The 15M's media activism as a tool for the production of knowledge: pedagogical action, lessons, and windows of opportunity[1]

El activismo mediático del 15M como herramienta para la producción de conocimiento: acción pedagógica, aprendizajes y ventanas de oportunidad

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This article approaches the 15M movement media activism as a pedagogico-political tool for the production of knowledge. The methodology combines document analysis and 12 in-depth interviews with activists and journalists. The 15M's pedagogical action carried out through the creation of media and its influence on independent media is shown. Empirical evidence on the legacy of the *indignados* movement is provided, and interdisciplinary research avenues for inquiring on the relationships between communication, social movements, and educational processes are suggested.

KEYWORDS: Social movements, 15M, media activism, pedagogical action, production of knowledge.

Este artículo aborda el activismo mediático del 15M como herramienta pedagógico-política para la producción de conocimiento. La metodología combina un análisis documental y 12 entrevistas en profundidad a activistas y a periodistas. En los hallazgos se muestra la acción pedagógica del 15M a través de la creación de medios y su influencia en los medios independientes. Se aportan evidencias empíricas sobre el legado de los indignados y se abren vías de investigación interdisciplinares para el estudio de las relaciones entre comunicación, movimientos sociales y procesos educativos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Movimientos sociales, 15M, activismo mediático, acción pedagógica, producción de conocimiento.

Introduction

The 15M movement emerged in Spain as a response to the double political and economic crisis. What began as a social media organized protest resulted in protest camps in several Spanish cities and an outburst of social actions and projects that aimed at promoting the construction of participative spaces in which the "radicalization of democracy" was demanded (Cruells & Ibarra, 2013). This movement crystalized tangible actions concerning social rights, public freedoms, the fight against corruption and projects oriented at democratic innovation that opened the space for citizen empowerment reinforcing already existing initiatives –such as the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH in Spanish)–. The movement also promoted the creation of other initiatives such as the anti-austerity movements that defended public utilities (*mareas ciudadanas* in Spanish), or the creation of new political parties that incorporated the proposals made to the institutional politics by the participants of the 15M (Sampedro, 2021).

This research is based on the communicational dimension and focuses on the 15M's use of the media activism as a pedagogico-political tool for the social production of knowledge. From its early stages, the 15M movement conceded a clear importance to the communication processes and lessons on citizen awareness, the promotion of democratic values and the increase on the number of spaces for participation. The communicational dimension of the 15M has been studied from different perspectives including the role of the ICT for internal organization and for the transmission of messages (Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2014; Postill, 2014), the technopolitics (Toret, 2013), the discourse promoted by specific collectives and its influence on the agenda of the media (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2016; Errejón, 2011), the impact of the 15M in the academia (Espinar & Seguí, 2016), and the influence of the movement in the revitalization of the Third Sector of Communication (Barranquero & Meda, 2015). There is research that highlights the relevance of the learning processes in relation to prefigurative politics, the deliberative democratic practices, and the assembly-based movement organizing practices (Hernández et al., 2013; Razquin, 2017; Rivero, 2013; Romanos, 2013); however,

works that address this relationship as an object of study in itself are rarely found (Barbas, 2020).

The purpose of this work is to demonstrate, on the one hand, how a significant part of the pedagogical action of the 15M for the production of knowledge was materialized in the media sphere and was canalized through the media projects created by groups that considered themselves part of the 15M –projects that in this research have been labeled as "own media"–; and, on the other hand, to explore the windows of opportunity opened by the 15M movement and the possible influence on the creation of the self-labeled "independent media". An inquiry took place on the actions of media construction understood as part of the production of knowledge repertoire generated by the *indignados* (indignants) movement that turned the media into pedagogico-political tools capable of causing repercussions in the struggle for cultural hegemony. The starting point is, therefore, the conceptualization of the 15M movement as a producer of knowledge as seen from the communicational approach.

The structure of this article stems from a theoretical framework that combines three approaches: the cultural perspective of the collective behavior theory, the studies regarding knowledge production in social movements, and the approach that studies the learning-teaching processes in the context of protests. The methodology includes document analysis, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews with activists and journalists involved in communication projects created by collectives directly linked to the 15M. It also includes interviews with journalists from the independent media that originated in the movement or in the conjuncture of the transformations generated during the time immediately before or after the protests. The findings are presented in three sections: 1) the lessons and teachings derived from the 15M media activism, where we argue the 15M legacy and impact on the subsequent media activism; 2) the pedagogical actions that the movement carried out for the production of knowledge through the creation of media; and 3) the opening of windows of opportunity by the 15M as well as its possible influence on the creation of independent media.

Ten years after the protests, this research aims at contributing to the understanding of the movement's legacy in terms of knowledge production for civic engagement, demonstrating the importance of the

pedagogico-political strategy developed through the media activism, and the likelihood of that strategy having had an influence in the creation and characteristics of the independent media. This work aims at opening interdisciplinary research avenues to address the relationships between communication, social movements, and educational processes for the social production of knowledge.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND LEARNING PROCESSES

Social movements are democratization agents that work as pedagogico-political actors insofar their efforts at cultural transformation involve teaching-learning processes aimed at increasing the citizens' awareness and empowerment (della Porta & Diani, 2020).

The cultural-symbolic perspective of the collective behavior theories focuses on the study of the processes, of the actions' repertoire, and the ways in which the movements generate a symbolic production alternative to mainstream (Swidler, 1986) against which they confront their ideas, demands or sociocultural models (Gusfield, 1994; Laraña, 1996). Social movements create new languages and grammars of democracy, and open up opportunities for political action. They attempt to transform the cultural frameworks as well as the thought patterns through which the citizens interpret current events and act upon social reality (Gamson, 1988). From this perspective, contentious collective action has a clear cultural character (Ibarra & Tejerina, 1998) as well as a cognitive character (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991; Holford, 1995). These characteristics allow us to connect the cultural-symbolic approach to the research that addresses the study of social movements as producers of knowledge (Arribas, 2018; Casas-Cortés et al., 2008; Cox & Flesher, 2009; Niesz, 2019). Social movements are, from this perspective, knowledge production laboratories in which different experiences are coordinated and different rationalities are connected within a shared cognitive system (della Porta & Pavan, 2017). In the words of Eyerman and Jamison (1991), those movements are "epistemic communities", an approach that has been developed in other works as well which is closer to theories of collective behavior (Laraña, 1996). In recent

publications, those theories have addressed the study of the 15M as a laboratory of political and democratic innovation (Candón-Mena et al., 2018; Feenstra & Casero-Ripollés, 2012; Flesher Fominaya, 2020). This approach dialogues directly to another approach of a more socio-pedagogical nature known as *social movement learning* which understands the social movements as rich learning environments (Cox, 2014; Hall et al., 2012; Welton, 1993). This perspective focuses on the study of the learning processes developed by the activists as well as those of the people influenced by their actions. In both cases, learning can occur informally or as the result of purposeful actions. In recent years, some links have been established between the socio-political approaches and the socio-pedagogical ones that study social movements (Kuk & Tarlau, 2020; Niesz et al., 2018); however, there is no evidence of an exchange between those approaches and the field of social or educational communication.

In a previous research (Barbas & Postill, 2017), a categorization of three pedagogical principles within the social movements that occur through communication was established: 1) the "pedagogical action" that refers to the media and projects created to provide tools and content that promote educational processes aimed at the construction of informed empowered and critical citizens; 2) the "pedagogical sovereignty" that refers to actions undertaken for the internal training of activists; and 3) the "pedagogical networks" that refer to the alliances between collectives for the creation of collaborative pedagogical projects. This paper focuses on the pedagogical action of the movements through communication considering that media productions have been one of the most significant pedagogico-political tools of the *indignados* movement.

METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork is based on a previous research (Barbas & Postill, 2017), in which 23 media created at the heat of the 15M were identified through the document analysis based on systematic searches on the web. The following data was requested from the participants of these media through a questionnaire: a) the origin of the media; b) the objective of

the media; c) the management and organizational systems used; d) the dissemination channels; and e) the current state of that media. This data complemented the information collected through a previous document analysis. For the current research, three of the initially 23 identified media were selected based on the following criteria: 1) they emerged directly from collectives of people that participated in the 15M; 2) their importance to the 15M –because their members actively participated in the collectives that generated the movement–; and 3) because they represented three different formats –radio, printed newspaper and digital publication–. The selected media are the *Ágora Sol Radio* (2011), the newspaper *Madrid 15M* (2012, currently named *Madrid en Acción*) and the digital publication *El Binario* (2013). Subsequently, between February and April, 2019, four complementary "active interviews" were conducted with activists of those media. Active interviews are defined as communication processes that imply the active subjectivity of the participant –that of the interviewer and of the interviewee– (Holstein & Gubrium, 2016).

The second phase of this research took place between December 2020 and March 2021 and had as its main objective the exploration of the journalists' perception concerning the windows of opportunity opened by the 15M for the creation of media and its possible influence on the emergence of such media. With that purpose in mind, a sample of 16 media[4] that participated on the "Independent Media Platform" was selected. These media share the need to promote critical and independent journalism at the service of society instead of being at the service of economic or partisan interests. The selection was made based on the following criteria: a) the media should have been created after the 15M; b) must have a generalist character; and c) must include cultural/educational projects among their activities. The selected media were *La Marea* (2012), *Ctxt* (2015), and *El Salto* (2017). Five active interviews were conducted with journalists from these media. This intentional sampling was combined with a snowball or referral sampling (Gentles

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[4]   *Público*, *Crítc*, *Nueva Tribuna*, *Ctxt*, *Luzes*, *El Salto*, *Pikara*, *Mongolia*, *Cuarto Poder*, *La Marea*, *Praza*, *Carne Cruda*, *La Voz del Sur*, *Alternativas Económicas*, *Nortes* y *Catalunya Plural*.

et al., 2015) which allowed to incorporate interviews to journalists from *Periodismo Humano*, *Pikara* and *Carne Cruda*. These eight interviews were conducted in addition to the previously mentioned four interviews for a total of 12 interviews in the fieldwork.

TABLE 1
PROFILE OF THE INTERVIEWEES

Name (date of the interview)	Biographic profile
María (pseudonym) (02/20/2019)	Member of Centro Social Seco and *Ágora Sol Radio*.
Silvia (pseudonym) (03/18/2019)	Member of *Ágora Sol Radio*.
Manuel (pseudonym) (03/21/2019)	Cofounder and member of *Madrid 15M*.
Juanma (pseudonym) (/0403/2019)	Member of *15Hack* and cofounder of *El Binario*.
Patricia Simón (01/10/2021)	Cofounder and codirector *Periodismo Humano*. Journalist of *La Marea* since 2018.
Pablo Elorduy (01/15/2021)	Journalist of *Diagonal* and cofounder of *El Salto*. Editor and coordinator of the Politics section of *El Salto*.
Tomás Muñoz (01/22/2021)	Journalist of Cadena SER, *Diagonal* and *El Salto*.
Vanesa Jiménez (01/28/2021)	Journalist of *El Mundo*, *El País* and *La Información*. Deputy director of *Ctxt*.
Javier Gallego (01/29/2021)	Journalist of Cadena SER, *M80*, Radio 3, TVE and *La Sexta*. Director and host of *Carne Cruda*.
Magda Bandera (01/30/2021)	Journalist of *La Vanguardia*, *El Periódico de Catalunya* and *Público*. Cofounder and manager of *La Marea*.
Javier Bauluz (01/30/2021)	Freelance Photojournalist. Cofounder and director of *Periodismo Humano*.
Ma. Ángeles Fernández (02/05/2021)	Freelance Journalist. Coordinator of the magazine *Pikara*.

Source: The authors.

Lessons and teachings of the 15M media activism

Media activism has been one of the primary strategies of the social movements that has adapted to the available media and technology of the time (Rodríguez et al., 2014). The media dimension is part of the political culture of the pro-democratic activism (Downing, 2001), and is the fundamental tool for the production of knowledge that activists use in the struggle for cultural hegemony. For Rovira (2017) "every movement is a laboratory of symbolic production that needs to communicate" (p. 9). Likewise, social movements influence contemporary movements and promote the creation of new ones (Snow et al., 2013). This phenomenon is related to the effects that the cultural changes of some movements have on others (Whittier, 2004) insofar there is a shared culture that acts as an identity anchor and as an expressive channel that gives historical meaning and future projection to contentious collective action.

In this sense, the media activism of the 15M is heir to a culture of political activism of long-standing. Even though the cycles of protest are characterized by their "qualitative jumps in their forms" (Romanos, 2018, p. 3), the use of Internet as an activism tool in the mid-90s and the creation of digital media by the social movements marked a before and after for media activism. Projects such as *Nodo50* (1994), *Rebelión* (1996), *Indymedia* (1999), *L'avanç* (1999), *Diagonal*[5] (2005), or *La Directa* (2006), that emerged from the experience of the global protest cycles from 1994 to 2003 were a key starting point for the Spanish media activism and what became known at the time as "counterinformation on the web" (López & Roig, 2004).

Many journalists today consider said experiences as "journalism school" as they paved a way to understand activist communication.

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[5] This historical project emerges from the paper newspaper *Molotov*, published between 2000 and 2003, which would be renamed *Diagonal* and published from 2005 to 2016 to be reopened as *El Salto* in 2017. In the last stage, there is a profound transformation of the media as it becomes a multimedia project formed by a wide network of media, which justifies its inclusion in the analysis of this section as *Diagonal* and later as *El Salto*.

Tomás Muñoz, a journalist from *Diagonal* that attended trainings offered by *Nodo50* and who years later actively participated in one of the groups that promoted the 15M says: "At the time, I trained in many things, I clearly saw the knowledge in communication that had been accumulated by the social movements and I understood the key communicational aspects" (personal communication). Similarly, Patricia Simón the cofounder of *Periodismo Humano* and journalist of *La Marea*, states:

> *Diagonal* was a referent for those of us that believed in independent journalism and was fundamental for the new media to follow in the wake of a journalism that tried to create from the margins. It is part of a process that pushes you to become part of a something with the idea of journalism as a cornerstone for public ethics (personal communication).

The accumulated experience from that period also provided important learning background to the media activism of the 15M. Moreover, the heterogeneity, transversality, and penetration capacity of the 15M made it possible for some of those media –such as *Diagonal* and *La Directa*– to begin transformation and reinvention processes. Those processes led them from the militant journalistic practices, originated in the context of protest, to a more open and inclusive journalism supported by more established and professional structures, which allowed them to improve the quality of their content, to reach a wider audience and to find sustainability formulae (López-Ferrández, 2018; Martínez-Sánchez & Martínez-Polo, 2017). As highlighted by Tomás Muñoz concerning the reinvention of *Diagonal*:

> The 15M was a propulsive force for the transition of *Diagonal* to *El Salto*. Everything that happened during that time created a conjuncture and a demand from the readers for a different type of information, and that gap was filled by the cooperative media or by the subscription based independent media (personal communication).

Diagonal went from being a biweekly printed newspaper and a precarious website, to become –already as *El Salto*– a confluence of

20 different media from all over Spain in 2017. Currently, it has eight regional publications, more than 60 blogs, 20 full-time employees, and by November 2021 it had more than 8 000 subscribers. Moreover, it has a daily updated website, a monthly printed edition, and a radio and video project. In Table 2 all this information is presented which allows to estimate the growth experienced by this media regarding dissemination capacity and outreach.

TABLE 2

DISSEMINATION CHANNELS, SUBSCRIPTIONS, AND FOLLOWERS
ON TWITTER FOR *LA MAREA*, *EL SALTO* AND *CTXT*

Name of the media and website	Dissemination channels	Number of subscribers (Oct. 2021)	Number of followers in Twitter (11/25/2021)
La Marea https://www.lamarea.com/	Print and digital publications, YouTube channel, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Telegram	4 000	246 520
El Salto https://www.elsaltodiario.com/	Print and digital publications (general and regional publications), YouTube channel, radio, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram and Mastodon	8 100	184 565
Ctxt https://ctxt.es/	Print and digital publications, YouTube channel, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Telegram	12 328	200 776

Source: The authors.

Highlighting the value of this legacy, that goes beyond the visions that underline the novelty and spontaneity of the 15M (Flesher

Fominaya, 2015), this research is focused on the 15M movement's own contribution to communication, media, and digital technologies (Treré, 2019). The 15M movement enriched Spanish media activism through the creation of its own media (*Ágora Sol Radio*, *Madrid 15M*, *El Binario*) as well as through its influence on the emergence of independent media (*La Marea*, *El Salto*, *Ctxt*) that stand out because of their pedagogical orientation towards empowering the active, critical, and engaged citizenry.

MEDIA ACTIVISM AND PEDAGOGICAL ACTION FOR THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Several of the collectives involved in the 15M focused their efforts on the creation of media directly linked to the movement and the protest camps: *Ágora Sol Radio*, the printed newspaper *Madrid 15M*, the audiovisual platform *Tomalatele*, the radio station *Ión Radio*, the news agency *Diso Press*, and the collective *Fotogracción*, among others. These media shared the organizational system of the movement and similar sustainability strategies, as well as the agenda and its discursive approach.

On May 26th, 2011, the radio station *Ágora Sol Radio* started broadcasting. It was a station created in the protest camp by a group of activist members of the Communication Commission that had the main aim of "contributing to the creation of a narrative about the movement that was created by the movement itself" (María, personal communication). *Ágora Sol Radio* has been expanding its coverage, means and outreach, and has become an important player in the Third Sector of Communication (Sáez Baeza, 2008) by broadcasting 24 hours a day with a schedule of 23 self-produced shows on topics such as political, social and cultural current affairs. The station also broadcasts music and humor shows, interviews, etc. Likewise, it collaborates closely with other free radio stations both in disseminating content as well as in covering news. Its collaborative characteristic and its social projection have made of it an important creator of synergies and networks between different collectives and projects, which has helped to expand and diversify its capacity to produce content and

influence the activist media sphere. Despite the limitations of the
community radio stations, *Ágora Sol Radio* currently has almost 12 000
followers on Twitter, more than 4 500 followers on Facebook, and some
of its shows such as *Barrio Canino* are retransmitted by 27 Spanish
community radios. In addition to the production and broadcasting of its
own content, *Ágora Sol Radio* generates pedagogical processes for the
dissemination and construction of knowledge through the organization
of their own events, there are events organized in collaboration with
other collectives (talks, screenings, workshops, etc.). Its pedagogical
action is especially observed in the project *Radio Guerrilla*, which is a
working group that organizes workshops about radio production for any
social collective that requests it:

> The *Radio Guerrilla* project is oriented to training in communication. We
> train people in technical skills, in the methodology of collaborative work,
> in the organization of content and in network broadcasting so that any
> member of the collective can set up their own online radio (Silvia, personal
> communication).

An additional communication project directly created by people
participating in the movement was the newspaper *Madrid 15M*,
which emerged in early 2012 and which originated in the proposal
of the *Asamblea Popular de Villaverde* (Madrid). The proposal was
accepted by all the assemblies in Madrid with the intention of "turning
the newspaper into an amplifier of the 15M assemblies in Madrid, by
disseminating the demands, actions and proposals of the movement,
and bringing together the 15M movement around a visible collective
identity" (Manuel, personal communication). The newspaper reached
print runs of about 50 000 copies between 2013 and 2015, in addition
to the digital downloadable version. From February 2012 until May
2019 a total of 79 issues were published. *Madrid 15M* has played an
important role as a producer of knowledge through the content that
it disseminates, through the events it organizes, through the one-
day sessions and workshops usually held at the EKO social center in
Carabanchel (Madrid), and most of all through its influential ability to
propose topics and debates of the agenda of the organizations based

in Madrid by acting as a connecting node for popular assemblies and collectives that have been linked to the 15M values. At the end of 2019, the newspaper stopped its publication under the identity of the 15M, was renamed *Madrid en Acción*, and went on to be managed by other social collectives. Even though the Covid-19 pandemic froze the project, our sources have made clear their intention to continue with the project.

The media activism of the 15M also included digital formats based on the philosophy of the common good that were directed to collective creation as is the case of the *15Mpedia* created in 2013 with the aim of documenting the movement. The case of *El Binario*, also inspired by the tradition of a free culture and hacktivism (Jordan & Taylor, 2004), was analyzed. Although this is a less known project with a smaller reach, its presence in this research is justified by being one of the projects in which the principles and values of the free culture that highly influenced the shaping of the 15M identity can be easily observed (Fuster, 2012). *El Binario* emerged in 2013 as an initiative of activists that had participated in collectives such as *hacktivistas.net* o *15Hack*, which was a commission formed in the 15M in charge of the developing and updating of the digital tools of the movement. Its objective was "to disseminate information concerning free software and free culture, to provide alternative communication services to proprietary software for social movements and to transmit knowledge for people to learn how to create their own services" (Juanma, personal communication). The collective also created a radio station and regularly publishes articles about free culture, social rights, citizenry, public freedoms, etc. Additionally, *El Binario* is a digital services provider for social movements and carries out very important educational tasks through workshops, talks and debates about internet privacy, data protection, free software tools, and their application to social and political activism strategies. With this aim in mind, they created what is called *Domingos Negros* "a safe environment to share information and tools to learn from everyone about everything" (Juanma, personal communication). This pedagogical action takes form in trainings about different subjects ranging from ethical hacking, programming languages, or digital self-defense, to content creation using Wikipedia, free radio, or the effects of the so-called "Gag Law" (*Ley Mordaza* in Spanish).

All three projects are examples of the pedagogical action of the 15M for the creation of knowledge through media activism. They do not only disseminate content that does not usually have a place in the mainstream media, but also carry out parallel actions aimed at media, cultural, and socio-political training. These educational actions are characterized by their planning, structure, and a remarkable degree of formality despite not coming from formal contexts neither in pedagogical nor in media terms.

WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA

The 15M emerged in the context of the 2008 economic crisis that hit the journalism sector hard. The drop in newspapers sales and the fall in the advertising revenue severely affected newsrooms forcing hundreds of journalists to work in extremely precarious conditions or to even abandon the profession. As pointed out by Vanesa Jiménez, the situation reduced the freedom of journalists and affected the credibility of the mainstream media. Most of our sources agreed that there was a paradigm shift created by the economic, social, and political situation: "During that time the number of people who demanded a different type of journalism increased" (Magda Bandera, personal communication). "There was a need for people to read and to listen to a type of journalism different from the traditional one, one that used a different approach (Javier Bauluz, personal communication) that was expected to be linked to a clear ethical commitment and which implied "placing information at the service of the interests of the society" (Patricia Simón, personal communication).

Even before the 15M, but already in the context of the economic crisis and the distrust of the major media, outlets such as *FronteraD* (2009), *Periodismo Humano* (2010), *Pikara* (2010) or *Cuarto Poder* (2010) had appeared. Those media became job alternatives for journalists that were starting to suffer the effects of the crisis. Their audience continued growing due to the coverage of subjects that did not usually find a place in the mainstream media: human rights, feminism, housing, labor precariousness, free culture, etc. In 2012, four of the most important mainstream media in Spain carried out an ERE (a collective dismissal

mechanism): *El País*, *El Mundo*, *Público* and *Cadena SER* (Barranquero & Meda, 2015). Even when this dramatic situation left hundreds of journalists out of a job, it became an opportunity for innovation and collective creation. As mentioned by Pablo Elorduy and Ma. Ángeles Fernández in their interviews, it was a key aspect for the creation of the self-appointed "independent media". This situation provided a space for journalists to be in contact with social collectives and assemblies where new forms of struggle influenced by the 15M materialized, such as *mareas ciudadanas*. A creative flux that provided the impulse for new journalistic projects was generated. Different cooperatives of former employees were created, amongst them digital TV *TmEx*, *9exili*, or the cooperative *Más Público* –which currently manages the newspaper *La Marea*–. Other journalistic projects were created and although they are not considered community or cooperative media they aim for independence, a critical approach and the empowerment in relation to management of journalists, readers, and subscribers, for instance *eldiario.es*, *Infolibre*, *Mongolia*, and *Ctxt*. This window of opportunity for media creation also favored the reinvention of existing media as was the case of *Diagonal* that after its reinvention became *El Salto* in 2017; or the radio program *Carne Cruda*, which went from being part of the of mainstream radio stations to being broadcast over the Internet in 2014, and financed by the contributions of its listeners. The director and host of *Carne Cruda* points out:

> The independent media that emerged in the light of the 15M are largely created by journalists that became unemployed; journalists without a job that saw that something is happening in the streets. And that was another big lesson from the 15M: take over the word and take over the media (Javier Gallego, personal communication).

Several of those media created synergies and collaborations among themselves in recent years. For instance, on April 2nd, 2020, 16 media got together to ask the government to protect the plurality and the quality of the information, and shortly after created the Independent Media Platform (*Plataforma de medios independientes*) whose origin and organizational system has a "very similar imaginary to that of the 15M"

(Vanesa Jiménez, personal communication). Despite the difficulties derived from being part of the minority media and despite the self-imposed restrictions because of their funding politics, many of them have consolidated by creating a community of subscribers whose role is key to understand their distinctive features (Jordán, 2014; Olmedo Salar & López Villafranca, 2018). Data in Table 2 helps understand the dissemination capacity, support, and number of followers of the three selected media.

According to our sources, as a result of the crisis and the overall impact of the 15M, a more critical public surfaced with a higher level of civic engagement and that is willing to contribute by paying subscription fees or acting as a transmission node of the information, or by playing a role in the production of knowledge. This type of public is defined by Javier Gallego as "an independent media activist". Pablo Elorduy and Vanesa Jiménez consider that the 15M created a critical and engaged mass of people who maintain their commitment by supporting these media. Many of the media share subscribers and users which has created a network of cooperation between the media and the public in a way of doing journalism and building critical citizenry: "our future lies in cultivating a relationship of trust and commitment with our readers, by remaining loyal to our ethical principles and by being mindful of the information" (Magda Bandera, personal communication).

In sum, even though the independent media have unique origins and specific characteristics, they are the result of the same economic, political, and social convulsion that was somehow channeled and expressed by the 15M. For Vanesa Jiménez, Javier Gallego, and Tomás Muñoz, some of the interviewees, these media have been inspired by the assembly logic and horizontality of the 15M. Likewise, according to Patricia Simón and Pablo Elorduy, the independent media have been able to interpret the demands on the part of the citizenry regarding the role of the media in society. Finally, according to Vanesa Jiménez and Magda Bandera, these media have recovered the dignity of independent media committed to public ethics and to the production of knowledge for social transformation.

Media such as *El Salto*, *La Marea* y *Ctxt* go beyond the type of journalism that presents current events, they are committed to present

detailed information by going deeply into a subject or what is known as *slow journalism* (Rosique & Barranquero, 2015). As highlighted by Pablo Elorduy: "one of the functions of the media that has been neglected is the promotion of the changes of the time regarding certain issues, to plant the seeds that will eventually germinate and at some point become public policies". To achieve that aim their journalistic actions can be seen as a type of "long-term pedagogy" that introduces new subjects and approaches that allow "the opening of new paths alternative to the official ones, providing different perspectives, giving room to additional debates and other ways to deal with issues in the long term, not looking to create immediate transformation but long-term change" (Pablo Elorduy). Moreover, these media have enriched their pedagogical dimension for the production and dissemination of knowledge by including courses and training activities as part of their social mission. These training programs include communicative learning from a critical perspective as well as other subjects that are important to the community and are characterized by a structured didactic planning and a very high level of formality. Table 3 compiles the training activities carried out by *La Marea*, *El Salto* y *Ctxt* between 2020 and 2021.

TABLE 3

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY
LA MAREA, *EL SALTO* AND *CTXT* BETWEEN 2020 AND 2021

Media	Educational Activities
La Marea	Journalism with a focus on gender; journalism with a focus on human rights; consumption as a political act; climate crisis.
El Salto	Journalism and health; critical and anti-racist journalism; journalism and migration; journalism and economics; podcast production workshop.
Ctxt	Cultural studies: a civic necessity; LGBT realities in the face of the new normal; art criticism laboratory; climate crisis; School/Workshop of Journalism in Context.

Source: The authors.

Through these educational activities, the independent media strengthen their civic commitment, forge alliances with the civil society and provide knowledge and tools to shape engaged and critical citizens.

CONCLUSION

The 15M was a movement oriented towards the creation of cultural spaces and tools to promote the empowerment of the citizenry and of the democracy. In this context, the media had a key role in the battle for cultural hegemony and became a tool of pedagogical action for the production and transmission of knowledge. This research intended to demonstrate the pedagogical action for the production of knowledge that has been materialized and channeled through the creation of a media typology that has been called "own media". Likewise, the windows of opportunity opened by the movement and the likelihood of its influence in the emergence of the so-called "independent media" have been explored.

Even though every social movement produces breakthroughs that differentiate them from previous movements, all of them are part of traditions of struggle and political cultures through which their identities and future actions are built. In that sense, the 15M is the direct heir of the media activism culture that was shaped by alter-globalization mobilizations and incipient projects of cyberactivism and counterinformation that were developed in Spain in the mid-90s. The cultural knowledge accumulated through preceding social movements and the cultural knowledge of the 15M is highlighted. As a result, some important pre-existent projects and activist media –for instance *La Directa*, *Diagonal-El Salto*, or *Carne Cruda*– expanded their impact capacity and social penetration level. Consequently, media activism gained force and intensified its influence.

The pedagogical action of the 15M and its capacity for the production of knowledge became apparent mainly through the creation of their own media such as *Ágora Sol Radio*, *Madrid 15M* and *El Binario*. These media are characterized by the orientation of the information at the empowering of the citizens, the implementation of parallel educational and cultural projects, and the creation of forums for meeting and mutual support among collectives.

Moreover, the influence of the 15M on the creation of new media that arose from the context of the economic crisis as a response to the rupture caused by a loss of trust on the mainstream media was researched, which opened a window of opportunity for media creation that resulted in the emergence of projects such as *El Salto*, *La Marea* o *Ctxt*. We have argued that the pedagogical action of these independent media is developed through their renewal of the ways of doing journalism –by means of the inclusion in the agenda of new topics of social interest, and by practicing a journalism more focused on the long term and on in-depth analysis–, and through educational and cultural projects. In addition, this work has highlighted the importance of the community of followers and subscribers that support and provide financing to these media, a community that surfaced as part of the media paradigm shift and whose creation was influenced by the pedagogical action of the 15M.

This paper intended to demonstrate the empirical evidence of the legacy of the 15M on social communication as well as on the creation of the independent media. Likewise, the role of the social movements in the public debate and the need to strengthen a journalism committed to democracy and civic values has been highlighted. Even though this work is an early approach to the study of the relationships and the influence that connect media activism and the pedagogical dimension of a social movement to the journalistic action of the independent media, it intends to open interdisciplinary avenues of research that allow advancement in the study of the relationships between communication, social movements, and pedagogical processes for the production of knowledge.

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