territorial node kernels, the X Party kernel was also tied to an "oversight and assessment council", as well as to thematic nodes. As the image, inspired in the structure of a cell, shows, the structure of the party was clearly concentric, with a Kernel 0 or "council of elders" at the center.

This image aims to depict the structure of the party at a late stage in its development. To have an idea of the basic shape of the X Party at the moment of its launch, the best image is probably that of the local node as the one amplified in the image.

5.4.1.2. X Party's technopolitical module of infrastructures for organization

Most of these spaces were built on the basis of three platforms: mailing lists, Facebook groups, and WhatsApp groups. Almost all of the internal spaces I just mentioned had the first, and frequently the other two. Both the network and every local node had a public, outwardly oriented mailing list, Facebook and Twitter profiles. This was the basic, X Party's technopolitical module of organization (not of "self-organization", since the setting up of a node implied approval by the network's kernel). Each of these had different, sometimes more or less overlapping, communities.

Two crucial and indicative variations with regard to 15M was the intensive use of WhatsApp and, more importantly, the use of Co-ment. Co-ment is a "Web service for submitting texts to comments and annotations", based on free software. This is a type of administered crowd-writing technology.

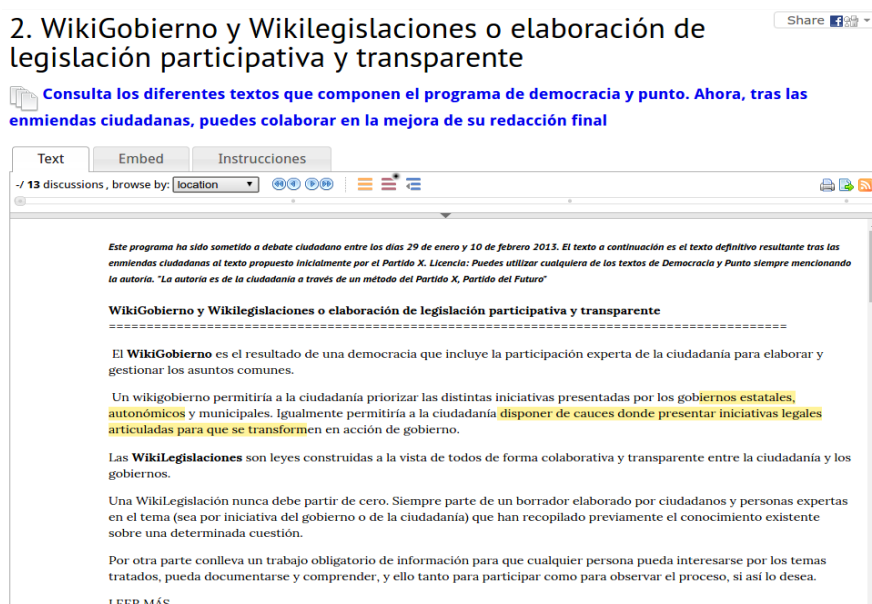


FIGURE 38. X PARTY: WIKIPROGRAM. TEXT: "WIKIGOVERNMENT AND WIKILEGISLATIONS OR ELABORATION OF PARTICIPATORY AND TRANSPARENT LEGISLATION".

A draft of the Party's political program elaborated by collaborators was uploaded to the service for people to amend from January 29th to March 18th 2014. Anyone could sign up in co-ment with an email address and comment on the draft of the various sections of Democracy, period. They could even submit alternative drafts. Nevertheless, this was no more a fully open space as etherpads³⁰² were. It was an infrastructure of mediated participation, deemed more appropriate for a party form, for an electoral assault, for a different stage in the 15M cycle of technopolitical contention.

The technopolitical infrastructures just mentioned were crucial for the organization of the X Party. Like in the 15M, they greatly reduced the costs of organization, but, furthermore, they influenced the organizational forms and connected to the political norms of the party (to put it with Juris, 2008), which we analyze in part 5. Unlike in 15M, they appeared within a consciously designed sociotechnical structure, included in an organizational syntax that situated the respective syntaxes of every technological infrastructure in a well-defined functional structure.

5.5. Pragmatics/Practices

In a party that, in line with the hacktivist tradition of the Sinde Law struggles and Nolesvotes, stressed the value of doing, to analyze pragmatics is crucial.

³⁰² As in earlier initiatives within the 15M cycle, etherpads, fully open crowd-writing technologies, played a continuous role in the daily work of initiatives such as the X party.

5.5.1. Transparency, visibility, and the practice of anti-representation

Ironically, one of the first controversies surrounding the X Party had to do with transparency. In the video recorded for the launch on January 8th, the characters identified themselves, first and funnily, as people coming from the future to announce the victory of the X Party, and then, in a joking/estrangement turn, as unemployed actors that had been hired to present the X Party in a video. Being a party from the future, it could not attend its own presentation. Ultimately, this representation game connected with the tradition of theater and comedy, and with Anonymous LOL, rather than with the usual political one. The joke didn't stop the questions, though, and there was a rising (at points, hilarious) debate on social networks³⁰³ and mainstream media³⁰⁴. The basic, serious question was: how can a legitimate party, especially in a situation of widespread corruption, and furthermore, one making of transparency its first programmatic point, present itself as an anonymous dispositive? The answers were many by different public actors, more or less close to the group³⁰⁵.

Internally, people were afraid of the media heat that public exposition may mean. Part of the attacks could come from 15M actors themselves, for the reasons I commented above, but the most feared were those of the press. As shown earlier, in the FAQs section of the official website, the conciliation of anonymity and the party form was primarily organizational and sequential: the party as communication guerrilla was to remain anonymous, the party as party, that would be activated only if it was necessary, would be not. In so far as this second step had not been taken, there was no need to give names.

In spite of these arguments, the controversy did not stop. In the first weeks, as media attention skyrocketed, damage-control operations had to be deployed frequently. Actually, as frequently any some relevant profile, especially in 15M networks, suggested not even who the X Party members were but even just to know them. As internet devotees, X Party promoters came to believe keeping the secret promised to

³⁰³ The controversy contributed to the proliferation of profiles on Twitter with names such as the "Y party", the "Z party", the "MDMA party", and even the "Gauss party", "the party of the inequations". Some of those were fostered by people close to the X Party itself.

³⁰⁴ On the other side, two quick serious reactions from two center-left media, the journal El País (with an article entitled "the faceless party" on January 8th) and the radio channel Cadena Ser (with an article on its website entitled "X Party supports transparency but hides its identity") were among the first in denouncing a contradiction. The number of articles and columns devoted to the party in the first weeks were dozens, in national and international media.

³⁰⁵ For sociologist Manuel Castells (2013) (some of whose points are included in the PDF of DP itself "if there are no faces, what remains are ideas, practices, initiatives [...] The X of the Party of the Future is not to hide itself, but for its content to be filled by people projecting on this experiment their personal dream of a collective dream: Democracy, Period".

be impossible. To this effect, a temporary solution was to, “no matter what”, deny membership, even if confessing sympathy; and, more importantly, avoid any leak about the composition of the group.

Part of the controversy did not only come from the side of mainstream media, but also from participants in the project itself. At the time of the launch, some of them commented in private meetings as well as in a thread in the mailing list of the “kernel”³⁰⁶ that they were having a hard time justifying the position of the party regarding anonymity (to themselves and others) and being continuously associated with it.

With a more propositional tone, Nota entered the mailing thread answering to a comment by another kernel member, who had suggested to use the expression “anyone” (a 15M notion analyzed above and particularly popular among those in the Madrid hub) rather than “anonymous” to define the status of those collaborating with the party³⁰⁷. He then proposed the creation of “characters”, as interfaces with both media and the public,

“to insist in the fact that our anonymity is not to be nobody’s, but to be anybody’s. On top of that, using the resource to cultural critique to humanize the party. Create characters with a bio, with a personality, that people recognize, but who are nothing more than identities that we create collectively.”

The question of anonymity and people, provisionally answered during the camp period by practices such as spokesperson rotation, had here a potentially new response: individual fictitious identities or characters. Nota was here addressing what he perceived as two problems of X Party’s media communication for “connecting with the target”, otherwise, the audience³⁰⁸, that the X Party wanted to appeal to: those two problems were anonymity and jargon. On the same mail thread, he suggested another option to maintain anonymity without making it nobody’s. Taking a recommendation from a user of the X Party Facebook fanpage, a proposal

³⁰⁶ The kernel mailing list, the central list for those involved in the project, was one of the main ways of internal communication.

³⁰⁷ “Collaboration”, rather than “membership” was the word of choice for defining their relations to the party.

³⁰⁸ The “anybody” or even the “Cuenca Lady”. The second was a formula coined back in September, 2012, in a first operative meeting of the party (then only composed by the Barcelona and the forming Sevilla nodes) for imagining character of a rural lady, which had to be appealed by the party. The name is after a city in Castilla y La Mancha.

inspired by the movements against the Sinde Law:

“I remember the initiative that Hacktivistas shot with the Sinde Law, which may work: www.damoslacara.net/. It would be enough to say that the people that “make up” this “party” show their face... so that the people who need to see faces see an avalanche of them. Who will “you” be among so many faces? The question lacks meaning and importance, when the proposal is to construct among all. This is democracy”³⁰⁹.

This idea could be reconnected with both the figures of the “anybody” and that of “people”, but even more with that of a multitude of faces that become masks, commented when discussing 15M emerging political subjects. The idea of creating characters never quite took off, while the idea of the “face avalanche” video was dismissed at that point. However, two months later, in March, 2013, the video prepared for the launch of the final (participatorily drafted) version of DP included a version of that: a variety of people, but with their name and professional or academic credentials, in a video. In spite of this recourse to faces, in a conversation on early July, 2013, Nota suggested that the X Party’s anonymity had indeed ended up being nobody’s. That was precisely the day when Levi appeared in a meeting of new political initiatives in Barcelona as X Party collaborator, putting an end the anonymity rule³¹⁰. Seven months after the launch, after many anonymous written (I myself wrote one for a Japanese journal) and spoken interviews (carried on by means of voice distortion techniques³¹¹), after many discussions about how to manage the situation and even more rushes to control potential leaks, anonymity was put aside. It was not a matter of principle. The rationale for doing so was tactical: the rise of alternatives

³⁰⁹ Two references in terms of massive play with the idea of masks, faces, and political representation is one of the final scenes (with the blasting of the building of the British Parliament) of the film *V for Vendetta*, an iconic reference for the hacktivist group Anonymous. Some of the taints of that scene are clearly with tendencies that draw from the same source as fascism in the XXth century. Years before the launch of the film, the Zapatistas (and, especially, their figure of Subcomandante Marcos) played with this possibility.

³¹⁰ She had already appeared in the video announcing DP, on March, along with other core members of the project such as Juan Moreno Yagüe. This was one of the first times that well-known persons (or faces) associated to 15M appeared explicitly supporting the X Party. In the production, there was not “an avalanche” technique, but rather an individual seriation, hybrid in the sense of mixing well-known activists with unknown (not anonymous, since each participant gave her name along with some personal details) supporters.

³¹¹ The resource to these techniques resulted in particularly hilarious situations, where an anonymous man speaking in the name of an X Party of the future addressed mainstream.

competing for a similar space and for an overlapping electorate³¹². The conditions in terms of the rules of the political representative field (Bourdieu, 1991) was the main driver for changing one of the more cherished tactical choices of the young party. The conflicted history of anonymity within and without the network surely played a role too.

Until the final demise of this position, in July 2013, the topic of anonymity and personalism was both a matter of innovation and concern, including personal friction and dispute, externally and internally. It was probably so because anti-representationalism was one of the recurrent zones of contention between 15M cycle initiatives and the media establishment. Not having faces and clear representatives was simply not an option for much of the media, and neither for many actors in the political field.

5.5.2. A wiki-program for an X Party

Another original, alter-democratic X Party practice was the application to itself of the method it proposed for politics in general. In a recursive manner, the drafting of the X Party program had itself something of the “wiki” and peer-to-peer character proposed under the idea of “wikilegislation”. DP was developed as a wiki-program, in a series of “chess moves”³¹³ between January 15th and April 5th, as detailed in the image below.

The first move was the launch of the draft of the political program on January 15th. This draft had implied a considerable amount of work and information gathered by party³¹⁴ collaborators, which complied with its own definition of how wikilegislation should proceed³¹⁵.

The second move, running from January 15th to 29th consisted in a call to interested citizens to inform themselves, something that the party itself promoted and aided by providing information and discussion on social networks, primarily Twitter and

³¹² In an email to the kernel list in late June Levi pointed out: “We must say who we are, but not for the spiel of anonymity and blablabla, but because this can go off hand, the rest start to be more than us and if we don’t establish a moral and work superiority they will eat us.”

³¹³ The chess metaphors, so beloved by people like Jurado and Yagüe, appealed to the notion of politics as game, as a space of rules to be played with more than played within, and, finally, not without grandiloquence, to be turned against those in power. The checkmate was directed to “power” (Jaque al poder).

³¹⁴ People spent a considerable amount of work researching the most advanced democratic systems: from the traditional European champion of direct and participatory democracy, Switzerland, to the new forms essayed in Iceland or Rio Grande do Sul, a Brazilian state.

³¹⁵ According to its definition of wikilegislation it “never must start from scratch. It always starts from a draft elaborated by citizens and people who are experts on the topic (be it by government’s or citizens’ initiative) who have previously compiled the existing knowledge over a given issue.”

Facebook, and its official website³¹⁶.

On the third move, from January 29th to February 10th, an open invitation was made to citizens (anybody, including political representatives) to participate, and a space was set up in the X Party's website to introduce comments, amendments and general changes in the draft of DP. People used Co-ment to make amendments or propose alternatives to the drafts elaborated by party collaborators.

Recomendaciones básicas para participar en el desarrollo de "Democracia y Punto"

El Partido del Futuro pone en marcha una nueva herramienta para la última fase de Democracia y Punto. Una herramienta para **mejorar la redacción final de los 5 textos de Democracia y Punto**. A los textos iniciales se han añadido las aportaciones hechas por la ciudadanía durante el mes de Febrero de 2013; estas aportaciones han sido integradas en el borrador inicial y ahora se trata de corregirlo para su redactado final.

Desde el Partido del Futuro hemos definido una serie de **recomendaciones y reglas básicas (Netiqueta)** para el buen funcionamiento de esta herramienta digital.

Debido a eso y como cobertura legal, **la administración del sitio debe moderar el conjunto de los comentarios que se envíen**, pudiendo rechazar o borrar comentarios si no cumplen las recomendaciones propuestas para poder ordenar el conjunto de las aportaciones.

La página y sus posts están bajo la responsabilidad técnica y legal de la administración del sitio partidodefuturo.net, que tiene, por tanto, legitimidad para llevar a cabo la moderación. Los comentarios que puedan causarnos problemas legales no serán publicados.

FIGURE 39. X PARTY: PROGRAM NETIQUETTE.

Estos son los diferentes textos que componen el programa de democracia y punto. Ahora, tras las enmiendas ciudadanas, puedes colaborar en la mejora de su redacción final.

- [0. INTRODUCCIÓN GENERAL](#)
last modified 3 years, 9 months ago / 10 versions
- [1. Transparencia en la gestión pública](#)
last modified 3 years, 9 months ago / 11 versions
- [2. WikiGobierno y Wikilegislaciones o elaboración de legislación participativa y transparente](#)
last modified 3 years, 9 months ago / 15 versions
- [3. Derecho a voto real y permanente](#)
last modified 3 years, 9 months ago / 12 versions
- [4. Referéndum obligatorio y vinculante](#)
last modified 3 years, 9 months ago / 16 versions
- [5. Anexo - Obligaciones de los gobiernos y de los ciudadanos representantes de la ciudadanía. Erradicar la corrupción](#)
last modified 3 years, 9 months ago / 27 versions

Contact · Powered by [co-ment](#) · Help · Français · English · Norsk · Português Brasileiro · Español · Български · Italiano

FIGURE 40. X PARTY: PROGRAM IN CO-MENT.

A relevant point before starting the process was the show up screen with some “recommendations” on how to participate, which included a basic “netiquette” of how

³¹⁶ This step of citizen work is also present in the step for the exercise of wikigovernment and wikilegislation “it implies a mandatory work of information so that every person can get interested in the addressed topics, document itself and understand, and that to participate as much as to observe the process, if it wishes to do so.”

to do so appropriately (see image on the left).

As a fourth move, from February 10th until March 18th there was a folding of the party to answer and “order all the feedback” provided by the citizenry. I took part in the process of reviewing and answering comments, whose approval ultimately depended on the justified and reasoned criterion of both reviewers and review supervisors. The reasons for such a review, which was centralized, are many. Probably the crucial one was not to let proposals frontally opposed to core member’s preferences to pervade the program.

Then, in the beginning of March, the fifth move was the publication of a definitive version of DP, the new wiki-program. Showing the care for licenses and acknowledgement typical of the free culture movement in which X.net has been deeply involved, the document was to be cited and “licensed” as “authorship by the citizenry through an X Party method”.

5.5.2.1. X Party free licenses: democracy for any party

The sixth movement³¹⁷ coincided in time with the fifth and was the launch of a public invitation to other parties to use it. This was a particularly original move, to call for any party (an “X” party) to appropriate it, “with the only condition that they accept it as a whole, without manipulations” (as stipulated in the poster below). The discursive suggestion was that the “X” in the name of the party appealed to an incognita: any party (the correlate of 15M’s political figure of the “anybody”) could be the X Party, any of them could implement DP and win the elections in the future. This taking on intellectual (or political) property was planned to expedite licenses analogues to those use in free software. One of the tasks of the X Party would be to evaluate different political projects following its participatorily developed standard. Anyone could take; the X Party would share.

³¹⁷ At the time of the launch, in early January, the objective was to get it discussed on the Parliamentary session on April 5th.



FIGURE 41. X PARTY: CHECK-MATE STRATEGY.

At the end of the first game (they called it check-mate), the idea was to get the program discussed in the Spanish Parliament, on April 5th, 2013. Out of the six moves, only this last point was not achieved.

5.5.3. Meritocracy, democracy and net-work: X Party rules

From informal conversations and email exchanges in the X Party kernel's mailing list, it seems that by March 2013, some members had come to believe that the party who called for a break of the block logics and party discipline in the political field may be falling into a trap similar to the one it was trying to solve. Some, like Nota, asked for a break, a stand aside. Most of the people from the Madrid hub had also taken distance³¹⁸.

A key point of friction concerned modes of organization, work and decision making. The form of allocating responsibilities and decision power within the network was, in principle, meritocratic. As suggested by Levi in her texts, this is a rule taken from the hacker or free software culture. The kernel was the core space for work, discussion and decision. According to the definition in the FAQs, mentioned above, the kernel was “a group of people that carries on more work.” According to the party web FAQs, the evaluation of such work resulted from “taking into account the weighting of commitment, peer recognition over the realized work, the proven competences in a

³¹⁸ Albeit no open statement was made, the fact can be deduced from the shrinking number of their contributions to the kernel mailing list, as well as to the “pads” or working documents of the party.

given field of work, the rigor shown in the achievement of common objectives, the respect for the work method and the antiquity.”

A strict meritocratic rule³¹⁹ meant decision making was progressively more concentrated, as newcomers could not equal the merits of early participants, which were continuous committed contributors. Under the rule of meritocracy, as time passed, people in the Barcelona hub became the ultimate decision makers, especially, the most committed. There emerged the growing grip of the so called “iron law of oligarchy” (Michels, 1915).

The effects of this derive were manifold. Although conversation and discussion, even heated, was common, if not always welcome, in most of the meetings of the Party I attended between Autumn 2012 and early 2013, as work exigencies grew, some of the principles tended to solidify into a harder organizational and work culture³²⁰.

An increasing emphasis on the idea that “this is not a space of discussion”, as well as in value of forking³²¹, meant anybody was free to disagree, and leave. As many of the initial collaborators distanced themselves from the party³²², the alignment of the rest around these principles was reinforced³²³. The question of who could give and fight for a position, when, with what legitimacy, etc. became better defined. Even if, at the time before and after the launch (late 2012 and early 2013), rules were not exactly implemented in the way the FAQs suggest, these texts were a form of confirming in discourse a way of doing things after it had won the day in practice.

As the rule of meritocracy and its multiple corollaries (the compulsion to measure it, appeals to it for enforcing rules, and the like) gained strength within the project, other principles of the hacker culture lost it. One of them was the one that appeals to enjoyment and fun³²⁴ (Himanen, 2003; Kelty, 2008), connected with the already mentioned creativity. In a group where most members are so only voluntarily, a

³¹⁹ For some, it was difficult to completely measure merits, however.

³²⁰ The exigency of respect for the work method partly conflicted with the idea of a “permanent beta” for the organization; stressing antiquity, although duly rewards long term commitment, also impedes forms of innovation that take place precisely when one is not yet antique. Furthermore, acknowledgement and rigor depend on people’s perception which, in small group, can depend on many interpersonal factors, sometimes connected with the previous criteria.

³²¹ In the context of cyberactivism and 15M, “forking” means, basically, “splitting”.

³²² Lack of entries, lack of emails, end of mumble meetings.

³²³ As the number points of agreement grew, the federation came to be more like its ideal: one of competences more than of competencies.

³²⁴ For a party that started with a launch video with several highly humoristic moments, which had officially registered as a president and vice-presidents three people over 65 years old that knew rather little about the project (two of them living in the countryside) and presented itself to other parties by quoting them in a tweet saying “Ola k aseis?” (“Hey, what’s up?”) one can safely say that the primacy of fun and humor receded as the investment in the party half and the political field increased.

special zeal in vigilance and recognition of hierarchy can very easily come to exclude many. To put it in a hyperbole, in the period from January to June 2013 (June was the moment when a stage of escalation in number of participants and territorial nodes started) the increase in the number of orders was inversely proportional to the number of key people in the project³²⁵. Meritocracy and democracy are not necessarily in conflict, while certain forms of horizontality and assembly-centrism can be antidemocratic. But an excessive emphasis on strong alignment of merit and decision making can stifle diversity: of commitments, of opinions, of positions, of knowledge and practice, and, ultimately, of values and possibilities too, such as fun, creativity, or even representativeness. Variety (and certain forms of focused disagreement) had proven one of the initial strengths of the party³²⁶. Following its own parameters around the need to mobilize expertise, it could be said the core group progressively lost diversity and collective intelligence in the period between early and mid-2013.

5.5.3.1. From free licenses to organized franchise.

Another example of the transition from November 2012 (and even up to early Spring) to June 2013, when a growth process started, are the X Party licenses I mentioned above. Differently from the initial idea of X Party licenses inspired in the free software model, the surviving model became in practice closer to that of an organized franchise. Under the final model, a party or a group of people could not just go, take the key ideas, and become itself an X Party. Instead, it had to pass a strong screening process and become incorporated into the structure described in part 4.

In the process of activation of the initially latent part, the party side, in mid-2013, the X Party had become an organization with a very concrete structure, stages of development, and objectives. The first of such objectives was to hit the elections to the European Parliament on 2014³²⁷. When Podemos was launched in early 2014,

³²⁵ The fact that there was a demand suggests there also was a shared agreement that some form of reclamation was appropriate. This was a coauthored situation: someone reclaims a job to be done because someone did not (could not, did not know how, did not want to) do his or her part. The concrete dynamics, though, are very case, situation-specific.

³²⁶ As shown in different studies, diversity and the presence of brokers mediating among heterogeneous communities or networks is key for enabling creativity (Burt, 2004; Barabasi, 2002). This was something characteristic of many 15M projects and the X Party itself, especially in the beginning. It guaranteed contact and influence upon multiple communities, the respect attached to (diverse) personal capital, a catalytic surplus.

³²⁷ The story of how this became an objective is an interesting one. It had to do, among other things, with the representation of the current political conjuncture both in Europe and Spain. A four-hour presentation in May, 2013, by an electoral analyst collaborating with the party convinced key members that the “space of rupture in the countries of South Europe” was the X Party’s opportunity.

the X Party first reaction was to offer collaboration and shared its “method” (practices such as the elaboration of wikiprograms, use of crowdfunding, etc. Giménez & Vargas, 2014). This was a new way of understanding the electoral field, using cooperation as a competitive advantage. But as elections approached, the party needed (as Bourdieu, 1991, indicates) ways of further distinguishing itself from other options, especially, from those appealing to 15M ideas, networks, or audiences, as was the case of Podemos³²⁸ (El Diario, 2014). As it got deeper into the political field, it applied many of the rules that are thought to define political organizations.

After a national “X tour” in June 2013, the members of the Party rose steadily, nodes started to be formed in over a dozen cities, and the new people had to be trained. This process would take place this time under a fully developed methodology and projected structure, which I have shown above. The shape and composition of the party was to be deeply different from the one it had in the months preceding and right after its launch.

5.5.4. Collaborating and crowdfunding a campaign

The party still had two key innovations reserved for the electoral period preceding the May 22nd-25th European Elections.

5.5.4.1. Collaborative listing

The first was its launch of fully open and collaborative lists³²⁹. This basically meant anyone could propose and support anyone as a candidate of the X Party for the elections. There were surely discursive indications of the kind of profile desired, but in the web enabled for the process there was no a priori closure around who could become candidate.

³²⁸ This was clear in various calls to debate (El Diario.es, 2014) and posts in the X Party's website, such as one that differentiated the X Party from Podemos <https://partidox.org/en-que-son-diferentes-el-partido-x-y-podemos/>. Accessed April 6th, 2016.

³²⁹ The process is explained in the Party's website <https://partidox.org/metodo-listas-abiertas/>. Accessed on April 3rd, 2016.



FIGURE 42. X PARTY: CALENDAR FOR COLLABORATIVE LISTS.

The first step of was the open proposal of pre-candidates, from March 1st to the 7th, with every voter choosing up to 5 competent people they considered would be willing to defend the roadmap and methodology of the X Party. Then, a period of prioritization of pre-candidates ran from March 7th to 9th. A voting web was set up where users could evaluate candidates on the basis of factors such as “knowledge and affinity with the program of the X Party” and its “work method”, “expertise of the person in its field”, “proven trajectory of work for the common good”, “capacity to speak on topics out of their field with responsibility, humility and without lying”, “knowledge of the European Institutions”, etc. Those receiving 25% of support or more in comparison with the most supported pre-candidate were publicly contacted between March 11th and 13th³³⁰.

On March 22nd-23rd, pre-candidates accepting the nomination begun a screening process that included a public Q&A with questions proposed and prioritized by internet users.

Then, a final voting of candidates took place by “X Party users” on March 24-25th. Party users were defined as “any proactive person in the project”, without limits for the number of candidates to be voted. Candidates with 25% of the most voted candidate got into the final list. Adjustment in the list were made on the basis of gender. Furthermore, the final order required an alternation of candidates between

³³⁰ This practice generated conflicts with those that disliked the idea of being associated with the X Party and even considered it an infringement into their privacy. The X Party answered suggesting it was a “citizen call”.

those “internal” to the Party and those “external” to it. The definitive list was announced on March 31st.

Here there are at work both the fully open and radically democratic and the highly exigent and meritocratic styles defining the X Party’s method. The proposal period was more open than anything done by any traditional party, while the forthcoming screening was tight. Perhaps more relevantly, the final voting was exclusive for those that had “earned” it, not by having some formal accreditation but by actively contributing to the network.

5.5.4.2. Campaign crowdfunding

A second campaign innovation was the use of crowdfunding to finance it. With the humorous slogan “He would never do it” and an image of Rodrigo Rato, target of the 15MpaRato campaign also led by X Party members, they made a call to the citizenry to fund the campaign (Partido X, 2014a)³³¹. It underlined the X Party would not be a campaign financed by the big banks they were fighting against, so they asked for an extra effort to the people to fund “solutions based on citizen work”. It included a detailed budget and, after the fact, a cost document was uploaded to the web.

The campaign, called the “X tour”, was primarily based on small events with local nodes across Spain. They insisted in being the “no party” and having invented the “no meeting”. Rather than a big final display, its final event took place on Twitter, where they pushed the hashtag #YoVotoPartidoX up to the top of the list of trending topics the day before the elections.

The results: 100.000 votes, far from the 300000 of the last party reaching representation in the European Parliament. This came as a big disappointment. Another initiative associated with the 15M cycle, Podemos, got 1.250.000 votes and came to inaugurate the new stage of the cycle. In the evaluation of the results, X Party representatives put the stress on the role that TV had on the elections, “the tv won” they sentenced. Podemos’s leading figure, Pablo Iglesias, had ample time in mainstream tv channels, especially of the left and extreme right of the political spectrum.

5.6. Alternatives

This part is devoted to resume the key challenges and changes that the X Party posed in both discourse and practice to the party form, as well as to the liberal

³³¹ The call can be found at <https://partidox.org/financiacion-ep2014/>. Accessed on January 10th, 2017.

representative ontology more broadly.

5.6.1. The party form.

In order to see the challenges that the X party posed to usual party forms, I recur to the threefold cited in chapter 2. According to Gunther & Diamond, parties can be distinguished by their organization (thin/thick, formal/informal, etc.), their program (stable/dynamic, principled/pragmatic, etc.), and their relation to the polity as a whole (integrated/subversive). On his side, Manin defined democracy from the 60s onwards as “audience democracy”, with the catch-all party as a party model of reference.

Looking at its own self-definition as a citizen network and its reliance on the internet and social media for its structuration and functioning, the key point to make in organizational terms is to stress its condition of “networked” party. Surely, its structure was thin and informal. With no physical structures, fixed official roles, or formal membership (cards, registry, or the like), it was enough to get enrolled in a given mailing list or group (on Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.), and contribute some work to be an X party collaborator (not a “member”). Its rejection of assemblies clearly distinguishes it from the movement party of the 90s, even if it shared with it a discursive rejection of representative party hierarchy in the old mass party style. Nevertheless, the appeal to strict meritocracy ended up recovering classical forms of work-based evaluation, in this case, freed from their bureaucratic and formal structure; this brought both the benefits of flexibility and the risks of opacity and informal leaderships with undefined powers. Taking into account that there are other parties that may be included within the “networked” genre, such as the Pirate Party, the X Party specific difference depends on the rest of its characteristics.

When it comes to its wikiprogram, as we noticed in section 5.3., it resulted from a moderated collaborative process. The party insisted it was “non-ideological” and that its guidelines were a “minimum agreement”. In that sense, its program was variable. At the same time, the method, the procedure for creating it, was well defined. Differently from the catch-all party, this was not a result of the decision of leaders and media strategists, but rather the outcome of a strict process of guided collaborative construction. However, the basic document proposed by X party initial members, DP, had a clear democratic center. For this I classify the X Party as both procedural and democratic.

Finally, when it comes to its relation to the political system, it seems clear that its position was one of subversion. Its situation with regard to the hegemonic-pluralist axis is difficult to draw as it claimed to aim to kick old parties from Parliament (a hegemonic gesture, according to Gunther & Diamond, 2003) while appealing to federation in a rather pluralist view.

Networked, procedural, democratic, and subversive seem appropriate qualifications for defining the X party under Gunther and Diamond classification³³². In a synthetic label, it could be defined as “network-democratic”, or “wiki-democratic”.

But there was more to the X Party that Gunther & Diamond’s schema is able to qualify. Two aspects that were passed on to Podemos and other initiatives rooted in the 15M cycle (even if in slightly modified versions), were its wikiprogram and its open and collaborative listing of candidates. They came to potentiate the internal democracy in the party form. So it did the crowdfunding method, which was a mode of strengthening the party’s economic independence in relation to banks. These advances in both internal democracy and economic self-sufficiency reflected the alter-representational demands (the calls for better forms of representation) launched during the 15M movement period towards mainstream parties.

Another idiosyncratic feature was its operative division into a latent formal party and an operative communication guerrilla and lobbying team, which made of it a schizoid or amphibian organization. Much of this resulted from its complex relation to 15M and the 15M cycle, to the more or less explicit anti-representationalism that has marked it. This also reflected a continuous desire to remain a civil society form of collective action (thereby its long self-labelling as “citizen network, X party”, or its suggestion that the X was the citizenry itself) while being a representative organization. The party aimed at undermining the (representative) form that it needed to embody to carry on such undermining: “you won’t vote parties. You will vote and make laws”, it promised. The peak of the tension between representation and anti-representationalism resulted in sentences such as its self-presentation as “the only party that doesn’t want to represent you”. The mediation between anti-representation (f.i.: in anonymity), alter-democracy (f.i.: in wikilegislation and the real

³³² Each of these terms implies more than Gunther and Diamond may imply, though. Within the 15M cycle they are tied to particular political cultures. “Networked” is not only an organization form but also, as Juris (2008) saw, a set of political norms and technological (in our case, rather, technopolitical) practices. It connects with the culture of anonymity, which as we saw brought many problems to the Party and was one of its most idiosyncratic features in its origins.

and permanent vote), alter-representation (f.i.: in the collaborative listing of candidates), and representation (f.i.: in its inevitable evaluation in terms of votes in the European Elections) was a key unsolved problem of the Party. Such tensions posed a clear challenge to the party form

5.6.2. Ontology

Looked through the glass of political ontology, the X Party can be tagged as an innovative, imperfect and conflicted project of internal docracy or wikicracy³³³ (at the party level) and external networked democracy or wiki-democracy (at the State level). The more innovative edges of its model were outlined in its discourse of an expert democracy in which a networked citizenry would collaborate and federate their competencies to solve social problems. This aspect, particularly well synthesized in the idea of wikigovernment and wikilegislation, would be primarily driven by a model somehow inspired in Wikipedia, in which “those that know of each topic” (as announced in the party’s launch video) would look for the best solutions to common problems. That exhibited its wikicratic character. The holders of such knowledge and, more importantly, the ultimate deciders, though, were the citizenry at large, thereby its democratic or wikidemocratic character.

Another innovative element of this discourse and practice of democracy was its particular combination of the notion of the citizenry and that of expertise. This generated the subject form of the expert citizen. This implied an attack on one of the bases of the aristocratic tradition of western democracies: that of the distance between the *aristoi* and the *hoi polloi*. Unlike what the tradition since Plato suggests, in X Party’s texts knowledge, expertise and experience are distributed among the citizenry. In this sense, this idea plays in an area next and beyond the third wave of science studies (Collins & Evans, 2002), recognizing informal knowledge and expertise and, more importantly, assuming that either everybody has some or can develop it. The party stretched the notion of what expertise is, and, especially, that of who holds it. This form of “citizenism” (Gerbaudo, 2016) relied on a renovated participatory ontology combined with antagonistic elements (clear in the X Party’s declaration of its intention to evict politicians from Parliament or its framing of the citizenry as the actor that would resolve the problems generated by Establishment

³³³ This could be understood as a system of organization and decision making in which collaboration in concrete tasks on the basis of expertise is at the center, and asymmetries between people (f.i., in decision making) are generated and accepted on that basis.

actors—as stated in its debut video) while avoiding populism³³⁴ in its univocal focus on the “common citizen”. The expert citizenry that contributed to draft the X Party’s program and that features prominently in it as a subject of wikigovernment and wikilegislation breaks with the idea of the selfish individual of the liberal representative ontology. It connects and innovates upon participatory, autonomist and antagonist ontologies.

The X Party reserved a very special place for expertise and knowledge, but also for practice and doing, within its normative discourse. In the style of the so-called hacking culture, there was an attempt at bracketing debates on ideology and trying to establish relations based on problem solving. The primary forms of relationship were thereby collaboration, knowledge sharing and autonomous work under the idea of expertise federation. Its ideas of wikigovernment and wikilegislation broke with the division of labor of modern political thinking (as per Brown, 2009: 85): the one that first separates sovereign and government, and then makes of the former the agent of political will and of the latter the agent of political knowledge and action. In this case, DP offers a venue for the direct intervention of a peer reviewed expert citizenry on various aspects of politics. This frontally breaks with the privatization of collective life in the market and the primacy of representation as aggregation of interests under the liberal representative ontology. One may re-describe this as a form of hollowing out the Leviathan, especially its political system, turning politicians into something closer to bureaucrats now deprived from any definitive epistemic superiority. In this case, the hollowing out seems to not go in the neoliberal direction, to potentiate the market and the consuming individual, but rather a new public sphere and citizenry defined not so much by dialogue (as in the deliberative democracy model) but by collaboration. The key is not the competition or representation of interests but the federation of competences for problem solving. The wikidemocratic ontology outlined by the X Party primarily relied on the combination of a participatory and an autonomist approach to politics, which also involved an element of agonism in its frontal opposition to the political status quo.

To resume what I just exposed, I can bring back the basic scheme of political ontology that I discussed in chapter 2 and resume the political model outlined by the X Party in its discourse and practice.

³³⁴ Levi stressed the relevance of occupying the space of bipartidism and explicitly warned about “populist formulas” (Riveiro, 2014).

TABLE 15. X PARTY: POLITICAL ONTOLOGY.

Political Ontology	Subject form	Collective Form	Modes of political relation
Autonomist Participatory Antagonist	Expert citizen	Networked (expert) citizenry	Collaboration meritocracy federation of competences

5.7. Conclusion

As a conclusion, I recapitulate previous parts, essay some reflections, and prepare what comes next. As I showed in part 2, the X Party was a project deeply rooted into the 15M cycle. It crucially contributed to open a new stage of that cycle: the “electoral assault”. In part 3 I showed how the X party articulated a discourse on the 15M cycle (3.1.), a discourse on democracy (3.2.), and a discourse on itself (3.3.). I in section 3.1, I outlined its reconstruction of the cycle, which made of the party the appropriate to break the “crystal ceiling” of State power by entering the political system to “do a 15M”. In section 3.2. I showed how the party outlined an alternative model of democracy that implied several challenges to the liberal representative model, particularly to the executive and legislative branches of government. Its ideas on wikilegislation, wikigovernment and real and permanent vote (particularly, the last one, which connected back to the 15M project of democracy 4.0) outlined a form of a primarily wikidemocratic (rather than representative) politics. As shown in section 3.3., it also elaborated a discourse around its condition as a party, half anonymous communication guerrilla, half party. Both halves were defined by a method for federating competences and promoting action, rather than representing people.

In its technopolitical syntax (analyzed in part 4) it was clear the inheritance from 15M and hacktivist struggles preceding it. Interestingly, it introduced a new infrastructure into the technopolitical module of organization: co-ment, a software for moderated crowd-writing, which epitomizes the shift from the full openness of 15M into the tamed participation of the representative field.

The tension of this transition is fully present in the various practices described in part 5. In section 5.1 I described how demands for transparency were turned against it by mass media when its members (in a typical anti-representationalist gesture of

hactivism and 15M) rejected visibility and remained anonymous for several months. Much less publicized but also symptomatic was its essay with the crowd-sourcing of its political program: anticipating what may be practices of wikilegislation, it recurred to forms of moderated crowd-writing. Section 5.3. showed the internal tensions generated by the modes of application of meritocracy and do-craçy, which showed a peculiar hybrid of hactivist and party practices. Finally, in section 5.4. I recounted its innovation in the use of crowdfunding (used earlier by X.net activists to fund their 15MpaRato campaign) for its political campaign.

Part 6.1 showed how the X party, even if somehow being a case of “networked party”, had idiosyncrasies that defined it, including its emphasis on democracy

In section 6.2. I recount how its discursive and practical construction of an expert, networked citizenry into a federation of competences implies a new, technopolitical version of the participatory ideal of democracy, which challenges the liberal representative ontology, defined by the gap, frequently legitimized in terms of knowledge, between those who know (representatives) and those who do not (represented).

While discarding many characteristic practices of the camp-stage of 15M (particularly, assemblies), the party displayed many recognizable ones. The X party carried into its electoral assault many technopolitical practices defining the hactivist struggles of the previous decade, in which X.net intervened heavily, while connecting with earlier positions by DRY and the most technopolitical strands of 15M: a meritocratic and internet-centric discourse and practice combined with a radical democratic one; emphasis on expertise and problem solving over ideology; decentralized collaboration; questioning of traditional leadership, use of anonymity and collective identities, etc.

The X Party crucially opened a new stage in the 15M cycle of technopolitical reassembling of democracy, and brought to it the discourse of an alternative future, one that, after its humble results in the European Elections on May 2014, was not to be realized by the X party itself.

Chapter 6. Networking democratic cities: the rise of local “governments of change”, common digital infrastructures, and new codes of technopolitical participation.

6.1. Introduction

This chapter analyzes the technopolitics (syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) around the project Decidim.barcelona, as well as its impacts on institutional forms and political ontology. Decidim.barcelona is the digital platform for participation of the city of Barcelona, launched on the Spring of 2016. The chapter covers a period that goes from the Autumn of 2014, peak of popularity of Podemos after its success in the May 2014 elections, and the Winter of 2016, date of the participatory process for the democratic (re)design of Decidim.barcelona. Part 2 analyzes the technopolitical networks and political conditions within the 15M cycle that made possible the launch of such a platform. These conditions included 15M inspired citizen candidacies winning governments in cities such as Barcelona and Madrid in May 2015, 4 years after the peak of the movement, a victory that opened an institutional moment. The success of the “electoral assault” at the local level allowed the formation of teams of innovation in democracy within the Participation councils of big cities. These teams were composed by 15M activists and hacktivists, which found in technopolitics a key element for the realization of alter-democracy, and came to design participatory platforms such as Decidim.barcelona and Decide.madrid. This appeared as a step forward towards institutionalizing the “real democracy” reclaimed by 15M.

Part 3 maps the discourses on democracy and technopolitics around Decidim.barcelona. In this case, the role of alter-democratic motives clearly predominates over alter- or even anti-representationalist themes. Like in the cases of 15M and the X party, there appear two strands of discourse: a normative discourse towards what democracy should be, the other, prescriptive and practical, on its embodiment in the projects to get there. Part 3 moves between the micro level (texts about organization and production of the Decidim.barcelona team) and the macro level (ideas about democracy beyond representation). Section 3.1 attends to the (self-referential) discourse of technopolitical production that underlies Decidim.barcelona, driven by key notions such as “technopolitical democratization”.

Section 3.2. discusses central narratives on emerging alter-democracy and technopolitical participation, which confront two paradigms at stake: the commons government and distributed democracy aspired to by Decidim and the corporate open government model embodied in the Civiciti platform, sponsored by giant Spanish telecom Telefonica. Both of them say to come to transform the existing representative democracy, but they do so in rather different ways. Section 3.2. also outlines the differences among two 15M inspired models for technopolitical participation and alter-democracy, namely, the critical-substantivist (stronger in Barcelona, around the Decidim platform) and the proceduralist (stronger in Madrid, around Decide.madrid platform).

Part 4 explores the technopolitical syntax of Decidim. Divided in two halves, the first is focused on the politics of infrastructures, while the second attends to the infrastructures for both technology (the technopolitical production of Decidim) and politics (the technopolitical participation on Decidim). As part of the exploration of the politics of infrastructures within the Decidim.barcelona case (section 4.1.) I dig further into the contraposition of the Decidim and the Civiciti models. Then, in section 4.2.1. I analyze the organizational structures and key technological infrastructures that were deployed in the development of Decidim. Finally, in 4.2.2. I analyze some actual and forthcoming affordances of the platform, otherwise, its technopolitical syntax for alter-democracy.

Part 5 focuses on the technopolitical pragmatics (that is, key technopolitical practices) around Decidim. Section 5.1. describes some key practices of technopolitical production of the platform, which displayed a progressive process of technopolitical democratization between late 2015 and late 2016. Section 5.2. describes a participatory process in Decidim.barcelona, MetaDecidim, which serves to illustrate different aspects and challenges of technopolitical participation.

Then comes part 6. Section 6.1 describes some of the transformations in the State form that derive from Decidim.barcelona. Section 6.2 attends to the challenges to the modern liberal representative ontology coming from the processes of technopolitical production and participation associated to it.

In the conclusions, I try to outline the how Decidim.barcelona accomplishes some of the recurrent aims of the 15M cycle, how it faces old and new technopolitical and democratic challenges, and what may come next.

6.2. The case and the cycle

6.2.1. Let's hack

By the Autumn of 2014, months after the European Elections that brought Podemos to the spotlight of Spanish and European politics, the party was soaring in voting polls and media attention: the end of PP-PSOE bipartidism seemed near (Castro & Picazo, 2014). Podemos' leading figure, Pablo Iglesias, professor at the Political Science school of the Complutense University in Madrid and political media star, appeared as the representative of a "new politics". The return of representation inaugurated by the X Party was in full sway.

The weekend of October 17th and 18th was the date of the party's constituent assembly, designed and expected to be a public display of force. The party still preserved a fresh appearance in the public eye. In spite of the tensions between different sectors inside it, the hopes were many, not only among the growing rank and file, but also among many activists who had taken part in the initiatives emerged within the 15M cycle. Others were less optimistic.

A critical but hopeful position could be found in some technopolitical and hacktivist quarters. Articles such as 15M hacktivist Isaac Hacksimov's piece entitled "¿Quiénes Podemos? Nos jugamos un partido" (Who can? A party is at stake), published coinciding with Podemos' constituent assembly, questioned the "we" behind the slogan "we can" (English translation of "Podemos") and made a techno-anarchist proposal of political organization. Albeit it had no impact on debates around and within the constituent assembly, it played a relevant role in the coalescence of a technopolitical network that later came to play key roles in the democratic innovation within Participation councils of the main "cities of change". Synthetically: the writing of the article, in which I collaborated, fostered the creation of a mail thread devoted to criticisms and alternatives to the positions of Podemos's leadership on internal organization of the party, and broader democracy issues. The thread included 15M activists such as Miguel Arana (at the time key member of the Podemos Participation Team, who later came to be part of the core of the Participation Council of the city of Madrid) and Xabier Barandiaran (later on appointed Chief of Research, Development and Innovation in Democracy of the Participation Council of Barcelona). The thread evolved into the creation of a mailing list, called "Panic", in November of that same

year, and a Telegram³³⁵ group, called Hackeemos³³⁶ (Let's Hack), on November 3rd.

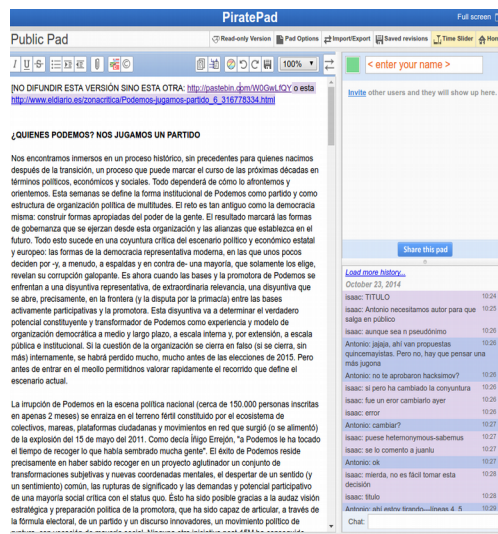


FIGURE 43. TITANPAD FOR THE TEXT "WHO CAN?"

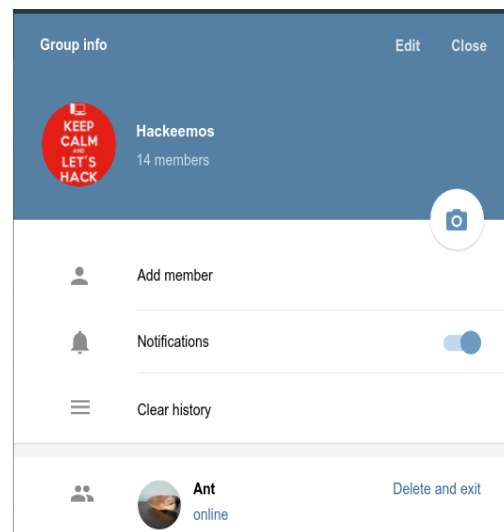


FIGURE 44. HACKEEMOS: TELEGRAM

On top of Barandiaran and Arana, these groups involved Pablo Soto, hacktivist and 15M activist, who on May 2015 became Participation Councilor of the city of Madrid. As in the case of the X party, the connection to 15M and to the 15M cycle of the people who came to be heads of departments of innovation in democracy of key Spanish cities, who coordinated the development of new participatory platforms, was clear.

6.2.1.1. Let's win

The general outlines of how Soto, Barandiaran and Arana, 15M activists, came to occupy those roles in municipal institutions within the two biggest cities in Spain is a process that deserves at least a note here. It involves some of the central landmarks of the 15M cycle of contention in political terms. It begins with the formation of two citizen platforms: Guanyem Barcelona (Let's Win Barcelona) and Ganemos Madrid (Let's Win Madrid), which later became Barcelona en Comú³³⁷ (Barcelona in Common) and Ahora Madrid (Madrid Now) respectively. These initiatives followed the opening of the “electoral assault” by the X Party and Podemos; differently from them, they did so with a “confluence” model that incorporated new and old actors in

³³⁵ Telegram is an instant messaging application.

³³⁶ The name followed the “we” logic of Podemos (we can) and Ganemos (Let's win).

³³⁷ The confluence candidacy was initially named “Guanyem Barcelona”, but on February 10th it officially changed its name to “Barcelona en Comú”. An individual had registered the name “Guanyem Barcelona” on August 26th, 2014, blocking the use by the confluence, and the proceedings of the Ministry of Home Affairs did not conclude in time for the candidacy to take it back in time for the May 2015 elections, in what Colau considered a sabotage by the Spanish elites (Europa Press, 2015).

the field of left politics.

On May 24th, 2015, Barcelona en Comú (from now on BeC) won the local elections of Barcelona earning 11 out of the 41 seats of the city council. PAH spokesperson and 15M activist Ada Colau was declared Major on June 12th. BeC was mostly composed by young formations lacking an established structure, but it was able to win the local elections of Barcelona with a participatorily written and ratified political program³³⁸. Surely, technopolitical innovations played a role in it³³⁹, as they probably did in the case of Madrid³⁴⁰. Ahora Madrid came second in the local elections, winning 20 out of the 57 seven seats in the local council, with the Popular Party winning 21. Ahora Madrid got an agreement with the Socialist party to invest its candidate, Manuela Carmena, as Madrid's new major.

With or without pacts, similar confluence candidacies won the governments of relevant cities such as Zaragoza, Valencia, Cádiz, A Coruña, Santiago de Compostela, or Iruña/Pamplona. This gave way to a municipalist wave on several fronts. Surely in that of participation.

6.2.1.2. From hacking Podemos to hacking government

As the closing process of Podemos around a classical populist and hyper-leadership structure accelerated (Sáenz de Ugarte, 2014) and the strength of the municipal initiatives grew, the attention of most members of the Hackemos group progressively shifted from the former to the latter³⁴¹. By March 2015 a new affinity

³³⁸ The collaborative writing and validation of Guanyem Barcelona's ethical code used dispositives designed by 15M technopolitical activists and hackers (as explained in Toret, Aragón & Calleja-Lopez, 2014). Some of them, such as Javier Toret, were first involved in DRY and 15M, then on the X Party; others, such as Andrés Pereira, came later to design Decidim.barcelona.

³³⁹ From a technopolitical standpoint, it is worth noticing the symbiotic relation on social media between its key spokesperson, activist Ada Colau, the party, and the various communities composing its technopolitical networks or "digital guerrilla" (in the words of Sandiumenge, 2015b). As analyzed by Aragón et al. (2016). The communication networks of BeC were divided in two big sub-networks: Colau's and the party's Twitter profiles built a highly centralized communication network around them (which, interestingly, included the profiles of Ahora Madrid and Ahora Podemos), composing what has been defined as the "party" network or "front-end" of the BeC digital communication network; connected to it via bridges such as 15M activist Toret's twitter profile, a decentralized network of networks and communities emerged around the Twitter profiles of BeC's communication team, constituting the "movement" network or digital "back end" of the BeC digital communication network. The performative symbiosis of this double end (a terminology used by Toret, 2015), between a party or front-end, centralized sub-network, and a movement or back-end, decentralized one, may well have been one of the bases of the preeminence of this young and poorly funded citizen candidacy on a relevant social media such as Twitter throughout the campaign.

³⁴⁰ Like in the case of Barcelona en Comú, they resorted to social media in intensive and innovative ways during the campaign for the municipal elections. Particularly, the art and social media campaign "Madrid con Manuela" (Madrid with Manuela) represented a landmark of multitudinous, creative, technopolitical practice after 15M, as described by Gutiérrez (2015).

³⁴¹ Initiatives by other collectives to change Podemos from within and without, such as Occupy Podemos, launched on November 2014, slowly lost traction in 2015. Their profile can still be found at

group, broader than Hackemos but with a similar composition and interests, was created on Telegram. It was called Demons and involved hackers, academics, and activists, some of which later became Participation counselors or advisors of cities such as Zaragoza, Barcelona, A Coruña or Madrid, frequently. The paradigm on this regard was anti-Sinde law hacktivist, and 15M activist, Pablo Soto, who came to be Madrid's "hacker councilor" (or "concehack", a wordplay with the Spanish term for municipal councilor, "concejal").

Soon after forming the government cabinets in the summer of 2015, it was confirmed that two Demons members, Soto in Madrid, and Gala Pin in Barcelona, would be in charge of Participation. The expectations were high.

6.2.1.3. On the conditions of technopolitical production: a tale of two cities

If the trajectories of Barcelona en Comú and Ahora Madrid were close during the "electoral assault" represented by the local elections, they remained connected as this gave way to an "institutional assault" after May 25th: municipal institutions were to be both governed and transformed. In terms of democracy and technopolitics, the trajectories of different cities partially approached or diverged in the following year and a half as a result of factors such as the position, vision and power of Demons members within their municipalities. At this stage of the 15M cycle, technopolitical becomings came more closely associated with institutional power.

With a clear plan and determination, Soto began to work from day one on a "Citizen Participation and Open Government Application" named "Consul"³⁴², having 15M activists Miguel Arana and Yago Bermejo, founders of the democratic software organization Labodemo³⁴³, as his direct collaborators, with a group of programmers under their command. As a result, they had their digital democracy platform Decide.madrid operative on September 7th, 2015, less than three months after Ahora Madrid's government official investiture.

Differently, in Barcelona, Gala Pin charged with both Participation and the Ciutat Vella District, had to devote much of her work to District issues. With delays directly related to political and institutional conditions, it was only on April 2016 that Xabier

<https://twitter.com/occupypodemom>. Accessed on January 15th, 2016.

³⁴² The developments of Consul in the last year are available at the open software repository Github: <https://github.com/consul/consul>. Accessed on January 15th, 2017.

³⁴³ "Labodemo (abbreviation of Democratic Laboratory) is a tool for change for the new democracy that wait for us in the XXIst century. Our goal is to open up institutions and organizations in order to create a more participatory and democratic world". This text and more information can be retrieved at www.labodemo.net/es/acerca-de-labodemo/. Accessed on January 13th, 2017.

Barandiaran (professor at the Basque Country university, hacktivist and 15M activist) arrived in the city to coordinate a network that involved Arnau Monterde and myself (members of the Networks, Movements, and Technopolitics research group, based at the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute of the Open University of Catalonia), as well as Andrés Pereira (from the web development association Alabs³⁴⁴ and Codegram (a young startup company of a nearby city³⁴⁵).

Except for Barandiaran, the team had been formally collaborating with the city council since the Autumn of 2015, working on the production of Decidim.barcelona. Decidim was launched on February 1st 2016, as a fork of Madrid's Consul code. In the process, Pereira, Barandiaran, Monterde and myself, along with Pablo Aragón (15M activist and data researcher) and Javier Toret (DRY, 15M, and X Party participant and collaborator at NMT) had created to form a Telegram group named "Compas"³⁴⁶, which is referred to in this chapter.

Similar processes of construction of development teams and digital platforms of participation have taken place in other "cities of change" in 2015. Frequently, but not always, these platforms have been based on the Consul code³⁴⁷. Most of the groups behind those deployments were coordinated by, or involved, earlier 15M activists and Demons members.

On May 2016, during an event on "Democratic Cities"³⁴⁸, the networks around Demons coalesced into "Democomunes: red de comunes para la democracia" (Democommons: network of commons for democracy).

³⁴⁴ Alabs is a web development association, focused on free software and politically progressive projects. More information can be found at <https://alabs.org/>. Accessed on January 15th, 2017.

³⁴⁵ Codegram is a startup company devoted to web consultancy and development, and more, including building a Ruby community in the Barcelona area www.codegram.com/about-us. Accessed on January 16th.

³⁴⁶ "Compas" means "fellows" in Spanish, and was frequently used in 15M context.

³⁴⁷ The code can be accessed at <https://github.com/consul/consul>. Accessed on January 5th, 2017.

³⁴⁸ This event was organized as a closure to the European project D-cent, oriented towards the development of digital tools for democracy and economic empowerment. More information on the open workshops and the Democratic Cities event can be found here: www.democratic-cities.cc/sessions/creando-una-red-de-comunes-democraticos/. Accessed on January 20th, 2017.

6.2.2. Teasing out the technopolitical threads of the chapter

In order to understand the technopolitics of democracy at this stage of the 15M cycle, the chapter focuses on three collective assemblages and three general matters of concern connected to them.

The first of those collective assemblages is composed by Compas (which could be understood as the Barcelona node of the Democomunes network) and the Office for Research, Development and Innovation in Democracy (from now on abbreviated “ORDID”), both based in Barcelona; the second, which appears only in the background, is the Democomunes network (which includes participation teams similar to Compas or the ORDID in other big cities, such as Madrid); the third is the active citizenry who have participated in the first processes mediated by Decidim.barcelona.

When it comes to matters of concern, the first is networks of technopolitical production (in this case, the ones around Decidim.barcelona): their discourses, practices, infrastructures, organizational structures, and governance. The second is technopolitical participation or multitudinous technopolitical participation, and has to do with models and experiences of multitudinous digital and technopolitical democracy in the city of Barcelona. The point in this case is to take a brief look at the some of the city participatory processes that have taken place around Decidim.barcelona. I connect these with a third matter of concern, namely, broader discourses around common government and distributed democracy, and how this model opposes to others such as the standard, liberal open government model or the continuous democracy idea advocated by Civiciti.

In synthesis, three key actors of the 15M cycle: Compas, democomunes, and active citizenry. And three issues: production, participation, and democracy in a broader sense. These are the two triads to be attended at this stage of the 15M cycle, probably the one in which the question of technopolitics has gained as much centrality as the one of democracy. The institutionalization of the discourses (ideas, demands, etc.) and practices reaches here a step further, deeper into the structures of the State than what 15M or the X Party (or even Podemos) had been able to reach, posing the practical problem of the assault and transformation of institutions. Interestingly, far from getting farther from civil society into the State, the idea behind Decidim.barcelona has been to erase the modern walls separating the two neatly. These are, even if not exclusively, from the 15M cycle perspective, the walls of

representation.

6.3. Semantics/discourses

After this simplified reconstruction of the becoming of various 15M networks working on democracy and technopolitics and their main matters of concern, I attend to the discourses on technologies, democracy, and their relationships, that they have produced. First (section 3.1.), attention is put on discourses on technopolitical production. If 15M defined its own modes of organization and aimed to prefigure in them the democracy to come, and the X Party essayed internally a model of federation of competences and participation that had its correlate in the broader political field, Compas and the ORDID have also generated narratives around their own functioning that try to prefigure and figure out how technopolitical aspects of democracy could work. Then (section 3.2.) I look at their discourses around Decidim.barcelona both on technologically mediated participation as well as around democracy in a broader sense. First (3.2.1.) attention is devoted to some points on participation in Decidim.barcelona. Then (3.2.2.), the alternative model of “continuous” democracy advocated by the corporation Open Seneca is outlined. Finally (3.2.3.), the differences between the critical substantivist approach tied to the idea of a distributed democracy and the positivist proceduralist one tied to the open government model in Madrid are discussed. This last point is particularly relevant, since it points to two different models of democracy within technopolitical networks connected to 15M at this stage of the cycle. As shown in part 5, this has been connected to differences in practice too.

6.3.1. Discourses of technopolitical production

6.3.1.1. From Compas to MetaDecidim: technoacracy, technopolitical democratization and participatory commons

Compas has no public interface³⁴⁹. The group exists only for the few people who belong to or know about it, which overlap for the most part. It is what I may call a “group of technopolitical affinity”. Its members share projects and general discursive coordinates on issues intermingling politics and technology, as well as a personal affinity tied to the previous two aspects. The affinity in terms of vision is especially tight among the four of us who co-work at the ORDID: Xabier, Andrés, Arnau, and myself. For Barandiaran, the group is a “hacker collective, technopolitical ninja team,

³⁴⁹ It has no external, discursive collective identity: no web, no Twitter, no Facebook account, nor anything of the sort.

and psychotherapy group, all-in-one”.



FIGURE 46. COMPAS INFORMAL LOGO.

Compas' logo, reminiscent of the anarchist "A" symbol, is a multi-layered semiotic game implicitly connecting technology, participation, commons, and anarchy³⁵⁰, that appropriately symbolizes what may be defined as "technoacracry". A technoacrat could be defined as an expert or technical practitioner in a given field (particularly, that of formal politics) that actively works to subvert the hierarchies and forms of power operating in that field and, potentially, others, by producing and enacting new mediators for, and forms of, collective organization and decision making.

Compas's technoacracry is deeply rooted within the current state of the 15M cycle. It roots itself in the institutional assault, and is oriented to put the conditions for a "distributed seizure of power" tied to, if not identified with, its radical redistribution³⁵¹. If Podemos represented a populist assault to the heavens (as formulated by Iglesias in his speech at Vistalegre on October 2014) by a few avantgarde leaders, Compas' vision is that of a self-governed multitude retaking and remaking State institutions

³⁵⁰ In its original shape, this figure, reconfigurable and available online under a creative commons license, displays a Compass. The first visual wordplay is clear: the Compass in the figure (in Spanish, "Compas") stands for "Compas", which, as mentioned above, means "fellows" in Spanish. Furthermore, it can also function as an acronym for "COMunes PArticipativoS" (participatory commons). Furthermore, by moving the angular shape of the Compass downwards, an "A" emerges that evokes the traditional anarchist sign, an association aided by the black and white of the design. This suggests the affinity of the core group with the tradition of anarchism in a city like Barcelona. In a more complex way, the figure of the Compass gives to it a "technomasonic" edge (as we commented while having lunch on the day we began to internally use the logo), and freely associates it to the mathematics of coding, one of the main tasks of the group. The figure may also resemble the multi-stable image of a person from a frontal and a side- perspective, waving an arm.

³⁵¹ Ideas around democratization and participation are connected to a crucial discursive tenet for the group: to nurture a radical redistribution of power. In this light, and beyond the idea of "taking power for redistributing it", suggested by Toret (2014) during a public talk and others later on (Castro et al., 2016), for Barandiaran political participation should be thought as a "distributed seizure of power" (as he responded to Toret after his talk).

and the city.

One may say technoacrats aim to end with, to be the end of, technocrats. Not of technicians, but of technicians as ultimate decision makers. This includes to abolish themselves as a closed group of political planners centralizing decision making on technical public issues. The ORDID documents have as a key goal to democratize, on the one hand, political decision making (this is a key task of Decidim.barcelona) and, on the other, the products and the very task of democratic innovation. Much of Compas' and ORDID's work is oriented to produce the legal, organizational, discursive and technological codes (what may be called "technopolitical codes") necessary for such a democratization to happen.

This is discursively clear in a variety of ORDID texts, particularly around MetaDecidim. MetaDecidim is a space in Decidim.barcelona where processes to "participatorily redesign" Decidim.barcelona will take place periodically. The first was initiated on November 2016. The process is analyzed in section 5.2. As defined in the "Decidim Decalogue", which I heavily contributed to write down³⁵²

"MetaDecidim is a place to decide the democracy we want. MetaDecidim is an open space and process to decide how we decide, a place enabled in Decidim.barcelona (and face to face events) for the citizenry to build, watch over and improve the platform. Code is law, it defines what can or cannot be done in a concrete digital space, and Decidim's is decided by everyone. MetaDecidim also aspires to be a community and a production ecosystem, as well as a lobby, able to define and reclaim new standards of democratic quality. A community that takes care of Decidim.barcelona. Because democracy is more if we build it together."

The ideas behind this and other ORDID texts cannot be understood without the practices and discourses of the technopolitical cycle opened in 2011. They tie the discursive fabric of Decidim.barcelona to hacktivism, 15M activism and the institutional assault. However, differently from earlier initiatives, the connection between democracy and technology is brought to the center of the discourse, which

³⁵² In terms of internal, discursive interpretation, the difference between Compas and the ORDID and the personnel associated to the latter can be synthesized in a comment by Barandiaran in Telegram indicating that "we are core ninja, but we begin to have an army". The former has its own fight tactics, codes, practices, oaths, aims, visions, experiences, skills, and resources. While the ninja image evokes a silent, fast, artsy, flexible, informal, underground collective, the army still maintains a public form, hierarchy, pay-per-work, formality, duty, bigger numbers, brute force, material resources, etc.

was not the case neither in 15M nor in the X Party, where this link remained under-discussed (with the exception of discussions around n-1).

The text outlines what may be defined as the “spiral of technopolitical democratization”: a recursive, growing loop of deployment of technology and technologically mediated processes for furthering political democratization (which may be considered the political reading of technopolitical democratization) tied to the articulation of processes of democratization of technology (which may be labelled as its technological reading). Decidim is presented as a technology for the democratization of democracy, bringing it beyond the liberal representative model, MetaDecidim is a space and process for democratizing technology (concretely, Decidim.barcelona) bringing it beyond the technocratic model of design, development and management.

The text speaks of a code and a community open to anyone and everyone, rather than closed to most, as both private and public-technocratic projects are, either in their production, their management, or their profits. MetaDecidim would thereby be a step towards technoacraçy, towards the democratization of technology and technological innovation. Furthermore, by doing so, MetaDecidim would become an open community that decides what democracy should be and how to get there by redesigning a power mediator such as Decidim. These are the coordinates of the normative discursive around MetaDecidim.

6.3.2. Discourses on technopolitical participation and alter-democracy

6.3.2.1. Decidim.barcelona: digital infrastructures for alter-democracy

At this stage of the 15M cycle, discourses on participation and democracy become connected to institutions, generating both new political opportunities and tensions. Furthermore, as I noticed, technologies move to the center of the discussion. They become a central source of discourse on the new forms of democracy. I will begin with the Decidim.barcelona web, whose texts are indicative of the ORDID discourse on democracy in relation to Decidim.barcelona³⁵³.

³⁵³ I take texts from Decidim.barcelona as of December 15th, 2016.



FIGURE 47. DECIDIM.BARCELONA HOMEPAGE.

TEXT: "WE DECIDE/LET'S DECIDE THE CITY WE WANT".

The biggest caption on the web homepage says “Let's decide the Barcelona we want”. The sentence clearly connects with the calls “let's win” of the citizen candidacies or the “let's hack” of the technopolitical networks mentioned in Part 2. It is an interpellation to the citizenry to decide how it wants things to work, as Miguel Arana reclaimed five years earlier (see Chapter 1). Furthermore, it is formulated from a citizen viewpoint, as citizenry interpellating citizenry, a “we” that is to answer and constitute itself in the call³⁵⁴. In this the call follows the X party approach of appealing to the “citizenry” status of the people behind the initiative, to deny the neat separation that the representation system imposes between institutions (be it parties or municipal offices) and their constituents. With Decidim this aims to go beyond discourse and semantics, and be translated infrastructurally, into a new technopolitical syntax of participation.

The discourse at the website Decidim.barcelona thereby institutionalizes the 15M cycle's discourse of democracy (“real democracy”, in the DRY case, and “democracy, period”, in the X Party case). If one of the initial demands of Nolesvotes and 15M was to bring about a more real democracy, to transform institutions and

³⁵⁴ In the Catalan context, it also reverberates with the debates around the “right to decide” of Catalonia concerning its political relation with Spain. The centrality and double sense of “Decidim” is inscribed in the very name and URL of the platform “Decidim.barcelona”, which can be translated as either “let's decide Barcelona” or as “we decide Barcelona”. The “we” and the “decision” are put at the center of the discourse around the platform, and is turned into the very core of its linguistic substance: its name.

make them closer to the people, Decidim.barcelona tries to embody and achieve that in the institutional sphere. In the 15M fashion, it aims to open up public institutions and their very “code” to participation (open source democracy, in terms of Rushkoff, 2003, used by the Deputy Mayor to describe the platform, Asens, 2016).

As synthesis of this, in the Decidim Decalogue, it is stated that “Decidim is a political network for a transparent, multi-mode, multitudinous, and multi-scale participation”. Much of what Decidim.barcelona is expected to do is synthesized in this sentence. Its political function is to serve as a platform for collective intervention into public policies, from legislation to action, from budgets to government agendas. But beyond this, Decidim aims to be a reconfigurable software enabling collective self-organization, decision making and action, as well as empowerment, across the social field. Otherwise, a digital infrastructure for alter-democratic governance within and beyond the municipal government. A technopolitical version of the participatory democracy, and a new version of the autonomist democracy model (see chapter 2).

6.3.2.2. *Civici: the corporate open government model of technopolitical participation*

Since my focus here lies with projects within what I have called “the 15M cycle of technopolitical reassembling of democracy”, I cannot devote much time to present and study the central, corporate alternative to the Decidim model, Civici. Some comments are in order, nevertheless.

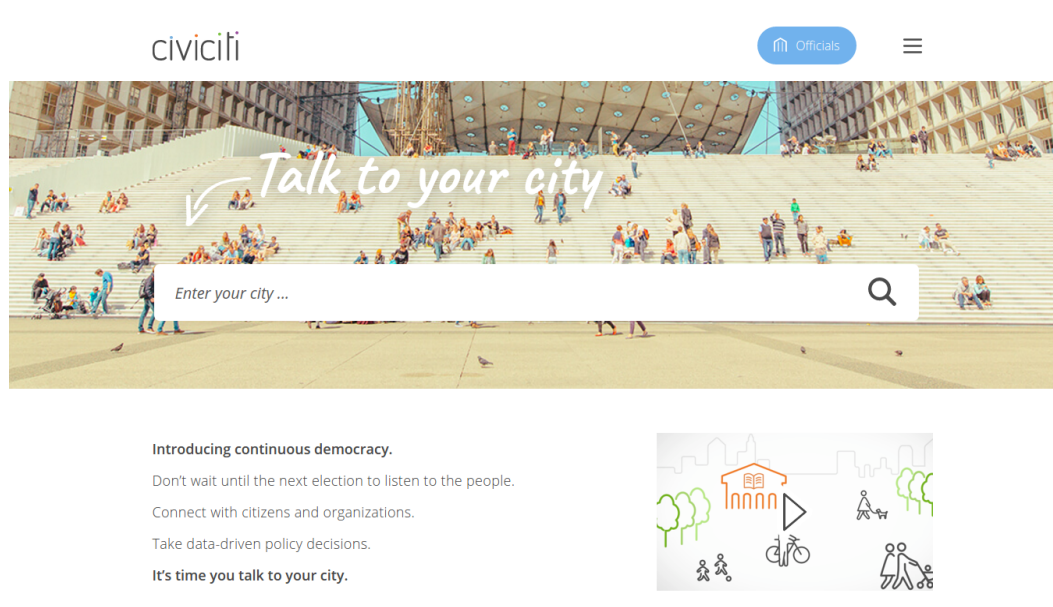


FIGURE 48. CIVICITI HOMEPAGE.

As I mentioned, Civici is a platform developed by the company Open Seneca,

funded by Telefonica and ScytI. Civiciti presents itself as a “platform for continuous democracy”. What this means is clarified by its official website³⁵⁵ self-description:

“We help citizens, public administrations and organisations around the world discover, discuss and decide on the issues they care about.

In the age of Facebook and Twitter, citizens don't want to wait four years to give their leaders thumbs up or thumbs down: they want their voices heard before, during and after elections. At the same time, public administrations want to be more attentive to their citizens' needs by being more transparent, accessible and inclusive [...] Civiciti is an online community to connect local governments with their citizens. We provide a neutral, secure and independent platform for public participation and continuous democracy [...] Civiciti is about more than just your city: it's a network of communities all around the globe”

This is a neat synthesis of the Civiciti approach, which I define as a “corporate open government model”. In the text just cited, the three cornerstones of open government (Lathrop & Ruma, 2010), namely, transparency, participation, and horizontal networked collaboration (between citizenry and government and within government itself) are discursively present. The “corporate” adjective serves to stress the production, property and management model behind this infrastructure, and is to be distinguished from “common” or “public-common” models. I further explore this distinction in section 4.1.2.

To begin to understand its main differences with the Decidim approach, it is enough to look at the image above, which presents its main website. The text is rhetorically oriented towards city governors: “don't wait till the next election to listen to the people”. Compare this with the leitmotiv in the Decidim platform, which is clearly directed to the people and formulated from within it: “let's decide the city we want”. The Civiciti text clearly shows its dependence of a representative model of digital democracy, even if it is combined with aspects of a participatory (or, rather, plebiscitarian) model.

The formula “continuous democracy”, taken from Rodotà (1997), is the word of choice to define a democracy open to people's intervention in “real time”. This is a feature shared by Decidim. Nevertheless, the discursive differences appear quickly:

³⁵⁵ The can be accessed at <https://www.civiciti.com/home>. Accessed on January 20th, 2017.

citizens are presented as giving “thumbs up or thumbs down” to their “leaders”. The image of the “thumb” connects with the “appellative politics” typical of clicktivism or what we may call “click-participation”. Furthermore, the reference to leaders confirms the primacy of the representative model, but with a technoplebiscitarian turn: the language in the text substitutes “representatives” with “leaders” which seems to stress the authority of the latter. The text also includes the classical references to “transparency” in open government discourses, which fit neatly with traditional liberal representative democracy.

In synthesis, coming back to the heading of the Civicit platform and recurring to a wordplay, I may say the difference in vision between Civicit and Decidim is between a liberal representative call to “leaders” to “talk to your city”³⁵⁶ and a participatory-autonomist call by the citizenry to the citizenry to decide and take the city³⁵⁷ (and, as we see in MetaDecidim, to become recursive). Decidim’s call roots itself into the 15M cycle, and some of implications of this can be seen in the differences in semantics just noticed, as well as in syntax and pragmatics.

6.3.2.3. Democomunes: two 15M models of technology and democracy (critical substantivists vs positivist proceduralists)

However, the unfolding of the 15M cycle has not been univocal, as if it had a necessary direction and a unitary reading. By late 2016 it was possible to find clear differences in views of both technologies and democracy within 15M inspired projects themselves. Two (at least, two) clearly differentiable positions on this matter could be found within the Democomunes network. Simplifying the various nuances, I will divide the discursive field in two: the position predominant in Madrid, especially in the discourses of Miguel Arana and Yago Bermejo, founders of Labodemo, and the predominant position in Barcelona, in the discourses of the Decidim team.

Analyzing different texts of their website and exchanges within the Demons and the Democomunes telegram groups, it seems appropriate to suggest such a distance. Interventions by Yago Bermejo in a discussion on technology and democracy in the Demons telegram group illustrates Madrid’s position: “a tool requires a user. Which is the population. And nobody says that this participation driver begins to walk with a tool alone. But I believe that something like Consul is part of the basic kit.” Later in

³⁵⁶ The use of the pronoun “your” makes the sentence especially problematic from a political viewpoint after 15M and the municipalism of change.

³⁵⁷ As suggested by Javier Toret, “take the city” seems a logical discursive and practical step to pose in 2016 for actors within the 15M cycle of contention, after taking the streets, digital networks and the squares, in 2011, the electoral space in 2014, and municipal institutions in the Spring of 2015.

the conversation, he added: “when I think in “population” I think of this 1-2% (open to anyone). The participative population (dozens of thousands of people) representing the whole and substituting representatives.”

This is obviously not a theoretical elaboration, and yet, it is indicative. There appear the generic “people” or “participative population” (a term frequently used by Bermejo that can be found in Labodemo’s website³⁵⁸ too), the “tool” (a software such as Consul) and the digital processes in which the former use the later for deliberation, decision making, etc.

There are three key discursive points that are to be attended and that distinguish this view from the approach of the Decidim team in Barcelona: the first is an approach to participation defined by a typically modern view of the social, which recurs to notions such as “population”, tied to the emergence of statistics and State census (Porter, 1996), as well as to the study of population dynamics by mathematical biology in the XVIII century. The second is the view of participation technologies as “tools”, which connects to the instrumentalist view of technology as a decontextualized, value-neutral, transparent and controllable mean. The third, probably the most crucial one, partly connected to the second point, is the focus on democratic procedures over its conditions, principles or results. As Arana already pointed out in his interview for 15M.cc back in 2011,

“We could decide that what we want is to put a tax to transactions, that we want to rise up the basic income, that we want to do something with renewable energies... that, for me, is a step afterwards. Because they are concrete victories that are lost as soon as they are gained. I believe we should focus on the essential: that they stop deciding for us, that people begin to be the ones who decide how they want the world to work”.

These points: populationism (rather than populism as defined in chapter 2), instrumentalism, and proceduralism are connected to the Open Government model to which the Decide.madrid project abides to. An open government model that in Decide.madrid is defined by “participation, transparency, and open data”.

An alternative narrative to these four points can be found in texts by the Decidim

³⁵⁸ These terms can also be found at Labodemo’s website www.labodemo.net/what-do-we-do/. Accessed on January 15th, 2017.

team. I will take the question of the subject of participation first. As noted by Barandiaran in response to Yago Bermejo on the Demons group:

“for me the problem here is the abstraction “the population”. That population is not a subject, it is a statistical mass. There always exists an organic organization of that “population”, even in 15M, what there is a multi-scale structure, inter-communitarian, the social structured in multiple layers and collectivities. There wouldn't have been 15M (in Madrid, for instance) without the interconnection between already existing communities such as Patio Maravillas, DRY, neighborhood assemblies, etc. It is not true that there exists “the population” and “a tool” and that such a relation is enough for articulating a democracy. It is necessary to recognize and allow the community and mesoscopic articulation of the social (nor micro nor macro). In that, right now, I believe the difference between Decidim.barcelona and Decide.madrid is important, and it will be even more so as the development plans grow further apart”.

If that leaves clear the differences when it comes to the ways of thinking about the subject of participation, namely, a discourse that thinks in terms of populations against one that thinks in terms of multitudes (as exposed in Monterde et al., 2015 and suggested above, when discussing 15M's identity), a similar difference (already insinuated in Barandiaran's quote above), has to do with the view of technologies. Contrary to Bermejo's view of them as “tools”, the Decidim Decalogue notes:

“Decidim is not a digital tool, it is the seed of a new type of democratic institution, a technopolitical infrastructure of the democracy of the future, a space of construction and conflict, a community and a growing ecosystem of participation”

Surely the technopolitical approach at the Decidim team results from a critical reading (by that I understand the tradition of political philosophy and philosophy of technology from Marx to Langdon Winner) of both politics, the social, and technology. That is a key difference with the Madrid group.

To close this portrayal of differences within two technopolitical teams within the 15M cycle, it is worth to dig into the idea of alter-democracy proposed by the ORDID. It appears not only as an alternative to representative democracy but also to both the corporate open government model of Civicitas as well as to the “technoproceduralist”

open government paradigm in Madrid. It outlines a position may be defined as “technosubstantivist”, and is tied to what may be defined as a “distributed and augmented democracy” model. Here I quote the ORDID’s Development Strategic plan at length, since the text outlines many of the keys of this alter-democratic model:

“according to this model [open government], democratic institutions and processes must be transformed in order to increase their level of transparency, participation, and horizontal networked collaboration, internally as well as in relation to the citizenry (Lathrop & Ruma, 2010). However, as it already happened in the debate between Richard Stallman and Eric S. Raymond around the paradigms of development of free software (Kelty, 2008), the open source model is compatible with neoliberal modes of production, management, and appropriation of democratic infrastructures. [...] in its reduced version (the most extended one), the Open Government model ends up confused with and reduced to transparency policies [...] the paradigm of Open Government is compatible with a more efficient, sustainable and, on that regard, perfected neoliberal system, albeit equally unequal in economic, political, symbolic, cultural or other terms.

Democracy is not only a matter of forms of government. As noticed by Rosanvallon (2008), in a deeper sense “democracy” names *a civic activity, a regime, a form of society, and a mode of government*. An active and distributed democracy, that supports itself on ICTs and the practices associated to them in order to potentiate and innovate in their different dimensions (direct, deliberative, etc., Pindado, 2012), that extends these practices to a growing number of social spheres (including the design and management of technologies themselves, thereby democratizing the “second constitution” of society), is also an “augmented” democracy”. Democracy today implies a critical technopolitics and a continuous innovation, in a public-common key, as conditions for its deepening and widening. The Open Government paradigm, especially when it leans on services from big corporations, is clearly insufficient on this regard.”

The document goes further, stating that the model of a distributed democracy

[...] is based on a set of institutional actions explicitly oriented to redistribute the economic, political, symbolic and cultural capitals (otherwise, a transformation of the

power relationships) in the city (Castro et al., 2016). This model leans on the coproduction of public policies (articulated through participatory organs and processes oriented to share public power), community strengthening (embodied in public-communitarian action, which implies the transfer of public power to common spaces, but without reducing the public contribution of resources) and citizen control (which makes use of mechanisms such as recalls or transparency laws in order to control public power).”

The discourse in Madrid and Barcelona holds many differences: a different view of the subject (population vs multitude), technologies (instrumentalism vs criticism), the core (proceduralism vs substantivism), and the general model of democracy. There is a model of direct digital democracy and open government and one of distributed and augmented democracy as well as (what I may call) common government. While the former connects with the idea of a participatory population involved in democratic procedures, the latter is tied to the discourse of a recursive multitude democratizing the material conditions of society, under a critical pro-commons view³⁵⁹, starting with the infrastructures of democracy themselves.

The views of both technology and society in Madrid were inspired by modern positions: social and technological progressive positivism. This implies a view of the social and technological fields as somehow pacified, value-neutral and intelligible realities. An updated version of the Enlightenment’s optimist views of technology (Mitcham, 1994). In Barcelona, the views drew much more from critical theories of both technology and society, from Marx to Langdon Winner. One may say Decidim is, very explicitly, a case of applied, critical, philosophy of technology. A critical progressivism that considers the social and technology as fields of political and ontological, value-laden construction and conflict (what Papadopoulos 2011 defines as “grounded”).

These differences between Madrid and Barcelona, though, grow on the basis of a common allegiance to the main 15M discourses and practices.

³⁵⁹ Here I use the formula “common” rather than “commons” to: 1- emphasize its critical approach to many existing economic practices, which is not necessarily present in discourses and practices of the “commons” literature (Laval & Dardot, 2014); 2-underline the centrality of “common people” in it and separate it from the usually economic-centric discourse around the commons; 3-connect it with the emerging discourse around “the common” in initiatives such as Barcelona en Comu.

6.4. Syntax/(Infra)structures

All the cases analyzed in this dissertation, Decidim is the best example of the complex connection between technopolitics and democracy. For this reason, unlike in the previous two cases, I carry on a full syntactic analysis: the first half of this part is devoted to the analysis of the politics of infrastructures (or technologies); the second, to (infra)structures (or technologies) for politics (otherwise, some of its key affordances and performances). The first half (4.1.) explores in some detail some of the comments on part 3 on Decidim.barcelona as a public-commons infrastructure for democracy, and compares it to the proprietary model of Civiciti, showing key aspects of technopolitical contention at this stage of the 15M cycle. This contraposition both repeats and variates the contraposition between autonomist and corporate social networks back in 2011 (as analyzed in chapter 4).

The second half (4.2.) describes the technopolitical syntax of Decidim as infrastructure for technopolitical participation (connecting to discourses in section 3.2. and the practices described in section 5.2.).

6.4.1. Politics of infrastructures: Decidim.barcelona, Decide.madrid, and Civiciti

6.4.1.1. *Decidim.barcelona: public-common political networks for democracy*

The politics of Decidim.barcelona has already been partially indicated in section 3.1. It has multiple facets, which I try to briefly synthesize here. In a sentence, Decidim is a political network developed as a free software project, a publicly funded infrastructure and a commons-based (participatorily designed and managed) technology, that aspires to be a model and source code for similar platforms oriented to potentiate alter-democracy.

In a tv talk, Barandiaran (2016b) presented Decidim as a political network, to be distinguished from the existing social networks, such as Facebook or n-1 itself. In the latter, the forms of association are broader, in the corporate case, usually of either individual or interindividual character, with a clear nexus to entertainment, commodification and prosumption processes (consumption of products and of other users' content) usually of apolitical nature. Differently, according to the Decidim Decalogue, political networks built on and around Decidim would have the "political bond", collaboration and collective decision making on the common good as their central purposes. This difference outlines a displacement from the more diffuse social sphere in 15M towards a new landscape of clearly political associations in the

institutional one. As suggested by Barandiaran in that same interview, while Facebook is a book of faces with the self at the center, platforms such as Decidim.barcelona and Decide.madrid serve to decide in common.

Furthermore, Decidim is a publicly funded digital infrastructure. It is developed as a free software project, which means its code is freely accessible, modifiable, shareable, and reusable, even more so under the new modular development model (Pereira & Blanco, 2016) that will make it even more adaptable to other social settings and institutions. But the Decidim model goes much further than the open source or even the free software models. Thanks to MetaDecidim, it will be participatorily designed and managed. By opening its features to citizen redesign, the platform is becoming an experiment in democratization of technology. Furthermore, this implies to democratize the design of the participation processes running on it too (how this may work is described in section 4.2. below). With public funding but participatory design and management, Decidim is called to be an experiment of a new model of democratic, public-common infrastructure. This is a form of technopolitical commoning that moves from a free software model (usually driven by elitist ideas of meritocracy) to one of democratic software, in the double sense of its shape being decided by anyone and everyone (and their needs, regardless of expertise) and by being software for democracy.

This view connects with the participatory politics of technoscience presented by Papadopoulos (2011), nevertheless, in its connections to critical discourses around a distributed democracy and the commons it seems to point towards autonomist alter-ontologies. If the Lorea networks and n-1 aimed to be social networks of and for the people, Decidim aims to be a political network of, by, and for the multitude: the basis for a recursive and augmented democracy. The combination of the characteristics enumerated above make of it a project clearly distinguishable from the one exposed in the following section.

6.4.1.2. Civiciti: closed proprietary software for a corporate open government

Since, at the time of writing this section, Civiciti is not openly accessible online, I base the analysis of its technopolitical syntax on the contents in its website and some fieldwork materials. I combine some notes on its politics of infrastructure and its infrastructural affordances (or what these may be, in principle) into a single section.

Civici works under a typical service for profit model³⁶⁰. Open Seneca, the company behind it, develops the platform and offers a closed package. Civici is announced to work under a “freemium” model in which a number of services are free while others such as participatory budgeting and secured citizen consultations will require paid subscription. The concrete free services and their temporal extension are not specified in its website. Neither is the ownership of the data introduced and produced in the platform. At a time when data has been dubbed “the new oil”, this is obviously a key issue.

Civici presents itself as a solution for the insufficiencies of democracy in the “age of Facebook and Twitter”. The instrumentalist and techno-solutionist (Morozov, 2013) rationale for why a continuous democracy has not been possible until now is that the tools were “*incomplete, complex or cost prohibitive*”. As my reconstruction of the 15M cycle shows, things are usually more complicated.

More crucially, Civici presents itself as a “neutral, secure and independent platform”. An episode may serve to situate the intention of such a claim. In an open debate between an Open Seneca representative, Barandiaran, and representatives from several free software projects, the former asked the audience whether they would trust an independent company or the Popular Party to be in charge of the software of democracy. This was a thinly veiled attack against Decidim, created by a public institution, sponsored by a given party government³⁶¹. On the spot, Barandiaran essayed two counter-arguments: neutrality and security can be ascertained by anyone by looking at the code (otherwise, what could be defined as the interdependence, rather than independence, of free software development³⁶²). At this point, Barandiaran took advantage to denounce that Civici's code, albeit allegedly already operative, was nowhere to be found, and thereby “Open Seneca” was not open at all. The second counter-argument, which unleashed the laughs in the auditory, was (checking at his smartphone on the go) to read the number of

³⁶⁰ All the quotes in this section are taken from the official Civici website <https://www.civici.com>. Consulted on December 15th, 2016.

³⁶¹ This attack is technopolitical (technocratic) version of classical neoliberal argumentation supporting the privatization and externalization of municipal services and infrastructures.

³⁶² Months later, MetaDecidim opened a further check to guarantee not only the neutrality or the independence of the platform, but to potentiate its democratic character. The key of the Decidim model is to make the platform not independent but interdependent, to connect it to a growing number of actors in society, rather than reducing them to a selected set of representatives, technicians and corporate actors. The key is not to pretend a political neutrality but rather a form of recognized and democratic pluralism. That is guaranteed by the definition of the platform as a public-common resource. The platform is to be owned and managed by public servants and citizens. Such a management is a form of constructing a civic common, in terms of Rosanvallon (2013).

members of the Popular Party seating at the Council of Telefonica, co-financer of Open Seneca. In a typical 15M gesture, the pretension of “independence” and distance between big corporations and mainstream parties was reframed as a fake. Moving from Civiciti's politics of infrastructure into its affordances, it is relevant to note how a key difference with Decidim seems to lie in Civiciti's anticipated connection to physical spaces and processes. Against the Decidim model in which, under 15M inspiration, multi-layered and multi-layering participation is key, in its website Civiciti makes no articulated references to the operative connection between digital and face to face spaces. If not deeply thought and articulated, a gap between digital and physical participation potentially opens: continuous democracy may well become a discontinuous one. Judging by its website, Civiciti's democracy is primarily, if not merely, digital. A risk is to potentiate what may be called “click-participation”. Multilayered dynamics are crucial if democracy is not to become merely digital, but rather, as in the proposal by Barandiaran and Calleja-López (2016), “augmented”.

In spite of the apparent similarities due to the discursive emphasis on issues such as participation or open software (which remains unfulfilled in Civiciti's case), and the unfinished state of both projects, Decidim's public-common and Civiciti's corporate model can now be clearly distinguished. The Decidim model of technopolitical syntax points towards a new technopolitical regime (to use Hecht's, 1998 expression) that takes distance from corporate infrastructures and relies on public-common ones. This decreases the technological dependence on commercial platforms, an objective central to n-1 and the Lorea network at the time of 15M; furthermore, it prevents them the closure of new forms of democracy under a corporate open government model.

6.4.2. (Infra)structures for technopolitical democracy: Decidim.barcelona

Beyond its code, Decidim.barcelona is a much broader project for the democratization of democracy, for its technopolitical democratization. But what does this mean in terms of technopolitical affordances and syntax? Although they are in continuous flux, I will describe some of the main ones as of December 2016.

Decidim allows, for the first time, to have both a space and a shared structure for all the participatory processes sponsored by the City Council of Barcelona.

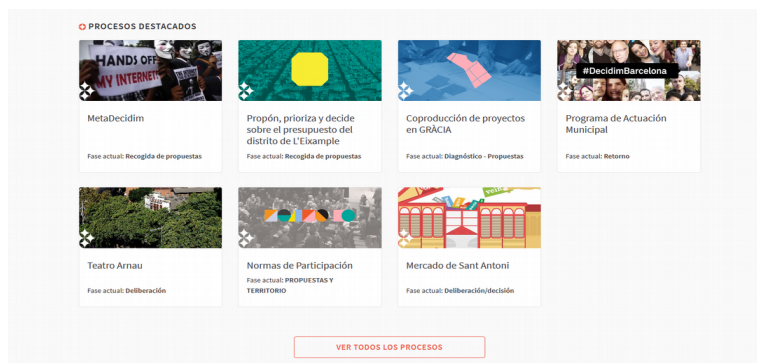


FIGURE 49. DECIDIM.BARCELONA: PROCESSES.

The main page includes a screen with “salient processes” and a link to all the rest. This means the city counts now with a space where one can find and participate in all public participatory processes.

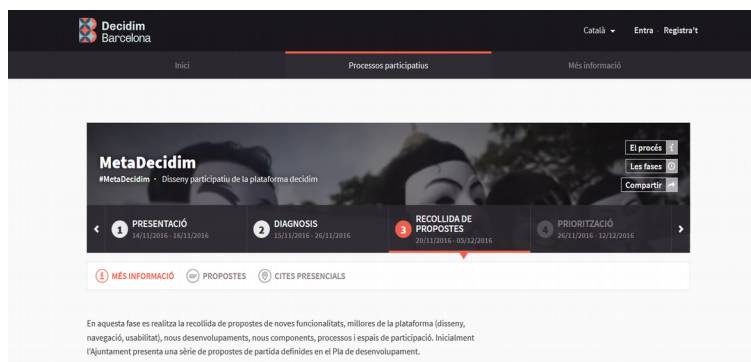


FIGURE 50. DECIDIM.BARCELONA: PROCESS STRUCTURE.

Each process has a homepage with a timeline of its phases and its stage of development. The kinds of activities allowed to users are multiple, primarily: to make proposals (with attached descriptions and documentation), to comment them (in favor, against, or neutrally), to evaluate those comments (positively or negatively), and to vote the proposals.

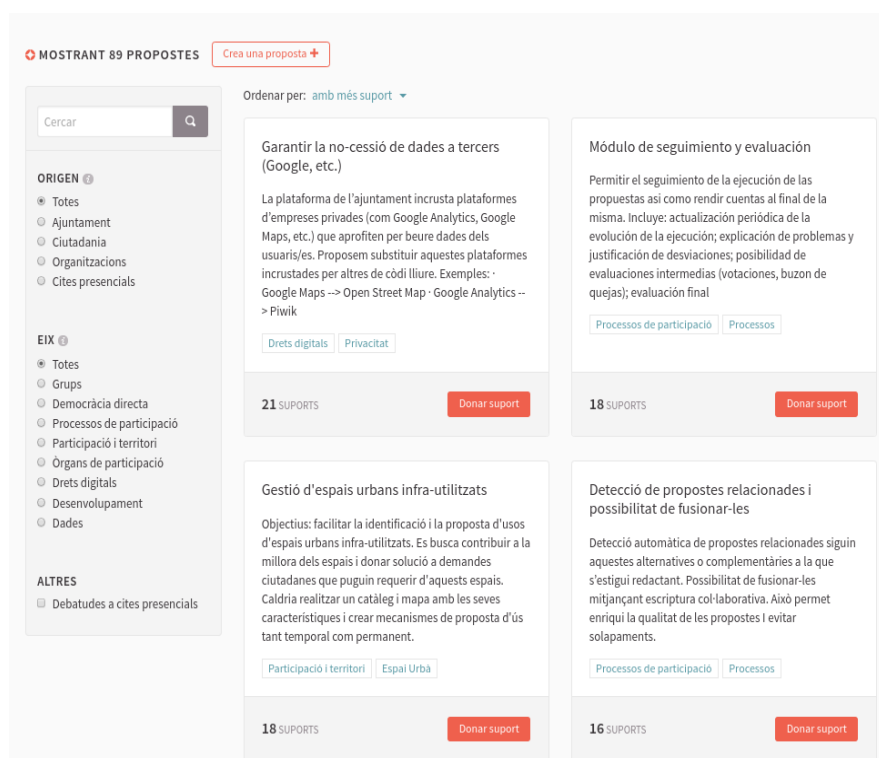


FIGURE 51. DECIDIM.BARCELONA: PROPOSALS.

Users can navigate through the proposals, choose to follow them, or filter them according to different categories³⁶³. While most functions, such as making and commenting proposals, are allowed to all users, only those registered in the city census can vote. Users have a customizable profile that allows a fully anonymous activity in the platform.

In order to potentiate hybrid, multi-layered dynamics, of the type described in 15M (the inspiration is explicitly recognized in Monterde et al, 2015b), the platform has been designed to allow geolocalization of physical events, which are displayed in a map. In the next months, it will also allow to geolocalize proposals³⁶⁴.

³⁶³ Some of them are provenance (City Council, individuals, organizations, physical meetings), area (City, District), thematic axis (which vary among processes), and date.

³⁶⁴ Currently, they are already tagged and filtered as connected to face to face meetings.

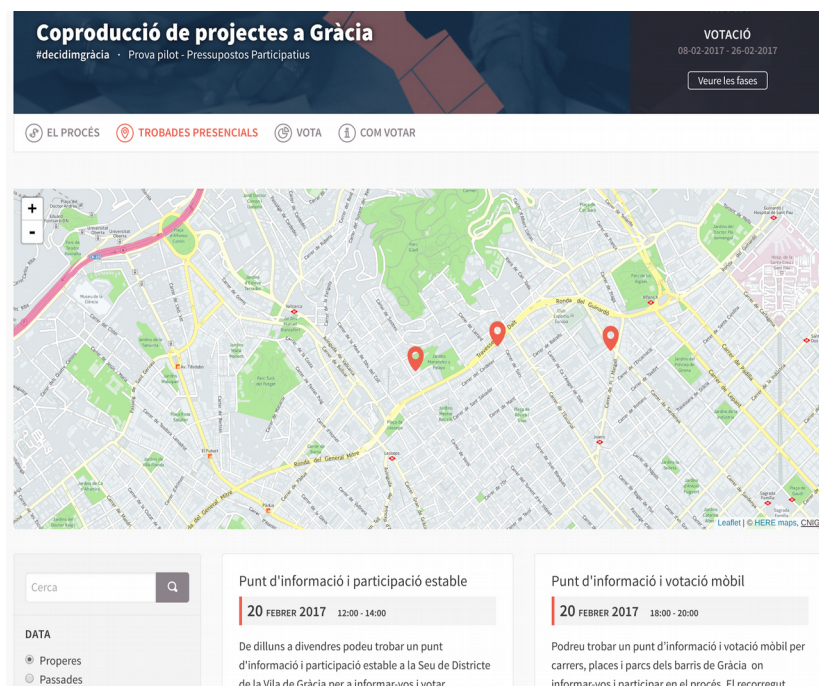


FIGURE 52. DECIDIM.BARCELONA: MAP.

Furthermore, as part of the technopolitical, multi-layering model of participation tied to Decidim, proposals, discussions, and information from physical meetings are to be uploaded to the platform³⁶⁵; reciprocally, content generated online can be brought into face to face meetings for discussion.

In order to potentiate multi-layer dynamics, the platform has also made every process or proposal easily shareable on social media. Furthermore, a profile on Twitter was set up under the name “Decidim barcelona” (@Decidimbcn).



FIGURE 53. DECIDIM.BARCELONA: PROPOSAL SHARING SCREEN.

³⁶⁵ Information including place, time, number of people and organizations attending, minutes, and other relevant information is uploaded into a “face to face” meeting register.



FIGURE 54. DECIDIM.BARCELONA: TWITTER PROFILE (@DECIDIMBCN).

After noticing some of the key features of the platform, I want to comment some of the key innovations under development. Decidim is bringing a digital layer to all the participatory processes organized by the town hall (and, potentially, other social organizations). A challenge associated to this has been to define the basic elements of participatory processes. The result has been a “process configurator” that will provide a step-by-step process for designing a process³⁶⁶. This clearly implies an effort in technical standardization, and somehow turning the platform into a customizable assembly line for participatory processes.

This process of standardization is connected to a number of steps oriented to radically and recursively democratize participation. The first is the intention, in the mid-term, to develop an interface that allows anyone and everyone to set up a participatory process on Decidim (unlike the current restricted format, in which only public servants can do so). The configurator is a way of making it both equal and easy for everyone to set them up. As a proleptic solution to the potential overloading of processes, the informal idea is currently to develop ranking and filtering enabling collaborative filtering and prioritization of participatory processes.

Another relevant element in the Decidim development plan for the next months³⁶⁷ is

³⁶⁶ As it stands, the stages (some of which may not be activated at a given process) will be “information”, “diagnostic”, “contributions-decision”, “return”, “evaluation”, “follow up”, and “accountability”. The components or functionalities that can be activated for a given stage are the following: “debate”, “face to face meeting”, “proposals”, “polls”, “questions”, and “collaborative texts”.

³⁶⁷ This has been included among MetaDecidim's most voted proposals and will most probably be carried on.

to introduce a “module for citizen calls to face to face meetings”, which will allow people to organize and use the platform to publicize their face to face participatory meetings on municipal facilities.

In synthesis, Decidim's technopolitical syntax will promote a democratization and distribution of the power to design, organize, and prioritize participatory processes. This emphasis on self-organization and autonomy connects in practice with the technoacritic redistribution of power commented in section 3.1.1. Certainly, though, the ultimate contribution to such a redistribution depends on the weight that participatory processes have in public policy (a recurrent question has been whether processes are binding or not), and the weight that public policy has in society more broadly.

Decidim's technopolitical syntax affords many of the possibilities reclaimed by 15M and the X Party of an alter-democracy in which the government of anyone and everyone becomes, unlike in the existing neoliberal representative model, a reality under construction.

6.5. Pragmatics/practices

Part 5 shows how the discourses analyzed in part 3 and the structures and infrastructures described in part 4 are enacted in concrete practices and processes. This part is devoted to explore key aspects of the technopolitical pragmatics around Decidim.barcelona and Democomunes. In 5.1.1. the focus is placed on the practices of technopolitical production within the Decidim.barcelona team and how these processes moved from the traditional stance of free software and agile development towards what may be defined a project of “technopolitical commoning for alter-democracy”: MetaDecidim. Among other things, I point out how the notion of MetaDecidim came out from practice. Then, 5.1.2. continues the narration initiated in 5.1.1. and explores key aspects of the MetaDecidim process itself. This process is a humble example of how Decidim.barcelona works: its combination of digital and face to face interaction, its open and participatory character, as well as of some of its potentials and limits.

6.5.1. Practices of technopolitical production

6.5.1.1. Decidim's open programming.

The development of Decidim.barcelona has been a free software development project from its inception: “the biggest free software project of the Barcelona City

Council”, according to Barandiaran (2016a). All of Decidim code is and will be covered by a free software license Affero GPLv3³⁶⁸ or later in the case of new developments, or licenses compatible with this one in case of reusing other codes. Resuming the four basic freedoms of the GNU licenses³⁶⁹, this means the user can use the code any way she likes and for what she likes, that she can study and modify the code, and that she can redistribute copies, including copies of the modified software. Furthermore, it requires to recognize the use of the original software (in this case, Decidim) and to maintain the same (or a compatible) license and related freedoms.

As another practice typical of free software development (Kelty, 2008), the whole process of programming, which begun on July 2015, has been open and visible, on the Github repository³⁷⁰ of the Barcelona city council, set up *ex profeso*³⁷¹. This means anyone could work and see how others work on the code. The systematic use of Github during development brings transparency (or, in a more precise term, visibility) to the programming process, a new form of technopolitical visibility to public projects that innovated on previous practice at the Barcelona Municipal Institute of Informatics (from now on IMI). Thanks to the Github metrics it is possible to see the different periods and peaks of activity, and the list of contributors, which, as of December 8th 2016, amounts to 34.

³⁶⁸ The specifics of this license can be found at <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/agpl-3.0.en.html> Accessed on January 19th, 2017.

³⁶⁹ A synthesis can be found at <https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.en.html>. Accessed on February 13th.

³⁷⁰ Github is an open code repository service, where users can upload, share, and work on code.

³⁷¹ The repository can be found at <https://github.com/AjuntamentdeBarcelona/Decidim.barcelona/>. Accessed on January 18th, 2017.

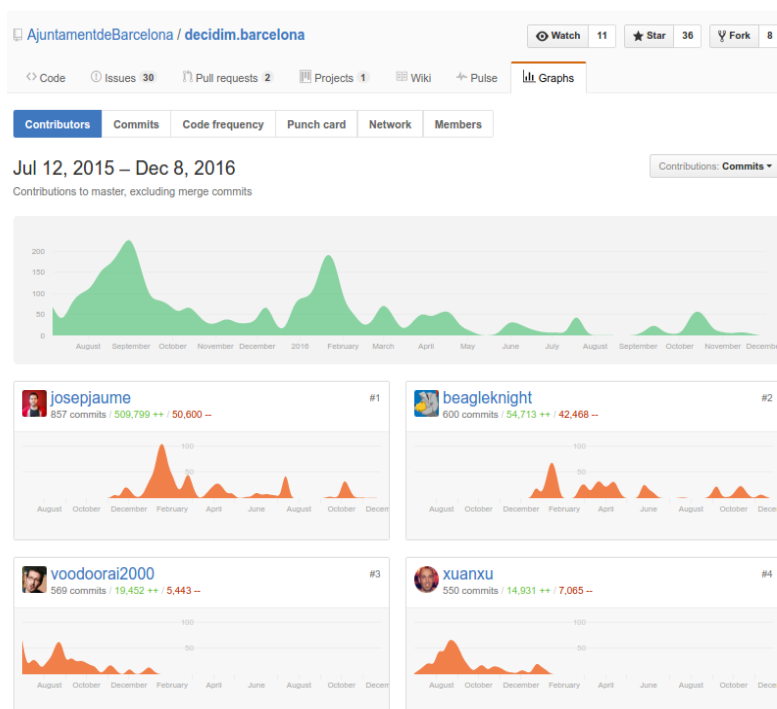


FIGURE 55. DECIDIM.BARCELONA: GITHUB.

As is typical of free software development projects, many of those contributors intervened pro bono. The overwhelming majority of the workload, though, has been mostly carried on by a young startup, Codegram. The choice of Codegram as main developer, rather than the usual big companies (mainly Indra) subcontracted by IMI had to do with a variety technical, political and straightforwardly technopolitical reasons. Some of them are relevant because of what they say of the potentials and difficulties of the inter-municipal, institutional assault within this 15M cycle.

The main technical reason was the need to have programmers proficient in Ruby programming language. This, in turn, resulted from the will to build Decidim.barcelona on the basis of Consul, Madrid's open government application. This will was based on several rationales. One was somehow technical: building on Consul meant much of the work for building Decidim was already done, which helped to reduce costs and, more importantly, to comply with the political calendar in Barcelona (which required Decidim to be operative on February 2016). There were also political reasons to do this: to build on Consul contributed to the discourse and practice of building a “network of cities of change” or “rebel cities”, as commented in part 2. Finally, there were utterly technopolitical reasons, as well. First and foremost, the idea of collaborating, sharing code and the conversation around the new digital

infrastructures of democracy and participation was a strategic goal for the Demons network and its local node, Compas. Otherwise, was a way of feeding into the emerging network of cities in a technopolitical way.

The process of setting up a development team showed to us (Compas members) the depth of the process of emptying out of public institutions and their reliance on big corporations. Under normal circumstances within the existing neoliberal model of the public, the programming of a platform such as Decidim would have been coordinated and supervised by the IMI but subcontracted to Indra Sistemas, a big Spanish IT and defense systems corporation. Given the non-acquaintance of the IMI-Indra team with Ruby language, the alternative found by Compas was a small, local start up proficient in Ruby. Even if this did not change the neoliberal externalization model, it is conceived as a step towards the constitution of a local-based, public-common led ecosystem of technopolitical production. Ideally, this ecosystem would be integrated by public institutions, small and mid-size companies, hackers, the MetaDecidim community and the citizenry in general (Barandiaran, 2016a). The choice of Codegram was to have not only economic and political, but also creative consequences (the MetaDecidim concept resulted from them).

If the production necessarily involved a private company, it presupposed a commons (the Consul code) and generated a new one (the Decidim code). Since its launch in February 2016, Decidim.barcelona has grown as a publicly funded, free software project that presupposed and nurtured technopolitical commoning: forms of collaborative production and use of the code.

Free licensing, open programming, sharing source code, and technopolitical collaboration and commoning. These were practices of technopolitical production operating within the Decidim project from the beginning.

On March of that 2016, a practical step towards technopolitical democratization took place. Codegram developers proposed, on the Decidim development group on telegram, as a half joke, what later came to be MetaDecidim.

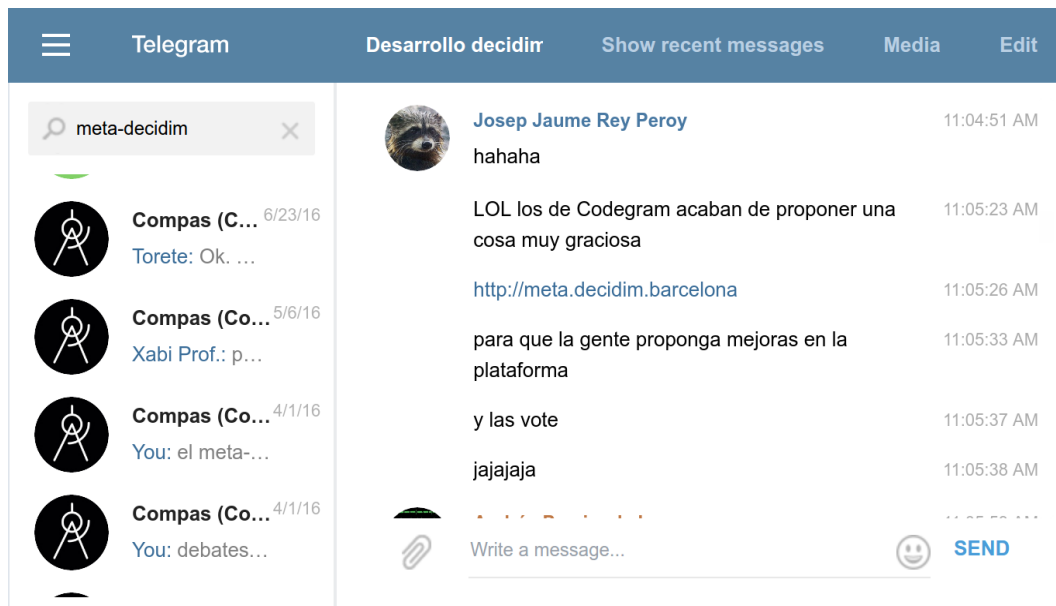


FIGURE 56. METADECIDIM: INCEPTION.

“Hahaha

LOL Codegram guys just proposed something very funny,

www.meta.Decidim.barcelona

For people to propose improvements in the platform

And vote them

hahaha”

The idea may have been no more than a joke. Within the Compas group, it was received with applause. The idea, commented on March 2nd, 2016, would see the light eight months later.

6.5.2. Practices of technopolitical participation and alter-democracy

Decidim aspires to become the base of a renewal of municipal participation and democracy. I comment upon a practical case of technopolitical participation mediated by Decidim and some mid-term projects of the ORDID for the fulfilling of such a promise.

6.5.2.1. MetaDecidim: process and practice

MetaDecidim is planned to be a permanently open space (with periodic cycles of development) where (according to its page in Decidim) anyone will be able to “participate in the design of Decidim.barcelona, proposing changes in functionalities, prioritizing development lines, deciding upon them, and deliberating on the uses and possibilities of the platform”.

El MetaDecidim es un proceso participativo para (re)diseñar las funcionalidades de la plataforma decidim.barcelona, priorizar las líneas de desarrollo, decidir proyectos de mejora y deliberar sobre los usos y posibilidades futuras de la plataforma. El proceso está igualmente encaminado a empoderar a la ciudadanía en la posibilidad de apropiarse de la herramienta, de contribuir a su desarrollo y de ser co-participes en su construcción. Para ello están previstas unas jornadas el 25 y 26 de noviembre en el MACBA.

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Toda la ciudad
GRUP PROMOTOR
Direcció de Recerca, Desenvolupament i Innovació de Drets de Ciutadania, Participació i Transparència, Comissionat de Participació, UOC, ALabs

FIGURE 57. METADECIDIM: PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

This brings the Github open source development model one step forward, to the extent that it aims to make democratic and “user friendly” the possibility of suggesting amendments to technopolitical infrastructures and participation processes. Doing so at the level of code on Github requires a level technical competence and knowledge of the platform unusual among the citizenry. In this sense, MetaDecidim is a dispositive for the multitudinous re-appropriation of Decidim in practice³⁷². This connects back to the politics of technology discussed in section 4.1.

As indicated in the subtitle of the web of the I MetaDecidim hackathon (celebrated in Barcelona on November 25-26th, 2016), MetaDecidim is a call to “Decidim com Decidim la Barcelona que volem”, “let’s decide how we decide the Barcelona we want”. The humorous tone with which MetaDecidim was conceived remained present in its first participatory event. A prime example were the slogan and images used for

³⁷² I use the expression “multitudinous”, not “massive”, as the singularization of the proposals and types of activities, and thereby of users’ interventions, is very high.

the web of the event.

Semantics and semiotics of technopolitical communication in practice



FIGURE 58. METADECIDIM EVENT. TEXT: “WHO WANTS TO DESIGN THE FACEBOOK OF DEMOCRACY?”

As a first step, participation requires citizens to know that participation is happening, what it is about, and why they should participate. Participation is tied to communication. For this reason, a website was set up for the MetaDecidim process. Communication of arcane technopolitical matters, though, is problematic.

The image of the web, above, exemplifies various aspects of the lived communicative pragmatics of technopolitics. Below the #MetaDecidim hashtag, the site asks readers “Do you want to design the Facebook of democracy?” Behind, in the background, there is the image of Anonymous protesters with banners demanding “hands off my internet!” or, even more provocatively “The internet, tool of the people, do you really want your government to control it?”. For the Compas team, always critical of big corporations on the digital realm, the combination of “Facebook” and “democracy” in the slogan, was provocation. The appeal to Facebook was a way to reach a wider audience, and get them to understand what the event and MetaDecidim more broadly were about: it was about building something as big as Facebook. Speaking of a “Facebook of democracy” implied to somehow turn Decidim into something both significant and insignificant, democratic and not so much. Facebook is a successful business, a common experience (for

good and bad), and the target of much technological critique, especially, from the left. Facebook is a relevant socio-economic phenomenon of our time and yet criticized for turning everything (starting with human relationships) into the shallows and irrelevance of an ever-shifting news feed (Carr, 2011). Facebook is surely a non-democratic space and it is far from being “a tool for democracy”, as has been repeatedly noticed (Morozov, 2011, 2013). We at the Decidim team share most of those critiques. We expected some backlash, which was part of the prank: to get attention by annoyance. For me it was also a way to challenge our view of the platform: perhaps Decidim actually ends up turned into a Facebook, in a space of more or less stimulating irrelevance. It is technopolitical contention and multitudinous appropriation (or the lack thereof) that will be the ultimate decider.

The second provocation was on the other background: the use of the Anonymous image was a way to play with what is supposed to be acceptable in an institutional setting. To put the image of a group of publicly declared dangerous, anti-government hackers into a government web, with an image calling for the people not to let government take their internet, was another step into the prank. As in a message I circulated internally: Decidim and MetaDecidim would be useful infrastructures for an “Anon government, a-non-government”. So, the small prank was directed towards certain profile of both liberal and conservative mindset, but also towards the Anon crew too. The question of how Anons would react to their appearance into such a web was a matter of guess and fun: will they interpret it like a victory or like a co-optation? And, more relevantly for our interest: will they decide the joke is not good and take down the web? This small technopolitical (perhaps more accurately, technopopulist) prank displays relevant references and aspects of the lived pragmatic of technopolitics in a project like Decidim.barcelona, it displays some of the convictions, the tensions, and the lulz³⁷³ of the project.

All these layers of democracy, technology, symbols and power display some of the typical features of technopolitical pragmatics, in this case, of technopolitical communication of participation.

Technopolitical participation in practice: assembling proposals in multi-layered processes and events (with some caveats)

Then, the MetaDecidim meeting happened, on November 25th and 26th, 2016. It is a

³⁷³ “Lulz” is the Anonymous version of the abbreviation LOL, or “laughing out laugh”, a common expression in internet chats and social media.

humble example of a multi-layered, hybrid, online-offline, participatory process enabled by Decidim.barcelona.



FIGURE 59. METADECIDIM: MAP.

The event was publicized and narrated on Twitter in real time too.



FIGURE 60. METADECIDIM: MULTI-LAYERED.

SOURCE: LAURA COVARSÍ, 2016.

LICENSE CC BY-ND 2.0



FIGURE 61. METADECIDIM: TWITTER³⁷⁴.

SOURCE: ARNAU MONTERDE, 2016.

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Almost 300 people attended at some point at the face to face meeting, which was considered a satisfactory number for this type of event: a participatory process to design a digital platform for participation. Of those 300, more than half were involved in the various creative sessions and hacking groups that were set up for the afternoon of the 25th, devoted to generate proposals and initiate collective

³⁷⁴ These are retweet networks during the #MetaDecidim event. The network was created and shared on the Compas telegram group soon after the event by Arnau Monterde.

explorations on different areas that are relevant for the development of the platform. Reflecting the hybrid, technopolitical nature of Decidim.barcelona, there were two main strands: a series of open sessions with working groups and a hackathon. The titles of the sessions map what are some of the key institutions and aspects of democracy to take into account for Decidim: functionalities for groups (associations, cooperatives, collectives, etc.); direct democracy and popular initiatives; participatory processes; participation and territory; participation organs (neighborhood councils, plenaries, etc.); privacy, security and digital rights.

The hackathon was divided in four sections: web programming; web design; user experience, gamification and enriched profiles; and a datathon. These topics help to map the areas of concern for technopolitical participation and alter-democracy, at the local level and, in some cases, beyond.

Several visualizations and close to 80 proposals for modifying Decidim.barcelona were generated, which have gathered several hundred votes in the following days, as part of a process of prioritization.

FIGURE 62. METADECIDIM: PROPOSALS.

In the session I took part in, several people were members of associations and institutions with a clear analogical background, while others were seasoned technopolitical activists. The three main proposals concerned the construction of a

module for citizen initiatives, and three types were differentiated: one of questions for the municipal hall, a second one for concrete municipal or district policies, and a third one for legislative initiatives at the local, regional or state level³⁷⁵. Conversations were intense and engaging, displaying the possibilities of collaborative production of and deliberation around proposals.

After the prioritization moment, the most voted proposals are to be studied by the Decidim team, to prepare an evaluation of the cost (discarding technically infeasible ones) in advance of a final voting. As we see, the process moves through several iterations of collaborative evaluation. Crucially, the results of the process will be binding, which is rarely the case among the processes running on Decidim.barcelona. This amounts to a form of direct democracy over the design of the code: the politics of infrastructure of Decidim thereby displays a clear participatory, direct democratic element.

If the collaboration around the Decidim's code on Github was a case of free software development, and collaboration around the Consul code was a case of technopolitical commoning, MetaDecidim moves further into technopolitical alter-democratization. It does so when looked from both syntactical sides, as politics of infrastructure and as infrastructure for politics.

The MetaDecidim process serves to illustrate some of the main practices of technopolitical participation, such as collaborative production and evaluation of proposals, multi-layered communication, or collective deliberation.

Some caveats are in order concerning the MetaDecidim event, though. One of them is the reappearance of the gender gap within technical meetings, a gap that was particularly manifest at the hackathon (working groups were more equilibrated). Similarly, in a city as diverse as Barcelona, there were very few participants from backgrounds outside Europe or Latin-America. Neither there were many people under 20-25. The question of inclusion of more and more diverse people remains crucial. The generation of hybrid processes are a partial step in that direction, since they entice people that may be excluded of digital spaces for various reasons or just may prefer face to face events. But there's still a long way to go.

Building new communities and cultures of technopolitical participation: challenges ahead.

If Compas was a ninja team, Decidim expects to build a series of citizen

³⁷⁵ In the discussion it was noticed how, although the town hall has no power to legislate at the State level, legislative citizen initiatives could gather force by using platforms such as Decidim.

communities. The first and key one is a community of use. More than 40000 people are registered in the platform as of early 2017, 25000 with a right to vote, composed by what may be considered an active citizenry, participating individually or in organizations, which may democratize public agendas and policies: this is the Decidim.barcelona community. A second community is composed by people intervening in MetaDecidim processes and channels, a community of technopolitical design and production, which may become a recursive citizenry, deciding over the shape of Decidim itself, democratizing the infrastructure (and helping to define a new institution of democracy): this is the MetaDecidim community³⁷⁶. A third community (or view of the Decidim community) is a community of knowledge, a cognitive citizenry that shares knowledge and expertise (in the X Party style) generating collective intelligence. Finally, Decidim may operate as the kernel for a community of influence, a democratic lobby, reclaiming new democratic standards. Resuming, Decidim is a platform open to a multitude that may define democratic policies, technologies, intelligence and standards.

Technopolitical participation also brings new issues and challenges, such as digital privacy, security, data ownership, licensing, or digital rights, as discussed in some of the sessions at MetaDecidim. The sessions called for collective deliberation (collective intelligence, in 15M terms) in areas barely uncharted in previous stages of the 15M cycle, areas related with the conditions and institutionalization of a networked democracy, a key part of the construction of 15M's real democracy in XXI century. The work at MetaDecidim was oriented to begin the construction of the communities (rather than expert committees) that may democratically explore such new areas and take control of the infrastructures around which they will be played out and through which they may be decided.

But to increase inclusion and to mobilize people to participate is a traditional and ongoing challenge among individuals, associations and public institutions interested in doing so. Contributing to the self-construction of an active, mobilized citizenry as well as an inclusive and deliberative culture of participation are two relevant challenges that the ORDID shares with the Participation council.

³⁷⁶ The other two potential communities would be one of influence (or lobbying), of active and demanding citizens reclaiming and overseeing the new standards of democracy. The third is a community of knowledge, sharing information, techniques and contributing to each other competences, generating collective intelligences. Obviously, some of these may be the same community looked at from different perspectives.

This is one of the rationales behind the formative workshops on secure digital citizenship that have been designed in late 2016 and are expected to be carried on in dozens of locations of Barcelona in 2017. Similarly, ORDID's plan for 2017 includes the launch of a Decidim.lab within a wider citizen laboratory, oriented to potentiate face to face dynamics that can benefit from the distributed expertise and practices of the citizenry while contributing to new ones, particularly, among groups devoted to participation (for details of the plan, Barandiaran & Calleja-López, 2016). Like in 15M, the aim is, with all its limits and contradictions, to construct a more real democracy, and to enact it in the way there.

6.6. Alternatives

As in previous chapters, this part looks at the challenges and changes that Decidim brings to both a given sociopolitical form, in this case, the State at the local level, and to the liberal representative ontology. This part also serves to synthetically illustrate the shapes of alter-democracy at this stage of the 15M cycle.

6.6.1. The State and the representative government form

Institutionally, Decidim poses a challenge to two structures of the State at the municipal level. The Barcelona city council recognizes two basic structures of functioning and organization³⁷⁷: a political structure and an executive structure. While the former gives general political orientations, the latter can execute policies and establish rules (not laws, since the autonomy of the local level is administrative, not legislative *strictu sensu*). Even if with limited autonomy, these functions resemble those of the powers and functions of the State. Decidim may affect them directly. Actually, the possibilities and challenges posed by Decidim in practice, for the State form at the local level, are similar to those posed by Democracy, Period in discourse, to the State form at the national level. Decidim has already operated as a platform of "wikigovernment", otherwise, as a mediator that allows the co-production of a policy agenda between citizenry and the executive, in the development of the Strategic Plan of Barcelona for the current political term. It was the very first process ran in the platform, in the Spring of 2016³⁷⁸. In the Spring of 2017, it will be deployed as a "wikilegislation" (or better, wiki-regulation) mediator for the co-production of the

³⁷⁷ A detailed map of the structure of the city council and the functions of its organs can be found at www.ajuntament.barcelona.cat/es/organizacion-municipal. Accessed February 18th, 2017.

³⁷⁸ Information on the process available at <https://Decidim.barcelona/processes/1>. Accessed February 15th, 2017.

norms of participation of the city of Barcelona³⁷⁹. Wikigovernment and wikilegislation were the two aspects of the second point of Democracy, period.

Modules for citizen consultations and citizen initiatives are in the horizon for the current political term of Barcelona en Comú (municipal elections are due in May 2019). Here again key limits lie with the limited autonomy of the local entities. For instance, only the national executive power can call for a referendum, a mayor can't. That said, practices in Madrid, where the government of Ahora Madrid is committed to support in the municipal plenary any citizen initiative which gathers a certain amount of support³⁸⁰, shows that steps can be taken towards a more direct democracy, even within a clearly representative framework.

Transparency (point 1 of Democracy, period) is also increased by Decidim. Concretely, in two basic forms: around participation processes, in terms of proposal and process visibility and trackability, and around the governmental reactions to it (of both representatives in power and in the opposition); more importantly, this will soon be applied to the implementation of projects coming out of participatory processes in new forms of accountability. Surely, other mechanisms of transparency (or, more precisely, visibility) are required or already operative for other aspects of political functioning. An example is the anonymous anti-corruption mailbox set up by X.net members in early 2017 for the Barcelona city council.

Finally, Decidim also opens the technical possibility, albeit, surely, not without issues of privacy or security, of walking towards the implementation of Democracy 4.0 or "real and permanent vote" (the third point of Democracy, period). This option is, nevertheless, much more complex, since the changes to the existing forms political and administrative power would be deeper. As they exist (in the two processes just mentioned above, of the Municipal Action Plan and participation norms), and to the extent that they are fully binding, mechanisms of wikigovernment and wikilegislation can be ultimately be filtered by the government in place (as happened, not without controversy, in the case of the most voted proposal for the Municipal Action Plan last year³⁸¹). A real and permanent vote would imply an actual limitation of the power of the executive and legislative power of representative government at the level of the

³⁷⁹ Even if these are not "laws" *strictu sensu*, they operate as such at the local level. Information on the process available at <https://Decidim.barcelona/processes/5>. Accessed February 15th, 2017.

³⁸⁰ More details on the process can be found at https://Decide.madrid.es/proposals_info. Accessed February 16th, 2017.

³⁸¹ Even though 72% of the thousands of citizen proposals were accepted, the most voted was not (El Periódico, 2016).

national State or its minor equivalents at the regional or municipal level. It thereby poses a bigger political and institutional challenge. It would mean for an incumbent government to limit its own power, to change the proximate source of decision making in everyday politics, and potentially to drastically transform the liberal representative scheme. Here again, the power to do so does not lie at the local but at the national level, and is unlikely that such a policy will be agreed by a majority anytime soon.

While Decidim currently falls short of the demands of Democracy, Period for a transformation of the State, it also goes beyond it by addressing institutions other than representative powers. Concretely, municipal public institutions (from bureaucracy to participation organs). As noted when describing the working sessions in MetaDecidim, these included participation bodies of the city: Decidim would potentially bring new spaces and democratic possibilities to these traditional institutions, with a long tradition in Barcelona. MetaDecidim itself is, as I have noted, an attempt at democratizing public innovation in democracy, thereby challenging the primacy of usual bureaucratic-technocratic modes of organization, embodiments of the representation paradigm that overlaps with governmentality (Rose 1999, 2006). Here, as in the case of 15M and, partially, the X Party, the modes of organization and practices around Decidim (particularly, MetaDecidim) prefigure and connect with key aspects of the alter-democracy advocated for the whole of the polity.

Resuming, Decidim brings two institutional challenges to both municipal government and public institutions: 1-the challenge of an alter-democratization by participation and distribution of public power (as formulated by Castro et al., 2016); 2-the challenge of institutional incorporation of technopolitics (with its increase in possible performances, visibility, trackability, etc.).

Decidim thereby connects with the project of redistributing the social and collective power accumulated in the State, a key aspect of “distributed democracy” (see section 3.2.3.); furthermore, it connects with the workings of an augmented democracy, defined by new layers of collective action, by possibilities (and new limits) of acting together in a multitude of variable configurations, as seen in the 15M case as well as in the first Decidim processes. In this case, distribution is not the “emptying out” of the State and democracy that 15M diagnosed in neoliberal representation, but rather a form of transforming the State to potentiate democracy, opening up to the various models I have discussed throughout the thesis. 15M

diagnosed neoliberalism has not only “emptied out” the State (specially, the Welfare State) but also filled it in with lobbies and money politics, thereby its corruption: “they call it democracy, but it is not”. The alter-democratic model behind Decidim points to a process combining new forms of emptying out (by diminishing the power of representation) and filling in (by increasing the power of direct participation), filling in with an active citizenry rather than corporate influence. As suggested in the Decidim Decalogue and the Strategic Plan of the ORDID, this implies to retie the link back to movements, to de-State the State without privatizing it, otherwise, to get out of the liberal representative model in which the public is always a representative translation of the private field and its power asymmetries.

This project is full of challenges itself. Even before the launch of Decidim for the elaboration of the Municipal Action Plan, many practical discussions moved between two twin concerns, the Scylla of lack of mobilization (and how this sometimes seems to result from factors such as a lack of trust in government and public perception of depotentialization of participation processes) and the Charybdis of the legitimacy of mobilization (f.i.: governmental fear to outcomes of a given process frontally opposed to its policies for the city, or the legitimacy of limited groups of citizens to make binding decisions for the whole of the city, Pindado, 2012). Decidim and similar projects have to face problems not present during the 15M stage, not so much the fear for the lack of participatory mechanisms (surely increasing in the last years) but the potential proliferation of fake or flawed processes under slightly more open models (Castro et al., 2016). Thereby the interest of distinguishing the commons government and distributed/augmented democracy model from the usual open government one, in earlier parts of this chapter.

6.6.2. Ontology

The challenges to the liberal representative ontology posed by Decidim.barcelona can be found at two levels: that of technopolitical production and that of technopolitical participation. It is particularly at the first level where the most innovative forms seem to have emerged. It is worth stressing the figure of the technoacrat (section 3.1.1.) and the collective form of the recursive citizenry (section 5.2.1.2) as two forms that go against the figure of the representative (in this case, the traditional bureaucrat or public servant) and the represented in modern democracies. As a subjective form, the technoacrat emerges as a counterpoint of both the

technocrat and “enforced” representation more broadly (to put it in Jurado’s 2014 terms). The collective form of the recursive citizenry is a technopolitical version of the classical active citizenry, now applied to the construction of the technological conditions of its own citizenship.

Crucially, these two images converge in the idea of a common government, a new public-commons alliance that shatters the preeminence of the private-public model under neoliberal representative democracy. After the neoliberal debunking of the Welfare State, the model for the reconstruction of the public in projects such as Decidim.barcelona is to be articulated through participation and collaboration, and thereby by the becoming-commons of the old public sector. Synthetically, Decidim.barcelona is funded with public money, universally accessible and working as a public service, its code free for anyone to take and modify, designed and managed by an ecosystem including public servants (such as participation technicians), academics (such as the IN3-UOC), small and medium-size enterprises (such as Codegram), and citizens (such as the Decidim and MetaDecidim incipient communities). Otherwise: this model involves platforms with public funding and public-common ownership, design, and management. This goes first against the neoliberal representative model of privatization of the public sector, in which the market and the profit-driven logics pervades ever more fields of society. It also goes beyond the model of the public as pure service under the so much criticized paternalist model of the Welfare State, in which the political and bureaucratic apparatus of the State “perforce” (to put it in Jurado’s, 2014 terms) represents the interest of a disempowered multitude. Combining these various factors, the predominant democratic model operative at the level of technopolitical production is a new combination of the participatory and the autonomist model of alter-democracy, defined by an active and collaborative citizenry that generates new commons.

In the field of technopolitical participation, the main challenge seems to be to bring the classical figure of the active citizen and citizenry into a new technopolitical version: a networked or technopolitical citizenship. This makes possible new modes of participation, but also poses issues of security, privacy or new rights. Here the ontological or normative model is the participatory one, actualized in a technopolitical shape. Co-production of public policies and norms (in the forms of wikilegislation and wikigovernment) becomes a new collective practice. One that, like technopolitical commoning, becomes a key part of the construction of alter-democratic life after

15M. These new possibilities and ontological constellations, though, remain dependent on a wider representative framework.

These are some of the challenges and changes in terms of political ontology, and the models they are tied to:

TABLE 16. DECIDIM.BARCELONA: POLITICAL ONTOLOGY.

Practice	Political ontology	Subject form	Collective form	Modes of political relation
Technopolitical production	Autonomist Participatory	Technocrat Recursive citizen	Recursive citizenry	Commoning, networking collaboration
Technopolitical participation	Participatory	Technopolitical/ networked active citizen	Technopolitical/ networked active citizenry	Co-production Co-decision

6.7. Conclusions

This chapter has explored the discursive and practical experimentations with technopolitics and alter-democracy essayed around Decidim.barcelona. It begun with a reconstruction of the stage of the 15M cycle in late 2014 and the roots of the Decidim project within it. Particularly, in part 2 I showed how the institutional assault (resulting from the arrival to municipal power of citizen candidacies tied to the 15M cycle) opened an opportunity for existing 15M networks of technopolitical activists and hacktivists to form teams of innovation in democracy within the Participation councils of big cities such as Barcelona and Madrid. They created technopolitical platforms for alter-democracy such as Decidim. With this they brought both technopolitics and alter-democracy within the 15M cycle one step further.

In part 3 I showed how these innovation teams (not unlike discourses within 15M itself or the X Party) articulated a whole semantics around how democracy should be and how to get there. The normative discourse of a distributed and augmented democracy was tied to prescriptive discourses on both the new forms of technopolitical production and the new forms of technopolitical participation based on Decidim.barcelona. In sections 3.1.2. and 3.1.3., distributed and augmented democracy appeared contraposed to the corporate open government model embodied by Civiciti. While the former is oriented to redistribute capitals in society, the latter fits nicely within the neoliberal framework that has been a target of critique for different projects within the 15M cycle. A key concept for how to advance towards

a distributed/augmented democracy is that of “technopolitical democratization”, understood as the deployment of technological infrastructures for political democratization (its political reading) as well as the deployment of democratic processes for the construction and management of such technologies (its technological reading). Decidim has been shown to be an example of the former; MetaDecidim, of the latter. Democratization in these cases has not been driven by, but mostly opposed to, representation, and thereby I consider the Decidim case a clear one of technopolitical alter-democratization. In section 3.2.3. I also showed the relevant distance between the critical substantivist approach to democracy and technopolitics held in Barcelona and the positivist proceduralism preeminent in Madrid, showing differences within 15M quarters as well.

Part 4 explored the technopolitical syntax of Decidim. Divided in two halves, the first focused on Decidim’s politics of infrastructures, while the second attended to its value as infrastructure for politics. As part of the exploration of the “politics of infrastructure” (section 4.1.) I looked further into the contraposition of the Decidim’s model of public-commons infrastructures for alter-democracy (and advance upon the autonomist n-1 model) and the closed proprietary software for a corporate open government of Civiciti. Then, in section 4.2. I analyzed key actual and forthcoming affordances of Decidim.barcelona, otherwise, its technopolitical syntax for alter-democracy.

Part 5 focused on the technopolitical pragmatics (otherwise, key technopolitical practices) within the Decidim case. Section 5.1. described some key practices of technopolitical production of the platform, which displayed a progressive process of technopolitical democratization between late 2015, when its development begun, and 2016, when MetaDecidim was launched. Section 5.2. described a participatory process in Decidim.barcelona, MetaDecidim, which serves to illustrate different aspects and challenges ahead for technopolitical participation.

Part 6 recapitulated some of the key alternatives posed by Decidim to the State form as well as to the political ontology of liberal representation. Section 6.1 described how Decidim potentially affects two of the branches of government (executive and legislative) as well as public institutions (such as bureaucracy and participation institutions), especially potentiating processes of co-production (what the X party called wikigovernment and wikilegislation), some forms of transparency, and easing the conditions (albeit with considerable security limits) of binding referenda and,

much more problematically, the 15M idea of a democracy 4.0. and the X Party's "real and permanent vote". Furthermore, Decidim brings a digital layer to both government and public institutions that opens opportunities and challenges, which in many cases will depend on what roadmap is taken: the corporate open government model of Civiciti, the positivist and proceduralist 15M version of open government preeminent in the Madrid Participation council, or the critical and substantivist model of a common government and a distributed and augmented democracy defended by the ORDID.

Finally, section 6.2 attended to the challenges to the modern liberal representative ontology coming from the processes of technopolitical production and participation associated to Decidim. I showed how new subject and collective forms such as the technoacrat or the recursive citizenry, and modes of relation such as co-production and commoning, as well as the central figure of the technopolitical active citizen exercising radical (deliberative, direct) participation, stretch the frame of liberal representation.

Decidim.barcelona appears as the final point in a still open trajectory. It partially accomplishes some of the recurrent aims of the 15M cycle: opening new modes of being together and taking part in politics, partially going beyond representation, constructing infrastructures of decision making that are more direct, transparent, and deliberative. Decidim institutionalizes and affords key 15M practices, among others, multi-layering, networked collaboration, or collective deliberation, and the intensive use of ICTs more broadly, etc. With the new stage of the cycle, there has also been new practices, such as co-production or technopolitical democratization. New challenges have emerged too: the ever-repeated problem of the lack or flaws of collective mobilization and participation, the tension between new practices and institutions and existing ones (the representative block to many of these innovations), the reproduction of the gap between represented and representatives, etc.

At this stage of the 15M cycle, Decidim is a technopolitical institution in the making, waiting for a multitudinous taking that may force structural changes. A MetaDecidim community defining the new standards of democracy and a Decidim community taking advantage of them to democratize politics and society. The challenges ahead are and will be many.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

7.1. Introduction

Real democracy, now! reclaimed the DRY slogan. Democracy 4.0. will take forty years to implement, assumed Yagüe. In the end, it was more and less than that. As I showed, under very concrete conditions, the 15M movement opened a cycle that brought many discourses and practices of democracy and technopolitics from the fringes to the mainstream, up to key public institutions of representative democracy, in around four years³⁸². In this conclusion, I want to address head on the three main questions around this cycle posed in the introduction. The first was:

what are the discourses on democracy and representation from 15M to Decidim.barcelona?;

the second:

what are the key practices of democracy and technopolitics from 15M to Decidim.barcelona?;

the third:

how does the reassembling period 2011-2016 look like from a sociopolitical and ontological perspective?."

In this conclusion, I devote a section to each of these questions.

7.2. 15M cycle discourses on democracy: between representationalism and alter-democracy

In the empirical chapters I differentiated various discursive strands on representation and democracy. Concretely, I distinguished between three main types of discourses: anti-representational (discourses calling for practices or processes against representation), alter-representational (discourses calling for practices or processes modifying representation) and alter-democratic discourses (discourses calling for

³⁸² As an example, Yagüe himself is currently third vice-president of the Andalusian Parliament with Podemos.

alternative models of democracy, such as the participatory, the deliberative, the autonomist, etc.). These discursive positions both reappeared and varied across circumstances, actors and time. They frequently displayed a threefold thread: a diagnostic thread on the problems of democracy or of the cycle itself, a normative thread on what democracy should be, and a prescriptive/practice thread on how to get there. They combined all of them with a motivational or mobilizing thread that appealed to affects.

7.2.1. 15M's discourse on representation and democracy

7.2.1.1. Pre-15M critique of representation

In chapter 4, part 3, I analyzed in detail the 15M (and pre-15M) discourses on democracy. A key pre-15M diagnosis, which was shared in its main lines by all the projects within the cycle, was the one formulated by the NLV Manifesto. It presented a critical view of the state of representative democracy in Spain. It lamented its corruption, bipartidism, inegalitarian electoral law, participacy, closed electoral lists, useful vote, blank checks, and turnism, factors that fed into each other.

In normative terms, the Manifesto made calls for a more participatory democracy, but the main point of its prescriptive/practice discourse was not very radical: “do not vote for them”. “Them” were the parties that had approved the Sinde Law (a pro-copyright legal disposition), otherwise, the Socialist Party, the Popular Party, and the Catalan *Convergència i Unió*. Other NLV texts frequently suggested to “vote for others”, smaller parties. But this means NLV kept the representative field as its central point of reference for action, it remained either purely representationalist in prescriptive/practice terms (vote, but for others) or alter-representationalist in normative terms (let's construct a representative democracy without the defects diagnosed in the Manifesto).

7.2.1.2. Critiques of and alternatives to representation

In chapter 4 I showed how a radicalization of these suggestions came with DRY and 15M. The main manifestos, texts, and slogans around May 15th preserved the NLV critique of representative democracy, but went several steps further. The key diagnostic slogan on this regard was “they do not represent us”. It was opened to several interpretations, of which I underlined two: the alter-representationalist and the anti-representationalist readings. Depending on the interpretation of the diagnosis, two normative discourses were constructed. The alter-representationalist

interpretation called for an improved representative democracy. Differently, the anti-representationalist reading called for forms of politics, in government but also in media and even social movements, that circumvented representation, many of those interpretations pointed towards form of alter-democracy.

Going beyond the NLV manifesto, 15M discourses openly attacked the economic system and mass media. They stressed the connection between political representation and economic expropriation of agency: “we are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers”, said DRY’s slogan for the demonstration on May 15th. Modern political divisions within the representative field were presented as obsolete: “to enter in “right” or “left” is a semantic debate. While political marketing is payed by the banks there will be neither.” Stripped from those tags, participants in the movement aimed to meet each other as “persons” and “indignant citizens”.

Similarly, other slogans targeted representation in media: “television, manipulation”, “then you will say we are five, or six”, people chanted at demonstrations and camps. In this case, the attack was also connected to a diagnostic of media misrepresentation as tied to corporate money. As stated in Agora Sol’s foundational statement, “traditional media ignored (when not blatantly deformed) a nascent movement”. This diagnostic was tied to a prescriptive/practice discourse calling for alter- and self-representation by movement media “to give voice to the movement of the outraged”. 15M’s anti-representationalism was usually tied to alternatives.

7.2.1.3. Alter-democracy and assemblies

Probably the most innovative, alter-democratic proposal in 15M discourse was that of de-representation around Democracy4.0 (Jurado, 2014), which proposed to combine representative mechanisms with direct democratic ones at the level of the nation-State. But perhaps more relevantly, in 15M the discourse on practice became the core of an emerging normative discourse. Differently from NLV, in the camps the invitation was not to vote for others but rather to join assemblies to voice, discuss and propose alternatives to the existing problems of the country. After the demonstration on May 15th, with the rise of the camps, the assembly became a prefigurative embodiment of alter-democracy both in discourse and practice. DRY had not mentioned it as central in any of its texts. Part of this new emphasis went hand in hand with a turn from a normative discourse about the State to a discourse about practice with broader normative implications. While the DRY manifesto and

proposals made general normative calls for an improved representative democracy (f.i.: transparency, internal democracy in parties), as well as new participatory and direct democratic forms (such as binding referenda for all relevant matters), the call of the Neighborhood Commission (2011) was a prescriptive/practice-normative call to give “all power to the assemblies”, a symptom of the displacement. Spokespeople were rotatory and subordinated to assembly processes and decisions.

However, the limits of the assembly form as a multitudinous decision-making process made themselves clear in the few weeks of May and June that the camps lasted. A growing diagnostic discourse about the condition of the movement begun to emerge: “We are trapped in our own dynamics and we are slaves of ourselves”, a participant in the Sol camp said. In chapter 4 I showed how big popular assemblies showed incapacity to move the movement further into mid and long-term action. Consensus appeared as a problematic requisite for a fully open decision-making process within a multitudinous and internally heterogeneous movement.

7.2.1.4. Beyond the limit of assemblies: from herds to catalyzers

The limits of assemblies and networked camps was something much discussed at the time of 15M’s first anniversary, moment of the launch of 15MpaRato. Simona Levi (2012), coordinator of the initiative, distinguished, in a strategic and diagnostic reconstruction of the political conjuncture, between “herds” and “catalyzers” as forms of collective action. Both were non-representational forms of politics. The former she saw as typical of the camp period, the latter, of the new stage opening with initiatives such as 15MpaRato and the advances of the PAH. While the former were “not agile nor precise”, the latter allowed “focusing the attention” of the various 15M actors and networks already existing. She called to stop repeating earlier gestures such as camping or assembling, to stop living like hermit crabs in the “dead shells” of 15M, and embrace innovative forms of collective action, such as 15MpaRato and, later, the X Party.

7.2.1.5. 25S and the peak of anti-representationalism

The increasingly recognized limits of the assembly and, thereby, the challenges of alter-democracy, did not dispel anti-representationalism, though. Quite the opposite,

key political³⁸³ and economic³⁸⁴ events taking place after 15M hardened the discursive diagnosis: political representation was a key part of the problem of the country, a mechanism for wealth extraction and non-sovereignty. That affirmed the manifesto inviting to “Surround Congress” on September 25th, 2012, which called to liberate democracy from a political and economic system that had “kidnapped” it. The practical call to surround Congress was tied to the expectation to force the resignation of the Popular Party’s government and the opening of a Constituent process. This displaced the center of the cycle from the 15M logics of autonomy and alter-democratic experimentation into a frontal confrontation with the symbol of representation, otherwise, into a logic of frontal opposition to Congress. The presentation of the 15M multitude aimed at the symbolic delegitimation of the space of representation. The numbers for the action were smaller than expected, even if demonstrators gathered in the tens of thousands. However, 25S made visible the peak of anti-representationalism within the 15M cycle.

I want to synthesize key 15M movement positions on representation presented so far. I present below a graphic that shows the differences and overlaps between anti-representational, alter-representational and alter-democratic positions.

³⁸³ A key event was the approval of the first constitutional change since the approval of the current Constitution in 1978, to prioritize public debt payment to (usually international) creditors over all other budget expenditures. This modification was passed without referendum, by the Socialist party, with support from the Popular Party, in August 2011. Then, the absolute majority of the Popular Party in November 2011 was followed by a strengthening of social cuts initiated by the Socialist Party, as well as repression of protest, among other things.

³⁸⁴ Growing unemployment, social cuts, worsening economic conditions, in general (chapter 3 for a more detailed reconstruction).

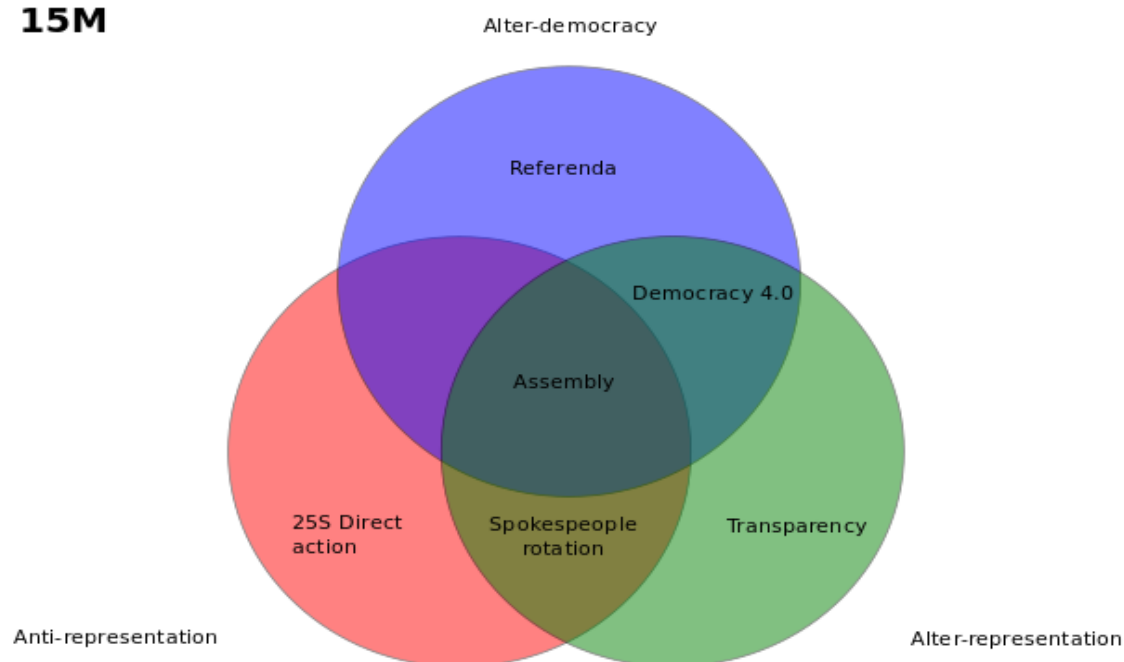
15M

FIGURE 63. 15M DISCOURSE: REPRESENTATION.

7.2.2. X Party's discourses on representation and democracy

7.2.2.1. *The return of representation*

By the time of the 25S direct action, a turn was in the wings. 15M technopolitical activists, especially in Barcelona and Sevilla, were preparing the launch of a party. Levi (2014) further elaborated her 2012 idea on organizational forms and resituated it within a politically strategic, discursive reconstruction of the 15M cycle. According to her, the first phase of the movement corresponded to DRY and the camps, it implied to “meet each other and display potency”, under the herd and beehive forms. In 2012, a number of initiatives to “attack objectives” were launched, including PAH (in the sphere of housing) and 15MpaRato (in the sphere of justice). For Levi, these initiatives, which followed the catalyzer model, were also successful. As of 2013, she diagnosed, 15M was in a third phase where “we have them surrounded” (in a wink to the 25S action) and “it’s time to reset the system”. Her prescriptive and practice proposal for undertaking such a resetting at that stage of the cycle was the X Party. This brought a (re)turn of representative politics. But the changes since the time of Nolesvotes had been drastic. Differently from 2011, in the new stage, the “electoral assault”, as X Party’s texts defined it, people could choose and enroll parties that emerged from the 15M cycle of contention, prominently, the X Party and Podemos. The former was especially radical in its anti-representationalist and alter-democratic

discourse and practice. The X party shared with 15M the diagnostic that “they do not represent us”, and its anti-representationalist reading made of it a very particular kind of party, one that defined itself as a “citizen network”.

As noted in chapter 5, its initial program, “Democracy, period”, outlined a discourse that called for forms of networked participatory democracy (wikilegislation, wikigovernment), networked direct democracy combined with representative structures (real and permanent vote) into de-representation (Jurado, 2014), as well as alter-representation mechanisms (such as candidate crowdsourcing or full transparency of public administration).

7.2.2.2. An anti-representationalist and wikidemocratic party

Like in the 15M case, a double-sided discourse was articulated around how democracy should be (normative) and how to get there (prescriptive/practice). The former was primarily formulated in DP, the latter, on statements around the party itself. As the X Party’s discourse normatively questioned the role of representatives within the State (mere “civil servants”) so it did the same in practice, within the party, especially in its first period. It articulated an anti-representation discourse that called for “de-personalizing politics” (against the audience democracy model, in which political media figures are crucial) and it was launched as an anonymous party. When the time came to choose representative, it elaborated an alter-representationalist discourse that emphasized ideas, methods, and the crowdsourcing of candidates as the way to go beyond the personalist model politics. Furthermore, it developed a discourse around the idea of the networked “expert citizenry” as a key subject in the construction of a new democracy based on radical decision making and the “federation of competences”, in parties and institutions, to solve social problems.

The X Party thereby outlined a discourse on the party form (a meritocratic citizen network as a federation of competences), the subject of democracy (networked expert citizenry) and democracy itself that combined anti-representationalism, alter-representationalism, and alter-democracy.

This discourse both connected with and differed from those circulating around 15M. The emphasis on the centrality of democracy and the right of the citizenry to decide over their lives remained. Alter-representation calls for transparency (point 1 of DP) and alter-democratic ones for more frequent and binding referenda (point 4 of DP)

were already present among DRY's proposals and even in the Nolesvotes's Manifesto. The alter-democratic (or de-representational) idea of a real and permanent vote (point 2 of DP) was only a re-labelling of the Democracy 4.0. idea already promoted during 15M. Finally, the participatory, alter-democratic mechanisms of wikilegislation and wikigovernment were an innovation with regard to the state of the discussion on democracy during the DRY and camp period. Interestingly, this idea was among the first to be implemented in the following stage of the cycle.

I synthesize some key X Party's discursive points on representation and democracy in the following schema.

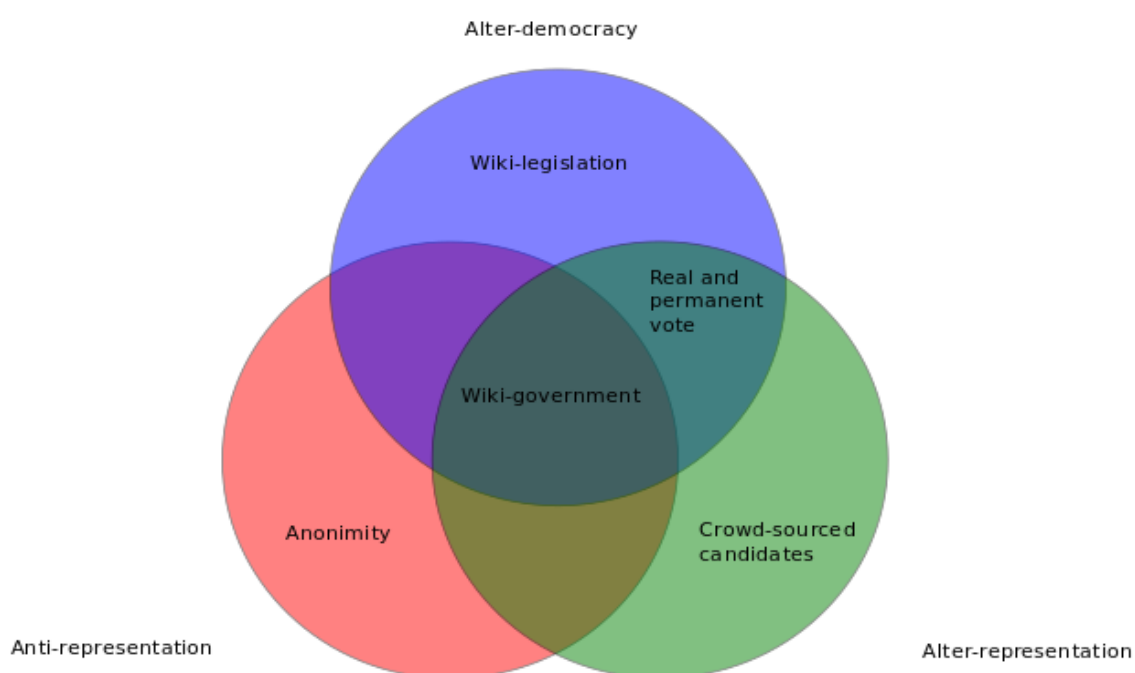


FIGURE 64. X PARTY DISCOURSE: REPRESENTATION.

7.2.3. Decidim's discourses on democracy and representation

7.2.3.1. The anti-representationalist discourse

With the victory of citizen candidacies in the local elections on May 25th 2015 (4 years after the emergence of 15M), the electoral assault gave way to a new moment, that of the "institutional assault". The center of the discourse in this third case was displaced from parties and still broad claims about democracy towards questions concerning how to create technopolitical infrastructures and participatory processes to nurture a more real democracy. The focus moved to Decidim.barcelona.

The diagnostic discourse of the Decidim team takes most of the pre-15M, 15M and X

party narrative on representative democracy, with one relevant addition: the new centrality of the discourse on the politics of technologies. The Decidim team shared with some (usually, technopolitical) 15M currents, as well as with the X Party, the anti-representationalist and alter-democratic reading of the “they do not represent us” slogan. But like the discourse calling for autonomous media in 15M, the Decidim diagnosis on alter-democracy criticizes not only traditional representative institutions but also corporations operating in the field in question. In this case, the Civici corporate open government model. According to the Decidim team’s diagnostic, under the corporate open government model, technological platforms for participation are neither designed nor managed by the people, but rather by corporations with a profit purpose. As we see below, in its prescriptive, practical discourse the Decidim team reclaims digital infrastructures must be democratic, democracy must become recursive.

7.2.3.2. Alter-democratic production and participation

Anti-representationalism runs strong as well in the prescriptive and normative discourses around Decidim, but the most relevant and innovative features are those concerning how to institutionalize alter-democracy. Like in previous cases, a double discourse has been built: a normative one around how democracy should be and a prescriptive/practice one around how to get there.

In this case, the “how to get there” has been sub-divided into two connected lines: discourses on technopolitical production of Decidim.barcelona and discourses on technopolitical participation through Decidim.barcelona. A key alter-democratic concept for conceiving both of these lines in their relation to democracy is that of “technopolitical democratization”, understood as the deployment of technological infrastructures for political democratization (its political reading, connected to participation in the platform) and as the deployment of democratic processes for the construction and management of such technologies (its technological reading, connected to the production of the platform). As I showed in chapter 6, Decidim is discursively constructed as an example of the former; MetaDecidim, of the latter.

The MetaDecidim prescriptive discourse on the conditions of alter-democratic technopolitical production presents the platform as a public-common infrastructure, which means it should have public funding and ownership and public-common design and management. The MetaDecidim prescriptive discourse has thereby

underlined the relevance of democratizing Decidim qua technology.

On the other hand, the Decidim prescriptive discourse on technopolitical participation emphasizes a diversity of participatory processes, such as citizen initiatives, wikilegislation, or debates with representatives (these are what I define, respectively, as Decidim A, B, and C in the figure below). The emphasis is on innovation and radicalization of democracy.

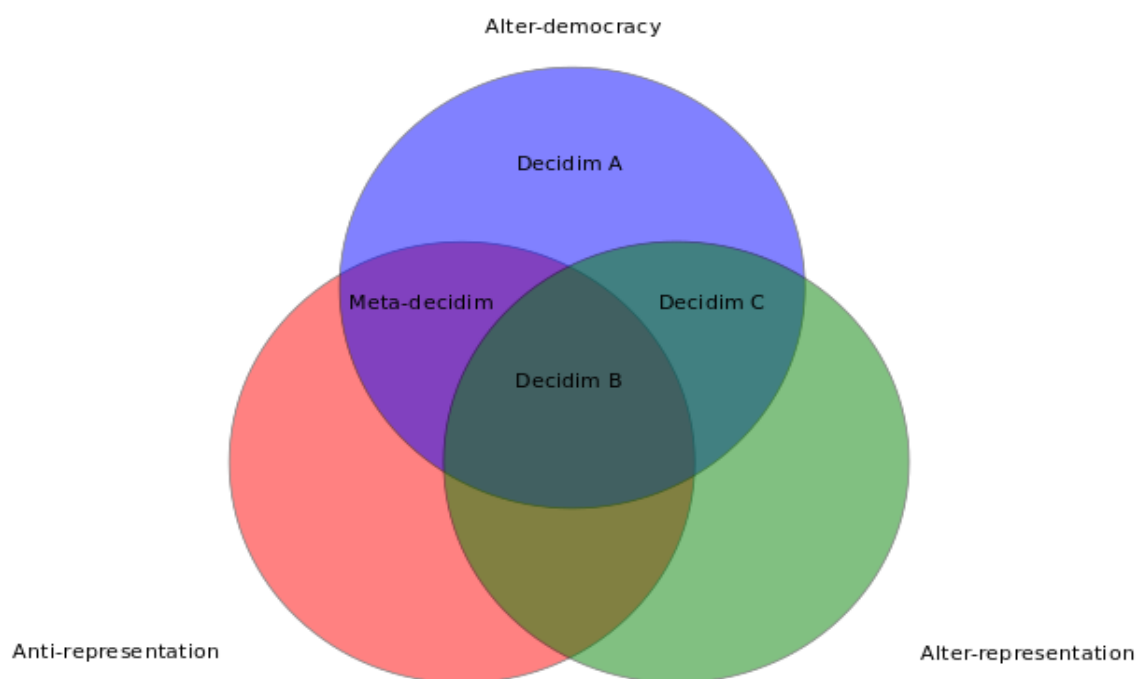


FIGURE 65. DECIDIM.BARCELONA DISCOURSE: REPRESENTATION.

7.2.3.3. On distributed and augmented democracy

But what model democracy is to be reached? When it comes to the normative discourse on the democracy to come, the model has been that of a distributed and augmented democracy, which puts social and political equality at the center. Three key practices (based on Castro et al., 2016) of this model would be the coproduction of public policies, involving participatory institutions and processes designed for sharing public power; community building, involving public-community action that transfers public power to the commons; and citizen control, which makes use of transparency (or, rather, visibility) and other mechanisms to control public power. In Bourdieu's terms, these mechanisms connect the distribution of public power to processes of redistribution of capitals in society (political, economic, cultural, etc.).

In relation to these ideals, but moving them forward, the alter-democratic, normative

discourse in the Decidim Decalogue presents Decidim as designed and calling for its re-appropriation by organizations at every social scale, from networks of cities to small neighborhood organizations, in order to potentiate their internal democracy and capacity for action in both the social and the political-institutional sphere. Otherwise, Decidim aims to potentiate democracy not only in relation to the State, but also across the social field.

Here, again, the antagonist model is no more simply the traditional representative institutions, even if they remain so, but also the corporate open government model embodied by Civiciti. While the idea of a distributed and augmented democracy is oriented to redistribute capitals and thereby to forward social and political equality, the latter fits nicely within the neoliberal framework that has been a target of critique for different projects within the 15M cycle and that has potentiated inequality for the last several decades in many countries (Piketty, 2014).

Decidim's discourse is a clear case of 15M inspired technopolitical alter-democratization. It shares much of its approach with the work at the Participation council of Madrid, another 15M inspired project. Nevertheless, as shown in section 3.2.3. there is a significant distance between the critical substantivist approach to democracy and technopolitics held in Barcelona and the positivist proceduralism preeminent in Madrid. While in Madrid the active citizenry is thought under the statistical concept of the "participatory population", technologies are envisioned as neutral tools under the traditional instrumentalist model, and democracy is understood as a procedure, in Barcelona the active citizenry is thought of as a complex multitude, technologies are seen as institutions in the making (as spaces of construction and conflict), and democracy is conceived as including substantial rather than only procedural elements.

By noticing this distance, I wanted to differentiate the view of technopolitics and alter-democracy around Decidim.barcelona from traditional representative institutions, corporate alternatives, as well as 15M inspired partners.

7.2.4. Resuming discourses on democracy and representation in the 15M cycle

Through this reconstruction it becomes clear the persistence, with transformations, of discourses on democracy within the cycle. The triple discourse of diagnosis of democracy and the cycle itself, the normative discourse around the democracy to come, and the prescriptive one around how to get there, was recurrent and variable

within the 15M cycle. It progressively portrayed an image of the whole field of politics, from civil society to the State: it mapped democracy as a discourse of both desire and practice. At every stage, discourses pointed to various aspects of the polity, but their focus seemed sharper when speaking of the practice at hand, otherwise, when it had to do with the field where actors were operating: civil society and movements in the case of 15M, political parties in the case of the X Party, public institutions in the case of Decidim. As I just recollected, the leitmotiv of real democracy and threads of anti-representationalism, alter-representationalism and alter-democracy were present in every case. This supports the idea that there was a connected cycle, in this case, a discursive 15M cycle on democracy, with reiterated topics and variations upon them. Variations were associated with the transformations of the cycle itself, as actors explored different territories, the reality of democracy, in their way towards a more real one. Here we can synthesize innovative discourses during the 15M cycle.

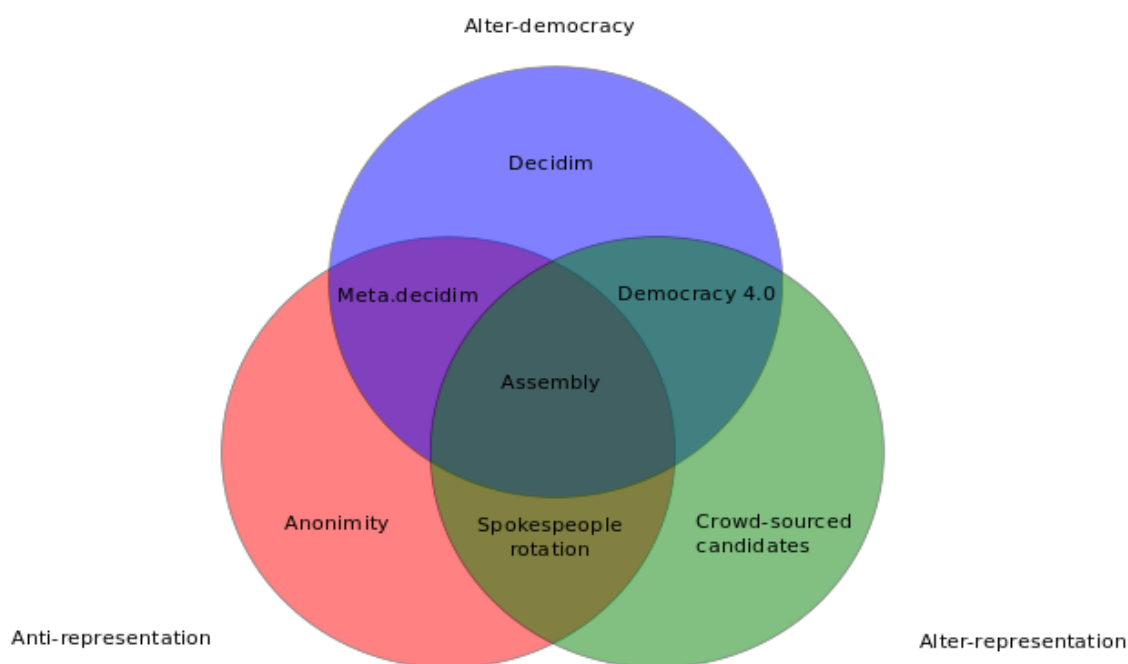


FIGURE 66. 15M CYCLE DISCOURSE: REPRESENTATION

7.3. What are the key democratic and technopolitical practices from 15M to Decidim.barcelona?

The second question formulated in the introduction concerned key practices within the cycle. I broke it down into various sub-questions, which I use here to help in my exploration. I first describe what I believe are key practices of each stage (social, electoral, institutional) and then explore different aspects of them. Following the two

key “matters of concern” of our exposition, democracy and technopolitics, throughout the exploration I will differentiate democratic practices and technopolitical practices, and will stress when they are clearly interconnected. In the case of democratic practices, I also clarify the variety of democratic models (participatory, autonomist, deliberative, etc.) with which they can be associated, as well as their relation to representation (anti-, alter-, non-representational). I choose and enumerate only paradigmatic practices, going case by case first (sections 3.1., 3.2., 3.3.) and then noting some continuities and commonalities of the cycle (section 3.4.).

7.3.1. 15M: democratic and technopolitical practices

In chapter 4, part 4, I described some key 15M democratic and technopolitical practices. I recapitulate them here. I will comment first on some that concerned democracy but not technopolitics.

The alter-democratic practice par excellence during the 15M period was that of the open, popular assembly. The key one from the viewpoint of democracy. This was a genuine addition of the camps to the previous Nolesvotes’s cyberactivist repertoire and DRY’s technopolitical one. The alter-democratic practice of gathering in squares to voice one’s personal situation and position on collective issues, as well as to listen to others, followed by deliberation, combined elements of the deliberative (in the open dialogues between people), autonomist (generating temporary autonomous zones), and the antagonist (by appealing to the citizenry and opposing the political Establishment) models. The practice of assembling included sets of other practices, from using hand signals to turn taking and waiting. Probably the most paradigmatic one was that of active listening, based on an openness to others against the competitive thrust of modern life, or even the agonistic model of the ancient Greek assembly.

Two other paradigmatic examples of 15M practices, camping and direct action, could rather be taken as examples of anti- or non-representation: forms of doing politics directly, against, or without reference to representation.

Then, the continuous renewal of spokespeople, a form of delegation subordinated to forms of direct involvement in politics during the camps (such as the assembly), could be categorized as a mixture of anti- and alter-representationalism.

A whole complementary set was composed by paradigmatic technopolitical practices. Alter-representation was essayed in the field of media by streaming and

social media narrations carried on by 15M activists. This was a form of democratizing information and communication (Cardon & Grandjou, 2004; DellaPorta, 2013). Direct participation in events (analogous and connected to camping or demonstrations) was also carried on through in social media by those that were not present at the squares (used by 61,5% of 15M participants, according Monterde et al., 2017). People could act without representative mediators, and to do so in multiple ways: voicing opinions and dispositions, interacting with others, recording or uploading videos (11,6% of participants used video, according to the same survey), etc. Differently from talk of “de-intermediation”, it is worth stressing that, even if the number of representative mediators declined, the number of technological mediations increased with regard to previous movements, making of social media a new condition of possibility of emerging forms of collective action. Forms of non- and anti-representation, on the other, were typical of the radical community management of key 15M accounts: the goal was not to represent others but rather to enroll them, to mobilize affects, to gather and circulate information and arguments. People behind those accounts were “reluctant leaders” (Gerbaudo, 2012): they held positions that generated asymmetries of power, but not resulting from representative leadership. Finally, multi-layer practices (58.8% of participants in the cited survey) resulted from the multiple hybridization of direct participation in and between digital and urban spaces.

I want to synthesize now the list of practices mentioned so far from the viewpoint of representation and democracy.

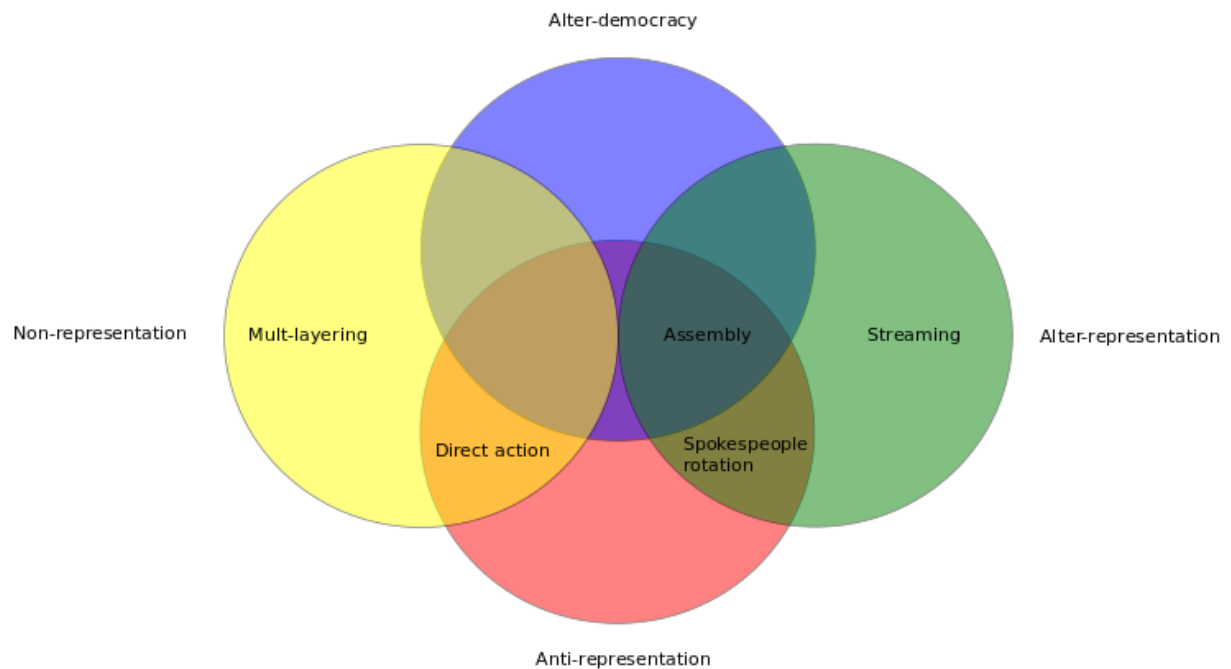


FIGURE 67. 15M PRACTICES: REPRESENTATION.

It is worth stressing that non-representational practices (distinguishable from anti-representational and alter-representational ones), otherwise, practices without regard or reference to representation, occupy a bigger role than they did in discourses, where they were not centrally thematized. Thereby, I include now a new, yellow circle to the scheme of analysis. As a second innovation in the analysis, here I present a map of key democratic and technopolitical practices and their overlapping. I situate them in one circle or another depending on the weight of each of these two central poles.

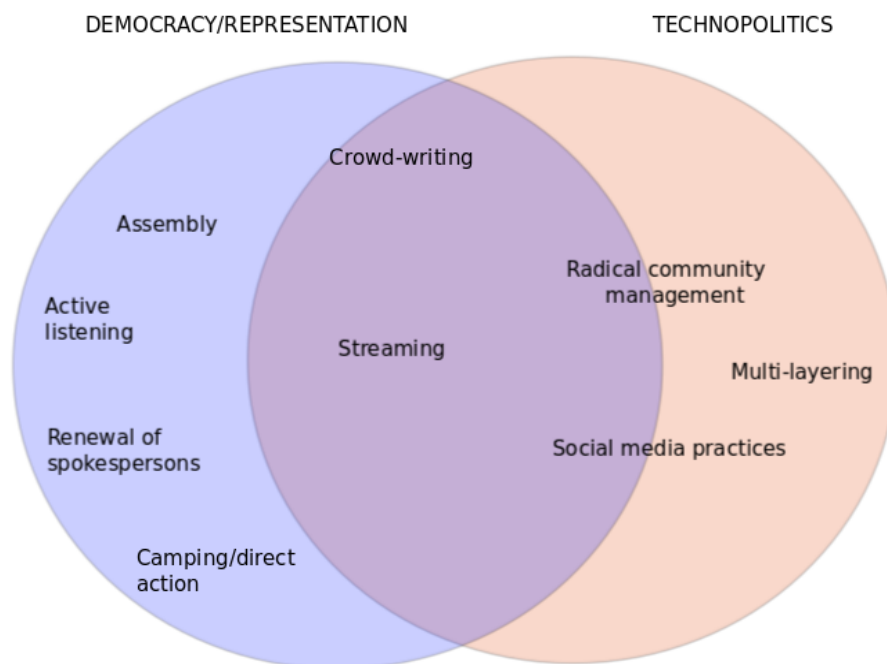


FIGURE 68. 15M PRACTICES: DEMOCRACY & TECHNOPOLITICS.

All of the mentioned practices converged into the multitudinous, multi-layered assemblage that 15M was.

As I show in the following scheme, they covered a variety of alter-democratic models. 15M demonstrations and citizen legislative initiatives such as the PAH's were forms of contention that may be situated within the republican and the antagonist models. Differently, networked camps and popular assemblies connected with both the autonomist and the antagonist models, with a deliberative element in the case of the assemblies. Manifestos had the strongly discursive, affective, and articulating elements valued within the antagonist model, while the networked communication fell more into the autonomist one.

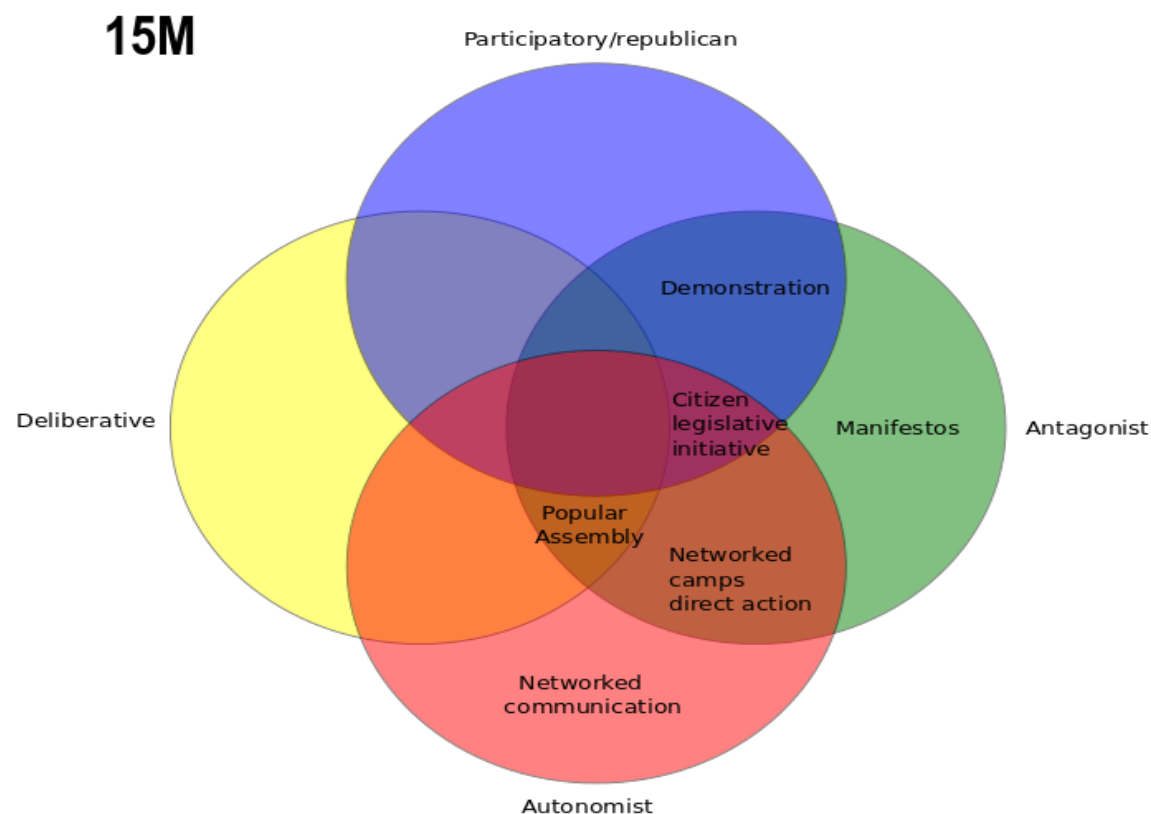


FIGURE 69. 15M PRACTICES: ALTER-DEMOCRACY

7.3.2. X Party: democratic and technopolitical practices

Although numerous democratic and technopolitical practices remained, many others changed drastically from 15M to the X Party. As noted in chapter 5, the party explicitly defined itself as a space for method-driven federation of competences, collaboration, and problem solving, not a space for discussion or ideology. This reflected the influences of free software and hacktivism cultures that preceded 15M and wiped out the “assembly” element that had become so prominent in the square period. In the X Party, the most innovative practices from the viewpoint of democracy and representation were almost always connected to technopolitics. As I noticed in chapter 5, this betrays the fact that key people behind the X Party were seasoned 15M technopolitical activists³⁸⁵.

Probably the most controverted X Party practice was the anti-representationalism of anonymity in communication. This practice, maintained only during the first months,

³⁸⁵Among them, Javier Toret in Barcelona, involved in setting up the DRY Barcelona node, Francisco Jurado, responsible for doing the same in Sevilla, or Simona Levi, X.net head already in the cyberactivist struggles of the late 2000s.

showed the tensions between 15M cycle experimental practices and mainstream representation logics in politics and media. When the time came to give concrete party representatives, X Party practices were oriented towards alter-representation: candidates were collaboratively listed and filtered (section 5.4.). Anyone could propose anybody as a candidate, and then vote to prioritize them. Under the X Party model of meritocracy, active members of the network had some privileges to both being elected and voting, but the process was probably the most open for selecting candidates of a party ever occurred in Spain.

Probably its most interesting alter-democratic (actually, wikicratic) practice was that of crowd-writing its political program, which enacted its ideas around how wikilegislation should work. It showed how the knowledge and expertise of hundreds of people could be put to work into a collaborative effort: the collaborative writing of Democracy, Period. The process was open but also filtered: it began with a draft, and the process of approval of amendments was carefully moderated by X Party members.

Another innovative, non-representational technopolitical practice deployed by this initiative, crowd-funding its campaign, was surely an innovation with regard to both 15M and established party repertoires, and was oriented to potentiate transparency and independence from banks, as reclaimed by 15M three years earlier.

Differently, other technopolitical practices such as multi-layering, streaming, radical community management or general intensive ICT use for organizational and communication more broadly were passed on from 15M struggles into the everyday work of the party. This showed the practical continuity of the cycle, while practices such as moderated crowd-writing or anonymity translated into the new stage earlier practices of fully open crowd-writing and spokespeople rotation.

I resume now the situation of X Party practices with regard to my representation and democracy schema.

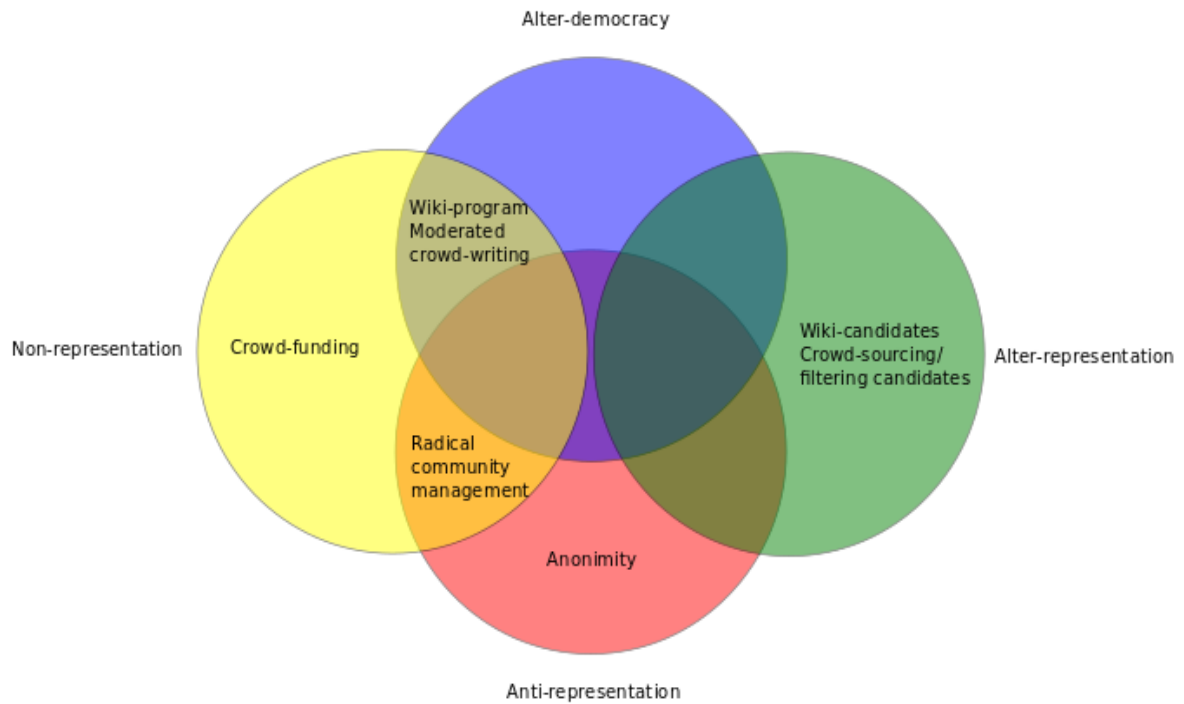


FIGURE 70. X PARTY PRACTICES: REPRESENTATION.

With regard to relations of technopolitics and democracy, the map shows a considerable growth in technologically mediations of key practices. I leave many earlier practices in the figure and include the new ones in bold.

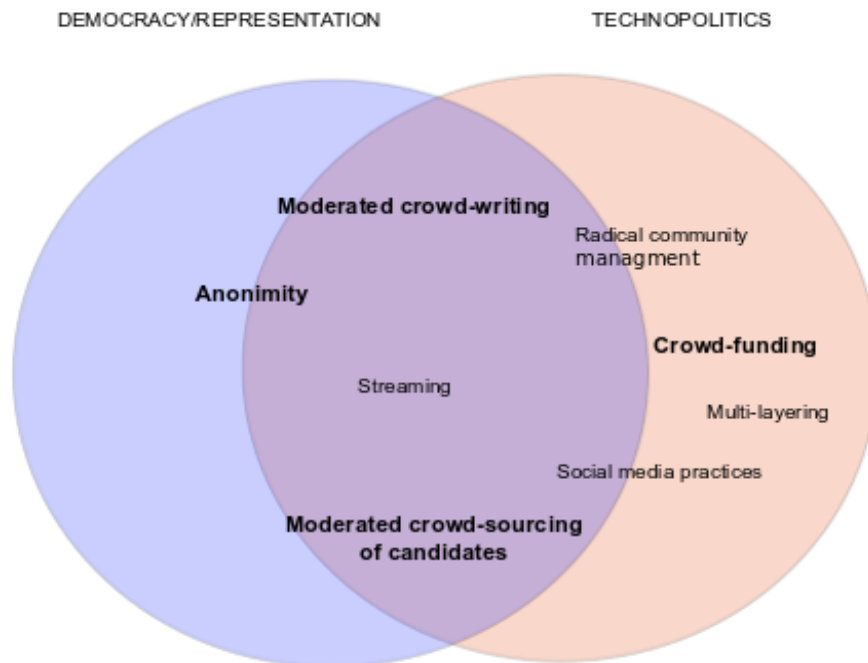


FIGURE 71. X PARTY PRACTICES: DEMOCRACY & TECHNOPOLITICS.

The various practices of the party fell within various models of alter-democracy, usually combining several of them. It is relevant to stress that, differently from the 15M case, the X Party processes implied, more or less strongly depending on whether we are talking of the “communication guerrilla” or the “party” side, a reference to modern political representation. The internal elaboration of the party program implied collaboration in an autonomist fashion, with the public part implied a distance between insiders and outsiders that gave it a participatory touch. Deliberation played its role in both the internal and external part. Similarly, the crowd-sourcing and filtering of political candidates implied such participatory elements. Like in the 15M case, the deployment of social media and networked communication fell clearly within the autonomist model while the communication guerrilla combined it with an antagonist element.

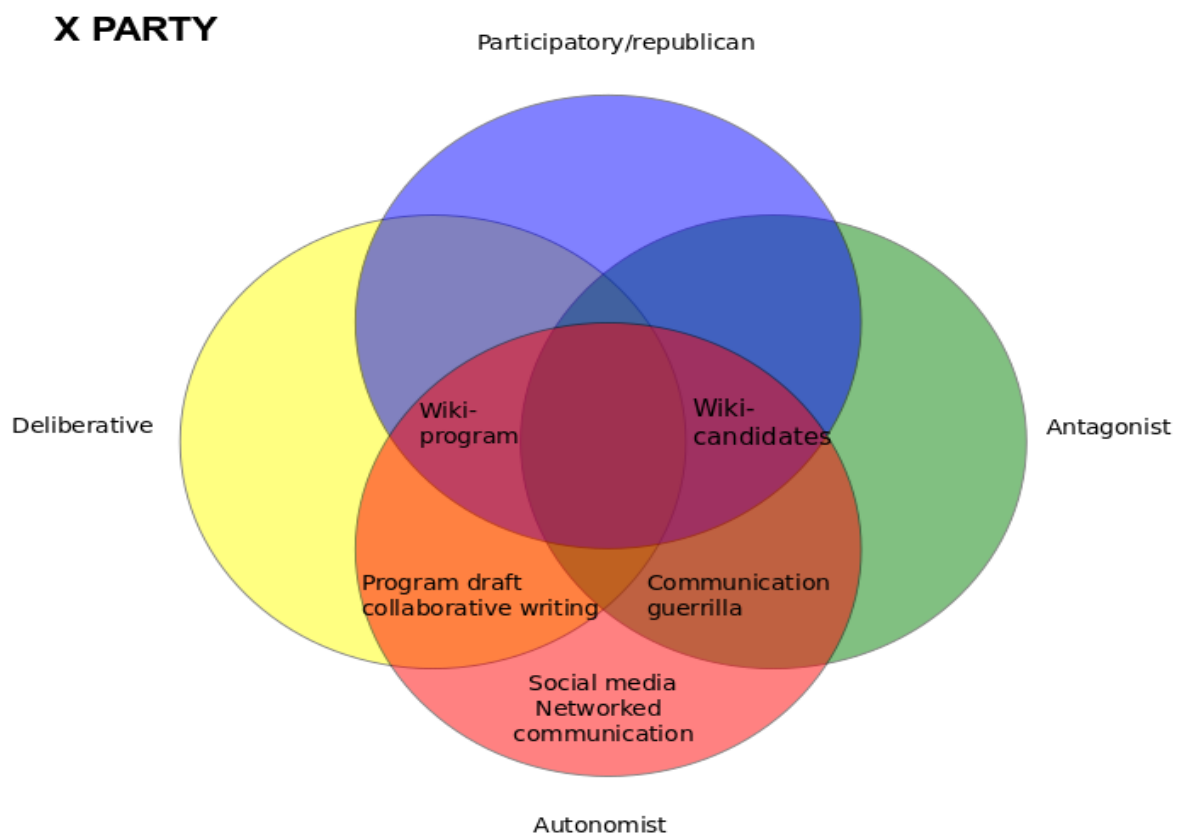


FIGURE 72. X PARTY PRACTICES: ALTER-DEMOCRACY.

7.3.3. Decidim: democratic and technopolitical practices

In the case of Decidim, practices of democracy and technopolitics were tied even closer together. In chapter 6 I underlined three sets: practices of technoacratism, practices of technopolitical production, and practices of technopolitical participation. As noticed there, these sets of practices combine different cultural repertoires, primarily, those of free software, ICT use, and political participation.

Among the practices of technopolitical production that I listed there were the sharing and collaborative production of source code in real time, the application of free licenses, the design of new participation infrastructures and processes, or the articulation of practices of coordination.

Technoacratism practices focused on constructing the conditions for democratizing many of these processes, otherwise, to open them to anyone and everyone, which has already been achieved via events such as MetaDecidim in the area of the design of participation infrastructures and processes, and, to a lesser extent, via free programming. Processes such as MetaDecidim aim to question the technocratic governance of digital infrastructures, frequently connected, in the case of public institutions, with representative structures.

When it comes to technopolitical participation, the Decidim project has displayed as many varieties of alter-democracy as afforded by the hybrid processes built on top of it. Key practices of technopolitical participation have included multi-layering action, collective deliberation, collaborative production and evaluation of proposals, as well as making things visible and traceable. Here the hybridization of practices of participation and deliberation combine with technopolitical ones, bringing new possibilities and challenges.

The following map outlines practices ranging from anti-representation to alter-representation in the production and participation around Decidim. Collective deliberation is a typical example of alter-democratic practice. Visibilization, as an example of alter-representation, and free licensing, of non-representational practices. Others, such as democratic design or the collaborative production of proposals mixed various types.

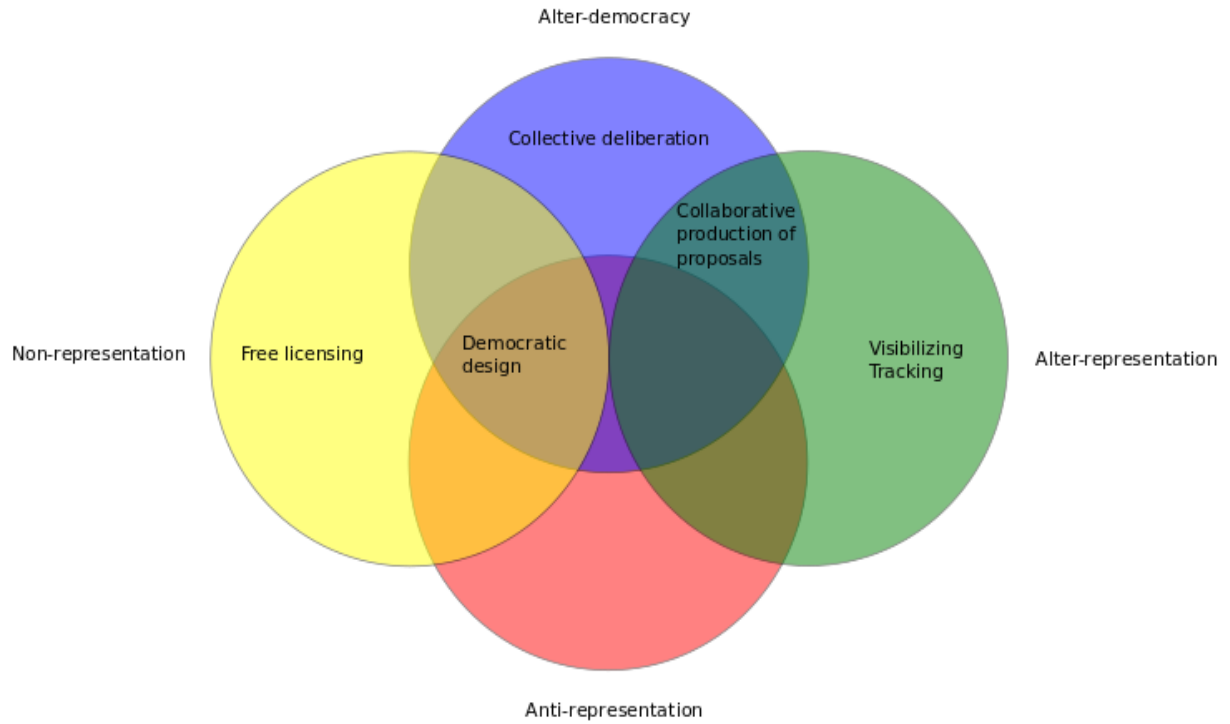


FIGURE 73. DECIDIM.BARCELONA PRACTICES: REPRESENTATION.

The following map shows the level of overlapping between democratic and technopolitical practices.

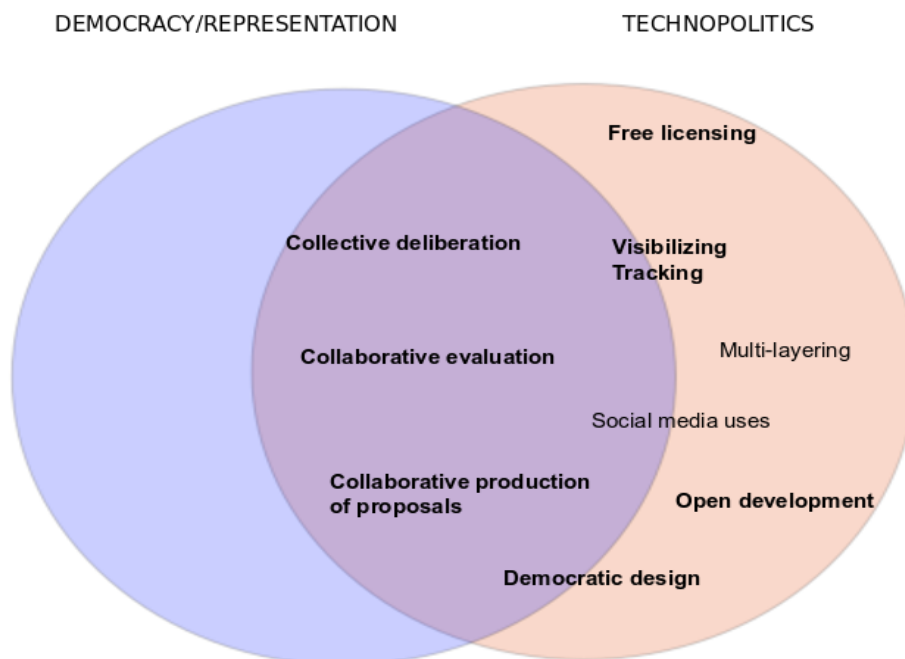


FIGURE 74. DECIDIM.BARCELONA PRACTICES: DEMOCRACY & TECHNOPOLITICS.

Finally, I want to situate Decidim in relation to the various models of democracy analyzed in chapter 2. Instead of concrete practices I use processes in which they are incorporated. Wikigovernment is a participatory possibility afforded by Decidim, while wikilegislation is already being deployed. Debates (a deliberative functionality) and networked communication (an autonomist feature) are also included in the project as of late 2016.

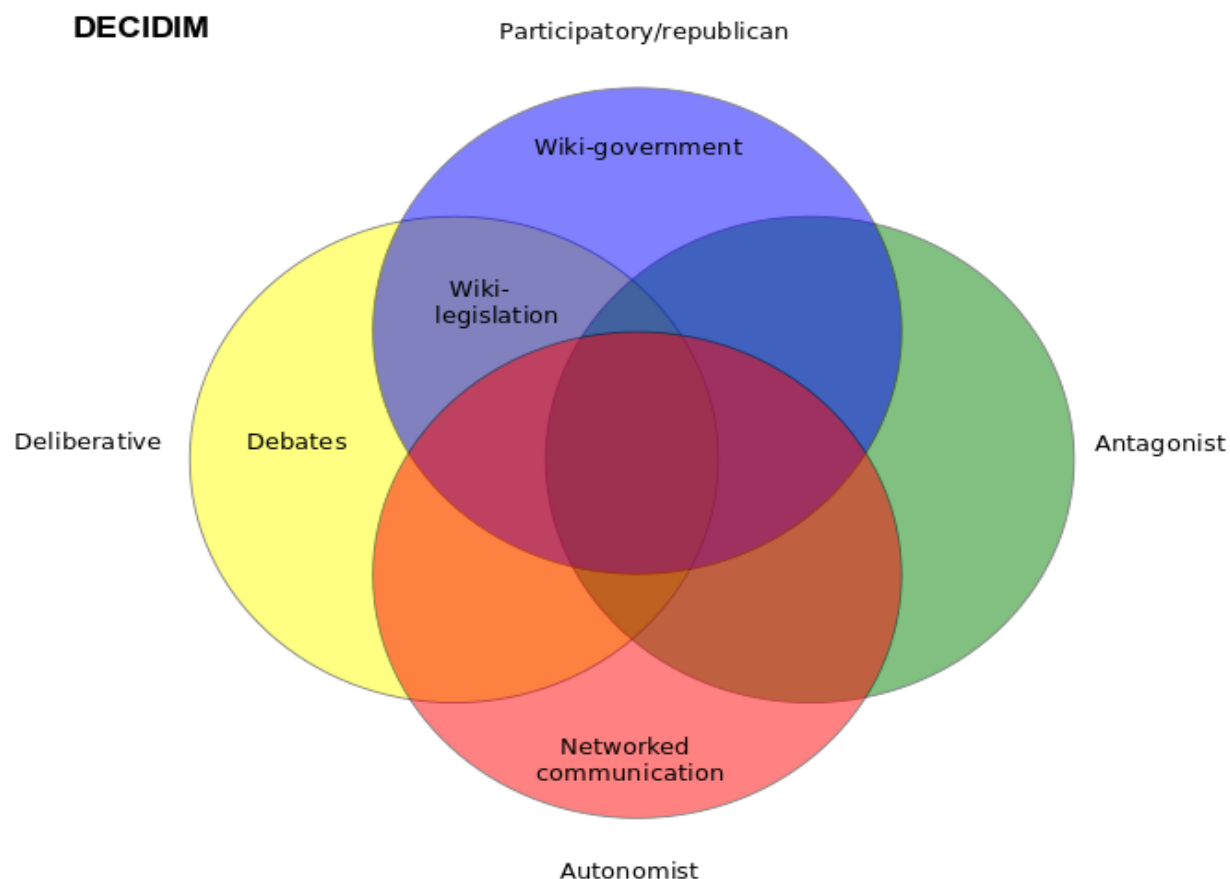


FIGURE 75. DECIDIM.BARCELONA PRACTICES: ALTER-DEMOCRACY.

7.3.4. Practical commonalities of the cycle

After recapitulating practices in each case, I want to bring a combined map that displays some representative practices in connection to the various alter-democratic models analyzed in chapter 2.

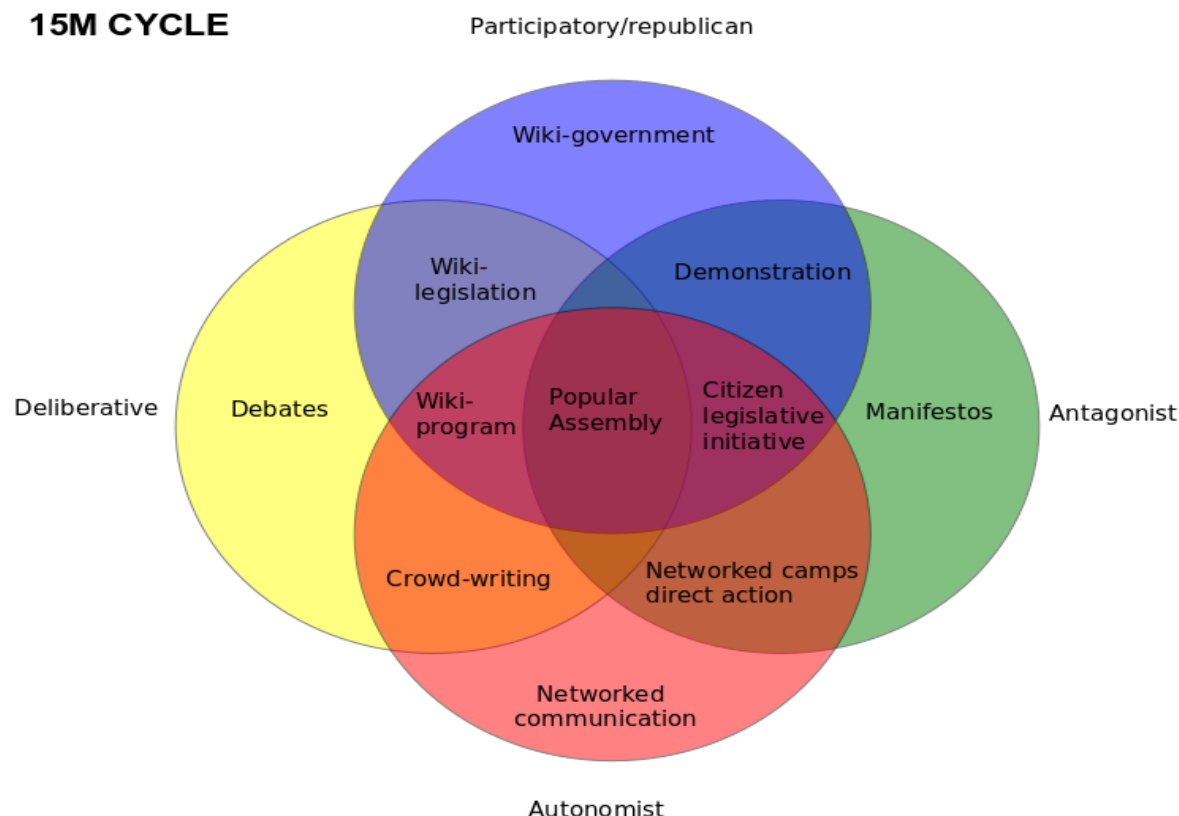
15M CYCLE

FIGURE 76. 15M CYCLE PRACTICES: ALTER-DEMOCRACY.

This map shows how practices in 15M displayed multiple combinatorial possibilities of alter-democratic models. It shows the richness of the cycle. A key issue emerges: that of what, if anything, they had in common. There are a number of commonalities and continuities that are worth stressing.

Alter-democratic discourses. The first, most obvious one, is the continuity of the contentious discourse around democracy and the alternatives to the existing neoliberal representative model.

Alter-democratic and technopolitical practices. What I have called technopolitical reassembling of democracy was operative at the movement stage, during the electoral assault, as well as during the institutional one. As shown in the empirical chapters, practices connected to democracy and representation and practices hybridizing technologies and politics, otherwise, technopolitics, were crucial on every stage of the cycle. These experiments opened new venues for taking part and, to that extent, one may say they launched experiments in democratization in various spheres of political life, be it social movements, parties, or institutions. This is true even if many of the new initiatives, channels or practices, taken in isolation, had their

own limits from a democratic perspective. Concrete practices were maintained throughout the cycle, and their general types did so too.

Technopolitical actors. A number of actors, with whom I have collaborated through much of the 5-year period, participated in numerous initiatives within the cycle. Hacktivist and technopolitical activists like Simona Levi or Javier Toret have reappeared as participants in pre-15M struggles, 15M projects, as well as the X Party. Francisco Jurado or Moreno Yagüe took part in various 15M initiatives as well as in the X Party. Others such as Arnau Monterde have participated in all of these, as well as in Decidim, making him not only a recognized researcher of the cycle (Monterde, 2015) but also a transversal participant. Technopolitical activists such as Madrid participation councilor Pablo Soto, or innovators in democracy such as Xabier Barandiaran or Miguel Arana did also participate in all of these initiatives, except for the X Party. These people are only a few, but they embody appropriately the technopolitical networks and trends within 15M.

Democratization from below. The 15M cycle has not only challenged relevant features, attributes, or practices of liberal representative democracy (and its associated idea of representative democratization), but also the list of driving actors and factors to look at in these processes. We have shown how key challenges and changes have been driven by citizen initiatives (and, perhaps, subaltern elites) rather than by established elites.

Action and participation over representation. It is also worth stressing the priority of participation and doing. Most of these practices involved a tendency towards new forms of taking part, otherwise, of participation, opposed to representation (or associated practices, such as delegation). Doing and taking part were prioritized over, generated or defined being (identity), and challenged representation. This can be appreciated in examples ranging from the emergence of multitudinous identities out of communication in 15M, in the discursive centrality of “doing” in the X Party, or the idea of a recursive active citizenry in the Decidim case.

Conditions of possibility and conditions of reality/existence. ICTs were not only conditions of possibility, they rather operated as conditions of reality (or existence): they crucially contributed to the new shapes of collective identities, organization, and action. Multitudinous identities, networked assemblages and augmented communicative events were an example in the case of the 15M movement. An anonymous citizen network, a federation of competences, and collaborative work

were examples in the case of the X Party. Finally, communities of active and recursive citizens, networks of technopolitical production and participation, and collective decision making in the Decidim case.

Common problems. Nevertheless, it is also relevant to notice that many of these experimental forms had problems to accomplish the goals set up for them and thereby to endure in time. The assembly was a paradigmatic case in the 15M period: a few weeks showed its limitations for collective decision making. Interestingly, parts of the networked assemblage, particularly digital networks, endured in time and remained operative well after 15M decayed qua movement and gave way to alternative projects. In the electoral assault, the networked citizen network form also fell short of its stated goals and was deactivated for the most part. Part of its limits had to do with its controlled growth strategy, its hard and yet informal system of meritocracy, and its lack of access to key media spaces which may have reinforced its multi-layer communication dynamics. Finally, Decidim faces the double challenge of mobilizing citizenry as well as institutional actors (politicians and technicians, mostly). To connect to processes of an agonist nature may be crucial for its success.

Common challenges. Finally, traditional challenges of movements, parties, and public institutions, which are challenges of collective action, remained present. One was to achieve the required levels of WUNC, worthiness, union, numbers and commitment across time, even if these may have been redefined by ICTs and the reduction of costs of collective action. A second one was to keep in check different forms of power asymmetries and exclusion. The third, to achieve social wider social transformation. As shown in the empirical chapters, each of these three points, especially the last two, remained open in the projects analyzed.

7.4. How does the reassembling period 2011-2016 look like from a sociopolitical and ontological perspective?

The third and last general question formulated in the introduction of this thesis concerned the transformations associated to the 15M cycle's reassembling of democracy. The first sub-point of this question concerned the key changes in social movements', parties' and State institutions' forms. The second sub-point concerned changes in political ontology. I address these two sub-questions now.

7.4.1. Transformations in sociopolitical forms

7.4.1.1. Social movements within the 15M cycle

The challenges and changes with regard to social movements can be synthesized in four interrelated categories: communication, practices, organization, and identity.

In chapter 4, section 4.2.2. I noticed (rewording Castells, 2012) the popularization of multitudinous (self)communication in 15M: the ecosystems of peer-to-peer, one-to-many, and many-to-many communication afforded by social media, streaming, or etherpads was a novelty with regard to earlier movements.

In section 4.3. I noticed how these new forms of communication were involved in multi-layered and multi-layering practices, performances, and settings, which appear as a central addition to previous repertoires of contention. The combination of multitudinous self-communication and multi-layered practices were two core elements of 15M technopolitics. This addition implied a democratization of sorts (irrespective of the degree of commitment they required or their internal democratic character), since it multiplied (and frequently eased) the ways in which people could enroll themselves into social movements. It also blurred the in-out, participants-audience, boundaries of movements, as suggested by Monterde (2015).

In terms of the types of organization, in section 5.1. of that chapter, I described the emergence of networked assemblages that represent an innovation with regard to movements in the previous decade (Gerbaudo, 2016). On the other hand, temporally distributed leadership may be a related innovation in movement organizational forms. More comparative research is needed.

Finally, also in 5.1. I analyzed the shape of 15M connective, multitudinous identities, and how they pose challenges to the tradition of collective identities in social movement theory.

Opening new forms, venues and practices of information, communication and participation, allowing a temporally distributed leadership, or constructing non-identification based multitudinous identities contributed to both challenging representation and even democratizing some aspects of social movements. Most of these challenges to the social movement form had technopolitics (as a syntax, semantics and pragmatics) at their core.

When combined with practices such as the general assembly form or its anti-representationalist challenges to (internal and external) representation, many of these features seem to outline a peculiar technopolitical and alter-democratic model

that challenges and changes the social movement form. Some of its innovative features have become characteristic of an emerging genre of networked movements (conspicuously, within the wave of networked movements of the squares), but rarely in a more developed, anti-representationalist and democracy-centered shape than in 15M (for comparison, see Gerbaudo, 2012, 2016). All that said, much comparative research is required.

7.4.1.2. Political parties

When it comes to political parties, in chapter 5 section 6.1. I recurred to Gunther & Diamond (2003) triple axis for party classification, which attends to organization, program and disposition towards the system. I noticed how the structure of the X Party was thin and informal in comparison to mainstream parties in Spain, and how its reliance on ICTs justifies qualifying it as “networked”. Then I noticed how its core program had a democratic element but was open to variation because it depended on the results of a process of collaborative writing. The method was the key of that process and thereby I have defined the party as “procedural”. Finally, the party had a clearly subversive disposition towards the status quo. Networked, democratic-procedural, and subversive seem appropriate qualifications for defining the X Party under Gunther and Diamond classification. Innovative practices such as wikiprograms, crowd-sourced candidates, and campaign crowd-funding seem to herald the advent of transformations in the party form. In some cases, these are similar to those happening in social movements and connect with some of the prognostics by Bimber (2003) and Castells (1996) about post-bureaucratic and networked organizations. Within what may be labelled as the “networked parties genre”³⁸⁶ (in which others such as the Pirate Party may be situated), the X Party would count as “networked democratic”, or “wiki-democratic”. The distance with earlier party types, such as the catch-all and the cartel party forms (with examples like PP and PSOE, in Spain), which are based on a clear top-down hierarchy, closed programs and candidacies, and well-defined media figures, is marked. The X Party’s emphasis in “doing”, its lack of interest in “constituency representation” (many of the X Party processes were opened to anyone, and its elaboration was oriented by “doing” and merit) also distances it from the movement party form as described by

³⁸⁶ Some of these elements are proper of a rising genre of networked parties, but others, such as its practices of anonymity, the centrality of the democratic question, or the subversive character, all of them connected with a movement such as 15M, were a rather idiosyncratic combination.

Kitschelt (1989).

Like in 15M, these changes came connected to technopolitical practices, a questioning of traditional representation, new forms of participation, as well as a strong alter-democratic discourse. These last points, as well its situation within the 15M cycle, make of it a very particular case within the emerging networked party genre.

7.4.1.3. State/public institutions

In section 6, chapter 5, I noticed how Decidim brings two institutional challenges to both municipal government and public institutions: the challenge of an alter-democratization by participation and the challenge of institutional incorporation of technopolitics (with its increase in possible performances, visibility, relationality, etc.). I would synthesize the former as its “distribution” challenge, and the second as its “augmentation” challenge.

The challenge of alter-democratization resulted from specific possibilities such as the wikigovernment and wikilegislation (or co-production of public policies and norms) afforded by Decidim³⁸⁷. Decidim has been discursively and practically oriented to promote a distributed democracy insofar as it aims to potentiate forms of control of public power by, sharing of public power with, and transference of public power back to, social actors. Building beyond this suggestion, as a public-common software open to reutilization and redesign by any other organization, Decidim is also oriented to potentiate democratic forms of organization and decision making in wider society (rather than only on the sphere of the State and its relations to society).

The challenge of augmentation comes from the institutional and cultural innovation that technopolitical discourses and practices associated to ICTs, as well as the new possibilities they open for acting together (as seen in the first Decidim processes) pose to traditional ways of institutional and bureaucratic functioning.

As I noted in chapter 6, social-democratic as well as neoliberal models of the State, but also more recent open government models, are challenged by the idea of public-common model of what I have defined as “common government”, oriented towards the reconstruction and redistribution of public power and resources through new forms of (technopolitical) participation and autonomous self-organization. This still forming model, (connectable to the normative discourse around a distributed and

³⁸⁷ Whether these forms should remain merely consultative or become binding, in what cases and under what conditions, has been a debate that remains open as of late 2016.

augmented democracy) must be differentiated from the usual open government models, which still move within a model of State and democracy fully compatible with neoliberalism. It has been suggested that State democratization is one of the biggest and systemic potential impacts of movements (Amenta & Caren, 2004, Amenta et al., 2010). Initiatives within 15M cycle may be advancing, albeit with many limits, on this front.

7.4.1.4. Resume

A key matter of concern both in discourse and practice throughout the 15M cycle was democracy and its reassembling. A thread that runs through the various cases analyzed. This was a struggle for a different model of democracy, a democratic and meta-democratic contention. During the cycle, the movement, the party, and the State forms (as well as the relations between the three) were tinkered with, in a process of pre-figuring out what democracy may be, both in discourse and practice. By running through these three fields, the 15M cycle amounted to a longitudinal experiment into alter-democratization. As shown in previous sections, technopolitical practices were central to this reassembling.

To provide a provisional situation of the transformations experimented through the cycle within a wider historical scheme, I may recur to Manin's (1997) scheme on types of representative government, combined with Gunther & Diamond's (2003) classification of parties, as well as Kellner's (1999) and Bimber's (2003) notes on information technologies. The issue is whether projects and possibilities in the 15M cycle point towards a fourth model of representative government (after Parliamentarianism, party democracy, and audience democracy) or, rather, towards alternatives to representative government and the liberal representative ontology, more broadly. Another option is that they do both. I suggest that, under the crisis of neoliberal representation, processes such as the 15M cycle imply an experimentation with alter-democratic subtypes of an emerging networked democracy, at least, at the local level. The 15M cycle, its failures, successes and challenges, may give a push to, and a shaper of, a new model of democracy in Spain.

TABLE 17. 15M CYCLE AND SOCIOPOLITICAL FORMS.

Types of representative government	PARTY GOVERNMENT 1850s-1960s	C	AUDIENCE DEMOCRACY 1970s-1990s	C	NETWORKED DEMOCRACY 2010s
Types of Party	Mass Party: class mass; Leninist; pluralist nationalist, etc.		Electoralist party: personalist, catch-all; movement party		Networked parties: wikidemocratic
Types of movements	Worker's movements Civil rights movements		New social movements: ecologist, feminist, indigenous, etc.		Networked social movements: networked social movement of the square
Types of State/ government	Bureaucratic representative		Neoliberal representative vs Social-democratic		Networked government: Open government vs Common government
Relations Society- Party-State	Party penetration of society and State		Media politics and society		Networked mediation of society and participation
Information & communication technologies	PRESS, RADIO		TV		ICTs
Political information & communication structure	Mass communication One to many		Mass communication One to many		Multitudinous self- communication Peer to peer One to many Many to many

7.4.2. New forms of political ontology within the 15M cycle

As I systematically showed in part 6.2 of every empirical chapter, each stage of the cycle implied a challenge of sorts to the modern political ontology and an exploration of alternative ones. According to our reconstruction in chapter 2, the liberal representative ontology, as a model, is populated by selfish individuals that try to primarily forward their private interests in their relations to others, with markets as a prime mode of association and State representation (allegedly oriented to aggregate interests) as a secondary and subordinate one, which must primarily guarantee the rule of private property and free exchange. This is the model of a depoliticized society that, according to 15M denunciations, ended up making of people

“commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers”.

As an alternative, the 15M cycle has generated a changing and expanding ecosystem of technopolitical discourses, practices and infrastructures that point towards hybrid, alter-democratic ontologies. They promiscuously combined elements coming from the participatory, autonomist, antagonist and deliberative models of democracy. In the case of the X Party and Decidim, these actually combine with the representative framework too. This suggests the question of political ontology may not be a binary, “yes or no”, “this world or that world”, a cosmopolitical “choice” (choice being a typical liberal concept) as suggested by some STS scholars (Woolgar & Lezaun, 2013). Rather, it seems to be an anarchic matter of practice, in which new worlds may begin to emerge without being able to break (at least, not in principle) the shell of the old. Such hybridization has generated many tensions, the paradigmatic one being the struggles around representation throughout the cycle, from 15M to Decidim.

7.4.2.1. 15M's political ontology

As seen in chapter 4, there were two central models to think the politics and ontology of the movement, both in discourse and, especially, in practice: the networked assemblage and the assembly. Under the model of the network assemblage, 15M exhibited clearly autonomist aspects in the emergence of subject and collective forms that questioned representation, self-organized as polycentric multitudes via networked communication, and were characterized by their affectivity³⁸⁸. Concretely, the actors generated multitudinous identities, a complex and non-identification based collective form, emerging out of networked communication. Furthermore, a line of discourse and practice around the politics of infrastructure, concretely around n-1, also displayed a clearly autonomist perspective (or constituent, to put it in Papadopoulos', 2011 terms), which partially oriented 15M technopolitics towards the construction of alternative material conditions for collective action.

Differently, under the assembly model, we could see aspects closer to the deliberative democracy ontology. In a humanist fashion (clearly distinguishable from the post-humanist one around the network assemblage), the assembly model was associated to face to face deliberation and active listening between persons in open squares.

³⁸⁸ One of those affects was “indignation [...] the raw material of revolt and rebellion”, according to Hardt & Negri (2009: 236).

It is worth noticing that autonomist and deliberative aspects can be connected into what Gerbaudo (2016) considers the “anarchist” thread of 15M. I believe it is this thread where the deeper challenges to the existing, representative model of democracy, were explored. Then he correctly notices the presence of another, populist thread (as discussed in chapter 2). This can be appreciated in the DRY manifesto’s references to “the common citizen” and how this common citizenry is discursively constructed in antagonistic opposition to the political and financial elites. All these elements (autonomist, deliberative, antagonist) were present during the 15M period and suggest an anarchic and hybrid ontology (or constellations of them).

7.4.2.2. X Party’s political ontology

In the X Party’s case, the most innovative collective form both in discourse and practice was probably that of the networked expert citizenry, able to define a new model of democracy and to address social problems. Rather than markets or representation (like in the liberal representative model) or discourse in civil society (like in the deliberative one), the primary form of association in this case was the federated networking of competences, something that the X Party aimed itself to embody. The primary relation was not of competition nor assembly deliberation but of direct collaboration in common problems. This case shows, again, a clear influence of an autonomist ontology. It also embodies a slightly different version of the “anarchist thread” of the 15M cycle, less deliberative and more action-oriented. Like in the case of the 15M movement, it is easy to find an antagonist (or populist) element in the X Party’s discourse, which confronted the networked expert citizenry that solves problems and the political and economic elites who generate them. Finally, the X Party’s discourse also included a participatory element (wikigovernment, wikilegislation) that resulted from the tension between a deeper autonomist tendency and the need to address (in Democracy, Period) the institutional space of representative democracy.

7.4.2.3. Decidim’s political ontology

In the case of Decidim, there are various subject and collective forms being contentiously constructed in discourse and practice. They are different for the case of the technopolitical production of Decidim and for the case of the technopolitical participation through Decidim. In the case of technopolitical production I underlined the twin figures of the technoacrat and the recursive citizenry. While the former is an

institutional technician that tries to network, distribute, and democratize its own function (while constructing infrastructures and practices that may potentiate similar democratizing processes elsewhere in society), the latter is a citizenry that takes over some of those functions and helps to define the infrastructures that made possible its own exercise of citizenship in a networked democracy. This case combines elements of the autonomist and participatory ontologies of democracy within software production, design and governance. Decidim advances into the technopolitical practice of constructing alternative materialities for democracy essayed in 15M with n-1, now in a problematic yet also powerful alignment with the paradigm of representation, the State form.

Differently, in the field of technopolitical participation, the preeminent ontology is the participatory one. Decidim is oriented to nurture the construction of a technopolitical active citizenry, which can experiment with new forms of multi-layered participation and self-organization involving digital platforms. New infrastructures, practices, and cultures will have to be constructed for this to consolidate and spread, thereby initiatives such as the formative courses for a digital citizenship. Under the State form, the participatory ontology is limited by the representative one, while is stretched into alter-democratic directions by it's the autonomist and deliberative possibilities afforded by (or planned for) Decidim. These alter-democratic possibilities connect, perhaps strongly than ever, to technopolitics.

7.4.2.4. Resume

I present now a table that somehow recapitulates the key elements of the ontologies posed in discourse and practice by projects within the 15M cycle. It shows how each case performed various ontological models, generating new potentialities, tensions and limits. The result was an emerging ecosystem of practices and discourses outlining hybrid ontologies in a landscape that was primarily anarchic in character.

TABLE 18. 15M CYCLE: HYBRID AND ANARCHIC POLITICAL ONTOLOGIES.

Model	Political ontology	Subject form	Collective form	Modes of political relation
15M/Assembly	Deliberative Antagonist Autonomist	Person Indignant Common citizen	Popular assemblies	Dialogue, active listening, contentious demanding
15M/Networked Assemblage	Autonomist Antagonist	Singularities Anyone	Networked multitude	Networked/ technopolitical communication
X Party	Autonomist Antagonist Participatory	Expert citizen	Networked (expert) citizenry	Collaboration meritocracy federation of competences
Decidim/ Technopolitical production	Autonomist Participatory	Technocrat Recursive citizen	Recursive citizenry	Commoning Networked/ technopolitical communication
Decidim/ Technopolitical participation	Participatory	Networked active citizen	Networked active citizenry	Coproduction Self/governance

7.4.3. What have been the characteristics of the process as a whole?

7.4.3.1. How and why did discourses and practices change?

Seen retrospectively, various aspects of the discourses and practices within the 15M cycle did indeed change. A key question connected to the previous two sections is that of how and why these discourses and practices changed. On the basis of the analyses in chapters 4, 5, and 6 I will first resume what I see as the general directions of the cycle I reconstructed. Then, I will recapitulate some factors driving those changes.

Directions

Pre-figuration and realization of democracy. A continuous thread was that of pre-figuring out and realizing what democracy may be. In this case, “realizing” has the double sense of exploring various key forms of liberal representative democracy (society, parties, State) and enacting various forms of anti-representationalism and

alter-democratization in each of them.

Institutionalization. In this sense, a general direction in my reconstruction was towards institutionalization, albeit not towards representation. The peak when it comes to representation, actually, came with the electoral moment and the X Party. With Decidim, as with the advent of the institutional moment more broadly, the key question becomes how to transform and create new institutions, as well as how to connect back with living movements so that the whole process of democratic reassembling finds a wide base for its deepening and maintenance in time.

Learning. Through this process there was an increase in discursive memory, in learned lessons, and in the repertoire of practices available for later action (as seen in sections 3.1. to 3.3. above). There was also a process of partial forgetting, discarding and even rejection of earlier positions³⁸⁹ (primarily, when it comes to the DRY and 15M anti-party and anti-representational theses).

Factors

After noticing some of the main directions of change in discourses and practices within the cycle, I want to mention some of the factors driving them.

Hysteresis. The becoming of the cycle was marked by its own history. Earlier discourses, practices and stages were key for later ones. Hysteresis, that is, the active traces, within a given event, process, or collective, of previous events, processes and collectives, operating in narratives, habits, technological infrastructures, or other factors becomes crucial to understand the 15M cycle. To use DeLanda's (2006) expression, early phenomena became "contingently necessary", historical conditions of possibility, and frequently operative factors, for later ones. 15M for the X Party, the X Party for Podemos, Podemos for the local candidacies, and these for platforms such as Decidim.barcelona operated as conditions of possibility, sometimes in unanticipated and even conflicting ways. Furthermore, as noted above with regard to social, political or technological conditions, they operated as conditions of reality, that is, they contributed to give a concrete shape³⁹⁰ to the processes coming after them.

Cycle, discourse and practice frames. A key factor was ongoing discourses and framing on the state of both the cycle and politics in general.

"Failure" and "success". Failure and success interpretations of practices and

³⁸⁹ This was sometimes interpreted in terms of "betrayal", but such a judgment can only be formulated from a concrete interpretation of 15M, politics, and the cycle itself, which actors themselves did.

³⁹⁰ I could say an "*haecceitas*", an individuating form, in an heterodox reading of Duns Scotus.

discourses drove many of the changes. That was particularly clear in the case of the transition from the social movement to the electoral stage. Since this step was a strong break with some of the key initial tenets of the movement, it implied quite a bit of discursive elaboration on the side of X Party actors.

Construction and contention. Failure and success were frequently defined as a function of two basic criteria: construction (primarily, of more democratic practices, relations, infrastructures and institutions) and contention (victories against status quo actors and structures, such as PPSOE, corporations, or representative institutions).

Fields. Another factor that recurrently re-appeared in the empirical chapters affecting change was the variable structures and cultures of the various social fields in which 15M activists got enrolled. Many of the tensions within and around the X Party, such as the practice of anonymity or its conflicts with Podemos, resulted from the representative and competitive character of the political field (Bourdieu, 1991).

Political, economic, social conditions. Then, 15M cycle actors' actions and strategies were also tied to the becoming of the socioeconomic and political crises. Many of these occurred with little direct relation to the action of the cycle's actors (f.i.: international pressures over the Spanish debt in 2011 and 2012), while others may have been connected to it (f.i.: the progressive unearthing of more and more cases of political corruption as 15M initiatives and a growing percentage of the population demanded judicial investigation). Other conditions such as ICT penetration or innovations (f.i.: launch of Telegram) played their role, albeit in a more diffused manner. These conditions, resulting from the activity of millions of actors, compose a diffuse yet active setting for the action of the key actors of the cycle.

7.4.3.2. Synchronic and diachronic axes of construction and contention: continuity, discontinuity, blocks and overflows.

As I noticed in chapter three, a number of socioeconomic and political conditions remained operative during the 2011-2016 period, such as social cuts, corruption revelations, and unpopular policies. These operated as continuous conditions that favored many of these initiatives and to which these initiatives responded. The basso continuo of the political and socioeconomic crises, critically constructed by both mainstream and, especially, alternative and social media, offered a continuous source of discontent that was organized into new forms of collective action. Contention affected and was affected by the existing social, economic, political and technological conditions.

Nevertheless, key innovations were tied not primarily to the variations in these conditions but to the creativity and becoming of the contention between established sociopolitical actors and 15M cycle contenders, which involved discourses on the past, present, and future of the cycle articulated at each stage. By focusing on 15M initiatives I have shown how these reacted to both the becoming of the cycle and their discursive interpretations of it.

After the reconstruction in this thesis, I believe there is a double axis to think contentious politics in the 15M cycle: on the one hand, a vertical, structural or synchronic axis, which presents a shifting but stable basso continuo of social, economic, and technical conditions as a ground resource for technopolitics, which exhibits, in turn, a constellation of syntax, semantics and pragmatics at any given point in time; on the other hand, an horizontal, dynamic, or diachronic axis, which displays the becoming of those various conditions and aspects of technopolitics across times.

If the technopolitical triad, in connection with sociopolitical conditions, serve to think the vertical axis, otherwise, the structures of technopolitical contention, Pickering's (1995) notion of "the mangle of practice" as a decentered dance of resistance and accommodation between humans and non-human agents is an interesting one in order to understand the horizontal axis, otherwise, the dynamics of contentious technopolitics. Every stage served as a "surface of emergence" from which actors could initiate a course of action, forcing others to resist or accommodate.

Clear discontinuities in the cycle can be found in the transitions from demonstration to movement, from movement to parties, from parties to institutions. 15M broke the street block of previous cyberactivism, which remained limited to the internet, but later faced the crystal ceiling of the political system and the State, given by its own self-limitation to the realm of civil society. The X Party broke with such a limitation, while Podemos begun a successful assault on the electoral field; nevertheless, the X Party suffered various media, discourse, and organizational limits and blocks that only Podemos was able to overcome into electoral success. Citizen candidacies went a step further, gained elections and begun opening institutional blocks to participatory democracy. Decidim advanced in creating a new technopolitical institution in the making. Then Decidim itself has faced the limits of those very institutions, the existing, representational culture.

At the core of the overcoming of some of these blocks there were what some 15M

actors defined as “overflows”. These are processes that exceed the expectations and the conditions (organizational structures, particularly) of the key actors at a given moment. 15M close analysts have stressed the relevance of such overflows (Petit, 2011; Gil & Jurado, 2015), and even the need to set up what may be defined as political and technopolitical “infrastructures of overflow”. This could be understood as setups calling for the unanticipated, the construction of structures that are open to be re-appropriated by others in innovative ways, unfinished dispositives (Padilla, 2013) or generative conditions and structures (Zittrain, 2008), so to speak. If pre-figuration somehow anticipates the future, these infrastructures and overflows open it up.

Rather than as a channeled dialectics, or only as a game tending towards homeostasis, the logics of the overflow fits better with the image of “excess” suggested by Bataille (Botting & Wilson, 1997), a multiplication game, which emphasizes the surprisingly constructive performance of actors and initiatives involved in the 15M cycle.

Events of excess and overflow prevent any account based on a continuous image of time without necessarily implying a denial of the conditions from which they emerge. An event always takes place in relation to those conditions³⁹¹. And yet, new possibilities break into the fabric of the political. Sometimes they come to taint a whole period. In this case, the 15M movement did so with a whole cycle.

Emergence vs planning, pre-figuring vs spontaneity, anticipated vs unintended.

It is relevant to stress, as I did in the introduction, how the cycle was not the unfolding of a plan, but neither the result of spontaneous processes. Rather, it was a work of contention and construction, of reassembling of democracy. This brought many surprises. None expected that May 15th would turn from a demonstration into a movement. Few could have foreseen that parties would end up being formed out of the dynamics of a movement that was, at the very least, suspicious of representation. Few could have hoped that 15M cycle initiatives would win the local elections of May 25th 2015, surely nobody expected that in 2011, not even in 2014. Clearly, many of these processes were unanticipated. In some cases, they were intended, in others they were not only unintended but even fiercely opposed by key actors within the cycle. For instance, the rise of the X Party was heavily criticized by many actors coming from the 15M movement. The local assault launched by

³⁹¹According to Alain Badiou (2011), a political event is characterized by an intensification, localization, and contraction—the situation contracts in a representation of itself, as a kind of metonymy of the situation of the whole— as well as by the emergence of a subjectivity that speaks universally.

Guanyem Barcelona and Ahora Madrid was seen with doubts by Podemos's leadership in its foundational assembly in October 2014 and finally embraced in the Spring of 2015.

7.4.3.3. On non-linearity

It is relevant to underline that my main narrative tended to present linearly and sequentially what were not merely sequential processes. Projects such as 15MpaRato begun when 15M was still strong as a movement, continued for most of the X Party's life and also at the time of creation of Decidim. The same actors (groups such as X.net) were involved in several of these projects at the same time. Similarly, practices common at the time of the Sinde Law struggles came back with strength with the X Party. The cycle allowed to go back and forth and sideways among practices. From that viewpoint, time was not a line but a network, which could be traversed in various directions. However, to narrate the opening up of new stages and strands of practice it was preferable to articulate a somehow linear discourse around them. This was an approach the actors themselves essayed (f.i.: Levi, 2014).

7.4.4. On technopolitical alter-democratization

The final of the sub-questions within the third question posed in the introduction was whether the cycle was one of technopolitical alter-democratization. The general answer is that the 15M cycle could be understood as one of alter-democratization: it brought new democratic ontologies to various spheres of politics under the liberal representative model. These experiments had technopolitics as one of its main drivers and shapers.

That said, a precision may be pertinent. I believe the first stage of the cycle was not so much of democratization but of demodynamization (Levy, 1997). Beyond the boundaries of traditional "democratization", usually a matter of new elites getting institutional power "for" the people over the State, 15M opened a time of demodynamization, an increase in the potency of the *demos*, a democratization from below. 15M was a complex and multitudinous process of empowerment in its multiple senses (power to, with, and within, Veneklasen & Miller 2002), which emerged before and beyond both the State and representative politics. As some have suggested, 15M was not a social movement, but society in movement. Especially for its first two years, it had something of that redistribution of the sensible, that reordering of places, that Rancière (1999) identifies with politics and

democracy. What was thinkable and say-able, visible and invisible, possible and impossible, shifted. Since 2014, with the rise to prominence of the electoral logics, the balance between *dynamis* and *kratos* changed.

Democratization, took the form of a process oriented to increase the power of the demos in the existing order, to get things under people's control (retaking the destinies of our lives, as suggested by Arana in the introductory quotes of this thesis), but in order to increase what can be done (potency, demodynamization) and what is actually done (energy, demoenergizing). Democratization, like demodynamization, is both *potentia* and *actus*: democracy is not primarily an ideal ahead but, as Karl Marx said of communism, the “real movement which abolishes the present state of things”. Both in its demodynamizing and democratizing forms, the reassembling process opened by 15M challenged key tenets of neoliberal, representative democracy.

And yet, as noticed in the introduction, it had both remarkable and yet limited effects. “Everything is the same, but everything is different” said Marga Padilla. Neoliberal representative democracy still remains the main paradigm in Spain, but the 15M cycle brought new discourses, practices and infrastructures for democracy to the mainstream.

Recurring to counter-factual argument, beyond what happened, it is worth stressing what did not happen. 15M actors gave a clearly progressive reading of the crisis, which may have prevented the rise of the ultra-right happening elsewhere in the West. Others may say it prevented a deeper progressive revolution. Some of its most radical proposals (such as Democracy 4.0) have remained incomplete, although clearly innovative possibilities are being essayed in projects such as Decidim or Decide Madrid. The cycle somehow democratized social movements and institutions, not so much the party form, where the X Party experiments did not always emphasize internal democracy.

In the following table, I essay a systematic recapitulation of various aspects of the cycle that I have mentioned. The table includes key elements of the cycle of reassembling such as the main action space, the main collective subject behind it, the key alternative form brought about, the sphere in which it operated, the main enemy, the targets of transformation, the scale of action, the relation to representation, the type of technological infrastructure, and the blocks it encountered.

TABLE 19. 15M CYCLE: REASSEMBLING PROCESS.

Case	DRY-15M	X Party	Decidim.barcelona
Action space	Movements	Parties	State/Public institutions
Collective form	Multitudinous citizenry	Networked expert citizenry	Recursive citizenry
Alternative	Networked movement of the squares	Wikidemocratic networked party	Common government
Sphere	Civil society	Party system	State
Enemy	Political/economic system	PPSOE Party system	Corporations Mere representation
Main target of transformation	Apathetic society Political culture	Party form	Bureaucracy Public institutions
Scale	Networks of squares	Nation-state	City, network of cities
Representation	Presentation Anti-representation Alter-representation	Alter-representation De-representation Anti-representation	De-representation
Technological infrastructures	Movement/Social infrastructures: n-1	Partisan infrastructures: Co-ment, crowdfunding	State/Social infrastructures: Decidim
Blocks	Broke street mobilization block Suffered from a political crystal ceiling block	Broke political crystal ceiling block Suffered from media ceiling and organizational blocks	Broke institutional block Suffered from representative politics, institutions and culture blocks
Technopolitical citizenship Cycle of technopolitical contention Reassembling of democracy			

7.5. Future research

Multiple aspects of the 15M cycle have remained unexplored in this work. I list them now as they may show how this research could move forward.

A first one is obvious. The cycle is not over. There are ongoing processes that may bring about new democratic and technopolitical innovations, which should be attended in further developments of this work.

A second point concerns key examples within the cycle that have remained untouched. That is particularly the case of Podemos, which I decided to leave for

further research.

A third point is to explore many other dimensions of technopolitics which I haven't touched upon, such as affects.

A fourth point is to carry a more systematic situation of the 15M cycle within the historical coordinates of historical politics and the network society.

A fifth point is to articulate further the notion of technopolitics and its various aspects as a field of exploration and as a toolkit for analysis.

7.6. Final remarks

My analysis of the cycle has shown how democracy is forged in the contention around it. "Democracy" does not exist as a singular model, but rather as a constellation of discourses and practices that are contested and shifting in time, as assemblages embodying various ideals. Both the institutions and the ontologies of democracy, what is and what can be done in democracy, are opened to contentious transformation. Thereby, a conclusion around democracy and democratization after 15M is that they must be figured out piecemeal, space by space and initiative by initiative, rather than through a judgment in bulk. This is a failure-prone process: the answers to democratic issues were in many cases insufficient by the actors' own criteria and evaluations. However, experiments were run, problems addressed, advances made.

There is always a long way ahead. The work of reassembling the *vita activa* in technopolis will require new practices, new technologies, new *paideias*. Nothing is granted. The challenge to construct a real democracy remains open, ground and ever receding horizon of a common journey into the future.

Appendix I

Network (structural) and synchronization (dynamic) analyses

The network analysis is divided in two steps. The first is the structural or static approach, which is aimed to define the boundaries of 15M's connective identity using standard network metrics, namely, strongly connected component and modularity. This first step includes the characterization of the 15M network structure using k-core decomposition (a technique used for finding cohesive subsets of nodes within the network, as explained in Seidman, 1983, and Dorogovtsev, 2006) in order to see whether it exhibits a centralized or distributed structure. The structural or static analysis uses a big dataset of Facebook activity, including 4957 fanpages connected to the 15M movement as well as other 'external' social actors such as trade unions, which are analyzed as a boundary contrast. 15M fanpages were selected beginning with two original samples of 100 representative fanpages, the first related to 15M and the second to trade unions CCOO and UGT. These 100 representative fanpages were selected as a result of qualitative analysis. A Facebook Query Language script extracted a list of fanpages 'liked' by the original sample (Facebook allows fanpages to create lists of other pages that present affinity to them). The process is repeated on the set of extracted pages, from which a larger (second order) network of 15M related pages is obtained.

The second step of the analysis, the dynamic one, takes 14 key fanpages from the previous dataset and looks at the level of activity of their users (in terms of posts, comments and likes). On the basis of this, it conducts a synchronization analysis based on Phase Locking Statistics (Lachaux et al., 2000) that allows to observe the dynamic structure of activity underlying the sub-network of fanpages, noticing which one is the most active and what the direction of the synchronization is between them at different points in time.

A note on networks

From a systemic/panoramic viewpoint, I work with two basic types of networks: functional and structural. Functional networks are those generated by brief interactions among nodes (e.g., "retweets" and "mentions" in the case of Twitter). Structural networks are those displaying long term links between nodes, which are a key, although not exclusive, enablers of functional networks (e.g.: a friendship on

Facebook means an open channel of direct interaction between two users). These networks show the interactions among nodes.

From a more “practical” perspective, or that of “user experience”, actors in social media such as Twitter or Facebook have two primary interfaces: the key one, where they can see the aggregated and serialized activity of other users in real time (this is frequently called “news feeds”, and displays the activity of nodes with which a given user has a “structural” or “functional” relation to), as well as the user profile interface (what is called the “wall” on Facebook, and “timeline” on Twitter), where much of a given user's activity is registered. To take an ideal case: when a user does something (say, generating a message), the message appears by default in the news feeds of all the users “structurally” related to him, as well as on those of many that are only “functionally” related (e.g., they are structurally related to someone who has shared the original message).

When it comes to the sample of nodes (profiles or pages) to look at on Twitter, Facebook, and the web, my selection resulted from a superposition of analyses, which usually begun with qualitative data about the main actors or hashtags in the movement (a list resulting from fieldwork, interviews, media analysis, previous network analyses, etc.) and then was connected to, reinforced, or corrected by the digital network topologies emerging from functional and structural network analyses. This is what turns my analysis from “big” into “deep” data, otherwise, analysis of big datasets feeding back with an insider's perspective.

Survey

Questionnaire and fieldwork

The survey was based on an electronic questionnaire set up on a web server. A self-selected, non-probabilistic sample was constructed by launching an open invitation through digital media. Most of the circulation channels for the survey were tied to 15M, thereby, we expected respondents to mostly identify themselves as participants. The three key channels to circulate the survey were email, Twitter and Facebook. For every channel, a specific hyperlink to the questionnaire (which was anonymous) was generated.

The survey was run between May 13th and May 22nd, 2014. The Survey Manager NetQuest was deployed for data collection. We received 1,330 responses (434 via email, 797 via Twitter, and 99 via Facebook). After cleaning up, the final sample size was of 1,320 observations. The database, the data dictionary, and the questionnaire are accessible under an open license at www.tecnopolitica.net/encuesta15m2014_datos.

A similar online survey conducted a year earlier 2013 (Linares, 2013) showed that it was possible to gather in-depth information on 15M participants through non-randomized online surveys. Our survey relied on a similar strategy: firstly, we enrolled 15M participants in the design phase via survey pilots, secondly, we launched the survey through 15M key information channels and social media networks, in which members of our research group are deeply involved. We are aware of the limits of online surveys based on a snowball sampling strategy in terms of representativeness. However, we are confident of its potential to approach the targeted universe, namely, 15M movement participants. We assume the survey primarily enticed 15M participants and supporters, given that it was mostly publicized via key 15M accounts, generating a trust-network effect. The dissemination strategy is central to understand the success of the survey, which gathered more than a thousand answers, in a few days. This, in despite of its length (20 minutes in average).

Basic characteristics of the sample

Table 1 below presents the basic socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Unsurprisingly, those characteristics differ from the country population. Gender distribution is unbalanced, with more men (59.8%) than women (39.5%). Educational

level is above the Spanish average, since 72.9% declares holding, at least, a university degree. With ages ranging from 17 to 75 years old, the median age of participants is 36. The sample primarily includes young and medium-age adults: 25% of participants is under 30 years old and 75% of the sample is under 46. Most respondents were born (92%) and live (93%) in Spain. Finally, 65.8% of respondents indicate they currently participate in the labor market. They do so as paid-employees, self-employed, or business owners. Up to 18.6% report being unemployed.

Up to 76.8% of the respondents participated in some way in the movement (see table 2). Personal identification with it is also high, but with some nuances: 87.7% of the sample identifies itself with 15M; however, the proportion rises to 91.6% when identification refers to the movement's demands and proposals, while it decreases to 71.1% when it refers to its actions and strategies. Lastly, 77.1% of respondents remain linked to and/or interested in 15M, while 16.3% already lost their interest.

Due to the sampling technique and the resulting characteristics of the targeted universe, respondents exhibit a high degree of support towards the movement, which is above the Spanish average indicated in other surveys launched at the moment we conducted the survey (see, for instance Ferrándiz, 2014).

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