Over the past two years, we have encountered quite fervent protest movements in Southern Europe. Indeed, they have arisen in the wake of the economic crisis that keeps on riding these countries, and the protests have a clear anti-austerity profile. In Spain, in Greece, and in Portugal, people have taken to the streets to demonstrate their discontent with the state of public affairs, and this has manifested itself through organisations such as Democracia Real Ya! (Real Democracy Now) and La Plataforma de los Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform for the Mortgage Victims), which form part of the Indignant movement, Los Indignados.

When looking at these protests, we can make a couple of interesting observations. First of all, even though the Indignants are often seen as an anti-austerity movement, it is difficult to pin down any specific agenda of theirs. In other words, one could say that the protesters lack a unified claim, something which otherwise is quite common for protest movement (cf. the green movement, the feminist movement, the gay movement). The protesters approach the current political problems from a variety of backgrounds; they can be single mothers who have lost their jobs, they can be middle-class families who have lost their homes, they can be anti-globalisation activists who blame the IMF, they can be nationalists who hate the EU, they can be feminists who are angry with the patriarchic nature of politics, or any other form of dissatisfaction. Even though these countries, Spain in particular, are democratic states with relatively sound electoral systems, freedom of speech and association, the protesters feel that the government are not fulfilling their duties in a satisfactory manner.

Ultimately, this discussion engages with the question of who is considered a political subject. Who can be listened to, and who has a voice that can render political legitimacy? What counts as political participation, and what does not count? In this paper, I want to raise primarily two points. First of all, I want to bring to the fore two forms of protest which I consider being if not particular to, then at least quite pronounced, within the Indignados. These two forms are aesthetics and noise/silence, and they are based on material gathered during fieldwork in Madrid, conducted in May 2013.

Second, I want to raise the point that these repertoires of protest are telling us something about how we consider social movements, what role emotions and affect play for their (non-)recognition, and what this could potentially mean for the study of democratic participation. I will first provide a short overview of the study of emotions within social movements, arguing that the focus on emotions has unfortunately remained largely instrumental, which does not entirely help us understanding the Indignados. As a prolongation of this, I then bring in the arguments of Jacques Rancière, in order to make the argument that these forms of protest should indeed be recognised as a mode of speaking.
Aesthetics as a repertoire

Within the Indignant movement, there is a strong sense of expressing one's opinions not only through what is traditionally thought of as political action, but they also include quite a bit of other forms of manifestations. I mostly witnessed these alternative forms of protest in settings like demonstrations, but these are common methods for the Indignados also elsewhere. For instance, using music and dancing has been very present when La PAH are trying to prevent evictions; they would gather large crowds of people outside the house of the people being evicted, thus preventing the officials from getting in and taking over the property. This has sometimes been a successful mode of protest, sometimes not.

The first day I was in Madrid, I took part in the Toque a Bankia\(^1\) protest. This protest was taking place outside of one of Caja Madrid’s offices, and consisted mostly of older people with banners. All of a sudden, a group of young people turn up, carrying a large construction, which I at first did not recognise, but later saw was a guillotine. Then, they enacted a small play right there and then, where a man representing a bank director was beheaded under the guillotine. I later found out that this group is called “La escuela política La Guillotina” (The political school the Guillotine), and they are offering classes in how people can take part in politics more actively, and want to create awareness of corruption and the flaws in the democratic system. That all makes perfect sense to me, but when I first witnessed the little performance in the square, I mostly saw it with reference to what one first think of when you see a guillotine, namely the decapitation by the people of political leaders that have lost their power.

Two pictures with motifs from the Guillotina movement.

When I was in the 12th of May march\(^2\), almost the first thing that I came across was how much singing and dancing there was. For instance, there was one dance performed to a chant, where the lyrics went like this:

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\(^1\) Bankia is a conglomerate of banks formed after the crisis, in an attempt to save money and thus not risk complete bankruptcy. However, Bankia has become a highly criticized company, accused of not having the welfare of the customers as their main priority, but rather to try to keep their profits at the expense of the savers.

\(^2\) Since 2011, large protests have taken place in mid-May all throughout Spain. This year, the largest demonstrations were held on May 12th.
Ed estudiantes, tenemos un deseo
Que para la privada no haya dinero
Dinero por aquí, dinero por allá,
La publica par ante, privada par tras

Workers and students, we have a wish
That there will be no money for the private
Money goes hither, money goes thither
The public goes forward, the private goes back

Pictures with people dancing in the May 12 demonstration.

They kept on repeating this song, over and over, and in general, they seemed to be very happy and joyful, dancing away. During the march, there was also a group of people with all sorts of percussions. One could hear them from afar, and they sounded a bit like the orc drums in the Lords of the Rings, with a strong ominous feeling to it. However, when they came closer, one could hear the rest of it too, and then it resembled more of a carnival feeling. This music did not have any words, nor did it have a melody, it was just a rhythm that you could follow. However, this had a very large impact, and people started to dance all around it, forgetting about their chants and their slogans, just following the beat.
When arriving at Puerta del Sol, there was a young man that climbed a statue with his saxophone. He started playing a few songs, and the crowd sang with him. First of all, he played the Internationale, a song which I know well, and which I expected to be familiar to the people around me as well. However, not many people knew it, and thus did not sing along. However, afterwards he started playing a song that was previously unfamiliar to me, however, this one everyone knew. They sang as loudly as they could, trying to overcome the noise of the drumming which was right next to us. This song seemed to fill people with happiness and enthusiasm, and later, when I went home to look up the song, I understood why. The song, A las barricadas, is a famous tune from the period of the Civil War, and was mostly sung by the anarchists. What surprised me though was that although this is a fairly old piece, almost all people around me knew it, regardless of their age group. As seen in the picture below, there is also a flag of the Second Spanish Republic\(^3\) (1931-39), and was also used by the exile government in Spain until 1977, during the dictatorship.

| Negras tormentas agitan los aires  | Black storms shake the sky |
| nubes oscuras nos impiden ver      | Dark clouds blind us |
| Aunque nos espere el dolor y la muerte | Although pain and death await us |
| contra el enemigo nos llama el deber. | Duty calls us against the enemy |
| El bien más preciado            | The most precious good |
| es la libertad                  | is freedom |
| hay que defenderla              | And we have to defend it |
| con fe y valor.                 | With faith and courage |
| Alza la bandera revolucionaria  | Raise the revolutionary flag |
| que del triunfo sin cesar nos lleva en pos (Another version: que llevará al pueblo a la emancipación) | Which carries the people to emancipation |
| Alza la bandera revolucionaria  | Raise the revolutionary flag |
| que del triunfo sin cesar nos lleva en pos (Another version: que llevará al pueblo a la emancipación) | Which carries the people to emancipation |
| En pie el pueblo obrero a la batalla | Working people march onwards to the battle |
| hay que derrocar a la reacción  | We have to smash the reaction |
| ¡A las Barricadas! ¡A las Barricadas! | To the Barricades! To the Barricades! |
| por el triunfo de la Confederación. | For the triumph of the Confederation |
| ¡A las Barricadas! ¡A las Barricadas! | To the Barricades! To the Barricades! |
| por el triunfo de la Confederación. | For the triumph of the Confederation |

\(^3\) The Second Spanish Republic was instituted after the abolition of the monarchy following municipal elections in 1931.
Young man playing the saxophone at Puerta del Sol.
Noise/Silence as a repertoire

Another feature about the protests that I found interesting and novel was the use of an absence of words, but only silence or noise. When I watch the video recordings that I have from the protests march, one can hear a lot of looking chanting, singing and the like, but quite often, there is no specific direction to the sound, there is no way that one can make sense of what is going on. When showing these video clips to my colleagues, most of them get quite annoyed, it is too loud, there is no pleasure in listening to it, and there is no message in it. They shake their heads and ask me why on earth this is important, people are merely yelling, blowing in their whistles, and the whole thing comes off as quite chaotic. However, while being there, I did not really think about this as not making sense. When I was stood in the middle of the crowd, and almost wanting to cover my ears because it was so loud, what struck me was not the meaninglessness of it all, but rather the powerful effect which it instilled on me. Those moments, when the noise was almost unbearable, was when I felt the strongest connection with the movement, when I was the most grateful that I had come to Madrid, and when I had the strongest motivation to continue on with my research to communicate their cause to others.

As a contrast, there were also very strong moments of silence. After having marched from different parts of Madrid, cheering and making a lot of noise, the protesters all gathered in the middle of Puerta del Sol. The atmosphere was amazing, people were having a good time, the sun was shining, and the whole event was more similar to a feast than an angry demonstration. Speeches were being held at some point, but these were almost impossible to hear due to the many different things going on everywhere, music playing, people dancing and singing. At that point, most of the participants had been on the move for several hours, myself included. Up until then, I had fervently been taking notes, but now I was experiencing sort of a cognitive drainage, I could not take in more information, I was tired of taking pictures, and I was tired of documenting. Then, at 8 o’clock, another event was scheduled, a grito a mudo (muted scream). In the general chaos of the square, which had up until then been a myriad of different expressions of protest, quietude spread. Everything stopped, the singing was interrupted, the chanting halted, the dancing stilled, the speeches silenced. In this sudden vacuum, people raised their hands waving them into the air. All you could hear was the distant buzz of the generators used for the microphones, and some birds in the sky. We were stood together, not making a sound, waving our hands, looking up into the blue, seeing all the photographers on the rooftops. This is probably the moment that is the most strongly inscribed in my memory. Rarely have I before experienced such ties with a crowd and that without saying a single word. The gesture itself, moving waving your hands silently in the air, is a gesture commonly used by the Indignados. This is used instead of clapping your hands, instead of saying bravo. As such, as soon as anyone says anything that people agree with, this is met not with words of approval or applause, but with a silent gesture in the air.
Pictures taken from the Grito a Mudo protest.
Emotions in social movements

In my understanding, these expressions mentioned above are highly emotional. They do not necessarily express a very detailed or explicit political programme, they do not adhere to a specific party, or ideology. But, does that mean that they are not political? What is interesting here is how these emotions play a part when it comes to the study of political action, and how we can understand emotions as being political. Below, I will give a short overview on how emotions are dealt with in social movement theory, and why this approach might need to be complemented with other perspectives.

In the beginning of the 90s there was an upswing in the interest for emotions and their effects on sociological research and researchers started to include emotion into their work. They started to reconnect to the works of the early sociologists, returning to a more blurred distinction between emotion and reason, trying to create a more nuanced picture. Criticizing former rationalist perspectives on social movements, several researchers have tried to incorporate emotions into the study of social movements (Ferree 1992; Kingston and Ferry 2008; Clark, Hoggett and Thompson 2006; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001).

Two of the most influential writers on social movements are Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow. They have produced several groundbreaking volumes on contentious politics⁴, exerting tremendous influence on the field. In Contentious Politics (2007), Tilly and Tarrow analyze the word claim. In their perspective, most social movements circulate around some kind of demand, or claim. This can be historically assessed, and as examples they take the British anti-slavery movement of the 1700s and the Orange revolution in Ukraine in 2004. These movements naturally demonstrate vastly different characteristics, but are still both instances of what Tilly and Tarrow refer to as contentious politics (2007:4). Contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. (Tarrow and Tilly 2007:4).

To continue, Tarrow and Tilly then refer to contentious politics as consisting of contention, collective action, and politics. Contention refers to the conflict itself. It bears a notion of scarcity of resources in order to cover all interests and demands, and therefore conflict arises from shortage of resources. This can of course be any kind of resource, be that material or abstract. A contention can exist either on a micro- or macro-level. I can contend with a family member over who gets to choose the television program to watch, but this is of lesser interest for social movement analysis. Our analysis focuses on those instances where contention has a regular pattern for quite a few individuals, forming a social movement. The actor that drives the contention can be an institution, a civic group, or a school (Tarrow and Tilly 2007:4). The actor then involves itself with a claim, something that it wants, and which some other entity prevents it from having.

The second component of contentious politics is collective action. Collective action occurs in the transition-moment from the micro- to the macro-level. The interests are then coordinated into a coordinating effort. This means that a football team could be said to be engaging in collective action, but are they a social movement? No, collective action can be completely apolitical; to get contentious politics, we also need politics itself. The third component is politics, which for Tilly and Tarrow means that we move into a world of governance. For

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⁴ McAdam – Tarrow – Tilly (2001); Tarrow (1994); Tilly (2004).
them, for it to be regarded as political, there has to be some kind of governmental involvement. Yet, most kind of politics involve no or little contention. When we apply for a driver’s licence, there are no contending actors; it is, in a sense, an apolitical act. The claim and the resource are not scarce and unfulfilled. As such, contentious politics are created where these three components intersect. For contentious politics to arise, we need all three to be present: We need there to be contention over an interest, there needs to be collective action, and the government has to be involved somehow. Then, are social movements the same as movements involved in contentious politics? Tilly and Tarrow call for caution in this matter; where many are tempted to conflate the two, they rather argue that a social movement is always historically situated, and that we should not confuse any essential framework with social movements (to which one could argue that the whole point of their analysis is inane). Tarrow and Tilly’s theory can tell us several things about how social movement theory has been constructed. In their model, mobilization is contingent upon the interest, organization, resources, power, and opportunities. This started a trend in which we could consider not only external factors, such as opportunities and capacities, but also the interests and aims of the individuals and movements. Even though Tilly and Tarrow do not focus explicitly on emotions, they still made way for scholarship on how the inner workings of the individual affect the social, and how these two are not distinct and separated. The significant contribution made by Tilly and Tarrow, something which they developed for many years, is now brought forward also by other scholars.

For example, Arlie Hochshild has produced a seminal study of how emotions are at the centre of social interaction, but that this role is quite a negative one. In *The managed heart* (1977), she shows how women in management or leader position within companies often try to suppress their emotional life in order to succeed. She also develops the concept of feeling rules, namely that we have certain feelings in specific situations (Hochshild 1979). Feminist scholarship has also greatly contributed to sociologist’s ability to blur the distinction between emotion and reason. Through gendered studies, feminist scholars have uncovered that what is rational and reasonable is constantly valued higher than emotions and passions (Rorty 1980). This has primarily been applied to studies on causes pertinent to gender equality, but is very well applicable to any kind of social movement. Several social movement theorists have picked up this possibility. Among others, Jagger (1989) and Scheman (1980), have analyzed how emotions do not necessarily have to only be a part of the private sphere, but how they also play a role in public affairs. This has been studied mostly within women’s activism, and how emotions are treated within a movement. For instance, in a women’s activist group, there might be a higher tolerance for emotional expressions than in a more traditional, male-dominated group (Kleinman 1996).

However, not only studies of gendered social movements have made use of emotions. Verta Taylor has introduced emotions as highly important to the study of social movements. In analyzing the abeyance structures of a group, she argues that there are several different mechanisms at play in sustaining a movement and the engagements of its members. These include continuity over time, purposive commitment, exclusiveness, centralization and culture (Taylor 1996). All of these were, according to Taylor, highly influenced by emotions. In particular, the love and friendship among the members were a contributing factor in sustaining the solidarity within the group, as well as creating a collective identity through which the engagement could be channelled. This is also connected to those studied made on sister- and brotherhood. Jasper (1998) has also studied this developing what he calls the *libidinal economy* of a social movement, symbolizing how emotions and desires can help create activism. In his idea, a social movement can be incited by a moral shock, causing anger which then leads to activism. Jasper also distinguishes between emotions between
members of an organization, such as love and friendship, and those shared emotions, such as anger and shame, which are collective motivators. As such, emotions are highly important both with regards to keeping the movement intact and coherent, as well as having a higher purpose.

Another emotion frequently discussed in relation to social movements is pride, one example being the Gay and Lesbian Pride campaigns. According to Deborah Gould (2009), the very concept of pride was invoked by activists to call for volunteerism when the AIDS crisis broke out. Since there was quite a divided attitude towards homosexuality, it was both something to be proud of, but also incited quite a bit of shame. Focussing on the positive side, pride, the social movements hoped to spur more activism, and thus make a stronger cause. Pride is also analyzed by Thomas Scheff (1994), and he argues that both pride and shame are integral to any form of collective action. He has mainly worked with Nazism, and how such ideologies can talk directly to our sense of pride and shame, and how we want to increase and decrease them, respectively. In this sense, Hitler made use of these sentiments while trying to convince the Germans of the necessity of a solution to the Jewish question (Sheff 1994). Polletta (2001) argues that emotion plays an important role in creating narratives which incite political action. Storytelling, and creating a context of a problem, can build on emotions to engage mobilization.

Even though these studies have made a significant contribution and an effort to bring emotions back into the debate, there are still limits to how emotions are used to analyze social movements. The sentiment that emotions could merely complement existing theories is still prevailing (Calhoun 2001). There is definitely an ambition to blur the distinction between emotion and reason, but there are still questions about the success of this endeavour. Rather than fully incorporating emotional expression into the workings of social movements, the analysis seems somewhat limited to how social movements make use of emotions in order to reach their goals, to attract members etc. This can be seen as an instrumental usage, which has come to represent a growing portion of sociology. As a result, there is still quite a sharp division between emotion and reason, between some sorts of political action and others. The researchers recognize that emotions can be important, but they are only important since they might affect our rational considerations. In light of new empirical realities, this might pose a problem to present research, since the emotions do not seem to be the root of politics, but only a component which is either malleable, or completely beyond our control. This becomes problematic with regards to, for instance, the Indignant movement, which does not seem to use emotions instrumentally, but rather have its very roots in a feeling. Still, there are theorists and thinkers who go further and claim that emotions are not distinguishable from reason, and that emotions do are not only a complement to present theory, but the root of social action itself. This leads us to ask the question what speaking means? Can these expressions we witness among the Indignados be political, and are they valid as opinions?


Democracy and politics revisited

One of the main contemporary proponents of re-thinking democracy and political action is Jacques Rancière. Rancière makes the observation that, there is an absence of divine authority, which leads to an empty space of governance. How are we supposed to organize ourselves without this divine principle? (Rancière 2006:33). Rancière goes back to Plato and uses his idea of the republic in order to make sense of what democracy is and what it is not. The difficulty with democracy is that it lacks any a priori fixed constitution, and any government is founded upon the very absence of a foundation. Those who govern are not the ones who are born to govern, they are not gods, but they have acquired the title to govern from an absence of any such title (Rancière 2006:41), this being a government by chance. This empty space is the very founding character of the political.

Political government, then, has a foundation, but this foundation is also in fact a contradiction: politics is the foundation of a power to govern in the absence of foundation. State government is only legitimate insofar as it is political. It is political only insofar as it reposes merely on an absence of foundation. This is what democracy means when accurately understood as a “law of chance”. (Rancière 2006:49)

One must understand here, that democracy is thus not something, which is given to us as a tool to make all people free and equal. Rather, Rancière would argue, it is the very proof of that we are not. In an absence of a foundation, a situation where the legitimacy of the governing power is not a given, we must look for other indicators as to why some people should be in power, and some should not. We can imagine several such indicators: it could be wealth, inheritance; it could be merit. In ancient times, we have had systems where hierarchies have been installed based on race or blood ties, but this is, arguably, not compatible with what democracy should be. In a democratic system, we would want to ensure the welfare of the people, based on a principle of the freedom and equality for all. If we depart from a system of hierarchies instituted upon an absence of freedom for all, we find ourselves in a position where there is an assumed equality. If we do not distinguish between individuals based on their wealth, family, or race, this means that all individuals form a part of the democratic system. This thought, much similar to the one of Habermas described above, implies a simple arithmetical figure, where the sum of the opinions in a political environment is equal to the addition of all individual opinions (Rancière 1999: 9). Such an idea, argues Rancière, is unfortunately inaccurate.

The myth of the (unified) political subject

The main issue with such an assumption concerns the idea of the political subject. The very premise of democracy is the introduction of those who have been previously unheard. When abolishing hierarchies and assuming equality, one adopts a certain idea of what democracy means, which leaves out one of its main features: disagreement.

Democracy, in this sense, the rule of the demos, implies that we know what the demos are; it relies on a totality of the political subject, of who the speaking party is. However, the very movement we are asking for is to include those who are currently excluded, to give voice to those who have none. In this instance, what we desire is a contestation to who the speaking

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5 Rancière is part of a larger field of radical democratic thinkers. His thought is comparable with that of Ernesto Laclau (1994, 1996, 2005, 2006), Chantal Mouffe (1993, 1996, 2000, 2005), as well as Claude Lefort (1989). However, I have chosen to focus on Ranciere’s thought, since he, in my opinion, makes the strongest argument with regards to the constitution of political subjects.
party is. If we have a political system based on a certain constitution of the people, we might want to reconstitute the count of opinions, to also include that of others. The goal is to make a part for those who have no part (Rancière 1999: 9). However, the need for such a system rests on the fact that some have voice, and some have not. Thus, there is a quest for equality, because of its absence. As such, democracy is not equality per se, but rather the absence thereof, which justifies its existence. In other words, the demos in a democracy are constantly revoking equal rights for some, while installing it to others. This insight is vital when thinking about democracy and what we are encountering in a democratic system. It is vital to realise that democracy as such is not an insurance against inequality, but is rather reliant on it. However, this part of those who have none must constitute a community. The creation of a community, according to Rancière, is the construction of a wrong committed to the group. Having a common sense of justice makes unity possible:

*Politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by the fact of placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation, the contradiction of two worlds in a single worlds: the world where they are and the world where they are not, the where there is something “between” them and those who do not acknowledge them as speaking beings who cunt and the world where there is nothing (Rancière 1999: 27).*

As such, democracy is the very instance where one group who do not consider themselves as being represented question the setup of the system, demanding recognition. This is what Rancière would refer to as the moment of politics, which questions what he would like to call the police (Rancière 1999: 28). This is similar to the thoughts of other radical democrats, but who are perhaps more likely to employ the words politics and the political, to refer to the same dichotomy. Anyhow, this tension between politics/police or political/politics, rests on an idea of what speaking means, and how to gain recognition.

**Voice, Noise, and Recognition**

In order to take part in the political game, one must be recognised as a political subject. Democracy and social movements are, in a sense, all about this; creating political subjects out of those that were previously nothing. However, this process is always underway, and never fully completed. In a situation of non-recognition, the police functions because obedience does not demand understanding. If the oppressive power would recognise that the obedient party understands why they need to obey, this would also mean that they could potentially be a speaking part, thus deemed a *something* in the political game. However, this is not the case. The obedient, which is not recognised, is equated with an animal, not possessing the logos necessary for political action. As such, there is a sharp difference between what we could refer to as voice and noise. Contention, thus, comes into play when we question what speaking is, and reconsider the borders between voice and noise. The animal is capable of expressing itself; it can relay emotions such as pleasure or pain, which can be communicated through simple, grunting, sounds (Rancière 1999: 23). However, this is not regarded as speaking, and the animal is not a political subject. The political subject, on the other hand, is capable of logos, of expressing what is just and what is not (Ibid.). Now, when contesting this limit, or border, we are in the midst of politics, creating new political subjects; giving a part to those who have none. The police, on the other hand, is the very practice of exclusion, of labelling some speech as voice, and some as noise:
The police [...] is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise. (1999: 25)

This insight forms an important critique to deliberative, representative, democracy. In a situation of inequality and injustice, the police, the institutions we have built to protect the voice of the unheard, effectively shuts out other voices, based on their absence of logos. The whole theory of communicative action is based on the assumption of the validity claims (Geltungsansprüche) (Habermas 1973: 8). The consequence of such a tenet is the violent exclusion of noise, which sediments its own existence. We could also think of this exclusionary practice as favouring rational claims over emotional expressions. As such, deliberation will only serve to rearticulate the logos upon which it rests, and, as a result, ceasing to be political. This brings us to the next important concept of Rancière’s, postdemocracy. By this, Rancière refers to the situation which is ubiquitously regarded as the height of human civilisation, consensus democracy. Consensus, or, rather, the absence of dissensus, does not, in his view, constitute any correlation with what democracy is actually about. Rather, it is the very absence of democracy, of introducing the voice of those who have none.

In Ranciere’s view, the very idea of democracy has been colonised or appropriated by practices which is in fact outright contradictory to what democracy means. In a situation of consensus politics, we, much like Habermas refers to, consider ourselves to be in a position where we can consciously deliberate on decisions, and thus form a sense of public opinion, which is equal to the sum of all individual opinions within the community. For Ranciere, this is, if not impossible, then at least unlikely. In a postdemocratic space, politics as we know it has come to extinguish the possibility for political subjectification, thus eliminating any space for democracy; the parties in the discussion are already given (Ranciere 1999: 102), and the political community is already established. As such, postdemocracy is always looking to sustain itself, keeping the discussion within its own boundaries. When deliberating, we can conceive of that some people are excluded from the discursive practice.

What is interesting here is what this entails for the concept of democratic legitimacy, what constitutes political subjects or actions, and how this affects our view on social movements. If we indeed are functioning in a postdemocratic state, the idea of the legitimate state also becomes the absence of politics. As Ranciere argues, if postdemocracy wants to sustain itself, it must also eliminate the demos, and not allow for a re-questioning or reordering of political subjects.

The state today legitimizes itself by declaring that politics is impossible. And this demonstration of impossibility works through a demonstration of its own impotence. To evacuate the demos, postdemocracy has to evacuate politics, using the pincers of economic necessity and juridical rule [...] (Ranciere 1999: 110)

Let us linger on these last two points. In other words, to gain legitimization, the state tries to bring politics into the realm of the real, equating norms with facts. For instance, the judicial state legitimises its decision on that this is in line with the constitution, or present legal framework. This takes the politics (or, the political) out of the picture, leaving a sutured space where there is no potentiality of political decisions. The same can be said with reference to

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6 In this paper, I refer to deliberative democracy as that developed by Habermasians. Please see Habermas (1984, 1996).
economic or commercial necessity. As Ranciere points out, the Marxist thesis of the international capital’s supremacy over state power has become commonplace; few would, in present-day politics, argue that a state should not try to satisfy the market and increase GDP and thus the general welfare. In that moment, the legitimation of state action can be justified in absurdum of the beneficial outcomes of economic policy, thus reinforcing the postdemocratic state. In a seemingly paradoxical sentence, Ranciere summates the legitimation process as a “demonstration of powerlessness” (Ranciere 1999: 113).

The Indignados: Are they speaking?
Having outlined the main critiques against a consensual form of democracy and the alleged supremacy of rational thinking, we must now ask whether this is at all relevant for the current situation in Southern Europe and the Indignados. To argue that this critique indeed holds some relevance, we can consider three main points. First, let us begin with the idea of the unified people. In the countries which have had a strong presence of the Indignados (Spain, Greece, and Portugal), we also have democratic systems. These people do have the opportunity to vote, and, even if there are corrupt practices, accountability and responsibility are present in the political environment. However, as we have seen, there is still a high frequency of popular dissatisfaction. The sovereign people, which is a fundamental component of any modern democracy presumes the unity of the sovereign. However, this also presumes a totality of the people, and that the people are one political subject. If we consider the situation in Spain and Greece, we can easily see that there is a lack of popular unity and voice. We can detect two main problems with the popular unity. First, there is a presupposition of equality. As mentioned above, in a consensual, representative democracy, we treat the equality of the individuals in a community as a given, when, in fact, the very need for democracy is based on the absence of such equality. In addition, we assume that all individuals belong to one identity or another. This assumption requires that individuals do identify with one group or another, be it a trade union, a political party, or any kind of organisation. However, what happens if people do not identify with a specific group, and, as such, do not succumb to representation? Within the Indignados, we have quite a few cases of organisational chaos and confusion regarding identity. Many do not like to label themselves in any specific way and there is no broad adherence to specific ideologies or minority groups. In other words, the “people” upon which democracy rests, the demos, is something which refuses to be tied down, and thus, we cannot assume popular unity, or the presence of any

Second, we must regard the point of what speaking means. Many have criticised the Indignados for not having a clear and unified front, and not being able to produce an agenda or programme, and their alternative repertoires have had a hard time being recognised as political action. However, does this mean that they are not a political subject with a voice? If we believe that politics can only be conducted through rational deliberation, this is a clear limitation on who and what can be regarded as a political subject. In many instances, the Indignados are also expressing opinions which might not fit in to what conventionally classifies as an opinion. Since much of their protest consists of art or emotions, of singing, dancing, or merely not expressing oneself through what would be referred to as “traditional channels”. Does this mean that the Indignados are not in possession of logos, and are therefore to be considered as noise and not voice? Are they animals and not thinking humans? Much of the media portrayals of the movement lean in this direction. The protesters are accused of being nonsensical and disorganised, and thus deemed doomed for ever having political influence or gaining status as a political subject. However, as explained above, this is merely another practice of exclusion. By challenging the current idea of what and where
politics is, the Indignados are themselves embodying the very idea of the same. It is in this instance, where we think that they do not make sense, or that their claims are unintelligible, unattainable, or simply wrong, that the political is being reintroduced. From this point of view, the Indignados are the most rather than the least political actor.

Third, we should ponder upon the issue of legitimation. As is well-known, the governments in Spain and Greece have repeatedly implemented measures pertaining to “crisis politics”, justifying large cuts in social welfare, which has been detrimental for many. One could look at this issue as an expression for a postdemocratic state. Here, the legitimation of the government, the idea of what the good state should do, becomes synonymous with removing political decisions from the sphere of questioning, saying that these are necessary measures in the interest of the people. As such, the people have no say, but are supposedly supporting the implementations given that it all lies in their best interest. In this moment, what we refer to as politics actually ceases to do what politics should, namely providing a space for interrogating current practices.

All of the issues above convey the same point; that in order to understand what is going on in Southern Europe, we must broaden our concepts and look at politics in a new way. We must perhaps consider emotions as not merely instrumental, as politics as not only rational. Ultimately, theories clinging onto the idea that rational deliberation by a fully conceivable popular unity is the sole way of doing politics will, if this goes on, have an increasingly hard time to match up with our political reality.
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