lotta meri pirita tenhunen

I AINT ME NO MORE, NOR MY HOUSE MY HOUSE NO MORE

la PAH's micropolitics of semiosis & the premises of radical democracy

ABSTRACT

During the years that followed 15M, the 2011 uprising in the networks and plazas of Spanish cities, la PAH has been a groundbreaking example of a multilayer organizational process that has risen to the historical challenge of empowering people to act together in the face of the crisis of representation. The initial letters P, A and H stand for *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*, translated roughly as the Platform of People Affected by Mortgages. As indicated by its name, the movement was founded as an organization for mortgage defaulters. In a conjuncture of rising unemployment and the 'working poor' on one hand, the tide of politicization that swept through the Spanish society in 2011 on the other, la PAH soon grew into a wider movement for the right to housing. Today it continues to evolve, looking to become an even more transversal movement with capacity to criticise and create political pressure within the reigning political system in the wider sense.

This contribution to the study of la PAH, and the grassroots practices of political organisation in general, was born through two years of collective struggle with a local PAH group in the Southern Madrid district of Vallekas. It focuses on the semiotic dimension of collective action as fundamental to the empowerment of its members and the key to the organisational success of la PAH. The semiotic production la PAH carries forth is, therefore, discussed as an intrinsic part of the micropolitics of the group and an important factor in the continuous negotiation of the ethics of collective action. My findings indicate that while these questions are awoken within the partial field of housing politics, they are impregnated with such a subversion that they often overflow into other areas of life of the members of la PAH, making them critically evaluate the society, their relationship with themselves and with the others.

This is, first and foremost, a study born in and from extended participation in the movement and motivated by the idea of helping to localize problems that need to be resolved in PAH itself. Furthermore I hope it will be useful for other groups and organizational processes in the common struggle against global debt governance in their communities.

keywords: PAH, micropolitics, debt, situated epistemology, militant research, subjectivity, social movements, empowerment, neoliberalism, housing, mutual aid, difference, care, affectivity, ethics, democracy

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Chapter 1: introduction

Micropolitics, and the semiosis as a site of struggle

> *"[The power of] micropolitics typically does not have a single center, and micro-political interactions are not necessarily conscious strategies. It will be clear that semiotic power and micropolitical power are inextricably linked: micropolitics result in a specific semiotic structure, while the semiotic power in turn influences the micro-politics structures."[1]*

Any organisational process, any movement, is made of groups. All groups have an "inner life" that usually isn't visible in the movement's public victories or failures even if it can, with much certainty, be said to play a role in them. This inner life could be called "micropolitics": the level of affinity (attraction and proximity), becomings (both personal and collective changes of subjectivity), necessity and strength, radical desire and, at times, all-devouring black holes. Micropolitics precede politics as organisation, and the prevailing social organisation is already an outcome of certain kind of micropolitics. Understanding which sort of micropolitics are underway means everything at the hour of evaluating whether our organisational practices break away from the repressive, controlling and totalising modes of social relationship, or simply reproduce it in new forms.

After two years of participation in la PAH, the Spanish housing rights movement, I deemed the role of micropolitics in the collective practices of resistance within the debtor–creditor relationship a decisive one. It was a discovery for me – but pretty soon I came to realise that for many who came before it meant stating the obvious. This was not the case just in the current housing movement, nor limited to those who organised themselves in Spain. Everywhere there where signs of people having come to the same conclusions in different historical contexts around the globe. Deborah B. Gould had found it out in the struggle against AIDS in 1980 United States, and stated that "feeling and emotion [were] fundamental to political life, not in the sense that they [would] overtake reason and interfere with deliberative processes, [...] but in the sense that there [was] an affective dimension to the processes and practices that make up 'the political'."[2] Realising there was a generationally repeated learning experience around the role of emotions that seemed to serve almost as a gateway to the social movements did not satisfy, but rather intensify my hunger for thought. I needed to understand *why was it so*, and *what kind of micropolitics enabled la PAH*.

As I observed the centrality of re-signifying speech in the mutual aid meetings, the role expression of emotion had in it, and how intersubjective commitment brought forth the gradual change in how one sees herself and the society surrounding her, I decided on studying the role of semiosis in the empowerment la PAH created in it's members. The **study question** I set out to resolve:

> What role do *enunciation* and *sense-making* through *resignifying interventions* in the *systems of meaning* have in organising within and against a growingly semiotic mode of capitalistic production?

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1   Bijker, Wiebe E. (1995) Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change. Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, p. 263.

2   Gould, Deborah B. (2009) Moving Politics. Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 3.

I wanted to make sure that while I would answer it, I would not forget that "with signifying semiotics we are always dealing with the social and with power"[3]. That is why I ended up with conclusions that, in fact, open into a new hypothesis to be ventured – a hypothesis that finds in the empowerment of the seemingly individual mortgage defaulters the premises of radical democracy. Even though a question for another study, it should also be understood as a result of the wider historical framework –i.e. the crisis of representation– in which the micropolitics of la PAH take place. And in a world that has experienced an unprecedented marriage between the State and the Capital called Neoliberalism, the question of resistance against and intervention into this mode of capitalist exploitation cannot be understood without radicalising democracy.

In this conjuncture the age-old question of organisation is defined as a *problem of producing solidarity and structures that sustain solidarious collective action* when the motives of (often binary, often insufficient) identifying elements of race-gender-class are (sometimes duly for emancipation, sometimes due to the relativism of the global market of identity) questioned in the age of multiplication of difference and when the body (more than mere transmissor: a factory and a fabric of knowledge) suffers intents of exclusion from the production in order to its capacities to be more perfectly exploited. The confusion about organising is furthermore benefitted by the contemporary misunderstanding that solidarity means charity towards those who have it worse than you: instead I read *solidarity as a result of producing common notions within the difference*. These notions are the constituents of knowledge that helps us *to understand the reality we live in, the possibilities we dispose of in order to change it, and the impossibilities we must accept in order to convert them into future possibles*.

There was a temptation in writing an ethnographic case study strictly in terms of the reality of one group, PAH Vallecas, in which I participate in – but too much contextual knowledge would have needed to be unlearned in order to limit the vision to one group. On the other hand, I was struggling against my desire to work in terms of conceptually heavy political philosophy. Finally I have settled with a **medium distance vision,** including both the local micropolitical and the more panoramic, wider-scale compositions of multiple groups as experiences that can (and should) be understood together. The core field work took place in the local group of Vallecas district, in southeast Madrid (participant in the Madrid Metropolitan area and statewide coordination dynamics of the housing rights movement), but in order to contrast and strengthen my findings I conducted some interviews in the pioneering group of PAH Barcelona – the first ever to exist. With much gratitude I've also had access to the interview material Mikael Brunila and Kukka Ranta produced within their parallel study in Barcelona during the autumn of 2015.

My main motive for the study was to shed light on the collective practices that permit the Spanish housing rights movement la PAH. While the reason for micropolitics to be relevant for my study subject is close to obvious, the challenges posed by the new paradigm of capitalistic organisation of production led me to focus on the semiotic and pragmatic aspects within the field of study. In this current paradigm, based on the profits that can be extracted from communication, the saying "knowledge is power" is more true than ever. But never hast there been such a universal thing as *the* knowledge: forms of knowledge are always multiple, even though some are invisible in the hierarchy of knowing and knowers. The questions of epistemic plurality, directly linked with questions of power and resistance, lead me to take a closer look at the symbolic order(s) they are encoded into. As the practices of knowledge production and distribution –that have always been

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3   Guattari, Félix & Genosko, Gary (ed.) & Hetrick, Jay (ed.) (2015) Machinic Eros: Writings on Japan. Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 41.

part of countering and escaping exploitation– gain a more central role, *semiosis* itself becomes an important site of struggle.

I analyse in my thesis the collective action of resistance in la PAH as shaped by the construction of *semiotic power* – that can, and effectively is, converted into social and political power[4]. As a point of departure it is useful for the reader to consider what Christian Marazzi, among others, has concluded in his analysis of contemporary economy[5]. Marazzi proposes that a linguistic turn of the production has taken place and caused an irreversible impact on politics. "Out of all the characteristics that have been highlighted during these years to explain what distinguishes the 'flexible production' [...] from the fordist mode of production", Marazzi argues (11) that "the one that seems most efficient for the study of the socio-economical and political transformation is the one that places *communication* in the center of the technologico-productive innovation". He goes on to explain, that "there is nothing mysterious in the entrance of communication into production: it is determined by the fact that [communication], confronted with a market that has become saturated due to scarcity of purchasing power and, as a result, of the capacity of consumption-absorption of the market itself, has to adapt to this, [...] has to be restructured in order to increase the productive capacity without increasing the quantity excessively". The organisation of such a chain of production–distribution–consumption would be impossible without communication of the desires and necessities, but also of the "social interaction" at the point of encounter between distribution and consumption (Marazzi offers as an example from the productivity studies of the mailing service UPS: the company found even a brief social interaction to have a fundamental role in the fidelisation of the customers). So we see that "communication and its productive organisation as a flow of information has become as important as the electric energy in the era of mechanical production".

No human communication goes by without at least a drop of feeling, a sense of event or encounter, something in it that carries the potential of changing something in us. No social cooperation happens without the element of becoming affected by the thought and action of others while affecting them in turn. This is why taking the affect into account while theorising about communication and social cooperation in production is crucial. Much of the most groundbreaking theoretical work in that field has been done by the post-workerist thinkers who, already in the mid-60's, launched a hypothesis of "social factory" (Tronti) or "factory without walls" (Negri): a society in which the different human activities had become directly productive of capital. One important strand within those activities – and at the same time the universal tendency within all the others – is affective labour. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri define affects and affective labour followingly:

> *"Unlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects refer equally to body and mind. In fact, affects, such as joy and sadness, reveal the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking. Affective labor, then, is labor that produces or manipulates affects... One can recognize affective labor, for example, in the work of legal assistants, flight attendants, and fast food workers (service with a smile). One indication of the rising importance of affective labor, at least in the dominant countries, is the tendency for employers to highlight education, attitude, character, and "prosocial" behavior as the primary skills employees need."[6]*

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4   On resistance and semiotic power, see: Storey, John (2006) Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader. Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 543.

5   Marazzi, Christian (2003) El sitio de los calcetines: El giro lingüistico de la economía y sus efectos sobre la política. Translated by Marta Malo de Molina Bodelón. Madrid: Akal. The translation of direct quotes to English is mine throughout the study.

6   Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio (2004) Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire. New York: Penguin, 108.

Together with other post-workerist theorists, Hardt and Negri argue that, for todays forces of re/production[7], the becoming-factory of the society means that our human capacity to communicate, cooperate and switch between different modalities of social and linguistic sensibility has become directly productive[8]. When such a thing happens, the individual and collective subjectivities of ours, our personality, the field in which the social agency is defined and disputed, become sites of struggle. This struggle, one that could in another lexicon be called class struggle (but I have not seen necessary to keep on emphasizing as such due to the dogmatic fetichism attached to the term), is composed of individual and/or collective vital strategies that escape from, resist against and create alternatives to the system of production, producing subversion independently of whether or not they are recognised and named as practices of struggle. I believe it is precisely due to this condition of labour that the (political) affect has become a prominent study field in social sciences.

In this growing field of study, oftentimes described as resulting from an "affective turn" in the humanities and social science[9], the affect is treated in multiple ways that all share an *a priori* seeing it as a relevant factor in the organisation and/or change of any certain society or community – and definately relevant for analysing contemporary capitalism. Investigations such as Kathleen Stewart's "Ordinary Affects", Laurent Berlant's "Cruel Optimism" or Eva Illouz's "Cold Intimacies" are exemplary works in that sense. The first a virtuous experiment in defining some of the ways in which affect weaves our myriad daily events and encounters into a society – that is neoliberal, yes, but also so much more than just that; the second an approximation of the organising logics and force behind the affects; the third, even though operating in terms of emotion and emotional capital rather than those of affectivity, a genealogy of *homo sentimentalis*, a name given by Illouz to the exploited consumer-worker of the contemporary capitalism.

All these investigations coincide in the fact that for the new worker-producer, the growingly semiotic economy that depends on the human emotional capacities, does not mean a transition into a more "relaxed", more "humane" form of exploitation. It would seem that, based on the production of symbols and dependent on maintaining a symbolic order fit to serve these ends, harnessing the emotions and interpersonal affectivity for the use of the market, it even fosters a new kind of aggressivity: it penetrates the body as a whole –from heart to brain– as does the linguistic and emotional capacities of the human being, the social animal. In this model of production, called semiocapitalism by Franco Berardi[10], the circulation of (semiotic) capital "takes the form of crisis

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7   By talking about re/production I seek to name the mode of contemporary capitalistic organization of production in which the division into productive and reproductive functions has become useless, given the overlapping of these two. See e.g. Negri, Antonio (2015) Poder Constituyente: Ensayo sobre las alternativas de la modernidad. Translation Simona Frabotta & Raúl Sánchez Cedillo. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 13: "In the postmodernity [...] the society has been completely absorbed into the economic organisation and the ruling power of the capital: this means that the 'subsumption' of the society in the capital has been 'accomplished'. Here the essential figure is financial capital that dominates and reorganises the division of labour in the global level, profits from material and inmaterial labour in the 'social factory', and *extracts rent from the production-reproduction of life and from the communication-circulation of values*." [Italics mine.]

8   This is the point of departure for a wide field of post-workerist study, as is well exemplified in the number of Ephemera journal dedicvated to the issue: Ephemera (2007) Immaterial and affective labour explored. Volume 7, number 1. Internet source http://www.ephemerajournal.org/issue/immaterial-and-affective-labour-explored, visited 5/9/2016.

9   Hardt, Michael (2007) Foreword. What Affects Are Good For. In Clough, T. Patricia & Halley, Jean (ed.) The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social. Durham & London: Duke University Press, ix.

10   Berardi, Franco Bifo (2012) Semio-capital and the problem of solidarity. Internet source: http://th-rough.eu/writers/bifo-eng/semio-capital-and-problem-solidarity, visited 15/6/2016. In this text, based on a panel talk from 2011, Berardi proposes the concept of semiocapital "in order to describe a form of social production

and process becomes that of permanent restructuration", as Gary Genosko would say[11]. In this way, an untiring work on systems of meaning is upheld, destroying and creating, capturing and commodifying them. Sustained by the institutional, economical, legal and customary structures (encoded within racism, sexism, ageism, ableism and class division), an intensified colonisation of the imagination, the subconscious and the creativity results.

Under these premises, any intent of resistance must be capable of launching processes that invoke other symbolic orders to help create a different kind of relationship with the world. The organisational experience of the people affected by private and public debt in Spain offered me two years of immersion in this collective intent. It taught me that there is an enormous power in the word –in the *semiosis* of the spoken and written word– when it manages to escape from the commodification and the isolation of the hypersegmented, neoliberal society, and finds a context of mutual difference. *In la PAH the word*, set in motion through mutual aid meetings and multiple communicational strategies, *is used to attack and deconstruct the symbolic order of debt.* I will discuss the theme of debt later on; for introduction it suffices to say that my investigation proposes that debt, in a similar way as capital, should be understood as a relationship of power. The debtor–creditor relationship, even though not a substitute for the labor–capital relationship, "intensifies mechanisms of exploitation and domination at every level of society" and can be universally imposed, given that under it "no distinction exists between workers and the unemployed, consumers and producers, working and non-working populations, retirees and welfare recipients"[12]. Debt is just as invasive as a technology of exploitation than the profiting from communication, both being elementary pieces in the contemporary capitalistic logic of *exploitation of life* as a whole. For this reason la PAH starts with the goal of providing mortgage loan defaulters with some basic knowledge about their rights as debtors and a safe space in which to express the emotional burden of debt, but typically later evolves into a much wider organisational process that faces the question of defence of life affected by debt – of the struggle of life against financial capital.

The position from which I study the struggle in la PAH is a privileged in two senses. Firstly, because this struggle has become my life. In the sense any anthropologist craves for (but paradoxically cannot reach without renouncing being just an anthropologist), I have by now been accepted as a member of a political community through commitment that exceeds the duration and area of my study. Secondly, my study position is privileged in the sense Donna Haraway claims the partial point of view to be because of its capability of producing situated knowledge[13]. While it is impossible for me to write from within the mortgage defaulters point of view, simply because I never had one, there is more than a strain of privilege in writing from within an organisational process, accompanied with the thought and strength of others, instead of alone, helped only by the sterile reports written by ONG's, politicians, and even the bankers themselves. It didn't surprise me I got a serious headache when time came to cram the field work material –two years of life– into the format of academic maturity examination. I have defined my **method of investigation** as a conmixtion of **contemporary militant investigation** with **political anthropology**. Out of these, the

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which is essentially focused on the production of signs, of 'semio'", precising that he doesn't "mean that all forms of social production are semiotic. I know that shoes and cars and houses are produced too. But everything is more and more translated into signs. Everything is more and more replaced, on the economic level, by a semiotic form of production."

11 Genosko, Gary (ed.) (1996) The Guattari Reader. Oxford & Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 27.
12 Lazzarato, Maurizio (2014) Velkaantunut ihminen. Translation Anna Tuomikoski. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto, 7. See also 8: "This [no distinction] is owed to the fact that the "creditor–debtor relationship is a product of power relations between owners (of capital) and non-owners (of capital)".
13 Haraway, Donna (1988) Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. Feminist Studies, 14:3, 575–599.

first was the red line that sustained the process during the three years in la PAH, while the second became necessary at the hour of writing this text. While I have been finishing the literary task, the movement continues its transformation, and I keep on participating in it.

My study takes the reader through the theoretic premises it is built upon in the following Chapter 2, and gives an account of the research method and data used in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 offers the reader unfamiliar with the Spanish political and economic model some quickly drawn outlines leading up to the historical moment in which the organisational process I study is born. The heart of my study beats in Chapter 5, divided into two subchapters that foster three and four parts repectively. The findings of my study, detailed in Chapter 6, could be described in a nutshell followingly:

> 1. The organisational prototype la PAH offers is a *biopolitical* one: it breaks down the division between the political and the social.

> 2. The everyday organisational practices of la PAH create *empowerment* that is primarily led by creating connections between the semiotic, epistemic and affective spheres of collective action.

> 3. As a political surplus of these practices, la PAH gains a *capacity to articulate the crisis of democracy* that results from the externalisation of the reproduction of life by the state, suprastate and capitalist power structures that nonetheless maintain the effective right to legislate about life.

> 4. Under these conditions, the semiotic power la PAH has gained provides it with the legitimacy to practice *direct action and civil disobedience in construction of a radically democratic society* where the private configuration of debtor–creditor relationship is broken down and debt governance is converted into a social conflict.

I conclude my pragmatic and linguistically focused study on la PAH convinced that much has been left out. Many decisions on the theoretic matters were taken bearing in mind that a too complex apparatus would take the study out of the strictly sociological field of study (and to avoid making a life-long project out of a Master's thesis). This has created some limitations, but also the possibility of continuity. I have made an effort to document the **conceptual swaps and closed doors**, following Donna Haraways beautiful maxim for any committed investigator to always "stay with the trouble"[14]. The most notable of these paths yet untraveled are listed in the final Chapter 6.

I hope the study of la PAH at hand offers an interesting contribution in the eyes of other social movements, of other forms of organisation of the indebted, and in general of those who resist – who foster a desire to see the world in a different way, to become conscious of and transform the relationship between oneself and the others in order to defend justice and make creativity proliferate, to understand that emotion and reason are intrinsically tied together and that affective action is political and *vice versa,* to organise our sense of ethics alongside with our communities, to find meaning and make sense, to work together on our situated forms of knowledge and distribute power.

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14 Haraway, Donna (2016) Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene. Durham: Duke University Press.

Walking down this road with la PAH has lead to challenging the reigning concept of unlimited private property as the principle that organises housing. Even more importantly, it has lead many of us who inhabit these pages to change enough as persons so as to say, like Federico García Lorca once wrote: "I aint me no more, nor my house my house no more"[15]. And this time, instead of a verse of loss, it is one full of discovery.

15 García Lorca, Federico (1924) Romance sonámbulo. In Posadas, Miguel García (ed.) (2015) Poesía completa II. Romancero gitano y Poema del canto jondo. Madrid: Penguin Random House.

Chapter 2: theory

On the premises of this study

The object of my study, la PAH, is situated in the field of non-representative political action that takes place *within* and *against* the capitalist exploitation, in defense and in continuous transformation of life (understood as intrinsically social, always plural in its forms and resistant to exploitation by definition). This excludes political action that benefits such exploitation, suppresses the plurality of life or blocks its transformation. Furthermore it excludes politics in which the dimension of having been born, raised and still having to live within a system of exploitation and oppression is evaded and, wounded by utopism, the liberation-seeking action merely promotes models of individual and/or privileged life alternatives.

As I went on theorising about la PAH, I realised that most of the theories that ended up in my toolbox were also written within similar context of politics, understanding critical thinking as a subversive act in itself. I use these theories to interrogate my data with the goal of producing a clearer understanding about how la PAH as an organisational process is based on interventions in the hegemonic narrative about the mortgage loan bubble and the following economic crisis.

My study fits into the post-workerist theory of resistance and new forms of the power relation that is capital, while I find it enriched by the thought of French poststructuralist philosophers such as Félix Guattari, who accompanies my line of thought on the background. When analysing la PAH's practices from the point of view of subverting the accumulation and circulation of semiotic capital, I found theoretic ground in the Italian feminist thought on symbolic order and in Mihail Bakhtin's linguistic theory. The contemporary feminist debates about ethics become present through the work of Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti. The Spinozan theory of affects can be found on the background of much of my analysis, as Hardt[16] believes to be the case with all study of political affect, even though I refrain from fully embracing the complex Spinozian conceptual apparatus. The theory of technopolitical action is used as elaborated by Arnau Monterde and the research group DatAnalysis15M, the most recent body of investigation on the networked organisational practices that emerged out of the Arab Revolutions of 2010–2011 and their sister events across the globe.

> *2.1 Previous theoretical work on la PAH and its context*

Previous investigation on la PAH is scarce in terms of academic papers in social sciences. There is, nonetheless, an impressive amount of different types of data collecting taking place in la PAH, oftentimes conducted in ways that escape rigid divisions between the academic and the non-academic, the inside and the outside, theoretically and practically motivated investigation. Two different yet equally illustrative examples of this mixing up of registers of knowledge production would be: 1) an academic paper coauthored by an investigator who is also an active participant in la PAH and therefore enjoys the privileged vantage point; 2) a whole book written by two of the founders of la PAH to incite participation and to construct a collective narrative of the events of the last years, yet at the same time a completely novel quantitative inquiry about the social strata of the families that have suffered an eviction.[17] This plurality of registers should become reflected in the following review of previous investigation and as we move further along the study.

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16 Hardt 2007.

17 La PAH has often gathered this sort of data due to the lack and/or inaccessibility of even basic statistical monitoring data on politically sensible tendencies (evictions, rights of the minor in the housing crisis, energetic poverty).

On the borders of the academic genre, yet produced outside of the academic institutions, two recent studies conducted exclusively or almost exclusively on la PAH stand out: the compact depiction of the historical events leading from the burst of the real estate bubble to the proliferation of organisation of the indebted *"Mortgaged lives"* by Ada Colau and Adria Alemany[18] and *"Tu casa no es tuya, es del banco"*, a collection of articles and interviews by multiple authors[19] which offers a plural view on the devices relevant for the implementation of debt governance in Spain, on the effects this governance imposes on the indebted, and especially on the resistances and alternatives that have been born as a response in the years after the crash of the real estate market. Both of them will be extensively used within this study to enrich the description of the object of study and to help to nuance my argument. I have used Isidro López and Emmanuel Rodríguez's research[20] to provide the reader with a satisfactory knowing of the historical and political context in which la PAH is born and being investigated. I find it represent a rigorous in-depth research of the building up and bursting of the real estate bubble.

From the field of strictly professional academic investigations I have included four studies dedicated fully to an analysis of la PAH within the field of social sciences: one is a paper on the fundamental organisational practices of la PAH[21]; the second surveys la PAH through a comparison with its "German sister" *Bündnis Zwangsräumung Verhindern* (BZV)[22]; the third questions the meaning housing has within the Ecuadorian notion of *Sumak Kawsay* –meaning "good life" or "living well"– based on the experience of the Ecuadorian members of la PAH[23]; and the last one traces two parallel modes of action within the wider housing movement in Madrid that PAH is a part of, analysing their confluence through a conceptualisation of difference[24]. There is also research taking place in other scientific fields such as law and entrepreneurship studies, but they have been excluded completely in order to frame this study as a contribution in social studies. Apart from the investigations mentioned here I have furthermore excluded the ones that have been framed with a tight focus not resembling the one chosen for my study: only the first and the last of these four papers have been taken into account in my study, since they both study the practices of la PAH from a point of view of social movements studies.

There is a notable amount of mentions of la PAH to be found in the investigation conducted on the 2011 uprising 15M – an object of study that has received much more attention within academia. It is not surprising that la PAH appears in these investigations as a kind of a sidekick. The profound and virtuous hybridisation of the two[25] and the unparalleled capacity of la PAH to produce continuity of

18 Colau, Ada & Alemany, Adrià (2014) Mortgaged Lives: From the housing bubble to the right to housing. Translation Michelle Teran & Jessica Fuquay. Los Angeles/Leipzig/London: Journal of Aesthetics & Protest Press.
19 Carretero Miramar, José Luis (ed.) (2015) Tu casa no es tuya, es del banco. Resistencias y alternativas colectivas frente al colapso de la burbuja inmobiliaria. Madrid: Queimada Ediciones.
20 López, Isidro & Rodríguez, Emmanuel (2010) Fin de ciclo: Financiarización, territorio y sociedad de propietarios en la onda larga del capitalismo hispano (1959–2010). Madrid: Traficantes de sueños.
21 García, Jordi Mir; Macías, Carlos João; Veciana, Paula (2013) Fundamentos de la Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca. Activismo, asesoramiento colectivo y desobediencia civil no violenta. Educación Social: Revista de Intervención Socioeducativa, 55, 52–61.
22 Ordóñez, Vicente; Feenstra, Ramón A. & Tormey, Simon (2015) Citizens against Austerity: a Comparative Reflection on Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) and Bündnis Zwangsräumung Verhindern (BZV) Araucaria. Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política y Humanidades, 17:34, 133–154.
23 Suárez, Maka (2014) Movimientos sociales y buen vivir: Ecuatorianos en la lucha por la vivienda en la plataforma de afectados por la hipoteca (PAH). Revista de Antropología Experimental 14:6, 71–89.
24 Gonick, Sophie (2016) Indignation and inclusion. Activism, difference, and emergent urban politics in postcrash Madrid. Environment and Planning D, Society and Space 34, 209–226.
25 This hybridisation was analysed by Gala Pin in her presentation "Qué le aporta la PAH al 15M y viceversa" (How does la PAH contribute to 15M and viceversa) for 15Mp2p-seminar, held in Barcelona 3rd to 5th of July 2013.

and mutations in its organisational processs[26] after absorbing different tactical, compositional, affective and technopolitical elements from 15M. As the relationship between 15M and la PAH is not the core of this study, I limit the selection of research literature of this field into a few carefully selected pieces that also contribute to the theory of social movements as explained later in this chapter. These are *"Emergencia, evolución y efectos del movimiento-red 15M (2011-2015)"* by Arnau Monterde Mateo[27], *"Tecnopolítica y 15M. La potencia de las multitudes conectadas"* by a research group DatAnalysis15M coordinated by Javier Toret Medina[28].

La PAH is present as an integral part in various investigations about home evictions. These investigations are mostly focused on the suffering associated with an eviction and analyse the effects from within the paradigm of ethnography or social work studies[29]. I will not delve into the offerings of these investigations, given that they study one of the symptoms of the housing crisis while I study the organisational process countering these symptoms. Nonetheless, it merits a mention that la PAH surfaces in several of these investigations that focus on evictions; it serves as a further proof of the prominent role of la PAH at the hour of talking and writing about evictions in Spain. In one of the examples, a study involving 110 persons under the threat of an eviction, a "use [of] the different resources for attention about the reality of eviction" is witnessed but it is a clear that the solutions are sought "primarily through the Platform of People Affected by Mortgages (PAH)".[30]

Furthermore, almost since the very beginning of its existence, la PAH has been assiduously visited by sociology, anthropology, social work, communications and other students of social, political and humanities fields[31]. As a result it has been analysed in a range of essays, master thesis' and other student work. In order to emphasise the intertwining of the academic and political motives of the to-be-investigators, I would like to note that more than a few visiting students have exceeded their period of participation-observation and stayed as members of local PAH groups, often getting involved in the organisational process with no distinction, as any member of the group. In this way academic investigation becomes intimately connected with political participation and critical thought in la PAH.

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26 In comparison with other similarly sectorial organisational processes, such as *Marea verde* or *Marea blanca*, la PAH has proven to possess a major virtue. For more on these examples of comparison, see third footnote (in Finnish) in Tenhunen, Lotta Meri Pirita (2015) Velkavankeudesta vapautumisen affektit. Internet source: http://kumu.info/velkavankeudesta-vapautumisen-affektit/ visited 13/09/2016.

27 Monterde Mateo, Arnau (2015) Emergencia, evolución y efectos del movimiento-red 15M (2011-2015): Una aproximación tecnopolítica. Barcelona: Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.

28 DatAnalysis15M & Toret Medina, Javier (ed.) (2015) Tecnopolítica y 15M: La potencia de las multitudes conectadas. Un estudio sobre la gestación y explosión del 15M. Barcelona: Editorial UOC.

29 See Contreras, Encarnación (2012) El desahucio de viviendas y su incidencia sobre el sujeto. Una perspectiva antropológica. Cuadernos de investigación etnográfica sobre infancia, adolescencia y educación del IMA / FMEE, 5, Internet source visited 13/09/16: https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/667-2014-02-23-TFM%20Premiado%20Encarna%20Contreras,%20(Desahucios)%202012.pdf; also see Piemontese, Stefano (2015) Leaving "Roma" behind. Notes on the impact of housing and (forced) mobility on education. Integrim Online Papers, 10, Internet source visited 13/09/16: http://www.integrim.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/PIEMONTESE-leaving-Roma-behind.pdf

30 Arredondo Quijada, Rafael & de las Olas Palma García, María (2013) Aproximación a la realidad de los desahucios: perfil y características de las familias en proceso de desahucios en la ciudad de Málaga. Alternativas: Cuadernos de trabajo social. 20, 113–140.

31 See e.g. Alonso Muñoz, Laura (2015) De los medios convencionales a la autocomunicación: El caso de la Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca. Universitat Jaume I. Internet source, visited 13/09/16: http://repositori.uji.es/xmlui/handle/10234/137087

La PAH also fosters and participates in multiple collective learning experiences that, while not necessarily academic, can be productive of knowledge previously lacking an articulation. The experience of la PAH is sought by many persons belonging to other activist environments (typically in other countries and related to the development of the mortgage loan bubble and/or the wider range of organisational practices related to housing, but also through the general interest on grassroots political practices promoting empowerment and inclusivity)[32]. There are also collaborators with the desire of documenting a historical phenomenon, normally with a strong disposition towards negotiating the terms of expression with the ones who are being pictured[33]. Offering one's audiovisual and/or artistic skills to serve in visualising the knowledge latent in a PAH group and in converting it to a tool of direct and/or viral action happens[34]. Organising debates on the strategic development of la PAH are common forms of collaborations with other groups, organised by la PAH itself, but at times also by other political actors [35]. Preparing replicable workshop models for the self-educative necessities born in the collective action is generally seen as one of the pillars of a strong network[36]. The list goes on. What these practices have in common, is to search for different modes of knowledge production in the gray zone between investigation and militancy. They look for a practical motive for theoretic production and a practical use for the theory resulting[37]. One of the recurrent practical motives is transferability of some of the successful organisational tools of la PAH to other similar context of struggle.

Throughout the study I will, alongside of the academic papers and monographs, make use of material from an abundant variety of knowledge produced outside of the academic field, incentivated and/or brought to being by the necessities of la PAH itself. It might at times distance me from the incipient academic debate on la PAH, but it brings me closer to the debates within the movement and promotes a mode of investigation that actively looks for ways to define reality from within, not from above.

2.2 Post-workerist theory and the feminist subversion of symbolic structures

The foundation of my theoretic framework is undeniably Italian: my analysis is based on the post-workerist theoretic work on capitalism and the struggles that move history, forcing capitalism to evolve into new forms. The organisationally relevant questions the post-workerist thought revolves around are also questions motivating my study. How can we connect in our struggles against capital? What red line, weaved in the reality of exploitation and oppression, could sew together the multiple forms of suffering the capitalist organisation of production promotes and fragments into

32 See, e.g. Curcio, Anna & Tenhunen, Lotta (2014) La lotta per la casa è contro il debito: Intervista ad Ada Colau. Internet source, visited 12/09/16: http://commonware.org/index.php/cloe/208-lotta-per-la-casa-contro-il-debito
33 Adrià Rodríguez's Kairos video archive project (http://projectkairos.net/) is a good example.
34 The campaign symbol designed for la PAH by EnMedio Colectivo, a group of precarious designers and artists (http://www.enmedio.info/dicen-que-no-caben-pero-las-vamos-a-meter-una-nueva-accion-con-la-pah/) – or the entire video production of the Vallecas group (https://vimeo.com/user33634526) – are examples of this.
35 In 2014 PAH Vallekas organised a 2-day-event called Orientations2015 (http://www.pahvallekas.org/jornadas-debate/) to discuss the statewide strategy; in 2016 the cooperative La Hidra organised in Barcelona a debate with la PAH and other political actors about the new subject of struggles (http://lahidra.net/propietarios-proletarios-y-el-nuevo-sujeto-politico-2a-sesion-del-curso-donde-bcn-pierde-el-nombre/), and so on.
36 "The PAH School", Escuela PAH, is the most known of these formats. The information of these workshop is printed into a pamphlet (http://www.facilitacion.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/ManualPAH-Cast.pdf) that is distributed freely, ancd anyone who has participated in the workshop can later impart it themselves.
37 See, e.g. Tenhunen, Lotta Meri Pirita & Sánchez Cedillo, Raúl (2016) Il sindacalismo sociale della PAH e il problema della verticalizzazione delle lotte. In De Nicola, Alberto & Quattrocchi. Biagio (ed.) Sindacalismo sociale: Lotte e invenzioni istituzionali nella crisi europea. Roma: DeriveApprodi. Translation Alberto De Nicola & Biagio Quattrochi. Roma: DeriveApprodi.

isolated experiences explained as resulting from individual life decisions? In order to resist suffering imposed by capital and to protect and transform life, how do we unite?

And from there we get, *mutatis mutandis,* another question: how do we unionise? As the regime of production of surplus is shifting towards modes of capture of value produced in social interaction and other life-producing and -maintaining activities (through such devices as debt), the post-workerist theoretic framework helps to understand la PAH in terms of a new kind of a unionism. This social unionism is one of the most prominent new lines of living political theory within the field of post-workerist thought[38]. Social unionism is not the object of my study though. This study merely contemplates a part of how la PAH works: the ways in which we, different as ever, come together in language. The conclusions drawn from the study la PAH's micropolitics of semiosis are nonetheless based on the way la PAH is understood as a historical and political actor, and this is especially the case with the conclusions regarding the premises of radical democracy. It is, therefore, in line to acknowledge with the reader that in the theoretic build of this study, la PAH is fundamentally a manifestation of the potentiality of the metropolitan composition of the productive forces; *ergo*, it is in many ways comparable with the trade unions of the 20th century.

The theory of linguistic turn of the economy has been a fundamental background for my study[39]. While situating myself in relation to affective studies, I found the post-workerist thought on affect crucial for maintaining a connection between the affect and the analysis of the capitalist mode of production[40]. That said, the lecture on Baruch Spinoza's theory of affect is not produced first-handedly on this occasion, and is clearly post-workerist, besides Deleuzian[41]. My reading on the effects of debt on subjectivity –result of much empirical matter, lectures and debates– coincides in most aspects with that of Maurizio Lazzarato's, as does his thought on Bakhtin's theory of utterance.[42]

At the same time, even if more as an undercurrent, the Italian feminist thinkers accompany and inform this investigation thoroughly. Librería de Mujeres de Milán provides a simply virtuous articulation of the 1960–80 "silent revolution" of women as a rebellion against the patriarchal symbolic order[43]. The lecture of the gradual but imminent changes in the social structures, always taking the multiple and complex motivations into account, set the notion of difference into spotlight – from there the name that their feminism is better known in the anglo-saxon world, the feminism of sexual difference. The following decades have proven them right beyond measure, as the multiplication of difference has not only become a source of cultural diversity but is also growingly being recuperated by the logic of market and control. Against such a recuperation, considering la PAH as an environment of multiple difference as well as one with a strong strategy of feminine politics, I have been prone to visit these pioneers of non-essentialising feminine and feminist thought.[44]

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38 For a recent compilation of debates around social unionism, see De Nicola, Alberto & Quattrocchi, Biagio (ed.) (2016) Sindacalismo sociale. Lotte e invenzioni istituzionali nella crisi europea. Roma: DeriveApprodi.

39 Marazzi 2003.

40 Ephemera 2007; Hardt & Negri 2004.

41 See Hardt 2007; also see Galcerán, Montserrat (2009) Deseo (y) libertad. Una investigación sobre los presupuestos de la acción colectiva. Madrid: Traficantes de sueños; also see Deleuze, Gilles (2012) Spinoza: Käytännöllinen filosofia. Translation Eetu Viren. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto.

42 Lazzarato 2014; Lazzarato, Maurizio (2009) Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the utterance. Translation Arianna Bove. Internet source, visited 29/09/16: http://www.generation-online.org/p/fp_lazzarato6.htm

43 Librería Mujeres de Milán (2006) La cultura patas arriba: Selección de la Revista Sottosopra con el final del patriarcado 1973–1996. Translation María-Milagros Rivera Garretas. Madrid: horas y HORAS.

44 It is worth noting, I believe, that when I or the Italian feminists of sexual difference talk about something being

On the other hand, feminists close to this strain of thought, such as Rosi Braidotti and Judith Butler, are also present through their work on subject, difference and ethics[45]. This is no coincidence, but rather springs from the political practice of feminism they continue to engage with during and through their investigation. Both of them have been quick to notice how the difference, one form of which was articulated by the Italian women, has become a decisive axiom for political organisation.

2.3 On the use of theory

I have come to notice that theories tend to be only as useful as far as they bring about some clarity about their use and relationship with the practice they are used to interrogate. This is especially the case for this type of study of organisational processes where one of the goals is that the object of study also feels the study benefits them, i.e. for there to be a flow of knowledge not only from practice to theory but also *vice versa*. So I would like to clarify some things about the use of theory in the present study.

Firstly, the methods used for interrogating the experience of observation-participation have been selected strongly guided by the material resulting from this process.

Secondly, the theoretical toolbox that has resulted from the selection made out of the two theories presented in this chapter is not one coherent theoretical system but more of a theoretical assemblage.

Thirdly, it is my intention to use the toolbox to conduct an analytic dual operation on la PAH, with the explicit aim of contributing to the ongoing and future transformations of la PAH and other similar organisational processes.

Fourthly and finally, I have chosen these theories for my toolbox in part due to the fact that they are sources fit for promoting a pragmatic use of theory close to the studied processes given that instead of just interpreting the reality, they seek to create organisationally useful conceptualisations of the emergent forms of collective action.

In the face of the pains caused by the avalanche of theoretical debates possibly linkable to the object of study it helps to remember that the practice implies a much more complex and nuanced terrain of action still. That is why "our rule", as expressed by some of the pioneers in bringing thoughts extracted from theorists to interrogate organisational practice, "is not to lose ourselves too much in their problems but rather dig deeper into ours"[46]. It is a rule that relates to the ethics of collective action, investigation, and the search that takes place in the terrain between these two – but it is in the following chapter I will further explore these questions that are related to the methodology that sets the theoretical apparatus in motion.

"feminine", it is not based on a biologist or ontological, essentialising view on women, but on the fact that the society reads some bodies as feminine and others as masculine. Their political conclusion is that in order to organise themselves, women must not succumb to the requirements of the masculine symbolical order, but rather adventure to amplify and overcome the limits of the definition of the feminine.

45 See, eg. Braidotti, Rosi (2006a) Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics. Cambridge: Polity Press.
46 Vercauteren, David; Crabbé, Olivier; Müller, Thierry (2010) Micropolíticas de los grupos: Para una ecología de las prácticas colectivas. Translation Jazmin Beirak Ulanosky et al. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 36.

Chapter 3: data and research methods

Who gives voice to whom?

I remember that it was *the* public secret in the corridors of the Department of Sociology. The method, and especially that of the maturity examination, was oftentimes seen as a matter of rather superfluous choice that should not be problematised too much. You just had to pick one, and better still was to choose it once the study is done, so it would fit better. I thought: from where does such a methodological difficulty, such an epistemological evasion spring? And, feeling it myself: what questions needed to be asked to resolve it?

To a students eye, sociology seemed to be continuously facing a petty game of balancing between the impossible universality and objectivity on the one side and an all-dissolving, fragmenting relativism on the other. Besides, I was struggling to see in sociology a way for contributing to social change. After a hesitant and conceptually pompous Bachelor's Study about the contemporary uses of militant investigation that helped the factory workers to organise in post-war Italy, I felt that I needed a place for finding out what politically committed investigation really meant today. In that way the principal epistemological –first– and methodological –secondly– question was defined, for me, as a question about the relationship between theory and practice, thought and action, intellect and politics. In some way, I had reached the first small conclusion following the lines of Gilles Deleuze describing said relationship in an 1972 interview with Michel Foucault[47]. He says, that while at a time "practice was considered an application of theory, a consequence; at other times [...] it was thought to inspire theory, to be indispensable for the creation of future theoretical forms", Nonetheless, "their relationship was understood in terms of a process of totalisation", which is not correct. He goes on to explain that

> *"the relationships between theory and practice are far more partial and fragmentary. On one side, a theory is always local and related to a limited field, and it is applied in another sphere, more or less distant from it. The relationship which holds in the application of a theory is never one of resemblance. Moreover, from the moment a theory moves into its proper domain, it begins to encounter obstacles, walls, and blockages which require its relay by another type of discourse (it is through this other discourse that it eventually passes to a different domain). Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall."*

Long story short, I found the place I longed for in Madrid, where the politically effervescent environment of the year of the uprising of the plazas (see historical context in Chapter 4) was complemented by the labour of the already existing collectives of politically committed social investigation. As I started to investigate the housing rights movement I was openly ambiguous about whether it was strictly militant investigation for the movement's organisational needs, or something that could be converted into an academic piece of work. The process of investigation took place in Madrid from September of 2013 to July of 2016 and resulted in this Master's thesis, but also in other texts and lines of collective inquiry. The most notable is the Women's Words Group started for discussing gender and housing in an environment of psycho-social mutual aid. The aim is to keep these seedlings alive and also return the more theoretical outcomes of the process to the community that helped to grow them, offering the previous and future participants of the workshops

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47 Bouchard, Donald F. (ed.) (1981) Intellectuals and power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. In Language, counter-memory, practice: selected essays and interviews by Michel Foucault. New York: Cornell University Press.

an opportunity of evaluation of their own, as is typical for **community-based research[48].**
In order to finish the academic branch of my work, I needed to find an epistemologic point of view I could identify with *within the academy,* so I studied my way into such methodological notions of **political anthropology** as Elizabeth A. Povinelli's anthropology of the otherwise[49] and Valerio Romitelli's ethnography of thought[50]. Both ideas define my way of working: anthropology of the otherwise because it "locates itself within forms of life that are at odds with dominant, and dominating, modes of being"[51] and ethnography of thought because it defines as "thinking the thought of the exploited and oppressed populations [...] without supposing a political subject or essential antagonism [...] but only the fact that such populations think about a reality, their reality, that results strange also to the one who will conduct the investigation, at least until the moment of really doing it"[52].

On the other hand, I needed to understand the likeness of my three years in la PAH –investigating a group I belonged to myself, living with the other members and organising as one of them– with other processes taking place in between the academy and the assembly. So I composed radical anthropology with what I learned from the many feminist women who practice **contemporary militant investigation** in Europe and in Latin America. The work of politically committed investigators such as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar, Marta Malo or Verónica Gago offered me the indispensable examples of *combining intellectual work –within, or on the borders of the academy– with practices of organisation and daily resistance*. These names and concepts are not systematically analysed here, yet can hopefully help other students who long for examples in this direction.

> *3.1 Realms of observation: the phenomenology of the public sphere and the phenomenology of a group*

We could say that I went to Madrid to practice **participant observation.** When I first arrived, I took on participating in the weekly meetings of the central district's housing rights group. By the time it was November, I was positive of not being welcome enough in the group for such a quest I was on, so I moved forward. Arriving to Vallecas district's group PAH Vallekas I made a remark to be open about the ambiguity of my desire: it was not only for the investigation, because I also wanted a sense of belonging. I connected with the group, and entered feeling simply accepted as another member among members, who all had their particular desires and ways of contributing in the common struggle. To organise workshops, to investigate, to theorise about it would be my way.

Once I felt confident enough –which required many informal conversations about the utility of my quest for the group– I started to organise open **workshops** that were called "The Life Affected by Debt". By the time I had also visited Barcelona's founding PAH group, interviewing some of its

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48 Given, M. Lisa (ed.) (2008) The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods. London: SAGE Publications, 97.

49 A. Povinelli, Elizabeth (2011) Routes/Worlds. Journal e-flux 11:27, Internet source, visited 17/09/16: http://www.e-flux.com/journal/routesworlds/

50 Romitelli, Valerio (2005) Etnografia del pensiero: Ipotesi e ricerche. Roma: Carocci editore.

51 A. Povinelli 2011. She goes on to explain that "one can often tell when or where one of [the] forms of life [that are at odds with the dominant ways of being] has emerged, because it typically produces an immunological response in the host mode of being. In other words, when a form of life emerges contrary to dominant modes of social being, the dominant mode experiences this form as inside and yet foreign to its body."

52 Fernández-Savater, Amador (2015) Política partisana contra política de partido. Entrevista a Valerio Romitelli. Internet source, visited 13/10/16: http://anarquiacoronada.blogspot.com.es/2015/12/politica-partisana-contra-politica-de.html

members, and had a clearer idea about the historical, but also emotional foundation la PAH was built upon. The workshops were designed to interrogate the central role of emotions I had been commented during the Barcelona interviews. Was it the same in Vallekas, or was Barcelona's experience a particular one? If there was a generalisable link between guilt and debt, what political conclusions should be drawn, even beyond la PAH?

By the time the first workshop was organised, these questions had already million answers – most of them spun in the small conversating groups in the disobedient Stop Evictions -gatherings, by group members and their beer bottles in the bar of the Self-managed Social Centre that hosted the mutual aid meetings, or by the tired comrades walking home after the demonstration. There was this inside that was so inclusive, a passage so porous, that I could be there from the moment I was trusted by at least some of the other members. And the inside was infinitely rich, and I struggled to understand how to contain it in any academic study. This sphere of observation, the **phenomenology of the group**, undoubtedly forms the core of the case study at hand.

Since a year before my arrival in Madrid I was feverishly following the media coverage la PAH was given, because I wanted to also maintain an idea of the **public phenomena** associated with, and exploited by, the movement. Once I had become a member of PAH Vallekas, my journalism studies came up in a conversation, and in no time I was asked to join the understaffed communication's group. The "inside" and the "outside" of the movement became together as I learned to participate in the daily media watch, had a weekly shift on Twitter, and planned together with the others communiqués on different occasions. These became also the themes of my investigation, as the reader will notice in Chapter 5.

3.2 Defining the material, a posteriori

The most articulated phase of data collection were the workshops about "The Life Affected by Debt". They were held in a series, being three in total, during the spring of 2014. In the workshops we discussed the experience each member had had entering la PAH, contrasted with the previous experience of indebtment. There was a clear focus on the emotional dimension of these different life phases and the transition from one to another. To focus on the emotions (and connect them with the collective action as to get closer of articulating them through the interpersonal affectivity instead of phenomena of the individual psyche) and to diversify the conversations and animate the participation of all, I brought to these workshops prepared dynamics. Some of them were mindmapping the different spaces/forms of collective action, to which we would then attach emotional charge according to our experience. The **group conversations** were all recorded. Some themes were too intimate for some members to be discussed in the group, so we agreed to hold additional **one-on-one interviews**. I have also used some **spur of the moment material** that has been born out of the necessities of the group's communicational strategies –such as Bea's interview, recorded for a Finnish radio programme Totuusradio during the first breakfast in one of the recovered buildings– or simply for pleasure – such as the photography used for illustration.

By the time it was summer in 2014, I faced the end of my investigation due to the end of my Erasmus grant for investigation practices abroad. This got resolved as I started living in one of the buildings PAH Vallekas recovered from the toxic asset company SAREB, reducing my housing costs to cero. After that, there was no way of separating my daily activities into straightforward investigation and non-investigative political participation. For the following one and a half years there was very little time available for a distanced reflection, conditioned by the group I accepted to

be a part of. During that time I found out that for me, Elizabeth Tonkin's judgement about how "when you participate more you register less, and when you register more you participate less"[53] was simultaneously true and completely false. As I, at times, lost the notebook systematicity any good anthropologist should maintain, I felt I gained a register of the chained events and intensities that traversed the group that would not have been possible if I had forced myself into a disciplined model on anthropologist's conduct.

I felt much more at ease once I agreed to the feeling I fostered about my participation in the group: investigation was, in fact, a form of collective political action; theory creation was, in fact, action in itself; thinking became a mode of resistance[54]. I realised this when the absorbent and hectic collective action was momentarily detained for me, and I received a possibility of collective reflection about it in some encounter of the wider network of social movement's to which la PAH belonged. The Italian and Finnish post-workerists wanted to know about the Spanish housing movement, and the preparing of the presentations for EuroNomade's Summer Schools (in two occasions, late summer of 2014 and 2015) or Tutkijaliitto's seminars (in the winter of 2014 and summer of 2015) became moments that permitted retrospection and connectivity betweent he particular experience of PAH Vallekas with the wider panorama of practices of resistance against the neoliberal policies. And not only did these occasions serve for scholarly reflection, but they also gave an impulse, a nudge, a push in the day-to-day in la PAH, where we had to be all the time more cleverer than the bankers and the politicians in the planning of our strategies. They inspired to aspire for more and to think more thoroughly every strategic decision. They reminded of the other worlds of struggle out there, helping to prevent short-sightedness and prepotent thought. Borrowing from Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's and Gunnar Mendoza Loza's terminology[55], they were each one an opportunity for a more exhaustive effort of *getting to the bottom* of this or that.

Those occasions of public exposure of the thought process helped me to put an end, even if momentarily, to the long period of *curiousing around* (Cusicanqui and Loza again), that got me absorbed for a long time. By noting this, I mean by no means to underestimate the long periods of seemingly non-articulated data collection I went through, all the contrary. These phases were important, and they provided me with an understanding of data as wide as is necessarry for an equally complex reality. From witnessing the emotional and bodily reactions in my body as well as in those of others, to the daily informal comparisons about the temporality, intensities and meanings of the different organisational processes, I was gathering **sensitive data**. Raúl Pacheco-Vega has put emphasis on this kind of a sensibility os crucial for ethnographic study[56].

I have also found sensitivity it to be the only way to make decisions in a political environment highly charged with emotion that are coherent and "conscious about the coming together of affect and history in the collective action", as Lauren Berlant defines the "process of dynamic sensual

53 Tonkin, Elizabet (1984) Participant Observation. In R.F., Ellen (ed.) Ethnographic Research: A Guide to General Conduct. London: Academic Press, 216–23.

54 Espai en Blanc (2009) "El pensamiento no sirve para luchar, sino que él mismo es lucha": Entrevista a Santiago López Petít. Internet source, visited 26/09/16: http://blogs.publico.es/fueradelugar/90/%E2%80%9Cel-pensamiento-no-sirve-para-luchar-sino-que-el-mismo-es-lucha%E2%80%9D

55 See Gago, Verónica (2015) Contra el colonialismo interno. Entrevista a Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. Internet source, visited 20/09/16: http://www.revistaanfibia.com/ensayo/contra-el-colonialismo-interno; see also Mendoza Loza, Gunnar (2015) Desde los márgenes. Pensadorxs bolivianxs de la diáspora. Buenos Aires, CLACSO. Both anthropologists use the three terms *curiosear–averiguar–comunicar* to describe the nucleus of their profession. The rough translation to these would be *curiousing around, getting to the bottom of* and *communicating*.

56 Pacheco-Vega, Raúl (2016) On having ethnographic sensibility. Internet source, visited 26/09/16: http://www.raulpacheco.org/2016/09/on-having-ethnographic-sensibility/

data-gathering" in which a "supersensitive intuition" permits the affect to come to being[57]. Sensitive data is composed of bodily sensations, intensities, memory and affect. The capacity of gathering this data, Berlant argues, is historically found in persons, especially women, facing change and taking an active stance to defend life. This kind of an "intuitionist", once "a catastrophe moves [her] out of her comfort zone", makes an effort to

> *"reorganize racial and political memory and sensation into an ongoing present that has to be taken in, navigated, and then moved toward an opening that does not involve rehabituation, the invention of new normativities, or working through and beyond trauma."[58]*

The key element in gathering sensitive data is not to think that the data gathering is limited to the structured occasions that form a part of it (interviews, workshops) and take the practice of **active listening**[59] everywhere you go. Besides encouraging the telling of ones experience or checking facts, active listening is elementary for any engaged investigation. When it is not practiced, the other participants of the investigation process are reduced to informants with a utilitarian function instead of being seen as co-equals – and the investigator, often blinded by the false requirement of universal objectivity, is not transformed in the process because the lack of empathy has impeded or postponed the possibility of subjective change of the investigator.

3.3 About the investigator–investigated-relationship

Active listening is the door to the **labyrinth of dialogue**. The labyrinth as a metaphor carries meanings of unknown (darkness, windings), danger (of gettin lost, of death by the Minotaur) and challenge (of saving one's life, of getting out, of overcoming the beast). As Jussi Vähämäki beautifully illustrates[60], the traditional Dance of the Crane, danced in the island Delos in imitation of the windings of a Cretan labyrinth and in remembrance of Theseus' escape from it. This dance was always danced in a group, never alone. In its dynamic, in which the group forms a line and the positions of the dancers in it keep on changing during the dance, "a strong impression of a wavey movement, with no beginning nor end, is transmitted"[61]. In the Dance of the Crane, exactly like in dialogue as a method of political inquiry, it is all about

> *"a living, scrabbling movement, that forms a sort of a ball that rolls on the ground in a similar way as sometimes done by ants. The dance only provides the form, the internal rhythm for a group of dancers that do not possess previous information about the environment. It creates a pack with no reference to any base, one that wanders ahead by way of probing."[62]*

I find it such a fit description of the investigation process that now, as the academic line of work is finishing, it is impossible to ignore the many other rhythms that gave form to the scrabbling and probing of the environment. There are other dancers, myself included, investing their energy in the dance after the academic part is over. The waves of dialogue have had high points (structured inquiry) as well as lows (opportunities to listen the rumble of the deeper rumblings of the sea), both contributing to understanding the world in order to change it together. This is what it means to do politically engaged investigation. As articulated about the workerist **militant investigation**,

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57 Berlant, Lauren (2011) Cruel Optimism. London & Durham: Duke University Press, 51–93.
58 Ibid., 17.
59 Given 2008, 7.
60 Vähämäki, Jussi (2011) Kurjen tanssi. In Sydänsalama (ed.) Kapinaviive. Tampere: Rohkean reunaan.
61 Ibid., 37.
62 Ibid., 37–38.

> *"the politicity of the investigation stems from the questioning and critique of the relationship between the investigator and the investigated, the specialist and the layman. [...] It is to say, the social relationship in investigation is not a relationship between the subject and the object of knowledge, but a relationship of collaboration and also of confrontation. Neither a relationship based on ingratiation nor an adversarial one, it is an uncertain, tentative relationship between the different."[63]*

From the militant investigation, born in the Italian post-WWII factories and gladly still resistant to blooming in the academic environment, I have brought one methodological notion: my knowledge is not "truer" than that of those who I engage with while I investigate. It is just different.

This is the political dimension of this study. Throughout the process I seeked to relate to the other participants as full and legitimate subjects of knowledge, instead of objects or informants, merely necessary for me to constitute myself as a subject of knowledge. It was not easy, quick or straight-forward (which the Dance of the Crane is not supposed to be). But with every mistake, due to clumsiness or sudden surge of egotism, I learned something new about the labyrinth and the dance that helped to grasp it. I also learned that to succeed in having a genuine dialogue is very rare, both in investigation as in politics. In the multiple possible pitfalls, the figure of investigator tends to carry the same vices than a political leader: exclusive relationship with the truth (investigator epistemologically; political leader ideologically) and the terrible habit of speaking for (investigator for the informants; political leader for the masses, the poor, etc). This is problematic because the words of such figures "are institutionally recognised and in relation to the institutions, and have the tendency to produce effects of power and reproduce the existing power relations"[64].

Yes, I share Romitelli's thought and "sustain that today, in order to try to organise political alternatives, it is indispensable to do investigation among the populations that suffer capitalist politics the most"[65]. However, not at the price of stripping such populations from their knowledge, converting it into something else and returning it to their mouths. Even within an investigator–investigated-relationship that recognises that the investigated is also a subject, *the idea sometimes persists that it is the investigator that gives this subject a voice*: increasing the audability of their thought, but also creating coherence to their expression, interpreting it, clarifying it, and so on. Often the experience of the populations whose voice becomes trransformed in such a way do not recognise their knowledge after such a treatment. It is also due to this that, as Marta Malo argues, "it is possible to trace, throughout contemporary history, a persistent distrust towards certain forms of knowledge production and distribution on the part of movements for social transformation"[66].

So when the time comes to the third phase of engaged investigation, *communicating* of the results (Cusicanqui and Loza one more time), I believe it is the depth –or should I say the irreversibility, as a factor that defines to what extent there is faith invested in the knowledge production process[67]– of the transformation lived by the investigator grasps the experience of the other and can not only speak about it, but dialogue with it. Even when she speaks in another time and space, she should be able to carry the other with her, sense the mark left by the others subjectivity and accept being affected by it. For me, after two years, it is pretty clear to me that it is not me giving a voice to la

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63 Vähämäki, Jussi (2010) Yhteiskuntatutkimuksesta. Internet source, visited 14/10/16:
    https://itsenalistus.wordpress.com/2010/07/27/yhteiskuntatutkimuksesta/
64 Ibid.
65 Romitelli 2015.
66 Malo, Marta (2004) Prólogo. In VV/AA (2004) Nociones Comunes: Experiencias y ensayos entre la investigación y la militancia. Madrid: Traficantes de sueños.
67 On faith and irreversible action, see James, William (1979) The Will to Believe, And Other Essays in Popular Philosophy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 3.

PAH in these pages: it already has a voice, polyvocal and strong, and it does not need me to do the job. On the contrary, it is me who has gained autonomy of thought, capacity of articulation and patience for the epistemic plurality of the world. In fact, I have been given voice by la PAH.

I finish with some questions for the future: what does it mean to practice anthropology, not as the neocolonial study of the Other –as it was historically constructed– nor as study of postmodern sociological identity groups, but as study of multiple entangled differences? Can anthropology be reborn as a genre that permits a certain amount of autoetnography without succumbing to the staring at our navels? Can it spring from a political motivation and sustain a line of intellectual-organisative work with the objective of understanding multiplicity of difference as a resource for emancipatory political action and constructive conflict, not a threat for existence in a setting of competition?

From the Falangist model of economic growth to the transmillenial brick boom and the 2011 uprising of the plazas

The single most important conjunctural factor leading up to la PAH's organisational success is, of course, the bursting of the **mortgage loan bubble** in 2008–2009. Nonetheless, it cannot be isolated as a historical event. The Spanish model of economic growth that lead to the bursting of the bubble dates all the way to General Franco's Falangist dictatorship. The continuity is stable enough for Isidro López and Emmanuel Rodríguez to talk about "the falangist architects of the Spanish model". These architects summed up the necessity of resolving the lack of housing and the need for a **distinctive macro-economic model** that would guarantee growth. In 1957, Franco's Minister for Housing, the falangist José Luis Arrese defined the sought political goal, perfectly Thatcherian twenty years before her time, by saying: *queremos un país de propietarios, no de proletarios* – "we want a country of homeowners, not proletarians". Under these falangist housing policies (even though renting had been the primery option of housing through the 1950s), "by 1970, private ownership accounted for over 60 per cent of housing" in Spain[68].

In the falangist political thought –described as fascist, authoritarian, conservative, anticapitalist, antidemocratic, antiliberal and religiously enforced– this meant an important **social pacification**. Even more importantly, it offered a model for market competition in a situation in which the country wasn't industrially developed so as to rely on exportation. Spain would produce houses instead: first it meant building a house for every Spaniard, but then lead into an economic model in which tourists from both within and beyond its borders could consume in real estate and associated services. The increased international competition didn't favour the model too much though: as the 1973 recession that hit Spain hard combined with Franco's dead in 1975 –starting a political transition– one could have expected the housing policies to change. That was not the case whatsoever, and "the advent of parliamentary democracy brought no change in macro-economic policy. The [Spanish Socialist Party] *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), in power continuously under Felipe González from 1982–96, had no alternative model to propose. Indeed, the strategy for relaunching the economy in the 1980s was based on deepening Spain's existing 'specializations' in tourism, property development and construction, as 'competitive advantages' neatly adapted to the new approaches of the emerging global economy, i.e. high capital mobility and growing competition to capture financial incomes."[69]

The private houseowner model was consolidated, and **incentives for global capital** to enter in the housing market were offered (oftentimes with the excuse that they would include benefits for the private homeowners, even offer them wealth and prosperity, converting them too into "businessmen"). As Ada Colau and Adriá Alemany point out, already within the 1978 Constitution "a tax relief was introduced towards the purchase of a home" and later, "during the years in which the Popular Party was in power, [it] was extended towards second and third homes." (54) The tax

68 López, Isidro & Rodríguez, Emmanuel (2011) The Spanish Model. In New Left Review, 69. Internet source, visited 19/09/16: https://newleftreview.org/II/69/isidro-lopez-emmanuel-rodriguez-the-spanish-model
69 Ibid.

relief was, nonetheless, principally directed to the benefit of the large real estate companies[70].

The option of renting, of course, had to be rendered unfeasible in order to maintain the real estate market growing. During the last two decades of the Franco dictatorship, a social programme that converted **social housing into private property** had been brought forth. This facilitated the gradual dismantling of allotted social housing, and Colau & Alemany (56) confirm that "during the transition to democracy [...] more than 90% of constructed social housing went up for sale and public rental became a residual option". Today Spain has the smallest fraction of public housing within the European countries, with only 1% of the overall housing units destined to public social housing.

When it comes to rental housing market, economic incentives were set in order to favour home ownership. For instance, the "tax reliefs towards deposits within home savings accounts or reductions in value added tax (VAT) towards the sale of property, implemented both by the left and right wing governments, extended tax benefits in favor of home owners and not renters". The legislation on **rental market was deregulated** in 1985, serving as what Colau & Alemany describe the *coup de grace* to the possibility of renting as a viable alternative to buying[71]. And the trend continues up to the day, since in 2012 the Urban Rental Law was reformed again to consolidate the property owners right to shorter minimum contracts, faster eviction procedure in case of nonpayment, shorter notification time for requiring the property for own of family use and dissociation from income statistics allowing the owner to raise the rent above living costs.[72]

Even with renting possibilities miserable both in quantity as in the quality of the associated rights, the situation didn't evolve into a social conflict. The mortgage loan interests were down and the banks would practically sign a loan for anyone. The years 1995–2007 got called **the Spanish brick boom**: the political anatomy they rest upon and the muriad effects on the society have been extensively analysed by Rodríguez & López[73]. By now the effects of these years are widely understood as the basis of the current economical crisis, and their connection with Spain's public debt is becoming clear. One of the interviewee's and a member of PAH Vallekas, Bea, confirms that

> *"[i]n the case of Spain it is very clear that [housing and public debt] are intertwined, because the public debt was not very high before the crash of the [mortgage loan bubble]. The growth of the public debt happened after the bank bailout. It was the money the state put into the banks –and the doubt in the financial markets about whether the government would be able to maintain a stable economy, that made the risk premium skyrocket– that have caused the public debt."*

In Spain this happened as if a political replica of the United States of Ronald Reagan, who parents the **neoliberal regime** together with Margaret Thatcher. In the US od Reagan administration, "*the land,* the territory, played a fundamental role" in the reconfiguration of the economy. Marazzi's description of the operation in the US matches to perfection the steps Spain took little bit more than a decade later:

> *"In the course of the decade of the 1980's, the neoliberal policies legalised the most insatiable real estate speculation that saw how the middle and lower middle class' savings banks (Savings & Loans Associations), already free from any sort of tie thanks to deregulation, catapulted into the real estate market according to clientelist logics that benefitted republican and democrat politicians. In American*

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70 Colau & Alemany 2014, 54–55.
71 Ibid., 55.
72 Ibid., 55–56.
73 López & Rodríguez 2010.

economist James O'Connor's opinion, 'one of the secrets of the boom of the 80's was based on the resulting increase in the demand of consumption that was determined by the expansion of mortgage loans and consumer credit [...].' In fact, during the 'brick ballad', the real estate sector, the construction and the financial sectors created their own demand for credit, to which they answered with the offer of money that nourished itself from the free and forced savings of the savers of middle and lower middle class."[74]

And, as was the case in Spain, "the final result of these operations was a very long series of bankruptcies of banks. The burden of covering the debts of the savings banks fell on the state, and that diminished (and will continue to diminish for several years still) the income distributed to the most disadvantaged groups of the population" (ibid.). Neoliberal policies, in parallel with the exernalisation of public services, have "externalised" the economical losses of their political gambling, leading to a **crisis of representation** that is reaching global dimensions. From these circumstances, new forms of struggle and political innovation are born, and la PAH is one of the groundbreaking examples.

La PAH got founded in the midst of the 2008 U.S. subprime crisis hitting Spain, following the conjunctural analysis of a group of previous participants of preceding housing rights movements. At first it comprehended a group of mortgage loaned people that had come to "seek help" in the face of the imminent nonpayment due to unemployment or precarity. Thanks to the know-how and careful planification of the meeting practices by the founding group, it quickly took wind as a movement in which the principle was that of **mutual aid instead of third-sector assistencialism**. By 2011 it had sparked interest in both the consolidated activist sphere and within the soon-to-be mortgage defaulter around Spain. Besides Barcelona, some other groups were already up – but the real spark for la PAH to grow into a massive networked movement became in the May of the same year under the name of 15M.

15M was an **uprising** by all means, both in the *plazas* and in the social networks. It sparked after succesful coordinated demonstrations claiming "Real Democracy Now" in 50–60 Spanish cities ended in a small group of people camping out in the Madridian square of Puerta del Sol, sending out a message in Twitter: "We have just camped in Puerta del Sol in Madrid, and we are not going away until there is an agreement." Inspired by the recent revolutionary events in Tunisia, Egypt, and other Arab countries, this quickly grew into massive camping protests in hundreds of Spanish cities that were networked and used the digital space in order to produce political analysis and share strategical tools. Even after the camps were taken down, the political potential born in the presential and virtual spaces of collective action continued to grow and take (multiple) form(s). During the year of 2011, bustling with politisation of the society, la PAH experiences a certain "hibridation" with the communicational forms, affective charge, horizontal organisational practices and political analysis of the uprising in the plazas, helps the movement to articulate its practices more clearly in terms of a **systemic critique**. The corruption of the representative democracy (expressed by the 15M slogan "They call it democracy, but that's not what it is") as a fundamental condition for the banking fraud is set to the forefront, and the elaboration of the Popular Legislative Iniciative campaign starts, including the Argentinian inspired *escraches*[75] as a pressure mechanism.

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74 Marazzi 2003, 94.

75 The practice of *escraches* was born in Argentina in 1995 as the human right's group HIJOS started to publicly point their fingers the genocides of the dictatorship of Proceso de Reorganización Nacional during the years 1976–1983, many of whom were pardoned by Carlos Menem in 1990. It consists of organising a protest in front of the home or at the work place of the person denounced to publicly shame them and to create social consciousness by informing the passers-by about the activity s/he engages with and the impunity of the judicial system not condemning the acts.

Back then one of the spokespersons of la PAH, Ada Colau describes this phase as "a perfect encounter between one thing and another", emphasizing 15M's importance in extending the housing movement from Catalonia to the rest of the territories in the Spanish State[76]. This was primarily possible due to the rapidly expanded, popular and collective learning processes 15M pushed forward in the field of autonomous and social media use, the so called **technopolitics**. Whereas 15M has been defined as an uprising of a "generation that was trained and educated in Internet, that had experienced it as its space of sosialisation, information and leisure, that has developed certain common values and critical positions"[77] this was not the case with the initial core composition of la PAH, that was not yet digitally native and based its collective action on presential meetings.

In direct continuity with the U.S. subprime crisis, banks in the eurozone member states of Portugal, Ireland, Greese, Spain and later Cyprus convinced the politicians of their respective countries about the necessity of nationally backing up their financial continuity instead of letting them go bankrupt. This led to said EU countries seeking financial assistance of the European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), profiling the European debt crisis as the most central aspect of European economic, social and political governance for the years to come. Since the Stability and Growth Pact, signed on 2 March 2012, the constitutions of the members countries were modified in order to give primacy to the payment of the sovereign debt at the cost ofcuts on education, health care, social welfare, as well as labour and other democratic rights. This consolidated the European **austerity regime**, intensifying also the social injustice of home evictions against which la PAH organises itself up to 500 every day.

Push coming to shove, 15M's help in systematising la PAH's message about the culprits of the situation was the key: it was *both* bankers *and* politicians that were to be held responsable for the emergency families faced, unemployment on the rise and no economically feasible housing at sight. There was a clear continuity between the governments of the socialist PSOE and the Conservative *Partido Popular* in both the housing reforms degradating rights and in the complicity with the austerity measures becoming the new European standard. With this in mind, la PAH joined 15M's political **critique of the two-party-system**, acknowledging the crisis of representation. It was building up a clever strategy that functioned in multiple levels, not turning its back on the already existing paths of citizen's participation such as the Popular Law Iniciative, but not contenting itself with them either. By 2013, having showed the ignorance and malefice of the administration, it had gained a wide popular legitimacy for direct action practices and civil desobedience previously condemned as marginal forms of juvenile protest.

As the austerity programme intensified, la PAH was pushed towards new compositional challenges. It was not any more only the indebted houseowners that poured into the mutual aid meetings, but also renters, occupiers and the inhabitants of public housing affected by the externalisation scheme, i.e. the selling of this property, primarily to global scale investment funds. This made la PAH a much more **transversal movement.** The transition could be described by saying that *what had previously been a movement of people affected by mortgages became a much more mature movement for the right to housing*. In an especially remarkable manner, la PAH harbours resistance and organisation of the –especially South American– migrant and migrant descendent population. While it's been claimed that the vital experience of the pauperised, autoctonous middle class youth were the key to politisation in the core events of 15M, la PAH has been from the beginning *mestiza*,

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76 Molina, Jordi (2013) "No creo en los maximalismos que llevan a la inacción absoluta": Entrevista a Ada Colau. Internet source, visited 01/08/16: http://www.nuevatribuna.es/articulo/sociedad/-no-creo-en-los-maximalismos-que-llevan-a-la-inaccion-absoluta/20130404114916090558.html
77 DatAnalysis15M & Toret Medina 2015, 54.

multiracial, and since 2011, growingly plural in terms of social strata and, if you please, traditional class composition. The connecting string between the indignation of the disillusioned youth of a depolitisised generation, the collective empowerment of the mortgage defaulters and the ever-so-precarious, feminised labour force is that during the years of debt governance leading to austerity regime they have all seen themselves forced into the avalanche of vital transformations in order to survive. The succes of la PAH is to have been able to convert the capacity of transformation into the fuel for collective action and organisation.

Politics of the symbolic

> *"We do politics of the symbolic, which consists in naming the reality that I live in, but that hasn't found within my world the words that allow it to be said."[78]*

Let us take a leap back in history to the post-war years of the Italian Laboratory that left a legacy for today's struggles visible throughout this study. One of the most relevant strains in the organisational practices of those years, in terms of study of la PAH, is the legacy of the women who, from the late 1960's until around 1995, organised themselves based on the notion of sexual difference. Born in the conditions of the broad metropolitan mobilisations successive to the cycle of workerist struggles, feminism of sexual difference claimed a completely different process of organisation to be conducted autonomously with regards to the leftist politics of the period, and exclusively by women. The core organisational practice was called *autocoscienza femminista*. Similarly to the practices of feminist consciousness raising groups that gathered in United States at the time, *autocoscienza* meant talking with other women about the reality of living in a patriarchal society as a woman. Very quickly it meant coming to grips with the fact that it was impossible to even start to name that reality without questioning and subverting the symbolic structure inherent to the patriarchal society. The women of Milan decided to call their practice *the politics of the symbolic*. They had already found out in practice that which Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani would decades later write about social movements – that their "activity largely consists of practices more or less directly linked to symbolic production, and that this element [was] not a precondition for conflict but, rather, one of its constituent parts" (p.74). In this chapter I shall study the parallelism between these women's groups and la PAH when it comes to the *power of the word* in resignifying the reality and, through creating new semantic fields, making sense of the experience of indebtment.

5.1 Mutual aid meetings: a space of empowerment

Since the beginning of my getting to know la PAH, the most told anecdote was the relief people experience putting into words their experience of suffering caused by debt . Later, as I found a PAH group of my own and started to participate actively in the Madrid district of Vallecas, I started to witness this meeting after meeting. As I observed and even experienced myself that "the language we speak and the voice we have for speaking [have an] admirable capacity to subvert the real"[79], I started to study the symbolic dimension of collective action in la PAH more closely in order to understand the connection between the speech act and empowerment.

The first interview I did was with Ada Colau, one of the founders of la PAH, and back then, one of its spokespersons. The main thing I wanted to ask her was what kind of a genealogy had lead to such a clear conception of basing the organisational process on the power of the word. Her answers tell of a historical departure point that was unexpected for the founders of la PAH and pushed them towards experimenting within the field of the politics of the symbolic. She says:

> *"When we founded the Platform in the beginning of the crisis in 2009, we who founded it came from the previous experience of struggle for the right to housing. We knew a mortgage scam had taken place, that*

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78 Librería Mujeres de Milán 2006, 8.
79 Ibid., 195.

the population had been massively deceived, that the state and the banks had told housing was the best and the most secure investment... so when all that blows up, our understanding was that we were about to find ourselves with a lot of people affected by this and angry, because clearly they had been ripped off. With that, we were counting on a subject that was about to get mobilised, to start to negotiate with the banks and with the political powers.

We were right about the intuition that there was a really serious problem, even bigger than we had thought. However, we were wrong about the idea of people being angry. All the contrary: we started to call out the first meetings, dozens and dozens of affected people started appearing, but each one more depressed than the previous. **We found ourselves with persons that weren't even able to speak**, *not able to explain what was happening to them, people who started to talk and broke down crying, that spoke* **of depression, of anxiety, of suicide attempts, of feelings of guilt, of shame**, *and throughout this they were more worried about their neighbours or relatives finding out [about their situation] than of losing the home ownership."*[80]

In this way, the first collective learning experience in la PAH was the connection between debt and guilt, that went hand in hand with the experience of the mortgage defaulters. In the German language this connection gets overlapped by the polysemy of a sole word: *die Schuld*, that is, both debt and guilt. The guilt caused by having acquired a debt, now impossible to pay, is experienced as shame. In the words of one of the veterans of la PAH, José Coy:

"The problem that we, victims of the crisis face when we hit rock bottom and realize that it is not possible to take care of the debts, [is] to overcome **the shame, the stigma and fear associated with the process**, *and to dare to talk about the situation we are facing."*[81]

Dani, a member of PAH Vallekas not directly indebted himself, sums the emotional baggage the newcomers bring to la PAH:

"Because people have had to swallow their worries about debt for so long, because it's not easy to tell your relatives and so on, of course you don't want them to worry but also because it has made you feel like a loser that you can't pay it no longer... So you tell it in la PAH and in that way **la PAH becomes a bit like collective therapy.***"*

Collective therapy maybe, but not one based on a psychological interpretation of the suffering. As the agenda of la PAH's initial mutual aid meetings started to become clearer, it did so in order to contest the, back then, widely accepted idea that indebtment as access to housing was only a matter of private contractual relationship, and by no means a political issue of the first order. In this way, despite the therapeutic effect, the meetings promoted from the beginning a social and political explanations of the suffering instead of psychological ones. It suffices to say, that the now widespread format of **mutual aid meetings** was born as a response to the individualisation of the issue of massive indebtment of society in order to access to housing. The malaise suffered as a symptom of the contradiction between the individualisation and the enormity of the phenomenon can also be understood as a symptom of a society in which the different kinds of "ties of belonging" at the level of political or neighbourhood communities driven by a shared interest have disappeared, become ephemeral, or transformed into commodified caricatures of the same. As Yolanda puts it, in la PAH there is

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80 Molina 2013.
81 Coy, José (2014) Yes We Can! In Colau, Ada & Alemany, Adrià (2014) Mortgaged Lives: From the housing bubble to the right to housing, 17–20. Translated by Michelle Teran & Jessica Fuquay. Los Angeles/Leipzig/London: Journal of Aesthetics & Protest Press.

> *"**a sensation of closeness**, a disposition to work together offering your time to help others when you can, and this **makes me feel there is a community here**. All that makes me feel better [...] and people also learn to show that affection to each other."*

The sense of belonging gets reflected also when Wilson sums up the mood change he experienced after entering la PAH:

> *"When I didn't yet know what to do, when I found myself with no way out, I was desperate. I didn't know what to do, how to face this, and logically you feel very low when **you're not a part of anything** – you just want to disappear."*

"Not being a part of anything" would be one way of expressing the problem of solidarity introduced in the introduction of this study. It is also a recurrent theme throughout the group conversations that constitute the data of the study. Notions such as Rosa's "I didn't have a family before, not really, only when I found la PAH", despite the fact that she has a husband and three children, do speak of a broadening of the scope of meaning found through the participation in la PAH. And, through the negation, they speak of a society with little or no solidarity at all, with no connections (or only chains disguised as such). As Rosa, Coy too is happy to confirm though, that "thanks to la PAH a lot of folks have gotten out of that stress and of that suffering [of not being a part of anything]."

Besides the "being part", there is also another important component in the solidarity found in la PAH. It is freedom, understood not as an individual independency that erases the ties between the individuals but as "the human characteristic of creating in cooperation a common shared world that doesn't yield to anyone's dictation, let those be the most powerful, the richest, the most competent or the most cynical", as Montserrat Galcerán defines it[82]. Freedom is here exercised through the choice of making a social and political investment in being part of the "family PAH", as opposed or in addition to –like in the case of Rosa– the marital family that deserves her critique implicit in the praise of la PAH. It is under the condition of freedom that the search for solidarity and ties of belonging should be understood, and not as a desire of returning to the communitarian form as understood by modern sociology: couple, family, school, church... Such an appeasement would have too high a price! Cecilia, a mortgage loan defaulter and a member of PAH Vallekas whose struggle for freedom of debt was entangled with the struggle for autonomy as a woman, offers an example of how choosing la PAH as an environment for her ties of belonging was also due to wanting to get out of the stress her marriage was undergoing:o due to wanting to get out of her marriage:

> *"I'm really happy for having gone [to la PAH], because I was feeling imprisoned in my own house. I felt like I was in a prison and I wanted freedom but I didn't know how. I had been wanting to divorce from him for a time and getting rid of the mortgage, but it was impossible, it was 180.000 euros! And **I couldn't get free...**"*

> *"I knew from 2009 onwards that I wanted to get a divorce and I've always told my friends: I'm in a prison. I left home twice, but **I had to come back because both the bank and my husband were pressing on me**, they both called me incessantly telling me I had to return home and keep on paying because my name figured in the mortgage loan contract."*

> *"Everything was good until we got married, job opportunities started to be a problem, and there was no more money in the house. He couldn't stomach it and started to attack me psychologically. He blamed me*

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82 Galcerán, Montserrat (2009) Deseo (y) libertad. Una investigación sobre los presupuestos de la acción colectiva. Madrid: Traficantes de sueños, 14.

> *for everything, but* **deep down I knew it wasn't my fault** *and nobody should have to suffer this. That's why* **what I want to do now is to be free**. *I don't wanna have any more debt, not with the bank and not with men. I want absolute, total freedom."*

I shall call this subjective change, experienced as a mixture of striving towards ties of belonging based on solidarity and freedom, *empowerment*. The term is often used by the members of la PAH ourselves in order to describe the subjective elements of the adhesion to the group, and it is used by the interviewed members, Yolanda for instance:

> *"We continuously see* **people who arrive with a very heavy emotional weight on their shoulders empowering themselves***, and that happens when they don't feel alone anymore."*

The term empowerment is also widely used in social sciences to define processes of becoming conscious of the socio–economic and political structures, typically in order to change them together with others sharing the same interest. In this sense, as the voices quoted here acknowledge, it means taking an active role in molding one's own destiny. This is a process that produces effects that potentially touch many other areas of life than that of housing. We can, therefore, consider la PAH not only as a sort of "housing rights office", as we confirm it pushes forward subjective processes that exceed simply allowing its members to restore the situation previous to the housing crisis. Correspondingly, Dani describes empowerment not as a return to what one was before:

> *"I remember so many people who have arrived here with such an enormous burden, and many of the people when they see themselves freed from it, it's as if* **they did this great jump***: not only they not return to what they were like before* **but it's more... as if** **there had been a change that has happened inside of them***."*

Empowerment is a "jump" into another way of figuring oneself and one's relationship with the other, and "changing from inside out" in the process. In the following three subchapters I propose an analysis of the empowerment process divided into three fundamental stages (that are not always chronological but fundamentally intertwined and dependent one on another): the utterance, the ethics of collective action and common notions understood as production of meanings that make sense.

5.1.1 The utterance

As we delve deeper into la PAH's politics of the symbolic, we must take a closer look into the speech act in la PAH's mutual aid meetings. In order to do this, the notions of an *utterance* and *enunciation* come in handy. For Mikhail Bakhtin an utterance is the smallest language unit through which meaning-making can be studied. While for Bakhtin, more a philosopher of language than a linguist, the sentence is a merely grammatical unit, an utterance is directly related to the question of ethics, as will be studied in the following subchapter.

I illustrate the question with the help of the four requirements Bakhtin establishes for a speech act to be defined as an utterance. Extracted from John Shotter's work on Bakhtin, the four points demand what an utterance must have: boundaries, responsivity/dialogicity, finalisation, and generic form.[83] Now what would each one of these general elements mean in the particular context of la PAH?

> 1) *Boundaries: "All utterances must be bounded by a 'change of speech subject'."* Most typically, Shotter confirms, this means silence. What an insane, if not completely impossible

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83 Shotter, John (2016) Notes on Bakhtin's Focus on 'the Utterance' as His Unit of Inquiry. Internet source, visited 26/03/2016: http://pubpages.unh.edu/~jds/Bakhtinnotes.htm

demand for starters! The emotional density of la PAH's meetings, together with the informality and plural use of the space (the children, the dogs, the Tupperware dinners, the interruptions of other user members of the Social Centre and so on) often translate into an incessant cacophony. We can confirm that this condition limits the meetings' effectivity insofar it depends on the affective intensity and precision of the enunciative act. What help is there for such a condition? Having **an appointed, rotative moderator** in the meetings is the most basic response to the need to provide boundaries for the speech act, thus creating conditions for an utterance. Following Bakhtin's line of thought, confirmed by first-hand experience, the failure to produce the necessary conditions through moderation can impede the empowerment and adhesion to the group[84], as the meetings fall into an infinite chaos of opinions that do not construct dialogicity (which is conveniently our next stop).

2) *Responsivity or dialogicity: "The utterance must be either responding/following a previous utterance or generating dialogue."* There is a strong idea of a certain linguistic interdependence in Bakhtin. In la PAH's mutual aid practices, this idea becomes realised in as **collective counseling**. When a newcomer has expressed their situation, the moderator typically opens up a round of comments. These comments should respond to the utterance of the newcomer by way of expressing experience that resemble his/her situation. After the comments round or mixed up with it, typically another round of debate takes place as to engage the newcomer in a *dialogue* about his/her chosen course of action.

3) *Finalisation: "An utterance must have a clear ending, and only occurs if the speaker has said everything he or she wishes to say."* While the rotative role of moderator exists in the mutual aid meetings to promote active listening, it should also point out any lack of respect to the finalisation of the speech act in order to make possible an utterance. But it is a tricky question! In la PAH the speech act is oftentimes cut, principally in two ways. For one, when the narrative of a person produces in the other meeting participants a "saturation point" in which enough of the narrated experience is recognised and the responses start to flow, even despite the moderation, anticipating the finalisation. Secondly, when the moderator or another participant feels –correctly or not, without any collective judgement taking place– that so much time is being dedicated to this person's speech act that it is unfair towards the other persons present. In this sense, it is possible that an utterance, in Bakhtian terms, doesn't take place in an accomplished way the first time it is attempted. If there is a follow-up attempt, it probably takes the following, fourth, element better into account.

4) *Generic form: "The choice of the speech genre is determined based on the specific circumstances and sphere in which the dialogue occurs."* Unlike Ferdinand de Saussure's parole, free to become realised by the individual in any possible combination of words in any given surroundings, Bakhtin's utterance must recognise the context of enunciation[85]. Many of the failures of producing the conditions for a accomplished utterance regard the lack of understanding of the newcomer of the context in which it will take place. Since la

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84 It would be fairly simple to conduct a small case investigation into the ratio of people staying or leaving after such a failure in the collective action (even though the variants are endless and close to impossible to control).

85 Comparing the two linguists, Bakhtin seems more useful for the study of political organisational practices due to his hypothesis of the central role of speech act in a group. For Bakhtin "it is not language-as-a-system that makes the utterance possible, but responsive utterances that makes language-as-a-system possible" (Shotter 2016). While Saussure focused on studying the language as an abstract system, in Bakhtin we find concretion that permits his linguistic theory to become connected with the another kinds of theories, even with the micropolitical practice.

PAH is an expansive organisational process that continuously engages with new participants, many of whom do not previously recognise social movements or unions as distinguishable spaces of socialising, a strong collective effort is needed for the contextualising to happen. In the practice of la PAH this has meant organising **welcome sessions** previous to the meetings. That way, entering the space of sharing experiences and preparing to tell one's own, a minimum of context is guaranteed.

All of these four dimensions Shutter establishes for the definition of a Bakhtinian utterance relate to the interpersonal, or group aspects of a speech act that demand us to reflect upon how should we speak (and act, in a wider sense) together – and this is the definition of ethics, no more no less.

Given the intrinsic nature of the interpersonal and therefore the ethical dimension in such a basic act as speech, there can be no collective action without some sort of an ethical notion. Likewise, there can be no strategic contemplation of collective action without having to deal with ethics.

5.1.2 The ethics of affirmation, vulnerability and potentia agendi

Such recent analysis of indebtment as David Graeber's[86], based on fundamentally moral conclusions of the transition from the power relationship to the empowerment, merit a clear division to be made between ethics and moral before anything else. I understand ethics as "the discourse about forces, desires, and values that act as *empowering modes of being*" whereas "morality is the established sets of rules"[87] that by definition do not encourage empowerment but obedience. Moreover, in accordance with Heidi White, "our experience in the world shows us that ethical disputes cannot be settled by a simple appeal to the 'moral truth'."[88] As "the world lends itself to many conflicting interpretations: political, economic, religious, and cultural" (ibid.), ethics is an explicitly collective issue born from the plurality, the many different perspectives. Ethics is, by definition, a *question* (how do we live together?), not a fixed answer (offered by different moral scriptures and traditions – but it is precisely from those I wish to distantiate myself by choosing ethics instead of moral). In the case of ethics of collective action this holds true in an even more accentuated way, if possible.

I propose a definition of la PAH's ethics of collective action by composing it out of three definitions of ethics (namely those of Rosi Braidotti's, Judith Butler's and Baruch Spinoza's, that shall be introduced along the road). To start with grounding the question: where, and in what ways, do ethics surface in the day-to-day of la PAH's collective action? Can we consider ethics are actually encrypted into the strategies of collective action, while continuously re-negotiated through their practice and the inevitable, necessary conflicts this negotiation includes? Isn't the utterance produced in the meeting of mutual aid the first gesture charged with ethical questioning? Or even before: isn't already the reason for arriving into the meeting the first shade of ethical doubt about the treatment suffered by the banks and even the society at large? Braidotti answers positively:

> "**'I can't take it anymore' is an ethical statement**, *not the assertion of defeat. It is the lyrical lament of a subject in process who is shot through with waves of intensity, like a set of fulgurations that illuminate her self-awareness, tearing open fields of self-knowledge in the encounter and configuration with*

86   Graeber, David (2011) Debt: The First 5000 Years. New York: Melvillehouse, 90–110.
87   Braidotti, Rosi (2006b) Affirmation versus Vulnerability: On Contemporary Ethical Debates. In Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy, 10:1, 235–254.
88   White, Heidi (2010) William James's Pragmatism: Ethics and The Individualism of Others. In European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy, II/1, 89–99.

others."[89]

For Braidotti, ethics mean fundamentally an act of affirmation.[90] This dimension, first of the three I will use, is strikingly visible in la PAH's practice of enunciation. In a parallel way with cognitive science and attachment theory that sustain that the psychological healing process can only start after the patient has fully affirmed his/her experience of suffering, la PAH's first ethical notion –not as a community of therapy, but of organisation based on a common interest– is to affirm the suffering associated with the indebtment. In a way, it is as simple as it is to hear, after a long time of doubting it in solitude, words that say: no, you are not crazy, it is normal for you to have suffered, and no, it is not your fault. As Yolanda reflects,

> *"many of us might not have had any place where to express ourselves, where to talk about this [experience of indebtment]. So the meetings are very emotional, but there* **it is OK that you cry, there is no shame about it.***"*

The affirmation, it must be noted, is intrinsically collective: maybe because only a collective affirmation is strong enough to struggle against the hegemonic narrative about the crisis. In a way, it is not an auto-affirmation we are seeing, but an affirmation granted by a group. When evaluated the ethics of the group that grant the collective affirmation, we must focus in the capacity of the acts they inform leading (or not) into a process of empowerment. As Braidotti argues, the "object of ethical inquiry is not the subject's moral intentionality, or rational consciousness". On the contrary, the ethical inquiry is directed at "the effects of truth and power that [one's] actions are likely to have upon others in the world". The ethical action takes place in an intrinsically collective environment and can never be thought in terms of solitary ponderings, more apt to lead into moral judgements than into ethical questioning. Even so, sometimes "taking distance" from the heat of the collective action can, undoubtedly, inform the group's actions, pushing them to ask newly relevant ethical questions that haven't come up before. Such is the example of Dani's personal disagreement with the ethic chosen by the group in the case of a conflict that was born in the communal life la PAH fosters:

> *"Sometimes we fail in doing things together the right way. Like when [one of the members of PAH Vallekas] took down the window glasses of [one of the recovered buildings] in order to sell them and everybody got mad. I think it was because he didn't realise he did anything wrong. And then we talked about it in the general meeting... and it was really embarrassing for him. I thought* **it would have been better to avoid causing that sense of humiliation.***"*

The protection each member –of a society or of one PAH group– deserves for the mere sake of his/her existence defines Butler's concept of ethics. For Butler, ethics means recognising the vulnerability of the other.[91] The difficulty of conserving this recognition, and thus ethical action, throughout the multiple social environments we inhabit is the consequence of dehumanising frames

89   Braidotti, Rosi (2011) Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti. New York: Columbia University Press, 318.
90   Braidotti, Rosi (2012) The New Activism: A Plea for Affirmative Ethics. In De Cauter, Lieven; De Roo, Ruben & Vanhaesebrouk, Karel (eds.) Art and activism in the age of globalization. Rotterdam: Nai Publishers.
91   Popuri, Haritha (2014) Vulnerability and Responsibility: Judith Butler's Political Rendering of Levinasian Ethics. In HINGE: Journal of Contemporary Studies, 20/14, 20–28.

that "set those others outside of the realm of perceptual awareness and concern".[92] This is precisely what the right-wing politics are about: let it be dehumanising Middle-Eastern immigrants through demonising Islam or justifying austerity programs in South-Europe by defining the populations as "lazy pigs", what is sought is to place these others outside of the sphere of ethical action (to justify exploitation, oppression and violence). As we see, the definition stands in compliance with Braidotti's, who too, following Luce Irigaray and Gilles Deleuze, asks from ethical action the recognition of "the effects of truth and power that [one's] actions are likely to have upon others in the world"[93].

Secondly, what we find in Butler's ethics of vulnerability is the much needed presence of the body. As she confirms, even when analysing the symbolic dimension of collective action we must bear in mind, that there is no language without the body: "Language emerges from the body, constituting an emission of sorts."[94] There is no enunciative capacity unless there is an embodied experience to be expressed. On the other hand, as Butler goes on to note, "the body carries its own signs, its own signifiers, in ways that remain largely unconscious"[95]. To this I might add: these bodily signs contribute in an inseparable way to the language understood in the wider, Bakhtian sense, as not only as a linguistic but also an ethical act. In this act also the tone of voice and the bodily gestures contribute in the ethical act. This was already known by the Women of Milan, from whom I have borrowed the initial definition of the politics of the symbolic. They saw the voice as inseparable from the language –for them, "mother's language", the result of their particular process of empowerment as heavy in ethical weight as that born in la PAH– that "tells the world and the relations attached to the coincidence between the words, the human body that emits them, and the things"[96]. In a strict sense this could mean, that only by way of speaking from the body, by speaking of an embodied experience, can one's speech act be considered an ethical act.

The notion of vulnerability makes of the body an unsurpassable factor when considering the ethics of collective action. And indeed, in la PAH a variety of different bodies share the condition of vulnerability. It must be duly noted, that some are more vulnerable than others, and that much effort is put into planning the strategies of collective action in a way that permits the participation of even the most vulnerable bodies (of the elderly, the children, the undocumented migrants...). That, too, is an ethical notion entangled with the strategic thought. The idea is to make it possible for everybody to widen their capacity to act (having affirmed the desire to change the circumstances and taking into account their particular vulnerability). With a little bit of help from Spinoza, who built his thought on the basis of the idea of *potentia agendi* (capacity or power to act) we can complete the concept of the ethics of collective action in la PAH.

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92 Gilson, Erinn (2014) The Ethics of Vulnerability. A Feminist Analysis of Social Life and Practice. New York & London: Routledge, 65.
93 Braidotti 2006a, 14.
94 Butler, Judith (2004) Undoing Gender. New York: Routledge, 198.
95 Ibid., 198.
96 Librería Mujeres de Milán 2006, 10.

Let us consider with Spinoza, that there is an affective dimension that traverses both the body that speaks and acts, as well as the words it emanates. For Spinoza, the speech is directly dependent on the imagination, and consequently, on the body and the affects –which are not simply emotions, but the effect of others' action over us perceived as emotions. Secondly, the affects are always either joyful or sad, the first increasing and the latter decreasing the *potentia agendi*, one's power to act.[97] The Spinozan ethical action can therefore be defined, in a very summarised way, as action that produces joyful affects and thus increases *potentia agendi*. It is in this very way that we can understand why a mutual aid meeting is a more ethical[98] space of action than a lawyer's office that, in order to feign defense, rips the person affected by mortgage of his/her last pennies and denies his/her political agency.

There are many indicators of joyful affects being actively sought and produced in la PAH. A few of the examples could be the planning of the meetings to start and end with news of the latest small victories that prompt the collective *potentia agendi*[99], from the festive civil disobedience tactics employed in the bank office occupations, to an exemplary recent event organised in PAH Vallekas, in which all of the bank-owned buildings recovered for a social use were toured in order to celebrate the four years of struggle. Yolanda expresses the importance of joyful affects in multiple occasions, placing emphasis on how

> *"even though there is much drama and stress in la PAH,* **we're definitely not always crying**. *Even though I'm crying now [in the interview] I prefer to laugh, and there is much of laughter in la PAH. What I love most is the collective celebrations of advances and the expansion of the group, of getting to know each other and create an alternative family."*

> *"It is true that sometimes the [organisational] process is frustrating, but* **in the end of almost every week there is some small achievement we have made and that's gratifying**. *And if not, it would be much harder to continue for sure."*

In this way we return to Braidotti's definition, newly resonating with Spinoza's idea of joyful affects, so closing the circle of these three definitions of ethics. Braidotti reminds us that while

> *"repugnant and unbearable events do happen,* **ethics consists [...] in reworking these events in the direction of positive relations.** *This is not carelessness or lack of compassion but rather a form of lucidity that acknowledges the meaninglessness of pain and the futility of compensation. It also reasserts that the ethical instance is not that of retaliation or compensation, but rather* **it rests on active transformation of the negative.**[100]

Wilson, after empowering himself in PAH Barcelona, describes the empowerment in a way that reflects the "reworking of repugnant and unbearable events in the direction of positive relations":

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97 Deleuze 2012.
98 It must be noted that "being more ethical" of the space of encounter does not automatically result in it being more efficient in solving each particular problem its members face with housing. It might be possible to prove though, that it is more efficient in terms of understanding the problem and consequently resolving it as a non-particular, but rather common problem that needs novel answers (that are born through the *conflict* that sets change in motion).
99 See the booklet containing the resources necessary for organising the workshop: Parera, Mireia (ed.) (2014) Manual de facilitación para las Plataformas de Afectados por la Hipoteca", Internet source, visited 3/10/16: http://www.facilitacion.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/ManualPAH-Cast.pdf
100 Braidotti, Rosi (2010) The Politics of Life Itself and New Ways of Dying. In Coole, Diana & Frost, Samantha (ed.) (2010) New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 201–217.

*"**Before when I went to the bank I was fearful of just speaking with the director**, to address him, but now with la PAH I go to the bank and I feel self-confident, if they speak to me I am able to answer, **before I did not have that help.**"*

*"If you go and empower yourself with la PAH, you won't need someone to accompany you because **la PAH gives you an mechanism to be able to speak for yourself** [...] I have learned to go to a bank without fear."*

*"Since they accepted me in la PAH **I'm in gloria**!"*

The empowerment born through the enunciation pushes towards an implication in the definition the ethics of collective action. I have proposed three fundamental requirements for la PAH's ethics, having observed their variation from meeting to meeting and between different local groups. These requirements of an ethical action typical for la PAH would be

1) possibility of affirming the experience of suffering as unfair (through the responsivity that an utterance entails),
2) being able to count on other's help (having been recognised as a vulnerable body and taken into the scheme of mutual aid), and
3) recovering, step by step, the power to act on one's own behalf (having one's *potentia agendi* increased –of which joy is a symptom– through the group).

What is here composed is, borrowing from Braidotti, "a kind of ethical pragmatism" that carries within itself "the notion of embodied materialism", as I too have sought to argument with the additional help of Butler's and Spinoza's thought. This ethical pragmatism also carries within it "a non-unitary vision of the subject": a thought of how each one of us is in a *continuous and collective process of subjective construction and transformation.*[101] Ethical pragmatism, or pragmatic ethics, is based on a guide for action that is collectively conjured up and continuously negotiated in order to better reflect the plurality and transformation of its creators. It can well be thought as a guide that is based on *utility* of the guidelines it promotes in a given context. In the case of la PAH the utility, too, must be defined taking into account the three ethical dimensions fundamental to la PAH: affirmation, vulnerability and *potentia agendi.*

5.1.3 Common notions: meanings that make sense

Borrowing from William James: the reality in which the pragmatic ethics are used to navigate is, fundamentally, a reality we can only confirm to exist through experience – *the experience of all*[102]. To have a clearer and more true idea of the reality that is wider than the experience of any one body can perceive, we need to put our diverse experiences together and produce common notions. Of course here it is suitable to ask, if the implicit parallelism between "all" and "the members of la PAH" isn't taking the argument too far. But let us consider that *to know something about the reality is always knowing something about one particular reality*. Inasmuch as there are, indeed, multiple realities depending on the social, economical and political status any particular body enjoys or lacks, common notions are always restricted to knowing one of them – the one shared by the ones who decide to put their experiences in common in order to make sense of it.

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101 Braidotti 2006b.
102 See James 1979, 184–215. James argues (184): "[t]here is no such thing possible as an ethical philosophy dogmatically made up in advance. We all help to determine the content of ethical philosophy so far as we contribute to the race's moral life. In other words, there can be no final truth in ethics any more than in physics, until the last man has had his experience and said his say."

Because of this practice of sharing emotionally charged experiences as a way of adhesion to the group and an entrance point to it's other activities, we sometimes jokingly call the initial round of the PAH newcomers the "Alcoholics Anonymous round". Humour as a pretext, there is a certain parallelism in the ethics of collective action of la PAH. Overcoming shame and isolation based on a social stigma through affirmation of a shared social condition is the key issue in AA as well as in la PAH meeting's as an initational rituel that pushes forward the empowerment process – we could, in fact, consider there to be a parallelism in the analysis of suffering that is being constructed in both collective spaces. When Gregory Bateson writes[103] about the causes of alcoholism as they become understood in the AA-space, he proposes that

> *"Bernard Smith, the non-alcoholic legal representative of A.A., came close to the mark when he said,"the [A.A.] member was never enslaved by alcohol. Alcohol simply* **served as an escape from personal enslavement in the false ideals of a materialistic society***" (A.A., 1957, p. 279)."*

In a similar manner, while la PAH is producing and updating a more nuanced collective analysis on the debt crisis, it is based on the previously made and fundamental background analysis that offers one important certainty. That certainty would be, paraphrasing Smith, that the debt acquired by the families and persons was never the actual enslavement, but rather "served as an escape from personal enslavement" in a society that has set a market value on fundamental rights such as housing. This previous, accumulated analytical work on the causes and culprits of the real estate bubble constitutes a strong factor in the empowerment process.

Another possible parallelism is the one detected by the United States debt resistance movement StrikeDebt in relationship to the previous gay movements in the 80's and 90's. When StrikeDebt faced the same departure point of guilt-ridden muteness symptomatic for the indebted condition, they sought help from the gay movement's practices of coming out of the closet in order to loosen the fear and open the highly individualised question of debt towards collective organisation[104]. Indeed, such an investigation as Gould's on ACT UP's struggle against AIDS[105] offers an analysis on the role of emotion in the organisational process that has a striking similarity with today's forms of shame due indebtedness and debt resistance. In both of the historical processes that resonate together even over the time, it is the encounter of similar suffering that puts the individual experience in a larger context, easing the pain. For Rosa this has become very clear:

> *"I was in a terrible condition, in an awful state. But then* **I saw that everybody was the same***, or even worse! Then* **I couldn't feel so bad anymore myself***."*

In a similar way, even without a mortgage loan of his own, Dani feels that participating in la PAH makes even other problems related to precarity suddenly shrink:

> *"When you're like, 'damn, what the f***k will happen with my life', when for a moment everything is broken and you blame yourself,* **when you go to the meeting and see how other people gather the strength** *to rise and speak up...* **that makes you see your problems differently***."*

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103 Bateson, Gregory (1971) The Cybernetics of "Self": A Theory of Alcoholism. In Psychiatry, 34, 1–18.
104 This parallelism was proposed by George Caffentzis during his visit to Madrid in July 2014. He participated in a conference on debt, organised by Observatorio Metropolitano in Traficantes de Sueños as documented in: https://www.traficantes.net/actividad/conferencia-george-caffentzis-la-relacion-entre-micro-deudas-y-las-macro-deudas
105 Gould 2009.

The importance of the combined practice of explaining the suffering and showing yours is not an isolated case, and it goes far beyond the positive psychological effects it might cause. As we have observed, the first common notions born in the collective aid meetings are those related to the emotional suffering associated with the debt. They are fundamentally based on the empathetic capacity of identifying with the other person's experience. Spinoza would call it "the imitation of affects", saying what happens is that the imagination confuses my body with that of the other, and imitates the affects it is experiencing. So actually, there are two initial common notions: firstly, the fact that my suffering is not an isolated case nor of "psychologic" nature, but rather caused by a set of economic and political tendencies consciously sought by concrete set of persons and reproduced in a less conscious way by another set of people; secondly, the realisation that if the first fact holds true, my empathetic reaction to the other's suffering is not a merely "psychological" reaction either, but has material, interest-based grounds. It is to say: inasmuch I foster the desire to change the course of my suffering, I have now come to realise that I need to take on the task of changing yours, too!

This I must not do alone, of course. Witnessing and sharing other people's lives through belonging to la PAH changes the way one perceives his/her relationship with others. In many cases it results in a capacity of "maintain[ing] present, at all times, that firstly we're not isolated persons but rather always inserted in dynamic ensembles of connections and relationships that precede us and that we, at the same time, produce through our daily actions"[106]. Dani has experienced it in this way, too:

> *"Me, before la PAH I was a person that was always at home, not paying attention to any of what was happening with my neighbours, not seeing that there are people that are in a bad situation... but* **since I go to la PAH I also interact much more with my neighbours** *and think in general that the world would be a better place if we all didn't wander around in the mode 'all that matters is me and my stuff'. It would be a better place simply because* **we would realise we can make it [the world] a better place little by little.***"*

Here we see how the "subjective knot" the private indebtment has created is starting to become disentangled. The subjective knot functions on two levels: first on the level of personal suffering (erroneously perceived as a result of merely individual decisions, seen in a complete vacuum of socio-economical conditions and unaffected by the context of, for instance, public housing policies); and secondly on the level where these multiple personal experiences become articulated as the fabric of society (converted into a structure of compartments of individuals who only engage with the other individuals through contractual or instrumental relations). Here private debt has served as one of the strongest mechanisms pushing further the neoliberal hypersegmentation of the society, privatisation of life forms and individualisation of social issues. When the richness effect created during the years of the real estate bubble is blown away, we see the high cost hidden by the mortgage's unreadable clauses[107] and, more than anything, by the public policies that dismantled the system of welfare and democratic rights in order to save the banks.

When all these continuously evolving, systemic and highly political factors related to one's suffering (that can no more be considered as merely personal) come to light in la PAH's meetings of mutual aid, a notion of *interdependence* is born. It comes through as a realisation of how there is something bigger going on than my little story – and that, by participating in this something bigger,

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106 Gago 2016.
107 European Court ruled in 2013 that the Spanish mortgage law was abusive because it permitted the installation of martgage contract clauses that are antagonic to the European consumer protection directive. See "European Court rules Spanish mortgage law is abusive", El Páis. Internet source, visited 04/10/16: http://elpais.com/elpais/2013/03/14/inenglish/1363264199_406548.html

having been enriched by the encounter of imaginations, my story could have a better plot than it otherwise would. This is how Wilson describes the reciprocity implied by the interdependence, and his idea of how there should be much more of future plot within la PAH:

> *"***I will continue to be there shoulder to shoulder fighting with la PAH** because it's a movement that has helped me very much and has helped a lot of people and well I have to be reciprocal* **since they've helped me a lot I also have to be there***. And the future of la PAH I hope that...* **for my part I hope that it never stops.***"*

The change of plot Wilson experienced is well described within his narrative about his relationship with the workers of the bank in which he got his mortgage. He tells how

> *"one day we went like 80 people, we took the bank and stayed there all day, and left it – we made a mess in the whole bank so that they couldn't open in two days to clean it all [...]* **After I went with la PAH, they took me seriously, it was another thing, they didn't play with me anymore** *and they asked to have my documents and accepted all requirements."*

Yolanda too notes that "the collective imposes certain respect in the financial entities". Here we see how the power relationship that was, in mouths of politicians and bankers alike, disguised as a relationship between equals, gets a new and more suitable name through the process of empowerment in la PAH. The new name is composed of meanings found in the light of the desire to change the state of things, and meanings which are also part of the common notions created in the meetings of mutual aid. This is how the politics of the symbolic produce an intervention in the system of meanings: in the words of the Milanese feminists, "it doesn't draw its conclusions from the so-called facts before figuring out their meaning", rather figuring out "the one they already have, but also the one they can get in the light of my desire and your desire".[108] In this way the common notions are a fulfillment of the politics of the symbolic. Their meaning is continuously creating anew the names of suffering, oppression and exploitation as well as coming up with the new names of the struggle, resistance, disobedience and creativity that is collective action.

Common notions, as the term itself suggest, are never a result of an individual process. This held true among the Italian feminists and it holds true in la PAH. Finding one's own voice from the cacophony of narratives of power –that speak with shaming, individualising, fearmongering tongues– is not an individual process, but one that depends fully on defining, one's relationship with others through practicing it. "We can only have an own voice in the middle of a collaborative net, in a cooperative of reciprocal support", as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui points out. The narratives offered by the power for speaking about "one's experience" are always individual, because individuals are controllable and forceless. Therefore only being involved in such a collaborative net permits us *to speak in a way that is not given while also recognising from where we speak* (having found out our "place in the world", defined by both the conditions of exploitation/oppression and the resistance intrinsic to them[109]) in order to produce new meanings for our experience.

In Donatella della Porta's and Mario Diani's theory of social movements, Ervin Goffman's sociological theory of interpretative frames is brought to offer explanations on how the processes of meaning-making are relevant to collective action. This kind of an interpretative frame is defined as "a general, standardized, predefined structure (in the sense that it already belongs to the receiver's

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108 Librería Mujeres de Milán 2006, 195.
109 For more on resistance being intrinsic to all forms power that act upon life, see: Foucault, Michel (1978) The History of Sexuality 1: An Introduction. Translation Robert Hurley. New York: Random House. French original 1976. A similar logic can also be found in the base of the Italian workerist as well as postworkerist thought.

knowledge of the world) which allows recognition of the world, and guides perception... allowing him/her to build defined expectations about what is to happen, that is to make sense of his/her reality"[110]. The necessity of making sense of the reality is detected here as it is in la PAH. When it comes to the answers given to this necessity, two important lines of divergence –and of critique– surface. Firstly, from the perspective of *creative* politics of the symbolic based on *collective* meaning-making, as defined by the Milanese feminists and practiced by la PAH, it is unthinkable to depart from "a general, standardized, predefined *structure*". Instead of that we have already seen that the meaning-making in la PAH is a process indispensably dependent on the plurality of its participants' knowledge of the world, capable of adapting and transforming in order to include new elements into the previous knowledge of the world.

Secondly, as della Porta and Diani too point out, "the framing perspective has been criticized for its excessive dependence on cognitive elements, to the detriment of the emotional elements of collective action". Here it is not enough to criticise the mere lack of emotional elements in the analysis of collective action though. As we have seen previously, and will return to analyse in Chapter 6, the cognition in la PAH happens fundamentally through emotions experienced while sharing experiences with other people affected by mortgages. The central role of emotional expression, and of a certain collective search for happiness that I have previously analysed through the words of la PAH's members, denies the separation of cognition from emotion. We must extend the critique to cover the whole Cartesian conception of division between body and mind, feeling and thought. Only in that way it becomes possible to understand cognition as intrinsically impregnated with emotion, and truly criticise such a theoretical lack as that of the framing approach.

I would also conclude from the union of emotion and thought an additional notion on the production of common notions as *sensemaking*[111]. The speech act that intervenes in the system of meaning must be driven by the desire to make sense, not only to produce any possible new meanings. In sensemaking it becomes imprescindible to overcome the culturally constructed disconnection between the affective and the rational dimensions of thought in order to incorporate in the collective action a real and lived sense (instead of ideological motivation, for instance). It is, first and foremost, a challenge defined by the composition of the ones who produce the common notions. We could say: I have found out there is infinite connectivity between my story and yours, but to articulate it into something that makes sense for me and the others at the same time, *it must be lived together as an affective encounter* that heals the wound cut between the rational and emotional intelligence in the Western thought. In this sense, the interviews and group conversations I conducted with other members of PAH Vallekas, had an interesting development. In her interview Yolanda came to mention, that her "entrance in PAH Vallekas was easy, but at the same time there was a particular difficulty, because [she] came from other social movements that are more rational, while la PAH is deeply emotional". I returned to the same question during the following group conversation. As a group we discussed the issue lively, with shared conclusions on 1) the importance of emotions in living a life that is fulfilling, and 2) the capacity of emotions in helping the group to overcome the myriad forms of socio-cultural barriers that could be detected between the group members and that could easily obstruct the collective action.

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110 della Porta, Donatella & Diani, Mario (2006) Social Movements: An Introduction. Malden/Oxford/Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 141.

111 The term was introduced in the organizational studies by Karl E. Weick, but is rather widely used in the social movements. In this occasion I wont adopt the definition due to Weick's posture on conflict. As we will see further, the conflictuality that difference unevitably brings into a group must also be made sense of, instead of being used as a motive for converting the sensemaking process into evasion of conflict, as Weick proposes.

This made stronger my hypothesis of emotional intelligence and overcoming the gap emotional–rational as keys to la PAH's success. The sense la PAH offers to its members is the solidarity that permits each member to live a fuller life. If the solidarity is to work, the connectivity between the members must be continuously renewed according to the changing circumstances set by the composition of many different that produce the common notions. Within "the plurality that holds together [la PAH] in terms of backgrounds, identities, beliefs and cultures", as Coy puts it[112] , the challenge is to acquire the capacity to act within *heteroglossia*. Borrowing again from Bakhtin, разноречие, literally "different-speech-ness", means the coexistence of different types of speech in one language. Heteroglossia challenges us to continuously translate between different speeches, in terms of dialects, slangs, modes of expression, tones of emotion, cultural diversity and resource gaps, and it would not be possible without empathy and other emotional resources. Agreeing with Coy that "it is a transversality that enriches and empowers us"[113] let us see how one member of PAH Vallekas Beatriz describes it:

> *"**La PAH is a mestizo movement, a mixed one,** of people from different countries. In Spain there was a huge wave of migration in 2000, also because of the bubble and the need of work force in the construction sector. Many of these people are now Spaniards, some are not and they are still immigrants with different permits for being here, but they –above all people from Ecuador and Peru, also Bolivia– they are very important for the movement. So in the movement for housing there are Spanish people but also migrant people and **I think it has been an interesting input and it is a very good thing we fight together in this struggle**."*

Why is it a good thing that different people come together around a shared interest? Let us consider, that while an organisational process benefits of the plurality of it's participants in creativity, at the same time *it is simply impossible to suppress the differences without generating a microfascist drift of the organisational process*. Therefore "the good thing" Beatriz points towards is at least as much as the possible causes of the plurality, the capacity of sustaining collective actions in conditions of and valuing the plurality. This, it could be added, makes of the collective action in places such as la PAH laboratories of tomorrow's democratic practice, because there "governance" means "collective selfgovernance" and parts from the condition of plurality instead of the intention of homogenisation. We find these two sides in Maurizio Lazzarato's thought on heteroglossia:

> *"**The recognition of the multiplicity** of the semiotic, the polyphony of matters of expression (both verbal and non-verbal), the heterogeneity of linguistic and non-linguistic elements, **becomes on the one hand, the basis of a 'strategic' theory of action between speakers** whereby it is possible to define meaning as an 'action on possible actions' (to use Foucault's expression, **and on the other hand, it is the basis of a theory of creativity and production of subjectivity**."[114]*

La PAH has accepted the heteroglossia intrinsic to the heterogeneity of composition and found it as a strength, following the line of thought in which the members of la PAH and the post-workerist analysis coincide. In la PAH, simply, the many different have accepted to become a group because stepping into the space in which the politics of the symbolic are practiced, they have shown how it is necessary to become a collective subject in order for each member to speak about an experience that didn't have a name before. In the search for new names, new meanings, a novelty surfaces: that of solidarity, of the joy of accumulating common notions and, through them, making sense of reality in a clearer way than before, alone and suffering. Now there is a group, so I move forward in order to analyse the power of the word in reaching towards the outside of the group.

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112 Coy 2014, 22.
113 Ibid.
114 Lazzarato 2009.

5.2 Narrational crevice: deconstructing the hegemonic crisis discourse

Can a group be subject of its own utterance?[115] If a singular utterance is an entrance point into a process of empowerment, what should we expect to find when a group speaks towards its outside: to what does a group's utterance lead? Depends on what we understand as a group, first of all. The definition of Enrique Pichon-Rivière serves in this occasion. For Pichon-Rivière a group is a limited ensemble of persons that –bound by continuity of time and space, in a mutual internal representation– proposes itself –in an implicit or explicit manner– a task that constitutes its purpose, interacting through complex mechanisms of acknowledgement and distribution of roles[116]. This works for studying la PAH, a deeply material movement in its group practices. We understand groups as a set of people who come together in the presencial sense at least once in awhile, that share material and/or immaterial resources, that sustain relationships of reciprocity however diffuse and/or expanded over the time, as opposed to the "social groups" that are bound together by any certain trait for the necessities of the sociological study of populations.

Félix Guattari divides group functioning into that of *subject groups* and *subjugated groups* (even though these can be and often are mixed: any group can contain both subject and subjugated modalities of functioning)[117]. The difference between a subject and a subjugated group is that while the former, in a greater or lesser extent, is capable of "speaking about itself" in all its complexity in order to function in continuous creation of its norms, the latter are "spoken by others", based on external normativity, a given not to be negotiated. Out of the two, only subject groups are capable of assuming the intrinsic existence of nonsense within the processes of collective meaning-making leading to sense, and succeed in harboring a continuous interpretation of themselves and avoiding dogmatic closures of collective creativity. Even though there are also traits of subjugated group functioning that are to be detected and countered in la PAH[118], most of the time it is within fair to consider it in terms of a subject group. At least la PAH strives towards being fundamentally non-ideological, transversal[119], inclusive, and to reject any form of racism, sexism or ageism.

Nonetheless, the technology of an enunciation differs greatly between a mutual aid meeting and mass communication, let it be TV or Twitter. Would it still be possible to consider that the "group utterance" of la PAH produces a similar opening in the system of hegemonic meanings of a society, than the one it does on the level of people forming a group? Can we consider that an enunciation of a group fosters the possibility of a process of empowerment of the citizenry (understood not through the legal categories of citizenship but through politicisation and mobilisation of the society towards non-representative democratic action in the form of multiple organisational processes in which the social relationships are transformed)?
What the singular act of expression and the publicly exposed choral voice emanating from the encounter of the singularities have in common is the enunciation from "another place" in relation to

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115 See Guattari, Felix (2015) Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews 1955–1971. Translation Ames Hodges. California: Semiotext(e), 76. This question was posed by Guattari in the context of his study of groups in La Borde occupied and self-managed psychiatric hospital. While we will not delve deeper into the wide background of this important question here, I wish to remark the necessity of further studying into the role groups have for the capacity of enunciation/uttering and "if it is even legitimate to consider that [group] gices us access to speech" (76).
116 Pichón-Rivière, Enrique (1978) El proceso grupal: Del psicoanálisis a la psicología social. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión.
117 Guattari 2015, 102–120.
118 Ibid., 77–78: "...phenomena that encourage the group to withdraw into itself: leadership, identifications, effects of suggestion, disavowals, scape-goating..."
119 On transversality, see ibid., 112.

the hegemonic narratives of power. Both acts defy the narrative, imposed both publicly and individually case by case, based on blaming the families and persons of the crisis, sweeping under the carpet the structural causes and the role of the empresarial and political oligarchies of Spain. The role of la PAH in opposing this narrative and creating one that better reflects the point of view of those affected by the crisis has been historical. Little by little it has burrowed through the discourse creating openings that have, with time and coordinated effort, become transformed into a wide-open crack that sets the thick layer of hegemonic crisis discourse under doubt.

I will call this opening a *narrational crevice* as I will analyse the multilayered structure it employs to let fresh air through the hegemonic crisis discourse. The narrational crevice la PAH has opened is composed of collective action of multiple types, constructing a fundamentally three-level structure that guarantees la PAH

> 1) protagonism through strategical use of TV and other mass media,
> 2) autonomy through technopolitics of the social media and
> 3) sustainability through the use of internal communicative tools such as Telegram, titanpads and Mumble.

To analyse the practices that sustain the aperture I use as my source the material produced as a part la PAH's communication strategies. This means, primarily, the movement's basic manual "Libro Verde de la PAH", the communiqués of PAH Vallekas, PAH Barcelona and movement's statewide website, the TV and other appearances on the media, the tweet-feed of the much used hashtag *#laSAREBesNuestra* and the debates taking place in the digital spaces for the internal organisation of PAH Vallekas. I will try to pay special attention to the points of connectivity between the three levels of communicational strategy. By doing so, I wish to provide an argument in favour of understanding them not as differentiated strategic (and in no case ideological) questions but as a multilayer structure of collective action, that combats and partly has proven to overcome the most typical problems social movements face in relation to communicating their agenda in the society.

5.2.1 TV strategies for protagonism

> *"For almost a decade, the Spanish population was subjected to, by land, sea and air, an avalanche of messages that reinforced one idea: if you were not a property owner, you were nobody. [...] Messages that were repeated in the mouths of pundits who frequented television satellite dishes and monopolized radio space. Messages that were amplified thanks to the media who entered into the kitchens of every home."[120]*
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> *"To attend to this or that programme doesn't mean that everything goes. But these days it is a fact that we live in a media society, and to reach out to the majority of the population –which has always been our vocation– means having to break through in the mass media. We must do it with care, dosifying our appearances and with critical spirit."[121]*
>
> *"Television is a stepping stone."[122]*

The departure point of la PAH as an organisational process was to recognise decades of building up of a popular imagination in which house ownership was placed as one of the primary life goals, and

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120 Colau & Alemany 2014, 43.
121 Molina 2013.
122 Genosko, Gary (2012) Félix Guattari in the Age of Semiocapitalism. In Deleuze Studies 6:2, 149–169.

mortgage the naturalised path to acquire it. Therefore it was the first task in the communicative strategy of la PAH to start to question and deconstruct this part of the collective imagination. This was done, as we will see in this party of the study, by way of revealing the political interest behind the media operations imposing home ownership and mortgage over any other possible lines of social imagination around housing. As Colau and Alemany (ibid) write about the situation during the years previous to 2009:

> *"In every place and at all times one heard the same song over and over again: that the housing bubble didn't exist, that the prices of houses would never go down, that the purchase of a house was the best option for retirement, that for the price of renting you could be a property owner and that, when comparing prices, it was better to buy." 43*

The interest in creating a mortgage loan market, where **"housing as a commodity" serves to produce surplus out of a basic right** is combined with the idea of **"home as an investment"** that includes in or at least **ties the homeowner with the capitalist interest of an expanding market and rising prices**. In the following, I will try to identify the fundamental elements of the hegemonic media strategy behind the propagation of this agenda.

> *"These legends came out of the mouths of supposed experts, professional consultants, representatives of the real estate sector, politicians of every color, Ministries of Finance, Development, Housing, Industry and Employment, governors of the Bank of Spain and presidents of banks and savings banks. All of those, from the first to the last, figures who defended specific interests." mortgaged lives p. 43*

The first thing that stands out is the use of **expertise from above and claimed objectivity** as an argument. It is precisely the voice of the expert that backs up the rationality of the mortgage against any other housing option. This is is where the figure of *homo economicus* appears –or should we say, is called out– as the ideal of a calculating, rational subject who decides according to the principle of the major possible economic profit.[123] This time it is, as Maurizio Lazzarato puts it, "a particular form of *homo economicus*"[124], the indebted man or *homo debitor*. Pertaining still to the industrial rationality of calculation of the effort–reward implemented by the ideology of work, *homo debitor* is born through the additional ideological elements of promise and guilt (of having to pay the debt and of having aqcuired it in the first place)[125]. But of what sort is the rationality of the homo debitor? Is there a difference with respect to the calculating rationality of the industrial period? And if so, what difference?

Analysing the transition from preindustrial to industrial production, Max Weber pointed out that "plurality of rationalities" always exists because "life can be rationalised following ultimate perspectives and to extremely different directions". The imposition of any type of economic rationality is dependent on "the mode in which [the economic rationality] governs the society, it is to say, the mode in which it imposes itself over any other rationalities, over all the other possible modes of life"[126]. The historical novelty of homo debitor is the introduction of freedom into the system of exploitation and social stratification as analysed extensively by Michel Foucault in his work on power. In the the rationalisation of life dependent on debt "the indebted is 'free', but his acts, his behaviour, must unfold within the framework defined by the debt he has acquired"[127]. It is through subtle, not directly imposed but rather economical and morally bound interventions in the life that the economic rationality succeeds in becoming hegemonic. In the case of the rationality of

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123 Lazzarato 2014, 35.
124 Ibid., 36
125 Ibid., 37.
126 Marazzi 2003, 21.
127 Lazzarato 2014, 37.

the indebtment it is crucial –both for the moral of promise and for the functioning of the guilt– to maintain the illusion of freedom. "One is free to the extent one assumes the form of life (consumption, employment, social distribution, taxes) compatible with the payment [of the debt]."[128]

What is the role of the media in introducing a mode of economic rationality on a society? In the case of Spain we have witnesses **a strategy that is internally paradoxic** –as Rosi Braidotti argues about the advanced capitalism[129] in a broader sense– **and combines with ease elements of social oppression through alienation and fear of failure** with those of "freedom of decision", personalised offer, which it is to say: **elements of capture of desire in order to produce a modulating, non repressive form social control.**

> *"Society seemed alienated, abducted and trapped in a kind of loop. A mortgage had been transformed into a status symbol, a euphemism for professional success which signified the passage into adulthood. Rent, however, was a symptom of failure and inferiority."[130]*

> *"Marketing departments inundated the market with every type of mortgage product for every type of profile: the "young mortgage", the "easy mortgage", the "free mortgage", the "open mortgage", the "tranquil mortgage", the "global mortgage", the "mortgage without fees", the "wild mortgage", the "super mortgage", the "revolutionary mortgage", are some of the names that the creatives came up with to baptize mortgage loans. Banks competed in an endless race to attract customers through increasingly aggressive and deceptive advertising. Viral Internet campaigns, mail-outs, television spots, email spam and street omnipresence thanks to a vast network of bank branches encouraged you to buy. Everywhere with the same stimulus and encouragements: that the monthly fees would always be affordable, the bank would lend a hand should you ever run into any difficulties, if you should ever lose your job you could always sell the home and return the loan, etc. It is not surprising that many people ended up succumbing to temptation."[131]*

These three elements of exercise of power, 1) the voice of the expert, 2) the constraint of fear and isolation and 3) the seemingly abundant options that all exist within the same master framework, become rounded up by a very specific and **globally reinforced new superstition** that bind them together. Gerardo Pisarello describes it like this:

> *"Of all the explanations for the crisis that circulate in the media, there is a recurring one; that attributes everything to the design of the "markets", conceived as a kind of mysterious entity able to operate outside the will of people made of flesh and blood. It is against this kind of magical thinking that [the book Mortgaged Lives] revolts against."[132]*

In la PAH the principal communicative task of revolting against the reigning idea of an omnipotent god of the markets deciding over our destinies starts with naming the problem. Colau and Alemany claim that talking about the housing bubble in other registers than those selected by the experts had become a taboo during the golden age of the Spanish economy (ml p.45). Because of that the first thing PAH did was to bring the taboo down by way of starting to talk about it publicly. From the

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128 Ibid., 37.
129 Rosi, Braidotti & Mura, Andrea (2014) Indebted citizenship: An interview with Rosi Braidotti. Internet source, visited 08/05/16: https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/rosi-braidotti-andrea-mura/indebted-citizenship-interview-with-rosi-braidotti
130 Colau & Alemany 2014, 46.
131 Ibid., 63–64.
132 Pisarello, Gerardo (2014) Introduction. In Colau, Ada & Alemany, Adrià (2014) Mortgaged Lives: From the housing bubble to the right to housing, 17–20. Translation Michelle Teran & Jessica Fuquay. Los Angeles/Leipzig/London: Journal of Aesthetics & Protest Press.

beginning in 2009, it took advantage of any possibility of TV interviews or invitations to the live debate sets around the question of housing and debt. We could say that la PAH revolted in order to set a notion of **expertise through the expression of a lived, first-hand experience** against the hegemonic notion of expertise from above.

It was not easy at first though. For instance, in 2009 la PAH denounced publicly the fact that the Ministry of Housing started by the second cabinet of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero to "guarantee the right to housing as was outlined in Article 47 of the Spanish Constitution"(44) was a gigantic act of cover-up of housing policies and corruption that had created the situation in the first place. As one of the members of the Ministry after another kept on denying the surrounding reality of the bursting of the mortgage bubble, la PAH stated that "the Ministry was only acting as a transmitter of interests within the business sector."(44) Still on February 2009, the very same month la PAH was publicly initiated after almost a year of preparatory work, the first appointed Minister of Housing Beatriz Corredor told the citizens, once again: "now is the right time to buy" (45). Despite the public denounce, José Coy "remember[s] the initial silence in the media, when nobody paid attention to us" (intro 21). This blinding out of the embryon of la PAH followed the pattern of silencing heterodox analysis of the economic situation and the austerity policies.

> *"The critical voices of those economists who warned of the unsustainability of the model were marginalized, drowned out and forgotten. Their presence in the media was anecdotal and thus deprived the population of hearing anything apart from the dominant discourse."[133]*

Since then, nonetheless, la PAH has won the silence, converting itself into one of the protagonists of the public debate on housing and debt. It took more than a year, almost two though, for it to overcome the mass media siege and become present in the living rooms and bar tables from which the TV screens were followed. We should consider that **la PAH's success in the media field cannot be separated from its success as a locally participated movement**. La PAH stopped its first eviction by means of civil disobedience in November 2010 in La Bisbal del Penedès[134]. The collective effort in rendering visible the vulneration of the right to housing through civil disobedience, the self organised documenting of the act[135], and the dissemination of the material in the Internet made the event reach the mainstream media. Even then, the law of the market reigned, resulting in partial censorship:

> *"When we were totally unknown,* **we suffered cases of small censorship**. *We called out to the media so that they would capture actions we did in front of some banks, and the televisions for instance had it prohibited to show the logos of the financial entities that are big providors of publicity for them."[136]*

Starting from the appearance of the Stop Eviction actions the media woke up and started to report about the innumerable evictions in more or less scandalous tones or from questionably dramatised points of view. As Colau confirms two years after the first stopped eviction

> *"when the phenomenon could not be silenced we have experienced how* **[the media] called us to be tipped off of the most traumatic evictions**, *looking for the morbid part of the drama."[137]*

133 Colau & Alemany 2014, 44.
134 On the event of the first eviction stopped by civil disobedience, see França, João (2014) El primer Stop Desahucios: "La PAH ha significado conservar mi casa y que mi hijo tenga un techo". El Diario, Internet source, visited 17/10/16: http://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/Recuerdo-Stop-Desahucios-PAH-significado_0_231326883.html
135 For a video clip from the first eviction stopped by civil disobedience, see La Plataformna de Afectados por la Hipoteca (2010) La PAH impide un desalojo. Internet source, visited 1/8/16: https://youtu.be/FwrPYc1Uzwg
136 Molina 2013.
137 Ibid.

Even if the surfacing of the collective struggle brought the issue to the knowledge of the media, Colau and Alemany criticise how

> "**media** *usually looks for what they call human interest stories, and a***lmost never give space for the investigation of the structural causes, nor to the collective struggle** *over the last three years that has made it possible to begin to listen to much of these individual complaints."*[138]

It is primarily through the organising of the actions of civil disobedience, called Stop Evictions, that la PAH breaks through in the media – not through an offer of an alternative analysis on the housing bubble. The first crack of the narrational crevice happens through the journalistic genre of human interest stories, which picture the families or persons under the threat of eviction as individual destinies. The lead the media follows to the families are, nonetheless, leads la PAH leaves "in the open" when calling out for civil disobedience to stop the evictions. In this way we see that actually even the particular stories pictured as individual have previous had to be rendered visible by means of collective struggle.

Collective action seeped through the initial media siege in multiple forms. Colau places one of the points of inflection in how the media treats la PAH in her appearance –also a collectively prepared political and performative act– in the Congress. She appeared in the Congress in February 2013 as one of the persons invited to voice their opinion about the Popular Party's Mortgage Law Reform, in representation of la PAH. Before her the vice secretary of the Spanish bankers association AEB had appeared in defense of the new law, due to which Colau began her appearance by stating that she "had been about to throw her shoe at him" and the only thing that had stopped her from doing so was not to ruin la PAH's possibility of voicing itself in the Congress. "He is a criminal, and like a criminal you should treat him", Colau concluded, before moving forward in the speech prepared by la PAH. The event was widely reported in the mainstream media while la PAH itself circulated proudly the video of the appearance. Colau argues that since that particular act, "the part of the social mobilisation became more visible [in the media] and the process of people's empowerment started to show".[139]

Recognising the tendencies of the mainstream media in treating social movements, based on being "clear about the fact that the mass media is a business that functions according to the rules of profitability"[140] has not lead la PAH to reject media exposure, but to **negotiate visibility** offered to it. Colau affirms there were many debates from the beginning about the relationship with the media, and that opportunities of appearance in different television programmes are separately debated in the communication's group of PAH Barcelona. The same applies in the case of PAH Vallekas, in whose communication's group I have been a member of for two years: the decisions of attending or not to a certain media format are myriad. In general, there is a favourable treatment with media that is known not to attack social movements or distort the message they are sending. This is the case especially when the journalists are open to negotiate the terms of picturing whatever dimension they seek to report in la PAH's struggle. The aim for this is to increase journalism that recognises the agency of the people organising to defend their rights as opposed to mere victims. On the other hand, an implicit critique towards the polarised and polemic-seeking journalism applied: it is judged to be of no interest to participate in an exchange of shouts where instead of a search for veridic information an aggressive competitivity reigns.

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138 Colau & Alemany 2014, 25.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.

By inviting media in the actions of civil disobedience and taking advantage of possibilities of interviews and talk show appearances, little by little la PAH turns into "a news source and object of endless analysis, articles and studies"[141]. By the end of the year 2011, Spain's biggest newspaper El País (that had tried to maintain media silence around the uprisings of the May of the same year and is known to serve the conservative agenda, having born from the interest of the Phalangist's during the Spanish transition to democracy), published an article announcing that la PAH had succeeded in making a priority out of stopping the evictions.[142] Some months later Pisarello judged that la PAH's "message has succeeded in breaking the media's siege on critical ideas[143]. By then, on the ground level, la PAH had also become a full-fledged networked movement with hundreds of nodes in the whole Spanish territory. In succeeding to do that, the strategic use of the mass media appearances has had enormous a relevance. It has permitted to

> 1) reach out to tens of thousands of persons affected by mortgage who are not especially active in social networks,
> 2) gain a stable legitimacy even for the direct action and civil disobedience in the eyes of the society and
> 3) create a strong base for later multiplying the fronts of struggle to include the organisation of tenants and homeless to defend their rights.

Nonetheless, TV and written mainstream media alone could not have provided la PAH with its own voice in the same sense the movement has been capable of providing its members with one. In the collaboration with the mainstream media little or no control over the processes of editing and publication exists – and that is exactly what builds up, time passing, into a narrative about the effects of the disastrous Spanish housing policies and of the resistance of and alternatives to those policies. One example of a typical problem that keeps on repeating itself are journalists picturing the struggle of la PAH merely as stopping evictions. This way of focusing on the the most spectacular element of the repertoire –the human resistance at the door on the day of eviction– leaves in its shadow a wide array of activity in the field of previous negotiation and popular legislative action. In short, it depicts a robust movement, active in multiple fields in defense of housing as a right instead of a commodity, merely in terms of a eviction victims support group or offering a lecture of marginal activism that engages with civil disobedience tactics. This can be damaging to the movement in the sense of building up of effects of loss of the empowered subjectivity and legitimacy of the direct action.

"Hav[ing] a voice of one's own means not accepting relationships of mentoring or dependency into our thinking, saying and doing."[144] Bearing this in mind we could say that la PAH speaks for itself as a movement in the mainstream media where the expertise from above previously reigned. La PAH's quest for TV protagonism must be combined with other communicative strategies though: only in this way the problems of a dependency on the often adversary mainstream media can be tackled. Two of the common solutions by la PAH are 1) strengthening the movement's own audiovisual and textual production in the local groups websites, Facebook profiles and analogue publications, and 2) the use of the social media as a technopolitical space in which the mainstream media depictions can be denied, challenged, contrasted, nuanced or augmented.

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141 Coy 2014, 22.
142 Blanchar, Clara (2011) Aliviar las hipotecas ya es prioridad. El País. Internet source, visited 10/06/16:
    http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2011/11/15/actualidad/1321388219_720902.html
143 Pisarello 2014, 16–17.
144 Gago 2016.

5.2.2 Technopolitics for autonomy

> *"A [medium] managed directly by young people, by workers, by women in struggle, etc., helps to establish a new kind of contact between activists and the wider population, a contact that is much more direct."[145]*

When Félix Guattari spoke of the novelty and importance of self-managed media in an interview conducted by Tetsuo Kogawa in October 1980, the medium he had in mind was the radio. In France, a historical proliferation of small clandestine radio stations was taking place as rebellion against the state monopoly of ether, and to provide a public space of plural expression. Guattari argued that in such a free medium "we find an aspect of what I call the *'transversal transmission of communication'" that would include "not only the communication of information, but also the transmission of affects, of another kind of semiotics."[146]* As Guattari came to confirm, "in fact, what interests us is not simply to construct large and recognized stations, but rather to see that the form of radio, as well as other media like video or television, is available as a new means of expression for everyone".*[147]*

The dream of a medium in which the diversity of the social life could unfold without being moderated by the commercial formats, the written and unwritten rules of broadcast intonation, the pretension of knowing the target public and speaking "its language" etc., have by now become reality. The possibility of expression through video and television is at everyone's reach. The proliferation of forms of expression in social media is a historical factor that must be considered as fundamental for the narrational crevice la PAH opens up. Weighting the part it has played in la PAH's evolution means, inseparably, weighting the impact of the 2011 uprising in the plazas and in the social networks has caused. It means, also, taking into account the genealogy of la PAH and the modes of action in the Internet previous to 2011.

Before la PAH was founded in 2009, Internet was already one of the native spaces of multiple organisational processes analysing, criticising and opposing themselves to the capitalistic organisation of the society. Initiated in/from Barcelona, la PAH's predecessor movement V de Vivienda that was practically born in the Internet; a fact that marked its capacity of expansion to other areas together with the ways of organizing and the heterogeneous composition of the assemblies.[148] Remembering, that the handful of la PAH's founders came from V de Vivienda, it seems reasonable to assume that a certain learning experience expands from one experience to another. In fact, we can easily see how the media strategies directed to vast audiences instead of ideologically committed followers were already tested in V de Vivienda. Colau and Alemany describe the novelty:

> *"It's not that V de Vivienda said anything new, but that it said it in another way,* **renewing the language and the codes used by more traditional social movements**. *Without a doubt, one of the principal merits of the movement was its capacity to connect with public opinion through direct, communicative campaigns (such as the slogan chosen to convene the first demonstration: You will not have a house in your fucking life), graphics (for example the yellow balloons in reference to the real estate bubble, which have turned into an icon of the movement), and imaginative figures (such as Supervivienda, a superhero who barged into candidates' rallies during 2007 municipal elections with Article 47 of the Spanish*

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145 Guattari & Genosko, 47.
146 Ibid
147 Ibid., 26.
148 Colau & Alemany 2014, 85.

Constitution inscribed on the back of his cloak to denounce the commodification of housing and the superhuman efforts that citizens must undertake to survive in cities that are increasingly expensive, inaccessible and exclusive)."[149]

The deconstruction of the hegemonic narrative, the intent of producing a narrational crevice, was already identified as the primary communicational task:

> **"The language used,** *as well as the practical and political action of the movement,* **sought to deconstruct the prevailing dogmas of faith**. *Where the dominant discourse negated the bubble, V de Vivienda pointed a finger at it. Where the hegemonic discourse spoke of the Spanish miracle, V de Vivienda saw only a mirage. Where the political powers saw growth and the creation of jobs, V de Vivienda denounced debts and precariousness of labor. Where some saw bread for today, V de Vivienda predicted hunger for tomorrow."[150]*

Nonetheless, there were some important limitations in and for V de Vivienda. The conjuncture was not half as favorable for a mass mobilisation and grassroot organisational processes for the right to housing as it would be few years later, when the mortgage bubble burst. The composition of the movement remained, despite the effort directed in communicating in another way, as very juvenile and much more marginal than la PAH. But to the credit of V de Vivienda, who did the best it could with what it had, a rigorous economic analysis anticipating the bubble that was to burst were conducted in its bosom. It was the seed of what was later successfully converted into *la PAH*, that also *inherited the innovative communicational strategies and the intelligent use of Internet for both the external and internal needs of the movement.*

V de Vivienda had been a young potential renters movement –"a movement composed mainly of young people with precarious jobs and wages who were organized in the face of difficulties to free themselves from the family home"[151]. On the contrary in la PAH it was "mortgage [that] turned out to be a connecting thread", "a communicative vessel that allowed the credit market to be related with housing. Pulling this thread meant exposing the structural causes that led us here".[152] Mortgage permitted to connect the micro and the macro: link the level of suffering from the exploitation of each family or person that had acquired a debt so that they could access to housing together with the level of a crisis of overproduction, financial market crash and the following austerity regime – the collapse of the "wealth effect" the debt had caused. It helped to make sense of "the Spanish case", one that Emmanuel Rodríguez and Isidro López confirm "can be regarded as an international laboratory"[153].

From May of 2011 onwards the whole conjuncture changed in Spain, and all of a sudden with the force and creativity an uprising contains, what had been a laboratory of neoliberal top down practices became another kind of a laboratory: a laboratory of bottom up political practices[154].

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149 Ibid., 86.
150 Ibid., 86.
151 Ibid., 91.
152 Ibid., 89.
153 López & Rodríguez 2011.
154 It has been habitual to seek help from the informatic sciences in forming new descriptive models of the organisational processes of the last years. This is also the case of the terms *top down* and *bottom up*. They are concepts used in information processing and knowledge ordering: "A top-down approach is essentially the breaking down of a system to gain insight into its compositional sub-systems in a reverse engineering fashion" while "a bottom-up approach is the piecing together of systems to give rise to more complex systems, thus making the original systems sub-systems of the emergent system" (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Top-down_and_bottom-up_design)

During the occupations of plazas known as 15M, a novel use of social media takes place, creating new organisational tools and formats that quickly spread in the society. To la PAH this means a step further; a scaling up of the game, without which it would not be the movement it is today. The toolset PAH adopts from 15M shall be called **technopolitics** following the hypothesis on the social media usage in the 2011 cycle, from the Arab revolutions to 15M, Occupy Wall Street and the posterior uprisings in Brazil (#PasseLivre), Mexico (YoSoy132), and Hong Kong (#UmbrellaRevolution). I define technopolitics according to the proposal of DatAnalysis15M, as **"the tactical and strategical use of the digital tools for organisation, communication and collective action"**[155].

One of the most important aspects of technopolitics is how it has successfully prevented the typical dependency of the mass media by offering a terrain where its depictions can be denied, challenged, contrasted, nuanced or augmented[156]. On the other hand, it has offered possibilities for potentiating the mass media appearances that are seen as fit expressions of the collective action. This is probably the most prominent contact zone between the superior and the middle level of the multilayer structure that sustains the narrational crevice open and in transformation, and surely the most visible in the eyes of the wider mainstream public.

Besides working to intervene, dispute and contrast mass media information flows, technopolitics means autonomous capacity of creating flows of our own. Technopolitics, I argue, is an example *par excellence* of what Guattari called "new means of expression for everyone". This **everyone's media** (forming the digital dimension of what was in 15M called everyone's politics) permits an unfolding of plurality of voices from within processes of politicisation, potentially of the whole life sphere.

There is now a *formal equality of expression*, that can and must be criticised from the point of view of the digital divide as well as through the division of time resources. It could, in the following decades, start to border an *effective equality of access* through the passing of the European post war "baby boom" generation, work that seeks to overcome the digital divide and the capitalistic extension of the basic smartphone market into the popular classes. The problem of the distribution of the material and immaterial resources needed for the effective access to the expression isn't the only problem though, there is at least another important one that has to do with the "social organisation" within the digital space. As year after year the mere quantity of information that must be processed daily by each citizen-become-media-activist grows, it's easier to lose sight of the revolutionary capacities of the new means of expression. Each voice, alone, stands for nothing more than an individualistic shout in a sea of voices, all isolated from each other through a regime of competitivity, of consumerist practices of differentiation, of commodification of life forms into a sterile catalogue. The *accelerated and expanded circulation of information creates too much noise* for it to suggest collective processes in which common notions can surface as an articulation of social, political and economic conflicts and desire that changes society.

Nonetheless, 15M and other seemingly spontaneous organisational processes in the digital space have proved that –as Guattari argued about free radio in the 80's– there is an importance to social media that can only be explained in terms of renewal of social struggles[157]. The uprisings of the *connected multitudes* –as DatAnalysis15M has called the participants of post-2011 mobilisations

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155 DatAnalysis15M & Toret Medina 2015, 35.
156 Castells, Manuel (2012) Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age. Cambridge: Polity Press, 119–124.
157 Guattari & Genosko 2015, 26.

that mix analogue and digital forms of collective action– might have seemed spontaneous at first sight, but what is actually taking form is a whole new way of organising[158]. The lesson could be: there is no strength in individual expression, but with the multitude of singular coordinated expressions we can overcome ideological dogmatism and infinite repetition of outdated and ineffective modes of protest.

This is known in la PAH, that attributes various strategically (and even subjectively, even though it cannot be studied in depth in this occasion) fundamental functions to the usage of social media. Even though the naming of these functions differ, in the framework of my study I would point out five functions sought by la PAH, namely 1) democratising the access to information, 2) promoting heteroglossia in the media, 3) sustaining an autonomous narrative, 4) marking the times in the wider political agenda, and 5) recruiting participants and sympathisers that mean continuity and legitimacy for the movement. In order to illustrate these five dimensions, I will finish the case study analysing one particular social media campaign –against the toxic asset bank SAREB and for the expropriation of the property fostered within it to social use. Before that, I must still add one more level to complete the argument of a multilayer structure.

5.2.3 Telegram for sustainability

> *"The last condition of existence and legitimation of the capitalist entrepreneur, that of ensambling the labour force in the sense of creating cooperation, disappears: the capitalist entrepreneur is an outdated figure, in the postindustrial society the cooperation and the knowledge is directly acquired and communicated in the core of the sociability of the labour force"[159]*

The digital space of communication most often used by even those members of la PAH that do not participate in public social media campaigns are the group conversations in the **free-of-charge messaging applications** such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and others. They have quickly made traditional SMS's expensive, clumsy, laborious and simply obsolete, and they are widely spread as the cheapest and easiest way of communication within families, circles of friends, etc. This is especially the case in Spain, the first European country in the ranking of WhatsApp use compared to SMS. and the fourth worldwide. Since 2011, the year of 15M in which "everyone's politics" entered the mainstream digital space in Spain, the use of SMS has dropped 61%.[160] The fast generalisation of simple and price accesible smart phones and tablets permitted to put these applications into the use of grassroots organisational processes.

Given the frequency of personal use of the messaging applications, they serve as an easy *point of entrance into the technopolitical organisation*. The organisational processes that take place on this level are previous to any usage of collective accounts in public campaigns. The consensus over the limits and future direction of collective expression are negotiated and adjusted in the group conversations of messaging applications. The tasks of collective account management are distributed generally in a more-or-less relaxed spirit, based on the self-announced availability of each member, even with a tendency to take into account task preferences. Some tasks are

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158 DatAnalysis15M & Toret Medina 2015. The existence of an affective logic behind the seemingly spontaneous organisation taking place simlatenously on the streets and in the networks constitutes the main argument of the study.

159 Domínguez Sánchez-Pinilla, Mario (2009) Obrero masa, obrero social. In Diccionario Crítico de Ciencias Sociales. Internet source, visited 26/05/16: http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/eurotheo/diccionario/O/obrero_masa.htm

160 See Strategy& (2015) Telco Trends for 2015+: Resumen Ejecutivo. Internet source, visited 06/10/16: http://www.strategyand.pwc.com/reports/telco-trends-2015-eps

understood as *marrones* –which translates "browns" and, in this case, means "shit tasks"– and they are sought to have an egalitarian distribution given the fact that nobody desires to be in charge of their realisation. A successful technopolitical organisation permits a distributed management of a collective account that provides each account user freedom to find a mode of expression in which the singular experience and the collectively constructed language, with its basis on the common notions, can coexist. Personal account usage, while fundamental for the Twitter campaigns, is generally not negotiated nor commented too much in the internal messaging groups. Nonetheless, personal account usage might be a point of entrance in the internal group conversations. In PAH Vallekas there are multiple examples of members who have first participated in the public campaigns, and later accepted an invitation of adhesion to the group (both analogue and internal technopolitical).

In a way there is an important barrier between the messaging platforms –internal communication– and the social media –external communication– but the barrier is incessantly penetrated by the multilayer technopolitical and communicational strategies. Members of a technopolitical organisation learn to commute between different digital spaces, and denote them with different levels of privacy, different registers of speech, and different socio-political compositions. During the period of swift expansion of technopolitical organisation in 2011, most digital spaces put emphasis in announcing the privacy levels and the proposed direction of the collective technopolitical action, so that those not previously familiar with these differences could habituate themselves. The narrational crevice la PAH has produced in Spain depends precisely on those gestures of inclusivity in "teaching" the technopolitics, and from there, on collectively transforming these capacities according to each situation. The *historical proliferation of diverse forms of expression and the generalisation of a sophisticated use of communicational skills* permits new forms of social struggle. But, as Ismael Peña-López reminds us, the historical development and distribution of the access to the information technologies is ambiguous, carrying equally possibilities of "increased freedom, empowerment and governance".[161]

Indeed, we must try to look from different points of view when analysing the skills of communication through new technologies, because today those skills are the basis of the production of capital. If we consider the example at hand, Telegram, *both direct and indirect productive skills are involved*. The mere use of these technologies is directly productive inasmuch it means participating in the production of big data that can be, and is, sold to third parties who use it for different ends, f.e. to improve mechanisms of capture of consumption or to offer paid derivatives of the free-to-use platforms. Additionally, the skills acquired by mere socialising are, in fact, very basic skills that are required in any wage labour – not to mention in the growing sector of forced entrepreneurship that is forged out of what previously was wage labour and where economic survival is strongly dependent on the communicative and relational capacities of each entrepreneur.

As our growing and deepening capacity of dealing with information flows, of communicating and modulating the registers of our communication together with the use of affective-expressive skills is made to constitute a labour skill, new questions arise. In the very same way the workerist militant investigators in the Ford factories in post-war Italy probed to ask the right questions about new machinery, must today be asked about the new technologies of communication: How do they modify our actions? In what way do they participate in the everyday organisation of social relationships? Do they empower or enslave? Or better still: in what sense are they "positive" and/or

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161 Peña-López, Ismael (2015) Política, tecnopolítica y desarrollo digital. Internet source, visited 19/02/16: http://ictlogy.net/sociedadred/20151120-politica-tecnopolitica-y-desarrollo-digital/

"negative" from the point of view of the struggles that seek to put life before capital? As "we use them", in what way do "they use us" in the machinic hybrid we are slowly becoming, as productors as well as rebels? Can we trace "routes" for the grand sea of information flows, thinking about our practices of disobedience and creativity, that help us to differentiate between the obedient use productive of capital, and the disobedient uses that undermine it and liberate resources for life?[162] The doubt and the question (that cannot be fully answered here) is born from the (mass, social, etc.) media being the first and foremost means of production in the information age. Sketching a parallelism with the political questions of the industrial period, there should be a way of expropriating the means of production and organising their use in a radically democratic way that also intervenes in the distribution of the wealth produced, democratising it. Besides, considering the role of both micro- and mass media in creating and sustaining protest movements over the past 30 years, we could ask with Janell Watson: have we entered the dissensual, processual post-media era whose arrival Guattari longed for?[163]

"The odd mixture of emancipatory, conservative and destructive impulses indicates that the post-media era has arrived only in bits and pieces, and that its technological aspects have evolved much more quickly than its subjective and social aspects", Watson argues[164]. The technology itself, however, is always less important than the subjective and social mutations that go with it. Guattari defined the post-media era as not just interactive and dissensual, but also processual. Full entry into the post-media era requires, according to Guattari, the development of what he calls processual assemblages[165]. They transform subjectivity of those who form part of them and provide new modes of social attachment – which is precisely what happens in la PAH. That said, it is by no means a political environment free from the more tacky elements Watson associates with the partial arrival of the post-mediatic era.

I would argue it is with the clearest of ideas about the centrality of the media today that la PAH has planned its technopolitical pedagogy. It aims, explicitly, at a more equitative distribution of resources and capacities. It promotes creating ties between the subjective level of argumentation with the knowledge about systemic issues, therefore raising in the participant's mind the wide question about the form of social ties and social justice. It proposes alternative ties, much in the way A. Povinelli describes the knowledge based on the otherwise[166] – on how things could be. The groups of la PAH periodically organise workshops on social media usage, and the groups engage in processes that create norms that are shared by the whole network of groups, promoting processual dealing with dissensus. When the members of la PAH participate in the technopolitical action with the collective accounts, they become part of a multi-headed monster that is in touch with the

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162 For previous accounts on the question of subversive usability of the means of production in the information age, see e.g. Negri, Antonio (2004) Letter to Félix Guattari on 'social practice'. In The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century. Translation James Newell. Cambridge: Polity Press. In this letter, written in 1984, Negri was already outlining the need for "a destructive dislocation that would defeat modernisation by 'removing and freeing' the technical and material means for its realisation from the control of the 'totality' that imposed them. In this period of bitter defeat, Negri recognised the 'fragility of the relations of domination' especially in the 'capacity to produce subjectivity'. While this has increased in semiocapitalism, the liberation of independent components of 'radical ontological difference' and the transversal assemblage of singularities has also increased with the emergence of the social worker and the growing importance of his or her personal qualities that can become, as Negri hoped, 'consciousness of singularity' and the communitarian, international and cooperative dimensions of social production" (Genosko 2012).
163 Watson, Janell (2012) Culture as Existential Territory: Ecosophic Homelands for the Twenty-first Century. In Deleuze Studies, 6:2, 306–327.
164 Ibid., 315.
165 Ibid., 314–315.
166 A. Povinelli 2011.

vastness of the information flows – but not from the isolated and individual position though, but as a much more powerful a voice built of many voices. This can be highly rewarding, and it also opens paths towards other universes of value, serving as a possible point of deepening of the political and ethical ideas born in the mutual aid meetings.

It is not easy to state what does it mean "to expropriate" the means of production in the immaterial production, when the means of production, the machine, is built from human capacities as much as of software and hardware. At the same time we see there are in la PAH practices capable of taking back the autonomous capacity of thinking, being creative, perceiving the reality together with other through both reason and emotion, and articulating this into different forms of communication. The head, the heads, can be expropriated from the production of capital through collective strategies, through understanding how communication withholds emotional charge and how does that affect the others[167] The question of the distribution of wealth resulting from the use of the media remains, nonetheless, at least partially unsolved. Nonetheless I consider (following the line of study of Guattarí together with Gilles Deleuze among others) that the production of subjectivity –that is not studied here even though it is impossible for it to come up– is always previous, conditio sine qua non for any other form of production. In this sense there is hope, a possibility, that the expropriated heads will come up with answers to the question of material distribution.

5.2.4 From common notions to a new common sense: #laSAREBesNuestra

> *"Self-organisation became common sense, and we saw a multiplicity of knowledge anf collective practicies unfolding and strenthening."[168]*

There is an often voiced idea circulating in la PAH that says la PAH, and 15M in the broader sense, has produced **new common sense** in the Spanish society.[169] La PAH itself resorts to the expression in its communiqués, press conferences and interviews. Judged in the context of everyday parlance it is relatively easy to understand what is meant when the term is used – but the term remains mostly undefined in the contexts of its use, and can indeed serve as a container of almost any political projection. To claim, of anything, that it simply is "common sense" or "commonsensical" can mean, in terms of organisational processes such as la PAH, a use of rhetorical power and a denial of dialogue. In terms of representative politics, it seems to function as a tool in the legitimisation of any political project that is imposed from above, very much related to the voice of the expert. "Common sense" seems to hover in and about, offering itself to any possible political use while not referring to any material collective practices whatsoever, as a true empty signifier in the sense it is often praised by those fond of the political thought of Ernesto Laclau.

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167 DatAnalysis15M & Toret Medina 2015, 95–110.

168 Arribas Lozano, Alberto (2015) Recordar el 15M para reimaginar el presente: Los movimientos sociales en España más allá del ciclo electoral de 2015. In Interface 7:1, 150–164.

169 On "common sense" and 15M, see La Tuerka (2015) ¿Qué queda del 15M? Internet source, visited 20/05/16: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPsBBGauM2s; also see Fernández-Savater, Amador (2013) La Cultura de la Transición y el nuevo sentido común. Internet source, visited 10/06/16: http://www.eldiario.es/interferencias/Cultura_de_la_Transicion-segunda_transicion_6_113798632.html. On "common sense" and la PAH, see PAH Terrassa (2011) V abecedario de la revuelta: Sentido común, persona, estar juntos. Internet source, visited 12/06/16: http://hipotecadosterrassa.blogspot.com.es/2011/10/la-pah-terrasa-en-v-abecedario-de-la.html; see also N/A (2013) La PAH de Cáceres dice que es de "sentido común" que el PP "obligara a dimitir" a Cifuentes tras sus declaraciones. Europapress. Internet source, visited 20/06/16: (http://www.europapress.es/extremadura/noticia-pah-caceres-dice-sentido-comun-pp-obligara-dimitir-cifuentes-declaraciones-20130326134535.html; see also the many uses of the term in la PAH's numerous communiqués available in http://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/category/media/comunicados/.

Analysts of 15M have used the concept to describe the movement of the social, political and subjective tectonic plates since 2011. Fernández-Savater argues that there has been "a general displacement of the common sense generated by the climate 15M"[170]. At the same time though, one can find the president of the Spanish Government Mariano Rajoy, a strong candidate for the political counterpole of 15M, stating that the Popular Party is the refuge of common sense"[171].

A centuries old debate over the term exists. This conceptual, but also political history of "common sense" weighs on us who have wanted to study philosophy and critique, resignify and create concepts: the reluctance to use it without defining it has to do with the meanings it has been charged with during the history. It has connotations in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, even economics and theology; the Aristotelian notion is of a capacity to consciously perceive complex objects, then we have the epistemological stratification imposed through the term in the Cartesian thought, later the Enlightenment philosophers who posed it as an epistemological question in order to criticize the French ancien régime, the multiple revivals of the Roman idea that takes the community into account. It is one of the most kicked around volleyball's of the Western philosophy, up to a point it is almost as if it would merely belong to the field of rhetorics.

In order to find more concrete and less mystifying names for this transformation, focusing especially on la PAH, some questions must be asked. How is common sense produced? How does one live, experience a change of common sense? In what way does a change of common sense alter the social fabric, meaning the organisation of our daily relationships (of exploitation and oppression, but also of mutual aid, complicity and solidarity)?

I propose that the common notions produced in the mutual aid meetings of la PAH are the embryonic form of the common sense la PAH advocates for. In order to test this hypothesis, I have chosen one technopolitical campaign that could be thought to have contributed into the spreading of a new common sense. The hashtag I have chosen, #laSAREBesNuestra, means "SAREB is ours". It is a slogan that refers to the toxic asset bank SAREB the government of the Popular Party created to foster the toxic assets that had to be cleaned away in order to maintain the rescued private banks on their feet. La PAH has proposed, both through popular legislative iniciative and direct action, that these "toxic assets" –empty homes in a situation of generalised homelessness– should be given a meaning that makes sense, putting them under a public social rent regime.

As I look at the use of the principal campaign hashtag[172] in order to see by what means the campaign defends a new common sense –while it is, in fact, creating it–, I also provide a more tangible analysis of the five strategic functions of social media for la PAH. I have previously argued that in the core of la PAH's technopolitics is the quest to

      1) democratise the access to information,
      2) promote heteroglossia also in the media,
      3) sustain an autonomous narrative,
      4) mark the times in the wider political agenda, and
      5) recruit participants that mean continuity and legitimacy for the movement.

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170 Fernández-Savater, Amador (2016) La política de los despolitizados. Internet source, visited 19/06/16: http://anarquiacoronada.blogspot.com.es/2016/05/la-politica-de-los-despolitizados.html

171 Agencia EFE (2015) Rajoy subraya que el PP es "el refugio del sentido común y la cordura. Internet source, visited 25/06/16: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UldSx3ifigQ

172 Hashtag (#) is the character designed for use in Twitter messages and discussions as a dividing theme and a key word for search. They can be spontaneously created at any given moment by any user.

SAREB is the Spanish entity for toxic asset management "created by the government but lead privately". It obtained 100% of its opening capital from 14 new investors: private shareholders 55%, public capital 45%. The private shareholders are eight Spanish banks: Ibercaja, Bankinter, Unicaja, Cajamar, Caja Laboral, Banca March, Cecabank and Banco Cooperativo Español; two foreign banks: Deutsche Bank and Barclays Bank; and four insurers: Mapfre, Mutua Madrileña, Catalana Occidente and Axa. Six further banks later also became shareholders: the Santander Group, Caixabank, Banco Sabadell, Banco Popular, Kutxabank and Banco Caminos, along with the electricity company Iberdrola. From the end of 2012 to early 2013, the insurers Generali, Zurich, Seguros Santa Lucía, Reale, Pelayo Seguros and Asisa invested in the company through purchases of subordinated debt. The remaining 45% was invested by FROB, a banking bailout and reconstruction program initiated by the Spanish government in June 2009, that was in turn funded with €99 billion of public money. Most of it ended in private savings banks in order to "incentivize" the nation's large savings banks to participate in an effort to stave off systematic financial instability. The 5% differential maintains SAREB, conveniently enough, a namely privately financed entity, even though during one particularly scandalious housing conflict in 2014 the Minister of Finance José Luís de Guindos publicly acknowledged the Ministry he leads held the political power over SAREB[173]. In all other occasions nonetheless, the government has denied it could intervene in SAREB's policies, that are characterised by acquiring houses (with or without inhabitants in them), handling the legal procedures necessary to render them empty in case they are not (through mortgage evictions or by legal action against occupants) and try to sell them in a saturated real estate market in a country that has quickly impoverished and lacks purchasing power (which means that the foremost buyers are global investment funds that continue to speculate with the property). Actually much more public money than the initial 45% investment through FROB has been injected in SAREB.[174]

The most repeated meaning attached to SAREB to the government is that of a rescuing institution that would, martyrlike, extend a hand and take care of what is argued to be the root of the housing crisis: the oversaturation of the real estate market. SAREB would help by way of pooling the toxic assets into its bad bank's lap, and maintain them there –in exchange of quite a sum from European and national public funds– until it became possible to sell again. Obviously there is a bitter irony in giving such a meaning to SAREB: the "toxic assets" are empty apartments considered toxic by the banks because they cannot be sold on a decent profit rate, but at the same time they gather dust, up to 517 home evictions each day[175] aare produced in Spain. This irony is augmented to a level of

173 La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (2014) #CitaConLaSareb: Carta a Luis de Guindos, ministro de Economía. Internet source, visited 02/03/16: http://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/2014/12/09/carta-a-luis-de-guindos-ministro-de-economia-citaconlasareb/

174 Martínez Morán, Guillermo (2014) Valoración de las ayudas públicas concedidas al sector bancario durante la crisis en España (2008–2013). Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid.

175 Data from the peak of the mortgage housing crisis in 2012 indicates up to 517 daily mortgage foreclosure evictions, see N/A (2012) Los desahucios en España se disparan hasta los 517 diarios. Diario Jurídico. Internet source, visited 17/11/15: http://www.diariojuridico.com/los-desahucios-en-espana-se-disparan-hasta-los-517-diarios/. At the current moment, autumn 2016, there are slightly less mortgage evictions, given the weight has shifted towards low-income renters and housing occupations, as the postponed effects of the impact of the mortgage bubble hit the news. It has been estimated that more than half of the evictions today are of renters (oftentimes previously homeowners and in the worst cases live whole familias stacked up into one tiny room in a flat shared with five other families). According the official statistics, renters evictions where more than 50% of the total on the first trimester of 2015, see: N/A (2015) Más de la mitad de desahucios se produce por impagos de alquileres. El Mundo. Internet source, visited 08/10/16: http://www.elmundo.es/economia/2015/06/05/55715ac6268e3e00618b456e.html. The housing occupation evictions (oftentimes previously evicted, living in their auctioned house after a re-entrance or in another bank-owned, occupied flat) do not figure in the official stadistics, which further contributes to the

cruel absurdity as we add the fact that SAREB, created practically to maintain homes off the market until it became profitable to sell –which is recently starting to happen: of course the sales are not to a precarised population without buying power, but to global investment funds– counts with a very strong public investment. A 45% of its capital is public, channelled through FOBR (Fund for Orderly Bank Restructuring)[176], while 55% is private investment (that permits to maintain the decisive power nominally on the private sector). Additionally multiple injections of public money have been performed to keep SAREB standing[177], oftentimes with such shady arrangements that the full amount is not known. Multiple different calculations exist but the government nor SAREB itself have not practiced transparency in order to inform about the matter.

I argue that through the campaign la PAH has displaced meanings attached to SAREB. Marketed as positive and resolutive, there has been a vague idea of SAREB, even a vacuum of meanings given the sought ignorance that serves for minimising the socio-political turmoil over the bailout and financial reordering. Instead, la PAH gives SAREB a meaning of target of social organisation.Through tactics that are primarily but not exclusively technopolitical la PAH creates new meanings, such as indignation over the looting and stashing away of publicly bought property, but also "positive" like the resolution of the Spanish housing crisis is managed differently.

As the bank bailout programme developed and it became clear that la SAREB would be the entity to harbor the fruits of the overproduction of the economic cycle that had ended with the mortgage bubble crashing, la PAH started to claim the buildings hidden by the opaque management of SAREB. Sense is here produced in two dimensions: through the growing understanding about the political motives behind the SAREB operation, and through la PAH's action to counter it. Having payed SAREB with public money, the movement enounced: "If SAREB is ours, the flats are too", later dropping the "if" and stating: "SAREB is ours, and the flats are too". At that point, many of the already-recovered bank-owned buildings –that in May 2016 sum up to 44 entire buildings and thousands of loose flats– were already being trespassed from a rescued banks, like Bankia, to SAREB. The assembly of recovered buildings of PAH Vallekas was numerous already in 2015 when four buildings (that would by the time it was 2016, have become 5) had been recovered:

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already profound marginalisation and rendering visible of the vulneration of the fundamental rights of the persons living in occupied buildings.

176 Fund for Orderly Bank Restructuring (FOBR) is a banking bailout and reconstruction program initiated by the Spanish government in June 2009.

177 See La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (2015) La Sareb Es Nuestra: Reestructuración. Internet source, visited 02/05/16: http://www.lasarebesnuestra.com/reestructuracion.html. "We don't know [the exact amount of money SAREB has cost the taxpayers] because each entity has a different way of calculating the state expenditure. Banco de España says that the state spend a total of more than 61.000 millions of euros of public money. [...] If we consider other injections that due to technical reasons are not reflected in the public expenditure, the quantity ascends to 107.913 millions of euros, a figure calculated by the Court of Accounts. The Citizen's Platform for Debt Audit adds to this other aspects such as the direct and indirect bank guarantees to Banco de España, and consequently estimates that more than 1,42 trillions of euros of public funds have beeen used."

In October 2015 la PAH opened a web page called "SAREB Is Ours"[178] to escalate its pressure towards the entity and the politicians. The website includes information about the creation of the toxic asset bank and the public investment it entails, a map of property SAREB maintains empty, and a manual of civil disobedience and direct action to promote occupation[179] of said property. In order to disseminate information, la PAH organised Twitter campaigns that included also other hashtags (to permit differentiated peaks in the social media activity while tying them under the continuity of the overall cam paign #laSAREBesNuestra). The other hashtags used highlight different issues related to SAREB and the right to housing, and are indispensable because they can be converted into Trending Topics more easily than ones that have previously been used[180].

In order to democratise the access to information (1) la PAH filmed **a didactic short animation**[181] about the creation of SAREB, explaining in 5 minutes the most basic aspects of the operation. In the website, and in the multiple Tweets transmitting bits and pieces of its contents in order to encourage people to enter, a more **complex account on the birth of SAREB** is offered. Additionally, in a clandestine genre of knowledge born from the grassroots effort, a **collectively gathered register of empty SAREB buildings**, is published. Having a map of the SAREB property at everyone's reach is thought to serve to render visible the material, tangible dimension of the conflict over the homes and enhance local groups to constitute themselves as la PAH and recuperate the property for social use (5). This introduces an element of autonomous narrative (3) that seeks to **enhance particular and concrete organisational processes that sum up to radical democracy**: it proposes to a population suffering from the savage social cuts and wide-spread homelessness that by organising and recurring to direct action they can become authors of their own destiny.

These elements can be seen throughout the evolution of the hashtag[182]. Here are few of the examples in which la PAH groups and individual participants attach new meanings to SAREB, and express a discovery of sense through them.

[Attention! This Wednesday morning SAREB will listen to us and get to know who is la PAH. #SAREBisOurs]

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178 La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (2015) La Sareb Es Nuestra. Internet source, visited 02/05/16: http://www.lasarebesnuestra.com/
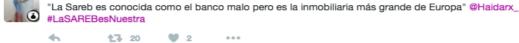
179 *Occupation* is the most commonly used term for the act of taking possession of an unused flat, building, or land area. Spain has a long history of occupation, both "political" and "social" in their public articulation, best known of being *movimiento okupa*. La PAH has, nonetheless, chosen to dispose of the term occupy and use *recovery* instead. This term is argumented to be more precise given the buildings inhabited by members of la PAH have already been paid through the bank bailout. La PAH's strategic decision is to occupy property of banks and their real estate agencies only: Their use by those paying the price of the austerity resulting from the bank bailout is seen legitimate.

180 A Trending Topic is a system of evaluation provided by Twitter itself: it offers a Top 10 of the most used hashtags in a certain moment, in a certain geographical area (until now, a country or the whole globe, with an unfortunate lack of the European or Spanish-speaking world, that would greatly enrich the study of technopolitical organisation).

181 La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (2015) La SAREB es Nuestra. Internet source, visited 11/08/16: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIA7cNnj938

182 See DatAnalysis & Toret 2015 for in depth analysis on the affective content and evolution of the hashtags.

João França @jotaemi · 21 oct. 2015
"La Sareb es conocida como el banco malo pero es la inmobiliaria más grande de Europa" @Haidarx_
#LaSAREBesNuestra

↩ ♺ 20 ♥ 2 •••

[SAREB is known as the bad bank but in fact it's the biggest real estate office in Europe. #SAREBisOurs]

emma @emma__gine · 21 oct. 2015
#LaSAREBesNuestra sabes qué es la @ObraSocial_PAH?es la que le da color a los pisos abandonados por @SAREB_Bancaria

↩ ♺ 17 ♥ 9 •••

[#SAREBisOurs but do you know what is Obra Social of la PAH? It's what's giving colour to the flats SAREB has abandoned]

When this escalation of a previously existing but disperse campaign against the opaque management of SAREB took place, Spain was entering a phase of recovery in terms of the growth of its GDP. Obviously, in the street view the picture is quite different than in the statistics, as the cost of the recovery of the formal economy has meant leaving an important part of the population more and more dependent of a variety of informal economies such as la PAH, but also others, of much less cohesion o egalitarian aims. With the campaign against SAREB la PAH invites to take a look at a different temporality of the crisis: the temporality the precarised, the ones below, the affected population – *as told by them themselves.* Without all of the members taking part in the technopolitical action disregardless of their age, gender, previous education, socio-economical status, etc., la PAH would not prospere as a technopolitical organisation. The Green Book of la PAH too notices that

> *"one of the principal strengths of la PAH is that* **the affected people themselves get involved and struggle in order to solve their situation***, but also those of the others. This collective dimension of the problem and the direct involvement of all the members, let us be directly affected or not, has been indispensable in guaranteeing that today the majority of the population knows and agrees with the work and proposals of la PAH."[183]*

What is here stated about organisation in general, holds very much true about the technopolitical organisation. That is why, especially since 15M, much has been said about the question of **overcoming the digital divide** as one of the principal barriers for truly transversal technopolitical processes of organisation. While digital divide has been documented[184] and no magical cure exists, multiple popular learning experiences are always on their course[185]. Non digi-natives can –for example in PAH Vallekas they habitually do– become attracted to the learning and daily usage of social media, and even dedicate their social media time solely or principally to technopolitics. On the other hand it is not necessary to belong to any PAH group in order to participate, and many of those who mobilise within the technopolitical campaigns of la PAH, do so without attending weekly meetings. This is why I argue that *la PAH's communicational strategy blurs the line that separates the "inside" and the "outside" of a movement* up to such an extent that it succesfully encourages to adopt protest and civil disobedience as new forms of democratic participation without the necessity of identifying as a member of a political movement.

What lowers further any treshold in participating is the praised non-ideologic character of la PAH. It has been said that during the last five years in Spain, people have come together "without no other ideology than common sense".[186] The sentence leaves space for us to ask whether actually we

183 La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (2014) Libro Verde de la PAH: Una guía básica. Internet source, visited 10/05/16: http://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/LibroVerde-PAH-32.pdf, 12.

184 See Giner Pérez, José Miguel & Tolosa Bailén, María del Carmen (2008) The local digital divide in Spain: a territorial analysis of the Internet penetration in the Spanish households. Internet source, visited 17/06/16: http://hdl.handle.net/10045/23142; see also Fermín Bouza (2003) Tendencias a la desigualdad en Internet: la brecha digital en España. In Tezanos, J,F. & Tortosa, Alaminos (ed.) Tendencias en desvertebración social y en políticas de solidaridad. Madrid: Ed. Sistema, 93−121.

185 On the active role of users in overcoming digital divide see Warschauer, Marc (2003) Technology and social inclusion: Rethinking the Digital Divide. Massachusetts: MIT Press. An extensive study into the impact of the 2011 uprisings, the politisation and mobilisation of the society on the digital divide in Spain (and other areas that have experienced such ocurrences) is waiting to be conducted.

186 Madrilonia (2011) El 15M, los neocon y el sentido común. Internet source, visited 02/07/16: http://www.madrilonia.org/2011/12/el-15m-los-neocon-y-el-sentido-comun/

should consider that there is an ideological element in *any* common sense, independently from the political color it is of today or to what end it is used. Doesn't any fixed, universal belief require methods of imposition either by force or by the power of ideological suggestion? (And doesn't it always, even enforced, fail in being "common" due to the resistance?) The non-ideological organisational processes of la PAH doesn't fit into the same picture with such a notion of common sense. When la PAH deconstructs the hegemonic recovery narrative it does it in a coral way, opposing itself even in the ways of doing to the idea of the universal law of the financial markets. The diversity of its composition, commented on the previous subchapter, becomes reflected in the **collective utterance** transmitted in the social media: it is not one sole channel where totalising political content is passed to the public, but rather a sea swarming of messages written in different registers and contexts (2). It would seem that in this way the "common sense of la PAH" comes to life, not as a single ideology, but rather as a plurality of notions of exploitation and creative struggle. In fact, it seems that the mere *form* of this sense –multifaceted, contextual, bathed in difference, always transforming– disputes the idea of any universally imposed common sense.

The difference that proliferates in the grupal processes of producing common notions I studied in the first part of this chapter helps the group enunciation to resist propagating universal common sense. The whole distributed character of the technopolitical organisation of la PAH helps the message to maintain its plurality and the consequent capability of reaching more, and different, people on basis of a minimal common denominator. In synchrony with the conclusions of DatAnalysis15M, Gómez-Gardenes et al posti the *notion of contagion*[187] in the center of micropolitical organisation.

But to what, exactly, should we attribute this capacity of causing a social and (techno)political epidemic? What is it that makes the multiple messages to travel around the world? Relying on the analysis' of DatAnalysis15M and Raúl Sánchez Cedillo[188], very much in parallel with the enunciative act in the mutual aid meetings, here too the emotional charge, *the affectivity of the message sent in the social media is the strongest motivation for joining the digital mobilisation* (and it can, and oftentimes does, also lead into joining also the analogue forms of mobilisation). This means that the minimal common denominator that glues the plurality together can be, and during the cycle initiated by 15M oftentime has been, of affective nature instead of discursive or ideological. Also in a clear parallelism with how the speech act finds an adequate context and a collective sustain in the analogue space of the mutual aid meetings, the *sense of belonging to a collective effort encourages also digital non-natives to create and use personal Twitter accounts* to support and circulate collective messages. It de-professionalises politics from below, by way of pointing out the politicity of the organisation of everyday life.

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187 Gómez-Gardenes, J.; Lotero, L.; Taraskin, S. N. & Pérez-Reche, F. J. (2016) Epidemia: Contagio explosivo en redes. Internet source, visited 03/09/16: http://ars-uns.blogspot.fi/2016/04/epidemia-contagio-explosivo-en-redes.html?m=1

188 Affectivity datanalysis + cuerpo-máquina de Raúl who speaks about 15M but I dare to extend the argument to the technopolitics of la PAH that, too, are born in 15M and carry the practicies forward once the heat of the most turbulent weeks passes: "El 15M comenzó como un **virus de afecto**, cuyo vehículo lingüístco se resume en el lema de aquella jornada: «No somos mercancía en manos de políticos y banqueros». El contagio prende así, de manera simétrica y contraria a como prende el pánico o la euforia en los mercados financieros, y da lugar, cuando nadie lo esperaba, a manifestaciones masivas. Contagio y enjambre. .... En este sentido, cabe afirmar que la cooperación estigmérgica en red y la aparición de universos de valor (ético, estético) y **afecto han proporcionado el suplemento que permitió dar consistencia** (y transistencia, esto es, capacidad de contagio, traducción, recombinación, hibridación) a la aglomeración a priori incomposible de elementos, singularidades y estructuras del 15M."

Through this distributed effort la PAH marks and immediately puts into practice a **political agenda of its own** that is not dependent on the temporality of the representative democracy, but rather based on another kind of a notion of radical democracy –direct action to recover SAREB buildings– and the denouncing of the indifference of the administration (4). It is a political agenda that is not only different in its temporality, but also in the ways of doing and the goals set for the doing: most of the time all these aspects conflict clearly with the political agenda of the representative institutions. Other times, as has been the case in many municipalities after the 2015 elections, the conflict can take place rather in the two previous fields (temporality, ways of doing) than in the third (goals). As Catalina Gayà attributes a successful strategy to having common sense in her essay about Sun Tzu's classic of strategical thought[189], she almost accidentally points out a notion that is typically lacking in the mystifying ethnographic analysis of the phenomenon called "change of the common sense": in her text common sense is understood through **conflict.**

> *"Josep reflected [on the sales of Sun Tzu's book that are lately on the rise]: Why is it read? "Sun Tzu gathers the common sense and converts it into knowledge." Why now? "Because* **this is an era of conflict, of change, and we must create strategies to survive***.""*

The storekeeper's idea reveals the connection between the everyday use in the new millennium and the theorisations ridden by theoretical dead ends. Stretching the lecture, or rather permitting a lecture of one's own, we could say that Sun Tzu means for Josep someone who has absorbed so many (divergent, different, conflictual) common notions that he can convert them into a weapon. Can we define common sense as the encounter of the common notions born in a certain society in a certain historical moment (because, as we remember from the mutual aid meetings, common notions are always produced from a certain reality, a certain social, economical and political status any particular body enjoys or lacks)? If so, common sense is by definition conflictual. And with conflict entering the definition of common sense, there is finally something tangible in the concept, because now we can talk about something that is recognisable within the organisational processes of la PAH. This would be the case of any other social movement that tend to be based on the conflictuality of any given issue. In the conflict over housing the common notions produced in the mutual aid meetings are converted into a weapon made of knowledge, experience, emotional charge and ethical demands. Together with a tangible strategy that proposes, point by point, a demand over the model of organisation of housing in Spain, they are brought to the public sphere, but not stripped of their conflictuality. It brings us very close to the Machiavellian definition of democracy. For Machiavelli democracy can only happen in what has to be

> *"«a tumultuous republic», but the* **tumults produce «good order»**. ... «The one who examines carefully the goals of [the tumults] discovers that they haven't given rise to an exile or any violence perjudicial to the common good, but rather to laws and order that benefits the public freedom» (Discorsi I, 4.).".[190]*

What impedes the faltering of the conflict once the demands enter in the public sphere? How does la PAH guarantee that the demands don't become "just a wet paper", as the Spanish saying goes? There is yet one element to consider: *there is always corporeality, materiality behind the meanings*

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189 Gayà, Catalina (2014) El arte de la guerra: el libro del sentido común. Internet source, visited 03/09/16: http://cuadernosdobleraya.com/2014/05/06/el-arte-de-la-guerra-el-libro-del-sentido-comun/ The connection between disputing common sense and a succesful strategy has been underlined in a series of studies about the organisational processes of the last five years in Spain. See e.g., García López,Ernesto (2013) Unidos por el sentido común: Identidad(es) cultural(es) y participación política en el 15M, preguntas para una reflexión etnográfica. Revista de Antropología Experimental, 13:3, 41–71; see also Flesher Fominaya, Cristina (2015) El sentido común, lo 'político', el feminismo y el 15M. In Encricijadas: Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales, 9.

190 Negri 2015, 101.

la PAH attaches to SAREB, guaranteeing that those meanings make sense to anyone that can identify with the notion of material lack and bodily suffering (if also with the empowerment the body can go through when it organises with other bodies). In this way, the motive behind la PAH's media action is not principally abstract, "to influence the public opinion", but rather the media reflects or functions as an extension of the corporeal politics, the bodies that organise themselves in order to prevent harm done to them in form of homelessness and the thousand other maladies related to the housing issue. The new common sense la PAH promotes is powerful because it is corporeal and based on a day-to-day organisation that sustains life. We see again the blurring of the line between the inside and the outside of the movement: the action la PAH impulses in order to reach "to the public" is not something separated from the internal communication, but actually seeks to make of any outside a part of the inside by way of making the inside visible from the outside. *La PAH communicates in the public sphere in order to organise itself, not the other way around.*

By speaking about "a change in the common sense" we, it seems, refer to how the protest against neoliberal austerity policies and for social and political rights has gained a widespread legitimacy in the society, leading to a politicisation of life (previously in the area of the private and the contractual, as we have seen with the question of housing) and pushing forward multiple organisational processes that promote a more radical understanding of democracy, not as representation but as collective action. The new common sense la PAH promotes would be "putting the life first": parting from the bodies that manifest their desire of change by way of organising themselves, engaging in a process that is intrinsically plural and conflictual and has as its objective to produce and extend those forms of organisation of the bodies –that in larger scale can be called societies– that have been found to serve life, as opposed to the economic profit, by a great variety of means (excluding those that enter in contradiction with the departure point of "putting life first").

By now it has become clear that the definition of common sense I'm forging for la PAH differs greatly to the historical usage of the term over the centuries. Even in today's use in Spain there are examples of completely different theorisation. Common sense, as I am trying to define it, would not be any mystical force blurring the conjunctural analysis of a given social change; nor is it the use of "big words" in the populist struggles for representative hegemony[191]; neither can we suppose that by being something "common", attributed to the many, it could not become a tool of repressive ideological operations disregardless of their political color.

What protects the common sense la PAH talks about and promotes, is that it defines as **plural, conflictual and processual**. Maybe there is in it more than a hint of what Jean-François Lyotard attributed to the old Roman *sensus communis*: political judgement that doesn't seek consensus, but makes an effort to find euphony –a certain pleasure of rhythm, even harmony– in dissensus. From the cacophony of the isolated individuals, the euphonic sound of the common notions produced within the conflict and by virtue of solidarity, can be distinguished. Common sense is the sense there is in the construction of a society in which a plurality of life forms fit and enjoy equitative rights. Common sense is never a precondition for the struggle, but a result that must be renewed

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191 Errejón, Iñigo (2011) Disputar les places, disputar les paraules. In Viejo, R (ed.) Les raons dels indignats. Barcelona: Raval Edicions, 18–24. The essay reflects well Errejon's Schmittian and Laclauian political formation due to which, for Errejón, the political is defined by identitarian adhesion, the division we/others and, of course, the idea of common sense as the result of a hegemony struggle. Two of these three are, I argue, daily battled against in la PAH by way of practicing politics from other point of departure. This results in the third –the common sense– gaining a very different definition. I hope I have, by now, managed to give some idea of how it becomes defines through la PAH's practices.

continuously. Alone there is no common sense to be had, because it is a transformation of the conflict into a process of change.

In la PAH, that fortunately leads us against the national romantic European tradition, it is not the wisdom of nations that embodies the common sense, but the knowledge of the *mestiza*. In feminine, because in parallel with the displacement of the figure of the European activist, we see another historical transformation: common sense is **transmitted and transformed above all by organised, empowered women.** The underlying motives for using the theoretical tools invented by the Italian autonomous feminists in order to delve into la PAH's practices becomes clear in the conclusion that la PAH is proving their hypothesis was correct. The historical discovery of the free feminine has meant an irreversible passage into doing politics in a different way[192], and the ways of la PAH stand as a remarkable example, resisting the professionalisation and masculinisation of the organisational practices five years after the delightful turmoil started.

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192 Librería Mujeres de Milán 2006, 197.

Chapter 6: conclusions

To speak, to resignify, to organise the life affected by debt

First conclusion I reached writing my Master's thesis was that asking a question results in an *avalanche of questions*. This must be especially so in the case of asking a question that, besides constituting an academic hypothesis, results of vital importance to the asker. This was my case, and so I got snowballed on.

I asked: What role do enunciation and sense-making through resignifying interventions in the systems of meaning have in organising within and against a growingly semiotic mode of capitalistic production? But if I let it, it would inmediately become a proliferation of questions. In reality I was asking quite a lot more. I was, in fact, also asking: what sense is there in life according to the politicians, the media, and any uncritical social environment we inhabit? Do we feel this sense is "enough", do we feel it sums up to a purposeful life? In crisis, such as facing a mortgage default, don't we get the tragedy with an opportunuty to reconsider? What is the sense in paying a debt for the rest of your life? What sense is there for housing to be a commodity anyway? Wasn't it a basic human right? Now we can start to guess why is it necessary to create spaces in which we can talk about our lives, the places we live in and the money we have to put in it. How to do it in such a way that it isn't just everyone talking about themselves as separate? Can we stop treating each other by their instrumental value and create communities of mutual aid and committed political organisation? What does it mean, I mean really mean day to day, to practice ethics of collective action? Can we understand we don't share the same backgrounds and resources? Wouldn't it be nice to realise we live in a same world and that we all fit in it? Is that what it would look like if we "changed the world"? If the world held our word against all other word and it was embraced, not turned away? If we found a voice to tell about our experience? But again, what to do with so many differences, with these heads full of fear and demands of universal explanations! Yet what would happen if it was a strength, not an obstacle? What if we could take the difference into account and decide about that which concerns our lives, different yet interdependent? What if we wouldn't be afraid of the conflicts that follow? What if we knew how to live conflicts as processes of liberation and transformation? What if we started today? What if we realised that despite and within all the difference we have something in common? Or have we already started? What is it that opens to us if we manage to understand the interconnections of the social, political and economic that build up to what we call "my life"?

Second conclusion was that we must *advance slower and take the tree by its branches*. It means not to shy away from the avalanche, but rather wallow in it. But it also means learning discipline of thought and putting limits, or rather find a rhythm, that fit the process at hand. In my rhythm it became very important to keep a list of all the branches that I had taken, that I had thought over and wanted to include but in this occasion could not, in order to get to my tree. The branches, that at times felt like closed doors but in the end helped to see complexities, were:

> 1. Why accept to talk about empowerment and not dive head in into the questions of production of subjectivity? In the years to come, I hope to explore and experiment further into this area of investigation, using the hypothesis Maurizio Lazzarato has offered about the

production of indebted subjectivity in his book "La fabrique de l'homme endetté" as a starting point. This leads into a more profound study of both subjectivity production and debt in the joint work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari that I am looking forward to.

2. What do these processes of empowerment, seen as production of subjectivity, have to do with constituent power, as elaborated by Antonio Negri in "Il potere costituente"? To continue to work in this field of encounter between the "micro" level of transformations of subjectivity on one hand and the "macro" processuality of construction of power from below on the other, the prologue for the latest Spanish edition of Negri's book proves extremely interesting, as it directly comments the uprising of 15M and sets a new set of challenges apt for the postmodern time.

3. What does law mean today? As the sovereignty of the States dissipates in favour of the global financial markets, it seems to be only movements like la PAH that are any longer capable of working towards a new concept of law, moving on the between the customary law and the potentiating of the jurisprudence of the disenfranchised to claim State sanctions.

4. What can we gather from the omnipresence and strength of the figure of women in this and other similar social struggles? It is a historical moment to recognise the role of women's struggles that has build up until this day. The challenge would be to construct, through an investigation into the experiences of feminist and/or feminine politics in the previous half a century, a genealogy of the woman in la PAH, a genealogy of becoming-woman of the collective action, if you will.

Third conclusion: it seems that, given the circumstances, to speak makes it possible to resignify the reality that surrounds us. And that the circumstances being of a lethal governance by debt in which capital opposes life, it is this resignifying action that is crucial in order to organise the life affected by debt. There is four things I feel confident to argue about la PAH that should nuance this.

1. *The organisational prototype la PAH offers is a biopolitical one: it breaks down the division between the political and the social.* In other words there is no acceptance of a representational relationship, but a processual empowerment through collective action instead. This process –or these processes, because they are multiple– permits that the social fabric becomes growingly autonomous, capable of speaking for itself, and therefore critical of political representation. As representation is turned down, a relationship of delegation can still exist, and la PAH has based much of its pressure towards politicians on that very idea: the organised society must be obeyed by those who claim to represent.

2. *The everyday organisational practices of la PAH create empowerment that is primarily led by creating connections between the semiotic, epistemic and affective spheres of collective action.* On the basis of my argument on the intrinsically affective nature of human communication, I have sought to prove that the key to empowerment in la PAH lies within connecting the emotional universe of the lived experience with its expression through speech (which promotes understanding the affective and ethical dimensions that concerns it), pointing out the shared nature of the experience without stripping it of difference (because only difference maintains it real and not ideological) and converting it into situated knowledge (that needs continuously to be saved in some way, pluralised, spread and defended against the hegemonic ideas claiming to be universal). It is a case in which the

term empowerment –often criticised due to its said emphasis on "feeling empowered" disregardless of the position in actual structure of power relations– is used in the proper sense of gaining real and effective power to growingly define one's life.

3. *As a political surplus of these practices, la PAH gains a capacity to articulate the crisis of democracy that results from the externalisation of the reproduction of life by the state, suprastate and capitalist power structures that nonetheless maintain the effective right to legislate about life.* As a result of overcoming the separation between the social and the political (1), the prominent role of the housing policies in the wider model of debt governance and the global financial markets that regulate housing once it has been progresively turned into a commodity, the collective voice la PAH has gained as a movement has become legitimate to articulate a social and political critique that goes well beyond the question of housing in its strict sense. In the parlance of la PAH this has lately become articulated as "defense of a dignified life", a continuation and amplification of a movement who defines itself as a movement in defense of dignified housing. What is left to ambiguity is whether the life la PAH is starting to talk about, is in fact not something that is being demanded, but rather becomes dignified through the struggle that being in la PAH means.

4. *Under these conditions the semiotic power la PAH has gained provides it with the legitimacy to practice direct action and civil disobedience in construction of a radically democratic society where the private configuration of debtor–creditor relationship is broken down and debt governance is converted into a social conflict.* This means, besides a reactivation of knowledge accumulated by the previous cycles of struggle, circulation of critical thought and disobedient practice beyond its previous limits. It means that those who previously thought that questioning unlimited private property was a no-no and acting directly against it as a property form was for thugs and criminals are today prouder of la PAH than of their Government when they travel abroad. It means that thanks to la PAH there are more of us who think that society belongs to us all and needs therefore to be a place where all of us can feel at home. It means thanks to la PAH today there are more people who wont tolerate injustice than there were yesterday. It means that, as humankind, we have taken a step in history.

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Interview of Ada Colau; co-founder and a spokesperson of la PAH

Speech held by Emmanuel Rodríguez –a militant investigator and an analyst of the housing bubble– to an audience formed by the members of PAH Barcelona

Interview of Wilson; mortgage loan defaulter and a member of PAH Barcelona*
Excerpts from Wilson conversating in PAH meetings and actions*

Material from the workshops "the Life Affected by Debt":

–Group conversation 1
–Group conversation 2
–Group conversation 3
–Group conversation 4

–Interview with Dani, inhabitant of the recovered buildings and a member of PAH Vallekas

–Interview with José Luís, mortgage loan defaulter, inhabitant of the recovered buildings and a member of PAH Vallekas

–Interview with Rosa, mortgage loan defaulter and a member of PAH Vallekas

–Interview with Yolanda, mortgage loan defaulter and a member of PAH Vallekas

–Interview with Beatríz, a member of PAH Vallekas

–Interview with Cecilia 1, mortgage loan defaulter, inhabitant of the recovered buildings and a member of PAH Vallekas
–Interview with Cecilia 2, two years later, as she has won the *datio* and a social rent

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