Online research, new languages and symbolism of digital activism: A systematic review

Investigación en red, nuevos lenguajes y simbologías del activismo digital: Una revisión sistemática

🆔 Dr. Julio Rodríguez-Suárez. Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Oviedo (Spain) (rodriguezsjulio@uniovi.es) (https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4373-8905)

🆔 Lorena Morán-Neches. Educator, European Anti-Poverty Network - EAPN, Asturias (Spain) (moranecheslorena@gmail.com) (https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1089-3378)

🆔 Dr. Juan-Bautista Herrero-Olaizola. Full Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Oviedo (Spain) (olaizola@uniovi.es) (https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0146-2464)

ABSTRACT

In recent years, digital networks have given rise to new spaces for socialization, action and protest, favouring the emergence of new forms of social participation that generate their own languages and new symbolic strategies. In order to analyze online mobilization within the Spanish context and in order to explore these realities in more depth, a systematic review of empirical articles with their own methodology was carried out. It includes those manuscripts published over the last decade by Spanish Sociology journals with the highest impact factor. After identifying 101 general studies that met the initial inclusion criteria, 34 were chosen whose subject of study included online social mobilization and/or used virtual ethnography as a research technique. The final sample for analysis was drawn from these, comprising the 16 publications that addressed this issue as the central topic. Among the main results obtained we have the scarcity of publications on the virtual dimension of social mobilization, as well as the growing use and adaptation of virtual ethnography as a research methodology for studying this field of knowledge. Likewise, the potential of the Internet to amplify the impact of demands, the need to break the online-offline dichotomy, the creation of new narratives and the transformation of the symbolic production of contemporary social movements are noteworthy.

RESUMEN

En los últimos años, las redes digitales han dado lugar a nuevos espacios de socialización, acción y protesta, favoreciendo la aparición de nuevas formas de participación social que generan lenguajes propios y nuevas estrategias simbólicas. A fin de analizar la movilización online en el contexto español y de profundizar en estas realidades, se ha llevado a cabo una revisión sistemática de los artículos empíricos, con metodología propia, publicados en la última década por las revistas españolas de Sociología de mayor índice de impacto. Tras identificar 101 estudios generales que cumplían los criterios de inclusión iniciales, se seleccionaron los 34 que tenían entre su objeto de estudio la movilización social online y/o utilizaban la etnografía virtual como técnica de investigación; de ellos se derivó la muestra de análisis final, compuesta por los 16 que abordaban esta cuestión de forma central. Entre los principales resultados obtenidos se encuentra la escasez de publicaciones sobre la dimensión virtual de la movilización, así como el creciente uso y adecuación de la etnografía virtual como metodología de investigación para el estudio de este campo de conocimiento. Así mismo, destaca la potencialidad de la red para ampliar el impacto de las reivindicaciones, la necesidad de romper la dicotomía online-offline, la creación de nuevas narrativas y la transformación de la producción simbólica de los movimientos sociales contemporáneos.

KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Social mobilization, virtual communities, cyberactivism, online participation, digital communication, scientific journals.
Movilización social, comunidades virtuales, ciber activismo, participación online, comunicación digital, revistas científicas.

1. Introduction

Social mobilization has been normalized in contemporary society, to the extent that some authors call it the "society of movements" or the "society of collective behaviour" (Javaloy, 2003). Although all forms of social action and mobilization aim to transform reality through collective participation, each context, each conflict and each initial situation are different, with a large diversity in their configuration and development. This situation, along with the fact that social movements are purely practical agents undergoing constant transformation, make their study and theorization difficult, while they may be explained based on highly different variables (Asún & Zúñiga, 2013), particularly taking into account the particularities entailed by combining the virtual and the material.

The use of electronic resources and the development of ICTs have favoured the emergence of new forms of expression, transforming social movements, in a way, into communication media (Valderrama, 2010). This has enabled them to organize and develop within the many available online platforms, leading to the creation of a wide variety of spaces for action and protest via the Internet. Thus, online participation enables "avoiding media enclosures" traditionally managed by the State and conventional mass media (Castells, 2009) and political mobilizations ceasing to be considered a form of "alternative communication" to become experiences of "total communication" (Treré, 2016: 45).

Beyond the aesthetic and promotional impact that "digital activism" (Joyce, 2010) or "digital activation" provides social action, it is necessary to explore in more depth the new languages, and the deep and symbolic aspects generated through the different forms of online mobilization.

Thus, this study is carried out amid a virtual non-existence of systematic reviews on social movements in the Spanish context; although it is possible to find some reviews in recent years on specific topics, such as political results (Aguilar, 2019) or housing (Sala, 2018), none directly linked to forms of online mobilization have been found. Therefore, a systematic review of the literature on social participation in the digital sphere within the Spanish context has been carried out based on empirical publications from the last ten years in Spain's most important Sociology journals. Instead of using the usual review methodology, consisting of searching for publications in bibliographical databases, and despite the greater difficulty of the process, the decision was made to directly consult the journals with the most impact, given their appropriateness as a formal source in this type of scientific literature analysis (Sánchez-Meca & Botella, 2010). When analyzing the results, particular attention was paid to the relationship between virtual and in-person activism, as well as the new languages used by contemporary social movements and the symbolic universe they operate in.

1.1. Studying contemporary social movements

The analysis of social action in the field of Social Sciences has traditionally focused on the political consequences that social movements have in the contexts where they develop (Poma & Gravante, 2017), and on their capacity to disseminate new frameworks of meanings and promote changes in the social order.

Starting with the Arab Spring in 2011 and the "indignant" movements it led to, mobilization is globalized from the local level and participation takes place simultaneously in the streets and on the Internet, leaving behind the concept of "activist networks", widely used until then, to now speak of "connected crowds" (Rovira, 2017). This global dissemination of protests, both through classic media and through new technologies, produced a contagion effect in different contexts, "but also imitation in the forms of action, discourses and symbolic frameworks among movements" (Candón-Mena, 2019: 27). In the case of Spain, the emergence of the 15M movement was a turning point in the organization and dynamics developed by social mobilizations, contributing towards its integration or "Europeanisation" (Della-Porta, 2013). From an academic point of view, it led to the appearance of new debates on contemporary social movements and was a challenge for sociological research, increasing the interest in its analysis, particularly the aspects related to virtual spaces, which require new interpretative keys and updated methodologies for analysis.

Thus, although they are still scarce, in recent years there has been an increasing amount of research focused on spaces of action and protest on the Internet, mainly analyzed by means of virtual, digital or online ethnography, a research technique that adapts classical ethnography concepts and guidelines to the analysis of new digital environments and online relationships (Hine, 2000). This methodology is presented

as an interstice between the researcher/subject of study, making it possible to "transform the method itself and reassess the theoretical and epistemological assumptions" of the field of study (Ardèvol et al., 2003: 18).

1.2. Deep languages and symbols of Internet mobilization

In the hyper-connected society, the concept of public space is transformed, leading to new contexts for collective action. At the start of the century, Ibarra already pointed out the possibilities that the Internet was starting to offer social movements, enabling them to achieve "a growing impact that significantly raises their potential to mobilize" (Ibarra, 2000: 285). Digital networks make it possible to increase collective action due both to the low cost of digital activism and to the possibility, even through local mobilization, of coordinating globally (Garrett, 2006; Alonso, 2013). These spaces are shown to be adequate for the development of what Jenkins et al. (2017) call "participative politics", political initiatives by the younger sectors of the population based on civic movements and innovative activists, transforming both the communities where they take place and the historical actors that comprise them (Gutiérrez et al., 2019). At the same time, apart from the possibilities of promotion and participation, digital environments lead to new languages, new forms of socialization, and new ways of establishing interpersonal bonds (Rodríguez & Valldeoriola, 2009).

However, although the new social movements or cyber-movements use digital resources to an increasing extent, "they do not depend exclusively on them" (La-Rosa, 2016: 50), as they are created on the Internet, but are legitimized on the streets (Castells, 2009; López-Carrillo, 2016) intertwining digital and in-person action; i.e., the online and offline dimensions of mobilization. Therefore, they must be analyzed as social constructions that redefine, through shared action, the meanings of the different elements that make up the culture of the community where they are developed (Melucci, 1999). Based on questioning the established cultural models and the general orientations of society (Touraine, 1997), they question different symbolic codes and propose alternative social meanings, using elements from popular and media culture, but also creating new elements (Candón-Mena, 2019).

The use of new technologies increasingly determines the practices and proposals of contemporary social movements, but also their collective imagination (Tascón & Quintana, 2012), as they involve "a re-creation and re-signification of society's symbolic universes" (Villafuerte, 2007: 177), which makes it necessary to pay attention to the symbolic strategies they develop, the use they make of artistic and cultural elements or the shared symbols that build group and community identities (Cohen, 1985). It is, therefore, necessary to take into account the collective imagination of social movements, redefined in recent years around the Web 2.0 and social networks (Treré & Barranquero, 2013).

In short, each social movement is built developing a series of values, languages, symbols, rituals, and myths that help to establish social and psychological identities (Martínez-Herrera, 2011). At this point, the forms of social action on the Internet, as the materialization of the redefinition and innovation of classical mobilizations, present their self-defining and most differentiating elements. Thus the importance of analyzing, both theoretically and empirically, their new communicative processes by addressing these realities, in order to learn about their nature as a whole.

2. Material and methods

### 2.1. Research question and objectives

This study proposes the following research question: How is sociological research analyzing the online dimension when studying social movements within the Spanish context? Based on this question, three specific objectives are established:

- To analyze current research into social mobilization in Spain, exploring both the fields of study, and the methodologies used, in particular those related to virtual environments.
- To establish the link between the online and offline dimensions of social participation, with research focusing on the use of digital spaces or collective action.
- A deeper sociological analysis of the construction of new languages and symbolic elements by contemporary social movements.

2.2. Methodology

The systematic review of the literature is a rigorous methodology, as it limits bias and error (Cook et al., 1995), which makes it possible, using a pre-established and explicit method (Sáenz, 2001), to identify, evaluate and interpret scientific production in a specific field of knowledge in an organized manner (Fink, 1998). In this case, the systematic review carried out focused on the analysis of social movements, specifically on their online dimension, by empirical sociological research with its own methodology developed within the Spanish context during the last decade. To carry out this task, the PRISMA standards were used for the protocol, search process, selection and synthesis of results (Moher et al., 2009; Urrútia & Bonfill, 2010), adapted to our subject of study. Thus, the initial inclusion criteria applied based on the PICoS strategy (Pertegal-Vega et al., 2019), which takes into account the population, the phenomenon of interest, the context, and the design of the study, were the following: empirical research into social movements; primary studies; analysis of the Spanish sphere; publications in the last 10 years (2010-2019); publications in Spanish sociology journals with the highest impact.

Firstly, five journals were chosen due to their inclusion in the 2019 edition of Journal Citation Reports (JCR)[1] and after that, the 34 present within the section of Political Sciences and Sociology of the 2020 edition of the visibility and impact ranking of Spanish Humanities and Social Sciences Scientific Journals with the FECYT seal of quality (Sanz-Casado et al., 2020), bearing in mind that four of them had already been chosen due to their inclusion in the JCR[2]. Thus, the final list was comprised of 40 journals, after adding five more due to their thematic relationship, present in the ESCI (Emerging Sources Citation Index) list with the criterion of belonging to the field of Sociology and inclusion in Latindex[3]. The search process was carried out in each journal based on eight key reference terms and access to the publications of interest. The concepts chosen were: "social movements", "social movement", "mobilization", "mobilizations", "collective action", "social participation", "activism" and "protest". This initial search was carried out between the months of February and May 2020.

Figure 1. Flowchart of the systematic review process
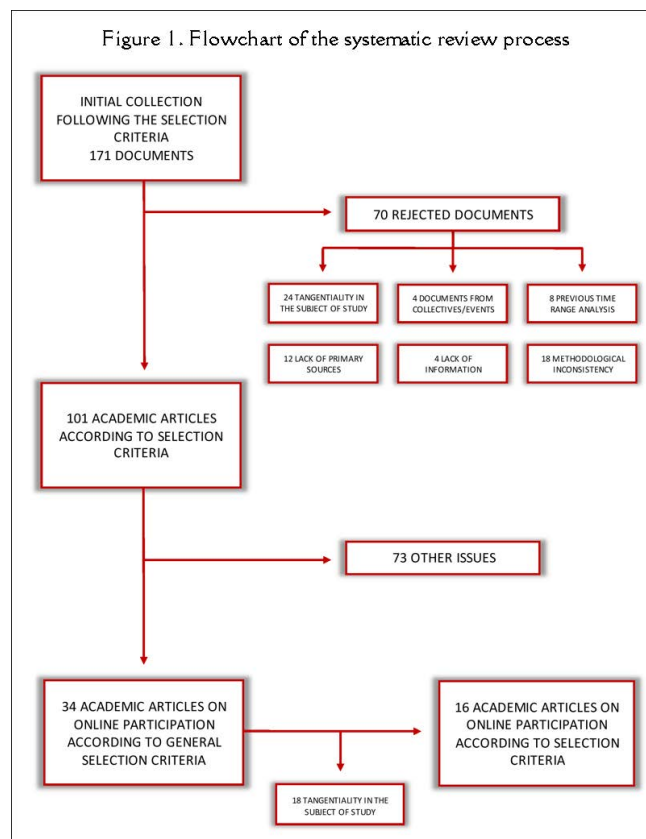
A database with all the references chosen on empirical research into social movements was created. In this first phase, after ruling out the large volume of theoretical publications and individually assessing each one of them, a total of 171 articles were found. Their complete texts were analyzed independently by two of the researchers who have carried out this review. 70 articles that did not meet the following criteria were eliminated: prioritization of social movements in the subject of study (24); use of primary data sources (12); exhaustive methodological information (22).

Once this first search was completed, the 101 bibliographical references found were organized using the Mendeley manager, creating a database with the following variables of each article: author/s, year of publication, journal, topic/s analyzed, online participation as the subject of study, type of study, methodological strategy and use of virtual ethnography.

After this first general selection, a second database was obtained with the 34 publications that met the criteria of online participation analysis and/or the use of virtual ethnography as a research technique. Of these, 18 were eliminated as this was not their central focus. Thus, a final selection of 16 articles was obtained (see the resulting database on https://bit.ly/32iUWgf).

No.	Reference	Year	Journal
**Table 1. Final sample selected**			
1	Candón-Mena, J.	2019	Teknokultura
2	De-La-Garza-Montemayor, D.J., Peña-Ramos, J.A. & Recuero-López, F.	2019	Comunicar
3	Núñez-Puente, S. & Fernández-Romero, D.	2019	Investigaciones Feministas
4	Sádaba, I. & Barranquero, A.	2019	Athenea Digital
5	Lizaso-Elgarresta, I., Sánchez-Queija, I., Parra-Jiménez, A. & Arranz-Freijo, E.	2018	OBETS
6	Márquez-López, M.	2018	Teknokultura
7	Pecourt, J. & Villar, A.	2018	Athenea Digital
8	Rodon, T., Martori, F. & Cuadros, J.	2018	Derecho y Política
9	Martínez-Rolán, X. & Piñeiro-Otero, T.	2017	Prisma Social
10	Saura, G., Muñoz-Moreno, J.L., Luengo-Navas, J. & Martos, J.M.	2017	Comunicar
11	Casas, A., Davesa, F. & Congosto, M.	2016	REIS
12	Ortiz-Galindo, R.	2016	OBETS
13	Rivero-Santamarina, D. & Larrondo-Ureta, A.	2016	Teknokultura
14	Romanos, E.	2016	RIS
15	Romanos, E. & Sádaba, E.	2016	RIS
16	García-Galera, M.C., Del-Hoyo-Hurtado, M. & Fernández-Muñoz, C.	2014	Comunicar

3. Analysis and results

In this final selection of 16 articles, (see summary on https://bit.ly/3aQNVXW) the years 2016 and 2018 stand out, with five and four publications respectively, as those with the highest production. This tells us that both online participation and the use of the Internet as a resource for research are increasingly installed in our society. Thus, in half of the cases the researchers focused on social mobilization in generic terms, on the Internet, as a topic to be studied, while in the rest, the virtual dimension of specific social movements such as feminism (4), the 15M movement (4), or political demands were analyzed. This is when the forms of action particular to each movement connect with the possibilities that ICTs offer for the visibility and expansion of their demands and proposals.

The fact of being analyzed "via its own method" is characteristic of this field of research, as the main methodological technique used is virtual ethnography (in 12 of the 16 publications), making it the most appropriate way of learning about these spaces, given its flexibility and the possibility it offers for studying groups whose access for researchers is difficult in in-person environments (Sádaba, 2012).

As for the platforms studied, Twitter is a prominent social network, used both for monitoring specific accounts and, in most cases, hashtags used as the emblems of the different struggles. Profiles or groups on Facebook or specific web spaces are also analyzed.

As for the way of doing it, the combination of techniques is not the most common, since there are only four publications that simultaneously use qualitative methodologies (studies 1, 12, 14, and 15), where virtual ethnography is used alongside documentary sources twice (studies 12 and 14) and alongside participant observation and interviews in a third (study 15). In any event, a lack of use is observed of a virtual ethnography that goes beyond mere direct observation and uses other research techniques linked to the digital sphere (participation in forums, interviews via chat, online discussion groups, etc.), as traditional ethnography does in in-person environments.

Only four of the articles in the sample have studied online participation by means of other techniques (studies 1, 2, 5 and 16), three of them doing so from a quantitative perspective via a survey (studies 2, 5 and 16). Thus, it can be observed that the methodology used to study social mobilization in its online dimension is mainly qualitative.

If we now analyze in more depth the contents of the 16 articles selected, we can see some common points and recurring issues in several of them. Firstly, the political dimension cuts, in a more or less explicit way, across nearly all of the studies, which shows the capacity and intentionality of these movements to have an impact and provoke changes in the political and social agenda (studies 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 15). This seems to indicate that citizens frequently use the Internet and the visibility it offers to manifest their political and social demands (studies 6, 7 and 11), whereby social networks such as Twitter, in certain moments, become the main space for protest (studies 3, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 13).

This is linked to the fact that virtual spaces are mainly used for communicative purposes (studies 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, and 13). On the one hand, for the consumption and dissemination of information in a more passive and/or unidirectional way, where its potential to raise the visibility of conflicts, struggles and movements developing in the offline space can be found, reinforcing them and generating tools or elements for their growth. On the other, by creating spaces for debate and agreement among individuals or collectives with a variety of positions, which may lead to the creation of online support networks, but also of confrontational dynamics which, although not usually materialized beyond the Internet, can become extreme as there is no mediation in this space (studies 3 and 8). Due to this main communicative function of ICTs, the creation of new ways of understanding and carrying out communication is enabled (studies 10, 12 and 14), offering more proximity, accessibility and immediacy than traditional media. Thus, virtual innovation leads to the development of specific spaces for social participation, such as the "Change.org" website, support and solidarity initiatives such as the "Wombastic" platform (study 6) or "crowdfunding" platforms, and to the use of tools such as humor for networked social action, as it enables the subversion of established cultural codes using a symbolic strategy (studies 6, 9 and 14).

In this sense, the collective imagination of 15M is built through shared references of popular culture (film, series, video games, music, celebrities, emoticons…), making use of artistic and cultural elements to symbolize their different demands. At the same time, messages are reinforced through symbolic elements, exemplified by the use of different colors to identify certain struggles ("Green tide" for education demands, purple to make reference of feminist struggles, etc.).

Another common element that researchers of online social mobilization highlight is the capacity of these scenarios to generate and reinforce collective identities, based on multiple existing actors and discourses (studies 8, 11, 13 and 14). In fact, the Internet makes it possible to maintain the collective memory of social movements, and from that foundation, it builds its identity (study 1). These identities favor the merging and strengthening of shared demands (studies 4, 6, 10, 11 and 12) and facilitate the creation of new spaces of agreement. Based on autonomy and horizontality as basic implicit values of this type of mobilization, organizations are made up of "distributed horizontal networks" (study 12) that manifest themselves through collaborative experience, spontaneous creativity and innovation.

These characteristics of social participation and Internet activism are not so different from traditional forms of protest. With openness and communitarianism as a distinctive feature, contemporary social action media make it possible to broaden traditional circles of participation (studies 5, 10, 12 and 14) by offering greater accessibility, which has been particularly highlighted among the younger population (studies 2, 5, 6, 7, 15 and 16). Thus, free access has been considered the most important key to favor social mobilization in virtual spaces, which seems to have been scarcely tapped by some collectives or struggles

with limited Internet propagation (studies 4 and 13). Consequently, a shared characteristic among online social movements involves passive participation dynamics, for the mere consumption and reproduction of information, without in-depth debates about the basic content of each reality and issue (studies 2, 4, and 13). On the other hand, there is also acknowledgment of the danger of mythologizing new technologies with an illusion of participation that does not correlate with reality, overestimating its real scope, which in many cases does not go beyond "ephemeral mobilization" (studies 7 and 9). As a result, a large proportion of the research analyzed concludes that both dimensions feedback and complement each other, although currently there is a larger volume of online than offline social participation (studies 2, 5 and 16).

As for the use of language by online mobilization, first of all the way in which the researchers themselves refer to the phenomenon studied should be highlighted, with terms already widely used such as "cyberactivism" (studies 1, 2, 12 and 16) or "cyber movements" (study 12), with their concretion as "cyberfeminism" (studies 4 and 13), as well as other more specific terms such as "techno-political movements" (study 1) and "techno-activism" (study 15), or "connective social movements" (study 11).

Now, focusing on the analysis of the digital spaces used by contemporary social movements, a shift from traditional discourses and languages towards new discursive and expressive forms that provide access to a more diverse and plural audience is observed (studies 1 and 11). Each movement creates its own new concepts, such as the widespread use of the terms "precariat" by 15M or "sorority" by feminism (study 6). At the same time, specific discourses with a more creative, imaginative, referential, and open language are disseminated, related to popular forms.

This language that is particular to virtual and networked activity is adapted to each platform, organizing the discourses by means of concision, hypertextuality and the use of keywords, as happens with hashtags (studies 3, 7, 8, 9 10, 11 and 12), used as emblems of positions taken (study 8), or with the defense of political demands in the "graphical battlefield" (study 6). In this sense, social networks become ideal spaces for the dissemination of specific messages and the condensation of complex ideas into simple contents, generally light-hearted, which cause the "contagion effect" and which make it possible to speak of a new language (study 9). Thus, for example, tweets are a simplified expressive form of participation, for rapid consumption and propagation, which can elicit action and make the empowerment of citizens possible (study 10), while memes are presented as a type of spontaneous, syncretic and visual communication that generates a chain of creative feedback (study 9). In any event, this context is likewise prone to the proliferation of hoaxes, "fake news" and other types of disinformation that distort reality (study 3). On these types of platforms, the users themselves make up a "multimodal landscape […] of shared authorship based on comments and cross-references" (study 4) which, despite generating a large number of interactions on the web, not always lead to mobilization as such (studies 7, and 9).

In conclusion, we can talk about the emergence of a "global digital culture of mobilization" linked to Internet culture, through which a large number of social movements consume, transform and create a culture at a local level based on a series of shared references (study 1), which generate languages and symbologies of their own. Thus, the online space becomes a new political and social element, a new agent that can cross borders and generate and establish feelings of identity, a "virtual us" (study 13) which sometimes inspires collective action.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Based on the systematic review carried out we have been able to verify, firstly, the scarcity of publications in Spanish Sociology journals on the nature and particularities of online social mobilization, which undoubtedly contrasts with the apparent proliferation of these movements in Spain in recent decades, with a more exhaustive analysis in other contexts such as the Latin American or Anglo-Saxon.

In terms of the methodology used, the difficult access from other types of methods to the new realities brought by the use of digital spaces by contemporary social movements means that the research included in the final sample analyzed finds virtual ethnography to be the ideal technique for their analysis. However, although complementary techniques are used in some cases, none of the articles in the final sample use a mixed research methodology, which should be promoted and broadened in order to offer more complete and comprehensive knowledge of the subject. Likewise, there is a significant limitation in the almost

exclusive use of direct observation as a technique in virtual ethnography, missing out on the potential offered by other research techniques linked to the digital sphere. Therefore, new specific methodological approaches that adapt to these new forms of virtual relationships and action that are transforming the meaning of social participation are needed.

As for the contents of the publications chosen, we find that more exhaustive and deeper analysis of the symbolic and mythological universe transmitted by contemporary social networks and social movements is lacking, which has prevented us from exploring these realities in more depth. However, we have been able to observe the intentionality and transformative capacity that the new forms of citizen participation and action have for social change, and how the online dimension enables the emergence of new discourses and languages that are more open and accessible.

The set of articles analyzed shows that, although social participation on the Internet and cyberactivism are different forms of mobilization, they have features in common such as horizontal, flexible and multimodal organization, confirming statements by classical authors such as Melucci (1996) or the search for a change in mindsets, in line with statements by, among others, González-Lizárraga et al. (2016). By means of new dynamics in the forms of protest and in communicative strategies, contemporary social movements are capable of influencing the political and social agenda, with prominence of the potential of web spaces to amplify the impact of demands, and the capacity of social networks to reinforce social bonds and promote civic commitment, although there is the risk that these new forms of activism can be limited to a form of passive participation that is not matched in the streets.

In this sense, and despite the fact that, to a large extent, analog mobilization has been replaced by digital action, as stated by authors such as Flesher-Fominaya and Gillan (2017), the online and offline dimensions of mobilization feedback into and complement each other (Herrero et al., 2004). For this reason, it is necessary, particularly in the sphere of academia and research, to break this dichotomy and link all forms of action in order to create a panoramic view of the current state of social mobilization. To achieve this, in future research it would be interesting to establish links between both forms of participation. In particular, it can be focused on their contents and on their internal dimension (messages, languages…), and to analyze the proposals for action that lead to activities at both levels, so that they can be analyzed "through a logic of broadening the repertoire and not through a dynamic of replacing the physical with the virtual" (Treré, 2016: 48).

On the other hand, the research papers revised show the existence of a new narrative in online social mobilization that uses a more approachable, referential and open language, and in which hypertextuality and the visual component become particularly relevant. Thus, each group finds its own voice within the framework of the different expressive formats, giving them greater visibility and more possibilities of access to the population as a whole. At the same time, starting from the local level, there is a symbolic resignification that is globalized from popular and digital culture, creating a collective identity and turning each movement into "a laboratory of symbolic production that it needs to communicate" (Rovira, 2017: 9).

Lastly, there is a debate between those who defend the power for transformation and social production of digital networks with ideas such as that of "participatory culture" by Jenkins et al. (2016), sometimes falling prey to "techno-fascination" or "techno-utopianism", in line with authors such as Orihuela (2008), and those, like MacKinnon (2012), who criticize this techno-determinism, pointing out the limited impact of social networks and focusing on negative issues such as online counter-information, which uses post-truth as a rhetorical element of the political narrative. Most of the studies analyzed, however, seem to defend an intermediate point, in line with authors such as Treré (2018) or Rendueles and Sádaba (2019) who, assessing the potential nature of these spaces, consider their real impact for mobilization to be limited.

In any case, although it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of this study as it only analyses articles from journals with a high impact factor and does not take into account other types of publications, the systematic review carried out has made it possible to verify the potential that the Internet, and specifically social networks, have as a tool for citizens, showing the forms of action of online social mobilization as a reflection of the plurality of thought that exists in contemporary society. In short, as we have been insisting, a deeper analysis of the new dynamics generated by contemporary social movements is required, as well as

the implementation of methodological strategies which, along with virtual ethnography, integrate different qualitative research techniques that enable a comprehensive, but detailed, approach to these complex realities.

Notes

[1] "REIS. Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas" (included in the Sociology area); "RIS. Revista Internacional de Sociología, Historia y Política" (Political Science), "Revista de Estudios Políticos" (Political Science) y "Comunicar. Revista Científica Iberoamericana de Comunicación y Educación" (Education & Educational Research and Communication; also included in the FECYT 2019 within the area of Social Sciences).

[2] "América Latina Hoy"; "Arbor", "Áreas, Revista Internacional de Ciencias Sociales"; "Ciudad y Territorio, Estudios Territoriales"; "Cuadernos de Trabajo Social"; "Digithum"; "Empiria, Revista de Metodología de Ciencias Sociales"; "Encrucijadas", "Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales"; "Gestión y Análisis de Políticas Públicas"; "IDP, Revista de Internet", "Derecho y Política"; "Investigaciones Feministas"; "Masculinities and Social Change"; "Methaodos, Revista de Ciencias Sociales"; "Migraciones"; "OBETS. Revista de Ciencias Sociales"; "Papeles del CEIC", "International Journal on Collective Identity Research"; "Papers, Revista de Sociología; Política y Sociedad"; "Relaciones Internacionales"; "Res Publica, Revista de Historia de las Ideas Políticas"; "Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals"; "Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos"; "Revista de Paz y Conflictos"; "Revista Española de Ciencia Política (RECP)"; "Revista Española de Discapacidad (REDIS)"; "Revista Iberoamericana de Ciencia, Tecnología y Sociedad" (CTS); "Revista Española de Sociología"; "Sociología del Trabajo"; "Teknokultura: Revista de Cultura Digital y Movimientos Sociales"; y "adComunica, Revista Científica de Estrategias, Tendencias e Innovación en Comunicación".

[3] "Athenea Digital. Revista de Pensamiento e Investigación Social"; "Aposta, Revista de Ciencias Sociales"; "Gazeta de Antropología"; "Prisma Social"; "Sociología y Tecnociencia, Revista digital de Sociología del Sistema Tecnocientífico".

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