

CHAPTER 5

Combining the Abilities of all the Anyones: The 15M Movement and its Mutations

5.1. Anyone's Word and the Expert's Word: An Alliance

5.1.1. Affected voices and technical voices: 15M, PAH, and Mareas
May 2011. A trembling voice; words heard over street noise—or perhaps cut off by a bad Internet connection in a YouTube video: 'It's just that you're doing things I've always dreamed about being able to do ...' A pause, the voice breaks, and applause explodes. 'Excuse me, but I'm just ...'—more applause, and little by little the older woman speaking to the assembly, bending over the microphone, hands trembling, manages to go on: 'What I meant to tell you all is that I think you are so much more creative than our generation, and so I'd like to ask you something, something I think we all need, and it's that we not forget that ...' She falters for a moment, and then continues. 'There's a part of the population that's not here. There's part of the population missing here. It's the population that's even lower than low, the people who don't have something to eat every day, who live in slums, the *barrios*—' Applause bursts out again, interrupting her, and a hand settles on the woman's back to support her. '—where the average life expectancy is lower than in other *barrios*, where illiteracy is much higher, where people die, they're sick and they suffer in horrible situations.' Another supporting hand appears on her back, as if sharing the weight of the words she's still trying to say. 'And we have that in almost every town in the region, and in Murcia itself, and somehow they have to have this life, it has to fall on them. I don't know how to do it, but you do, I believe you do ...' Applause bursts out thunderously now, while the woman leaves the microphone and walks towards the people—who all stand up—and she loses herself among the crowd.

Shortly before or shortly after this, in May 2011, self-convened meetings in other plazas in cities and towns throughout Spain will see myriads of similar moments, at which so many other trembling voices will speak, often beginning with an apology. 'I'm sorry, it's hard for me to speak in

public.’ This phrase, emphasizing the speaker’s own vulnerability, becomes a habitual introduction for moments of exceptional sincerity and collective emotion.¹

But at the same time, another style of words, completely different in their format, tone, and presentation would also shortly spring forth from those assemblies and *acampadas*. Let’s take, for example, some lines from point #14 in the document titled ‘Propuestas abiertas de la comisión de economía del 15-M (Sol)’ (2011):

Establishment of a moratorium on the payment of the Spanish state’s foreign public debt until a full audit (including economic, social, and environmental aspects) can be made, with the participation of social agents and independent experts, to determine its legitimacy or illegitimacy. Should a debt be declared illegitimate, its payment shall be denied, and civil or criminal penalties for both debtors and creditors shall be required.

This proposal appeared as part of a document drafted collectively by the Economics Working Group of the *Acampadasol*. It included 16 specific political measures for resolving the crisis and changing the model that had caused it. These proposals were compiled and approved by the subgroups on Political Economy, Finances, Housing, Employment, Dissemination, Action, and Global Relations.

As Pedro Martí (15M.cc – *conversación con Pedro Martí* 2012), one of its members, explains, the power of the Economics Working Group came from having pooled together many ‘creative minds’ in an open discussion space where anyone was welcome. Martí asserts, in this regard, that one of the most important characteristics of the 15M movement in general, to which this Working Group belongs, has been knowing how to combine the production of ‘collective thought’ (‘without that psychological process it would have been hard for us to move from such a competitive society to understanding and listening so much to others’) with the recognition that

specialization is essential in a horizontal system; when there is no hierarchical system that unites us all, it’s efficiency [that unites us], and it’s much more efficient for those who know how to do something

1 As Amador Fernández-Savater says, ‘In the assemblies, the most *personal* contributions were applauded (in silence, with hands only), for example, those who stammered and struggled to find the right words. Arms crossed in rejection were raised immediately against any speeches that sounded more automatic, more rote, less affected by the situation’ (2014).

to dedicate themselves to that, regardless of the fact that all spaces are open to everyone so that anyone can participate in them.

This combination of fragile voices, that is, of ‘anyone’ with technical, specialized proposals and languages, no matter how strange it might be, doesn’t seem to have disappeared from the social arena since the 15M occupations of plazas ended. On the contrary, we can see it constantly reappearing throughout the cycle of mobilizations and social transformations that have taken place in the wake of this movement. It perhaps reached its most intense moments around the campaigns of the People Affected by Mortgages Platform (or PAH, the acronym for its Spanish name, Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca) and the so-called Mareas Ciudadanas (with particular emphasis on the Mareas in defense of public health and public education). I offer two brief examples.

March 2012. The documentary ‘La Plataforma’ is released, telling the PAH’s history. In it we see Matías González, a citizen affected by the real estate bubble who was evicted from his house—another of those ‘fragile’ voices—recounting how he made contact with the association:

I went to Obrador Street one Friday afternoon, to see what that thing was all about, and I saw what was happening: just like me, well, there was tons of people, thousands. So I told ‘em about my case and they supported me ... and they gave me the strength to be where I am, and now I even support the people who support me. I mean, if we don’t support each other here, there’s no way to get nothin’ done. And I give thanks for the Platform, ‘cause, well, it gave me the strength to be where I am, ‘cause this’ll drive you crazy ... This’ll just drive you crazy.

Months later, Matías González had his mortgage debt reduced. His voice, along with many others, had influenced the production of legal documents like the resolution of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg that prevented the eviction of people living in a block of apartments in the town of Salt that had been occupied by PAH’s ‘Social Work’ campaign. Based on that resolution, PAH itself (2013) produced a legal document to be presented to any Spanish court processing an eviction, which began with these words:

XXX, Solicitor of the Courts and of XXX, as I have duly verified in foreclosure proceeding nº XXX//// eviction for rent, before the Court and according to law I hereby SUBMIT:

That in accordance with articles 10.2, 47, and 96.1 of the Spanish Constitution, with international regulations on the right to decent housing and the prohibition of forced evacuations without prior

relocation, and in light of the recent ruling on the matter by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, I solicit postponement of eviction from my house, on the basis of the following allegations ...

In 2014, another legal decision marks what is perhaps one of the most important victories of the political cycle the 15M helped to initiate: preventing the privatization of six public hospitals in Madrid, as evidenced by the following decree from the Superior Court of Justice in Madrid:

The Court (Section 3) RESOLVES: ACCESS to the preventive measure requested by the claimant and consequently suspension is granted of the Resolution of April 30, 2013 from the Vice Ministry of Health Assistance of the Ministry of Health of the Community of Madrid, which publicized the call for bids on the contract of services known as ‘Licensed Management of the public service of specialized health care of the university hospitals “Princess Sofía,” “Princess Leonor,” and “Princess Cristina” of the Southeastern Henares and el Tajo.’

This judicial decision led to one of the extremely rare resignations from a public position to be seen in Spanish politics since the crisis began—that of Javier Fernández-Lasquetty, the ex-Minister of Health in the Community of Madrid. It would not have been possible without the whole process of strikes, protests, and legal actions taken by what came to be called the *Marea Blanca*, a huge public mobilization that reacted rapidly and forcefully to the attempted privatization orchestrated by Lasquetty.

But again, one of the main characteristics of the *Marea Blanca* was precisely its open, nonhierarchical, and, given its connection with something as historically stratified and corporatist as the health sector, surprisingly un-corporate organization. In addition, the *Marea Blanca*, like the assemblies of the 15M movement and PAH, was conceived as a space with room for voices with different types of authority, ranging from that gained through the personal experience of being affected by common problems, to that obtained through having specialized, technical kinds of knowledge. In fact, in the *Marea Blanca* it has been common to hear voices recognized as professionals, but also as patients. As one woman said on the radio program ‘*Dentro de La Marea Blanca*’ (2012):

We are very alarmed, but not by fear of losing our jobs; nor are we fighting to earn more money. We simply see a threat to the rights we’ve gained during these thirty-odd years of having public health, and against all the patients, and that includes us professionals, the doctors and nurses.

Also recurring in the Marea Blanca's mobilizations are references to the diversity of abilities necessary to maintain the public health system. There have been posters that say, 'The kitchen is as important as medicine, let's defend both,' strikes by hospital janitorial staff supported by the entire medical sector, and, in general, a constant appreciation for those with the caregiving, logistics, and social skills so necessary to the practice of medicine and who have set aside the strongly hierarchical distribution of value imposed by the tradition of expertise that surrounds the medical field. This redistribution of values has had an almost playful echo in the sudden transformation of healthcare personnel, patients, and hospital neighbors into 'activists' who have been able to pull together huge strikes overnight, to spread their message to all of society, and, several times, to paralyze downtown Madrid. An article in a local newspaper said, 'You can see doctors-cum-"community managers" compiling information and distributing it through social networks. You can see nurses giving press conferences and speaking in front of television cameras, aides designing posters and placards, technicians, physical therapists, all of them moving in the same direction' ('Desde Fuera ...' 2014).

The blog maintained by Hospital de la Princesa personnel ('Salvemos la princesa' 2014), who managed to avoid its shutdown after weeks of mobilization (in another remarkable victory for the Marea Blanca), evidenced the unity of the various hospital workers. They considered it not only a coordination of efforts to reach a goal, but also as something that is, in fact, quite distinctive: a victory over a world that proposes competition as the general form for relationships:

All the groups that have participated in this movement—doctors, nurses, aides, technicians, unions, watchmen, cleaning personnel, kitchen workers, maintenance staff, etc., etc., almost 3,000 people—have learned to reconcile their interests into one: our hospital.

Don't you believe for a minute that that's easy to do in a world dominated by ambition and 'I want to be more than you.' Every one of you guys knows that.²

Ultimately, if this characteristic combination of expert and everyday knowledge bases and abilities came together in these movements (15M, PAH, Mareas, and others), I think it's not just because everyone had something they felt the need to protest against. They also had the will to find ways of collaborating that offered alternatives to a competitiveness and hierarchy

2 Some of the most illuminating texts about the Marea Blanca that I know can be found in the blog *Al final de la asamblea*, to which I will refer later.

that was perceived—even if often only tacitly—as part of the problem being protested.

5.1.2. A ‘protest style’ and a ‘climate’

The accelerated pace of today’s multiple narrations by the big mass media companies—and often also by digital networks, which usually follow the former in this regard more than in others—makes it difficult to draw analogies like the one I suggest. The constant need to report as news what happens in the social sphere, to which the majority of the media succumb, also permeates civic self-perception. However, that has not prevented the recognition, from multiple perspectives, of the continuities between movements like 15M, the PAH, and the Mareas. These are no longer seen only as timely responses to the government’s management of the economic crisis, but as moments in the same political and social cycle that involves a fundamental rupture in the tacit agreements that supported the foundations of Spanish coexistence. (This was particularly true of agreements about the democratic operation of the political party system, previously considered acceptable, if imperfect, and about the acceptability of the economic system itself.)

This brings us back to the idea of the ‘crisis of the system’ I spoke of at the beginning of the book: it’s not only a crisis of ‘the economy,’ it’s not only an economic situation caused by the poor management of particular individuals. It’s something deeper that has to do with the way the Spanish state has been organized since it was ‘democratically’ established after Franco’s dictatorship.

Beyond the fact that this perception has been proposed as an interpretive thesis by some of the investigators working on the notion of the CT, and beyond the fact that many sectors of social movements habitually maintain it, it seems to me that it’s a narrative that is pretty well accepted by the general population. There’s a feeling that something fundamental is broken, or at least being questioned. Along with that, there are unavoidable perceptions that now something different has been opened. These perceptions often include, consciously or subconsciously, that of protests in general—and the 15M movement in particular—as triggers of that opening.

Thus, Fernández-Savater’s proposal to view the 15M movement not only as a specific social movement limited to the experience in the plazas, but also as the opening moment of a different climate that is altering the limits of what is possible in Spanish society, seems to be in harmony with a certain ‘common sense’ shared by large sectors of the population. As early as January 2012, Fernández-Savater stated in the article ‘¿Cómo se organiza un clima?’:

The official reality is the map of what's authorized as possible: what it's possible to see, to think, to feel, and to do. *We have opened that map.* Now other things can be seen, thought, felt, and done. The party system is no longer taboo. We conspire to interfere in the elections, although we may not agree among ourselves on how to do it, because it's the *vox populi* that they are a fraud. The relationship between democracy and capitalism is no longer so clear. The previously invisible reality of the evictions is now out in plain sight. It's possible to think and make policy without being affiliated with a party, or even a member of a social movement. We use the Internet every day to collectively construct another point of view about the present. We've learned that the unknown other is not only an enemy or an irrelevant object, but that he or she can be a friend. We've discovered that we can do things we had never suspected. The map of the possible is different, the climate is different.

Perhaps one of the versions of this idea that has caught on in a big way, as the years pass, is that of a new 'protest style.' Even though these continuities may not be spoken of explicitly in media forums and among the general public, it is very difficult to deny that such massive mobilizations as those of the Mareas, PAH, or the Marches for Dignity in March 2014, share with the 15M movement the choice not to use the more usual (although hardly unique) organizational forms of social movements, unions, and other leftist organizations: those in which some type of strong identity—activist, worker, sectorial, 'subordinate,' gender, etc.—tends to play the role of protagonist, and to generate spaces for a 'vanguard' composed of those who represent that segment of the population to all the rest of the population.

This 'inclusivity,' as it is often called, of recent movements has been generated through a whole series of procedures, expressions, and we could even say 'tics' (none of which are exempt, at times, from a certain fetishization) that have become emblems of that 'new style of protest,' and which are often put into practice and recognized almost automatically. I am thinking mostly of assemblies, with their turn-taking, facilitators, codes of gestures to express agreement or disagreement, etc. But we cannot forget the posters of various sizes and styles that fill demonstrations, contrasting significantly with the uniformity of those distributed by political parties and unions. Then there is the broad repertoire of slogans and characteristically nonsectarian and nonsectorial chants ('Yes, we can,' 'They don't represent us,' etc.) that accompany a use of public spaces that is hospitable and respectful of others (even—in general—of those who in principle would not expect that hospitality, like the riot police).

Often the dizzying pace of ‘the present’ and the urgency imposed by increasing structural violence (unemployment, precarization, etc.) make it very difficult to look back, and a few years seem to be enough to blur past events. It seems to me, though—and this is difficult to prove, because it’s based on my own daily monitoring of the mass media, my participation in digital networks, and on personal conversations held during these years—that at least a certain feeling has been engraved into the recent collective memory that the 15M movement opened another type of political space that has been constructed more ‘by anyone’ than by a certain social group or ideology, with its corresponding ‘vanguard.’

‘We are everyone,’ was one of the more oft-repeated slogans of the movement. And the truth is that more than 80% of the population declared their support for it, in addition to the approximately 7 million people who participated directly, united by very general mottos like ‘Real Democracy Now!’ or ‘We’re not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers,’ but without necessarily identifying with any particular social group or ideology.

Likewise, one did not and does not have to be a member of anything, nor adopt any strong social or ideological identity—nor submit to any vanguard—to agree with the PAH or the Mareas, or to participate directly in their mobilizations. That is something that, I dare say, few people would doubt today. And in any case, the phenomenon has been thoroughly studied and theorized by social scientists, philosophers, and other scholars of such movements, especially those that have put the 15M movement in relation to its other ‘sister’ movements that arose around 2011 in the global wake of Tahrir Square and the Arab Spring. All of these movements have been characterized by their ‘absence of leaders,’ their ‘horizontality,’ and as already mentioned, their ‘inclusivity.’³

On the other hand, the tacit or explicit notion of an inclusive, horizontal ‘style of protest’ keeps recurring when mass media and researchers represent these social processes. At the same time, and this is the nuance that I particularly want to introduce, along with that perception of its ‘open, nonmilitant style,’ an awareness—often silenced by the media—has also crystallized among the people who have lived it up close and personal that there are fundamental aspects of these processes that exceed ‘the protest’ as such; that is, the complaint or the demand for solutions from institutional powers.

3 Some examples include Graeber (2013), Hardt and Negri (2012), Jimenez and Estalella (2014), Lawrence (2014), Morell (2012), Moreno-Caballud and Sitrin (2013), Romanos (2014a, 2014b), Sitrin and Azzellini (2014), Toret, Monterde et al. (2013), and Gould-Wartofsky (2015).

I will propose shortly that these other aspects have to do with those two dimensions to which I have alluded: the appearance of the voice of ‘anyone,’ which expresses their shared vulnerability, and the construction of political alternatives by resorting to specialized, technical ways of knowing. I will emphasize primarily the feedback of these two dimensions and their equal importance within these processes, since—and this is my main thesis here—the value placed on the ‘unauthorized’ or vulnerable word, and the ability to combine this word with specialized, technical discourses is the main cultural tool of these social processes that, besides protesting, manage to simultaneously promote and support nonneoliberal ways of life. In other words, they are foreign to the principles of competition and corporatization of life (i.e., treating life as if it were a business) discussed in chapter 1. But before beginning to elaborate on this topic, I want to give a clearer idea of the space-time coordinates of the processes I am talking about.

5.1.3. Mapping ways of life in the face of dispersion

Despite the greater visibility of movements like the PAH and the Mareas, the political, social, and cultural transformations that have taken place in that new ‘climate’ are undoubtedly open to very heterogeneous possibilities surrounding the 15M movement. They also appear in different spaces: some more *macro* and others more *micro*, some openly political and formally organized, other more routine and almost invisible. Furthermore, as I noted above, it is especially difficult to perceive those transformations and give them value in a society that is not only forced by mass media to accelerate and scatter its self-representation in supposed ‘news stories,’ but which, in general, is articulated based on the neoliberal principles of widespread competition and the corporatization of life, which produce what the psychoanalyst Franco Ingrassia (2011) understood as an intense, pervasive tendency towards ‘dispersion.’ Ingrassia defines this tendency as ‘that which makes the social ties we establish ever more unstable, weak, and heterogeneous.’ Dispersion, therefore, is an ‘effect on the social aspect of market transactions there where the state weakens its regulating, structuring function of intersubjective relationships,’ given that ‘the market today is constantly assembling and disassembling bonds based on its incessant search for the maximization of profits. Disturbance becomes the norm and stability the exception.’

These conditions of dispersion caused by the neoliberal market hegemony strongly affect society’s self-perception. In this sense, it is easier to count the processes opened by the 15M movement, like the swell of always apparently novel protests, than to try to trace the continuities between processes that sometimes are indeed protests, but often, in fact, are much

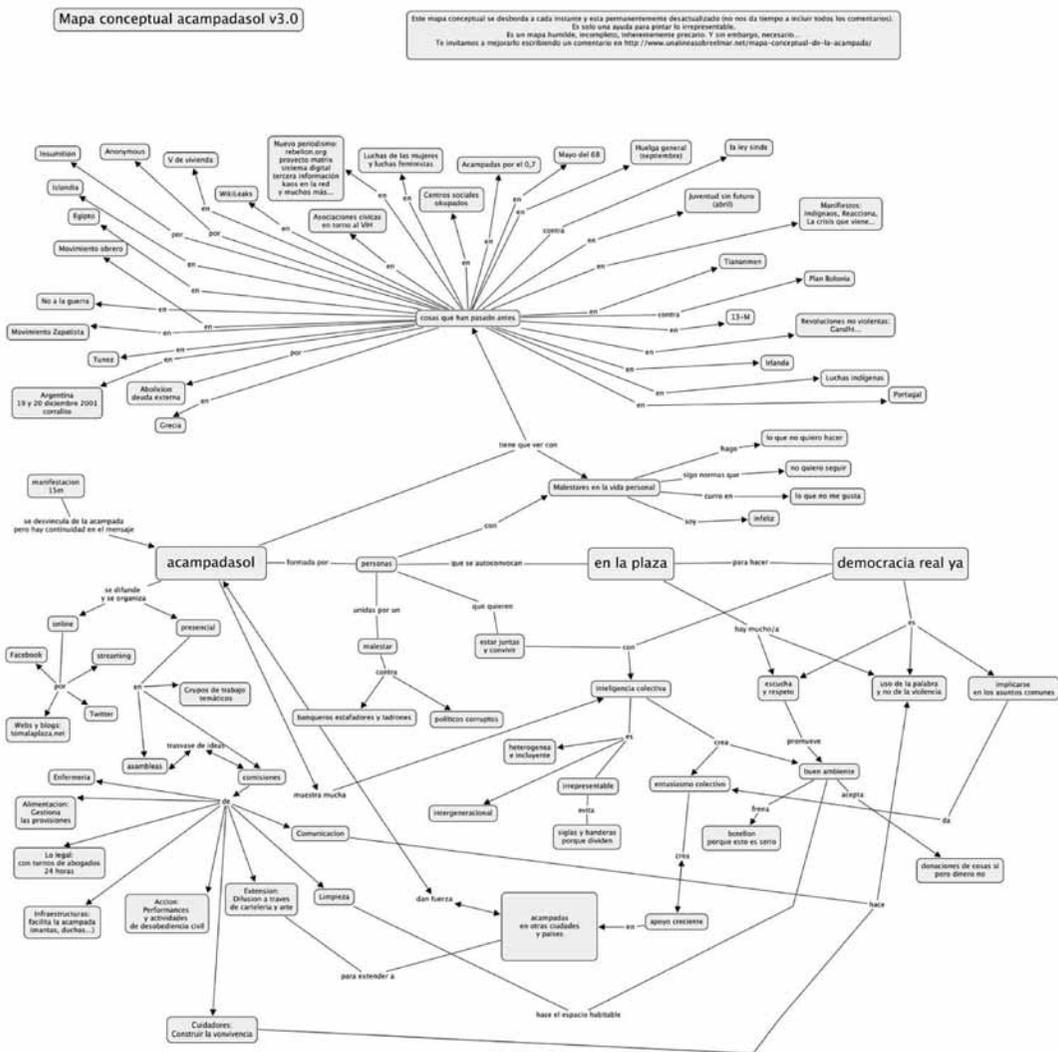


FIGURE 1. 'Conceptual Map of Acampadasol,' in its 3.0 version

more transformative in their propositional, affective, or subjective aspects—precisely those most capable of creating the social tie that neoliberalism tends to destroy.

In response to these difficulties of self-perception, agents of the movements have produced, among other things, instruments of rapid visualization like the 'maps' shown in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 is the 'Conceptual Map of Acampadasol,' in its 3.0 version. It was produced by Acampadasol's Thought

Commission in May 2011, and extended based on suggestions made by people ‘on the ground’ in the plaza itself and also online, through the blog of the radio program ‘Una línea sobre el mar,’ where it was originally published. Figure 2 is called ‘15M Mutations, Projections, Alternatives, and Convergences,’ and was prepared by the Civic Self-Consultations Working Group at the beginning of 2014, as a tool to help in the process of ‘updating’ the 15M that was proposed by this group.

The first map was produced closer to the time when the plazas were occupied, and not for nothing does it appear to be a map of Acampadasol. But at the same time, it shows the camp’s ‘present day’ in the light of a recent past of ‘things that have happened before.’ These range from very specific protests in the Spanish state—like the ‘Acampadas por el 0.7%’ that took place during the nineties, or the general strike of September 2010—to great historical political movements like the ‘women’s struggles and feminist struggles,’ the labor movement, and indigenous struggles, moving through experiences related to emergent online cultures, like WikiLeaks or Anonymous, and to revolts of the new global wave, like those of Egypt, Iceland, or Greece.

The second map, on the other hand, focuses more on the post-15M period, when a climate of politicization or the ‘new style of protest’ develops. The explicit intention, as the Autoconsulta Ciudadana (‘AutoConsulta Ciudadana’ 2014) website says, is

to evaluate the experience of these three years of the 15M, to synthesize its proposals and thesis, to show and make a map of what is alive and working, to visualize our social support graphically, the social movements’ successes in their forms of struggle (demonstrations, marches, ‘Silent Shout,’ Mareas, Civic Consultations, halting the privatization of healthcare, PAH, demonstrations in Gamonal, etc.).

This idea of showing the social movements’ ‘successes,’ often also called ‘victories,’ has circulated widely among the ‘15M climate’ networks. This is in line with their continued success at getting political, legislative, and judicial institutions to respond with concrete measures—though, it’s true, these may be few and far between—to the pressure and specific proposals of the movements. From this motivation, which is central in the Civic Self-Consultation map, it’s easy to tend to give more value to the specialized, technical aspect of political projects in the wake of the 15M movement—because it is the people with such skills who communicate directly with the institutions—than to their capacity to create spaces for everyday, experiential, or affective abilities and ways of knowing; in other words, spaces for ‘anyone.’ In this sense, it’s almost inevitable to grant a

central value to mobilizations that obtain judicial victories because they have support from lawyers who play an essential role, as seen in both the PAH and the Marea Blanca.

Likewise, the thematic organization in ‘commissions’ or ‘working groups’ that was carried out even in the 15M camps, and which serves as a guide to this map for categorizing the ‘post-15M,’ always runs the risk of emphasizing the more instrumental aspects of these social processes, and of erasing their more expressive, affective, or relational aspects. In other words, those involved in the ‘construction of subjectivity,’ and who, despite being—it seems to me—essential for all areas, would be relegated quietly to the headings of ‘culture,’ ‘spirituality,’ or perhaps simply ‘thought.’

The map developed by Civic Self-Consultations is, in any case, an excellent tool to show the plethora of initiatives taking place in the wake of the 15M movement that have specific intentions, and often with the specialized, technical capacity to obtain small and large institutional victories. That plethora of initiatives is what is so difficult to reconstruct in the middle of the dispersion produced by mass media, and in general by the precarization of life under neoliberalism. The map shows, for example, the existence of initiatives that combine technical abilities related to the economy, law, or audiovisual media. Some examples include the Platform for the Civic Audit of the Debt—which emerges, in fact, from the aforementioned Economía Sol proposal number 14; the 15MpaRato project, which is lodging a civic complaint against Rodrigo Rato, the head of Bankia, the financial organization that received the most public money to avoid bankruptcy; the Record Your Meeting Platform, the Precarious Office, the Platform against the Privatization of the Isabel II Canal, the Offices of Economic Disobedience, and many more.

Just the *possibility* of mapping conceptually, beyond an organization around ‘subjects’ (politics, economy, justice, education, health, etc.) that came into the 15M world already preconceived, is what enables the *conceptual* Acampadasol Map. For reasons of chronology, it can’t include the post-15M, but it does allow an approach to its dimension of subjectivity construction. Thus, playing with the possible routes suggested by this other map, we can describe the 15M movement by creating phrases like the following from the proposed nodes: ‘people who want to be together and coexist by using collective intelligence, which creates collective enthusiasm’ or ‘in the plaza people listen to you and respect you, which promotes a good atmosphere.’

Regarding the organizational structures of Acampadasol, we can read in the map:

Acampadasol is disseminated and organized face-to-face in thematic working groups and commissions on nursing, food (arranging

provisions), legal (with 24 hour shifts of lawyers), infrastructures (providing the camps with blankets, showers, etc.), action (civil disobedience performances and activities), extension (dissemination through poster-making and art), cleaning, and communication.

Together with those commissions is also the more general idea that there are ‘caretakers who facilitate coexistence and facilitate the use of words and not violence’ (perhaps the most specific translation of this function in the field was the creation of the so-called ‘Respect Commission,’ which I’ll return to later).

What I find interesting about these conceptualizations developed by the Acampadasol Thought Group is precisely their capacity to show the importance of ways of life and meaning production, like collective intelligence, respect, mutual care, enthusiasm, coexistence, and listening, that are cross-sectional and essential for the explicit thematic and organizational orientations of both the 15M movement and those later ‘mutations, projections, alternatives, and confluences’ shown by the other map.

I want to return now to the nuance I want to contribute to these debates on the 15M movement and the social processes it has opened. I believe that, once again, as happened with the online cultures, the issue of this ‘subjective’ or ‘cultural’ aspect that moves beyond the protest and ‘institutional victories’ dimensions cannot be understood without relating it to the mechanisms that support it; that is, the mechanisms that allow all the work of production, circulation, and transformation of meanings that are the material substance—and there is no other—of this cultural dimension.

As I noted at the end of the previous chapter, what the 15M *acampadas* intended was precisely to create a space where not only culture—that is, the collective production of meaning—but also life as a whole, could be maintained. This would be accomplished through collaborative practices as far as possible from the neoliberal ‘way of the world’ that foregrounds competitiveness and the corporatization of life. This meant getting to work: if things couldn’t be done with money—which was not accepted within Acampadasol—if certain words could not be imposed upon others by pre-established criteria of hierarchical authority—if we really ‘are everyone’—it would be necessary to produce materially and to maintain *other mechanisms for valuing existing abilities and needs*.

Thus, it seems to me, in the same way that it was essential for the camps to construct material infrastructures for the collective management of food, rest, or physical care, it was also fundamental to ensure a space to collaboratively manage everyone’s ‘cultural needs.’ This translated into the creation of spaces of respect, valuing, and listening for vulnerable voices,

which spoke from their personal experiences about common problems, and not from the positions of authority habitually used in the competitive neoliberal dynamic.

Beyond the protests, then, was a whole other dimension, one of constructing ways of life that replaced competition with collaboration, that were respectful of vulnerability and able to value different kinds of knowledge and everyday or experiential abilities. That does not mean by any stretch of the imagination that specialized, technical abilities were cast aside. On the contrary, what happened was that the latter were combined with the former, within a logic of collective cooperation that was promoted intensely through its embodiment within a specific limited space—the plaza—where, unlike in digital cultures and many of the post-15M spaces, all the basic aspects of the coexistence of daily life have a place. The plaza was a space to find ‘solutions’ formulated in the technical languages that institutions wanted to hear; it was a space to experiment with alternative ways of life, through words and affection, sociability and bodies.

In short, the 15M plazas could be described as spaces where all kinds of knowledge and abilities were welcome, as long as they were used to help support a way of life based on the collaboration of anyone, and not on competition.

5.2. Sustaining the Plaza and Beyond: Towards a New Cultural Power

5.2.1. Building abilities, resources, languages

In order to think about this better, we return for a moment to the scene of the trembling voice that appears, apologizing, before the assembly. The example I gave comes from the Acampada Murcia, but really, it could have happened in any other camp—and here in this section my observations are based on research done mainly on Acampadasol. But in any case, what interests me are those hands that settle on the woman’s back as her speech progresses with difficulty, a difficulty usually heard in voices ‘unauthorized’ by modern neoliberal paradigms of cultural authority to speak in public. In this case, the speech that progresses with such difficulty talks about the need to include those who live a more difficult life. In some way, those hands are supporting the body that speaks, making its words possible. But they are not the only ones.

If we imagine a wider view of that same scene, and we begin to observe everything around the speaker, we will see that there are many more elements necessary for those words to be said. When seen from further away, the assembly sometimes has the appearance of a ‘spontaneous’ meeting. But

during the 15M occupations an entire logistics and a series of very complex protocols were developed that enabled the organization of assemblies that were consciously structured so that not only could anyone participate, but their participation would not get lost at the anecdotal or individual level, but rather, would help to create what was constantly called ‘collective thought’ or ‘collective intelligence.’

So as we continue to look around, we will notice that beside the microphone there is, of course, sound equipment, and several people responsible for making it work. Who brought the equipment, and the necessary electric generator? Remember, we’re in the middle of a public thoroughfare. The testimonies on the matter all say the same thing: ‘Things appeared, people brought them, nobody had to pay for anything. Everyone contributed what they had and what they knew how to do.’

However, it isn’t enough to set up a microphone so that a voice can not only be heard, but also be ‘actively listened to’ (another common expression in the camps). For this to happen, many other things have to happen too. First, the subgroup on Assembly Logistics has prepared the way. It has created corridors with adhesive tape on the ground so that people can enter and leave comfortably without bothering others (remember that there were often more than 1,000 people gathered at the assemblies). It has distributed pieces of cardboard for anyone who wants to avoid sitting directly on the hot ground baked by the Spanish summer sun. And it has found chairs ‘for people with limited mobility or energy.’⁴

With the assembly already under way, the Assembly Logistics subgroup still doesn’t rest: its members can be seen circulating among the people with water diffusers for whoever wants to cool off (a playful element, and one that helps to ‘create a good atmosphere’). They also distribute parasols. Alongside them, the members of the Turn-Taking subgroup circulate with posters plastered to their bodies to identify themselves. Not only do they note the names of people who want to speak, they also ask on what subject, and negotiate the relevance of the intended contribution. But it isn’t up to them to decide. They transmit the information to the Turn-Taking Coordination team, which, since it has greater contact with the Facilitators group, can make a more informed decision.

The Facilitators, in turn, don’t have to communicate that decision directly to the assembly. That task belongs to the Moderators, who are dedicated entirely to interacting with the public, because the Facilitators are giving

4 As recommended by that fascinating document, the ‘Quick Guide for Energizing Public Assemblies,’ published in May 2011 on Acampadasol’s blog, ‘Toma la Plaza’ (DifRed 2014).

them all the necessary clues (when to move on to the next point of the daily schedule, how to paraphrase a contribution, what is the best decision at any given moment to reach a consensus, etc.). Flanking the moderator, who always faces the assembly, are the iconic simultaneous interpreters of sign language—a language everybody at the assembly participates in to some degree when they show their agreement or disagreement with their now no less iconic hand movements to express applause or rejection, among other things.

In some assemblies there were even enough people working on the Facilitation group that some could personally approach any person who showed their displeasure with the process, trying to get their opinions to include them later. Needless to say, anyone could belong to the Facilitation group, as long as they showed up for group meetings. Of course, one had to know when and where those meetings were being held, but this wasn't hard. The information points had lists of everything that happened in the plaza, updated constantly and in plain sight. In just a few hours, a new arrival could know practically the same things about the operation of that small city as somebody who had been there for a month.

Because, let's not forget, people were living in the 15M *acampadas*, at least in those of the biggest cities. The assembly was only a brief moment out of the daily life in the plaza, although, in some sense, the whole *acampada* had been constructed so that they could keep holding assemblies where 'we look for solutions' or, as Acampadasol's first tweet said, 'we reach agreements.' Because, while the Tahrir Square demonstrators promised not to disband until Mubarak resigned, Sol swore—not without some ambiguity—in that first message: 'We have just set up camp in the Puerta del Sol. We will not go away until we reach an agreement.'

In order to maintain that long, arduous search for an 'agreement'—to obtain that meeting between anyone's voices and the expert voices that wanted to decide how to live a life with dignity—many things needed to be done in turn. When the assembly was over, the cleaning team had to make sure to leave the space as it was before, while at the same time the Infrastructure Commission made sure that the plaza was still walkable, directing traffic through contributions from 'micro-urbanism.' There was one zone for camping and sleeping, and a different one for daytime activities. People ate there—and pretty well, too; there were even vegetarian options. The locals were constantly bringing homemade food to Acampadasol, although cooking was also done there in the camp.

The body was very much in evidence, because so much work had to be done. It was necessary 'to take care of oneself': 'We take care of each other' was a constant refrain. The members of commissions who used computers

ceaselessly and spent whole nights without sleep, like Communications or International Outreach, received visits from the Spirituality Group offering them Reiki massages. The Feeding Commission offered sandwiches to the Carpentry Commission. Seniors and children each had their own spaces. There was, mostly during the early weeks, a somewhat contradictory atmosphere of emergency: a peaceful, careful kind of ‘trench’ atmosphere. A poster in Sol said ‘Rest and get organized: your exhaustion benefits them.’ Another one, with certain older resonances, said: ‘Madrid will be the tomb of neoliberalism.’

Sound technicians, electricians, carpenters, cooks, translators, hackers, journalists, social workers, economists, lawyers, architects ... in Acampadasol, all easily found ways to use their abilities to collaborate with others. An exceptional mixture of knowledge bases, aptitudes, and ways of doing things arose. The professional, the expert, the technical were mixed with the affective, the experiential, the everyday in a way that couldn’t happen in neoliberal society.

Fernández-Savater quoted in his ‘Notes from Acampadasol’—an exceptional document for understanding these dynamics—the following comment: ‘A friend who is very involved in the organization, who dedicates her life to the camp, says, “Shit, we can’t get a job in our own fields, but we’ll know how to do a little of everything.”’ In Sol, a city was built in four days. In spite of the urgency, they created a daily life rich with activities: while an older gentleman lovingly prepared a huge paella, a few meters away the Legal Commission drafted a proposal to change the Electoral Law. Climbers scaled the scaffolds that surrounded the plaza to hang banners; others planted gardens in the flower beds. In the library, at the beginning, there wasn’t enough room for all the donated books, but later they were catalogued scrupulously, and as with the Archive that contains every document produced in the plaza, all those books can still be freely consulted today.⁵

One of the many documentaries and semi-amateur videos recorded in those days about the march, titled *No nos vamos* (We Are Not Leaving) (*No nos vamos – Comisión de Respeto* 2011), attempted to chronicle the activities of each of the Acampadasol working groups. In one of its sections, dedicated to the emblematic Respect Commission, the language used by a young man explaining the daily life of that commission is noteworthy. ‘What are we doing?’ he says in a didactic tone to the camera that follows him as he walks

5 As I write this, both Archivo Sol and Biblio Sol are housed, after having taken various trips, in the CSA 3peces3, as explained in a recent informational note (‘La Biblioteca Sol y el Archivo del 15-M perviven en Lavapiés’ 2014).

through the crowded plaza. ‘Well, right now we’re organizing the Respect Commission, we’re gathering resources. So what does this mean? Well, first, personnel resources: people to be able to cover the area covered by Respect Commission #2.’ When he reaches a small stand where his companions are, he explains, ‘Another job of the people here in reception is to control human and technical resources. What does this mean? Well, for example, keeping track of whether the walkie-talkie needs batteries, to fix those kinds of things. They also manage any displaced personnel. Third function: internal communication with Respect #1.’

It is striking to hear language full of expressions belonging to a business management vocabulary coming from the mouth of this experienced member of the Respect Commission to describe perhaps one of the most representative groups of that collaborative, inclusive culture that characterized Sol. This same person, switching to a much more colloquial register, also says about Respect, ‘We are not an authority, what we do is mediate and raise awareness, we’re not going to tell people what they should or should not do.’

A young woman, explaining to some newly arrived volunteers how to collaborate, is much more colloquial: ‘If you get nervous in a bad situation, you split, so things don’t get out of hand, okay?’ And ‘if someone comes around being a jackass, and someone always does, just stay calm, chill out, and most of all, don’t get nervous, never lose your cool ...’

Sol was said in many ways. During a meeting of the Respect Commission with the Thought Group, they drafted a text (2014) in which the former represented itself in these terms:

The Respect Commission, originally fed by prior knowledge bases (Crisis Intervention, Social Work, Sociology, Psychology, Linguistic Pragmatics, Philosophy of Language ...) is enriched with knowledge derived from action and praxis. Instead of a competition between voices, the Commission relies on empathy and mediation for its dialogue. Instead of conflicting interests, motivations are heard and prejudices are battled to collaborate on a beneficial result for everyone.

These types of crossovers between professional, specialized, intellectual, and even business languages and traditions with other everyday, experiential ones—all of them in service to collaboration—are the ones that interest me. In order to live collaboratively in the *acampada* it was understood that all those languages, knowledge bases, and abilities were necessary and worthy of respect. Despite the logical desire and hope that ‘something else would result’ from the plaza, that ‘specific proposals’ would be agreed upon (these were recurring expressions), it was also understood that in the camp something important was already happening, because of the way

coexistence was lived and organized day by day. It was understood, I think, that the goal was not to distill the knowledge of ordinary everyday ‘anyones,’ to obtain a specialized, technical knowledge, but to blend one with the other in spaces where collaboration was prioritized over competition.

This is one of the reasons for the mysterious phenomenon of the faithful endurance of very many people in assemblies of endless duration, lasting hours and hours without reaching many concrete decisions. Again Fernández-Savater (2011b) gathers testimony that offers a key: ‘Another friend: “What works in the assemblies is not the assembly format, but an energy that comes from somewhere else: the need and the desire to be together and to keep going together. Only this way can we put up with it, that’s what needs more care.”’

In another vignette, Fernández-Savater talks, now in the first person, about the same phenomenon:

In the group I’m with in the evening there is not a single thought in common. Monologue after monologue. And even so ... Someone trembles with emotion when taking the megaphone, people going shopping in calle Preciados are caught up, glued to the group, overwhelmed, so much is said from the heart ... So definitely, something is happening.

Among the string of opinions offered by various intellectuals in the mass media about the 15M movement, to which I will turn shortly, there was no lack of those that emphasized, in a critical tone, the aspect of the ‘viscerality’ or the ‘emotiveness’ of the movement. This was the case, for example, of the reading of Zygmunt Bauman himself, from a perception that was inevitably distanced from the 15M’s daily life, and armed with his theory of the ‘liquid society.’

However, I repeat that those aspects of emotional expressivity related to the creation and material support of an ordinary life not governed by competition cannot be separated from that context. From that context of ‘a nonneoliberal city within the neoliberal city,’ the emotivity released by the 15M movement takes on another meaning.

5.2.2. Empowering the new ‘experts in what happens to them’

Of course, the biggest problem was that this ordinary life based on collaboration, and distanced from (at least rendered indirectly related to) money and the relations of neoliberal competition and corporatization, couldn’t be maintained indefinitely in the camps. Everybody knew that the camps’ days were numbered, they weren’t made to last. Just like the assemblies, the camps had what was often called a ‘symbolic value.’ It was a

matter of demonstrating that it is possible to live another way, even if only for a while and only within that enclosed space.

But during that demonstration, procedures were constructed, sensitivities and ways of knowing that, unlike the material infrastructure of the camps—all those precarious constructions of cardboard and wood that often ended up in the trash—they *could* continue to be used, wherever other places and other energies could be found to reactivate them. Specifically, as I have shown, that peculiar combination of the knowledge of the citizens affected and the knowledge of the experts is probably one of the most strongly exported of the cultural dynamics cultivated by the 15M movement. And perhaps, therefore, it is also one of the nuclei of that new ‘style of protest’ or ‘climate of expansion of the possible’ that was opened by the movement, and which Fernández-Savater has called ‘the birth of a new social power.’ It seems to me that it’s also about ‘a new cultural power,’ since it promotes that ‘culture of anyone’ revalorized by the 15M movement. This is thanks in part to the new collaborative abilities acquired online discussed in the previous chapter, which enabled the construction of all kinds of nonhierarchical knowledge and abilities capable of creating ‘collective intelligence.’

If we observe what happens in social processes with roots in the 15M movement, like the PAH (which, although it was created before 2011, owes much of its massive success to the plazas’ spirit of solidarity), or the Marea Blanca in defense of public healthcare, we can confirm that there is an important transmission of that new ‘cultural power.’ It is notable, for example, how in the case of the PAH, the assembly where all voices are important continues to be a central organizational tool. In fact, the exceptional ‘empowerment’ the PAH inspires must be attributed, among other things, to its determined rejection of a ‘service’ model through which the problem of mortgages would be confronted with the aid of a series of legal experts, mediators, or activists offered to an undifferentiated contingent of so-called ‘victims’ whose abilities and ways of knowing would not be relevant.

The key to the PAH’s success—as noted by those who began it and maintain it day to day—is that everyone who was affected participates in all the processes of the struggle for all the cases, everyone contributing his or her own kinds of knowledge and abilities, and themselves becoming advisers for other affected people. This is how Montserrat Hernando, housing adviser for the Federation of Neighborhood Associations of Barcelona, and customary collaborator of the PAH, explains it in the documentary *La Plataforma*:

Every Friday in the assembly you see people who come, at first very fearful, very afraid, they don’t open their mouths, they won’t stop crying if they do, and they even feel guilty, they feel like a failure.

And these people, you see that as time goes on and they attend more assemblies, and more than anything from that collective advising that the assembly does, they start latching onto that strength, and even that leadership, like in Matías's case. So then they can become the strength for other affected people, and they can move and publicly denounce what's happening, with no worry at all, no fear, and with so much honor, and really with everything they have ... And that, I believe, is the great formula of the assembly. When I came for the first time it hit me, and it really works.

Antonio Lafuente (2009), a multidisciplinary researcher whose roots are in the field of history of science, coined the very useful concept of 'expanded authority,' which can help understand these processes better. By this he means 'a heterogeneous, delocalized cluster of experiences that produce knowledge, meticulously confirmed, outside the limits and borders of the academy, outside the laboratory.' And he enumerates some of those experiences:

[T]ogether with the market and the state, there is a third sector, based essentially, although not exclusively, on the economics of the gift. It is constituted by NGOs, antinuclear, pacifist, and ecological movements, the local movement, or the collectives of affected or concerned citizens; i.e., patients whose identity has been designed based on science and who rebel against what seems more punishment than diagnosis, struggling to construct their own identity. The most advanced, most recognized experience, which constitutes the flagship of the third sector, is the hacker movement and everything there is around the operating system GNU-Linux ... All of them are, as I say, 'experts in experience,' experts in what happens to them.

It seems to me that this figure of 'expert in experience or expert in what happens to her' is a wonderful way to conceptualize the breakdown of the arbitrary barrier between the expert as understood by the modern technoscientific tradition and 'anyone,' the person culturally unauthorized by that paradigm. The 'expert in what happens to him' would be nothing more than 'anyone' who has freed himself from the prohibition against recognizing himself as a thinking being capable of producing meaning and knowledge, and who has therefore begun to value and expand his abilities. Thus, for example, the citizens affected by mortgages who approach the PAH become 'experts in what happens to them' when they are mutually empowered to understand better and to fight against their problem, shedding the role of victim but also the position of 'those in the dark.'

I understand that when Lafuente speaks of ‘communities of affected people,’ he is referring in particular to groups of people who suffer from environmental diseases seldom studied by medical science, and who are united to elaborate their own theories collectively. But at the same time, Lafuente also indicates the enormous importance of all the types of knowledge that have not historically been considered scientific, and have even been persecuted (‘described as superstitious, charlatans, prejudiced, ignorant, plebeian, etc.’) but that comprise a whole unrecognized, ‘amateur’ tradition that has been fundamental for the construction of modernity as we know it. If we think of the PAH as a ‘community of affected people,’ we realize just how the technical, specialized knowledge bases of lawyers and social workers are allied with social, relational, experiential, and emotional ways of knowing that make up the element of solidarity and mutual aid. And without these things, the assembly, and therefore the PAH itself, would never work as it does now.

It seems that the 15M movement itself—and not only the political but also the cultural climate that was opened with it—could be thought of as a great process of collective learning of certain kinds of knowledge restricted until then to experts—as when they say (and it’s true) that with the 15M ‘we’ve learned a lot about economics.’ But at the same time, it allows an intense reevaluation of those kinds of ordinary, everyday, unauthorized knowledge and abilities ‘of anyone’ needed by those affected by the crisis of neoliberalism to defend themselves from its consequences. Those affected by the neoliberal crisis unite, then, regardless of their class and condition, to become ‘experts in what happens to them’; but they understand that to be expert, in this case, doesn’t require only specialized knowledge, but also those others situated, everyday ways of knowing that are usually called ‘experience.’

The case of the Marea Blanca, finally, particularly corroborates this tendency. In it, the hyperspecialized, prestigious world of medical science coincides with the strong belief that such specialization and prestige are nothing if not used in service to the health—and therefore the dignity—of anyone. Time and time again, it has been repeated, even by some who are otherwise ‘ideologically’ very conservative (and abound in the medical profession), that public health also needs to be universal, as a matter of dignity. But what is even more interesting and unusual is that when massive protests have been staged to defend that universality, the very spaces of the protest have been infected with the positive valuation of ‘anyone’ implicit in the recognition.

And thus, as indicated earlier, we have seen medical specialists, along with nurses, other health personnel, users, and neighbors of the hospitals sharing those protest spaces, and doing so with the blend of expert and

everyday kinds of knowledge that is typical of the 15M movement. The Marea Blanca, like the PAH, has broken with the ‘service’ model typical of NGOs and even many activist groups. This has led to the understanding not only that medical ‘experts’ are also potentially ‘patients,’ as the previously quoted doctor indicated, but also that the defense of public health has no meaning if we do not incorporate an open space for everything that ‘anyone’—whose dignity must be safeguarded—can contribute. This way, the ‘patient’ stops being a victim, or the passive recipient of a service, and becomes, in fact, an ‘anyone’ who has to be taken into account. In the same way, those affected by mortgages can also be ‘anyone,’ although now it may be more directly one or another specific person, and that ‘anyone’ is always going to contribute something in the assembly.

The right to health or housing stops being only a need, and becomes a source of active abilities that are multiplied when they are woven in collaborative ways. Thus, it is possible to understand that ‘yes, we can’ which we heard chanted in the streets not only as an affirmation of the possibility of defeating the institutions and policies that oppose those universal rights but also precisely as an assertion of empowerment and the multiplication of abilities implicit in recognizing the very legitimacy of ‘anyone’ to establish what constitutes that dignity.

5.2.3. Social differences and practices of equality

It is important to make clear that the openness to ‘anyone’ I have been identifying as characteristic of the ‘15M climate’ is not at all incompatible with a special sensitivity to knowledge, ways of life, and sectors of the population usually excluded and marginalized from the production of and access to recognized social value. Some rather hasty characterizations of 15M as a ‘middle-class’ movement have perhaps underestimated the ability of the various processes related to the ‘15M climate’ (not just camping in plazas) to compose bodies, lives, and experiences marked by very different ‘levels of exposure to the crisis,’ to use Labrador’s expression in his article ‘Las vidas subprime’ (2012), which addressed this plurality in 15M. That is, I think the ability to combine the material and symbolic capacities of people suffering different forms of cultural and material domination that have accumulated up to the neoliberal crisis has been underestimated.

Indeed, Labrador notes that the circulation of what he calls ‘stories of *subprime* lives’ is one of the main features of 15M ‘as a social movement and discursive world.’ These are stories of ‘lives that cease to be viable,’ stories of poverty that had been marginalized in the official culture of Spanish democracy, and that emerge articulating new politicizations, with particular strength in the early moments of the assemblies in the plazas. I say that

they articulate new politicizations because they call attention to the kind of life that ‘embodies and experiences *in situations of serious biopolitical risk* the conditions caused by the last economic cycle’ (570), not because they intend to individualize that life or segregate it in a space of the ‘other,’ but because, on the contrary, they want to build an inclusive ‘us’ with those life experiences:

At the meetings people spoke in the first person, but also brought the experiences of others. They told the stories of their own *subprime* lives, but also those of others, just as in neighborhood assemblies *subprime* life stories of others were told, some of them about people who were going to be evicted. The permanent remembrance of those who were not in the plaza tried to include other *subprime* lives (those of immigrants, elderly, disabled ...), so that *all* were in the plaza. (573)

Thus, as in the example of the woman talking to the assembly about ‘those who are not here’ with which I opened this chapter, there was a constant effort to build a discursive and material ‘space of anyone’ that was not at all politically neutral or immune to the existence of different social conditions. On the contrary, it would only become possible when it was accessible to those in situations of greater danger of social exclusion because of the crisis.

At the same time, there was also a constant effort not to lock people into rigid social categories, that is, not to decide for them what their capabilities and aspirations were, but to allow them to self-represent. Perhaps it is, again, the PAH which has led this type of dual approach further and more effectively. It is an approach that includes sensitivity to the suffering and particular vulnerability of some, while at the same time creating a situation of equality that empowers everyone to change things (although there are other remarkable examples, like Yo Sí Sanidad Universal or the Brigadas Vecinales de Observación de Derechos Humanos). In the PAH assemblies, from the beginning, university graduates, precarious workers, migrants, skilled professionals, people with little schooling, the unemployed, and even some individuals with access to the mass media (among many other conditions and situations of relative dispossession or relative stability) have sat together. The differences in these different people’s access to cultural and material capital are not, in any sense, hidden or erased. What happens is that the PAH launches forms of collaboration in which those differences are no longer in the forefront, because what counts is what each person can contribute to change the ‘housing emergency’ situation that affects everyone. In this sense, it is particularly striking, for example, to see the fluidity of cooperation between people who personally suffer a problem with their home and others who feel concerned and sympathize, but are not themselves at risk of losing their own home.

Such differences are what have traditionally resulted in hierarchical situations in the history of the political left. A political and intellectual vanguard decides that some part of the population does not have the material and cultural ability to represent themselves, being subjected to forms of domination and social exclusion that prevent it. As Pablo La Parra explained in his illuminating article 'Revueltas lógicas' (2014), 15M involved the implementation of something that, following Rancière, we might call 'equality practices,' which seek to disrupt these hierarchical dynamics:

The fact that the 15M assemblies were based on what was agreed to be called 'inclusiveness'—i.e., on discussion among peers without establishing a prior identity requirement or aspiring to monopolize participants' commitment—not only helps explain the extraordinary capacity for social aggregation and the legitimacy of the movement, but also constitutes the practice that confirms its egalitarian ideal. (11)

La Parra also echoed Rancière's criticism of Althusser, to warn against the risk of putting oneself in a privileged position from which the attempt to 'discuss among equals' is quickly characterized as an (unconscious) 'middle-class' trend to erase the differences between oneself and the subaltern classes (an accusation launched against the 15M movement, among others, by the anthropologist Manuel Delgado). Indeed, Rancière has devoted much of his extensive work to dismantling such an intellectual position that seeks to constantly denounce delusions of emancipation, 'unmasking' them as hidden ways to play the system of domination in which each social class acts inevitably as determined by its place of privilege or subordination. In a critique of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Rancière (1984) synthesized as a circular argument the alleged discovery of such an intellectual position: first, that the system of domination is reproduced because people do not perceive the way it functions; and second, that the way the system of domination works is by making its functioning imperceptible (Ross 1997). Imperceptible to 'the people,' yes, but not to the intellectual who, like Bourdieu, claims the ability to avoid that deception.

I will return to clashes between the egalitarian practices of the 15M with forms of authority indebted to this intellectual tradition that claims to see 'what people do not see,' but first I want to propose very briefly three arguments that may be useful to illuminate the issue of social class differences in the '15M climate.' The first is a corollary of the above: following Rancière, it is interesting to emphasize the impossibility of finding a privileged position from which to think about the 'equality practices' that are deployed in the 15M climate, for those of us who study these practices

are as immersed in systems of domination as those who implement them (and sometimes we are, in fact, the same people). That does not prevent us, I think, from helping to build an account of these experiments; nor does it prevent this account from including references to the different situations of social exclusion or privilege with which said 'equality practices' must deal. In this sense, I greatly appreciate the contribution of Charlotte Nordmann (2010) in her book *Bourdieu/Rancière*. She proposed, from a casual and creative relationship with the texts of these intellectuals, that it would be much more useful for emancipatory practices of equality to admit, in contrast to Rancière's position, that they do not come 'out of nothing,' but rather from concrete, and sometimes contradictory, social positions that need to be studied. Furthermore, contradicting Bourdieu, they are capable of breaking the cycle of domination, creating new, more egalitarian social compositions that redistribute social order.

So, entering the second argument, 15M is a political and cultural process that is quite difficult to understand without talking about social situations like the neoliberal precarization exerted on segments of the population that have, it is true, different levels of access to cultural and material resources. At the same time—and I am not trying to fetishize the event or the climate of the 15M movement—it is also important to think how both opened a new space of 'anyone.' Or, to put it in another way, to accompany them in their egalitarian experiments without trying to reduce them to a game of predictable exchanges between fixed and pre-existing identities or social 'classes.' To do this, it may be useful, as La Parra does in quoting Espinoza Pino (2013), to recover E. P. Thompson's (2013) notion of class: it is not a matter of 'a static, homogeneous category,' but 'a dynamic historical and social process, the result of the exchange of experiences, social trajectories, historical memory, and various socio-political objectives' (La Parra 11).

In this sense, as La Parra reminds us, the very 'transverse, interclass, and intergenerational' reality (Gálvez Biesca 2007) of the precarization phenomenon already clearly requires, in and of itself, a complex approach to 'social class' phenomena, such as that proposed by Thompson. I referred in the previous chapter to precarization during neoliberalism, especially among young people, as one of the processes that have motivated the search for other spaces in which to cultivate skills and forms of collaboration, generating subjectivities that were later tested in the 15M movement's 'practices of equality.' But it would be very important too (and unfortunately I will not be able to do it in this book due to lack of resources) to track in more detail many other precarizations and their consequent creative responses. Some of these include migrants who have moved from allegedly 'buying' the dream of an 'ownership society' to joining the front ranks

of the PAH, or those public workers who have distanced themselves from a supposedly ‘privileged’ corporatism to meet on an equal footing with the rest of society in the Mareas, or of those retired people relegated to an alleged depoliticization or to forms of ‘old’ politics, which have become creative and solidary ‘yayoflautas.’⁶

In any case, I think the 15M climate has been able to combine these and many other processes of precarization, through different levels of risk and exclusion. It has done so by building the legitimacy of ‘anyone’s’ experience. Being ‘affected’ has been considered something worthy of greater value and greater respect, allowing the building of equality practices to which, I think, we should apply the same ‘presumption of intelligence’ that they apply to anyone.

There are still, of course, ‘authorities’ who will not recognize that legitimacy, even if they defend very similar things to the 15M movement, such as the universality of the rights to housing, healthcare, education, etc. So it’s one thing to think that ‘anyone’ has those rights, and another to think that ‘anyone’ has the right to participate actively in the elucidation, conquest, and specific construction of those rights, with no need for anybody else to authorize him or her with their expert knowledge. From this there arises a latent—and sometimes a manifest—‘conflict of authorities,’ which seems to me to be another fundamental element for understanding the cultural climate generated by the 15M movement.

5.3. Conflict of Authorities: Intellectuals, Mass Media, and the 15M Climate

5.3.1. The ‘intellectual leader’ in his circle of impotence

On October 27, 2013, about 4.7 million people listened to the journalist and writer Arturo Pérez-Reverte say the following things on the television program *Salvados* (2013):

Can nothing be done? Is there nothing we can do? Well, sometimes the answer is no. At least, the answer I give myself is no ... It won’t change anything, nothing will change anything. If there were a revolution today, people would go out first to see if their car had been burned

6 ‘Yayofalutas’ is a derivation of ‘perroflautas’, a pejorative expression used by some people to disqualify 15M participants. ‘Perroflautas’ alludes to the stereotypical figure of a young punk or hippie that asks for money in the street, surrounded by dogs and playing the flute. It was reclaimed by the movement, and later creatively transformed into ‘yayoflautas’ to refer to the elder participants in the movement (‘yayo’ is a familiar word for ‘grandfather’).

... Do you know why people want the crisis to be over? To go back to doing exactly what they did before: to buy a car again, a mortgage, to go to Cancún for vacation again ...

He listed with a certain nostalgia some causes of this supposed widespread selfishness: 'Before, when things went bad, in other times, there were ideologies that supported those things, there were ideas, there were even intellectuals who made use of those ideas and disseminated them to the people ... Now those leaders no longer exist, society is defenseless, orphaned.' He concluded:

People don't want an education, they don't demand an education for their children ... The whole problem with Spain is a problem with education, because we are who we are; politicians are only one manifestation, the symptom of a disease of who we are: the acritical stance, the lack of culture, fratricide, vileness, envy—that is who we are, we are Spaniards. The politician is nothing more than the officialization of our essence ... it's a culture problem.

From among the innumerable reflections and critiques on the Spanish economic crisis and its possible alternatives expressed by intellectuals, opinion makers, participants in talk-shows (*tertulianos*), and other heirs of the elitist, exclusivist conception of culture, those expressed here by Pérez-Reverte have the virtue of clearly identifying the central stereotypes of this tradition: 'people' are uncouth and selfish, only the intellectual leaders can change things, and without them society is 'orphaned.'

In this sense, it seems to me that Pérez-Reverte's position perfectly exemplifies a particular viewpoint on the phenomena I have been studying—phenomena of empowerment of 'cultures of anyone' and of their blending specialized kinds of knowledge. Instead of despising or attacking them, he ignores them, because, I would dare to say, they don't fit within his framework of 'what's possible.' Pérez-Reverte's conception of politics is simultaneously and very clearly one of pessimistic essentialism and individualism that doesn't seem to consider the possibility that collaborative, supportive forms of politics, capable of respectfully articulating human interdependence and of empowering anyone's abilities, could exist as anything more than isolated and even 'heroic' acts:

What prevents someone from saying, 'Let it rain napalm!' is precisely the fact that there is always one just man in Sodom, there is always that little seed, that teacher, that solitary hero there waging his small, individual battle, and he'll manage to get another kid to do it, too.

From this viewpoint, then, it's no wonder that in the same appearance on the program *Salvados*, Pérez-Reverte also projects a pessimistic vision of the 15M movement:

I—the 15M when I saw it emerge, I said: 'Look, there are still heroes. Heroes can still reach an agreement' ... After just a few days of observing it, I began to see how it changed, how the boy disappeared, how the demagogue occupied his place, how rhetorical speech replaced rational speech, how the most populist and ignorant replaced the smartest and the most astute, and how little by little it disintegrated into the miserable human condition.

No doubt this inevitable triumph of 'the miserable human condition' resonates with the feeling that 'there's no hope for this country' of which Javier Marías spoke, and with the view that 'barbarism is our natural state' asserted by Muñoz Molina. But it's worth asking: Why is this type of reading of the 15M movement, and of political and human nature in general, still so attractive and gaining so many adherents? After all, it completely contradicts the relatively mass 'common sense' I mentioned before—that is, it ignores the 'climate' of possibility that has opened up in recent years.⁷

Obviously, centuries of hegemony of the modern power/knowledge complex will not vanish overnight, nor probably in decades of proliferating online collaborative cultures, or of horizontal, anti-elitist social movements. But besides all that, perhaps the greatest power of the modern belief in the cultural inequality of human beings—in the existence of a minority of heroes and intellectuals and an egotistical, stupid majority—is still that it offers a type of moral justification for the political inaction that is especially useful in a crisis.

⁷ If we contextualize Pérez-Reverte's words in the program during which he utters them, we realize that, in fact, they exert the seductiveness of a familiar, paralyzing pessimism that, paradoxically, has been partially weakened during these years of crisis. In fact, the host of the program himself, Jordi Évole, conducts the entire interview as an attempt to move Pérez-Reverte beyond his pessimism. This wouldn't, however, necessarily mean taking him beyond his elitism and individualism (and in that sense, *Salvados* often tends to feed its own optimism with the logic of 'isolated heroic gestures'). But the show does express a certain boredom with that type of defeatist explanation, which is probably one of the main factors for this television program's huge success.

In this regard, minutes earlier, another 'testimony' invited by Évole, that of philosopher Txetxu Ausín, had mentioned the Marea Blanca as an example of civic mobilization. He emphasized its ability to fight and win in the legal arena, thus suggesting, no matter how fuzzily and fleetingly, the argument for the characteristic ability of these movements to mix everyday kinds of knowledge with specialized ones.

Of course, the existence in any society of selfish, passive, or simply stupid attitudes like those noted by Pérez-Reverte is undeniable, and it is to those attitudes that commentators turn time and time again to justify their disdain for human nature and the pointlessness of all political effort. But, as Rancière might say, that type of defeatist criticism forms part of the ‘circle of impotence’ associated with the ‘pedagogization of society’: it is postulated that to ‘have culture,’ one must submit to the guardianship of the avant-gardes that control it. In doing so, the rest of the population is thus being turned into supposedly ignorant, dependent beings who—and this is worse—will internalize this judgment and begin to believe they really are incapable of learning on their own, and therefore of changing things. This is how the image of a society divided between the few ‘in the know’ and the majority ‘in the dark’ is consolidated, and it has a corrosive effect on everyone, sowing both elitist scorn and inferiority complexes everywhere. In the end, a structural distrust of the other develops, which leads to the same ‘selfishness’ that Pérez-Reverte criticizes. This only leaves the door open to change through ‘education,’ as Pérez-Reverte himself does. But this is often an education that, as demanded by the myth of pedagogy, must be authorized by ‘those in the know,’ thus perpetuating the existence of that group and, therefore, of cultural inequality.⁸

In contrast to this ‘circle of impotence,’ I have shown how the 15M movement and later social processes like the *Mareas* or the PAH are, among other things, precisely political efforts that reject the need for ‘teachers’ or intellectual leaders as guides to bring everyone else towards ‘education,’ ‘culture,’ or social change. On the contrary, in these movements it is assumed that things are done better with everyone involved, when everyone contributes their abilities and ways of knowing. Its dynamic consists of multiplying these capacities and ways of knowing by creating collaborative networks in which anyone can participate. That doesn’t mean, once again, that these abilities

8 In an interview, César Rendueles said the following about the internalization of cultural elitism and the disdain for the masses in Spanish culture: ‘Nineteenth-century elites did not hide their panic and disgust at the possibility that the working classes might gain access to political institutions. They thought the masses would disgrace Western civilization to the point of destroying it. At the start of the twentieth century, during the colonial era, that hate became a racist fear that the populations subjugated by imperialism would become uncontrollable and would end up invading the metropolis. This discourse has been internalized and endures even today. We see ourselves the same way the rich previously viewed the dangerous classes. We have incorporated that elitism into our ideological genotype. This is why egalitarian projects have practically disappeared from the political sphere. We radically distrust our own capacity to debate together; we view democracy as a competition among private preferences’ (Arjona 2013).

and knowledge bases can't be valued for their differences: the movements understand perfectly that specialized, technical knowledge is necessary for some things, and for others, everyday or experiential kinds of knowledge are needed. Likewise, they understand that not everything has the same value within each of these ways of knowing, and so filtering and refining mechanisms are implemented with the goal of creating 'collective intelligence.' But mainly what the practices of these movements propose is precisely that politics and culture are things in which everybody must participate actively. After all, everybody lives in society and everybody needs to give meaning to their existence, and it is not fair that others decide how it should be done.

In this sense, perhaps even more so than the technical or expert authorities, it has been the intellectual and political authorities that have been deeply questioned—even if only implicitly—by this cycle of movements and its emergent 'cultural power.' The responses to those challenges have not been long in coming. But as far as I can find, they have tended to appear in critiques that, like those of Pérez-Reverte, in fact do not address this central question of a cultural transformation involving the appearance of collaborative networks which reject the guardianship of any avant-garde. Rather, they are limited to wielding multiple, many-hued, and often contradictory reasons for denying that the movements—particularly the 15M—have any value.

5.3.2. Deaf ears, insults, advice, and reaffirmations of authority

The op-ed article '5 articles not written about the 15M,' published by the writer and columnist Javier Cercas in *El País* on June 24, 2011, is especially useful as a quick review of those critiques, because it suggests a classification of some of them. Cercas begins the text by saying that he has been wanting to write about the 15M movement for weeks, but for several reasons he never got round to it. Already in that first statement we can find hidden a central characteristic of the way many intellectuals have related to the 15M: they have wanted to write *about* the movement. That is, they have wanted to take it as one more in the infinity of current 'subjects' or 'issues' they write about every day in the mass media from the position of authority granted to them by the tradition that guarantees the figure of the intellectual, charged with all the problems I have been analyzing.

They have frequently wanted to read the nonauthoritarian, noncompetitive culture of the 15M from the logics of an authoritarian intellectual tradition and a competitive political economy. So, perhaps inevitably, they have tended to emphasize or even invent rather partial, lesser aspects of the movement that allowed them to read it without calling into question the culture from within which they read it.

Thus, for example, the first of the five articles on 15M that Cercas says he hasn't written—and also the one 'he is happiest not to have written'—would have been 'an article written on the spot,' or rather, he says, 'an act,' since in it he would have announced that he was leaving his newspaper column, the novel he was writing, and his 'father-son duties' to go to the plaza de Cataluña in Barcelona 'to throw in my lot with the *acampados*.'

Of course, Cercas uses a humorous tone here, but the type of joke he decides to use is significant. He compares joining the 15M camps during the early days of the movement—something, remember, that several million people of all the ages did all across Spain—with a kind of voluntary enlistment in a war. This understanding of the movement as a (violent) rupture of the everyday, prevents him from seeing that other fundamental dimension of collaborative support for daily life the plazas had from very early on—day-care centers, senior centers, food service, and all the other devices for a mutual care sensitive to vulnerability, were already present from the beginning, and they fit very poorly with Cercas's warlike metaphor.

In that sense, curiously, Cercas's own position would perhaps not be so far removed from those other types of article he might have wanted to parody: those of the old 'revolutionaries' from '68 that react critically to the *Indignados*, 'first calling us,' says Cercas—again in a humorous register—'pansies, and the movement, queer: a serious revolution burns the Parliament or takes the Bastille or the Winter Palace with blood and fire, for fuck's sake.' Later, however, they would also label 'the 15M as demagogic, populist, fanatic, antipolitical, and antisystem, and the campers as hordes or violent mobs.' I say his position would perhaps not be so far removed from these revolutionaries turned—he says—'extreme right-wingers as a consequence of being so modern,' because they both focus their attention on the protest aspects of the movement, ignoring its capacity for collaborative support of democratic cultures and everyday life in the *acampadas*. Neither Cercas nor just about anybody else in the mass media has said anything about this last aspect, as far as I know.⁹

In an earlier article, I discussed the existence of some curious contradictions, similar to those Cercas presents, in contributions from intellectuals, particularly in the conversation published by *El País* between the publisher Mario Muchnick and the painter Eduardo Arroyo (Cavero 2011), titled 'Sol visto desde mayo del '68.' In it appeared the recurring idea alluded to by Cercas: the 15M as a 'revolution of lies,' a simulacrum of revolution, an insufficient gesture. 'These guys want to fix the system. We

9 Notable exceptions would be José Luis Sampedro and Manuel Castells, among others.

wanted to blow it up,' said Arroyo. In an article in *La Vanguardia*, Catalan writer Quim Monzó (2011), for his part, asserted on the one hand that it was shameful to call the 15M a 'revolution' because it is not a true change in political and economic structures, but just a 'camp-out.' At the same time, venting his spleen with 'I won't be the one who defends the politicians in power; they give me the heaves,' he pushed the vote as the only way of fighting against bipartisanship.¹⁰

Felix de Azúa (2014; Sainz Borgo 2014) also stood on shaky, ambiguous ground when he said, 'The inability to understand violence, the absolute forgetfulness that war implies, functional illiteracy, all lead to schoolyard revolts.' Feeling the need to clarify, he added, 'I'm not insinuating that the 15M must move into terrorism ... I am saying that if a movement wants to fight this war successfully it needs leaders, study, planning, and a program.' In the end, for Azúa, as for Pérez-Reverte, it all it comes down to a problem of education: 'They have not been educated in how to study, in discipline, in effort, in sacrifice.' Although, in fact, with or without education, 'the human way of life' consists of 'huge catastrophes generated by our own stupidity.'

It seems to me that perhaps this type of criticism, along with Cercas's article, would also fit into another category of participation, which has perhaps actually been the most frequent kind among intellectuals regarding the 15M: that which consists of telling the movement what it should do. Thus, completely ignoring the possibility of working to construct the 15M movement from within so that their ideas would add to its collective intelligence—the same possibility that so many millions of other people had assumed—intellectuals like Cercas simply prefer to recommend from outside that, for example, they put 'more emphasis on Europe,' because Europe, he says, is 'our only reasonable utopia.' Which, by the way, confirms Cercas's allegiance to that intellectual tradition that, voluntarily or not, has helped so much to justify the construction of neoliberalism through its Europeanism.

10 Kiko Amat and Manolo Martínez answered him in an open letter. They asserted that Monzó preferred to focus on superficial aspects of the movement rather than try to understand it and take it seriously. They recommended he read several of the first documents of political proposals produced in the plazas. Furthermore, they waxed ironic about his criticisms of the 15M for not being 'sufficiently revolutionary': 'In a last pirouette, Monzó also suggests that the reason for his lack of interest in the *Indignats* movement is that it is insufficiently revolutionary, and that what they are doing is not revolution, but 'camping out'; perhaps insinuating that, if they were armed and wore ski masks, he would cast aside his laptop and hit the streets with fists at the ready to combat those 'powerful politicians' that he so firmly swears he detests, like a crazy *sans culotte*' (2011, 43).

In the intellectual world, everyone has their own recommendation for the *Indignados*, regardless of their ideological allegiance. Thus, Ignacio Ramonet (2011), in a conference in Heidelberg, wished that there were more concern with the power of the *mass* media in the movement, because he had seen very little of it reflected in its slogans. Meanwhile, Francisco R. Adrados responded to a survey of ‘intellectuals’ in *La Razón* (2012) saying, ‘information, still scarce, indicates decay,’ and recommends that the 15M movement ‘should not live for a date, for an obligation, that is self-imposed.’ In a manifesto titled ‘Una ilusión compartida’ (Público.es 2011) names such as García Montero, Almudena Grandes, and Joaquín Sabina, for their part, spoke of ‘taking advantage of the civic energy of the 15M’ to mobilize the left. Another of the *La Razón* survey respondents, however, the university professor Ángel Alonso Cortés, said, ‘its strength is low because its persuasive ability is weak, and to have a future it would need ideological discipline.’

There are many more examples, and if there is anything surprising about them, at least if you know the least little bit about the 15M, it is how colossally capable they all are of ignoring the possibility of using channels opened up by the movement to incorporate any proposal. These intellectuals toss out their own proposals as if they were unavoidably—through some kind of magical, existential quality that would make them different from millions of their fellow citizens—prevented from taking their ideas to the street just like anyone else.

Finally, there is one more type of contribution to talk about, which, even if these contributors don’t put a positive value on the 15M, or even explore in depth those cultural dimensions of it that clash directly with the tradition of modern intellectual authority, at least ‘sniff’ around them, that is, they notice some of their aspects. Perhaps the article ‘Empobrecimiento’ by writer Enrique Vila-Matas (2011) could be included here. In it, he drew a connection between the 15M movement and the use of digital social networks, in particular Twitter. His idea was that the brief format (140 characters) of the messages or tweets sent by the *Indignados* was one more indicator of the widespread impoverishment of the language in current times. This assertion, as I have noted elsewhere, comes across as quite odd coming from a writer who is heir to the avant-garde, defender of ‘portable literature,’ a style of writing that practices self-restriction and plays with self-imposed formats.

Sánchez Dragó (2011) would do something similar. He seemed to understand the 15M movement’s dimension of opening up politics to anyone, but he did so only to criticize it and defend just the opposite: a type of politics that would function as a professional job done by a series of salaried technicians. In other words, a ‘technocracy’:

Like everyone, I pay some men to manage public affairs, not so that they can allow me or force me to butt in on something that bores me. If a businessman hires an accountant, it's so he doesn't have to bother with the boring accounting, not so he can go poking around in it. Wouldn't that be something! Out of the frying pan, into the fire ... Let the politicians manage politics honestly and effectively, and not bother those of us who have other jobs, vocations, and interests.

In a similar vein, albeit using less expressive terms, the responses of many of those 'professional' politicians, such as those Sánchez Dragó likes, have flown past. Mostly they have reminded the citizenry that politics is done at the ballot box, and that's it. In some cases, they even urged the 15M movement to form a political party or, better still, join theirs. I will not take up time or space reporting these types of response, which are much more monotonous than those of the intellectuals. What I would like to do is examine the intersections of both types of response with representations of the 15M movement and its 'climate,' from some of the prevailing logics of the big mass media outlets. These media representations—and in general all those coming from the cultural establishment—have provoked direct and indirect responses from the movements that allow a better understanding of the conflict between diverse forms of authority that is put into play in these dialogues.

5.3.3. When 'anyone' responds to the cultural authority

Much has been said about the increasing distance between the politicians and the citizenry of Spain. Somewhat less has been said about the latter's possible emancipation from the establishment of reality performed by the mass media, and perhaps still less about the increasing distance between intellectuals and average citizens. Nevertheless, they are strongly related phenomena, and thus became obvious at many times during the 15M movement.

Let's recall, for example, the airing of the Spanish National Radio program 'En días como hoy' on Tuesday, May 17, 2011. Two days after the demonstration on May 15, and in the face of the incipient encampment at Puerta del Sol, the '*tertulianos*' (a hybrid species between the figures of the intellectual and the journalist, these are participants on television and radio political programs, mostly journalists, sometime politicians, or 'experts') present on this morning public radio show, Miguel Larrea and Javier García Vila, spoke frankly about the subject, expressing opinions like the following: 'It's an embryo of something, but confusing'; 'There's a mix of antisystem forces and all kinds of other forces there'; 'The slogan is taken from Stéphane Hessel's book, *Indignez-vous!*, a worthless book, it's

nothing': "Real democracy": as Churchill said, democracy is the worst of all possible systems except all the others, and that's the reality, there *is* no other alternative to democracy'; 'Everything about assemblies is so passé since the French Revolution, it doesn't make much sense'; 'I think it's great they've been kicked out, because they were turning Madrid's Puerta del Sol into a camp where all kinds of strange people were showing up ...'

To all of this, which was contributed by Larrea, García Vila indicated his agreement, adding that in Sol they were expressing 'a feeling of orphanhood relative to the political class,' but that it was a mass of 'confusing assemblies that led nowhere,' and furthermore, 'they are used by violent antisystem groups to do their little things.' From there, both *tertulianos* began a spiral of mutual reaffirmation that led them to build the following series of stereotypes: 'Can the world be changed? It's very hard, we're seeing a world dominated by money, by consumerism ...' 'Esperanza Aguirre said what they have to do is go and vote, but that's exactly what they *won't* do, the kind of young people we have today.' 'It's necessary to be organized, to have spokesmen, it's necessary to establish structures, which is exactly what they're criticizing.' 'One of the leaders is a lawyer who's running for office, I say it with the greatest affection, but there is nothing more bourgeois,' and to top it off: 'Young people today have it so much better than 40 years ago.'

Up until then, everything was rolling along like something we could call 'any given day in the CT,' any given day in the world of the *tertulianos*, daily defenders of the limits of the possible from their position of semi-intellectual, semi-mediatised authority. But something was changing. A few minutes later, the program was opened to callers, and the telephone call of one listener—Cristina from Burgos—would soon go viral: 'I'm speaking on public radio, right? The one that represents us all, the one we pay for with our taxes?' This was how Cristina's contribution began, but she then went on to say the following clearly and confidently:

I'm 46 years old, I was at the demonstration in Madrid this Sunday, and I have something to say: there *were* a lot of young people, but there were people of all ages and conditions. Antisystem? Yes, obviously: politicians and bankers and those who really support these measures that are cutting all the rights it cost our parents and grandparents blood, sweat, and tears to earn; our politicians, who we voted for, who are evidently managed by the same hands of capital that are also managing the mass media, are the ones who are making our young people, our sons and daughters, antisystem. Because they are leaving them out of the system.

After continuing to develop these ideas, Cristina alluded directly to the *tertulianos*: ‘One of you said, “the kind of young people we have” ... This kind of young person is the one who’s going to give us a big surprise.’ She concluded with these words:

You’ve thrown them out of Puerta del Sol, but we’re all there, supporting them. And we don’t need political parties or economic parties, we don’t need any of that. We’re more than capable of getting things done: our parents and grandparents raised us with the dignity to always move forward, following our dreams. There we all are. No, there are no *antisystems*, there are not four lamebrains, no. We are all of us defending a better world. That’s all I wanted to say.

Moments like these exemplify very literally the ‘rebellions of the publics’ about which the texts of Amador Fernández-Savater and Ángel Luis Lara (among others) talk. This type of situation almost always tends to be explained in terms of responses to the ‘media’s manipulation of information,’ but I think it’s important to also put them into the wider context of the proliferation of participative cultures to which I referred, along with Henry Jenkins, in the previous chapter. In this sense, not only would there be straight answers to the distortions or twisted views of reality from the big media outlets, but also, in a very important way, these would occur within a pervasive climate of circulation of ‘post-media’ voices in the digital sphere, capable of recounting their own versions as well.

Cristina’s call can be seen in the YouTube video ‘Cristina, la oyente que exigió a RNE respeto para los manifestantes del 15m’ (2011). It belongs to a tacit subgenre of what we could call ‘straight answers to media powers on their own turf,’ and when this happens, always with an aura of exceptionality and challenge, they are widely disseminated through social networks. They are moments when the word of ‘anyone’ (of someone who doesn’t try to give value to what he or she says from a supposedly exceptional knowledge base, but from an everyday, experiential position) directly confronts the authorized discourse of the media, *tertulianos*, or intellectuals, and which the post-media sphere later celebrates and spreads. They couldn’t exist as such, or at least, they couldn’t achieve massive dissemination, without that post-media sphere that is in charge of selecting them, extracting them from the media ocean—which sometimes even censors them—and distributing them virally.

A pair of good, more recent examples of this genre took place as a result of another of the important victories of these social movements: that of the inhabitants of Gamonal, a *barrio* in Burgos, who in January 2014 managed to stop an urban planning project suspected of political corruption in

their region. Thus, the video ‘Un vecino corrige a un periodista de Radio Nacional que estaba mintiendo’ (2014) (with almost 1.5 million hits on YouTube) shows an even more direct irruption of ‘anyone’s’ voice into the media discourse. In fact, it is literally an *interruption*, and thus different from Cristina’s call, which was part of the segment of the program called ‘Listeners’ Conversation.’ In this case, what we have is a radio reporter in the street, covering the protests live, and saying, ‘Groups of citizens have become violent, they’re burning containers and they’ve broken the windows of some businesses.’ But as he speaks, we hear some voices trying to talk back to him, until finally one of them interrupts him outright—we understand that somebody has probably snatched the microphone from him—and protests: ‘Don’t lie: not a single business, they’re banks. Banks, which we understand are guilty, too. But not a single business.’

Another video related to the Gamonal protests (‘Manipulación y acoso en TVE. El portavoz de Gamonal calla la boca a Mariló Montero’ 2014) also gained considerable dissemination on the networks. This one showed a verbal confrontation between Manuel Alonso, a spokesperson for the inhabitants of Gamonal, and a group of *tertulianos* from TVE. In the face of presenter Mariló Montero’s insistence on asking about the throwing of liquids and eggs by the Gamonal demonstrators, Alonso answered: ‘And of all the problems the people face, this is what’s important? Whether an egg or a bottle of beer is thrown, that’s what’s important? Or is what’s important the problems that the people, the *vecinos*, the citizens in general have?’ Montero responded with the myth of journalistic objectivity: ‘My opinion isn’t what matters here, I have to stay focused too, on the information about what we’re seeing.’

Given that answer maybe ten years earlier—if I might be permitted this small flight of fancy—before social networks had turned the public sphere into a much more plural and accessible space for many citizens, perhaps then the neighbors’ spokesperson would have been left speechless. But on this occasion, what Manuel Alonso’s reaction shows is that the myth of journalistic objectivity has lost much of its force in the last decade. Also, although not many people use the term ‘agenda-setting,’ that doesn’t mean they don’t know very well that the veracity of information depends as much on an accurate representation of the facts as on which facts are chosen for representation, and with what degree of priority some are chosen over others.

‘Look, I’m going to give you top priority information, eh?’ says Manuel Alonso, pulling out a document that certified, he explains, that the business developers who had time and time again denied any involvement in the Gamonal project, resigned from the business that was to supply all the

cement for the works, and would therefore profit from the project, just a few days after the protests started.

The TVE reporter responds rather disconcertedly and decides to turn things over to another reporter, but not without first dropping a veiled question regarding the authority of that paper—in her words, not a ‘document’—which Alonso has already clearly identified as an official document from the Certificate of Incorporation: ‘María, do me a favor,’ she says. ‘We’re going to take a closer look at that paper, while I go to the plenary, I want to look *that* paper over closely, the *seal* of that paper, the *heading* on that paper, *who’s* sealed that paper, *what* kind of documentation it is ...’ She pronounces this list emphasizing its monotone rhythm, as if explaining that there are many requirements ‘that paper’ is going to have to fulfill to earn some credibility as a ‘document’ in her eyes.

This exchange seems particularly revealing because it shows how the myth of objective reporting is ultimately supported by the expert, technocratic power at the core of cultural authority in the modern West. What Manuel Alonso does here, and what the conjunction between the climate of widespread illegitimacy causing the economic crisis and the informative plurality opened up by digital cultures has done, is break the cycle of belief in mass media discussed in the first chapter. Manuel Alonso and his Gamonal *vecinos* have stopped believing that reality is what becomes visible through the media, they have stopped believing something is reality just because it’s what *everybody* believes. The myth of media objectivity is laid bare: the inhabitants can produce their own versions of reality, which they well know are much less biased, and they do it by contributing documents if necessary.

Faced with this gesture, the media discourse has no other choice but to step back, turning to a supposedly higher authority than their own, an authority that would have the power to ‘*certify*’ with their seal what is truly real, from among the different versions. That authority, even if it is not named straight out, can be none other than that which emanates from the modern power/knowledge complex in its many and varied sources of legitimacy, from the technoscientific to the intellectual, by way of its bureaucratic and institutional derivatives. It is the same tradition to which Manuel Alonso also turns when showing his legal document—but he doesn’t wield it from public television’s position of power, nor by hiding behind that supposed informative objectivity. He acts from the power of a local movement which also values another type of authority: the authority of anyone to participate in the necessarily collective debate over what constitutes a life with dignity—the debate about ‘what is really important’ that Manuel Alonso proposes to the reporter, and which she is unwilling to join unless she has an official seal.

So, in essence, the demands of those ‘voices of anyone’ from the new movements arising in the wake of the 15M, when they break out in the media or other public forums, are no more and no less than demands to be allowed to talk about what’s really important, even if they are not voices gifted with hegemonic cultural authority (technoscientific, intellectual, media, etc.). In that sense, it seems to me that what they do is somewhat more complex than ‘denying’ or ‘correcting’ wrong information, although that may often be the immediate intention. It also has to do, at least tacitly, with the public arenas—which are neither ‘neutral’ nor ‘objective’—where what will pass for reality is established, and where, therefore, expectations are also constructed about what a life with dignity should be. The movements protest that these arenas should not be monopolized by voices that wield expert authorities (such as those of the *tertulianos*, journalists, intellectuals, politicians, and others belonging to the group of ‘those in the know’). Such a monopoly would imply that they were the only ones to elucidate something that nobody should delegate to others: the meaning and dignity of their lives.

This ‘conflict of authorities’ is often expressed as a confrontation, a clash, like those indignant responses in the media, interruptions, and exchanges of proofs and counterproofs. Recent years have seen more public challenges to authority in the Spanish state. We have seen students who, when receiving their National Award for Excellence in Academic Performance, ignore Minister Wert, the person responsible for cuts to education. We have seen former spokesperson for the PAH, Ada Colau (now mayor of Barcelona), stand up in the Congress of Deputies and call ‘supposed financial experts’ criminals for praising the Spanish legislation on evictions ‘while there are people who are taking their own lives over this problem’ (an event that gave rise to another viral video); we have seen Spaniards who have emigrated to Paris and belong to the *Marea Granate* (the *marea* for exiles of the economic crisis) publicly confronting the PSOE candidate to the European elections to remind her that her party is responsible for the ‘austerity’ her campaign is now aimed against. We have seen a woman approach Philip of Bourbon in the middle of the street to demand a referendum on the permanence of the monarchy. And we have also seen innumerable recordings circulating online that show actions and events that contradict official and media versions, such as, notably, the active role of the secret police in provoking violent confrontations in the street. This includes a video where one of these secret police, disguised as an ‘antisystem,’ was beaten by the riot police themselves while he yelled at them, ‘I’m one of you, for fuck’s sake!’

But there have also been other types of manifestation, more indirect and elusive, of that conflict between the authority of the established cultural

powers and that of ‘anyone’ who collaborates to prevent the monopoly of those powers over the meaning and dignity of human life. I want to take the time now to talk about them, because in fact, it seems that they are the most characteristic of the political cycle I am investigating, generally not much given to straightforward antagonism. Rather, they are rich in strategies of ‘withdrawal from the established order,’ as the philosopher Santiago López-Petit would say—at times even through refusal to be set against whomever should have fulfilled the role of ‘enemy’ (as had happened with the police). In considering these alterations of established identities (and their habitual conflicts), which have been so characteristic of the 15M, I want finally to return, once again, to the question of the sustainability of the cultural power generated around the movement, especially complicated once the plazas are deserted.

5.4. ‘The Boxer and the Fly’: Nomadism and Sustainability after the Plazas

5.4.1. Deserting ‘police logic’

May 27, 2011, eve of the grand finale of the ‘Champions League,’ in which F. C. Barcelona will face Manchester United. The television newscast of TVE’s first network connects with London, where the match is to take place, to show the Barcelona fans spending time in the ‘entertainment zone’ organized for that purpose in Hyde Park. Behind the correspondent, people are reserved and silent. But suddenly a voice bursts in: ‘Now, now!’ Immediately a large group with posters stands up and choruses noisily, ‘They call it democracy, but it’s not!’ The correspondent, who can barely be heard now, keeps calling them ‘fans of Barça,’ denying the obvious. And the report continues without the camera focusing on them.

Where fans should have been, the *Indignados* had appeared. This is one of the typical maneuvers of displacement of identities that characterize the 15M movement. These maneuvers at times even lead to situations where the *Indignados* should appear, but nobody is there at all; that is, the very space assigned to the movement has been ‘vacated.’ So, in effect, as the 15M movement is assimilated like a new actor in the reality which the mass media and cultural authorities describe and guarantee, stereotypes, expectations, and forms of representation begin to arise that catch on within those ‘official’ narratives, which the 15M has often tried to avoid. Let us consider, to give an idea of the popularity of the movement, that by the time of the local elections on May 22, 2011, only a week after the *acampadas* began, the mainstream television networks had already included among their live broadcasts of the meetings of the various campaigning political parties,

another obligatory one at Puerta del Sol. This was how, from very early on, a codified and increasingly routine space was reserved to represent ‘the *Indignados*’ protest,’ according to the language typically used by the media.

I have already commented that limiting the understanding of the movement to nothing more than a protest is perhaps one of the most habitual and effective means of erasing its potential to create collaborative ways of life and democratic cultures in the long term. Given this, it’s no wonder the collective intelligence of the movement often resisted engaging in direct conflict and resistance or ‘shock’—the types of logic that were expected of it, based on that limited understanding.

Perhaps the best example of that type of collective intelligence is what was seen when, after the police took down the information booth on August 2, 2011, which was the last piece of physical evidence of Acampadasol left, a series of mass ‘walks through the plaza’ arose spontaneously, and led to the police’s decision to close the plaza to the public completely. Then, instead of continuing to try to reoccupy the plaza or dispersing, the people went to other plazas, and began to hold assemblies and meetings again there. These meetings attracted growing numbers and reached great intensity, giving rise to a kind of rebirth of Sol outside of Sol. Meanwhile, the Puerta del Sol itself remained completely empty and surrounded by police, day and night.

This situation unleashed the humorous wit of the networks, which quickly invented a fictitious protest called ‘#Acampadapolicía.’ On August 2, a Twitter account was created with that name, and sent this first message, parodying those of Acampadasol: ‘#Acampadapolicía needs: tear gas, rubber balls, extendable nightsticks, and walkie-talkie batteries, this is going to last a while @acampadasol.’ And many more followed: ‘We’re buying the *tomalaporra.net* domain and the Facebook *spanishinvolution*’; ‘We’ve set up camp in Sol and we won’t stop until they order us to’; ‘Tomorrow 11:00 peaceful anti-disobedience workshop with Mossos [Catalan police], 12:00 practice evictions with senior citizens, 20:00 how to stop an *Indignado* tsunami’; ‘The spokesmen for PRY (Policía Real Ya) are here already, taking all the credit. Let’s assemble to see if we run them out on a rail’; ‘Last assembly of bosses for tonight: they call it democracy and it is’; ‘If you don’t let us sleep we won’t stop beating,’ etc.

This type of wit capable of revealing repressive or antagonistic situations through creative, satirical re-creations has been fundamental to the 15M climate. There are already specific studies about it, such as those of the sociologist Eduardo Romanos (2014a). He frames the use of humor in the 15M movement within a more general turn towards aesthetic and identity production in social movements, and differentiates the uses of instrumental versus expressive humor. I particularly want to note that humor often has

a lot to do with the movement's ability to elude what Rancière calls the 'police,' in his oft-quoted distinction between 'police' and 'politics'—which, of course, is crucial for my overall analysis of these 'cultures of anyone':

Police logic thinks and structures human collectivities as a totality composed of parts, with functions and places corresponding to those functions, with ways of being and competencies that likewise correspond to those functions, with a government as government of a population, which divides that population into social groups, interest groups, and that offers itself as an arbitrator between groups, distributing places and functions, etc. *Police logic* today takes the form of a solid alliance between the state oligarchy and the economic oligarchy. Politics begins precisely when the system departs from that functional mode: hence my assertion that the people, the *demos*, are not the population, but nor are they the poor. The *demos* are the *gens de rien*, those who don't count, that is, not necessarily the excluded, the miserable, but *anyone*. My idea is that politics begins when political subjects are born that no longer define any social particularity. On the contrary, they define *the power of anyone*. (interview with Fernández-Savater, 2007)

One of the ways to exercise that 'power of anyone' in the 15M movement has been, literally, to avoid being in the place where not only the 'police logic,' but the police themselves, that is, the forces of public order, expected the movement to be.

Another notable example of this kind of feint to fool the police order can be found in connection with the European Central Bank summit in Barcelona in early May 2012. The authorities decided to call out a completely unexpected full deployment, putting 8,000 policemen on the streets, and even temporarily suspending the Schengen Treaty to be able to close the country's borders. However, the expected protest in the streets, which the authorities and some mass media had practically considered a given, never happened. The police presence was clearly seen to be a waste. This caused another flood of creative jokes on Twitter, this time under the hashtag #manificación: 'The first attendance counts range between 0 and 100,000 invisible, violent demonstrators in the #manificación'; '200,000 violent demonstrators according to police. 0 according to the organization. The serious press estimates an average of 100,000'; 'The Mossos develop sophisticated mime and body language techniques representing combat with a powerful enemy'; 'Mossos vans speed across the city filled with dummies with dreadlocks'; 'The president of the BCE declares: "I've never seen so much violence. In fact, I don't see it now, either"'; '#manificación leaves zoo open: the ostriches head towards Fitch, the snakes to Moody's and the kangaroos pound the Mossos'; 'Trias

includes “invisibility” among the crimes in city ordinances’; ‘Puig doubles his bet: “In the next few hours, groups of hungry pumas and burning snakes on llamas will invade”; ‘Puig accuses AcampadaBCN of resisting authority for avoiding the summit and orders the arrest of its leaders.’

5.4.2. The technopolitical speed of networks

The speed of mass communication enabled by digital networks has been crucial to the flow of these kinds of frequently humorous ‘rebuffs’—and the identity displacements that accompany them—and has contributed to a certain, not only physical, but also, we could say, ‘existential’ nomadism that characterizes the 15M movement. Spontaneous marches, proliferation of names, changes of plans, crowds pulled together in just hours, disguises, simulations, playful appropriations of ‘enemy’ speeches, and, in general, all kinds of surprising, unpredictable tactics for occupying both physical and symbolic spaces have all been regular occurrences in a movement with a very active, flexible presence which is, above all, combined and coordinated between the streets and digital networks.

Of course, this ‘nomadism’ was multiplied in the ‘post-plaza’ stage. It gave rise not only to such ‘disappearances’ or ‘camouflages’ of the movement in the face of power, but also to their encounters with other social protests and processes. These were not specifically identified as ‘15M,’ but they tended to come together in, or at least to cross, the somewhat unforeseeable drifts the movement had inspired. Thus, as was intelligently narrated in the blog *Al final de la asamblea*—which constitutes one of the best sources for understanding these ‘post-15M’ dynamics—in the summer of 2012, shortly after the Barcelona ‘manifiación,’ there arose a series of very interesting convergences of protests by various groups of civil servants with ‘15M-style’ mobilizations. It came to the point where the police and members of Acampadasol found themselves on the same side for once, when the police organized protests against public spending cuts that also affected them. The interesting thing was that, as a post in the above-mentioned blog noted (‘El desconcierto (Cuerpos y Fuerzas del Estado de Indignación)’ 2014), the framework of inclusive practices ‘of anyone’ that the 15M movement had created—or at least strengthened—including their ‘street nomadism’ and their rapid-fire use of [social] networks, was adopted even by their supposed ‘natural enemies,’ the police, when they wanted to protest. The post posed the question:

I wonder where the anger of the indignant police might have taken them? Where would the people-of-order of another time in another country have ended up in other circumstances?

Several options seem to be very easy choices: on the street but behind Le Pen in France, in Jobbik in Hungary, with Berlusconi in Italy, with Clean Hands and Spain 2000 in Spain today, in the hands of the PSOE in Spain five minutes ago, as the saying goes, or behind big union flags and union leaders, or behind the UP&D-style third ways, genetic recyclers of the system. Or, who knows, rabidly burning cars and [breaking] shop windows like in Paris or London.

It's possible that any of these things could still happen, but not today. It's possible that the municipal police officers I'll talk to couldn't care less about the litanies of 'they don't represent us' and 'these are our weapons.' However, de facto, they've begun their mobilization by threatening an *acampada* in the Congress, using networks to organize anonymously (as well as using certain platforms), and they've started to copy the first *perroflautada* that they have seen, roaming the streets without permission, running around and around the locked-down Congress, visiting the offices of the majority parties.

An 'indignant policeman' had already appeared in Acampadasol, but for the police as a professional sector to adopt the 15M forms of protest was certainly something quite unexpected, and even disturbing for many.

Some months earlier, in February, during a protest organized under the name '#Yonopago' (I'm not paying), which invited participants to jump the turnstiles in the metro as a protest against price hikes in public transportation, *Al final de la asamblea* described another situation in which the movement didn't do what everyone expected. This inspired the following optimistic analysis from the blogging collective:

The state expects something to happen. The media expects something to happen, there were mobile units with antennas in Sol. Everyone is sure something is going to happen. They set the scene for us, opening a space in the middle. The tension is mixed with excitement. It's as if E.T. had once landed in Sol, and now at the least provocation, they all come running: federal agents, marines, NASA, and TV. There's something so hilarious about this, like a poor lover being stood up. It's like the state is shadow boxing with something it can't see. It's like a 375-pound boxer (with his head smashed in) trying to swat a fly. They waste a lot—I mean a LOT—of energy. Many young, fresh-faced men, many bosses, new suits ironed, helicopters, SAMUR [emergency medical services], thousands of brand-new vans, etc. Cameras, reporters, photos, flashbulbs. The enemy seems happy and ready ... and The Other (us) doesn't show up. Disappointment. Back home they go, with all their toys in tow.

How does that Jap thing go? Using the enemy's weight and strength against him? (15mas1 2014)

A large part of the movement's 'becoming Japs,' their ability to become a fly which the powers that be sometimes want to hunt down with cannons, is due specifically to those 'swarm dynamics' fostered, as Margarita Padilla suggested, by digital networks. The research group DatAnalysis15M has completed an exhaustive investigation that utilized a wide range of methodologies (including a huge amount of quantitative analysis). They collected numerous interactions between the streets and digital networks that came from what they call the '15M Network System' and its 'multilevel synchronization of collective behavior.' They summarized the first of their conclusions in the study *Tecnopolítica: la potencia de las multitudes conectadas* (2013):

The centrality of the connection between online social networks and human networks for the emergence of new forms of communication, organization, and collective action mediated by the political use of technology, critical mass phenomena, and mass self-communication has been shown in the gestation, explosion, and development of the 15M. We characterize this tactical and strategic use as technopolitical, and it varies between mass appropriation and derivation of the original use of digital platforms, and the collective invention of new uses and new tools. This has meant a drastic reduction in the cost of collective action and a greater ability to construct the meaning of what happens in real time, and simultaneously to create a very strong impact with viral campaigns or events put together through digital networks.

In essence, if the new 'cultural power' coming from the 15M movement is capable of creating 'cultures of anyone' able to challenge the monopoly over cultural authority that experts, media, and intellectuals attempt to exercise, it's partly because it is capable of gaining access to a technopolitical infrastructure that allows it to 'construct the meaning of what happens in real time.' In other words, it can construct alternatives to the spin that cultural officialdom keeps putting on 'what happens.'

But that need to do it 'in real time' noted by the DatAnalysis15M collective indicates the types of event—ephemeral, nomadic, quick, one-time, exceptional—in which that 'lightness' of technopolitical structures turns out to be especially effective. In competing with the accelerated time of 'the present' marked by the media, to anticipate and surprise the police or institutional bureaucracy, that network speed becomes priceless.

However, as I continue to note, I don't think these are the only, nor

probably even the most transformative, dimensions of the 'cultures of anyone' capable of defying the cultural authority establishment. In these cultures, once again, it also has to do with maintaining a cultural space in which the daily construction of meaning that is intimately linked to human dignity is democratized. This involves maintaining a space that would be difficult to make function from an ephemeral plane. It has to do, essentially, with being able to construct a culture that faces up to the dispersion created by neoliberalism, making visible and strengthening collaborative, egalitarian forms of human interdependence that, it seems to me, cannot base their strength on transience.¹¹

I am not suggesting here a dichotomy between the slowness of the physical and the speed of the digital. Rather, the dichotomy I propose is between the desire to create sustainable collaborative networks that, through their permanence, end up becoming alternatives to the neoliberal organization of life (for which the digital sphere is one of the fundamental tools), and the desire to regularly sabotage that neoliberal organization by promoting the upsurge of 'illegitimate' abilities, knowledge bases, and

11 Increasingly, it is capitalism itself whose reproduction is based on speed, transience, and even destruction. As early as 1989, David Harvey indicated in *The Urban Experience* that capitalism not only needed, as Marx had said, 'to abolish space.' In its post-industrial drift, it also functioned by way of a constant 'creative self-destruction' through which it needed constantly to construct new spaces to be able to 'dissolve them in air' (to take up Berman's classic expression) as soon as possible. 'We look at the material solidity of a building, a canal, a highway,' Harvey said vividly, 'and behind it we see always the insecurity that lurks within a circulation process of capital, which always asks: How much more time in this relative space?' (192).

More recently, the economist and business professor Stefano Harney (2010a; 2010b) integrated the study of novelties presented by the world of financial capitalism within this line of analysis, taking it to an unheard-of point: the affirmation of the complete split of capitalism from the suppositions and ideology of progress. The kind of 'creative destruction' on which financial markets embark in speculating with sophisticated products like derivatives, says Harney, can no longer be thought of from that familiar perspective through which, by means that might at times be somewhat pernicious or incomprehensible to the layman, it was thought that capitalist 'modernity' would always result in a control over nature that would, one way or another, bring progress in the future. Around 1998, with the deregulation of financial economics, asserts Harney, something happens that will disrupt that familiar view: while before it had been thought that economic value should always increase, in parallel with that 'progress of humanity' that everyone hoped for, now it begins to be thought that increasing value isn't so important, but that we know how to manage ourselves through its swings. Risk becomes something desirable, productive. In fact, it becomes the main investment of capitalism, whose speculative economy is, as is well known, 30 times bigger than the 'real' one.

discourses, in that order. It is precisely the speed of word and image, the speed of the more immediate aspects of meaning construction (multiplied by digital infrastructures) that tends to cause so much energy to be put into instigating ephemeral interruptions, displacements, sabotage efforts, or insults to the neoliberal order, because everyone knows that they will achieve an immediate goal. But the danger of this specialization in ephemera is that it abandons the everyday to its fate. In other words, the everyday is left to the neoliberal organization of life, which permeates everything by default in our time.

The difference between the logic of the camps and the ‘nomadism’ of the movement—shown, for example, in the post-15M ‘aimless indignant strolls’—is not, I repeat, the difference between the physical and the digital. The two aspects coexisted in both moments. The difference is based, rather, on the fact that in the first case a permanent forum for the democratic construction of meaning was articulated, like a kind of Trojan horse within the neoliberal city; in the second, it played cat and mouse with the ‘police,’ in both Rancière’s and the literal sense. Both models, which have never been completely separated but simply combined to different degrees, have their strengths and their problems.

5.4.3. Advertising and commercial appropriations of collective value

In the 15M *acampadas*, as is well known, everyone was invited to participate, but not through the media, technocratic, or intellectual platforms that tend to produce a monopoly on knowledge. Rather, the invitation came from within the unique ‘space of anyone’ the movement was attempting to maintain, and which created its own conditions of participation. There were, in this regard, repeated debates in Sol about whether or not the media should be allowed to record the assemblies. And there were times when it was expressly prohibited, rejecting an ingenuous conception of ‘freedom of expression.’ They proposed the restriction as a way to defend themselves from what they identified as a danger of ‘manipulation,’ but which, it seems to me, had much to do with the illegitimate hoarding of cultural authority exercised by the mass media.

The plazas were inclusive, but only in terms that allowed inclusion for everybody. This was also true for intellectuals, whether they were famous or not, leftist or not, who, as Luis Martín-Cabrera (2011) said in an article on the subject, ‘in the plazas they have to wait their turn just like everybody else, and they have neither last names nor pedigrees.’

When there is no camp, however, when that permanent space of anyone doesn’t exist, although other opportunities for resisting authoritarian cultural powers appear, it also becomes much more difficult to make those

powers respect, even a little bit, the protocols necessary for the egalitarian multiplication of abilities that creates collective intelligence. When the playing field is marked out by the media, with their *tertulianos*, their intellectuals, their constant desire for novelty, and their transformation of reality into a market, things are different.

Let me offer some examples: shortly after the 15M movement, various advertisements appeared appropriating the aesthetics and the ways, or rather, the ‘tics’ of the movement. One television commercial was especially striking: it staged a hypothetical, completely decontextualized ‘assembly’ in which people of various ages contributed ideas on the appropriate price for text messages sent through cellphones, finally agreeing that they should all be free. The voice-off concluded, ‘The people have spoken and this is what it has asked for: new cellphone rates decided by everyone.’ The company was Movistar, which belongs to Telefónica, the Spanish communications giant. It is well known for its commercial practices of doubtful legitimacy, as repeatedly condemned by FACUA, the consumers’ association. FACUA’s members have voted it the worst company of the year for several consecutive years. They likewise voted the assembly spot the Worst Commercial of the Year in 2011.

It was, stated FACUA (2014), ‘pure mockery of the 15M movement trying to take advantage of their image and the decisions of their assemblies.’ On the other hand, the anonymous ‘communications guerrilla’ that flourishes on digital networks didn’t take long to upload a new and improved YouTube version of the ad, in which the characters attending the assembly talked about Movistar-Telefónica itself, and reached very different conclusions: ‘Profits (€10,167 million in 2010), layoffs (6,000 or 20% of workers) and quality (the slowest and most expensive service in Europe).’

Something similar happened with a pair of television commercials for Campofrío, a brand of cold cuts, aired in 2012 and 2013 respectively. Both ads played with a vague notion of the virtues of the supposed ‘Spanish character,’ staged as a way ‘to raise morale’ supposedly depressed by the crisis. Thus, without making any reference to the causes of that crisis, they praised sports, infrastructures, a sense of humor, and Spanish sociability in an undifferentiated amalgam that ended up, in both cases, reverting to a collective desire to buy Campofrío’s cold cuts, because they embodied—never better said—that revalorized ‘Spanishness.’ What I want to stress here is that among the list of characteristics that should be attributed to the Spanish spirit—which, providentially, were listed in the first ad as a kind of *résumé*—was ‘solidarity’ (exemplified with images of PAH protests) and the ability ‘to fight even when you feel you can’t go on’ (as expressed by ‘el Langui,’ an actor and singer in the hip-hop group La Excepción, who suffers

from cerebral palsy and who appeared in a t-shirt displaying a symbol against budget cuts).

Beyond the problems the commercial context itself could cause for the message—let’s not forget that they *are* advertisements—and without wanting to diminish any support the PAH’s struggles and those against cuts in education and healthcare may have received thanks to these ads, it is important to indicate the risks involved in integrating these struggles acritically into narratives that juxtapose them to social realities that are so dependent on neoliberal logic, such as the promotion of elite sports and the creation of overly ambitious transportation infrastructures. Campofrío’s own commercial says, ‘you can’t turn around without tripping into an airport,’ but indeed, building airports that see little or no use has been one of the emblems of the speculative real estate bubble’s excesses.

In the next chapter, I will explore a little further the logics of the neoliberal system’s appropriation of the value collaboratively created in ‘cultures of anyone.’ I will discuss the symbolic capital created by the movements and how these obvious ‘thefts’ perpetrated by the big multinationals that use it for their publicity, are only one quite literal—and for that reason especially useful—example. But they form part of a very complex conglomerate of indirect, hybrid, often barely visible, and ambiguous dynamics through which, in fact, any socially recognized value tends to be financierized one way or another, and put to work in the competitive, corporate logic of neoliberalism.

Fortunately, we also have numerous, complex analyses of these dynamics, and in dialogue with these, I will also outline some concrete attempts to manage the collaboratively created value and try to protect it from neoliberal appropriation. In particular, I will talk about institutions that work with ‘culture,’ and try—in a way that is partly analogous to the *acampadas* of the 15M—to include both physical and digital spaces where it is possible to defend specific protocols that prevent the privatization of cultural value, and guarantee the capacity for self-management of that value by the collaborative communities that produce it.

No, there is no ‘pure’ outside to neoliberalism. But there are, as the historian Immanuel Wallerstein (2002) proposed, processes of ‘selective decommodification,’ that is, the creation of ‘structures that operate in the market [and] whose objective is to offer a service and its survival, and not the profit.’ ‘This,’ indicated Wallerstein, ‘can be done, as we know from the history of universities and hospitals: not getting everything, but getting the most possible’ (39).

In this regard, what I wanted to indicate here are some difficulties raised by the ‘nomadism’ of the 15M climate facing that ‘selective decommodification.’

This is an action that seems to require, as Wallerstein says, the creation of more permanent ‘structures,’ like the plazas of the 15M movement, with its attempt to maintain a noncompetitive, noncorporatized everyday life, and like some of the institutions I will talk about in the next chapter, which try to do the same with the cultural or symbolic aspects of life.

5.4.4. Political talk shows and academies: The dangers of playing away from home

An especially controversial drift of the relations between the ‘cultures of anyone’ and the neoliberal establishment, in relation to the ‘nomadism’ of the former, would be certain attempts to intensify what I view as interruptions or sabotage of big media’s logic on their own turf. I think about what happens, for example, with the crucial and delicate matter of the participation of people like Ada Colau, ex-spokesperson of the PAH (and now mayor of Barcelona with the platform Barcelona en Comú), or Pablo Iglesias, secretary general of Podemos on the political talk shows that have proliferated on the major television channels.

It is a complex subject about which I only want to briefly note an idea, which perhaps doesn’t appear very often in the debates on the matter. I am referring to the fact that in the interesting opinions exchanged on digital networks sympathetic to the 15M climate about the advisability (or not) of these contributions in a perceived ‘enemy’ territory, the tactical importance played in those televised debates by recourse to specialized knowledge, or even, simply, to the authority of the expert position is not always kept in mind. As I noted above, the figure of the televised or radio broadcast *tertuliano* owes much to the ‘aura’ offered by that position. Thus, it seems especially difficult to reappropriate it from a position within the ‘cultures of anyone,’ or at least to enter into a relationship of equals with it, as has been done with so many other figures of power/knowledge (economist, doctor, lawyer, philosopher, etc.) during this cycle of cultural democratizations that was opened up with the 15M. It is especially difficult, I say, above all when it is being attempted on the ‘home field’ of the *tertuliano*, which is big media.

It seems that this is so in part because of a lingering misunderstanding: the usual criticism of these political talk show participants is that they act as if ‘they know,’ but, in fact, they don’t know. This is not far from the truth since, indeed, they are asked to offer opinions on any current event, and it’s impossible for them to ‘really know’ everything. Taking this as a point of departure, it would make sense to resort to a strategy in which a *tertuliano* is introduced who breaks that logic, and who really does know what he or she is talking about.

But again the question is, what does it mean ‘to know’? If a *tertuliano*

is put onstage who displays a knowledge set authorized by establishment institutions, it seems to me that perhaps that other essential type of knowing—that of ‘the experts in what happens to them,’ the knowledge of the affected ones, the knowledge of those vulnerable voices that know what it is to tremble—is being set aside somewhat. This is the case with Pablo Iglesias, who often introduces himself by emphasizing his specialized ‘professor’ knowledge, throwing his brilliant academic dossier in the face of another guest on the program (in one of the most viewed videos of Pablo Iglesias on YouTube).

There is, however, hardly any space for ‘anyone’s’ type of knowledge in the big media *tertulias* (political talk shows). When the voice of an affected individual is allowed to make an appearance, it is to turn it into a victim, to be moved by or show solidarity with it, but not to learn with it or from it. Even the interventions of Ada Colau, who was always faithful to her role of PAH spokesperson—not ‘representative’—in the media are marked by the use of expert discourse, in particular legal discourse (although not always nor totally). This is understandable simply because in those forums the choice presented is doubly disgraceful: if she speaks as an affected individual, she risks being framed as an impotent victim; if she speaks from her specialized knowledge base, she risks being assimilated as just another ‘expert’ more, using her cultural authority against that of her peer tertulianos. And perhaps sometimes this second type of identification is chosen as the lesser, or perhaps the less visible, of two evils.

Finally, along with these complex relations between the ‘cultures of anyone’ and the mass media, I would like to point out that there are other equally problematic relations that are even more directly related to the logic of hierarchical cultural prestige. Again, when the playing field is not fixed by the ‘cultures of anyone’ themselves, but by institutions strongly marked by the monopolistic, authoritarian logics of the modern power/knowledge complex in its neoliberal declension, like most of the academic and cultural institutions of the globalized world, the symbolic value created by those cultures is easily reterritorialized in competitive dynamics that alienate it from the communities that produce it. The immense machinery of institutional cultural programming and academic publication—both strongly marked by the neoliberal logics of competition and corporatization—find in the material created collaboratively by the cultures of anyone ‘subjects’ for their events, books, and articles, just as the media intellectuals used them for their opinion columns.

These are the risks being run by the very volume you hold in your hands now, along with the growing investigative and analytical production emerging in more or less direct, close contact with the ‘cultures of anyone,’

but which also uses the infrastructure provided by institutions immersed in the neoliberal, 'expert' paradigm. In the face of those risks, as with those run when the 'cultures of anyone' make any incursion into institutions alien to their open, decommodified, collaborative logics, it seems to me that one of the most powerful strategies is usually to implement 'roundtrip routes' that lead the revaluation allowed by that establishment, in turn, back towards those very 'cultures of anyone.' I am referring to instances when the infrastructures, resources, and capacities provided by the neoliberal institutions are used, directly or indirectly, in efforts that try to create alternatives to neoliberal logic.

To do this, those dynamics for creating structures capable of a certain permanence, and therefore, of a certain 'selective decommodification,' are particularly necessary. These may sometimes reclaim energies being used in other, more 'nomadic' structures of online movements and cultures, and which are therefore perhaps also more vulnerable to the neoliberal dispersion paradigm. I will dedicate the last chapter of this book to a study of some of the former, from the conviction that making them visible through a historical and philosophical analysis is another way of constructing the collective value that can guarantee its permanence.