VICTIMS OF (THE) EXCEPTION: INTERVENTIONS OF THE 15M MOVEMENT IN THE POWER DYNAMICS OF THE SPANISH CRISIS (2008-2015)

Azahara Palomeque Recio
Princeton University

Abstract || Based on the Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and sovereignty, this article analyzes the intervention of modes of ruling based on the sovereign control of the body in the current democratic context of the Spanish financial crisis. I argue that some discourses produced by protest movements like 15M and the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages shed light on the shared experience of a "state of exception" which, far from producing "bare lives" in the Agambian sense, allows for the transformation of destitution into political agency. In this sense, the multiplicity of emerging voices questions the hegemonic frame of public representation and recognition, and reformulates the category of "victim" as a tool for political struggle.

Keywords || 15M | Spanish crisis | Sovereignty | Governmentality | Exception | Victim

0. Introduction

In the context of the temporality of the Spanish crisis (2008-2015), there took place discursive civic demonstrations which interacted with the forms of power that predominate in the current political and financial panorama. The constant references to infiltrated "dictatorships" of politicians and bankers, the endless search for those responsible for the crisis and the questioning of the current democratic apparatus have generated a public debate about the forms of contemporary biopower that combine parliamentarism with "exceptional" measures of an anti-democratic nature. Taking as a point of departure the Foucauldian ideas of governmentality and sovereignty, this paper analyses the convergence of both concepts in the current Spanish context, as well as the civic response they provoke in the frame of contemporary representation. Through the analysis of written stories produced in relation to protest movements like 15M, these pages seek to shed light on the experiences of active citizens who question institutional and economic power, generate their own power and at the same time fight for self-representation within the frame of the execution of these powers. In this sense, I suggest that there are two categories which regulate the definition of citizens as subjects of the crisis: firstly, an awareness of "precarious life", a concept arising from shared vulnerability (Judith Butler); and secondly, the ability to transform this precariousness into new avenues of political agency. Finally, I propose that the multiple emerging voices of protest activate mechanisms of perception of governmental and sovereign dynamics of power, reformulating, in the current Spanish panorama, the category of "victim" as a tool for collective action.

1. Governmentality and sovereignty: power conceptualised

One of the reflections gathered in the book *Las voces del 15M* states the following:

> El enemigo del siglo XXI – no tiene bigote, no es de carne y hueso ni tiene intenciones manifiestas. Se trata de una dictadura infiltrada en la vida de todos, seductora, que se ha apoderado de las cúpulas de la comunicación y que juega con nuestro miedo a perder lo poco que nos queda mientras nos roba: es la dictadura de los mercados y las élites que la rodean. (Bou Linares, 2011: 34-35)

This quotation illuminates one of the problems confronted by the social and protest movements against the crisis in Spain (and in other countries). It can be defined as the attempt to locate the "culprits" of the prevailing situation of national precariousness, to identify in a precise way a power which, although vaguely situated in "markets and elites", remains a dictatorship that cannot be located. Amador

Fernández Savater, in the same collection of narratives, mentions the impossibility of exercising, within the political framework of the nation-state, any type of control over the effects of a globalised economy. "Lo que tal vez no sabemos aún es cómo hacer directamente una política contra algo tan abstracto y anónimo como el mercado, aunque sea lo más concreto de nuestra vida diaria" (Bou Linares, 2011: 67).

The market and current democratic framework appear to be the continuous targets of the most repeated accusations, the objects of civic denunciation and protest. This does not lessen the extent of the search for responsibilities in institutions outside the national political paradigm. Among them is the international financial conglomerate, namely, the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the Central European Bank. A triumvirate known as the "Troika", it has in countries like Portugal been directly charged with the austerity measures adopted by the government. What is undeniable is the expression of a shared malaise which is concretised in the forms of dialogue and questioning of institutional power by citizens in crisis, specifically where methods of government believed to be obsolete – being totalitarian – are combined with democratic practices. This leads to declarations such as "la dictadura no es sólo unipersonal" (Bou Linares, 2011: 17-18). On the other hand, the debate that seeks to explain the political taxonomy of the current system of government incorporates a reformulation of the role played by violence in contemporary societies – "Violencia es cobrar 600 Euros" (Cabal, 2011: 145) – and the same happens with an inquiry into the potential to kill of this violence, characterising modern capitalism as a sort of "genocidio silencioso"' in the words of Pablo Iglesias Turrion (Cabal, 2011: 95).

These claims make explicit the contradictions of a parliamentarism which, pierced by the neoliberal dynamics of postcapitalist societies, shows dictatorial aspects without preventing the exercise of power from remaining multiple and undecipherable. In Foucault's characterisation of power, the philosopher distinguishes between a first medieval stage in which the sovereign government has unlimited power to put a subject to death, and a second historical period – beginning in the 16th century and increasingly continuously, especially from the 18th century – that is incarnated in the management, classification, optimisation and regulation of life in the form of biopower. In other words, "the old power of death that symbolised sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life." Rather than functioning as a protector of life, biopower in its exercise of control makes invisible the processes which end life, while at the same time establishing the necessary mechanisms for its termination. The consideration of politics as the domain in which biopower is executed gives rise to

the term "biopolitics", which is linked in its origin to the development of capitalism (Foucault, 2010: 258-263). Finally, power manifests itself through techniques which exercise control over bodies – called "subjects" – moulding them and constructing them. From this emerges the multiple conception of the above-mentioned power, which is not concretely individualised in any institution or state apparatus, but is still present in them and in all those instruments of regulation, subjection and, ultimately, subjectivisation of individuals (Foucault, 2010: 181-206).

From this first exploration of the corpus of Foucauldian theory and the discourses of the protest movement that question the present-day politico-economic mechanism, it can be argued that, at different times and in different formats, the public debate about the legality and legitimacy of the system reveals a civic understanding of power as biopolitical and disciplinary: this understanding is already present in the first placards of the 15 May 2011 demonstrations and also occupies the subsequent reflections of some protagonists in the volume *Las voces del 15M:* "la clave del 15M es una insurrección del cuerpo-máquina contra la destrucción de las condiciones biopolíticas de la democracia que suponen las políticas de austeridad" (Universidad Nómada, 2012: 60).

The historical substitution which seems to take place in the shifting of sovereign power to biopower, together with the subtle intersection between both in relation to the management of the ability to inflict death, has brought Foucault to a wider problematisation of the biopolitical reach of the contemporary methods of government in the state, crystallised in his concept of "governmentality". According to the philosopher, there is in this idea a convergence of numerous mechanisms – political, economic, institutional, and administrative – for the management of the population, where government, discipline and sovereignty create a type of triangle that neither exhausts nor replaces the old means of social control in our age (2003: 243-244). Judith Butler has deepened the implications of governmentality to define the term as that type of power which, centred on the production, maintenance and regulation of individuals, also administrates the circulation of goods in as far as, in accordance with biopower, these maintain or limit the life of the people. The relevance of governmentality is located in the way it channels its practices, especially in the framework of juridical law. "Governmentality operates through policies and departments, through managerial and bureaucratic institutions, through the law, when the law is understood a "a set of tactics", and through forms of state power, although not exclusively" (Butler, 2004: 52). The state, Butler later clarifies, is not conceived of as unified power but rather as an open field of power in which myriad agents intervene and participate. As a result of the multiplicity of

forms acquired by power to manifest itself, the tactics of government crystallise in a "diffuse" way (2004: 52). The representational obstacle that emerges from the "infiltrated" dictatorship named in *Las Voces* – i.e., from an invisibility of the power that prevents its identification – corresponds to governmental dynamics in the sense Butler gives to the concept, which also enables us to understand the heterogeneous search for "culprits" of the crisis by 15M.

The initial programme of the 15M movement, from within a logic of assembly with horizontal participation, has moved beyond its initial set of demands and diversified its objectives and requests to directly contest the multiplication of disciplinary channels in which power capillarises. Specifically, the initial set of proposals compiled by the Sol Encampment in the early days of the movement demanded the fulfilment of rights to shelter, education and public health set out in the Constitution, a series of financial control mechanisms over banks and political parties, as well as a shift in the practices, procedures and, consequently, the definition of democracy. Among these is emphasised the "efectiva separación de poderes ejecutivo, legislativo y judicial" (Cabal, 2011: 11-16). Through the interiorisation of the mechanisms implicit in the logic of governmentality, it is similarly possible to interpret the different strategies in which the fight against the crisis has manifested itself from the phenomenon of the *Mareas* (citizen groups related to issues of labour, gender and migration that demand fulfilment of institutional claims related to their group identity) to neighbourhood associations and the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH).

On the other hand, the analytical framework of governmentality is illuminating when trying to locate the causes of explicit pacifism in the large majority of protest inititatives that have taken place during the crisis in Spain, as indicated in the motto taken up by Iglesias: "sin violencia somos más" (Cabal, 2011: 98). Given a conception of power as disciplinary and diffuse, unclassifiable and indiscernible from its biopolitical horizon of action, whose capacity for killing has been delegated among a multitude of agents at the service of both the state and the economy, citizens respond with diverse strategies that contest each of the different governmental tactics and modes of action from a position of non-violence. With no single figure of power to eliminate – whose presence in other times of instability would have led to assassination – the subjects of the crisis organise themselves biopolitically and argue in the same language as their oppressors. In other words, they allude to the capacity of power to manage, regulate and limit life (bio), as already mentioned. Nevertheless, the references to the dictatorial component of the democratic order in the discursive corpus of 15M and other similar movements give social intervention a sovereign power which needs explaining in more detail.

Sovereignty has traditionally been theorised as a premodern method of unified and univocal power, recognisable, in the medieval framework given by Foucault, in that it combines the legitimacy of state and law, being a self-referential power (Butler, 2004: 53). However, at the current heart of governmentality, sovereignty has been conceived of, not necessarily as the historical precedent of the contemporary era, but as a series of practices or tactics for managing the bodies inserted into the operational dynamics of governmentality. It crystallises mainly in the act of the suspension of law or in the adjustment of the latter for its own ends. As Butler says, "[it] contorts law to its own uses" (2004: 55). In this sense, governmentality and sovereignty are given simultaneous form, converging in the administration (detention, classification, cataloguing) of bodies, creating a sense of historical anachronism which can be seen in the application of current methods of repression, often in relation to the historical right to kill, but in a democratic era.

In the Spanish case, the references to the "dictadura" of "politicos y banqueros" or the frequent presence of narratives which invoke the memory of the civil war or Francoist dictatorship, even labelling the present situation as a "golpe de estado" (Medialdea García et al., 2011: epigraph), can be seen as explicit references to the existence of both sovereign power and governmentality in the context of the Spanish crisis. As argued by the Platform for People Affected by Mortgage, the methods used in recent times by the police in demonstrations and evictions (arbitrary arrests, physical abuse, etc.) has lead to a perception of the current climate in Spain as a "una deriva autoritaria y peligrosa más propia de otras épocas" (Colau and Alemany, 2012: 133). The police and state security forces, along with officials, bureaucrats, bank employees and others, belong to the multiple network of "pequeños soberanos" given the power to decide the life and death of a person once sovereign practices, being inserted into the framework of governmentality, are broken up into a series of administrative powers which can be found, up to a certain point, outside the state apparatus, although still in relationship with it (Butler, 2044: 55).

Within the analytical framework outlined up to now we might include the myriad sovereign interventions envisioned and questioned by 15M in the Spain of the crisis, as well as by other social movements of different importance. The suspension of the characteristic law of sovereignty has perhaps not been subject to as much intervention as its other aspect: the approval of a series of legal methods which could be considered modifications or contortions of the law, avoiding the usual procedures, often with the goal of public repression. The August 2011 Constitutional reform, which establishes a limit for the state budget, has been characterised as part of the democratic measures which, as they were not widely discussed in advance

of their approval, "dan rango legal a dicha dictadura" (Medialdea García et al., 2011: 62) – to the dictatorship of the markets. However, the regulation that has perhaps been most criticised by protest movements is the Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana (Civil Security Law), also known as the *Ley Mordaza* (gagging law) or "anti-15M law" because it widens the range of protest activities (demonstrations, assemblies, dissemination of related content online) that can be penalised with large fines. In addition to the opposition displayed by certain sectors of 15M, not only against this law, but also against the prohibition of protests that question it, the regulation has been labelled as a "law of exception" by some judges (Blanco, 2014).

From the demonstrated submission of the juridical framework to sovereign logic, it is necessary to ask what power the law has as such and how it is executed in the current biopolitical horizon. According to Judith Butler, governmentality can be understood as an extralegal political and discursive field that turns law into a tactic, and sovereignty into an extralegal authority which institutes or forces the application of this law. The "extralegality" does not necessarily imply illegality but can be related, rather, to Butler's label of "state of emergency" (2004: 60-61, and the critic Germán Labrador's denomination of a "temporalidad de excepción" (2012: 557) to refer to the wide spectrum of the Spanish crisis. Both are, implicitly or explicitly in dialogue with the philosopher Giorgio Agamben and his writing about the "state of exception", a political logic which emerges from interaction with sovereign power. As Butler indicates, for Agamben sovereignty is revealed when it is decided what does or does not configure exceptionalism in a given case, disabling or modifying the law in service of it, resulting in the creation of a "paralegal" universe, i.e., "a law that is no law […] fully discretionary, even arbitrary" (Butler, 2004: 62).

The Italian thinker highlights that, while the measure was originally conceived of as an urgent measure to be applied only occasionally, the state of exception became generalised in the European interwar period and has become permanent in our time, becoming "una de las prácticas esenciales de los Estados contemporáneos, incluidos los democráticos" (Agamben, 2004: 11). Among the diverse examples he mentions, one case of state exceptionality is the de facto absence of the division of powers that is sometimes displayed when legal decrees are made by the executive (2004: 18). However, in order to specifically characterise the current situation in Spain (2008-2015) as a "state of exception", it is necessary to emphasise that the more restrictive measures emerge from circumstances of perceived national crisis and that, while these crises were initially associated with armed conflicts, they have gradually been equated with or substituted by times of economic instability. The "asimilación

implícita entre guerra y economía", which takes place at a discursive level, was powerfully displayed in the US politics of the New Deal, destined to reactivate the economy after the 1929 crash (2004: 25-37). With these historical circumstances in mind, it is not strange that certain critical analyses conceptualise the difficulties arising from the temporality of the Spanish crisis as an "estado de control social policíaco" or "guerra total" (Roitman, 2012: 24-26) as dissidents are criminalised, made illegal and pursued through practices that invoke the venal violence of sovereign power. Many of the narratives emerging around the Spanish crisis are thus constructed through the production of an analogy between economy and conflict, between the application of harsh austerity measures and financial cuts in social services and the confrontations between different elements of the social fabric, against which the state formulates pleas "en pro de la seguridad" (Roitman, 2012: 22).

The conceptualisation of the state of exception is debated in specialised circles in terms of its oscillation between law and politics (Agamben, 2004: 9). Given the perception of exceptionality established by the crisis, the narratives produced around 15M and other groupings show a desire to conceptualise the present moment through the investigation of a new definition of the current system of government. While Roitman talks of rescuing politics through these circles, Manuel Castells synthesises the legacy of the protest movements into a single objective: the search for a new meaning for democracy (2012: 232). On the other hand, the attention to the legal frameworks within which this system is located has given place to a civil resistance based on the appeal, knowledge and use of the law, which has been at the disposal the public since the camps in Plaza del Sol in May 2011. This included the legal advice of "abogados variados" (Bou Linares, 2011: 22) and publications like the PAH manual that explains in detail the legal and administrative protections of people at risk of eviction (Colau and Alemany, 2012: 124), as well as the numerous websites of civil groups that offer related information. With the knowledge of the extra- or paralegal tactics used by sovereign intervention, a critical citizenship makes use of the law as governmental strategy for contestation and dissent in the period of exception. From here, we can ask ourselves what type of subjectivities the temporality of the Spanish crisis constructs in the civic substrate and in what manner its discourses invade the current regime of visibility.

2. Victims of (the) exception

In the analysed framework of the state of exception, the capacity for human action remains limited by the development of sovereign practices which abolish or distort the law, leading to the creation

of an unprotected being which Agamben has called *homo sacer*: a person that can be murdered without the act being considered as homicide or sacrifice, that is, not judgeable or punishable by human or divine law. In other words, "what is captured in the sovereign ban is a human victim who may be killed but not sacrificed: *homo sacer*", whose existence has been called "bare life" (1998: 82-83). This figure has been used by Judith Butler to analyse the precarisation of some subjects in different historical contexts, and to investigate through the universal notion of "vulnerability" the degree of humanisation in the field of representation accorded to those individuals subject to the dynamics of sovereign control. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the author constructs a notion of vulnerability through its relationship with the subject's constitutive loss, unleashing a process of collective pain that consequently transforms each person (2004: 20-22). Freud has defined pain as "the reaction to the loss of a loved one or an equivalent abstraction: homeland, liberty, the ideal, etc.", which provokes a generalised decline in a subject who, despite this process, does not repress the loss or lose their self-love (1973: 2091-2092). For her part, Butler emphasises the historical and social character of human defencelessness and argues for the importance of a collective processing of this state with respect to those individuals "in social movements who have undergone innumerable losses" (2004: 28).

Starting from the loss inherent in the individual, the power of the vulnerability of each person lies, for Butler, in the possibility of calling for the formation of a political community through a precariousness which is articulated in terms of corporeality, the body being understood as socially constituted in relation to the other, whether through an affective tie or exposure to violence. The connection with the vulnerable other gives rise to a feeling of affliction, as a principle of pain, with the potential to form a political community founded in ethical or affective principles which, while encompassing passion or anger, acquire greater renown in affliction, in as much as the latter means an identification with this very suffering (2004: 22-30). Nevertheless, the moment capable of assembling a politically mobilised collective will arrive only through a conversion of suffering into discourse, which for Butler also constitutes the creation of the sufferer. That is, the transformation of vulnerability – from which collective affliction arises – into discourse implicates its insertion into the field of representation, which defines in itself the necessary process of subjectivisation for bodies to become human. If we consider that vulnerability is an indispensable condition for delimiting the human (2004: 43), then the failure to make it visible means that bodies – always exposed to violence and configured in loss – will become entities which are not recognisable or recognised, spectral: "the derealization of the 'Other' means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral" (2004: 33-34). The task that the media – as agents in the current regime of visibility – must perform, according

to the reading of Butler, consists in representing the vulnerability of bodies, giving them a degree of humanisation which prevents their spectrality and the propagation of violence on them.

Keeping in mind the relevance of discourse as a tool of subjectivisation, in order to elucidate the construction of the subjects of the crisis by the protest movements in the frame of Spanish representation, it is necessary to mention the multiplication of channels of information diffusion, among them social networks. This phenomenon has enabled a shift in the media paradigm, through which movements like 15M have been able to multiply their voices, as explained in the collective book *Tecnopolítca, internet y r-evoluciones* (Alcazan *et al.*, 2012) The opening up of new forms of narration outside the great media conglomerates has an impact on the political administration of common vulnerability through which communities are created. If, as McLuhan argues, "the medium is the message", it is necessary to allude to the transformation that took place in the discursive construction of "precarious lives" due to the existence of new counter-hegemonic channels which, in some cases, anticipated the themes later echoed in traditional media. Although this work will limit itself to an analysis of narrations collected in books, they are open to extensive sharing due to the increase of the copy-left as well as to their availability in digital format.

Agamben's theorisation of "bare life" as representative of the state of exception, and Butler's argument about the vulnerability of bodies emphasise the particularities of an existence for death, condemned to the sovereign future inserted in biopolitical circumstances. Loss or dispossession (of house, of dignity) have been reformulated by the PAH as forms of fostering the formation of communities fundamentally based on the vulnerable condition of each of their members. In its writings, the organisation ensures an "identification with the victims", implicitly invoking an emotional and affective bond with them which constitutes the principal motive for their recognition. Affectation, present in the terminology used by the collective, is for Amador Fernández Savater a "sentir que tu vida no puede continuar igual, que algo pasa y que as de hacer algo con eso que ocurre y te ocurre", and this "something" is pierced with a preoccupation for the other, "porque sólo con ellos podemos encontrar respuestas" (2011). According to this process of bonding with the suffering of others, the category of "victim" employed by the PAH refers, in general terms, to those subjects that have lost or are in the process of losing their homes. But it also alludes to those who have experienced some kind of economic injustice in the context of the crisis (Colau and Alemany, 2012: 14-23), giving rise to an affective bond constructed from loss. The corporal dimension of the vulnerability of the subjects of the crisis in the biopolitical framework reaches its zenith in the intersection of personal narratives that invoke the crisis as a "corpus sintomático"

revealed in bodies through the lens of depression, illness or suicide attempts (Colau and Alemany, 2012: 97-98).

The ability of sovereign power to inflict death and, as a result, the condition of *homo sacer*, whose homicide is not punishable, have been explored in an article by Germán Labrador, who draws a map of the suicides produced in the temporality of the crisis through the theorisation of "historias de vida" of each lifeless body. If the experience of these bodies corresponds to those whose "bare life" has become obvious through sovereign negation, Labrador underlines the impulse for political mobilisation provoked by the dead when their biographies, inserted into a media framework which constructs them as results of historical difficulties, are capable of creating "un puente empático entre su receptor último y la vida de su productor, done, al tiempo, se reunifican *una vida que no es como la mía y una vida que sí lo es*" (2012: 564-66; emphasis in the original). The affective tie between the general public and the protagonist of the narrative is produced through an identification of the former with the latter that overcomes any differences that might divide them. Because of this, for Labrador the history of life informs a "tecnología de empoderamiento" through the differentiation between blaming and victimisation, according to which the latter "funcionaría como una estrategia contrahegemóica" (2012: 563). Lives made for death, in accordance with the specified sovereign dynamics that give rise to the present state of exception in Spain, can be considered as subjectivities with the potential for mobilisation, in as much as their stories are able to engender collective action through their insertion into the current frameworks of representation and recognition. If, as Iglesias argues, it was sufficient for 15M to "haber dado el salto del dolor al conocimiento" (Bou Linares, 2011: 92), this knowledge will be mediated by the passage of suffering through affective networks which, after having been transformed into political communities, give rise to the compression of the historical circumstances in which they develop.

In accordance with the ability for community construction from an affective or empathetic logic capable of assembling subjects, the representation of precarious lives in the framework of the current crisis in Spain has been characterised to emphasise the progressive acquisition of political agency. This links the "victim" with protagonism in the historical task and represents the victim's vulnerable condition as supporting their potential for action. The mobilisation of numerous civic organisations which, like the PAH, have taken charge of managing the common vulnerability of those affected, has led to a discursive displacement in the current system of representation of a concept – "victim". This had mostly been employed in order to refer to the dead republicans of the Civil War in the context of the debates surrounding the Recuperation of Historical Memory. The

critic Ángel Loureiro has emphasised how the creation of an affective tie with the victims of the war has given rise to a vision of "historia como agravio" which, at times, generates a facile sentimentalism from which to "delimitar o incluso eliminar la reflexión" (2008: 24). In face of this tendency, the new "victims" of the crisis have rejected their condition of "bare life", making extensive use of the different political techniques implied in the logic of governmentality. From an understanding of power as multiple and anonymous, mechanisms of civic resistance have been created which, for the execution of their purposes, specifically make use of the different tactics of biopolitical control. A paradigmatic case is offered by the movement Anonymous, whose framework of action uses the same practices of invisibility and anonymity that characterise the "dictadura infiltrada" of the markets. The masks associated with the collective and used in the demonstrations of 15M and other protest movements make visible the unidentifiable power that hides behind the agency of the citizens, while covering the faces of those who might be criminalised.

The role of 15M and its representation of human vulnerability has been strongly criticised by a type of activism which identifies victimisation with dispossession and inaction. Moisés Mato has condemned the lack of attention accorded by 15M to the most underprivileged groups in the social scale, arguing that "el problema de los empobrecidos, ni siquiera aparece en las reivinidcaciones fundamentales" (Mato, 2011: 21). Effectively, in the material related to protest movements that has been collected for this paper, the representation of poor people as lives made for death within the exceptionalism of the crisis has been linked solely to the capacity for action of those groups. While victims can collectively organise themselves through the PAH to avoid the loss of their homes, some of 15M's texts proclaim a general dispossession, blurring the attention to the most needy, in so far as the crisis affects a majority with the potential to mobilise.

Carlos Taibo affirms the communitary character of the "victim" as one generated by economic currents, while also identifying four paradigmatic sectors of Spanish "misery": the young, as they make up the largest group of unemployed; women because of gender inequality in the labour market; immigrants, and the elderly (Cabal, 2011: 127-129). This displacement of the concept from macroeconomic and political dynamics to the situation of concrete groups indicates an attention to the generalised framework of the crisis, in which poverty does not have a predominant place because it is inserted into the wider logics of power from where it can be contested. In this sense, even groups which are legally disadvantaged, such as undocumented immigrants, have political agency in the context of the crisis. Boaventura de Sousa Santos has characterised the illegal immigrant as a subject that personifies the "retorno" of colonial dynamics of power that correspond with

a logic of "apropiación/violencia". De Sousa Santos points to the presence of colonial modes of oppression in metropolitan Western societies in an age – the contemporary one – governed by the "state of exception", where the distinction between "Old" and "New" has been erased (2007: 55-57). Maybe because of the non-existence of this binary, the administration of civic precariousness within the the scope of social movements has generated dynamics of inclusion and collective participation between Spaniards and illegal immigrants; for example, citizens bringing racist raids to a standstill or the action of the Brigadas Vecinales de Observación de Derechos Humanos (Neighbourhood Brigades for the Observation of Human Rights) (Gutiérrez, 2013).

In the collection *Democracia distribuida,* various voices debate the possible intervention of social movements like 15M in the process of the country's impoverishment, and one of them concludes that "la capacidad de percutir en el ámbito institucional y contra las medidas que saldrán adelante es fundamental" (Universidad Nómada, 2012: 99). This fact implies that the attention directed to the vulnerability of citizens in crisis passes through an active intervention in the governmental and sovereign articulation of the state in the current temporality of exception. If, as Foucault declares, governmentality constitutes "the only real space for political struggle" (2003: 245) the protests and actions of 15M and other similar movements, which represent the aforementioned logic of power that originates in collective mobilisation, have embraced the category of victim as a source of political dissent and rearticulation of communitary forms of resistance. Maybe for this reason, there has emerged among certain voices a visceral rejection of that which is not considered anti-establishment activity, i.e. of "el pathos victimista" (Universidad Nómada, 2012: 77), seen as a mechanism of demobilisation and an affective appeal to an affliction that is detached from history.

From the analysed texts, it is possible to affirm that, within the discursive framework of 15M and other similar associations and groups, the attention to the victims of the crisis has been produced in the context of a conceptualisation of "bare life" that refers to the consideration of the sovereign and governmental dynamics of power characterised by the institution of the permanent state of exception in the framework of the temporality of the Spanish crisis. If there is an allusion to common vulnerability in the texts, this is done in connection with an allocation of political agency to its subjects, seen from their potential for organisation and promotion of communities from which they question the context of biopolitical control into which their bodies are inserted. Consequently, the "victim" composes the affective category from which to interrogate the generalised imposition of law as a sovereign strategy; in other words, it is the entity that can transform a "vida para la muerte" into another "para la

gestión de la vida".. Finally, the appeals to sovereign interventions of power conceived from an anachronism – the "return" of the Francoist dictatorship or its "repetition" – generate dynamics of mobilisation which, in summoning totalitarian memories, gain the capacity for intervention and recognition through their representation of the new system of visibility configured by the counter-hegemonic media channels of the crisis.

452ºF. #15 (2016) 37-53.

Victims of (the) Exception: Interventions of the 15M Movement in the Power Dynamics of the Spanish Crisis (2008-2015) - Azahara Palomeque Recio

51

Works cited

AGAMBEN, G. (1998): Homo Sacer. *Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Heller-Roazen, D. (trad.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

AGAMBEN, G. (2004): *Estado de Excepción.* Homo Sacer *II, 1.* Gimeno Cuspinera, A. (trad.). Valencia: Pre-Textos. BLANCO, T. (2014): «Todas las claves de la polémica Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana», *El Economista,* <http://www.eleconomista.es/legislacion/noticias/ 5381084/12/13/Todas-las-claves-de-la-polemica-Ley-de-Seguridad-Ciudadana.html#. Kku8GgfLjSDw39X>, [29/09/2015].

BUTLER, J. (2004): *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Nueva York y Londres: Verso.

CASTELLS, M. (2012): *Redes de indignación y esperanza. Los movimientos sociales en la era de internet*. Hernández, M. (trad.). Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

COLAU, A. y ALEMANY, A. (2012): *Vidas hipotecadas. De la burbuja inmobiliaria al derecho a la vivienda*, Barcelona: Cuadrilátero de Libros, Angle Editorial.

FERNÁNDEZ SAVATER, A. (2011): «El arte de esfumarse; crisis e implosión de la cultura consensual en España», *El estado mental*, 1.

FOUCAULT, M. (2003): *The Essential Foucault.* Rabinow, P. y Rose, N. (eds.). Nueva York y Londres: The New Press.

FOUCAULT, M. (2010): *The Foucault Reader.* Rabinow, P. (ed.). Nueva York: Vintage.

FREUD, S. (1973): *Obras Completas*, Vol. II. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva.

GUTIÉRREZ, B. (2013): «La España en red protege a sus inmigrantes», *20 Minutos*, <http:// blogs.20minutos.es/codigo-abierto/2013/01/19/la-espana-en-red protege-a-sus-inmigrantes>*,* [06/05/2016].

LOUREIRO, Á. (2008): «Argumentos patéticos. Historia y memoria de la Guerra Civil», *Claves de Razón Práctica*, 186, 18-25.

MATO, M. (2011): *La indignación en la encrucijada*. Madrid: Espantapájaros Ediciones.

LABRADOR, G. (2012): «Las vidas *subprime*: la circulación de historias de vida como tecnologías de imaginación política en la crisis española (2007-2012)», *Hispanic Review,* 4, 557-581.

ROITMAN ROSENMANN, M. (2012): *Los indignados. El rescate de la política*, Madrid: Akal.

SOUSA SANTOS, B. (2007): «Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges», *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 30. 1, 45-89.

VV. AA. (2011*a*): *¡Indignados! 15M*. Cabal, F. (ed.). Madrid: Mandala Ediciones.

VV. AA. (2011*b*): *Las voces del 15M*, Barcelona: Los Libros del Lince.

VV. AA. (2011*c*): *Quiénes son los mercados y cómo nos gobiernan. 11 Respuestas para entender la crisis.* Medialdea García, B. (coord.). Barcelona: Icaria Editorial.

VV. AA. (2012*a*): *Democracia distribuida. Miradas de la Universidad Nómada al 15M,* N. p: Universidad Nómada.

VV. AA. (2012*b*): *Tecnopolítica, internet y revoluciones. Sobre la centralidad de redes digitales en el 15M,* Barcelona: Icaria Editorial.

VV. AA. (2013): «Comunicado #14D contra la Ley Mordaza», *15m Pamplona*, <http://15mpamplona. org/2013/12/10/comunicado-14d-contra-la-ley-mordaza/>, [01/15/2014].