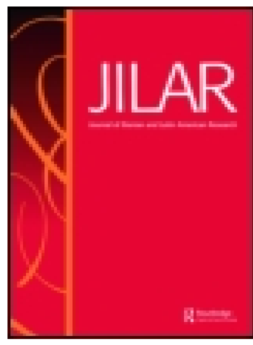

Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjil20

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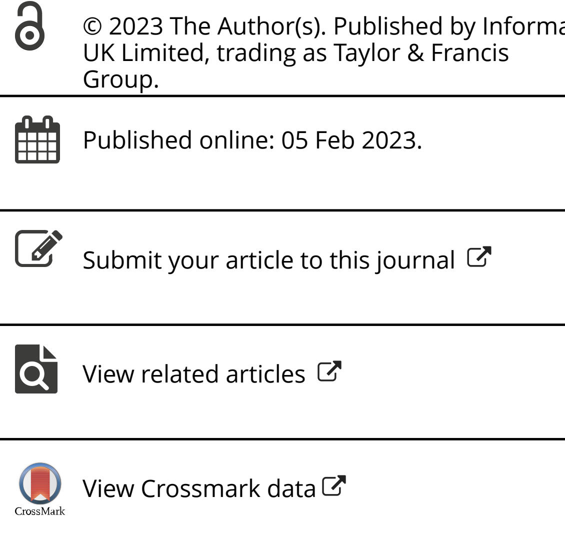
To cite this article: Maria Rovisco, Stamatis Poulakidakos & Anastasia Veneti (2023): Who Are We? Square Politics and the Collective Self-Understanding of the Indignados in Spain and Greece—Reflections and Legacies, Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research, DOI: 10.1080/13260219.2022.2170732

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13260219.2022.2170732



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Published online: 05 Feb 2023.

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JOURNAL OF IBERIAN AND LATIN AMERICAN RESEARCH
https://doi.org/10.1080/13260219.2022.2170732

Who Are We? Square Politics and the Collective Self-Understanding of the Indignados in Spain and Greece—Reflections and Legacies

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ABSTRACT

As occupations of squares in Spain spread across Europe, the Spanish Indignados gave rise to a transnational movement of ordinary citizens united in their anger against the banks, corruption, the electoral system, the global financial system, and the press. In this article, we reflect upon the legacies of the Spanish and Greek Indignados and show how their collective self-understanding—that is, a sense of a "us"—is formed and articulated very differently in Spain and Greece through square politics. We argue that it is the dramaturgy of political protest that fundamentally constructs and shapes the collective self-understanding of the Indignados in Spain and Greece. We will see that while in Spain there is a clearer sense of a shared political project and a shared identity, in Greece social movement actors were divided by their particular agendas and sectarian identities, which resulted in different articulations of their collective identity.

KEYWORDS
Indignados; dramaturgy; new social movements; collective identity; austerity

Introduction

On the 15 May 2011, the platforms *Democracia Real Ya* (Real Democracy Now) and Jóvenes sin Futuro (Young People with No Future) organized a demonstration in Madrid's square Puerta del Sol that attracted unexpectedly large numbers of protestors through a call for action that went viral on social media. At the end of the demonstration, a group of about a hundred protestors decided to occupy the Puerta del Sol, and so the social movement that became known as the Indignados, 15M movement or movement of the squares was born. Inspired by the uprisings of the so-called Arab Spring, the movement went on to spark a wave of occupations throughout Europe and galvanize wide sectors of civil society while enjoying very high levels of public support. Ten years after the wave of protests led by the movement of the squares, we reflect on the legacy of the Spanish Indignados by examining how this movement took hold and evolved in the Spanish and Greek contexts. We are particularly interested in reflecting and shedding light on how a movement of ordinary citizens, united in their anger against the banks, corruption, the electoral system, the global financial system, and the press, evolved into

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what Alain Caillé and Frédéric Vandenberghe, describe as a "newest" social movement; that is, a radical anti-systemic social movement striving for non-representative forms of democracy.[1] When occupations of squares rapidly spread beyond the initial core of activists in Puerta del Sol across Spain and other EU countries (such as Italy, Greece, France, and Portugal) what becomes clear—against the backdrop of the EU debt crisis and unprecedented mass unemployment in many EU countries—is that the Indignados anger against the political and economic system needs to be understood also against the backdrop of what the Indignados perceived to be a crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy. As a grassroots movement that reportedly drew up to 8% of the Spanish population, the Indignados responded to the debt crisis and austerity policies with tactics and struggles that led to the creation of alternative networks of direct democracy, self-organization and mutual aid, solidarity economies, and innovative uses of social media and ICT platforms (blogs, livestreaming, wikipages, digital archives).[2] The Indignados went on to adopt the grassroots models of political participation of other grassroots social movements such as the European Social forums, the Global Justice Movement, and Madrid's autonomous social movement scene.[3] But while these movements were open to representatives of all civil society groups, relied strongly on alternative media practices and emphasized mobilization for concrete demands, the Spanish Indignados went on to advocate principles of nonviolence, non-partisanship, and leaderlessness through a distinctive repertoire of protest. The corruption of the political class (in particular, its links with the economic elites) and the neoliberal politics of deregulation, privatization, and cuts in social spending were common grievances that Indignados shared with previous grassroots social movements, including the global justice movement.[4] Although the Indignados in Spain and beyond had a shared political project pursuing forms of non-representative democracy against the backdrop of neoliberal austerity policies, their political demands rejected the "old politics" while also reasserting and extending the power of ordinary (indignant) citizens by providing them with instruments of participatory and direct democracy.[5] Above all, their struggles were struggles for recognition that coalesced around the formation of a distinctive collective identity. But while the Spanish Indignados achieved a strong sense of a shared Indignados identity, the Greek *Aganaktismenoi*, although united in their anger against the official legislative body, never managed to transcend the deep divisions and internal differences between those collectives gathering in the lower and upper sections of Syntagma square.[6] In this article, we reflect on the legacies of the Spanish and Greek Indignados and how their collective self-understanding—that is, a sense of an us—is formed and articulated very differently in Spain and Greece through square politics. We will see that while in Spain there is a clearer sense of a shared political project, in Greece social movement actors were more divided by their particular agendas and sectarian identities, which resulted in different articulations of their collective identity, as well as different civic and political outcomes. We will also see that it is in the physical space of the square and as embodied subjects that the protestors go on to affirm their identity as a collective body of peaceful ordinary citizens. This article seeks to contribute to the literature on the role of culture and emotions in social movement studies. It does so through an interdisciplinary lens and by bringing together social movement theory, approaches from performance studies, cultural sociology, media and communication research, and visual analysis. In arguing that what shapes the collective identity of the Greek and Spanish Indignados is what we

call a distinctive dramaturgy of protest, we show the role of emotions, symbolic practices, and political performativity as embodied practice in the collective self-understanding of the Indignados. In this way, this article seeks to advance debates on the role of culture and emotions in social movements by responding to calls for scholars to take more seriously aesthetics, the visual, and performance in social movement studies.[7] This research is informed by textual and visual data (in particular, manifestos, photographs, the main FB page of the Greek Indignados, and notes from the first assembly published in the Greek Press) that were produced and circulated, by both protestors and the mainstream media, during the phase of sustainment of the encampments in Plaza del Sol and Syntagma square.[8]

The Making of a New Political Subject: The Spanish Indignados, Square Politics, and the Dramatization of Protest

Like the struggles of previous new social movements, the Indignados' struggles are struggles about appearing and being recognized for what they are, rather than for what they have or what they do.[9] These struggles for recognition were powerfully articulated in the open and collaborative manifestos produced by the various encampments (*Acampadas*), which included a wide-ranging set of demands, from political and fiscal reform and the regulation of the banks to the right to high-quality education and healthcare, tackling unemployment, and the establishment of a participatory model of democracy. This vast array of demands was not easily compatible with a concrete and unified program of democratic reforms through which the Indignados—like the public—would make power accountable (a la Habermas). Yet, the manifestos succeeded rather well in cementing the identity of the Spanish Indignados as a non-partisan social movement of ordinary citizens demanding participatory forms of democracy.[10] Amongst the distinctive characteristics of this collective identity are the principles of non-violence, care and non-partisanship that are expressed in the manifestos as narrative frames that help the Indignados make sense of who they are. In the manifesto issued by #Acampadasol they have written:

> WHO ARE WE? We are individuals who have come together freely and voluntarily. Each of us has decided, after the concentrations on Sunday, May 15, that we are determined to continue fighting for dignity and political and social awareness/*We do not represent any political party or association*./We are joined by the singular cause of change./We are brought together by integrity and solidarity with those who are unable to join us [. . .]. We are here to make it known that the people have not fallen asleep, and *we will continue fighting . . . peacefully*. (#Acampadasol; italics added for emphasis).

Although the Indignados had strong links to the collective identity and movement culture of the Spanish Autonomous movements, the framing of 15-M as a non-partisan movement of ordinary citizens is, as Cristina Flesher Fominaya notes, an explicit and deliberate strategy to eschew the label of activist to reach out to the local community.[11] Identity claims such as "We do not represent any political party or association" can also be seen as a protest strategy for collective identity construction that goes in tandem with highly dramaturgical forms of assembly and gathering in public space. To understand the collective self-understanding of the Spanish Indignados as

a movement of ordinary citizens that eschews representative democracy and the majority rule, it is important to shed light on how their occupying tactics—what Maria Rovisco and Jonathan Ong call square politics—led to a new model of protest that became available for circulation and appropriation in a transnational space.[12] Drawing on Alberto Mellucci, we are concerned with illuminating how square politics played a crucial role in the construction of a sense of a "we," that is, a shared collective identity that arises out from social relationships between people in which a common consciousness and a shared understanding of the circumstances in which they find themselves are created and negotiated.[13] In so doing, we pay attention to the discursive, emotional, material, and embodied dimensions of collective identity formation.[14] Importantly, we show how square politics relate to collective identity formation not solely discursively, for example, through the making identity claims, but crucially, through distinctive forms of embodied and symbolic action—that is, through the dramaturgy of political protest.[15] The Indignados social movement fits in well with the paradigm of the new social movements that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, and are no longer rooted in social class or the capital-labor conflicts of the old Labor social movements. Much of their struggles are about gaining recognition for their collective identities and challenging dominant definitions of "who we are" and how we should live, rather than what we should get.[16] As Habermas argued in his theorization of new social movement theory, the new social movements (such as peace and nuclear energy, environmental movements, Women's and Gay Liberation movements, student and youth movements) are "new" because they left behind the politics of old Labor movements, which in Habermas' view, stopped being a radical source of change as they became integrated in the political system though trade unions and political parties.[17] Much like the new politics of the new social movements of the post-1960s, the Spanish and the Greek *Aganaktismenoi* embraced decentralized power structures and loose and informal organizational structures that are rooted in informal networks. One of the distinctive features of new social movements identified by Habermas is their ability to construct a space (within the lifeworld) to openly debate and question the legitimacy and the accountability of the system. This is certainly something that was pivotal to the horizontal and non-hierarchical structures and the consensus-based assembly format implemented by the Indignados. We argue, nonetheless, that the Indignados social movement that started in Puerta del Sol and then spread across Europe is, arguably, much more radically anti-systemic than the new social movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Although this is still a movement that is capable of sensing, thematizing and articulating new social problems (in the sense of Habermas' "warning system"), the 15M mobilizations did not see their demands for democratic reform as being purely a public issue that needed to be eventually taken up by formal political bodies.[18] While their crowd-sourced manifestos and open daily assemblies could be seen as an experiment in deliberative politics, the Indignados did not seek to hold the government accountable in the sense of the ends-oriented political action that characterized the new social movements of the post-1960s era. This is because their struggles for recognition were not just about challenging dominant definitions of who they are, but also an experiment in the construction of a new political subject—a citizenry that is committed to repair politics by embracing democratic values such as the values of the commons, an ethics of care, and principles of horizontal direct democracy. Their struggles were, above all, struggles for appearance that were predicated on what Butler calls political

performativity—a new mode of political agency and action that involves bodily appearances in public space and struggles that are sustained by an insistence on existing and mattering precisely when and where precarious subjects and bodies are erased from the public realm.[19] As an experiment in so-called democracy from below, this new mode of political agency was predicated on the communicative and performative dimensions of distinctive square politics that coalesced around the dramatization of protest and long-term occupations of public space. Although occupations of public space are a common tactic of protest and citizen participation, and the Indignados drew inspiration from long-established repertoires of protest, what was radically new about the occupying tactics of the Indignados were the ways in which new forms of assembly and gathering in public space forged a "choreography of assembly" that made citizens visible as political subjects in a highly dramaturgical and symbolic fashion.[20] The square became a vital theatre where the collective identities of the protesters were formed and changed via carnivalesque and ritualized interaction among strangers in public that ignite strong emotions, reinforcing a sense of "we-ness" and solidarity with the group.[21] Ritualized interactions such as those that could be observed, for example, in the general assemblies, played an important role in building feelings of solidarity and belonging to the group and helped cement the collective identity of 15M as a group of ordinary citizens. The general assemblies are a good example of how the dramaturgy of political protest works through the structure of ritual. These were forums and spaces of discussion in which anyone could support or vote on ideas, actions and proposals by consensus. While these consensus-based assemblies were clearly deliberative, they also operated through social performances and symbolic acts such as hand gestures to signal approval, disapproval, blockage. The hand gestures (Figure 1), for example, were not purely deliberative. They were

Figure 1. Protestors at Plaza del Sol (Madrid) on the 17 May 2011. Photo by Mauro Fuentes licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/)

also ritualistic to the extent in which they had been inspired and learned, in both conscious and unconscious ways, from other social movements such as the alterGlobalization movement.[22]

The assemblies, which were often livestreamed, were not just an exercise in democratic decision-making; they were also about making visible the movement's activities that are often hidden from public view and facilitating equal participation in the movement for those who were not physically present in the occupied square.[23] Arguably, then, the assemblies were social performances that envisaged to tell not only "a story about ourselves to ourselves," but also to stage the collective identity of the protestors as a collective body of indignant citizens for both bystanders and global audiences.[24] This is significant because certain images of occupied squares were not only livestreamed, but they were also picked up for global circulation by both social media and the mainstream media.

The assembling of masses of individuals from diverse backgrounds within public squares via the savvy use of social media—what Jeff Juris calls "the logic of aggregation"—allowed the protestors to stage their identity through symbolic acts and stylized objects—for example, masks of V for Vendetta—not only in the squares, but also in a transnational communicative space.[25] Social media acted as platforms of communication and organization that enabled the protesters to act together in new ways. For example, icons, memes, photos of the occupied square, and slogans that became available for viral diffusion acted as symbolic symbols that helped, on the one hand, to cement distinctive forms of personal and collective identification, and on the other, to galvanize the attention of global audiences.[26] While other interpretations emphasize the logic of networking over the logic of aggregation when it comes to construct a shared systemic collective identity of 15M, we argue, nonetheless, that it is not the logic of networking, but rather the dramaturgy of political protest—as an expression of Juris's logic of aggregation—that fundamentally shapes the collective self-understanding of the Indignados in Spain and beyond.[27] In a similar vein to W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, the logic of the networking argument is that the collective identity of 15M relies on the networked interactions of heterogenous actors (bloggers, activists, reporters, alternative and independent media).[28] In contrast, we posit that it is in the locally rooted space of the square that social movement actors come together as embodied subjects to form a collective actor that goes on to reject the old politics and advocate for a non-representative form of democracy through what Diana Taylor calls "animatives"; that is, forms of embodied action that exceed discursive formulation while destabilizing political hierarchies and legitimizing discourse.[29] Unlike older new social movements that placed great emphasis on the narrativization of protest by discursively articulating who we are, what we demand, and a collective story, the mobilizations of the Spanish Indignados were an experiment in new ways of doing politics that involved solidarity with strangers, conviviality, and being together with others.[30] The Indignados were not looking for a confirmation of the transformative effectiveness of their actions, but rather for being in the political with others. The Indignados are a good example of that kind of "anarchist/DIY performativity that seeks to revitalize political action by valuing political action as the as the action of not being worn out by politics."[31] Crucially, their democratic vision of the good life—the vision of real democracy now—was not born out from the framework of connective action, which suggests that collective action

frames are replaced by self-organizing and individualized networks that are dominated by personal action frames that travel online and offline with the aid of technology platforms.[32] We argue instead that the Spanish Indignados' sense of a collective identity and their alternative democratic visions were born from square politics, particularly, the protest camp as both a very local and specific strategy of protest and a transnational practice, which allowed the protestors to experiment with new ways of participating in politics.[33] The protest camp as a specific expression of square politics, with its distinctive infrastructure—such as media tents, kitchens, and banner-making workshops, libraries, nurseries—allowed the Indignados to explore radically new modes of citizen participation—in particular, forms of participatory democracy beyond the state—in concrete public space, while also forging bonds of solidarity and feelings of collective identity amongst disparate groups of protesters gathered in the squares.[34] The 15M protestors did more than demonizing the economic and political elites with their symbolic acts, stylized objects, and performative and ritualistic action in their consensus-based assemblies. Square politics offered the protestors the possibility to both imagine and put into practice a truly participatory democracy. Hence, we argue that achieving a program of political demands is not a good measure to assess the legacy and achievements of the Indignados. When Flesher-Fominaya argues that the 15M movement did not manage to have its central demands met, she notes their tremendous success in encompassing and inspiring a vast part of Spanish civil society.[35] Yet, while it is the case that the 15M mobilizations sought to rescue democratic institutions for the citizenry, as Flesher-Fominaya argues, their solidarities and commitments were not to specific ends, but for rescuing politics through embodied processes of articulating their vision of a real democracy now.[36] Communicative rationality is still important and relevant as enacted, for example, in the consensus-based assemblies. Yet unlike the so-called older, new social movements that pursued effective social change through interest-groups politics and ends-oriented political action—such as feminist movements, gay liberation movements, the global justice movement—the Indignados—and the Spanish Indignados, in particular—did not aim to hold the state accountable in the same fashion of the so-called older new social movements, for example, by holding an authorized program.[37] It is the case that they articulated their demands discursively in their manifestos, but their struggles for recognition were primarily, as we have argued in this article, struggles about appearing and becoming visible as subjects that wanted to be together with others in the political arena. The Indignados' greatest success and legacy is, arguably, the successful development of a dramaturgical model of protest and politics that draws strongly on a shared visual language,[38] and which became available for appropriation by other social movements and collective actors such as the Occupy movement and the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement, and, more recently, Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion. Despite the grassroots and autonomous character of the initial 15M mobilizations, an important legacy of the movement can also be found in formal politics in both Greece and Spain, most visibly in the municipalist movements—for example, Barcelona en Comú, Ahora Madrid—and rise of new or revised progressive political parties such as Podemos in Spain and SYRIZA in Greece. In the 2015 Spanish elections, the electoral manifesto of Podemos embraced the demand for direct democracy in promising new mechanisms of citizen participation and new forms of "citizen democracy."[39] In Greece, as we shall see in the next section, the legacy of the movement could be found more visibly in everyday

grassroots forms of dissent and new forms of social organization, which do not pursue state-based forms of direct democracy. These include, most notably, solidarity networks and DIY practices of survival that strengthened Greek civil society by providing ordinary citizens with instruments to implement horizontal, self-governed, and civic forms of democracy.

The Greek "Movement of the Squares" (*Aganaktismenoi*): Reflecting upon the Agonies and Ideological Divisions of Greek Society

Inspired by the Spanish Indignados, the Greek "Movement of the Squares" or *Aganaktismenoi* (Indignants), which has prevailed as a *terminus technicus* to name the movement, and an identifier of the movement that was commonly used in the public sphere appeared on 25 May 2011, at Syntagma Square in Athens. Although Syntagma Square remained the heart of the movement, the latter successfully expanded to various squares in major Greek cities. The "Movement of the Squares" was an unprecedented direct expression of citizen indignation against the austerity measures implemented to respond to the debt crisis.[40] The austerity measures and a series of structural reforms were the products that followed the signing of the first bailout package in 2010, by the then Greek government, the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund.[41] Nonetheless, the "Movement of the Squares" was not just mobilizing and expressing anger and indignation towards the austerity measures and the bankrupted Greek state. As Anastasia Veneti, Stamatis Poulakidakos and Kostas Theologou argue, "these protests contain a great deal of political, ideological, ethical and emotional qualities. The entire movement is not about a mere fiscal crisis, but an accumulated anger and fury against the official legislative body."[42] Similar to the Spanish Indignados, the protestors were people from all walks of life who came together to reject the so-called old politics while diagnosing the crisis of representative democracy.

The use of social media, in particular Facebook and Twitter, were instrumental in the mobilization and organization of the Greek "Movement of the Squares."[43] Most importantly, social media affordances facilitated self-organization and coordination of protests which subsequently allowed for more efficient communication amongst protesters, and the mobilization of a much broader sectors of society in Greece.[44] Moreover, against the backdrop of a Greek media system characterized by vested interests between businesses, politicians and the media, where the later have long been used as a means for political pressure, the use of social media allowed the Greek protesters to create counter-narratives to the Greek mainstream media coverage of the protests.[45] These counter-narratives sought to shed light on the fermentations that were taking place in the lower part of Syntagma Square, where, for example, public assemblies became an "incubator" for prefigurative politics and experiments in direct democracy.[46] While the protest coverage by the Greek mainstream media was not overtly negative and had indeed a general positive tone, it nonetheless overemphasized civic resentment against the status quo and purposefully avoided engaging with the political alternatives discussed by the protesters.[47] This was one of the reasons why the "Movement of the Squares" resorted and linked with alternative Greek media like TVXS, and Indymedia Athens.[48]

The protesters participating in the two-month long occupation of Syntagma Square in Athens and the neighboring streets shared important common characteristics and several

differences. In terms of the similarities, the protesters shared rather common anti-establishment and anti-systemic sentiments focused predominantly on the rejection of the first Memorandum of Understanding, the dismissal of the then social democrat government, and the demand for public referenda as a form of political participation.[49] These sentiments, though, given the ideological cleavages permeating the heterogeneous participants, which spanned political, generational, and class differences, were hiding different ideological motives as well as intentions and desires, ranging from social to national populism to different levels of engagement, ranging from activists to bystanders.[50] This is particularly visible in how square politics was played out in Syntagma Square. The distinct ideological backgrounds of the protestors were visible in the way in which different repertoires of protest were being articulated during the occupation phase of the "Movement of the Squares." Although ideological differences were never expressed by a concrete spatial cleavage, since the protestors were, in practice, constantly moving from the upper part of the square to the lower one and vice versa, one could observe more liberal, (far) right-wing and conspiracy theorist performances closer to the parliament buildings, while the progressive left, including anarchists and autonomists, camped at the "lower" side of the square, organized according to general assemblies, assimilating direct democratic procedures and working groups.[51] On the "upper side" of the square, one could see Greek flags and banners celebrating the "immortal" Greek heritage, neo-Nazi salutes, and slogans that primarily targeted the "global government," the "banks," the "markets" and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, all seen as responsible for the current "decline" (who deserved the "gallows").[52] References to the Battle of Thermopylae were paired with unfounded theories presenting Greece as the victim of an international conspiracy and anti-Semitism.[53] This (extreme) nationalist discourse gave rise to a new wave of far-right mobilization, as well as to attempts to institutionalize an (ultra) nationalist indignation within the square occupation movement.[54] On the other hand, the lower part of the square functioned as an incubator of prefigurative politics aiming to "reinvent" democracy and open the prospect of democracy from below through open "people's meetings" and daily assemblies that acted as "simulations" of direct democratic procedures.[55] The experiment in direct democracy that took place in the lower square is a very good example of political performativity; it symbolized the contestation of representative democracy and parliamentarianism through embodied processes and appearances "in front of the parliament itself."[56] This particular dramaturgy of protest was not restricted to square politics and eventually evolved into DIY practices and forms of embodied political action in the form of squats with their horizontal and autonomous organization and the grassroots solidarity networks as ideological "products" of the lower part of the square.[57] The more conservative participants, mainly articulating their discontent at the upper part of the square, were limited to more traditional forms of protest to express their discontent against the austerity policies. Arguably, then, what binds the collective identity of the Greek Movement of the Squares is, like in the case of the Spanish Indignados, a general discontent against austerity policies and political elites, and the staging of the movement's collective identity through distinctive forms of embodied and symbolic action in public space. Yet, the dramaturgy of protest played out this collective identity as one that is marked by ideological divisions. Square politics operated here through the more or less conscious assembling of particular collectives in the upper and lower square, and the use

of symbols and symbolic tactics (for example, in consensus-based assemblies) that signify their distinct ideological orientations (including party affiliations) and political agendas. Most of the participants in the Movement of the Squares in Athens did not have particularly high expectations with regard to the outcomes of the mass protests.[58] Some of them believed that the Movement of the Squares acted as an awakening of the Greek people, since people from all walks of life had the chance to voice their concerns about economic and debt crisis and their grievances about the political corruption of the (Greek) political establishment, which was held responsible for the crisis. Disappointment with representative politics and the glorification of direct democracy are some of the most important facets of this mobilization, which left its mark on the Greek political scene.[59] Despite their relative short presence in the squares—a forced evacuation took place in August 2011—the Greek *Aganaktismenoi* "helped ingrain a sense of collective identity in Greek people and has been regarded as a significant moment in contemporary politics."[60] Following that, questions arise regarding the legacy of these protests in later political developments in Greece. It is worth stressing that, contrary to 15M, which morphed into Podemos, *Aganaktismenoi* have had more subtle, but nevertheless significant, ramifications.[61]

Arguably, then, the legacy of these protests can be found in both formal and grassroots politics in Greece. Regarding formal politics, according to Paris Aslanidis and Nikos Marantzidis, around two dozen new parties emerged in the period following the decline of *Aganaktismenoi*.[62] Still, the most important political developments in the aftermath of the Movement of the Squares was the rise to power of the left-wing SYRIZA party, the sharp increase of the electoral power of the far-right, the neo-Nazist party of Golden Dawn, and the emergence of the far-right party of Independent Greeks (AN. ELL.) created by an ex high-ranked member of the right-wing New Democracy, which ruled together with SYRIZA in two consecutive coalition governments for almost four years, between late January 2015 and mid-January 2019. According to Aslanidis and Marantzidis, the referendum in July 2015, held by the SYRIZA-AN.ELL. government signifies the link of the coalition with the Movement of the Squares.[63] Most notably, the Movement of the Squares marked the beginning of the burgeoning presence of solidarity networks and gave Greek citizens the opportunity to strengthen civil society by creatively implementing horizontal, self-governed civic innovations.[64] Many of the innovative citizen-initiated groups that played a vital role in enhancing Greece's traditionally weak civil society stem from the Syntagma public meetings and experiments in direct democracy in the lower segment of the square.[65] We argue that the political performativity of the *Aganaktismenoi* goes beyond the performance of protest in the squares, and can be found today in the political agency of those actors involved in the organization of solidarity networks and other forms of autonomous and horizontal grassroots action.

After the protests, solidarity networks rapidly emerged in the city of Athens and the broader area. As argued by Marina Prentoulis and Maria Kyriakidou "resistance practices initiated in the squares were recontextualized in the formation of solidarity networks, which, through local-level engagement, reconstituted the 'people' against the established political system."[66] These solidarity groups were a direct response to the effects of the crisis and constituted a critique and an alternative to austerity policies.[67] The main purpose of these networks was to offer help to those in need and those heavily struck by the economic measures, such as the homeless, and people with no health insurance. In

the years that followed the occupation of Syntagma Square, a variety of grassroots groups organized social pharmacies and solidarity clinics, food banks, cooperatives, theatre occupations (for example, EMPROS in Athens), factory occupations (such as VIO.ME. in Thessaloniki), and even alternative media (such as thepressproject.gr) initiated by unemployed journalists. The volunteers involved in these numerous solidarity projects encompassed experienced activists as well as by people that had no previous political engagements.[68]

Conclusion

We have argued in this article that the Indignados social movement was a radically anti-systemic movement whose greatest achievement was popularizing a model of protest that went on to inspire other social movements and new forms of citizen participation beyond the state. We have seen, in this regard that the greatest legacy of the Indignados is not a successful model of deliberative politics or their innovative and savvy use of digital technologies, as some scholarship has argued, but their success in devising and popularizing a new model of protest that went on to inspire and inform not only the tactics of contemporary social movements—such as the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement and the Black Lives Matter social movement—but also citizen-led grassroots initiatives beyond the state. We have suggested that to assess the legacy of the 15M movement, the question to be asked is not whether the Indignados achieved their demands, and succeeded in reforming the existing model of democracy, or in enforcing their democratic values—for example, the values of the commons, an ethics of care, principles of horizontal direct democracy—within their own system of governance, but, rather, what has been the impact of their alternative visions of democracy and their repertoires of protest in both civil society and formal politics.[69]

We have also seen that the Spanish and Greek Indignados' struggles for recognition were tied to the construction of a collective identity, a sense of "we," that was predicated in a desire to appear and to become visible as a political subject through embodied processes and new ways of doing politics that are highly dramaturgical. The political performativity of the movement can also be seen as an experiment with alternative forms of citizen participation beyond the state, through both deliberative and embodied action. We have also argued that square politics led to very different articulations of the collective identity of the Indignados in Spain and Greece. While in Spain square politics enabled established collectives to transcend their ideological differences and partisan interests to forge bonds of solidarity and feelings of collective identity that coalesced around a strong sense of shared Indignados identity, in Greece the Indignados' appearances in public space powerfully symbolized the ideological divisions and interests of the various collectives gathered in the upper and lower segments of Syntagma Square. The ideological cleavage between (far) right and the radical left was played out, as we have explained, in the use of ancient Greek symbols and even Nazi salutes in the upper part of the square, and the experiments in direct democracy in the open public assemblies in the lower part of the square. That is why, at least in terms of assessing the legacies of the *Aganaktismenoi*, the political outcomes of the movement have been rather contradictory; for example, the rise of far-right parties goes in tandem with prefigurative politics in Greek society.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).