





# *Movinets* and the Future of Social Movements: How 15M and Occupy Revolutionised Political Protest

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The year 2011 will be remembered as the year of social movements. From the Arab Spring through 15M in Spain and other *Indignados* movements that followed, to the Occupy movement that began in the United States and spread worldwide, it seemed as though most of the world was rising against the existing socio-economic and political systems. Two years later, the movements have all but disappeared from the public eye, and it could be inferred that they simply failed. Certainly it is hard to feel the almost tangible energy and enthusiasm with which the public welcomed the appearance of these movements and their calls for change and social justice. We argue that 15M and Occupy<sup>1</sup> have remained active through fragmentation and have evolved into smaller entities that focus on specific issues. More importantly, they have left a legacy that is of utmost importance to the future directions and actions of political and social protest.

We start by locating 15M within its specific socio-political and economic context of Spain in the midst of the economic crisis. We identify the precursors to the emergence of 15M and the role that social networks played in the early days

of its mobilisation. We then consider the characteristics and analyse the discourse of 15M as an established albeit still evolving social movement. Next, we examine the relationship between the Internet and 15M as well as Occupy, and in the final section we propose a new term, *movinets*, to describe the phenomenon that emerged from 15M and Occupy, namely political protest and social unrest that alternates between virtual and physical spaces. Our argument is that the Internet was essential in the creation and development of these movements, and it is in their DNA. It would be impossible to understand these movements without the Internet and this is what makes them into a new category, distinguishable from the traditional movements (unions, political parties, etc.) and the New Social Movements (environmentalist, feminist, pacifist, etc.).

### **Roots**

When thousands of Spaniards took to the streets and squares on 15 May 2011, it came as a complete surprise to the politicians and to the media. During the endless television debates that followed, they admitted that had no idea that such a powerful force had been brewing on various social networks, yet by May 2011 the socio-economic situation in Spain was becoming critical. Heavily affected by the global economic crisis from 2008, Spain entered a period of recession with alarming levels of unemployment (21% at the time), a burst real estate bubble, collapsing banks (such as Bankia), and a government unable to stop the rapid economic deterioration. Still, as Giles Tremlett commented on 21 May 2011, ‘just a week ago the Spanish had seemed stoical about one of the most depressing eras in recent economic history’<sup>2</sup>.

Spain didn’t have a culture of protest like that of France, for example, and large demonstrations had been rare since the transition to democracy in the late 1970s. In fact, only two large scale mobilizations took place prior to 15M, and they were both in response to specific events or circumstances related to terrorism. The 1997 kidnapping by ETA of the politician Miguel Ángel Blanco caused 2 million Spaniards to protest ETA’s threat to assassinate him, which was carried out in the end. When ETA was blamed by the ruling party, in the middle of an election campaign, for the 2004 Madrid train bombings, 2.3 million people (in a city of 4 million) took to the streets. With similar demonstrations emerging spontaneously all over Spain, all together over 11 million people<sup>3</sup> denounced the government’s lies and showed their distrust in the political system, ultimately changing the outcome of the 2004 election. However, while these mass demonstrations were impressive in terms of their numbers and speed of organization, they also very quickly folded up once the circumstances that

spurred them were removed. Spanish society, on the whole, was not one to take their grievances to the street.

It is important to note that the Spanish culture of protest is quite different from other European countries. In May 1968 Spain was still under the regime of General Franco, and the subsequent transition to democracy after Franco's death in 1975 was conducted in a spirit of peace and moderation. Spain's relatively recent authoritarian past and the characteristics of the transition process impacted heavily on the development of social movements, and the societal attitudes towards political participation and protest. Rafael Vázquez García, following Rafael López-Pintor<sup>4</sup>, argues that 'dictatorship left a legacy of disinterest in politics, apathy, political scepticism, a terrible lack of confidence in political elites and an estrangement from the decision making process'<sup>5</sup>, while the advent of democracy brought with it low political involvement and ideological moderation<sup>6</sup>. John Karamichas points out that the impressive economic growth that followed the transition to democracy allowed for relative wealth and wellbeing, further delaying the emergence of new social movements in comparison with other European countries<sup>7</sup>. The student movement of the 1970s did not leave a lasting legacy<sup>8</sup>, and the newly legalized socialist party PSOE 'adopted a rhetoric that was definitely more radical than the social-democratic parties of Northern Europe' and closer to the New Left, thus appearing 'capable of representing the NSMs and mobilizations'<sup>9</sup>. Entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the generation that remembered the dictatorship was content with the political status quo and focused inwards to family and leisure. Younger generations, brought up in democracy and relative wealth, took them for granted and developed apathetic attitudes towards any kind of political or social involvement.

The recent economic crisis dramatically changed societal attitudes. Rising unemployment affected youth at a rate twice that of the general population: 41% in early 2011, the highest in the European Union. Those lucky enough to have a job were underpaid and employed on short contracts. University graduates found it particularly difficult to function professionally in the recessed economy. Unemployment, paired up with the housing crisis, led to a sharp decline in standards of living across society. Those not directly affected witnessed the birth of a new social class: the precariat. Government's actions were perceived as either ineffectual or blatantly against the interest of the citizens. Stéphane Hessel's call to action *Indignez-vous!* (Time for Outrage), published in France in 2010 and in Spain in 2011<sup>10</sup>, resonated with the sentiments of social injustice and marginalization, and was followed by a number of Spanish texts such as *Delito de silencio. Ha llegado el momento. El tiempo es de acción* (Crime of Silence. The

moment has arrived. It's Time for Action) by Federico Mayor Zaragoza (March 2011)<sup>11</sup>, or a collection of essays under the title *Reacciona* (React) (April 2011)<sup>12</sup>. And react they did.

### Emergence

15M movement didn't emerge from a void; like other worldwide mobilisations of 2011-2012, it 'drew on submerged, pre-existing social movement networks'<sup>13</sup>. One of the very important movements that preceded 15M, *Juventud Sin Futuro* (Youth Without Future)<sup>14</sup>, condemned the neoliberal politics of the government that positioned the youth as the most affected sector of the society. The discourse employed by this group was very clear and direct: 'sin casa, sin curro, sin pensión, sin miedo' (without a home, without a job, without a pension, without fear<sup>15</sup>). Created in February 2011 and initially based only in Madrid, the movement announced an upcoming demonstration at a press conference on 31 March 2011 that surprisingly attracted the attention of conventional media<sup>16</sup>, thus assuring press coverage of the 7 April demonstration of about 6,000 people. *Juventud Sin Futuro* imitated the style of an older movement, *V de Vivienda* (H for Housing)<sup>17</sup>, that had emerged prior to the financial crisis and the bursting of the real estate bubble in Spain. Already in 2006 the *V de Vivienda* movement, whose main objective was to fight for universal access to affordable housing, was pointing out the contradictions of an economic model too inclined towards real estate construction and speculation<sup>18</sup>. Both *Juventud Sin Futuro* and *V de Vivienda* movements took advantage of the potential of social networks.

The Internet was also essential in the mobilization of a direct precedent of 15M movement, the platform *Democracia Real Ya* (Real Democracy Now)<sup>19</sup>. *Democracia Real Ya* was successful in uniting into one demonstration various organizations that had previously mobilized independently; these included the aforementioned *Juventud Sin Futuro*, as well as *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) (Platform of Those Affected by a Mortgage)<sup>20</sup>, *Estado del Malestar* (State of Unrest)<sup>21</sup>, *#No\_les\_votes* (Don't Vote for Them), and the international anti-globalisation group ATTAC, or *Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financière et l'Aide aux Citoyens* (Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens)<sup>22</sup>. In fact, 31% of Twitter users who used the Twitter hash-tag #Spanishrevolution also used #Nolesvotes<sup>23</sup>. As noted by Sidney Tarrow, 'the generalization of conflict into a cycle of contention begins when political opportunities are opened for well-placed "early risers", when their claims resonate with those of significant others, and when these give rise to objective or explicit coalitions among disparate actors and create or reinforce instability in the elite'<sup>24</sup>.

*Democracia Real Ya* developed through social networks with direct and specific messages. At the centre of its discourse is the idea that the so called economic crisis is in fact a swindle that leads to the worsening of existing socio-economic problems, as well as grave consequences for a representative democracy that is unable to address public discontent. The 15M movement revolves around the gulf between the representatives and the represented. The two most chanted slogans at the demonstrations are in fact ‘*Democracia Real Ya, no somos mercancías en manos de políticos y banqueros*’ (Real Democracy Now, we’re not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers), and ‘*No nos representan*’ (They do not represent us).

### **Characteristics**

15M movement is non-union, nonpartisan, horizontal and peaceful. One of the most salient elements of 15M, in relation to earlier movements, was its success at being fully inclusive, avoiding banners and symbols that would hinder inclusiveness. Both unions and political parties tried to co-opt the movement when it first emerged, recognizing its force and potential in gathering votes<sup>25</sup>. However, 15M remained loyal to the principle of not becoming part of the existing political structure.

For some, 15M was also a transversal movement that brought together a broad cross-section of political sentiments. This stance earned the movement a certain prestige that it later lost with the passage of time and the role that the camps played in the development of the movement. From the conservative perspective, the movement was reduced to disillusionment with the political class, with the call for electoral reform at its core. The General Assembly of 25 May 2011 that took place at the Puerta del Sol camp in Madrid formulated four main demands: electoral reform leading to a more proportionate participative democracy; anti-corruption measures aiming for total political transparency; separation of public powers; and creation of civic control mechanisms designed to ensure political responsibility.

This approach resonated in particular with right-wing circles that found a common platform with 15M in its criticism of the socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. Some sectors of the right, discontent with the politics of the main right-wing party Partido Popular (PP) (Popular Party), sympathized with 15M, as long as it did not go beyond electoral reform and anti-corruption measures. Others within the right considered 15M a convenient means to accelerate the fall of the socialist government and improve PP’s electoral chances even further. However, such interpretations are quite distant from a much more complex reality evident in the manifesto of *Democracia Real Ya* from which

15M germinated, and of other groups it brought together. *Democracia Real Ya* proposed a list of very specific demands, such as the removal of privileges of the political class, anti-unemployment measures, the right to housing, quality public services, control of banks, changes to the tax system, civic liberties, participatory democracy and a reduction in military spending. It proposed specific solutions to the housing situation such as expropriation of unsold dwellings to put them on the market as rent-controlled housing; there was also a call for a shorter working day so that a better balance could be achieved between professional and family life. Such suggestions clearly clashed with the deregulatory principles of neoclassical economic thought. The movement's direction towards the left is further confirmed by the support of the leftist political scientist Carlos Taibo<sup>26</sup>, and the moral and intellectual leadership of the economist José Luis Sampedro who famously stated 'there are two kinds of economists: those who work to make the rich richer, and those of us who work to make the poor less poor'<sup>27</sup>.

One of the virtues of 15M was the ability to connect the public spaces in the cities with social networks and new technologies<sup>28</sup>. During the first 3 days (15 to 17 May), traditional media didn't highlight the demonstrations in its news reporting; only its persistent presence on the Internet forced the media to pay attention (for example, the eviction at Puerta del Sol on 17 May 2011 was streamed on the net). The decisive moment for the movement was the establishment of the camp on 17 May, following on the example of Tahir Square in Cairo, Egypt. In Spain itself there are also precedents of camps in Spain, but they're again, like the previous demonstrations, focused on specific claims: the 1994 *Campamento de 0,7* (0.7 Camp), calling for developed countries to donate 0.7% of their GDP to developing countries; the 2001 camp of Sintel employees in Madrid; or the 2001 student protest against commercialization of public universities and introduction of corporate-style management.

15M emerges as a movement in its entirety, bringing together various groups. The camps are a perfect example of it. The diversity of opinions within the camps inevitably led to tensions, and as the movement grew, so did its plurality, because it kept attracting yet more diverse groups. In all this confusion *Democracia Real Ya* acted as the intellectual core of the movement. The same structure was replicated when the camps were dismantled, and the process was not without problems, given the variety of opinions within the movement

### **Discourse of 15M**

15M cannot be understood as a movement without ideology, or one that simply proposes a method. *Partido X* (The X Party)<sup>29</sup> that brings together some



members of 15M and *Democracia Real Ya*, has defined itself in terms of a method, with 4 specific tools: binding referenda, wiki-democracy, transparency, and participation in lawmaking through the voting system<sup>30</sup>. However, 15M was not only a method, and it certainly had an ideology. Its criticisms and proposals referred to both representative government and the socio-economic model. In regards to the first, 15M denounces the transfer of power from the representative model to global institutions that nobody elected and that the politicians submit to. The criticism of the politicians is one of the pillars of 15M, with, at its core, a call for electoral reform and removal of privileges of the political class<sup>31</sup>. 15M put forward the idea of a direct and participative democracy that would allow the citizens to express themselves through new technologies; thence the specific proposals of wiki-government and Democracy 4.0.

In regards to the socio-economic model, 15M put forward very clear proposals. On the national level, it included fiscal reforms, strengthening of public healthcare and education, recovery of privatized public enterprises, and a more rigorous regulatory model for financial transactions (lack of which contributed to the bursting of the real estate bubble). Right to housing is an essential element of 15M's program: right to a dignified housing, in accordance with the constitutional mandate and a reformed mortgage legislation<sup>32</sup>. On the global level, 15M proposed that politicians keep the promise from the G-20 meeting in 2009, to 'take action' against offshore tax havens (a promise not kept at all, given the empirical evidence<sup>33</sup>). 15M proposed several financial measures (e.g., the Tobin tax<sup>34</sup>), as well as a significant curbing of power of institutions such as the IMF or Central European Bank. Protesters in the Puerta del Sol camp in Madrid put the blame for Spain's economic situation not only on the Spanish government, but also on other institutions and corporations with GDP higher than those of some countries.

In practice, the political discourse of 15M was applied by actively supporting occupations with social goals and objectives: creation of social currency, *bancos de tiempo* (time exchange banks), civic initiatives related to campaigns of education and popularization with the aim of developing civic awareness<sup>35</sup>. This last element confirms the great significance of 15M as a pedagogical movement, more than just outrage. The concept of outrage cannot be applied to 15M, as much as it seems paradoxical. While we cannot deny a certain influence of Stéphane Hessel's book, the development, structure and achievements of 15M go a lot further than just outrage.

15M put forward political initiatives and organizes *marea*<sup>36</sup>s and associations aimed at the fight for specific causes. A public outrage propelled by a book or

by certain circumstances cannot explain the transcendence and development of 15M. In this aspect 15M had a direct precedent in the anti-globalization movement which also united diverse actors but its actions did not have an impact similar to that of 15M, with the exception of the march in Seattle in 1999. 15M inherited its organizational design and improved on it with the use of the Internet. The structure of anti-globalization movement, based on assemblies, and the non-violent nature of the protest, are two important characteristics that were adopted by 15M. The use of the Internet was decisive in making more effective the dissemination of 15M' discourse, something that the anti-globalization movement always lacked.

### **Internet**

The relationship between 15M and the Internet is multi-dimensional. In the first place, 15M movement was able to increase its social base and access to the public thanks to social networks. Secondly, the Internet was instrumental in convening protests, broadcasting them and initiating a more deliberative and inclusive debate. Finally, 15M took advantage of the perception of the Internet as an unquestionable democratic tool. This perception of the Internet is controversial in itself and subject to academic scrutiny. It is in fact disputed by some authors<sup>37</sup> who believe that the Internet is the object of idealization, and warn against considering it a perfect tool for democratic transformation. Eugeny Morozov believes that it's necessary to perform a serious evaluation of the connection between Internet and democracy, and the role of the Internet as an instrument against authoritarianism. He presents several examples of it, among which the case of Iran stands out. He criticises Western democracies' utopian attitudes towards the Internet, calling it *cyber-utopianism*: 'a naive belief in the emancipatory nature of online communication that rests on a stubborn refusal to acknowledge its downside'<sup>38</sup>, and warns that the excessive fetishism of technology as a tool to change the world is dangerous for the real promotion of democracy. While a technology such as Internet is a very useful tool for organising a mobilisation or a debate, and it offers new, unmatched capacities, it can also be used by governments to spy on its citizens. We know for a fact that large corporations<sup>39</sup> exercise abusive control of its consumers and their privacy. Whether the physical body of the Internet: servers, cables etc., remains in public or private hands, has serious consequences for the communication that it creates and stores.

Matthew Hindman points out that while the Internet balanced certain inequalities, it created others, not less important<sup>40</sup>. Understanding the Internet

as a mere platform of neutral communication renders invisible the relationships of power and control, in the process of its creation as well as its development. Worse, it mythologises the technology, by promising a democratization of politics<sup>41</sup> that it cannot ultimately deliver. Vincent Mosco reminds us of similar processes in relation to other technologies such as railroads in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or nuclear power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>42</sup>. He further argues that ‘it is when technologies such as the telephone and the computer cease to be sublime icons of mythology and enter the prosaic world of banality – when they use their role as sources of utopian visions – that they become important forces for social and economic change’.<sup>43</sup>

For Hindman, the myth starts to crack when the online concentration becomes more significant than the concentration in traditional media. He warns about the concentration that the Internet has gained with Googlearchy. The average Internet user doesn’t have the background and skills necessary to perform searches other than those facilitated by Google. As a result, some sites attract vast majority of traffic, while others are rarely visited. The same applies to the promise of ‘giving the voice to the voiceless’: over 95% of political blogs have no readers. It’s easy to talk in the cyberspace, it’s harder to be heard.<sup>44</sup> This is one of the main issues affecting freedom of exchange and communication.

Another important issue is the direct censorship that users of the Internet are subjected to. Corporations such as Google, Facebook, YouTube or Twitter censor their contents to be allowed to operate in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes. Only a few months ago Twitter decided to block tweets in certain countries to avoid violating local laws – a very good example of the exercise of *net power* on the part of corporations that are gradually assuming rights previously belonging only to governments and subject to legal systems. The consolidation of social networks used as if they were public but that are in fact private, entails the acceptance of abusive practices of fundamental rights.

The commercialisation of the Internet, the presumed neutrality of the technology and the obvious lack of appropriate regulatory mechanisms are all areas that need to be seriously re-evaluated by *movinets*: social movements that have the Internet embedded in their structure, in their language, in their way of entering the world and of understanding it.

### ***Movinets*: Political Mobilisation and the Internet**

*Movinets* are characterized by a sociological organization and composition that identifies them as collectives of collectives: they house diverse groups that identify with one discourse (in 15M’s case it is *no nos representan*, and in the

case of Occupy: *Wall Street Government*). *Movinet*s react to situations that they consider unjust. The bubble created by the financial capital eager to speculate, and its consequences, led to an atmosphere of social discontent. On the one hand, those affected by the situation got poorer; on the other, social inequalities increased. The reaction to a situation that is clearly unjust is what unites the diverse collectives of *movinet*s; they don't merge into one movement but are united by one common denominator. Their messages are direct and attempt to synthesize more complex ideas:

15M:

No somos mercancía en manos de los políticos y banqueros  
(We are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers)  
*Lo llaman democracia y no lo es* (It's called democracy but it's not)  
Soberanía para el pueblo y recortes para los mercados  
(Sovereignty to the people and [austerity] cuts for the markets)

Occupy<sup>45</sup>:

Wall Street is everywhere therefore we have to occupy everywhere  
Lost my job but found an occupation  
We the 99% are too big to fail

*Movinet*s are peaceful movements based on a horizontal organization. It becomes apparent when looking at the online network tools like Twitter (collective identity) that are of great value for activists. The use of mobiles on real time allows *movinet*s to develop strategies of mobilization and protection in real time, as exemplified, in the case 15M, by events in Las Setas in Seville or Plaza Cataluña in Barcelona. In 15M's working documents any kind of violent action has always been condemned. Similarly, Occupy rejects violence for two reasons: ethical – the idea of violence as instrument to transform the system is rejected; and strategic – use of violence breaks up social support and reduces the popular base of the movement. It is precisely for these reasons that 15M denounced the presence of violent groups and plain-clothes police that could have led to discrediting of the goals and the methodology of the collective.

*Movinet*s question the aristocratisation of politics. 15M's slogan *no nos representan* condemns that current situation where the existing structures of representation turned into an elitist model of electoral polyarchy. The concept of 99% refers not only to economy but mostly to politics. With this slogan, *movinet*s inform the public that the interests of 99% of the population are not represented in the institutions of government<sup>46</sup>. They condemn the growing power of organizations that have not been elected by anybody.

From the theoretical point of view, *movinets* are movements of political disobedience. This aspect is transcendental when compared to civil disobedience, practices by collectives such as Civil Rights Movement in the United States. According to Bernard E. Harcourt, “Civil disobedience” accepts the legitimacy of political structure and of our political institutions, but it resists the moral authority of the resulting laws. [...] Civil disobedience accepts the verdict and the condemnation that the civilly disobedient bring upon themselves. It respects the legal norm at the very moment of resistance, and places itself under the sanction of that norm.<sup>47</sup> The political structure behind those norms is accepted in civil disobedience but it is questioned in the case of ‘political disobedience’. The demands of 15M of profound changes in the relationships of power and the political structure make this movement closer to political rather than civil disobedience. Occupy criticizes the very model that the activists consider usurped and moulded to represent the interests of Wall Street.

Both 15M and Occupy integrate the Internet in its DNA. Internet is more than just a characteristic or dimension of the movements’ performance – it is part of the very concept of the movements. The net becomes an ontological part of the movements, with both positive and negative consequences. 2013 could be the year in which the Internet lost a large part of its aura of innocence. The Snowden case revealed an undue use of the Internet. The increase of 7000% in sales of Orwell’s *1984* this Northern summer indicates clearly the impact of these discoveries.

Maybe we’ve never been completely ingenuous when it comes to the misuse of the net, but the two realities that converge in the Snowden case have never been presented in such a hard-hitting way: on one hand the control exercised by the state, and, on the other, the complicity of large Internet companies. We would expect these corporations to guard the privacy and interests of its clients, yet they haven’t done it.

These events collide with the imaginary that large parts of the population have about the Internet: as a place for democracy, for the participation, as a nightmare for dictators, as a way to generate changes that will help people. The activities of *movinets* were preceded by the use of social networks and Internet as an instrument to attain democracy where it didn’t exist, and to deepen and improve it where it did exist.

Social movements and collectives emerge in this context, and communication through Internet becomes one of their most important assets. *Movinets* organise through social networks and use them persistently to develop their mobilization and proposals. We are talking then about movements that emerged from the

Internet and that use the Internet as a platform. They're social movements but with characteristics different from those of the classical movements, or New Social Movements (NMS)<sup>48</sup> studied by Claus Offe<sup>49</sup> and others. *Movinet*s are born from initiatives on the Internet, literally a page or two that outline some goals and ideas, and spread out through social networks. This was the case with 15M, and the manifesto of *Democracia Real Ya*. The organisers themselves didn't expect the success that it had. Later on, the presence of this initiative on social media, and the impulse from other social movements and collectives, made it possible to organise new protests. The demonstrations and camps were observed and commented on by the traditional media, although not at the very beginning as we pointed out earlier in the paper. The movement itself used the Internet to develop participation in the neighbourhoods, and the proposals that the movement put forward were also debated on social media.

The Internet appears then to be the neuralgic centre of 15M's activity. But despite being the key in the dynamics of the movement, its social impact would have never reached the same level without the physical presence of the protests on the squares of many cities, such as Puerta del Sol in Madrid, Las Setas in Seville or Plaza Cataluña in Barcelona. Similarly, the symbolic takeover of certain parts of New York was essential for the development and impact of the Occupy movement in the United States and subsequent occupations worldwide. As such, the 15M and Occupy movements are related to historic occupations by workers as part of their protest against poor working conditions.

Therefore, it's important to remember that the Internet doesn't free or emancipate *per se*. The movements must consider the possibilities as well as limits of the net, and reject idealistic and naive visions. The Internet is not just a tool or a path – it is part of a more widely conceived fight for democratic change and this means the use of the Internet as a common, non commercialised and open space. The results will depend on the actions of the collectives, and on their capacity to transfer proposals and ideas from the Internet to the streets and other critical spaces.

*Movinet*s, exemplified by 15M, developed their own strategic mechanisms to propel their actions, disseminate their discourses and increase its social base. With these strategies, *movinet*s are using the net as a vehicle for deliberation and reflection, but also for immediate, medium term and long term organisation.

Patricia García Espin, in a comparison of 15M to the strategy of mobilisation 2.0, draws on Streeter and Teachout and argues that certain categories of the strategy of mobilisation 2.0 can be successfully used to examine the different ways in which 15M uses the Internet for its activities<sup>50</sup>:

Interpretive communities or political bubbles: these are horizontal forums of the Internet (blogs, websites, forums and spaces on Facebook, Twitter, Tuenti, N-1, LOREA<sup>51</sup>, etc.) for debates on specific political or ideological strategy. These are small communities of collective analysis, interpretation and preparation. They could constitute the seed of a common political identity.

Echo chambers: closed interpretative communities, with limited capacity and/or inclusive willpower. They do not have resonance.

Expansive chambers: they have many nodes, interconnection capabilities and resonance.

Netroots (virtual social bases): where social bases of a movement are configured autonomously, or are auto-generated in Internet; it's a development of the American term *grassroots*.

Active/energetic public: these are the actual activists of the movement that participate in the defining of strategy from below and with support of new technologies.

Auto-generated virtual networks: procedures and contents are generated autonomously on the Internet.

Resonance: it has a capability to exceed proper bounds and mobilise other social actors or media. It demonstrates the efficiency and expansion of its own discourse.

Specific data reveals the explosion of the use of the Internet as a vehicle for communication of 15M: 15M network in Twitter grew from 3403 to 110198 nodes in its explosion phase<sup>52</sup>.

Virtual Networks of 15M: Tools and Nodes of the Sol Camp in Madrid.	
Twitter	<i>twitter</i> : @acampadasol
Website	<a href="https://spanishrevolution.net/">https://spanishrevolution.net/</a>
Facebook	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/Spa">http://www.facebook.com/Spa</a>
Website	<a href="http://tomalaplaza.net/">http://tomalaplaza.net/</a>
Website	<a href="http://tomalosbarrios.net">http://tomalosbarrios.net</a>
Facebook	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/acar">http://www.facebook.com/acar</a>
N-1groups	<a href="https://n-1.cc/pg/groups/acampadasol/">https://n-1.cc/pg/groups/acampadasol/</a> <a href="https://n-1.cc/pg/groups/130trabajo-acampada-sol/">https://n-1.cc/pg/groups/130trabajo-acampada-sol/</a>

Source: Comisión de Informática, Redes y Herramientas digitales en Sol, <http://hacksol.tomalaplaza.net/>

*Movinets* are therefore social movements different from the classic and from the New Social Movements. With *movinets* we are opening a new category of

analysis that will allow us to better understand the form and the content of social mobilisations in the second decade of the 21st century. *Movinet*s are the result of three phenomena of fundamental importance: one, the abyss between the representatives and the represented that questions the idea of representative government in today's world; two, the imposition of an economic model that puts the interests of big corporations above the interests of the people; and three, the technological revolution and the advent of the Internet. All three have been integrated in the DNA of the mobilisations. The Internet is not just an option within *movinet*s, it's part of their conception and their vision of the world – including both the positive and negative aspects of it. We find the legacy of the workers' movement in the systemic criticism of the production model as a whole that was dissolved in the New Social Movements. A more in-depth democratic participation is the consequence of the previous factors: on one hand, with more democracy, corporations and supra-national institutions would lose some of its influence; on the other, the Internet is a tool that allows for the creation of electronic agora that would facilitate people's access to self-government. This in turn would permit for people to cast their votes not for political elites, but for specific policies that would be created from below, horizontally and peacefully.

## Conclusion

In conclusions, we have traced the trajectory of 15M, a social movement that inspired worldwide demonstrations and occupations, while also becoming a precedent for *movinet*s, a potential future channel for mass protest and social change. Within Spain, the visibility of 15M has declined drastically in the last few months, to the point that one could infer that the movement failed. It is true that none of its key objectives was achieved, and that the resistance of the consolidated power was too strong, even for a movement as remarkable as 15M. The fragmentation of the movements in its later stages didn't lead to a successful transformation of the political and economic system. However, its pedagogical legacy is undeniable.

In the global context, we suggested that *movinet*s, with their embedded technology and capacity to circulate ideas between the net and physical spaces, have a potential to significantly alter the dynamics of social mobilisation. Our examination of the role of the Internet in propelling and shaping social movements indicated several areas of concern related to power relations and private ownership of Internet providers. In order to succeed, *movinet*s will have to overcome organizational weaknesses and use the Internet as a tool, for the physical space is where the real social change happens.



## Notes

- 1 The Arab Spring went on to develop different characteristics in a different context, and will not be analysed here.
- 2 Tremlett, Giles (2011) 'How corruption, cuts and despair drove Spain's protesters on to the streets. Young protesters in Madrid and beyond have many different demands, but they are united in opposing the government', *The Guardian*, 21 May 2011, online: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/21/spain-reveals-pain-cuts-unemployment> (accessed 29 August 2013).
- 3 According to El Mundo (2004) 'Las manifestaciones más multitudinarias en España', *El Mundo*, 13 March 2004, online: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/03/13/espana/1079142574.html> (accessed 29 August 2013).
- 4 López-Pintor, Rafael (1982) *La opinión pública española: del franquismo a la democracia*, CIS, Madrid, 74.
- 5 Vázquez García, Rafael (2007) 'Creating social capital and civic virtue. Historical legacy and individualistic values – what civil society in Spain?' in: Derrick Purdue, ed., *Civil Societies and Social Movements. Potentials and Problems*, Routledge, London & New York, 168.
- 6 Vázquez García, Rafael (2007) 'Creating social capital and civic virtue. Historical legacy and individualistic values – what civil society in Spain?', 169. This 2007 study argues that 'the return of democracy has not produced a largely more engaged and civic civil society in Spain' (166). Comparative analysis of data shows that 'Spaniards generally speaking are less likely to be interested in politics than the inhabitants of most other European countries' (172), and the same applies to other markers of civic engagement such as participation in voluntary associations etc. (176). The findings lead the author to conclude that 'socialization in Spain has perpetuated an apolitical culture that has not allowed civil society to emerge fully' (182).
- 7 Karamichas, John (2007) 'Key Issues in the Study of New and Alternative Social Movements in Spain: The Left, Identity and Globalizing Processes', *South European Society and Politics*, 12 (3), 280.
- 8 Parejo, José Luis & Javier Lorente (2012) 'From student associations to CEUNE: the development of student representation in Spain', *European Journal of Higher Education*, 2 (1), 80.
- 9 Karamichas, John (2007) 'Key Issues in the Study of New and Alternative Social Movements in Spain', 286.
- 10 Hessel, Stéphane (2010) *Indignez-vous!*, Indigène, Montpellier. Spanish translation: Hessel, Stéphane (2011) *!Indignaos!*, Destino, Barcelona.
- 11 Mayor Zaragoza, Federico (2011) *Delito de silencio. Ha llegado el momento. El tiempo es de acción*, Comanegra, Barcelona.
- 12 Sampedro, José Luis, Baltasar Garzón et al. (2011) *Reacciona*, Aguilar, Madrid.
- 13 Tejerina, Benjamín, Ignacia Perugorriá, Tova Benski and Lauren Langman (2013) 'From indignation to occupation: A new wave of global mobilization', *Current Sociology* 61 (4), 384.  
<http://juventudsinfuturo.net/>
- 15 Also translated as 'Homeless, jobless, pensionless, fearless'. See Perrugorriá, Ignacia & Benjamín Tejerina (2013) 'Politics of the encounter: Cognition, emotions, and networks in the Spanish 15M', *Current Sociology* 61 (4), 427.
- 16 Juventud sin futuro (2011) *Juventud sin futuro*, Icaria, Barcelona, 80.  
<http://www.sindominio.net/v/>
- 17 Juventud sin futuro (2011) *Juventud sin futuro*, 26.  
<http://www.democraciarealya.es/manifiesto-comun/manifiesto-english/>
- 20 <http://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/>
- 21 <http://www.estadodelmalestar.tk/>
- 22 <http://www.attac.org/>
- 23 Toret, Javier (ed) 2013 'Tecnopolítica y 15M, la potencia de las multitudes conectadas. El sistema red 15M, un nuevo paradigma de la política distribuida', IN3 Working Paper Series RR 13-001, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona, online full text: [http://journals.uoc.edu/ojs/index.php/in3-working-paper-series/article/view/1878/n13\\_toret](http://journals.uoc.edu/ojs/index.php/in3-working-paper-series/article/view/1878/n13_toret) (accessed 20 September 2013). A 21-page summary in English, written by Eunat Serrano, is available online: <http://datanalysis15m.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/technopolitics-15m-summary.pdf>.
- 24 Tarrow, Sidney (1998) *Power in Movement. Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 144.

- 25 Izquierda Unida (Uniteed Left) (IU) was particularly interested in associating itself with the movement. A party more to the left than Spain's main left political party Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Workers' Socialist Party) (PSOE), it recognised in the actions and discourse of 15M a lot of its own ideas, and was hopeful to attract the vote of one important group of Spanish electoral absentees: the disinterested youth. 15M, however, despite some ideological overlaps with IU, did not want to become an extension of a political party. More importantly, its main principle was to remain inclusive, and represent the interests of people of all political beliefs and associations.
- 26 Taibo, Carlos, Josep María Atentas et al. (2011) *La rebelión de los indignados. Movimiento 15M: Democracia real, ¡ya!*, Editorial Popular, Madrid, 8–11.
- 27 Rodríguez Marcos, Javier (2011) 'La vida inesperada de José Luis Sampedro', *El País*, 12 October 2011, online: [http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2011/10/12/actualidad/1318370403\\_850215.html](http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2011/10/12/actualidad/1318370403_850215.html) (accessed 13 August 2013).
- 28 An example of a detailed study about this connection is Toret, Javier (2013) 'Tecnopolítica y 15M, la potencia de las multitudes conectadas. El sistema red 15m. Un nuevo paradigma de la política distribuida'.  
<http://partidox.org/en/>
- 29 Sánchez, Juan Luis (2011) 'Partido X: Queremos desarrollar un método, no un ideología', *El Diario*, 8 January 2013, online: [http://www.eldiario.es/political/Partido\\_X-entrevista-programa-anonimos-15m\\_0\\_87841344.html](http://www.eldiario.es/political/Partido_X-entrevista-programa-anonimos-15m_0_87841344.html) (accessed 7 September 2013).
- 31 <http://madrid.tomalaplaza.net/2011/05/20/propuestas-20-mayo/>
- 32 This is one of the issues that was significantly developed thanks to the assistance of PAH that gathered 1.402.854 signatures in support of a legislative initiative – it wasn't well received in parliament and ultimately withdrawn by PAH when proposed alterations made it practically unrecognizable from the version supported by the citizens. See <http://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/category/propuestas-pah/iniciativa-legislativa-popular/> for more details. In May 2013 the PP government (that rules in Spain since November 2011) passed a reform that PAH qualified as 'useless'.
- 33 As indicated by Andreu Missé, the solemn declarations proclaiming the fight against offshore tax havens at the G-20 meeting (London 2009, Toronto 2010 and Los Cabos 2012) haven't had any effect. According to data published by Eurostat on 13 June 2012, financial investments of the EU in offshore tax havens registered a strong increase in 2011, reaching almost 59 billion euros, 10 times more than in 2010 (5.3 billion). However, in 2009 they surpassed 103 billion. Thus the 2010 drop was really an illusion. Missé, Andreu (2012) 'Los paraísos fiscales se rien', *El País* 27 June 2012, online: <http://blogs.elpais.com/la-larga-marcha-de-la-uel/2012/06/los-para%C3%ADsos-fiscales-se-r%C3%ADen-del-g-20.html> (accessed 27 June 2012).
- 34 Tobin tax would put a penalty on short-term financial round-trip excursions into another currency.
- 35 For more detailed information about all the proposals of 15M, see <http://tomalaplaza.net/>
- 36 Literally 'marea' means 'tide'. Here it refers to a series of protests for a specific cause. For example, *marea verde* (green tide) is a coordinated series of protests against cuts in the public education sector that started in Madrid at the beginning of the school year 2011/2012. Participants wore green T-shirts at the first demonstrations, and green T-shirts, banners, flags etc. continue to identify these protests as belonging to the ongoing campaign against cuts in education. Similarly, *marea blanca* (white tide) refers to protests against cuts to the public health system, and *marea roja* (red tide) refers to protests against unemployment (<http://marearaja9.wordpress.com/>).
- 37 See: Mosco, Vincent (2004) *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power and Cyberspace*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA; Morozov, Eugeny (2011) *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, Public Affairs, New York; Rendueles, César (2013) *Sociofobia, Capitán Swing*, Madrid. These 3 authors come from different ideological perspectives (Morozov coming from conservative right, and Mosco a Marxist) but agree that the idealisation of the Internet as a tool for democratic change is not realistic.
- 38 Morozov, Eugeny (2011) *The Net Delusion*, xiii.
- 39 McChesney affirms the media giants and the state are 'working hand in hand to promote corporate interests, and a state preoccupied with militarism, secrecy, propaganda and surveillance. In such environment political liberty is at risk'. McChesney, Robert W. (2013) *Digital Disconnect. How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*, The New Press, New York, 171.
- 40 Hindman, Matthew (2008) *The Myth of Digital Democracy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 19.

- 41 '...almost from the moment that it became a mass medium, the Internet was seen as more than just a way to revamp commerce and the practice of business. Its most important promise, many loudly declared, was political. New sources of online information would make citizens more informed about politics. New forms of Internet organizing would help recruit previously inactive citizens into political participation. Cyberspace would become a robust forum for political debate. The openness of the Internet would allow citizens to compete with journalists for the creation and dissemination of political information.' Hindman, Matthew (2008) *The Myth of Digital Democracy*, 1–2.
- 42 '... many would say that on balance those technologies ... created more good than harm. Nevertheless, society has also paid an enormous price for their promises in lives and resources sacrificed to realize impossible dreams.' Mosco, Vincent (2004) *The Digital Sublime*, 24.
- 43 Mosco, Vincent (2004) *The Digital Sublime*, 6.
- 44 Hindman, Matthew (2008) *The Myth of Digital Democracy*, 142.
- 45 Taussig, Michael (2013) 'I'm so angry I made a sign', in: Mitchell, W. J. T., Bernard E. Harcourt and Michael Taussig, (2013) *Occupy. Three Inquiries in Disobedience*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 3–43.
- 46 The concentration of wealth in the hands of 1% of population is a product of unjust non-redistributive production model. See Taylor, Astra, Keith Cessen et al. (2011), *Occupy. Scenes from Occupied America*, Verso, New York, 16–17.
- 47 Harcourt, Bernard E. (2013) 'Political disobedience', in: Mitchell, W. J. T., Bernard E. Harcourt and Michael Taussig, (2013) *Occupy. Three Inquiries in Disobedience*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 46.
- 48 They do share some characteristics, such as emergence during the time of crisis.
- 49 Offe, Claus (1985) 'New Social Movements. Challenging the boundaries of Institutional Politics', *Social Research*, 52 (4), 817–868.
- 50 García Espin, Patricia (2012) 'El 15M: De vuelta al barrio como espacio político', *Revista Internacional de Pensamiento Político*, 7, 291–310. See Teachout, Zephyr, Thomas Streeter et al. (2008) *Mousepads, Shoe Leather and Hope. Lessons from the Howard Dean Campaign for the Future of Internet Politics*, Paradigm, Boulder and London.
- 51 Tuenti is a social network similar to Facebook and much preferred than Facebook by young people in Spain and Latin America. N-1, very popular with 15M participants, is the main node of LOREA, a project to create secure social cybernetic systems, in which a network of humans will become simultaneously represented on a virtual shared world.
- 52 2013 'Tecnopolítica: la potencia de las multitudes conectadas. El sistema-red 15M como nuevo paradigma de la política distribuida'; online: <http://datanalysis15m.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/tecnopolitica-15m-resumen.pdf> (accessed 25 September 2013)