Indignation as dissent? The affective components of protest and democracy

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

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Contents

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Table of figures

7

List of abbreviations

12M = 12th of May

15M = 15th of May

ADICAE = Asociación de Usuarios de Bancos, Cajas y Seguros (Association of Users of Banks and Insurances)

DRY = Democracia Real Ya! (Real democracy now!)

EC = European Commission

ECB = European Central Bank

EMU = Economic and Monetary Union

IMF = International Monetary Fund

JSF = Juventud Sin Futuro (Youths Without a Future)

PAH = Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages)

PP = Partido Popular (People's Party)

PSOE = Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Worker's Party)

Abstract

Indignation as dissent? The affective components of protest and democracy

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities, June 2015

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This thesis discusses the Indignados movement, which arose in Spain in 2011, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. It makes the observation that the Indignados, and many other movements similar to it (like Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, or the Global Justice Movement), gather large amounts of people, but are still struggling to be recognised as political subjects, as influential forces in the political environment. Many times, they are criticised for being too dispersed or too emotional, and lacking the cohesiveness to formulate concrete political aims. The Indignados can therefore be seen as challenging democracy and how political subjectivity is accorded, both in theory and practice. This leads this thesis to inquire into some of the theoretical underpinnings of democracy, and in particular political subjectivity. Its main research question is therefore: Can the Indignados spur a new reading of democracy?

To further understand how we can conceive of the political subjectivity of an emotional and dispersed protest movement, this thesis turns to two approaches, social movement theory as well as deliberative democratic theory. After having examined extant literature on the matter, the thesis concludes that both of these approaches employ a distinct separation between emotion and reason, where political subjectivity is almost always hinged upon the latter. In addition, affect is seen as disjointed from signification, and therefore from political articulation. In order to circumvent this theoretical stalemate, this thesis turns to theories of radical democracy, and more specifically to the works of Ernesto Laclau. It argues that Laclau's juxtaposition of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Derridian deconstruction opens up possibilities for a form of political subjectivity based on affect instead of reason alone. As such, Laclau's theory of hegemony can shed light on those instances where affect and emotions play a central part in the creation of political subjectivity.

In analysing Laclau's theory, I respond to different analytical challenges that question the viability of explaining movements such as the Indignados through a theory of hegemony. Current observations point to that contemporary movements are not hegemonic (which place too much emphasis on verticality), but rather horizontal and networked. In order to address this critique, this thesis constructs a framework of the hegemonic project. This framework emphasises two commonly overlooked features of Laclau's theory: the affective and transient nature of hegemony, which stresses the connection between affect and signification. Through two sets of empirical data – ethnographic fieldwork material and social media analysis – the thesis shows how the Indignados exhibit clear instances of verticality, albeit of an affective nature. This hegemonic, affective verticality speaks of two ways in which the movement can construct political subjectivity: viscerally (through unity in affective practices) and virtually (through social media).

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11

Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

This thesis discusses the Indignados,[1] a social movement which erupted in Spain 2011, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. In 2011 alone, the Indignados gathered millions of protesters both on the streets and in online forums (RTVE 2011). Their main slogans were against the establishment, for instance *No nos representan!* (They do not represent us), *No somos mercancía en manos de políticos y banqueros* (We are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers), and *Lo llaman democracia y no lo es* (They call it democracy, but it isn't). However, similarly to other contemporary protest waves, such as Occupy Wall Street (a protest movement which took place in Zucotti Park on Manhattan in 2011 against social and economic inequality), the Indignados have been accused of failing to achieve concrete political change. Zygmunt Bauman argued in an interview in October 2011 that:

> If emotion is a good tool for destruction, it is a terrible tool for construction. People from all kinds of classes and conditions unite on the squares and shout the same slogans. They are all in agreement regarding what they dislike, but you will get 100 different responses if you ask them what they want. (Bauman in Verdú 2011 [my translation])

Bauman was not alone in this position. Much of the Spanish press, commentators, and policymakers, while being sympathetic to the cause, agreed that the movement was too disorganised to achieve any 'real' societal change, and asked questions such as: 'How are these complaints to be channelled politically? Without parties? With a party of Indignants? We do not know, and they do not want to tell us' (Wert 2011). This poses a puzzle: Why is it that movements which enjoy such high popular support are perceived as inconsequential? Is this a fair judgment? How do we understand political consequentiality and how is it connected to the ascription of political subjectivity? This thesis will develop these questions in-depth, but first, we need to briefly examine the origins of the movement itself.

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[1] The protests erupted on the 15th of May 2011, which is why they were initially referred to as the 15M demonstrations. However, the term Indignados is very common today, and the name refers to a short pamphlet by the French philosopher Stephane Hessel *Indignez-vous!*. This thesis will primarily use the name Indignados, and not 15M.

What happened in Spain in May 2011?

After the Lehman Brothers crash in the United States in 2008, financial markets throughout the world were increasingly affected by uncertainty, the worst enemy for any financial stability (Kolb 2011: 219). Fear and doubt had crept into the system, resulting in falling stocks all over the world. Naturally, Spain was no exception to the consequences (Charnock et al. 2014). Since the implementation of the euro in 2000, Spain is bound to the monetary policy of the Eurozone. Sovereign monetary policy has therefore been transferred elsewhere, and has created a system in which free financial flows and fixed exchange rates have been favoured.[2] In other words, when Spain was hit harder by the financial crisis than other European countries, the government could not, as previously, decrease the value of the currency and thus potentially raise the demand for Spanish export goods. Instead, Spain was caught in a position where the sovereign debt crisis could not be adjusted in any way but through cuts in public spending. From the beginning, the debt crisis in Spain was only affecting the private sector, more specifically the housing sector. However, when the property bubble, which had been increasing throughout the 2000s, finally burst this had such severe consequences that the state finances could not remain unaffected. As such, a private debt crisis became a sovereign debt crisis.

After the private debt crisis had become a sovereign debt crisis, the Spanish social democratic government, led by José Luis Zapatero, was under much pressure from the so-called Troika (European Central Bank, European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund) to implements budget cuts in order to receive bailouts for some of its largest banks (European Financial Stability Facility 2013). The government thus adopted a similar attitude as the United States: some banks were 'too big to fail'. However, bailouts were conditioned upon structural reforms, and, consequently, in 2012, the conservatives (*Partido Popular*, the People's Party, PP), who had taken office the year before, announced a 10.000 million euro cut for health care and education (El País 2012). Since

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[2] This is commonly referred to as the Impossible Trinity, or the theory of the Monetary Trilemma. According to this theory, the three pillars of monetary policy (sovereign monetary policy, free financial flows, and fixed exchange rates) cannot be achieved at the same time (Obstfeld et al. 2004). The model in the Eurozone, which has the combination of the two latter pillars, becomes vulnerable in case of crisis, where member states have limited wiggle room to create counter-measures through, for instance, a devaluation of their currency. The underlying ideological current for the creation of the Eurozone is very much in line with the neoliberal trend of creating free flows of trade and capital across the EU, and is seen as a core part of European integration (Eichengreen 2008).

then, there have been significantly more cuts to public spending, many which have been monitored by the online tool, the 'Recortómetro', (loosely translated as the Cuts Meter) (Peña Lopez and Negro 2015).

The sovereign debt crisis and the following structural reforms had several severe economic consequences, one of the most acute being a massive rise in unemployment. In 2010, youth unemployment reached 41 per cent, and 47 per cent in 2011 (Eurostat 2011). The government, however, was tied to conditions set by the European Central Bank in order to get the bailouts for the banking sector and therefore implemented a number of laws in order to reduce public spending. Among these one can note the raising of the retirement age from 65 to 67, budget cuts in health, education and social services (Castells 2012: 110; El País 2012). Reducing the public debt became the overarching goal to preserve the Spanish membership of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

This development had been going on since 2008, but protests did not erupt until 2011. Why was this the case? As Buechler (2000) has aptly observed, economic factors are not the sole explanation for the outbreak of protests. One explanation could be the lack of regular channels of communication. Even though the labour unions had criticised the reforms, they still came to agreements with the government on the changes, and, consequently, there was no immediate voice for the people. The socialist party, PSOE, which was the governing party in 2011, had embraced neo-liberal reforms, thus breaking their electoral promises of 2008 (Castells 2012: 110) and the labour unions were accused of not disputing these reforms, given their strong ties with the socialist party (Gerbaudo 2012: 78). Clearly, many people came to the view that existing channels of communication and influence were closed, or provided little help, and they were therefore looking for alternative ways of expressing their opinion (Taibo 2011; Velasco 2011).

A crisis of democracy? Practical challenges to contemporary systems

This created space for new organisations and groups. People started taking to the streets, congregating with others who shared their concerns and problems. In addition, online activism started to take off. In a proposed series of legislative changes to restrict Internet freedom, the so-called *Ley Sinde* (Sinde Law) aimed to control and censor piracy and file-sharing (Perugorría and Tejerina 2013: 428). This sparked concern in the Spanish online

communities, with subsequent online campaigns such as the Twitter hashtag *#nolesvotes* (don't vote for them).

During this time, in early spring 2011, the social network *Democracia Real Ya!* (Real democracy now) (DRY) began to develop. The aim was to provide an online platform, much like the *#nolesvotes* campaign, but which could attract a larger number of people (Sampedro 2011). *Democracia Real Ya!* quickly became one of the key organisations within the rising Indignados movement (Castells 2012; Castañeda 2012). They created a forum with a perceived apolitical nature, emphasising not any particular ideology, but a focus on protest and dissatisfaction. As such, regardless of your background, you could join the Indignados movement against the political establishment. The following quotes are taken from their manifesto, demonstrating their aim to be an inclusive movement, with no predetermined agenda:

> We are ordinary people. We are like you: people, who get up every morning to study, work or find a job, people who have family and friends. People, who work hard every day to provide a better future for those around us.

> Some of us consider ourselves progressive, others conservative. Some of us are believers, some not. Some of us have clearly defined ideologies, others are apolitical, but we are all concerned and angry about the political, economic, and social outlook which we see around us: corruption among politicians, businessmen, bankers, leaving us helpless, without a voice.

> This situation has become normal, a daily suffering, without hope. But if we join forces, we can change it. It's time to change things, time to build a better society together.

> For all of the above, I am outraged. I think I can change it. I think I can help. I know that together we can. I think I can help. I know that together we can. (Democracia Real Ya! 2011 [English in the original])

DRY quickly gained support from similar organisations such as *Juventud sin Futuro* (Youths Without a Future, JSF) and *La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages, PAH) (Romanos 2013). All of these organisations,

along with several others, answered a general call from DRY to organise a large demonstration on the 15th of May 2011. On this date, around 50,000 people gathered on the main square in Madrid, *Puerta del Sol*. In addition, it is estimated that a further 20,000 joined the protests on *Plaza Catalunya* in Barcelona, and 10,000 in Valencia. Protests took place in another 50 Spanish cities on that day (Castells 2012: 112). After the protests, however, the activists remained. They set up a camp on *Puerta del Sol*, which lasted for about 6 weeks. This practice was continued all over Spain through to October 2011, and around 2.2 million people took part in the protest during this time (Blanco 2011).

The name Indignados stems from a short pamphlet published by the French philosopher Stéphane Hessel called *Indignez-vous!* (2010), a short text which became of paramount importance for the Indignados. This has been translated into English as *Time for outrage!*, but a more literal translation from the French imperative would be *Be Indignant!*. The text is rather exhortative, and lists a number of reasons to be indignant about today's political climate. Hessel argues that we need to resist corrupt bankers, detached politicians and change the structure of the political system. Only then will we have a legitimate form of governance. The Indignados attracted a wide-range of support, and was not only comprised of young activists, but the whole age spectrum. In a survey conducted in June 2011, 88 per cent of the Spanish population identified with the movement (Metroscopia 2011). In a recent study, it was found that three out of four citizens of Spain support the arguments of the movement, and two out of three are supportive of their protest methods (Sampedro and Lobera 2014: 75). This result controls for factors such as geographical position, gender, and age.

Nevertheless, one could say that the Indignados' levels of activism have waned or transformed since 2011. Going from protests which gathered hundreds of thousands, the day-to-day presence on the streets or online is somewhat different today (2015). Recent developments have seen some parts of the movement move from the streets into political offices. In the Spanish elections to the European Parliament in 2014, *Podemos*, a new party which had only been founded three months earlier, gained 8 per cent of the vote.[3] The

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[3] This can be compared with some of the other smaller parties and coalitions (aside from the two main parties, PSOE [23 per cent] and PP [26 per cent]), such as *Coalición Izquierda Plural* (Plural Left Coalition), which is a group of regional and national left-wing parties and got 10 per cent, or *Coalición por Europa* (Coalition for Europe), which is a group of regionalist parties from, for instance, the Basque country and Catalonia, who

party programme is very reminiscent of the DRY manifesto and it can lead to a belief that the Indignados movement has simply transformed into a party structure:

> Podemos is a method for the leadership of the populace and citizenry. We wish that our programme will be realised through citizen participation and the *Circulos Podemos*. Nobody knows our needs better than the citizens who take this country forward day by day. (Podemos 2014 [my translation])

As is often the case in many European countries, small parties can do very well in the elections to the European Parliament without this translating into national elections. Spain is holding national elections by the end of 2015 and therefore there is no data yet on how Podemos would do in a national election. However, current polls are speaking for Podemos gaining a very high percentage of the vote, estimated at around 20 per cent (Metroscopia 2015). This would place them on the same level as the two most established parties, the social democrats (PSOE) and the conservatives (PP).

Podemos has gained electoral support, but it seems as though the sense of popular power has changed shape. Podemos has a party structure with a clear leadership, but this has caused some concern that the central management is too strong, and that the party is at risk of committing the same mistake as its adversaries, creating a top-down organisation (Sampedro 2014). This poses a puzzle: When the Indignados movement gained the most support and had their strongest presence, they were least regarded as political subjects. This situation has now changed drastically with the arrival of Podemos. In the current political landscape, the leaders of Podemos are given much attention, are invited to debates, and the party is doing very well in the polls. This further illustrates the stark differences between the dispersed movement and the party structure, and the diverging responses the political establishment have had to these groups. The party is clearly recognised as a political subject, whereas the movement is struggling to gain the same level of recognition.

One illustrative example of the different situations between movements and parties in Spain is the *Ley Mordaza* (the gagging law). In December 2014, the Spanish Parliament passed a law under which you can be fined up to €30,000 for occupying a building in Spain. Furthermore, spontaneous demonstrations outside public buildings, such as the parliament,

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got 5.4 per cent of the vote (European Parliament 2014). Podemos thus became the 4th largest party in the Spanish European Parliament election.

can be fined with up to €600,000 (El País 2014). The law is officially called *Ley Orgánica de Seguridad Ciudadana* (The Citizen Safety Law), and has been promoted and created by the conservatives (PP), currently in power. In addition to implementing very high fines for 'disturbing the public order', the law requires every demonstration to be pre-approved. The law also classifies these offences as administrative, and they are thus removed from the penal code. There is therefore no requirement for authorities to show proof of the offence, and thus fines can be administered preventatively. The official reason for implementing this law is to ensure public security, and give the police more tools to crack down on crime or any disturbance of public safety. The unofficial reason, say several MPs as well as main newspapers (El País 2015; Sanchez Almeida 2014), is to stifle the waves of protest Spain has seen since the financial crisis, and that this severely circumscribes rights such as the freedom of assembly and the freedom of association.

This law demonstrates how these protest movements seem to be disturbing presences for the established parties in power. However, the part of the movement which has transformed into a political party is now seen as a proper game changer in Spanish political life. Even though the established parties, PSOE and PP, have occasionally been rather hostile towards Podemos and claimed that they are a 'danger to democracy' (El Mundo 2015) there is no legal action taken against them. In this context, it is also important to remember that Podemos is not necessarily a direct transformation of the Indignados (Delclós 2014). Even though Podemos has emerged from members of the movement, there are many members who do not feel comfortable with the change from a grassroots movement into a political party. However, there are equally many forces who argue that this is the only way to gain political influence. Returning to the puzzle of the challenges for the Indignados to gain formal political influence (despite its large popular support), we can ask if movements have to form political parties in order to be recognised as political subjects? Which are the implications involved in such a transition and how do current understandings of political subjectivity affect the image of the Indignados?

In order to understand the puzzle of lacking political subjectivity for the Indignados, there are two key observations which have to be made about the movement. Firstly, the Indignados have a highly dispersed character. From the first day of movement action, there has been a strong sentiment within the movement not to have a specific political

programme, not to have elected leaders, nor to identify with certain political ideologies (Lopera and Mario 2012: 250; DRY 2011). While these observations naturally change over time, one of the most accentuated features of the Indignados is how they encompass many different claims. For instance, the Indignados see themselves as a home for ordinary workers, the unemployed, the retired with lost pensions, the environmentalists, the LGBT activists, the feminists, the anarcho-syndicalists, and the anarchists. All of these different, variably sized groups and movements focus on different problems and have distinct perspectives on the current state of affairs in Spain and beyond. The participants vary from being very highly committed and politicised activists to individuals who have not engaged politically before. There is also a strong ambition of keeping a flat organisation, without any steep hierarchies (Lopera and Mario 2012: 248). The focus has been kept on horizontal forms of decision-making, aiming at being as inclusive as possible. Nonetheless, for all its diversity, we can speak of one movement: the Indignados.

Secondly, the Indignados is a movement with a strong emotional character. For a start, their name alludes to a feeling rather than to any specific cause. The movement plays on anger, joy, and hope as some of their most accentuated features (Perrugorria and Tejerina 2013: 432; Castells 2012; Espinoza Pino 2013). In addition, their protest methods are also affective and emotional and not necessarily only cognitive. For instance, they make much use of aesthetic expressions or of silent manifestations. This is not something which is exclusive to the Indignados, but they have placed high emphasis on this type of repertoire. Importantly, these methods do not come in conjunction with any predetermined, specific, or over-arching agenda, which is valid for the whole movement.

The main problem for the Indignados, however, is that these two characteristics above are often seen as impediments to constructing any kind of political claims or political subjectivity. There are numerous newspaper articles and voices which claim that if the Indignados could only agree on a common programme, if they could only have a clear agenda, if they could only focus more directly on policy, then the chances for them gaining more power and influence would be so much higher (Wert 2011; García-Jiménez et al. 2014). In addition, there has been frustration from within the movement regarding the inefficiency of protest, and the 'failing to prioritise basic demands around which to mobilise the movement and wider layers beyond it' (Stobart 2014). To some degree, this

could be what is happening with Podemos. When the movement transformed into a clear political party, with clear leadership and a party programme, the tune changed. Podemos is a political force that should be taken into consideration.

Then, why should we be interested in the Indignados? Are they not only another expression, perhaps momentary, of the harsh financial climate in Southern Europe? How much does this really mean for our democratic system? Is Podemos not merely the natural continuation of the Indignados? This thesis seeks to problematise these questions and begins with the observation that these movements, such as the Indignados or Occupy, gather large amounts of people and enjoy very strong popular support. Nonetheless, they struggle to be recognised as political subjects. This paradox forms the backbone of the rationale for this thesis. The story told above illustrates how the Indignados are positing a strong practical and political challenge to how democracy is conducted today. Their modes of protest, with focus on leaderless organisations, on an absence of a clear ideology, and the use of emotions as a method of resistance, are all deviating from how much of institutional political action is normally conducted. This thesis has chosen to focus exclusively on the Indignados, since it has been one of the strongest post-crisis movements in Europe, only paralleled by the *Aganaktismenoi* (Indignants) in Greece. However, whilst the focus of this thesis remains in Spain, the conclusions drawn could be valuable also for similar cases and movements, such as Occupy or the *Aganaktismenoi*.

The thesis aims to further investigate the challenges to democracy posited by the Indignados. I will argue that the practical challenges to democracy seen above spur both theoretical and analytical implications. The difficulties for contemporary democracies to include and handle movements such as the Indignados, is but one part of the story. In addition to the *practice* of democracy, there are similar – and potentially co-constitutive – patterns in *theory* and *analysis* of such movements. As will be argued, these challenges and implications are interconnected, and should not be seen as separate phenomena. They are rather outlets of the same syndrome: a depoliticisation of the Indignados through the denial of their political subjectivity. This thesis will therefore argue that the puzzle posed by the Indignados cannot be understood without reassessing the idea of what democratic political subjectivity entails. Thus, to bring together many of the smaller questions already posed, the main, overarching, research question for this thesis is:

Democracy, reason and emotion: Theoretical challenges

In order to understand the Indignados movement and their struggle for recognition of their political subjectivity, one could approach the problem from two different theoretical perspectives. On the one hand, social movement theory tries to understand why people want to challenge authority and how they do this collectively. As the quotes from the DRY manifesto, cited above, showed, this generates a series of sub-questions, regarding movement membership, leadership, composition, cultural issues, etc. How they construct political claims, who is a member and why, and how they organise themselves, are all questions which social movement theory seeks to answer, and are all relevant to the research question of this thesis.

On the other hand, since this thesis is interested in why the Indignados are not considered political subjects, this leads onto themes relating to democratic theory, which deals with who is regarded a political subject, and when, and how – and by whom – democracy could and should be constructed and maintained. When taking a closer look, however, there are several problems with using current theory for understanding the Indignados, emanating from the two observations made above: their dispersed and emotional character.

Challenge One: Emotions

The first problem arises when wanting to understand emotions and affect. How are emotions dealt with in social movement theory, are they important or not? One could envision a trajectory in social movement theory, which has gone from near hostility towards emotions and passion, to an emotional and an affective turn. In early social movement theory, following the works of Le Bon and Smelser, emotions were considered something dangerous for the masses, and certainly not suitable for a proper political environment. However, in the beginning of the 1970s, there was an important shift in how the crowd was perceived. The crowd, or movement, could now be regarded as a rational entity. This change of direction was much due to the rising sympathies with the masses within the research sphere. It was no longer uncommon to be both an activist and an academic, and this led to increasing attempts to rationalise movement action. Emotions were not really part of the research agenda, but this changed in the early 1990s. With the

arrival of the so-called emotional turn, researchers started to incorporate emotional and affective expressions into the field (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001; Clarke, Hoggett and Thompson 2006; Flam and King 2005). Emotions could now be motivational and also influential in sustaining activism. Recent research has criticised the emotional turn for not engaging with how emotions work in and of themselves, but only seeing them as instrumental, as means to an end (Calhoun 2001; Gould 2009). It is true that emotions could be used by movements in order to attract higher levels of membership or sustain activism. However, this does not resonate with the emotional and affective character within the Indignados,[4] where emotions and affect are not necessarily tied to any specific over-arching cause, but are present merely in and of themselves.

In opposition to the perspective that emotions are instrumental, a growing portion of social movement theory has focussed on affect as different from emotions (Massumi 2002; Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005; Gould 2009). This has been referred to as the affective turn, which calls for a greater engagement with affect and corporeal sensations. Affect is seen as autonomous from emotions, but also from signification at large. However, replacing emotions with affect (which is often seen as disjointed from meaning-making, language, and signification), leaves questions on how political subjectivity can be constructed within an affective framework.

Democratic theory is encountering similar problems when attempting to explain emotional protest movements, even though strong currents within this approach argue that aggregative modes of democracy are insufficient, and that the majority vote does not constitute a legitimate democratic system (much in line with the claims of the Indignados). One of the main critiques of aggregation comes from deliberative democracy, and especially the thoughts of Jürgen Habermas. Habermas' theory of deliberative democracy, that democratic decisions cannot be legitimate without them being preceded by rational argumentation, has a strongly inclusive character, and has become very popular as a counterweight to technocratisation, bureaucratisation, or any trend which disjoins

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[4] Chapter Two will engage with the differences between emotions and affect. However, even though many would argue that there is a stark division between the two, this thesis will assume the position that affect and emotion are co-constitutive and should not be separated. Therefore, this thesis will use emotion/affect to indicate the interplay between the two. This will be further elaborated in Chapter Four.

democratic decisions from the *demos* (for instance the creation of the European Union and its effects on democracy) (Elster 1999: 12; Bohman and Rehg 1999: xiii).

In this sense, deliberation could be seen as the solution to the challenge posited by the Indignados. They are indeed questioning how democratic decisions have been moved from their own elected representatives to levels of supra-national governance, and are highly critical of the current forms of representation, where EU institutions have large influence over national policy-making. However, the political subject in deliberative democratic theory is closely aligned with the practice of rational argumentation and the capability of reason. Other forms of political behaviour are seen as irrational and therefore also irrelevant (Thomassen 2008: 31). As a result, deliberative democracy is unable to account for the practical challenges to democracy described above: an emotional movement attracting high levels of popular support. Consequently, the question remains: what role do emotions and affect play in democratic theory and in the creation of political subjectivity (Norval 2007b; Sanders 1997)?

Challenge Two: Dispersion and horizontality

The second problem, connected to the first, concerns organisation and the dispersed nature of the movement. The Indignados claim not to have one will, but to be comprised of many wills, and they also see this as one of their strengths (DRY 2011; Lopera and Mario 2012; Perugorría and Tejerina 2013). The dispersed character of the Indignados is troubling for both social movement theory, as well as deliberative democratic theory. In social movement theory, there is an abundance of work on how movements unite, how they stay together, and how they develop a common agenda (even though movements gather a wide variety of claims) (Tarrow and Tilly 2007; Tilly 2004; Melucci 1995; Crossley 2002; Buechler 2000). Historically, this has also often been the case. Movements are seen as fighting for a *cause*, be that civic rights, feminism, environmental concerns, or gay rights. However, with the Indignados, there is an absence of such an overarching umbrella term, apart from one: indignation. As noted above, the current body of research on emotions and affect in social movements does not engage with emotions as the sole unifying factor. As such, there are questions as to what role emotions play for the creation of collective identities, in and of themselves, and not as complements to an already present ideological

24

direction. The dispersed and emotional natures of the Indignados are therefore closely connected.

Similar questions can be asked of deliberative democratic theory. According to Habermas' idea of the rational consensus, the goal of deliberation should be that the force of the better argument prevails, i.e. that unity is created, not based on coercion or manipulation, but through argumentation between individuals capable of exercising reason (Connolly 1984: 12; Habermas 1984: 10). The popular democratic sovereign, as constructed through rational argumentation, is thought of as one entity. Since deliberative democracy is centred on the idea of the rational consensus, dissenting voices are seen as hurdles to be overcome, as impediments to the popular will and a unified popular sovereign. However, where does that leave a dispersed movement, and where does it leave emotions? In deliberative democracy, there seems to be a conflation between the capacity for reason and the construction of political claims. This begs the question: do emotions therefore not play any role in the construction of political claims, and, by extension, the construction of political subjectivity? If reason alone is the condition for collective identities, how can we understand the Indignados? As such, the Indignados challenge deliberative democracy by virtue of both their emotional character and their dispersed nature.

In sum, both deliberative democratic theory and social movement theory struggle to fully explain and understand emotions and affect as influential mechanisms for political identity creation as well as political subjectivity. Both sustain the distinction between emotion/affect and reason, which carries important repercussions for political subjectivity. This is reminiscent of the same split seen in the Cartesian *ego cogito*, even though several attempts have been made to depart from such divisions, primarily within affect theory (Massumi 1995; Connolly 2002). The dichotomy between emotion and reason produces a strong primacy of the rational over the emotional, and the mind over the body. I will argue below that the challenges to practice, theory and analysis posited by the Indignados largely emanate from this strong dichotomy between emotion/affect and reason, and in order to understand the Indignados, we must move beyond such stark divisions.

The dispersed nature of the Indignados also poses difficulties for both social movement theory and deliberative democratic theory. Political subjectivity is normally ascribed to groups (be that political parties or social movements) with clear aims and agendas.

However, the presence of dispersed movements raises questions regarding the conflation between unity and rationality, as expressed in deliberative democratic theory. Subsequently, there is a clear need for analysis which further interrogates the understanding of political subjectivity and its theoretical underpinnings.

In opposition to the primacy of consensus and reason, theories of radical democracy question the desirability of consensus and argue for the constitutive nature of disagreement. Disagreement and conflict, it argues, are not hurdles to be overcome, but an inherent part of democracy. Radical democracy offers a model in which the democratic sovereign is not a unified entity, but rather a constant exclusionary practice (Rancière 1999; 2010), in which some subjects are regarded as having voices, whereas others are mere noise. Furthermore, Chantal Mouffe (1993; 2000, 2005) has pointed to the constant antagonistic nature of democracy, thus questioning the consensus-based, rational decision-making offered by Jürgen Habermas (1984; 1996). In other words, Rancière and Mouffe argue that there has been a constant favouring of rational action within democratic theory. Democracy is never a representation of the people, but merely a classification of those who have a political voice, and those who do not. The emotional and the passionate are seen in the latter category, as noise rather than voice, which signifies a thorough critique against deliberative democratic theory. However, whilst Rancière and Mouffe are pointing to the exclusion of emotion/affect in deliberation, their theories do not offer an in-depth account of how emotions and affect can function in the creation of political subjectivity.

This opens up spaces for other theoretical terrains and brings to the fore theories which manage to combine emotional and affective expressions with the creation of political subjects. One such perspective is offered by Ernesto Laclau and the theory of hegemony. His work combines lessons learned from both Lacanian psychoanalysis and Derridian deconstruction (Laclau 2005: Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985]; Mouffe 1996). By doing this, Laclau enables a model in which affect becomes a central part of how movement claims are made. Groups or individuals attach to a certain ideology or word, which does not have any essential content, the empty signifier. This practice, a radical, affective investment in an empty signifier, allows for unity creation which is, in fact, based on exclusion, which then follows into the creation of political demands. Laclau argues that movements, or parties, are in fact hegemonic constructions, which claim to have one

solution to many different problems; hegemony creates verticality and unity for an array of demands. Democracy, therefore, is a game between hegemonic powers, and not a pure reflection of what individuals or groups want. Representation can never be a complete reflection of any original demand, because this original demand is a split enterprise, due to the Lacanian constitutive lack. However, Laclau (and Mouffe's) theory of hegemony was constructed 30 years ago, and even though he has published many works since, the primary examples of hegemony are the Peronist era in Argentina, as well as 19th century tsarist Russia. This begs a few questions: Does hegemony function in the same way today? Can Laclau's theory of hegemony be helpful to further understand dispersed and emotional protest movements, and especially to the Indignados?

Hegemony, affect and social media: Analytical challenges

There are several critiques of Laclau's hegemony which claim that it cannot further the understanding of the Indignados or similar movements. For example, Hardt and Negri have argued that movements of today are much less constructed as vertical hegemonies, and much more resembling of horizontal, rhizomatic, autonomous and affective networks (Hardt and Negri 2012). A theory of hegemony is therefore incapable of explaining this type of movement. Instead, Hardt and Negri's concept 'the multitude' is used as an analytical tool to explain movements similar to the Indignados, such as the Global Justice movement, the World Social Forum, or, more recently, Occupy Wall Street (Maeckelbergh 2012; Juris 2011 and 2008; Sitrin 2012; Williams 2012). Hardt and Negri also turn against Laclau in saying that a theory of hegemony suffers from linguistic reductionism, not fully taking affect or emotion into account, and therefore falling short in its ability to further the understanding of contemporary activism. Indeed, the observations made by Hardt and Negri, which point to a horizontal, networked movement, could be seen as a compelling explanation of the Indignados. In fact, in studies of the Indignados, horizontality and their autonomist heritage are almost always the main focus (Perrugorría and Tejerina 2013; Stobart 2014; Espinoza Pino 2013; Sampedro and Haro Barba 2011; Fominaya 2014; Peña Lopez et al. 2014), and they refer to the Indignados as a practice of affective, horizontal autonomy; hegemony is rarely mentioned.

Stavrakakis (2014; 2007) argues, however, that a theory of hegemony is not solely linguistic, but has a strong affective character. This will also be one of the main arguments

of this thesis. This leads to the question: Does the affective and dispersed nature of the Indignados – which could be seen as supporting the theory of 'the multitude' – preclude the possibility of clear nodes and moments of centrality? These nodes perhaps take on new shapes and forms, but they could still exist. The possibility of nodes and centrality could thus also enable the presence of a political collective subjectivity, making one movement out of many.

This brings this thesis to argue that the Indignados also carry analytical implications, in that they challenge the common ways of applying Laclau's theory of hegemony and Hardt and Negri's theory of autonomy. Theoretically, a theory of hegemony can offer the type of framework needed to understand the affective notions of political subjectivity. There is a clear possibility of affective hegemony, but, analytically, and regarding application of a theory of hegemony, there has not been enough focus on affect. This has allowed theories which argue for the horizontal and networked version of social movements, mainly pertaining to the bodily sensations of unity, to dominate studies on contemporary protest movements. However, as will be argued in this thesis, there is much to be gained from applying a theory of hegemony to the Indignados, albeit with slight modifications.

Unity and the hegemonic character of Laclau's empty signifier might function differently today. This thesis argues that this is due to mainly two reasons: first, because of the affective and emotional character of contemporary social movements, and, second, due to the rise of social media, which could be seen to accentuate the idea of the networked multitude. This is where the main contribution of this thesis lies, in demonstrating how these two elements can be explained by a theory of hegemony, even though they could initially be seen as challenges to it. This addition will emphasise certain elements of hegemony and thus demonstrate how it is able to cover current movement formations. In doing so, this thesis will frame current social movements as *hegemonic projects*, and place a stronger emphasis on the fluid, transient, affective and unstable character of hegemony, and also point to the perishable nature of any hegemonic constellation. The Indignados with their affective and dispersed character aptly illustrate this. Consequently, the thesis also considers the following sub-questions to the overall research question: can the Indignados spur a new understanding of democracy:

What roles do emotions and affect play in the construction of a political subject?

What roles do social media play in the construction of a political subject?

Based on these sub-questions, this thesis develops two conceptual tools, in order to understand the particularities of the hegemonic projects' focus on affect and social media: Visceral ties and virtual ties. These conceptual tools emanate from the engagement with two sets of empirical data: ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Madrid in 2013, as well as social media analysis of Facebook discussions within the Indignados. The analysis of these data sets will shed light on the tensions that social movements encounter, between emotion/affect and reason, as well as horizontality and verticality.

Visceral ties play directly on the affective nature of contemporary protest. They signify moments of unity which occur not through cognitive means, or even language, but through affective moments, such as the protest repertoires spatial occupation, silence/noise, and aesthetic expressions. These components, which are all strong repertoires of protest within the Indignados, create senses of belonging through other means. (Re)claiming public physical space and occupation has become a common occurrence within protest movements today. By gathering together, from different backgrounds and different viewpoints, people can unite in the common space. Similarly, silence and noise can function as empty spaces which can be filled with different contents. However, the commonality in silence or in noise still enables a unified identity. In addition, aesthetic expression can be interpreted and made meaningful in many ways, and therefore signify a non-cognitive unifying practice. This allows for a move away from the (unnecessary) focus on the empty signifier as mostly linguistic, and emphasises the affective dimensions of hegemony. It also points to strong instances of verticality and centrality, albeit in affective and emotional forms.

Virtual ties incorporate the arrival of new information and communication technologies into a theory of hegemony. Even though the social network could be said to be the epitome of a horizontal organisation – as proposed by Hardt and Negri – this thesis will show the presence of direction and centrality in online discussions. Even though social media provide platforms which allow many people to speak and interact without the presence of elected leaders and outside fixed institutional practices, there is a sense of unity. As such, political identities are formed in a constant re-negotiation of central themes and grassroots' claims, a balancing between horizontality and verticality. The hegemonic project thus

opens up for new forms of unity and therefore new forms of political subjectivity. It stresses the tension between emotion/affect and reason, horizontality and verticality, and hegemony and autonomy. It builds on Laclau's theory of hegemony and reworks some of its components, in order to encompass the social movements of today.

This thesis thus intends to further investigate the practical challenges to democracy which the Indignados are posing, and whether these are co-constitutive with challenges to theory and analysis. It aims to question and problematise the strong division between emotion and reason, as currently seen in some dimensions of democratic theory and social movement theory. The thesis will centre its focus on current understandings of political subjectivity, and how these are often reliant on the Cartesian *ego cogito*, and produce a constant favouring of rational over emotional action. It also engages with the dispersed nature of the Indignados and enquires into what constitutes a political claim. By analysing social movement characteristics normally associated with a lack of subjectivity, the thesis aims to shed light on the practices of exclusion present in democratic theory and social movement theory. As a response, the thesis will offer an alternative framework inspired by radical democracy, and in particular Laclau's theory of hegemony, in which affect and emotion are central components of political subjectivity. However, the critiques against Laclau will also be addressed by calling for a move to the hegemonic project, indicating the transient, affective and perishable nature of hegemony.

Outline of thesis

Chapter Two, *Re-reading dissent: Emotion and reason in theories of collective action*, faces the challenge of the emotional character of the Indignados and explores the role of emotions within social movement theory. It depicts four different approaches to emotions, which range from regarding emotions as completely irrelevant to central for understanding collective action. However, as the chapter will show, all of the approaches retain a strong division between emotion/affect and reason, reminiscent of the Cartesian *ego cogito*. Even the most recent affective turn, which seeks to address the importance of affect and bodily sensations for collective action, claims that affect is a solely corporeal experience, which further sediments the division between mind/body and emotional/rational. Affect is thus seen as autonomous from emotions, but also from signification at large. Because of this, there is no connection between affect and the creation of political subjectivity, and the role

of emotions and affect in the creation of political subjects is left unexplored. Therefore, the chapter concludes there is a need to engage further with what role emotions and affect play in the creation of political subjectivity, as well as what affect can be beyond corporeality.

Chapter Three, *Sovereignty in crisis? Dead ends and ways forward for the democratic subject,* approaches the challenges to democracy from the perspective of deliberative democracy. It argues that deliberative democratic theory is struggling to understand the Indignados, both due to their emotional and dispersed character. Since deliberation is based on an idea of the rational consensus, where the force of the better argument creates legitimate decisions, rationality and reason lie at the heart of any theory of consensus and the creation of political claims; the possibility of a democratic sovereign relies on the axiomatic nature of reason. Critiques from within deliberative democratic theory bring up the point that deliberation can be an exclusionary practice, and how access to deliberation might vary between groups and individuals. Whilst this is an accurate observation, the internal critiques do not touch upon the desirability of deliberation and consensus, if it can only manage to be completely inclusive.

In opposition to this, we can question the desirability of consensus and unified claims and instead consider the constitutive nature of disagreement for democracy. This perspective, put forward by thinkers based in the radical democratic tradition, is in this chapter mainly represented by Rancière and Mouffe. They argue that there has been a constant favouring of rational action within democratic theory and, therefore, democracy is never a representation of the people, but merely a classification of those who have a political voice, and those who do not. The emotional and the passionate are seen in the latter category, seen as noise rather than voice. However, whilst Rancière and Mouffe are pointing to the exclusion of emotion/ affect in deliberation, this thesis seeks an in-depth account of how emotions and affect function in the creation of political claims, in order to understand the Indignados.

Chapter Four, *Subjectivity, collectivity, democracy – From hegemony to the hegemonic project*, undertakes this task and offers a theoretical model which can combine the interest in emotional and dispersed movements and the recognition of political subjects. By turning to Laclau's theory of hegemony, there is a possibility to understand the importance of emotion/affect for democratic politics. After first revisiting the theoretical backgrounds of

Laclau's theory, mainly Lacan and Derrida, the chapter goes on to describe how a theory of hegemony can be a useful tool for understanding the Indignados. However, hegemony is not an uncontroversial concept. It has received critique for placing too much emphasis on the vertical and perceived transcendental qualities of social action, whereas, in fact, horizontality might be a more correct description of collective movements today. This claim has mainly been put forward by Hardt and Negri, who argue that the horizontal network is a more apt description of movements such as the Indignados or Occupy. As noted above, they see these movements as more autonomous than hegemonic, and more affective than linguistic. However, the chapter argues, in line with Stavrakakis (2007; 2014), that this is an inaccurate reading of Laclau. A theory of hegemony is highly affective, albeit in a different way. As such, affect is seen not only as corporeal, but as discursive as well. The discursive for Laclau and Mouffe was never only confined to language, but has always had a material dimension, reminiscent of Wittgenstein's language games (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 108). However, the affective nature of the Indignados, as well as the arrival of social media must be more emphasised in a theory of hegemony in order to make it valid for contemporary developments. Thus, the chapter introduces the hegemonic project, an elongation of hegemony which places a larger emphasis on affect and which recognises the highly perishable and transient nature of hegemony. The hegemonic project will act as an analytical category for the following two empirical chapters.

In Chapter Five, *Visceral ties: Creating a movement which is not one*, the thesis will engage with its first set of empirical material, based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Madrid 2013. After a methodological overview, where the different types of material and methods will be presented, the chapter sets out to outline how we can perceive of 'a movement which is not one', a phrase which indicates the paradoxical nature of the Indignados. In doing so, it focusses on the forms of diversity and unity present within the Indignados. It commences with an illustration of their diversity, describing the different branches, and how their claims are of a highly varying nature. However, in the second part, the visceral ties of the movement are described, arguing that these less cognitive and more affective forms of unity are key to the identity formation of the Indignados and can also function as hegemonies.

Chapter Six, *Virtual ties: Social networks, identity formation and the hegemonic project*, presents the second set of data consisting of Facebook discussions and enquires into the virtual life of the Indignados. Based on analysis of activity frequency, it concludes that online movement activity has decreased significantly since 2011. However, this has also affected the nature of the discussions. The chapter employs word clouds in order to illustrate the most common words and concepts present in discussion, and it later concludes that the words which attract the most activists are also words which are seemingly apolitical and not attached to any specific ideology. As such, there is a similar pattern to hegemony in the virtual as in the real: empty signifiers become hegemonic markers and create unity. However, the chapter also notes that the hegemonic life of these signifiers is very short-lived, thus proving the need for a transition into the hegemonic project, where hegemonies are highly perishable.

Chapter Seven, the concluding chapter, brings this discussion back together and reinforces the points made in the empirical chapters Five and Six. It will point to how the affective dimension of protest is not liminal, or complementary, as has been argued by several theories so far, but central for the presence of any movement and any identity formation. As such, even though the Indignados are considered to experience a lack of political subjectivity, the conclusion will argue that is due to the narrow conception of the same, and which reinforces the division between emotion/affect and reason. Further, it will point to how by broadening the conceptual claim to what subjectivity entails movements like the Indignados can be understood to a higher degree. The conclusion will also give an overview of further research trajectories, enabled by the work undertaken in this thesis.

2. Re-reading dissent: Emotion and reason in theories of collective action

How can we conceive of the Indignados as political subjects? One could say that they are indeed present in the political sphere, but what kind of subjectivity are they demonstrating? Traditionally, political subjects have often been thought of as parties, as movements with clear aims and goals, as dictators, or any other well-defined and palpable agency. However, as noted in the introduction, the emotional character of the Indignados could be seen as a challenge to this traditional view.

Indignation is a feeling, and, yet, it has come to function as an umbrella term for a wide range of collective action in Southern Europe since 2011. In other words, an emotion – indignation – is a central feature of the movement, and this is one of the reasons why the Indignados are puzzling: the aims and claims of the movement have been somewhat unclear. This is not to say that emotions have played no part in collective action prior to the Indignados, but what is different this time is not that the Indignados are more emotional, but the absence of any specific ideology to accompany the emotions.[5] Indignation has come to be the overall brand or direction for the movement and it attracts a wide variety of members. Belonging and collective identities have often been based on ideological affinity, but now, emotions have gained a more prominent place. Based on these observations, this chapter first asks the question: If belonging cannot be perceived in the same way as before, what happens to political identities and what role do emotions play in their construction? Secondly, this question should be read in the light of the overall concern of this thesis: how can we understand a movement like the Indignados which defies hierarchal representation and traditional labels? Can emotions help us in that endeavour?

This chapter will offer an overview of how emotions have been conceptualised with regards to collective action and the creation of political identities. In doing so, it will trace the main trends within primarily social movement theory, but this field is naturally influenced by general currents in the social sciences at large. Before delving into the

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[5] This thesis deals primarily with the development of the Indignados from 2011 to 2014. Whilst the thesis recognises that the rise of the new Spanish political party Podemos (who have much more well-defined claims) is important, the thesis engages with the overall grass-root movement, which does not have a unified, specific, agenda.

specifics of how social movement theory has dealt with emotions, it is important to consider the conceptual divide between emotion and reason which underpins much of contemporary scholarship on emotions. The Cartesian notion about the constitutive division of the ego has permeated political thought since its inception. Descartes argued that the mind and the body are two completely separate entities even though he made adjustments and corrections to his theory.[6] This perspective serves as the starting point for this chapter. However, the chapter will not only describe this dichotomy and its discontents, but will also, in the last part, argue that there is a need for a move beyond the rigid dualism between emotion and reason, in order to understand the political subjectivity of the Indignados.

The first part of this chapter will give an account of the early years of social movement theory and how, in the first half of the 20th century, emotions were regarded as purely irrational and therefore impossible to include in political analysis. For instance, in the eyes of Le Bon (1960) and Schumpeter (1976), crowds were seen as highly emotional, and therefore also inept for political engagements. During this time, the mind was seen as wholly superior to bodily sensations and 'lowly' passions, and there was a need for exercising control over the seemingly uncontrollable masses. Crowds were also highly susceptible to manipulation, rhetoric and charismatic leaders, and collective action could almost be equated with collective madness. In sum, emotions were present in politics, but highly undesirable.

This was followed by what I call the rational turn, explored more fully in the second part of this chapter.[7] This period turned 180 degrees from previous thought, saying that *everything* about collective action is rational, and we can always trace the rational calculations made by its leaders and members. This perspective, emanating from an increased affinity between the research and activist communities, held the view that social movements should not be seen as mere irrational entities, but should be recognised as reasonable political subjects. This was a successful narrative, and during the rational turn, social

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[6] This is a simplified account of Descartes' metaphysics, but which serves the purpose of this thesis. The debates around possible interpretations of Descartes' work on the mind-body relation can be seen further in Cottingham (1992; 1994), Brown (2006), and Damasio (1995).

[7] It should be noted that the scholarship presented as the rational turn is mainly focussed on Anglo-American trends. There were other perspectives present during the rise of rationalism (mainly in Continental Europe), but the Anglo-American perspective has been considered the dominant narrative of how social movements were conceived during the 1960s and onwards.

movements gained a more prominent status as political subjects. However, the focus on emotion was almost obliterated, leaving the second half of the mind/body dualism behind.

Over the last 20 years, however, this has been increasingly questioned and the debate has developed into a discussion on emotions as well as rationality, allowing for a more constructivist perspective on the creation of the claims of movements and the role of emotions therein. What has been referred to as the emotional turn indicates yet another shift, but this time in favour of emotions. Several scholars, such as Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001) and Clarke, Hoggett and Thompson (2006), have brought emotions back to the fore. Social movements could, in the emotional turn, be seen as both emotional and rational, and these forces could work toward a common goal. Emotions were seen as important for sustaining activism or increasing mobilisation.

However, in addition to considering emotions in social movements, attention could also be turned to affect. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, which can be misleading.[8] Within cultural studies, the affective turn has come to signify an important shift in how identity and belonging are conceptualised. Several scholars following the so-called affective turn, such as Ahmed (2004), Massumi (2002), or Connolly (2002), try to bring in an idea of affect as central to social and cultural dimensions.[9] They turn against what has been described as the linguistic turn,[10] and argue that in order to understand social relations, we cannot merely consider language, but must inevitably also take affective, corporeal, and sensational aspects into account. This turn to affect has had an effect also on social movement theory, where scholars such as Gould (2009) and Emirbayer and Goldberg (2005) work on how affect, as distinct from emotions, are central for collective action. The difference between the two, they argue, is the inherent cognitive character of

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[8] This chapter starts with a focus on emotion, but will also engage with the concept of affect. There are many different takes on how, or if, these terms should be distinguished from one another. The chapter will settle on the definition that emotions (and not only affect) are important, but that emotions should not become overly focussed on the cognitive. As such, the chapter positions itself in between these debates, which will be further elaborated in the last section of this chapter.

[9] In addition to the affective turn, one could also refer to the trend of new materialism. In a sense, affect theory is influenced by this turn to matter and critique of anthropocentrism, which argues that focus should be turned also to biological, environmental, and resource-related factors (Connolly 2013). However, it is also important to point out that affect theory is dealing specifically with bodily matter, and not everything material, which has an effect on how we perceive it (Glynos 2012). As such, affect theory is indeed a form of new materialism, but quite a particular one.

[10] The linguistic turn is present in many disciplines of the social sciences, such as philosophy, politics, sociology, anthropology, to name but a few. The importance of language and its ever-changing nature and effect on social relations will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

emotions. Emotions are thus products of affect, an explication and a representation of a bodily sensation. Unlike perspectives adhering to the emotional turn, the affective turn puts larger emphasis on material practices and their import for the creation of collective identities. Emotions are thus seen as too instrumental and too cognitive to fully account for the range of responses an individual could have towards its environment.

Importantly, the four main trends of social movement theory which will be described in this chapter could all be subject to the same line of critique: a reinforcing of the division between emotion and reason. Over time, social movement theory has seen the pendulum swing in favour of either alternative, but the spectrum is based on a clear distinction between the two poles. Either social movements are rational or they are emotional. Even the affective turn, in which scholars have tried to question this dichotomy, ultimately emphasises the autonomy of affect (as described by Massumi 2002), as a realm separate from cognition and meaning-making. However, these dichotomies might preclude analysis which could further the understanding of emotional and affective social movements, such as the Indignados.

Ultimately, this chapter concludes that even though the field of social movement studies has undergone both an emotional and an affective turn, significant questions remain. The extant literature does not give sufficient indication as to how affect functions in the creation of political identities and also fails to further elaborate on how affect is important, not only for social theory, but for political theory as well. Since affect is described as disjointed from any creation of meaning, or representation for that matter, it also becomes detached from the political realm. In addition, the exclusive focus on affect as corporeal and autonomous from the discursive and conceptual, as described by Massumi and Connolly, is contributing to the already existing divide between reason and emotion, mind and body. As such, the last section of this chapter calls for a bridge between affect and cognition, between emotion and reason, mind and body. Based on critiques of affect theory, mainly represented by Leys (2011), Zerilli (2013) and Glynos (2012), the chapter makes the argument that in order to understand contemporary social movements, there is a need to move beyond the distinction between affect and cognition. In doing so, the chapter will call for an analysis which questions the Cartesian *ego cogito* by not only reversing the order of importance (emotions over reason, body over mind), but which aims to dismantle the very

assumption of a clear division. These challenges to existing social movement theory will be further elaborated on in Chapters Three and Four, where the thesis will argue that the failure to sufficiently engage with language and signification in conjunction with affect leaves significant gaps with regards to the understanding of collective action today.

Between emotion and reason: tracing the tensions

Early understandings of collective emotions

Marx, Weber and Durkheim are some of the most important foundational thinkers for social movement theory, and their acceptance of the mind/body division has had a great influence on the field. For Marx, emotions could be seen as commodities; they could be translated into a material world (Denzin 1984: 33) and an individual's emotions were shaped by social structures. In this perspective, the individual is incapable of controlling his or her own emotions since they are determined by history, materiality, and tradition. Weber, on the other hand, argued for a perspective where emotions had to be controlled, since the capitalist system is built on individuals making rational decisions. Emotions should solely be part of private life, and in social life, they should merely be used in order to control the crowds (Weber 1946: 254). This is not to say that emotions are not present in public affairs. On the contrary, Weber claimed that they always are, but that the political system is constantly favouring non-emotional reasoning. Durkheim emphasised the duality of the human being, that we are both emotional and rational, not one or the other. As such, emotions are not irrational or antisocial, but highly social. The feelings and emotions that an individual experiences are a result of social, emotional pressure from the collective outside: 'we are then the victims of the illusion of having ourselves created that which is actually forced itself from the outside' (Durkheim 1964 [1895]: 5). However, the structure is not entirely governing of the individuals. Individuals constantly feed into the collective emotion, and help create its power. All of these collective emotions can solidify into rituals and traditions, and then be even more social and harder to break free from.

The common denominator for these thinkers, despite their differences, is a clear embrace of the Cartesian *ego cogito*. This had great influence on studies of collective action for years to come. For instance, in the beginning of the 20th century, another influential, but controversial, thinker, Gustave Le Bon – and later his follower Neil Smelser (1968) –

argued that emotions and rationality are incompatible (Calhoun 2001). Emotions, however important, were seen a part of the inner, mysterious workings of an individual and, thus, they were illegitimate for social research (Aminzade and McAdam 2001: 20).[11] Le Bon had a great influence on the study of social movements for many years. In his seminal work, *The Crowd* (1960 [1895]), he argued that emotions play an intricate role in the creation of a social movement, but not a positive one:

> Given exaggeration in its feelings, a crowd is only impressed by excessive
> sentiments. An orator wishing to move a crowd must make an abusive use
> of violent affirmations. To exaggerate, to affirm, to resort to repetitions, and
> never to attempt to prove anything by reasoning are methods of argument
> well known to speakers at public meetings. (Le Bon 1960: 51)

As such, an individual is not making a rational decision to join a movement, or to support a cause, but is forced to do so by the power of demagogues and manipulative rhetoric (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2000: 66). The movement itself is in possession of the emotions, which has little or no connection to what the individual herself desires. Le Bon considered movements to be irrational and a danger to the social order. As such, he refused to acknowledge that an individual could control their emotions, or that emotions would have any positive impact on the social. His work was, to a large extent, concentrated on how we can use emotions to control weak crowds, which is quite a dubious endeavour. Le Bon also influenced Schumpeter, who thought normal citizens inept for political affairs.[12] The citizen, Schumpeter argued, 'drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. He argues and analyses in a way which he would readily recognise as infantile within the sphere of his real interests. He becomes a primitive

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[11] It is important to note that Le Bon developed the teachings of two prominent scholars: Tarde and Taine. Tarde and Taine both pointed to the importance of the unconscious for the creation of crowds, which was ultimately what united them. Emotions such as love or hatred were thus central to group psychology, but also signs of an almost pathological behaviour, something which Le Bon heavily emphasised (Ellenberger 1970: 528). See also McClelland (1989).

[12] Le Bon's influence on Schumpeter does not indicate a direct adoption of Le Bon's work by Schumpeter. Like many others, he was highly critical of the borderline-fascist traits of Le Bon's works, since they could be seen as a justification for authoritarian modes of governance. However, Schumpeter also largely drew on the works of Pareto (1935) and Michels (1959), who argued that politics could and should be seen as a realm for the elites, since this would ensure the welfare of the people (which could easily be used by fascism) (Smelser 1995: 21). As such, Schumpeter could be said to portray a somewhat conflicted opinion of the nature of the elites, exhibiting a tension between the conservatism of his time and the concurrent liberal trends (Medearis 1997).

again' (Schumpeter 1976 [1942]: 262). This fact, paired with the passionate nature of the lowly citizens, made them not only unsuitable for politics, but also incapable of creating a common interest, since their only concern was with their private life (ibid. 261). One might argue that Schumpeter was merely a product of his time, and that his arguments are inapplicable to current day events. However, both Le Bon and Schumpeter have greatly influenced later writings on emotions in social theory and contributed to highlighting the tension between emotion and reason.[13] This is not to say that emotions have always remained the focus of attention for the study of social movements. After this period, social movement theory entered a phase of rationalism, which largely precluded any importance for emotions in politics.

Rising rationalism

Starting in the 1970s, an important shift took place, where social movements went from being seen as largely irrational, or at least partly emotional, to entirely rational. During this period, it became much more common for researchers to sympathise with the cause of the movement, and they were therefore looking for a way of rationalising their behaviour (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2000: 69). In a sense, this meant that social movements were taken more seriously, no longer being regarded as unstable anomalies trying to overthrow the government. This coincided with the rise of many of the most significant contemporary movements. In the United States, prominent examples of these were the feminist, anti-war, civil rights, and new Left movements.

The reason why social movements came to be regarded as rational was the effect of several changes of opinion. In order to make social movements a part of 'real politics', it was necessary to make the inner workings of a movement understandable. Explanations of social movement behaviour were strongly influenced by the parallel development of rational choice theory, where any action could be explained based upon the incentives, opportunities and capabilities of the actor. A rational actor, it was claimed, had good reason to be taken seriously, since they were able to deliberate on actions and causes in a

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[13] For instance, the American tradition of political science draws heavily on the works of Schumpeter. David Held has noted that Schumpeter's works are clearly echoed in Western calls for limitations to participation. As examples of participation gone wrong, Held mentions the masses that propelled the Bolshevik revolutions as well as the democratic election of Hitler (Held 1987: 165). Similar thoughts can be found in Almond and Verba's *Civic Culture* (1963), or as Philip Converse stated: 'what needs repairing is not the [survey] item but the population' (1970: 176).

reasonable way, thus gaining the status of a respectable social actor (Elster 1989). The reason for participating in a social movement was not raging anger, but a calculating rational mind, trying to realise its cause. With this turn, social movement theory simply shifted from asking *why* movements were formed into *how* they realised their goals (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2000: 70). Given that their goal was well-defined and understandable, one could now more easily justify their claims.

The rational turn became the dominant narrative of social movement theory for several decades. Aminzade and McAdam claim that the reason why emotions have been so absent over the years has been that the field has primarily been dominated by male researchers identifying with a Western tradition. This type of researcher is less likely to incorporate emotions into their work, since they have been brought up in a culture where only rational actions count, and men especially should not engage with such 'soft' matters (Aminzade and McAdam 2001: 23). As noted above, this perspective presumes a sharp division between what is emotional and what is rational. Within this rationalist perspective, emotions became mere inner workings of the body; they are uncontrollable and, albeit influential, immeasurable. [14] This immeasurability also became one of the central justifications for not engaging with emotions when researching collective action. Since everything was regarded as rational, emotions did not really have any place. If we are all common-sense creatures, we have obviously learned to control our emotions, and thus, they are irrelevant to scientific analysis. The binaries of thinking/feeling, mind/body, and public/private always stressed the importance of the first category, leaving the second behind, and, as a result, the study of emotions was silenced for more than 30 years. The opposition between emotion and reason was very sharp: if you were rational you could not simultaneously be emotional.

Recovering emotions

The consequence of this hierarchical binary, say Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, was that research on collective action missed a large portion of knowledge on how social movements are constructed and experienced (2000: 70). However, in the beginning of the 1990s there was an upswing in the interest in emotions and their effects on sociological

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[14] Calhoun makes a good point when asking how measurable concepts such as power or class are, which did not seem to impede any research before 1990 (Calhoun 2001: 48). In other words, political analysis has always made use of concepts which are not so easily measured.

research and researchers started to include emotion in their work. They reconnected to the works of the early sociologists, returning to a perspective where emotions were not hidden away, in order to create a more nuanced picture than the rationalist perspective could offer. However, they also tried to refrain from portraying emotions as part of the 'uncontrollable masses', and instead looked at how emotions could be meaningful and productive for social movements. Criticising former rationalist perspectives, several researchers have tried to incorporate emotions into the study of social movements (Ferree 1992; Kingston and Ferry 2008; Clarke, Hoggett and Thompson 2006; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001; Jasper 1997). This line of thought has also been developed by several political philosophers, amongst others Solomon (1990; 1993; 1998) and Nussbaum (2001; 2004), who argue that claims and morals need not be prior to emotions, but in fact, that emotion is the reason for a claim to come about.

There had previously been some attempts to include not only external factors in social movement theory, such as political opportunity and structural capabilities.[15] Theories of new social movements – which started to develop after 1968, but which became a fully-fledged section of social movement theory in the 1980s – were crucial to this move, and emphasised the importance of not only class and other structures, but also of immaterial factors. Within new social movements, questions of identity, movement culture and personal relationships also mattered for the development of social action. For instance, Melucci stated that collective identity is in fact based on a myriad of individual ones, and therefore we need to turn our attention also to the internal lives of movement members (Melucci 1995: 45). As for emotions, Melucci claimed that there could be no activism without emotional investment: 'To understand this part of collective action as "irrational", as opposed to the part that are "rational" (a euphemism for good), is simply nonsensical. There is no cognition without feeling, and no meaning without emotion' (Melucci 1996: 71) In addition, another of the founding theorists of new social movements, Buechler, reinforced the importance of identity and how social movements are not only products of historical structures (2000).

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[15] Framing theory could be said to be a bit of an anomaly in this picture. Even though framing theorists, such as Snow and Benford, were mainly concerned with movement outcomes and successes, they connected these with the way that movement claims resonate with political elites and the general public. This perspective has certain affinities with theories of ideology, and also reinforces the symbolic productions of social movements (Melucci 1995). See also Snow and Benford (1988).

Furthermore, two of the most influential contemporary writers on social movements, Tarrow and Tilly, have produced several ground-breaking volumes on collective action (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Tarrow 1994; Tilly 2004), exerting tremendous influence on the field. In *Contentious Politics* (2007), Tarrow and Tilly analyse the word 'claim'. In their perspective, most social movements circulate around some kind of demand or claim and they take the British anti-slavery movement of the 1700s and the Orange revolution in Ukraine in 2004 as examples. These movements naturally demonstrate vastly different characteristics, but are still both instances of what Tarrow and Tilly refer to as *contentious politics* (2007: 4). Contentious politics:

> involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone
> else's interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests
> or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of
> claims, or third parties. (Tarrow and Tilly 2007: 4)

Tarrow and Tilly's theory can tell us several things about how social movement theory has been constructed. In their model, mobilisation is contingent upon interest, organisation, resources, power, and opportunities. This started a trend in which we could consider not only external factors, such as opportunities and capacities, but also the interests and aims of the individuals and movements. Even though Tarrow and Tilly do not focus explicitly on emotions, they still made way for scholarship on how the interests and aims of the individual affect the social. As such, they embody a bridge between the rationalist perspective and the emotional turn in that they broadened the scope of social movement theory as to also include the inner workings of social movements, and not solely external factors.

However, there are examples of the emotional turn which precede Tarrow and Tilly. For instance, Hochshild has produced a seminal study of how emotions are at the centre of social interaction, but that this role is quite a negative one. In *The Managed Heart* (1983), she shows how women in management or leader positions within companies often try to suppress their emotional life in order to succeed. She also develops the concept of feeling rules, namely that we have certain feelings in specific situations (Hochshild 1979). Feminist scholarship has also greatly contributed to sociology's ability to reverse the hierarchies between emotion and reason. In gender studies, scholars have time and again

uncovered that what is rational and reasonable is constantly valued higher than emotions and passions (Rorty 1980). This has primarily been applied to studies on causes pertinent to gender equality, but is applicable to any kind of social movement. Several social movement theorists have picked up this possibility, amongst others, Jagger (1989) and Scheman (1980) have analysed how emotions do not necessarily have to only be a part of the private sphere, but how they also play a role in public affairs. This has been studied mostly within women's activism, and how emotions are treated within a movement. For instance, in a women's activist group, there might be a higher tolerance for emotional expressions than in a more traditional, male-dominated group (Kleinman 1996).

Several studies on specifically feminist social movements have also focussed on emotions. Taylor has introduced emotions as highly important to the study of social movements. In analysing the abeyance structures of a group, she argues that there are several different mechanisms at play in sustaining a movement and the engagements of its members. These include continuity over time, purposive commitment, exclusiveness, centralisation and culture (Taylor 1996), all of which are, according to Taylor, highly influenced by emotions. In particular, the love and friendship among the members were contributing factors in sustaining solidarity within the group, as well as creating a collective identity through which the engagement could be channelled. This is also in line with the argument made in studies on sister- and brotherhood. Jasper (1998) develops the concept of the *libidinal economy* of a social movement, symbolising how emotions and desires can help create activism. In his thinking, a social movement can be incited by a moral shock, causing anger which then leads to activism. Jasper also distinguishes between emotions between members of an organisation, such as love and friendship, and shared emotions, such as anger and shame, which are collective motivators. As such, emotions are highly important both with regards to keeping the movement intact and coherent, as well as creating a higher purpose.

Another emotion frequently discussed in relation to social movements is pride, one example being the Gay and Lesbian Pride campaigns. According to Gould, the very concept of pride was invoked by activists to call for volunteerism when the AIDS crisis broke out (2009). Due to the divided public attitude towards homosexuality, it was both something to be proud of, but also incited shame. Focussing on the positive side, pride, the

social movements hoped to spur more activism and thus make a stronger cause. Pride has also been analysed by Scheff (1994), who argues that both pride and shame are integral to any form of collective action. He has mainly worked with Nazism, and how ideologies can speak directly to our sense of pride and shame and how we want to increase and decrease them, respectively. In this sense, Hitler made use of these sentiments while trying to convince the Germans of the necessity of a solution to the Jewish question (Sheff 1994). In addition, Polletta and Jasper (2001) argue that emotion plays an important role in creating narratives which incite political action. Storytelling, and creating a context of a problem, can build on emotions to engage mobilisation.

Works on specifically Spanish movements have also included focus on emotions. For instance, Romanos has written extensively on the role of emotions in Spanish anarchist movements, and especially in underground activity during the Francoist dictatorship. Romanos argues that emotions and affect are indeed highly important for engagement in high-risk political activism. In the primary instance, emotional engagement works for the sustenance and maintenance of mobilisation. Among the ways in which emotions work, Romanos mentions that they can strategically mobilise activists, as well as strengthen ideological cohesion (Romanos 2011). In other words, 'the anarchists mobilised a series of emotions in their discourse, seeking to change the degree and quality of emotions among potential supporters in order to inspire action' (Romanos 2014: 545).

Similar thoughts have been expressed in recent works by Donatella della Porta. In *Mobilizing for democracy – Comparing 1989 and 2011* (2014), della Porta makes the argument that democratisation takes place through so-called eventful democratisation. She compares the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989 with the developments in the Arab Spring 2011. In the event, where the populace raised against an authoritarian regime, emotional and affective mechanisms of social movement action 'were also at work, intensifying positive ties of solidarity among protesters, and transforming fear into rage' (della Porta 2014: 64). della Porta also points out that emotions present in social movements are not only negative, such as anger, fear, or frustration, but also positive, such as joy, pride and pleasure (della Porta 2014: 33; Flam and King 2005).

More recently, Perugorría and Tejerina (2013) have studied the 'the emotions that were mobilized by social movement organizations linked to the 15M (e.g. outrage or

indignation)' (2013: 426) and subsequently make the argument that 'DRY strategically 'mobilized' the emotion of indignation to motivate and then broaden participation. In doing this, it turned this emotion into the stepping stone for the construction of the movement's collective identity' (ibid. 432). In this sense, Perugorría and Tejerina follow the same vein as Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001), in saying that emotions are tools, means to an end.

Even though these studies have made a significant contribution and an effort to bring emotions back into the debate, there are still limits to how emotions are used to analyse social movements. The sentiment that emotions could merely complement existing theories is still prevailing (Calhoun 2001). There is definitely an ambition to blur the distinction between emotion and reason, but there are still questions about the success of this endeavour. Rather than fully incorporating emotional expression into the workings of social movements, the analysis seems somewhat limited to how social movements make use of emotions in order to reach their goals, to attract members etc. This can be seen as an instrumental usage, which still rests upon quite a sharp division between emotion and reason. As such, researchers in the emotional turn recognise that emotions can be important, but they are only important since they might affect our cognitive considerations. For instance Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta claim that 'the emotions most relevant to politics, we suspect, fall toward the more constructed, cognitive end of this dimension' (2000: 79) and Jasper follows the same vein when he argues that 'emotions involve beliefs and assumptions open to cognitive persuasion. We often can be talked out of our anger on the grounds that it is too extreme a response, or that we are misinformed' (1998: 401). In other words, there is a seemingly strong will to connect emotions with cognition, and potentially with rational behaviour. However, in light of current empirical circumstances, this might pose a problem to present research, since the emotions are still only regarded as a component of politics which is either entirely malleable, or completely beyond our control. This becomes problematic with regards to the Indignados movement, which does not seem to use emotions instrumentally, but rather has its very roots in a feeling. As such, the problem remains: how can we understand an emotional movement such as the Indignados?

The affective turn

One response to the seeming instrumentalism of the emotional turn could be offered by what has since the early 2000s been commonly referred to as the affective turn. This theoretical change of direction took place as a response to the linguistic turn, criticising current trends of focussing too much on language and representation, and therefore excluding bodily sensations and affective responses. The turn was largely influenced by the thoughts of Deleuze and Guattari (1988), but the works of Brian Massumi (the translator of Delueze's works into English) has in particular had a profound effect on the field.[16] Affect theorists wanted to turn away from the fear of engaging with nature and the body – as expressed within the linguistic turn – and to overcome the dread of falling into the same essentialism which they wanted to criticise (Leys 2011: 440). Massumi argued in his seminal article 'Autonomy of Affect' (1995) that we need to make a distinction between affect and emotions:

> In the absence of an asignifying philosophy of affect it is all too easy for received psychological categories to slip back in, undoing the considerable desconstructive work that has been effectively carried out by post-structuralism. Affect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion. But…emotions and affect – if affect is intensity – follow different logics and pertain to different orders. (Massumi 1995: 88)

Affect, as distinct from emotions, is described by Massumi as intensity and must break free from theories which are always concerned with signification. Affect is therefore seen as a 'non-conscious, never-to-be-conscious remainder' and is 'disconnected from meaningful sequencing, from narration as it is from vital function' (ibid. 85). Emotion, on the other hand, is 'a qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions' (ibid. 88). What Massumi does here, is to argue that theories on emotions are actually still caught in a perspective which prioritises cognition over affect, and which therefore sediments present structures of

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[16] The affective turns builds upon an engagement with affect which precedes both Massumi and Deleuze and goes back to the works of Spinoza. Spinoza's theory, that affect is a constant becoming of the body, that affects indicates a certain potentiality, has regained the interests of contemporary scholars (Leys 2011: 442; Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 3). As such, Spinoza's quote 'no one has yet determined what the body can do' (Spinoza 1959: 87) has become vital for this revived interest in how we can understand bodily sensations in social, cultural and political dimensions.

cultural and social life. In Massumi's view, affect should rather be thought of as autonomous from cognition, but something which can still be captured into an emotion:

> 'Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions
> of actual connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect.
> Emotion is the most intense (most contracted) expression of that capture −
> and of the fact that something has always and again escaped' (ibid. 96).

Many have followed the same path as Massumi. For instance, Thrift has in geography explored affect as a non-representational theory, thus following suit from Massumi's reading of Spinoza (Thrift 2007). In addition, Gregg and Seigworth have in their recent anthology gathered a wide variety of affect theorists which all explore the potentiality of affect as a pre-conscious force of signification (2010).[17] Connolly, following Massumi, has also written extensively on how lessons can be learned from the neurosciences, thus further emphasising the importance of the body (Connolly 2002; 2013)

This chapter, however, is mainly interested in how affect is conceptualised with regards to collective action.[18] The affective turn has had an increasing impact on the field of social movement studies, and has been most reflected in the works by Emirbayer and Goldberg (2005), as well as Gould (2009).[19] For instance, Emirbayer and Goldberg (2005) argue that 'most contributors to the recent emotional turn rely heavily upon a cultural and social-constructionist view of emotion' (2005: 471). According to the authors, social-

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[17] For further works within the affective turn in cultural studies, see Sara Ahmed *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004); Lauren Berlant *Cruel Optimism* (2006); Patricia Clough and Jean Halley (eds.) *The affective turn: theorising the social* (2007).

[18] At the end of the 1980s, there were several attempts to nuance the use of emotions in social movement theory. For instance, the works of Thoits (1989) emphasised how there might be different kinds of emotions, where some are thought of as 'higher' (more cognitive) and some more immediate. This could be seen as an early sign of an affective turn, but social movement theory did, for a long time, emphasise that the 'higher' level emotions were more relevant for politics (see Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2000: 79; and Jasper 1998: 401). This significantly delayed the introduction of affect, which has been much more influenced by the works of cultural theorists than Thoits, even though the conclusions overlap.

[19] There is a growing portion of social movement studies which uses affect as an analytical category, albeit in a somewhat different fashion. These theories tend to focus more on the horizontality of protest, rather than the nature of affect and emotions, in other words, they are more concerned with application and analysis than theoretical development, which is the main focus of this chapter. See for instance Feigenbaum et al. (2013); Fuentes (2012); Jowers et al. (2012); Roelvink (2009); and Rosenberg (2013). Horizontal and rhizomatic forms of political protest will be further explained in Chapters 4 and 6, but with a stronger focus on Hardt and Negri's version of the same.

constructionism[20] is indeed a valid perspective, but users of the theory might still encounter issues when applying it to empirical material.

There are two main problems, according to Emirbayer and Goldberg. Firstly, social constructionism can contribute to reinforcing a faux dualism between emotion managers (leaders of social movements) and emotions managed (members of social movements). One example of this is the argument of Jasper, Goodwin and Polletta when they analyse mobilisation and also to the very early ideas of collective action, where the emotions were seen as potential tools to manipulate the masses. In this sense, an emotion becomes a tool for the emotion manager to attract more members, i.e. the emotion managed. The other problem is that previous theories tend to reify emotions. An emotion becomes something static, a well-defined noun, which is not subject to any power relations, or any type of fluidity (Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005: 471).

Emirbayer and Goldberg are also highly critical of the division between reason and emotion that prevails in current theories. Even though emotions have been reintroduced, a sharp division between the rational and the emotional remains, and this has affected how we approach social movements. As such, Emirbayer and Goldberg basically agree with those arguing that emotions should be brought back into the debate, but are highly sceptical of how this is implemented.

This division leads to an internal partition within social movements. On the one hand, we have those driven by strategic considerations, and those driven by passionate impulses. The former are often seen as the leadership of a movement, and the latter as the rank and file members (Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005: 476). This division could also symbolise two groups, one doing conventional politics, and another engaged in 'eruptive protests' (ibid. 477; cf. della Porta 2014). In this sense, there are always leaders of a movement who rationally calculate the use of emotions, and how they can benefit the cause. Aminzade and McAdam claim that effective movement leaders are able to:

> [...] assess emotional climates, induce mobilising emotions that motivate
> followers by altering definitions of the situation, create/reconfigure emotion

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[20] Social-constructionism in their sense means mainly the pioneering work of Hochschild, see for instance *The managed heart* (1983) and *Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure* (1979).

vocabularies, and transform emotion beliefs and feeling rules into moral obligations. (Aminzade and McAdam 2001: 35)

Instead, Emirbayer and Goldberg are advocating an even stronger stance for the value and impact of emotion. Not only are emotions well-defined tools which can be used as means to an end, but emotions in and of themselves are just as influential and constitutive of a movement as any rational claim. The very dynamic of a social movement can be driven by an emotion exclusively, and they therefore deserve a different kind of attention. Emirbayer and Goldberg also argue that emotions are not only private; they are a highly social matter (2005: 507). Therefore, the previous theories where the emotion is only important for the single individual is misleading. As a consequence of this, emotions should not be seen as a reflection of a social or cultural structure, but they can in fact be mutually constitutive.

Gould has also made a significant contribution to, as she calls it, the new curves of the emotional turn, or the affective curve of the emotional turn. Departing from the previous theories on emotions in social movements, she argues that emotion should not be taken as something fixed and objective. Gould is clearly inspired by Massumi (2002; 2003) and conceptualises affect as something 'non-conscious and unnamed, but still registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging the body' (Gould 2009: 19).

Affect as such is a fluid, unbound practice; it is only a free-floating energy. On the other hand we have emotions, which are the result of a process in which we name the affect. We place affect somewhere in our vast range of experiences and concepts, as to reach an emotional stage (Gould 2009: 21) and this process is never finished, never completed, but always in flux. The difference between emotion and affect is that the emotions attempt to fix the affect and channel it through one certain emotion:

> An emotion, in other words, brings a vague bodily intensity or sensation into the realm of cultural meanings and normativity, systems of signification that structure our very feelings. (Gould 2009: 21)

This possibility of non-fixity, of non-determination, leaves room for emotional change. There is a certain potentiality in the transformation from affect to emotion. This is not to

say that there is a fixed temporality with affect preceding the emotions. Emotion and affect can exist simultaneously, and are mutually constitutive (Gould 2009: 22). The reason for introducing affect, says Gould, is that this creates a space for the non-conscious, non-cognitive, non-linguistic, non-coherent, non-rational and un-predetermined, which otherwise occupy a very limited role in the analysis of human action. This is a response to earlier scholars of the emotional turn, who, according to Gould 'over-cognitivise and rationalise' political emotions (Gould 2009:23). [21] In their research, emotions are indeed seen as something that can be chosen, something which is used to reach an end, as mentioned above. Gould, on the other hand, wants to emphasise those instances where cognition is secondary to the emotion or at least parallel, in order to gain a wider perspective on political action. This is not to say that affect is irrational, on the contrary, Gould points out that it is always non-rational, not to return to the former, destructive, division between emotion and reason. [22]

How can affect be useful when analysing social movements? Gould points to how affect is highly influential in creating social reproduction and social change, affirming that previous theory has done little to take affect into consideration. She argues that most social change starts with affect, with 'an inarticulate and in-articulable sensation' (2009: 26), indicating that something is wrong with the current state of affairs. Here she borrows Raymond Williams' (1977) term 'structures of feeling', signalling that affect works to recognise a disparity between the dominant state of affairs and the dominant discourse on what is a desirable society, and on the other hand, one's own experiences and impressions. The common denominator for affective states is thus that they 'fail to identify with the existing order' (Gould 2009: 26).

Gould argues that if social movement studies were able to include affective states, it could possibly gain new knowledge about the driving forces of mobilisation. By including an affective dimension we might be able to understand when an ideology is successful and when it fails, depending on whether the affective state can identify with the current order

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[21] Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001) are the main target for Gould's critique.

[22] Gould here identifies the same problem as Emirbayer and Goldberg. When preserving the division between emotion and reason, this often results in reserving rationality for some (often leaders of social movements) and passion for others (the followers). This leads to an uneven power relation where the leaders in their rationality are valued higher than the emotional followers.

or not. Affect can thus be used, indeed, both as a tool for political leaders to sell an ideology, and as a ground for resistance.

Like Emirbayer and Goldberg, Gould also asks how emotions and affect can change our view on power. If we include affect as a space for production of social change, this inevitably becomes a space for power. In this sense, power is no longer restricted to ideologies or rational claims, but is also to be found in affect and emotion (Gould 2009: 27). Affect can create power, but it can also be moulded into submission, given its fluid potentiality. In addition, Gould argues, affect could be viewed as a new space of meaning and meaning-making. Moving as such, the mere sensation, can give rise to a feeling, but this does not mean that you necessarily know why you are feeling the way you are. It is not always easy to make sense of an affective state, but this is where social movements enter the scene:

> Social movement contexts provide a language for people's affective states as well as pedagogy of sorts regarding what and how to feel and what to do in light of those feelings. Movements, in short, 'make sense' of affective states and authorise selected feelings and actions while downplaying and even invalidating others. (Gould 2009: 28)

As an example of this, Gould brings up how anger motivated the feminist movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Instead of being portrayed as depressed victims, anger was launched as a new channel of political action. This was a new strategy of women's liberation, which proved to be quite successful. Since affect is potential, it could be appropriated by any concept or emotion, like anger. A movement is a place for the expression of that emotion, for the channelling of affect into political action.

Based on the above arguments, Gould develops what she calls an emotional habitus, a continuation of Bourdieu's concept.[23] According to Gould, Bourdieu defines habitus as the 'socially constituted, commonsensical, taken for granted understandings or schemas in any social grouping that, operating beneath conscious awareness, on the level of bodily understanding, provides members with a disposition or orientation to action' (Gould 2009: 33, see also Bourdieu 1977; 1990; 2001). In this sense, the habitus governs what we do and

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[23] For other works that use Bourdieu to analyse social movements, see Crossley (2002).

say, and what is appropriate. This does not mean that the habitus is in any way static; it is very dynamic and also subject to constant change. Gould finds the concept of habitus suitable for her analysis, since it puts emphasis not only on the cognitive side of our being, but also on those dimensions to which affect belongs. According to Gould, habitus can provide an explanation to, for instance, why we choose to follow some social norms and not others. When following a certain social norm, says Gould, we do not rationally calculate whether to do so, but this is a process which takes place on a corporal level. This is where the concept emotional habitus comes in.

There are streams and currents which we follow in our emotional life, feelings that respond to certain given situations (Gould 2009: 34). Some feelings are 'un-feelable' and inexpressible, because they lie outside our emotional habitus. The reason for extending habitus as to also include emotions, says Gould, is that this makes emotions social. Since affect is undeterminable and fluid, emotions and emotional habitus govern how affect is channelled, and how this can transform into political and social action. This is an important point: it is really a transformation. As Gould points out, when an emotional habitus channels an affective state, this actually does transform the affective state into something else, which it was not before. This is because the affective state is indescribable, and when trying to describe it, the emotional habitus invents something of its own (Gould 2009: 38). It is also important to note that groups are not chained to one emotional habitus, but they are able to develop new emotional habitus over time.

As such, affect can both be subsumed under an emotional habitus, but it can also break free from it. This leads us to a discussion on how power is exerted with regards to affect. Gould argues that affect is yet another space in which power can exist and express itself (Gould 2009: 39). For example, we have the power that the emotional habitus exerts on our affective state; the power which appropriates affect and transforms it into an emotion. For instance, consider when a government invokes fear of terrorism in order to implement more surveillance strategies. In that situation, we have a free-floating affect, which is appropriated by an emotion, fear, with a political purpose. Affect and emotion can thus be used to sustain a political system. On the other hand, emotions and affect can act as a disruptive force against an emotional habitus. When people are experiencing emotions that lie outside the emotional habitus, the individual can choose not to submerge them, but

affirm them. If so, then these outlaw emotions can help us step outside our current emotional habitus (Gould 2009: 41). We can challenge the dominating streams and 'unravel hegemonic ideologies' (ibid.).

In other words, Emirbayer, Goldberg and Gould, as epitomical examples of the affective turn in social movement theory, are aiming to follow suit from the introduction of affect in cultural studies. Turning the focus also to bodily sensations and pre-discursive affects can further the understanding of the workings of collective action and this seems to be a logical step since many contemporary social movements do exhibit a strong affective character. However, is the affective turn in social movement theory helpful when wanting to analyse the Indignados?

Overcoming dichotomies

Above, we have seen quite a radical transformation of how social movements have been studied throughout the years. The field has gone from conceptualising emotions as obscure and irrational, to regarding everything about social movements as rational, and further to the emotional turn where emotions regained some of their status. In opposition to this, recent work based on the affective turn has argued that emotions are in fact over-cognitivised, and in order to fully understand the inner workings of collective action, it is necessary to consider affect. Gould, Emirbayer and Goldberg have imported the concept of affect from cultural studies also into social movement theory and thereby introduced a valuable dimension to the study of social movements. They argue that a rationalisation of emotions does not necessarily help us better understand emotions in politics, it merely subjugates them to the same models and theories already present. Therefore, the affective turn in social movement theory remains a necessary step towards a more holistic scholarship on emotions in social movements. Since the Indignados, and other contemporary protest movements, place large emphasis on emotions and affect, the failure to engage in-depth with emotions and affect as important for political subjectivity posits several hindrances for analyses of the Indignados. The fact that we can include affect and emotions as relevant components of collective action is a necessary turn in social movement theory.

However, even though the contributions made by Gould, Emirbayer and Goldberg, as well as affect theoriests such as Massumi, are significant, a few questions remain to be answered. First of all, we can question the characteristics of the affective state. Gould and Massumi make some references (Gould 2009: 27; Massumi 1995: 96) to how affect as such is a non-intelligible and non-articulate state, which is malleable and can transform into an emotion. However, they do not go into depth as to why this is the case, or how we can understand this with regards to identity. If an individual is experiencing an affective state, why is it that he or she can or cannot articulate this affect? Why is affect disjointed from meaning? Second, it is unclear exactly how this potentiality, the malleability of affect, can transfer into a political claim or cause. Why can only emotions (as the channelled and cognitive version of affect) be political? For Gould *et al.* the mere fact that an emotion can be held collectively seems to suffice in order to make it social, however, they do not elaborate on how affect can function as a political factor. In addition, even though emotions as such are viewed as constructed in Gould's theory, social movements remain quite static. The movement enters the scene as a grey mass of collective action taking advantage of the individual's affective state. Even though the movement is instituted by an emotion, this emotion, often belonging to an emotional habitus, does not seem to change.

Corporeal affect?

One of the most severe problems with the affective turn is the seeming embrace of dichotomies initially rejected, based on the Cartesian *ego cogito*. In both Gould's and Emirbayer and Goldberg's accounts, affect is seen as something exclusively corporeal: 'I use the term affect to indicate non-conscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body' (Gould 2010: 26). Whilst this is one definition of affect, it runs the risk of re-articulating those very divisions which they are trying to question. The affective turn is trying to deconstruct the very sharp line between emotions and reason, arguing that this division has produced a power relation in favour of the rational. However, the exclusive focus on corporeal sensations seems to pair the affective with the corporeal and the linguistic with the rational and cognitive. This is a division which then serves to re-articulate a divide within social and political theory which could be equally damaging to the understanding of social and political action. Several questions arise out of this: Is

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language only rational, or does it contain any affective elements? Is language contained to the realms of cognition and affect to the corporeal?

These problems could be said to be part of a larger set of questions on how affect is introduced into social movement theory. Whilst many of the advocates of the affective turn claim that they are intending to move beyond dichotomies, recent scholarship has pointed to that, in fact, they might be perpetuating extant dualisms. For instance, Leys argues that Massumi and Connolly, along with many other thinkers of the affective turn, operate 'at once with a highly intellectualist or rationalist concept of meaning and an unexamined assumption that everything that is not "meaning" in this limited sense belongs to the body' (Leys 2011: 458). In this sense, the affective turn, instead of questioning the dualism between mind and body, affect and cognition, is merely reversing the priorities, privileging the body over the mind.

Similarly, Glynos has questioned how the new turn to matter is actually a turn to only one type of matter, as the limits of discourse, the extra-discursive. He argues that even though there are points to be made about new materialism, there is a strong tendency to 'dichotomise matter and meaning' (2012: 175). However, says Glynos, this dichotomy might not be as sharp as one might think, and he introduces the concept of liminality, indicating those processes which 'are impossible to identify as definitively extra-discursive or not, or impossible to disentangle, or simply spatially and temporally complex' (ibid. 180). Glynos thus wants to question discourse seen as the limits of matter, or vice versa.

In addition, Zerilli has in her recent writings heavily questioned the clear partition between affect and signification/meaning. In her understanding, whilst she identifies similar patterns of un-intentionality in affect theory as Leys, there is no reason to why affect should naturally be seen as lacking meaning or being unable to produce meaning. This misinterpretation of affect, she says, is because:

> Affect is presented as a distinct layer of experience that is both prior to and beneath intentional consciousness; it gets figured as a stratum of practical attunement that is autonomous of propositional intentionality. It is treated as a level of experience that is already there, independently of language and symbolisation. (Zerilli 2013: 514)

As such, Zerilli is highly questioning the seemingly strong division in affect theory between conceptuality and affectivity. According to affect theories, affect should not be appropriated by concepts, since it would then become colonised by language and representation.

This is a problematic stance. As highlighted in the paragraphs above, the divisions between mind and body, so heavily emphasised in the Cartesian *ego cogito*, are even permeating theory which seeks to abolish this very distinction. In this sense, social movement theory, from the early sociological works to contemporary writings, is, in one way or another, sedimenting these structures. Indeed, the focus has shifted over time on what the most important components of social movements are, but the field has never managed to go beyond the Cartesian understanding of the individual.

Indeed, when looking at the Indignados this tension becomes even more pronounced and also problematic. The Indignados, which seem to fit the later perspectives of a social movement, which seem to turn to affective responses to politics, become denied of political subjectivity in affect theory. If affect is – as is has been described above – an inarticulate and in-articulable sensation, how can it also be political? How can we conceive of political subjectivity which has its roots (and expressions) in affect? In affect theory, affect is thought of as devoid of meaning, but this also leads to an infantilisation of the protest movement. Is an affective protest movement also devoid of meaning, and is meaning only possible with a rationalisation of the movement aims and claims? Social movement theory, and especially within the affective turn, is thus – by its claim to strong dichotomies – eclipsing political articulation for any non-cognitive collective action. These questions will resurface in Chapter Four, where I will further discuss the possibilities of a linguistic affect, and why this is important when studying the Indignados.

The politics of affect and the democratic subject

In this chapter, the question was asked: Do emotions play a role in the construction of political subjectivity, and, if so, what kind of role is that? The first part of the question is not difficult. There is (nowadays) almost a consensus in present theory that emotions are highly important and that they do shape political actions. The second part, however, is up for debate. Given the disparity of theory with regards to emotion, one could take many

different standpoints, however, almost all of them subscribe to a Cartesian division between emotion and reason.

Throughout the chapter, there have also been varying ideas on the definitions of emotion and affect. For some, they seem almost identical, and until the affective turn the terms are used interchangeably. However, with the arrival of the affective turn, there was, as mentioned above, a strong will to distinguish affect from emotions, saying that the latter is overly cognitivised. I have argued in this chapter that this distinction might in fact perpetuate the divisions between emotion and reason, between affect and cognition. In this sense – albeit being sympathetic to the works within the affective turn – this thesis will not side with any of the perspectives given in this chapter. Rather, it will develop a different idea of affect and emotion, based on psychoanalytical insights,[24] which will be further elaborated in Chapter Four, below. By introducing this additional perspective, this thesis allows for a combination and juxtaposition between affect and meaning, which will serve as the main framework in the analysis of the Indignados: an emotional and affective protest movement. Here, it is important to point out that the remainder of the thesis will make use of both terms, emotion *and* affect, when referring to the practices and repertoires within the Indignados. As has been noted above, this thesis does not agree with a strong division between the two, since this reinforces an idea of affect as solely corporeal and of emotions as solely cognitive. Contrarily, this thesis seeks to problematise this division and will therefore make use of both concepts.

Importantly, one of the aims of this thesis is to understand how affect and emotion function in the creation of political subjectivity and collectivity. For social movement theories of affect, affect is indeed a space for power exertion, but there is no further explanation as to exactly how it becomes political. Even though emotions and affect have been brought back into focus, there is, as of yet, no comprehensive take on how this affects political life. Some of the problem lies in the failure to engage in-depth with the politics of emotional collectivity, and another, in the above-mentioned division between affect and meaning. Even though Gould admits that 'political attachments sometimes, perhaps frequently, derive from visceral and inchoate fears, resentments, anxieties, desires, aspirations, senses

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[24] Both Leys and Glynos argue that psychoanalysis offers a framework in which affect and meaning are joined together, which is one of the reasons this perspective will be adopted in this thesis. Further reasons will be given in Chapter Four.

of belonging or non-belonging, that an individual (or an ideal, or an organisation) somehow stirs up and addresses' (Gould 2010: 29), this merely puts affect on the map, but it does not inquire any further to the mechanisms in which affect creates political subjectivity.

This is a pressing question when returning to the topic of the Indignados. How can we conceive of a movement which defies representation and hierarchical structures and which does not have a clear political agenda? How can we say that there is one movement, when the very nature of the movement is such that it renounces many of the present ideas of identity and belonging? Affect and emotions seem to play important roles here, but the framework offered by affect theory and social movement theories of emotions do not provide sufficient guidance as to how political subjectivity is created, aggregated, and perhaps compromised. As such, theories of emotions and affect need to be conceived of as not only social theory, but also political theory. How can the Indignados be conceived as political subjects?

As described in the Chapter One, above, the democratic system with elections and representatives is becoming increasingly challenged and questioned. The political legitimacy previously derived from electoral representation now seems insufficient. As a reaction, we have seen the rise of the Indignados, as well as other movements. However, these are not considered traditional political subjects. As such, this thesis is looking for not only a deeper engagement with a theory of affect and emotion, but also for a deeper engagement with democratic theory. Who can be regarded as a political subject, and why? What are the conditions for having a voice in the political sphere, and what characterises that very sphere? In order to deal with these questions, the next chapter will turn to the basics of democratic theory, to understand how political subjects are shaped and constructed.

3. Sovereignty in crisis? Dead ends and ways forward for the democratic subject

As noted in Chapter One, above, when looking at the Indignados we can make two relatively simple observations. First, the movement has a *dispersed character*. The protests do have one distinctive feature: they encompass a wide variety of backgrounds and problems; the critiques can range from dissatisfaction with employment rates, with social welfare systems, or with the lack of concern for green issues. As such, the Indignados have moved away from the seeming monolithic nature of movements. In addition, there is great variety in the suggested treatments for the disease. Some suggest a revolution and a complete deconstruction of the market economy, whilst others advocate a softer approach using existing channels of communication. Nonetheless, there is a significant number of different groups who feel they are not being heard. The second observation regards the *emotional character* of the Indignados, which was also the focus of Chapter Two, above. This chapter highlighted how emotions and affect have been conceptualised within social movement theory. It sketched the development of how emotions have become more important when considering the construction of political identities, and also how social movement theory has oscillated between considering emotions as useful or useless for social research. The chapter concluded that with the arrival of the emotional and affective turn within social movement theory, this has enabled an increased focus on movements such as the Indignados.

However, the chapter also concluded that social movement theories become constrained in their analyses given the sustained dichotomy between emotion and affect, on the one hand, and reason, on the other. Even theories within the most recent affective turn subscribe to an idea of affect which clearly separates it from meaning-making and signification. In addition, the chapter concluded that social movement theory does not provide a sufficient framework for analysing movements such as the Indignados as political subjects. The creation of emotional and affective identities and their importance for movement formation is an acknowledged research route, but how this affects political subjectivity remains under-theorised. As mentioned in Chapter One, this thesis engages with the question of who is considered a political subject and what constitutes the democratic sovereign. Who

can be listened to and what counts as political participation, and what does not? Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to focus on the social movement as the popular sovereign and how it is accorded political subjectivity. How can we make sense of an emotional protest movement as the democratic sovereign? In order to do so, this chapter turns to democratic theory.

One could spend many pages explaining the history of democratic theory, which would be an exciting, yet a quixotic, endeavour. However, this chapter will take its point of departure within deliberative democracy. Deliberative democracy has, since the works of Habermas, become one of the most well-known and applied theories of democracy (Dryzek 2000). It has influenced many areas of political science, such as public policy, international relations, as well as public law,[25] and has moved from being a 'theoretical statement into a working theory' (Chambers 2003: 307). As such, deliberative democracy occupies a central place in democratic theory. In addition, deliberation with its focus on communication rather than exclusively aggregative, electoral forms of democracy is potentially something valuable for understanding the Indignados.[26] As described above, the representative system is insufficient to the protesters, and this thesis therefore engages with democratic theory which goes beyond the electoral system, as deliberative democracy does.

As such, the chapter will begin by considering the Habermas' democratic theory. The bottom line of his work concerns how flaws in communication and lack of deliberation harm the democratic process. His theory of communicative action therefore engages with what can be done in order to create political communication capable of producing democratically legitimate decisions and one, sovereign, voice. One of the crucial tenets of Habermas' theory is the assumption of the rational individual and her capability of rational deliberation, in order to produce what Habermas calls 'discursive validity claims'

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[25] For instance, in international relations, deliberative democracy has been prominent in the works of Dryzek (2000), Held (1995), Archibugi (2000) and Benhabib (2002), which all discuss challenges to the nation state and how this can be conceptualised within a deliberative democratic framework. In policy studies, we can mention Fishkin (1995), Gutmann and Thompson (1996), as well as Gastil (2000). For an overview of the rippling effects of deliberative democracy, see Chambers (2003).

[26] Deliberative democracy departs from aggregative democracy in that it does not focus only on electoral participation, but on the communicative process which should ideally precede decision-making. Legitimate decisions, in other words, cannot be made only by reference to the majority vote, but should include the possibility of deliberation. Naturally, aggregation can also be preceded by discussion (as would be argued by neo-Schumpeterians such as Downs (1957)), but the difference is that deliberative democracy claims that this discussion is based on rational grounds, but that it is still not only based on self-interested bargaining, but on the creation of a common good (Elster 1999: 12; Bohman and Rehg 1999: xiii).

(Habermas 1973: 8). As such, in Habermas' view, and which has also in many ways come to represent the field of deliberative democracy at large, rationality lies at the core of the democratic process.

However, this theory has attracted elaborate critique, which accuses deliberation and communicative action of leading to a potentially exclusionary practice, as will be described in the second part of the chapter. By attributing such large importance to rationality, deliberation ultimately becomes a realm for the elites, or, in the language of the ancient Greeks: the *aristoï*. Pointing to the fact that there is still inequality in access to the public sphere, the critiques identify the current state of deliberation rather as a foe than a friend of democracy. However, this critique of deliberative democracy does not question the aims of deliberation: a consensus among the people based on rational processes. Even though the implementation of deliberation is to fault, the aims of the project are still seen to be sound.

In opposition to this, the third section of the chapter goes beyond the thought that the problem is a lack of deliberation on equal terms, to question the characteristics of democracy itself. This perspective, in this chapter represented by theorists of radical democracy, Jacques Rancière and Chantal Mouffe, brings up the question of whether the problem really lies in deliberation, and not, in fact, in the very quest for democracy. In addition, this section argues that in deliberative democratic theory there is a strong distinction between voice and noise, which runs in parallel to the dichotomy between reason and emotion. As such, radical democratic theories argue that contemporary democracies are built around an idea which further sediments rationality as superior to emotion, and which therefore is intrinsically exclusionary. They also question the possibility of a popular sovereign aiming for consensus, since this precludes the possibility for disagreement, and therefore for any questioning of the dominant narratives.

The fourth section of this chapter is sympathetic to the radical democratic approaches, and agrees that rationality has become conflated with democracy in a manner which negates political subjectivity for those groups or actors who express themselves differently. For example, the emotional character of the Indignados is thought of as a voice less valid in the political game, and there is a sense of exclusion perceived among the protesters (as noted above). However, the critique of consensus democracy as argued by Rancière and, to some extent, Mouffe, does not offer a theoretical framework which sufficiently engages with

affect and emotions as constitutive of popular sovereigns. Therefore, this chapter concludes with a turn to theory which does allow for an affective take on political subjectivity.

Political subjectivity and rationality

Contemporary democratic theory revolves around the notion that in the absence of a divine power,[27] we need something to fill the empty spot; this could be filled with justice, with utility, or with rationality, as will be described in this section. Habermas has created a proceduralist version of democracy, where legitimacy emanates from a deliberative procedure taking place between reasonable citizens, who are considered the main political subjects. What in the 1970s was referred to as social or economic crises, should, according to Habermas, rather be thought of as legitimation crises. Drawing on Luhmann's systems theory,[28] Habermas argues that what causes a crisis in a system is not an accidental change, but rather a systemic error, built up over time (Habermas 1973: 2). He also admits that it is not obvious what the difference is between the structural degeneration of an institutional model and a learning process improving its performance. Not all changes lead to crises, but some do:

> Thus, only when members of a society experience structural alterations as
> critical for continued existence and feel their social identity threatened can
> we speak of crisis. Disturbances of system integration endanger continued
> existence only to the extent that social integration is at stake, that is, when

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[27] Many political theories prior to theories of the enlightenment, though not all, had been heavily dependent on the idea of a God-given power, and that the emperor or king was a direct voice for the doings of the deity. Authority and exertion of power became legitimate because the state apparatus and the use of force were all directly connected to the will of God, and this sufficed as a justification. In fact, legitimacy was not really an issue in the first place, since one could hardly question the divine purpose of the emperor or king (Connolly 1984:3). However, with the arrival of the enlightenment, philosophers started questioning the role of a god in human interactions and public affairs; instead, the man-made condition emerged, based on a political and social situation not as given by God, but as made by Man. This led to an emergence of a human agency, a perception and cognition-based rationality, which entirely transformed the construction of public affairs. The human being, Man, became the groundwork for justification of authority (Connolly 1984:4).

[28] Habermas argues along the lines of Luhmann that today's society is defined by the concept of communication. However, he argues against Luhmann in that there is a difference between communicative and functionalistic reason, which enables critique of said society, and, potentially, change. As such, Habermas' conception of society is much less self-regulating than Luhmann's system. For more information on the influence of Luhmann's systems theory on Habermas' theory of communicative action, see Brunkhorst (2004: 296) and Hanssen (2004: 286). See also Habermas and Luhmann (1971) and Luhmann (1965).

the consensual foundations of normative structures are so much impaired

that the society becomes anomic. (Habermas 1973: 3)

As such, when the members of a society can no longer recognise themselves as the foundational moment of democracy, their sense of identity is lost or compromised, which can lead to unrest.

We, the people: Deliberation and the democratic sovereign

To further understand the relevance of this for democratic theory and the creation of a sovereign, it is necessary to consider Habermas' idea of how reason works. It all starts with how we encounter statements from other individuals, i.e. how discourse[29] is formed. Habermas develops Weber's thoughts on legitimacy,[30] but questions why Weber has not inquired into the actual truth of the statements that society rests upon. Weber states that there is a 'rationally irresolvable pluralism of competing value systems and beliefs' (Weber in Habermas 1973: 100). However, says Habermas, if we do not think that legitimacy can be 'true', society will be based on manipulation, mysticism and ideology, which for him is an undesirable outcome. Instead, Habermas proposes a system where truth is not to be created on mystical grounds, but through rational persuasion (Connolly 1984: 12). In other words, discourse should provide a system for validating and invalidating truth claims. Because of our ability to check whether something is valid or not, we will also pay our allegiance only to those statements deemed valid:

How would members of a social system, at a given stage in the development of productive forces, have collectively and bindingly interpreted their needs (and which norms would they have accepted as justified) if they could and would have decided on the organization of social intercourse through discursive will-formation, with adequate knowledge of the limiting conditions and functional imperatives of the society? (Habermas 1973: 100)

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[29] It is slightly problematic to use the word discourse here since this word will come up again in an entirely different setting later on. Habermas' theory is often referred to as discourse ethics, but for clarifying reasons it will from hereon be called communicative ethics.

[30] The institutional arrangement of a capitalist society was not criticised by Weber, and Habermas here part ways with Weber's theory. For institutions to be effective, they might have to develop procedures which are not considered legitimate by the people. Thus, the institutions are in a dilemma; they cannot function without the new procedures, but they cannot be legitimate with them implemented. See Beetham (1974), Horowitz and Maley (1994), Weber (1962), as well as Weber (1978), for a more in-depth explanation.

In this question, Habermas implicitly argues that rational persuasion is superior to mystical or ideological conviction; mysticism might prove to be harmful since it covers up injustices. Habermas also identifies an increased need for legitimacy. As the state is getting more involved in the citizens' lives, its power takes on new forms, which also have to be legitimised. Areas previously pertinent to the private sphere, such as education and income distribution, get politicised and are thus in need of legitimisation (Connolly 1984: 13). A legitimacy crisis occurs when a government fails to legitimise its actions to the citizens who are holding the governing power to a 'rational standard' of legitimacy. In other words, Habermas is arguing for increased popular involvement in politics, but this involvement has to be contingent upon rationality.

Further to this, Habermas repeatedly states that his theory is more descriptive than it is normative, although it does argue that some decisions are just, but only based on a procedural standard (Chambers 1995: 233; Bohman and Rehg 1999; Rush 2004). It is procedural, because it is trying to grasp *how* we could reach consensus, rather than saying that consensus should consist of a certain value system. Ultimately, Habermas' theory is centred on communication.[31] Habermas renders an ideal communicative situation as a possible means to be convinced by reason, and thus fully understanding your opponent, without potentially sharing his grounding values. This signifies a transformation from a monological universalisation, as introduced by the enlightenment theorists, to a dialogical universalisation. If we want to find a maxim that is universally valid, that is, agreeable to all, we do not only inquire as to if it is logically consistent, but if everyone else would agree to be regulated by this maxim (Chambers 1995: 233). This makes the theory of communicative action a very appealing method for unifying opinions and groups who might previously have been in conflict due to their different positions. As such, Habermas argues that by focussing more on the methods than the content, communicative action enables consensus between radically different views, and can therefore create a popular

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[31] At the centre of Habermas' democratic theory lies communication, a process which is concerned with power, and which can function to control factors external or internal to society. A legitimacy crisis, or a crisis of democracy, is often a failure of steering practices, in other words, a failure to include external and internal factors into societal norms. Social systems and their environment interact exclusively through production (appropriation of outer nature), and socialisation (appropriation of inner nature). Examples of external factors can be natural resources, where society extracts them and gives them value which they previously lacked. Internal control makes the members of society able to act within them, to speak, listen and understand each other (Habermas 1973: 9). At the core of controlling both internal and external factors lies *knowledge*, which materialises through *utterances that admit of truth*, and *norms that have need of justification*, and these two form one of Habermas' most important concepts, *discursive validity claims* (Habermas 1973: 8).

sovereign which is more inclusive, but at the same time unified. This would make for a more legitimate democratic situation, since decisions are grounded in the populace and in deliberation among citizens.

One must note, however, that this is based on a quite specific idea of rationality, knowledge, argumentation and truth. One of the main assumptions is that every individual is capable of being reasonable and listening to reasonable arguments. [32] Habermas developed this thought and made it one of the main pillars of democracy. However, he also paired it with an idea of the public sphere, of popular participation, which made this previously not particularly democratic notion, much more inclusive. Another important difference to other theories is that consent for Habermas is not purely acquiescence, but a product of a rational deliberative process. Legitimacy for public institutions is thus only achieved if citizens deem the institution's actions justified after having deliberated on this with each other (Chambers 1995: 236). Habermas has set out quite precise conditions for how deliberation should ideally function, and how consensus can be reached, as developed in his seminal work *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984). The main reason that we do not reach consensus – which makes the popular sovereign weak – is distorted communication (Held 1990: 256). If individuals are believed to be reasonable, and if we can recognise them as such, then agreement and consensus on how the world should look should be attainable, and the pathologies, which impede emancipation for the people, should be diminished. Habermas calls this 'an ideal speech act' (Held 1990: 256), which forms a crucial part of the theory that can help us recognise distorted communication, which impedes 'justice, truth and freedom' (ibid.). But this raises several questions: what does it mean to be reasonable, what is a valid argument, and what is consensus?

The foundation of rationality lies in how we acquire and use knowledge (Habermas 1984: 8). For consensus to be reached, this has to be done in a rational manner. Again, it is very important to remember that rationality is not what we know, but rather how we acquire that knowledge. Rationality is a tool, a method, and not a specific series of knowledge claims. According to Habermas, we are rational when we choose to believe in knowledge presented to us in a rational way. This does not mean that we have to hold the statement in

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[32] Originally a Kantian notion: 'There must be a spirit of freedom, for in all matters concerning universal human rights, each individual requires to be convinced by reason that the coercion which prevails is lawful, and otherwise he would be in contradiction with himself' (Kant 1999:85).

question to be true, but we can still recognise it as a rational statement (Habermas 1984: 9). This adds another dimension to the matter, namely the effectiveness of the statement. If we can evaluate a statement's effectiveness and validity, then it is also rational:

> An expression satisfies the precondition for rationality if and insofar as it embodies fallible knowledge and therewith has a relation to the objective world (that is, a relation to the facts and is open to objective judgment). (Habermas 1984: 9)

A rational statement is thus something that can be subject to criticism and open evaluation; rational statements have to be observed in the same way by different subjects, they have to have a *transsubjective validity claim* (Habermas 1984: 9). If we have two actors, A and B, and if we assume that they have an identical storage of knowledge *p,* A and B can then use *p* differently (Habermas 1984: 10). A can, in communicating with others, assert *p*, whereas B can use *p* to reach a goal that he desires. They are both rational in their enterprises. If they are able to convince others of their claim and thereby reach an understanding among the participants about the statement in question (Habermas 1984: 11), then they can be called rational. A valid expression is shared by a communicative community, where all have agreed on the validity of the statement (Habermas 1984: 13).

However, there are also other forms of communication that can be subject to rationality; we can use rationality also for normative purposes. A statement can include a truth claim, but it can also include a normative claim. If a person behaves in a certain way, we can say that he or she is rational if he can justify his behaviour from a normative point of view. If I believe in a specific norm, I should also act accordingly (Habermas 1984: 15). But can these statements really be subject to criticism, and can they be recognised as valid on the same grounds as a non-normative statement? Here, Habermas does not speak about truth claims related to reality, but rather about norms based on experience (Habermas 1984: 16). He says that normative claims can also be subject to criticism, but this occurs within a cultural community. There are, in communicative and cultural communities, normative standards with which you can compare the normative claim. If we refer to standards that are specific or local to ourselves, then we cannot expect to gain understanding from our fellow members of the cultural community (Habermas 1984: 17). And if we cannot gain understanding of our claim, then we are not rational.

Hence, the goal of communicative action is to create a mutual understanding to the effect of achieving, sustaining and renewing consensus. Claims are considered reasonable if a large community understands them, and people are rational if they can 'provide reasons for their expressions' (Habermas 1984: 17). Assuming this, the next question is about how we can create these cultural and communicative communities, and therefore identities. Habermas attaches much importance to argumentation, since, in an argument, we try to join a statement with a validity claim and present it to our audience. When we accept the validity claim of an expression, we simultaneously refute validity claims of other statements, which can be seen as a learning process. As such, the goal of communicative action is not to get the opponent to behave in a certain way, but to reach true understanding. Resorting to other means of conviction, such as bribes or threats, is impossible and undesired. The key to rational understanding is the force of the better argument. Since all individuals can act rationally, they can also identify a better argument when they see it. Then, what unites consensus theories is a belief in a possibility for will formation which is grounded on rational individuals. The ability of an individual to make rational, informed decisions is central to the arguments. Not only is the theory based on rational thinking, but on universal rationality. This means that no matter the background of the individuals, there is theoretically a possibility of consensus because of the capacity of rational argumentation of all individuals, and therefore the possibility of a creation of a unified democratic sovereign, a collective will.[33]

After Habermas: Deliberation 2.0

Does the deliberative framework pose any problem when wanting to explain the current crisis situation in Spain? When looking at the current crisis, we can see that the diagnosis as presented by Habermas holds some value. *Prima facie*, it is indeed quite helpful to regard this social and economic crisis as an expression of a crisis of legitimacy and democracy. However, when it comes to explaining why democracy has failed, and to suggesting possible remedies, deliberative democracy is still limited in its explanatory

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[33] It should be noted that Habermas has in his later works recognised the difficulties with having rational consensus as the goal of communication. As pointed out by Thomassen, the achievement of rational consensus would also mean the end to communication; the possibility of communication is also the impossibility of communication (Thomassen 2008: 28). Habermas has also shifted the focus from 'the *aim* to the *process* of discourse' (ibid. 33). However, it is important to note that the centrality and axiomatic nature of rationality and reason for deliberation has not diminished, which is the central focus of this chapter.

power, as will be explained below. However, it is important to point out that Habermas is not the final destination of deliberative democracy. Since his founding works, the theory has developed and several theorists (as described below) argue that deliberation democracy needs to be updated to also account for current developments. These thinkers posit two main critiques against Habermas in order to rethink deliberation: The question of exclusion and the primacy of rationality. As such, these critiques reformulate the possibilities for creating a unified democratic sovereign upon the basis of deliberation.

Deliberation as an exclusionary practice

In her seminal article, 'Against Deliberation', Sanders bring up several problems with deliberation. She argues that, in practice, the effects of deliberation become rather close to the effects of conservatism, and therefore draws the conclusion that rather than working in favour of democracy, deliberation can actually function counterproductively (Sanders 1997: 349). The main thrust for deliberation – and one of the reasons why it has such high democratic appeal – is the inclusion of ordinary citizens in the decision-making practices, which were previously left to the elites. As such, deliberation broadens participation and therefore the democratic leverage and legitimacy (Manin 1987: 354). In addition to increasing autonomy for the common citizen, deliberation is also priding itself on creating common identities; in a process of deliberation we are able to form common ground and thus create interests (a term so crucial for decision-making). The common voice, the stronghold of a powerful popular sovereign is at stake here: without it there is no hope for the people (Wolin 1981: 10; Cohen and Rogers 1983: 16). This lack of power for the people is what deliberation is trying to amend. Sanders argues that 'deliberation still provides no solution for, and possibly exacerbates, the hardest problem for democrats' (Sanders 1997: 351). What she is referring to here is the persisting and disturbing fact that not all people have equal access to the public sphere and therefore to deliberative practices. This issue of disenfranchisement is not unknown to theories of deliberative democracy. In fact, much effort has been spent reemphasising the vital importance of the participation of *all* parties (Manin 1987: 352). Indeed, Rogers and Cohen go as far as to advocate the absence of material deprivation in order to create truly inclusive deliberation (Cohen and Rogers 1983: 157). However, Sanders argues that this is insufficient and does not address the more profound and inherent forms of exclusion which deliberation fails to overcome: prejudice and privilege.

In her argument, Sanders makes the connection between a classical conservative rhetoric and the fundaments of deliberation. Referring back to Schumpeter, Le Bon (as discussed in Chapter Two, above), as well as Burke,[34] she reminds us of how they considered the masses as lowly animals with lacking control of their passions, and consequently inferior beings inept for political affairs. These views also formed the backbone of much of 20th century American political science (Held 1987). However, the same field has later on embraced deliberation, despite its seeming opposite views. Deliberation has, in a sense, offered to include the masses meeting the conditions set by conservatism: 'reasonable, foresighted, steady, and oriented to a common, not sectarian, problem' (Sanders 1997: 356), or, as argued by Lindblom: 'most people want policy making generally to be democratic. But they also want it to be intelligent' (1980: 6).

The trouble with this perspective is the exclusionary practice which follows the (assumed) unity of the popular sovereign, or at least the feasibility of such unity. When deliberation takes place, aiming to include all individuals in a society, deliberative democrats assume that the creation of a common voice is possible. However, as Sanders argues, the focus on rationality can produce unintended exclusionary consequences (Sanders 1997: 360), since it favours an environment in which there is a correct way of speaking. This could be said to tie in with some elements of conservative and aristocratic ideas of mass politics, even though Habermas has been one of the major critics of democracy being equated with electoral politics and aggregation. This is not to say that there is no room for difference, or that individual interests are only cued in deliberation (an issue which will be discussed further below). Rather, deliberative democrats are often acutely aware of the necessity of including different interests, and that there should be no oppressive practices in the process (Mansbridge 1992: 7; Pitkin 1981). Then again, deliberation is more prone to advocate altruism and promote the 'we' over the 'I', the universal over the particular.

Sanders argues that, in fact, deliberative democracy promotes an undemocratic product. In her studies on jury participation in the United States, she finds that even though all jurors technically have equal access to the discussion, some talk more than others. Interestingly, the chairs of the juries are almost always white males, even though these individuals had no more qualifications than the rest of the jurors (Sanders 1997: 364). Sanders therefore

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[34] Burke said that 'the multitude, for the moment, is foolish, when they act without deliberation' (as quoted in Pitkin 1967: 181).

draws the conclusion that deliberation and the creation of a unified sovereign is taking place at the expense of equal access to deliberation: 'The invitation to deliberate has strings attached. Deliberation is a request for a certain kind of talk: rational, contained, and oriented to a shared problem' (Sanders 1997: 370). In this sense, the echoes of conservatism are clear, even though the intentions are radically different. Theorists of deliberation most certainly want to promote equal access to the public sphere. However, the consequences of deliberation are similar to those present in an aristocratic society: exclusionary privileges and prejudice against difference. One could say that by constantly promoting a rational, unselfish way of decision-making, one constantly excludes passionate speech for a particular interest.

Similar thoughts have been presented by Young, who, in her work on deliberative democracy, has constantly tried to introduce difference as an asset for deliberation, and thus move away from the universalist notion of a common goal. Coming from the turn to a politics of identity and difference (which is similar to the turn to new social movements as described in Chapter Two), Young argues that deliberative theory must take a position which includes its practical implications. Whereas some see the turn to difference as detrimental for deliberation, since it obliterates a common goal and a common identity (Gitlin 1995, Elshtain 1995), Young seeks to reverse the notion that difference necessarily means conflict. In short, Young advocates a differentiation between the politics of identity and the politics of identification. In her view, people are not adhering to a social group because they inhibit any inherent qualities which make them part of the group, but because they share the group's overall perspective (Young 1996: 385). For Young, the key word is inclusion, and by realising that we are all different, we can also draw on our different experiences to increase inclusivity in the deliberative process. However, Young also recognises that there might be voices who claim that inclusivity is impossible to reach. She identifies that deliberative democracy has little to say about activism, and that the dialogue between deliberative democrats and activists is sparse (Young 2001: 675), something she wishes would be different.[35] Young realises that there might be claims from activists against decision-making institutions which are valid, such as a lack of formal (and informal) inclusion. She mentions the Seattle protests – against the ministerial conference of the

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[35] Here, Young touches upon one of the themes of this thesis, namely the lack of interaction between social movement theory and democratic theory, which could be seen as damaging to both fields.

World Trade Organisation in 1999 – where some activists were indeed invited to partake in the proceedings, but on which they had effectively no influence. Like Sanders, she also sees how the less privileged are disenfranchised in democratic deliberation (Young 2001: 681). Furthermore, Young pins down how deliberation falls short of describing these forms of exclusion:

> The theory and practice of deliberative democracy have no tools for raising the possibility that deliberations might be closed and distorted in this way. It lacks a theory of, shall we call it, ideology, as well as an account of the genealogy of discourses and their manner of helping to constitute the way individuals see themselves and their social world. For most deliberative democrats, discourse seems to be more 'innocent'. (Young 2001: 686)

Furthermore, Young also identifies that communication could be defined more broadly than in Habermas' version. She raises the point that artistic expression, street art, and cartoons, should all be part of the communicative process. In sum, the critics argue that for Habermas' theory to work there would have to exist a popular voice which could rationally argue their case to the governing power, to deliberate with each other and their opponents in a rational way, and which could unite around one cause. Both Sanders and Young have argued that not only is this quite far from current circumstances, but it produces exclusionary barriers for some forms of communication.

If we return to the Indignados, we can easily determine that the standards of deliberation as set by Habermas are quite distant (something which Habermas also recognises). Political life can contain more and qualitatively different actors than merely the rational, goal-directed sovereign he claims (or wishes) to see in the deliberative process. Instead, we are in contemporary Spain looking at a situation where the people and their voices are highly fragmented and emotional/affective, where there is no specific common agenda for the whole protest movement,[36] but where there exists a legitimacy crisis, which cannot be ignored. However, within the framework of deliberative democracy, there is little possibility to recognise this as a valid form of political protest; the movements become

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[36] It is important to reiterate here that this thesis is concerned with the movement of the Indignados, and not with the party *Podemos*. Even though Podemos is in many ways a product of the Indignados movement, there is not a one-to-one correlation between the two (Rojas 2014). This will be further explained in the concluding Chapter Seven.

excluded from mainstream politics due to their lack of rational claims and lack of unification.

The critique posited by Sanders and Young could at first sight seem to amend these problems. They are pointing to several, accurate, observations about deliberation, which could explain the Indignados' lack of influence. Indeed, they are denied access to the deliberative process of the establishment in Spain (as of 2015). Many are claiming that the political decisions made in Spain are far detached from the People, and hence there is a crisis of democracy. The movement is also employing protest methods which are not confined to merely stating their claims; just as Young points out, there is a wide array of forms of communication and deliberative democracy many times fails to include these in the decision-making process.

This poses more general questions of how democratically legitimate decisions can be achieved and how we conceive of the popular sovereign. As noted in the introduction of this chapter, we can consider three approaches to this problem. Firstly, one could state – like Habermas – that deliberation offers the potentiality of creating rational consensus. Habermas sets up a number of criteria of how communication should work for decisions to be sound, and how the popular sovereign is comprised of rational individuals who work towards a common goal, albeit with different backgrounds (even if this is largely seen as an ideal situation and Habermas recognises that there are several impediments to this ideal (Thomassen 2008: 32)). The next perspective, as seen in the second part of this chapter, is Sanders' and Young's, who argue that the problem with democracy and the crisis of the sovereign is the nature of current forms of deliberation. It poses a challenge to an account of deliberation rooted in the inherently exclusionary practices of Habermas' universalising account of rational deliberation, whether intended or not. As Sanders points out, deliberation might in fact harm democracy rather than aid it.

There is, however, a third way of looking at this problem, which goes beyond deliberation, and which constitutes the third part of this chapter. One could argue that the issue lies not in the inadequacies of deliberation itself, but in the desirability of deliberation. What Sanders and Young are not questioning are the aims and goals of contemporary deliberative democracy. They do not doubt that inclusive deliberation and decision-making is possible (or desirable), we have only yet to find the solution to the problem (Thomassen

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2008: 24). What is interesting here, are the omissions made in the very formulation of the problem. Deliberation is seen as insufficient, but the underpinnings of its ambitions are just and correct. They argue that deliberation produces exclusion and does not unify the people. What they do not question, are the consequences of wanting to unify the people, and finding a universal mode of making just and democratic decisions. These questions will be the focus for the remainder of the chapter, which asks: Is the problem perhaps not the concept of deliberation, but the concept of democracy itself? How are we supposed to make sense of the Indignados? Can we perceive of them as valid political voices? To broaden our outlook, the next section looks at theories different from rational, deliberative forms of democracy, and instead focuses on disagreement, contention and dissensus. However, it is important to note that both theories of consensus and dissensus emanate from an observation that aggregation and electoral politics are insufficient, but the conclusions are quite divergent.

Bringing disagreement back in

The theories described in this chapter so far reflect one take on democratic sovereignty, with a focus on consensus, rationality and agreement, but this perspective encounters several difficulties when trying to explain the Indignados. However, there is another strand of thought which envisions democracy being based on dissensus, disagreement and contention. These theories question the very basic assumptions made by deliberative democracy: the possibility and desirability of a unified democratic sovereign. Below, drawing on the works of Rancière and Mouffe, three lines of critique of deliberative democracy will be presented. Their common denominator is a focus on disagreement. However, it is important to note that disagreement is not a hurdle that is to be overcome, as Habermas would describe it (Norval 2007b: 42); consensus is not necessarily the goal. Instead of arguing that communication can create consensus – even though the talking parties come from very different backgrounds – theories of dissensus claim that disagreement is the very constitutive character of how politics works, and to say that we should try to eliminate it is to eliminate any possibility for 'the political' (Bowman and Stamp 2011). Rather, the notion of disagreement is a political logic of its own, and is constitutive of the political system, and therefore of democracy. As such, disagreement

should not be seen as a return to difference or pure subjectivity (as argued by Young), but a questioning of the very possibility of commonality (ibid.).[37]

The first issue engages with the question of what is considered a political subject. In other words, the unity of the popular sovereign (or the desirability and feasibility of unity) is put into question. The second issue concerns what is understood by 'speaking' and how a focus on rationality produces inequality, where some modes of speaking are regarded as voice and some as noise. The third issue brings up the concept of consensus democracy, and how this can be equated with what Rancière refers to as postdemocracy, where there is no possibility for a reformulation of the political system. All of these issues point to theoretical constraints on the utility of deliberative democracy when analysing the Indignados. Most importantly, there is a distinctive difference, or hierarchy, between different forms of disagreement. As will be described below, deliberation rests upon axioms which only allow for a limited range of disagreement, and other forms are consequently excluded.

The myth of the unified political sovereign

The first line of critique considers how the Indignados challenge the idea of the unified sovereign, and how their dispersed character becomes problematic for theories of deliberation. Rancière makes the Nietzschean[38] observation that the absence of divine authority leads to an empty space of governance. However, his interpretation differs from enlightenment theories, which favoured reifications of Man and of human rationality, as a way of filling this empty space. Rather, the question remains unsolved for Rancière: How are we supposed to organise ourselves without this divine principle (Rancière 2006: 33)? The difficulty with democracy, he says, is that it lacks any a priori fixed constitution. Those who govern are not the ones who are born to govern, they are not gods, but they

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[37] A further discussion on the particular and the universal (or immanence and transcendence) will be offered in Chapter Four.

[38] Friedrich Nietzsche, writing after the enlightenment, used the death of God to break down old traditions and mores. Instead of wanting to fill the empty space created by God's absence, Nietzsche argues that this space is impossible to fill, that modernity is exactly the nothingness by which everything is organised (Connolly 1984: 6, Nietzsche 1996). The enlightenment ideas of self, the will of Man, truth, language and reason are thus only chimeras, and quite arbitrary. There is no over-arching principle by which society is arranged, and hence, there is no obvious source of legitimacy. According to Nietzsche, this is what modernity is really about, but there is a built-in tension, a struggle against exposing our constructed standards to the chaos of uncertainty and arbitrariness, modernity is 'afraid to reflect' this (Nietzsche 1967: 4), since it stands on the verge of the abyss, losing all its meaning of social construction.

have acquired the title to govern from an absence of any such title (Rancière 2006: 41), this becoming a government by chance. This empty space is the very founding character of politics, since there can be several claims to power. Rancière goes back to Plato and uses his idea of the republic in order to make sense of what democracy is and what it is not:

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

However, Rancière points out that one of the problems of today is that we have lost sight of politics. In radical democratic theory, the notion of 'the political' is key, and indicates precisely this uncertainty over the entitlement to authority and the legitimacy thereof. Most other radical democratic theorists would use the term 'the political' (Marchart 2007) with reference to the uncertainty of social order, and the opposite, sedimenting, practice is termed 'politics'. Rancière, however, instead uses the term *politics* indicating the political, and politics is instead termed the *police*. In other words, the police refers to our institutions, to our places for deliberation and decision-making, to our assemblies for discussion and legislation (Rancière 1999: viii). On the other hand, politics refers to contestation in itself, that institutions are not fixed, and that anything can be taken up in discussion. In this sense, the police is the closure of politics. In Rancière's view, society is becoming increasingly geared towards the police, leaving politics behind:

> The problem is that these are the very places where the disenchanted opinion spreads that there isn't too much to deliberate and that decisions make themselves, the work proper to politics simply involves an opportune adaptability in terms of the demands of the world marketplace and the equitable distribution of the profits and costs of this adaptability. (Rancière 1999: viii)

Rancière argues that one solution to the absence of an a priori given foundation, is to assume equality in the right to govern, which is similar to what Habermas does (although

he assumes equality in the capacity of rational argumentation). However, if we assume a presence of equality, if we do not distinguish between individuals based on their wealth, family, or race, this means that all individuals form a part of the democratic system and also the democratic sovereign. In such a system, all individuals count, and the political system is considered a sum of all individual opinion. This thought implies a simple arithmetical figure, where the sum of the opinions in a political environment is equal to the addition of all individual opinions (Rancière 1999: 9). Such an idea, argues Rancière, is unfortunately inaccurate, due to the ever-becoming nature of political subjectivity (the constant count and re-count of the people), as well as the absence of recognition of some forms of speaking.

When abolishing hierarchies and assuming the presence of equality, one adopts a certain idea of what democracy means. This is what Habermas does, and Sanders and Young are criticising his assumption of equality, based on practical circumstances; equality is desirable but absent. What Sanders and Young are not questioning is the desirability and feasibility of equal parts creating one unified opinion, i.e. consensus; they assume a theoretical possibility of equality. The consequence of this is the omission of an inherent feature of democracy: disagreement. Democracy, in this sense, the rule by the demos, implies that we know what the demos is; it relies on a totality of the political subject, and knowledge of who the speaking party is, which is also crucial for Habermasian deliberation. However, the *desideratum*, the desired outcome, according to Rancière, is to include those who are currently excluded, to give voice to those who have none. The goal is to make a part for those who have no part (Rancière 1999: 9) and in order to do so, we must acknowledge the absence of equality and therefore there is a quest for equality because of its absence. In other words, the demos in a democracy are constantly revoking equal rights for some, while installing it for others. It is vital to realise that current forms of democracy as such are not an insurance against inequality, but are rather reliant upon it. Without a difference in the access to political power, there would be no need for institutional arrangements aiming to secure equality in that very access.

In relation to this, the construction of *the people* is an important critique put forward against consensual democratic theory. Rancière thinks of this in relation to democracy, which he refers to as consisting of three main components. First, democracy is 'the kind of

community that is defined by the existence of a specific sphere of appearance of the people' (Rancière 1999: 99). The appearance signifies the construction of a people as the source of popular sovereignty. It is important to note here that appearance is not something which is opposed to any 'real', it is not an illusion, but is rather something which disrupts reality and adds other dimensions to it; appearance is neither objective, nor entirely subjective. Second, this appearance of a people favours a particular kind of people. It is does not signify a people in a more traditional sense, where we identify peoples as either ethnic groups or social segments, and where the people always adds up as the sum of the individuals it consists of. Rather, in a democracy, the 'people' is a superimposition of those groups, who have no place of belonging, no part in any social or ethic group. In other words, the 'people' is not the sum of all the opinions of all the individuals in society, not an exercise in arithmetic, but an uneven favouring of some groups over others. As such, political will formation could be seen as a practice of subtraction rather than addition.[39] A construction of a people aims at designating the undetermined, the floating subjects, and those groups who do not belong anywhere, into existing parts of society, as an exertion of control. Thus, the 'people' consists both of a social body and a body that is dislocated. The third dimension regards the location of democracy, which, according to Rancière, is situated in the place of dispute. However, the dispute does not concern the interest of different parties, but rather the count of those very parties, i.e. what constitutes the people.

This is an important notion, since in a discussion, we cannot grasp the general will, we cannot grasp who the people are, because the undetermined disrupt the discussion between the interlocutors; none of them can fully speak for the 'people'. This, says Rancière, is also why communicative action will always fail as a model of politics: since communicative action presumes that the speaking parties are pre-constituted, and that they are clearly defined speaking communities, both of which are, according to Rancière, highly inaccurate claims (Rancière 2010: 38).

Similarly, with regards to the constitution of the people, Mouffe argues, drawing on Schmitt, that politics is constructed around a friend/enemy relation. The relational

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[39] It should be noted here that deliberative democratic theories do not see democracy as simple additions. However, it is argued that 'outcomes are democratically legitimate if and only if they could be the object of a free and reasoned agreement among equals' (Cohen 1999: 73). This indicates a more positive view on consensus-making, the production of one, sovereign opinion based on the discussion among individuals with equal communicative power, rather than the oppression of some views to the benefit of others.

character of political identities is a key component in many theories today, and Schmitt was one of the first to bring this to the fore. One of the most important concepts is the 'constitutive outside'[40] for political relational identities. The constitutive outside signifies the creation of identity dichotomies and a difference between the two, often including an internal hierarchy, such as white and black, man and woman, where the first-mentioned hold a higher rank (Mouffe 2005: 15). An identity is thus always constituted through its opposite, its constitutive outside. This is the basis for Mouffe's argument on antagonism.

When we think about collective identities, these are, in other words, always constructed around a *we/they* dualism, a relation which need not be hostile, but can become so. Hostility arises when the *they* are considered a threat against the existence of the *we*; this can happen to any kind of we/they relation, be it religious, ethnic or political. Mouffe argues that they goal for democratic politics must be not to ignore this potentially hostile relation, but to be able to channel it into a non-violent manner (Mouffe 2005:16). The solution is *not*, however, to ignore this potentiality, as consensus theories are implying. Since all identities (and thus sovereigns) are created around an antagonism, it is ontologically impossible to imagine a world without it. This becomes central when analysing the Indignados, since they are seen as unable to contribute to traditional forms of political decision-making. However, we must then inquire to the conditions upon which this ability rests, which is the focus of the next section.

Voice, Noise, and Subjectivity

In addition to the composition of the popular sovereign and the implications of assuming a unified people, the speech and practices of groups and individuals must also be considered, since, in order to take part in the political game, one must be recognised as a political subject. Habermas sets up quite specific standards for how a valid political subject should behave, with the main emphasis on rationally constructed validity claims. According to Rancière, democracy is all about this: creating political subjects out of those that were previously nothing. However, this process is always underway, and never fully completed. In a situation of non-recognition, the police – institutions and the sedimentation of politics – functions because obedience does not demand understanding. If the oppressive power

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[40] A concept developed by Derrida, through his ideas of 'supplement', 'trace' and 'difference'. See Staten (1985). This will also be explained in more depth in Chapter Four, below.

would recognise that the obedient party understands why they need to obey, this would also mean that they could potentially be a speaking part, thus deemed a something in the political interactions. However, this is not the case. The part which has no part, which is not recognised, does not possess the *logos* necessary for political action. As such, there is a sharp difference between voice and noise. Contention, thus, comes into play when we question what speaking is, and reconsider the borders between voice and noise. In other theories – in this chapter mainly represented as deliberative democratic theory – says Rancière, the political subject is confined as being capable of *logos*, of expressing what is just and what is not (Rancière 1999: 23; 2010: 38). When contesting this limit, or border, the political moment is reintroduced, creating new political subjects; giving a part to those who have none. The police, on the other hand, is the very practice of exclusion, of labelling some speech as voice, and some as noise: 'The police […] is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise' (Rancière 1999: 29).

In order to bring back the political into politics – or politics back into the police – there has to be some kind of contention, and therefore the aim for consensus and agreement is not the solution. But, according to Rancière, there are many myths about disagreement. Disagreement, he says, is not that one person says black and another says white, but that both say white, but still do not understand each other (Rancière 1999: x). Some might say that this is merely misconstruction, that that the subjects do not know what they are saying, and that they are simply misled by ignorance, dissimulation, or delusion (cf. the argument about conservatism made in Chapter Two, above). That is not necessarily disagreement, nor is disagreement necessarily a failure of definitions of terms, misconstruction, or a misunderstanding. However, consensus-based approaches, such as Habermas', claim that disagreement could be circumvented if we only managed to define our key terms, such as justice, truth or the common good. As such, says Rancière, misconstruction and misunderstanding are today resolved through linguistic sanity, 'finding out what speaking means' (Rancière 1999: xi). Linguistic sanity imposes a rationality ban on the concept of communication, much like Habermas has advocated, but this practice becomes problematic to Rancière. He argues that even in a situation where the interlocutors are perfectly rational, we can still have disagreement, which is not a misunderstanding.

Numerous speech situations in which reason is at work can be imagined within a specific structure of disagreement that has neither to do with a misconstruction that would call for additional knowledge nor with a misunderstanding that would call for words to be refined. Disagreement occurs wherever contention over what speaking means constitutes the very rationality of the speech situation. (Rancière 1999: xi)

In this sense, when we have two interlocutors talking about something, X cannot understand Y, not because X does not recognise or understand the words that Y is saying, but because X cannot see or conceive of the object Y is referring to. Another possibility is that X connotes Y's objects with something entirely different, but uses the same term as Y. As such, when we are trying to define and use the word justice we must use this specific word, a word that is commonly known among many individuals, something which can cause confusion and real disagreement over what justice is. As such, there is no separate language where learned philosophers can create their own well-defined terms that would function as divine wisdom. When we want to express the meaning of justice, we must use the same term as everybody else, even though our meaning might be entirely different. And if we want to explain that our meaning is entirely different, we must also use common words, or else it would render no understanding whatsoever. This is how disagreement can occur. In addition, disagreement also has dimensions not only connected to words. The whole situation of speech, not only the words uttered, can be regarded as disagreement, which leads to Rancière's approach to democratic theory, and especially his critique of theories of consensus. A state of consensual democracy has in many cases been become the ideal, but Rancière perceives it to be a statement founded on contradictory terms (Rancière 1999: 95). All over the world, democracy has assumed the role as the triumphant, superior mode of governance, uniting the claims for justice, as well as financial prosperity and optimisation of resources. However, Rancière views this success of democracy as inherently connected to an actual reduction of democracy:

Democracy is not the parliamentary system or the legitimate State. It is not a state of the social either, the reign of individualism or of the masses. Democracy is, in general, politics' mode of subjectification if, by politics,

we mean something other than the organization of bodies as a community
and the management of places, powers and function. (Rancière 1999: 99)

Similarly, and again drawing on Schmitt (1976), Mouffe argues that there is an inherent tension in democracy, the dualism between politics and the political (Mouffe uses the distinction politics/political instead of Rancière's police/politics). In this sense, Mouffe agrees with Rancière, and argues that in our current political climate, the political has been pushed aside by politics. According to Mouffe, a decision made by institutions and proceedings in a liberal setting, might not produce human rights for all of the people. As such, in a liberal perspective, there are human rights which can veto popular sovereignty. In other words, liberal democracy is founded upon popular sovereignty, but can still decide to circumvent the popular vote based on inherent rights. This is what Mouffe refers to as paradoxical in what democracy has become. She argues that this tension is in fact natural to democracy, and that we need to embrace this contradiction, not abolish or ignore it, for democracy to develop. In her view, this reconciliation results in attempts to hegemonise the tension and provide all-encompassing solutions to the problem. The goal is to erase any idea of an alternative solution and thus bereave any opposition of its strength. The status quo becomes the only way that things could really be. This, says Mouffe, can be seen after the 1990s, when the boundaries between Left and Right became blurred and new political bonds were tied in a consensus at the centre (Mouffe 2000: 6). Such a denial of the political element of democracy has proven detrimental to the very groundwork of a democratic society, namely disagreement. Mouffe argues that such a denial inevitably leads to a loss of faith in traditional democracy, which can have fatal consequences. This, she says, is an effect of consensual democracy and the belief that agreements can always be reached through rational deliberation:

The consensus model of democracy, which informs both the theories of 'deliberative democracy' and the proposals for a 'third way politics', is unable to grasp the dynamics of modern democratic politics which lies in the confrontation between the two components of the liberal-democratic articulation. (Mouffe 2000: 8)

Mouffe argues that any rational consensus is in fact an act of exclusion (2005: 11), making any fully inclusive rational consensus impossible. In fact, says Mouffe, it is the very idea

of antagonism that can help us reach a democratic state. Consequentially, we need not abandon any of the two logics of society (rights or participation), but if we can challenge the constitution of the people, we might gain access to our necessary, albeit presently lacking, democratic component: contestation. What we gain from seeing this tension in a positive, illuminated way, is that we prevent politics from closure and sedimentation. As such, when politics is only working in order to rearticulate itself, when we have lost disagreement, when everything is 'true', we have also lost democracy. This agonistic element needs to be revived in order for democracy to function. However, this also entails that society will never be perfect; we will never have complete equality, or complete liberty for that matter, since the victory of one logic would mean the total elimination of the other.

According to Mouffe, theories of deliberative democracy fail to fully apprehend, embrace or encourage this paradox, but are rather trying to find a way out of it. By arguing that consensus (and thus a break from irreconcilability) is possible, one tries to escape contestation, which then leads democracy into despair. Reason and rationality are indeed key components for this to be possible and by imposing an essentialist view on rationality of individuals, there is no room for non-rational individuals, non-rational actions, or non-rational causes.[41] This is not to say that there is another essentialist solution to the problem, rather that essentialism in and of itself is the problem. Just as Rancière argued, the essentialist construction of the people (or rather, that it is not a construction) stifles democracy, and ultimately transforms it into pure bureaucratic procedures disconnected from popular sovereignty. In other words, this section has sketched how voice is consistently associated with rationality, whereas noise is something which is considered inferior and distinct from rational communication. This becomes central, since political subjectivity in deliberative democracy is also inherently tied to the former. Next, we will consider the consequences of such a perspective for democracy in general.

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[41] Rather than founding democratic societies on rational argumentation, Mouffe, inspired by Wittgenstein, argues that allegiance to democratic values emanates from 'an ensemble of language-games which construct democratic forms of individuality' (Mouffe 2000: 12). Wittgenstein claims that agreement and endorsement of values are not based on *Einverstand* (rational understanding), but rather on *Einstimmung* (emotional approval), something we will return to later.

Against consensual postdemocracy

These insights form an important critique against deliberative democracy. In a situation of inequality and injustice, the police, the institutions we have built to protect the voice of the unheard, effectively shut out other voices, based on their absence of *logos*. As noted above, the theory of communicative action is based on the assumption of validity claims. The consequence of such a tenet is the violent exclusion of noise, sedimenting the existence of a specific, rational, community. As such, deliberation will only serve to rearticulate the *logos* upon which it rests, and, as a result, there will be no politics. This brings us to the next important concept of Rancière's, postdemocracy. By this, Rancière refers to the situation which is ubiquitously regarded as the epitome of human civilisation, consensus democracy. Consensus, or rather the absence of dissensus, does not, in his view, constitute any correlation with what democracy is actually about. Rather, it is the very absence of democracy. In a postdemocratic space, politics as we know it has come to extinguish the possibility for political subjectification, thus eliminating any space for democracy; the parties in the discussion are already given (Rancière 1999: 102), and the political community is already established. As such, postdemocracy is always looking to sustain itself, keeping the discussion within its own boundaries. In other words, through deliberation, some people and some actions are intrinsically excluded from the discursive practice:

> Postdemocracy is the government practice and conceptual legitimation of a democracy after the demos, a democracy that has eliminated the appearance, miscount, and dispute of the people and is thereby reducible to the sole interplay of state mechanisms and combinations of social energies and interests. (Rancière 1999: 102)

As such, in a consensus democracy, there is no discussion over the possibility of equality within the speaking community, who belongs to it or not. This is a noteworthy feature of consensual democracy, according to Rancière, who argues that this means the *disappearance of appearance* (1999: 99). For democracies to work, appearance is a vital component, and ignoring disruptions to the constitution of the people, or any incongruence between speech and will, is to diminish the nature of democracy. This, says Rancière, is

what consensus democracy entails, and it means the end of politics, and the arrival of a post-democratic situation.

What is interesting here is what this entails for the concept of democratic legitimacy. To gain legitimation, the state tries to bring politics into the realm of the real, equating norms with facts. For instance, the judicial state legitimises its decision on that this is in line with the constitution, or present legal framework. This takes politics out of the picture, leaving a sutured space where there is no potentiality of political decisions. The same can be said with reference to economic or commercial necessity. As Rancière points out, the Marxist thesis of international capital's supremacy over state power has become commonplace; few would, in present-day politics, argue that a state should not try to satisfy the market and increase GDP and thus the general welfare. In that moment, the legitimation of state action can be justified *ad absurdum* by the beneficial outcomes of economic policy, as could be said by the situation in Spain. In a seemingly paradoxical sentence, Rancière summates the legitimation process as a 'demonstration of powerlessness' (Rancière 1999: 113).

This section has identified several points of critique which aim to problematise dominant conceptions of democracy, rather than deliberation *per se*. In a sense, both Rancière and Mouffe are identifying similar problems as Sanders and Young about the exclusionary practices of deliberation, however, their conclusions are quite different. According to Mouffe and Rancière, the problem is not that we are deliberating in the wrong manner, but that the founding characteristics of democracy are producing this type of exclusion. As Rancière points out, the popular sovereign is never fully complete, since it always consists of a reworking or a recount of 'the people'. Another important point is that the political vanishes the moment we believe in a totality of the people. The moment we stop the recount, we are sedimenting exclusionary practices. Politics, therefore, does not linger in the stating of rational claims, but in the contestation over who counts and who does not. Throughout this section, it has become clear that the focus on rationality limits democratic action and that those theories which abide to a definition of democracy tied to rationality can, intentionally or not, produce exclusive practices. For instance, the emotional and dispersed character of the Indignados is often not recognised as constitutive of political subjectivity within such a framework. Importantly, this also illustrates the difference between disagreement for deliberative democratic theories and for radical democratic

theories. Disagreement is in the former seen as a hurdle to be overcome, and the ideal to strive for is an elimination of disagreement. However, deliberative theories do emphasise that the possibility for disagreement must exist, or else claims cannot be validated. Nonetheless, this only goes so far. As seen above, democratic claims are hinged upon rationality, and there are practices of exclusion towards other forms of speech or actions; there can be no disagreement over what speaking is.

The passionate sovereign?

Emotion and affect is thus something which only comes up in passing within deliberative democratic theory.[42] Whilst deliberative democracy does not see the masses as lowly passionate animals, like conservatism does, it still holds rational communication as superior. This is heavily criticised by Rancière and Mouffe, who identify that this perspective reinforces the division between voice and noise, favouring the *aristoï*. In other words, they argue that we need to recognise the centrality of affect and passions for democracy.

Consequently, the conclusions from both Rancière are Mouffe are fairly uniform: consensus and deliberation are promoting an idea of democracy which might act counterproductively. By perceiving the popular sovereign as a singular, or as a possible one, consensus theories fail to recognise the power relations inherent in the production of the sovereign and the inequalities it generates. However, how can this help us understanding the Indignados? To conceptualise the sovereign as many rather than as one, as a re-count of the people, as based on difference rather than unity, seems more apt for an analysis of contemporary political situations.

As such, this thesis is very sympathetic towards Rancière's and Mouffe's diagnoses of the problem, and it agrees that the focus on rationality is counter-productive – if not harmful – when wanting to understand the Indignados. However, is the critique of rationality, consensus and democracy as presented by Rancière sufficient in order to grasp the

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[42] One could of course make the argument that passions have been central within democratic theory, as portrayed in the discussion on conservatism above. However, as pointed out by Sanders (and also in Chapter Two), these accounts of emotions and passions are rather negative, and rationality is central in recent democratic thought, as embodied by Rawls and Habermas. Instead, what this thesis aims at offering is positive account of emotions as constitutive of the democratic sovereign. In addition, there have been recent criticisms against how emotions have been handled in primarily liberal politics, see Norval (2007b: 210).

intricacies of the current challenges to democracy? Indeed, the critique of deliberation presented above is valid and well-founded, but it still remains largely focussed on speaking. This is not to say that there is an inherent opposition or dualism in Rancière's work between language and material or affective components of democracy (rather, he would argue that disagreement has an inherent performative character (Rancière 2011: 2)), but the critique of specific ideas of speech has in Rancière's work become more dominant than the production of other forms of speech. In other words, there is a return to the same tensions described in Chapter Two, above. Even though Rancière does not preclude the possibility of affective politics, his works do not offer an in-depth account of how this would function (Dean 2011: 93). Importantly, there is lack of engagement with what Jodi Dean refers to as the democratic drive, and the *enjoyment* which is necessary for disagreement to occur. This connects the creation of political subjects with insights from psychoanalysis, which will be elaborated in Chapter Four, below. These insights become pressing, since one of the main observations about the Indignados, and which also formed the focus of the previous chapter, was the idea of the emotional/affective collective. Even though there cannot be said to exist a common and unified cause with a particular content for this protest movement, there is still a term that has persisted throughout, a feeling of indignation. This has come to signify general dissatisfaction, no matter the reason to that dissatisfaction. As such, whilst Rancière's analysis offers a convincing critique of rationality and consensus-building, questions remain of how we can conceive of emotions and affect with regards to the creation of political subjectivity. Even though Rancière is recovering some ground for an emotional account of the popular sovereign, there is little specific or in-depth discussion on how we can conceive of a democratic sovereign which is built around an emotion rather than reason. In order to amend this, there is a need to go beyond pointing out the negative consequences of rationality and to engage with theory which connects affect and subjectivity.

To some extent, Mouffe has done this for several years. Taking inspiration from Canetti (1960), who has studied the problems of parliamentary systems, she argues that the models proposed by both aggregative democracy and deliberative democracy preclude not only the political, but by effect also the passionate dimension of politics. When consensual theories are faced with emotional and passionate expressions as political means, much like the Indignados, they are taken aback and lack a proper explanation for these expressions.

When trying to make sense of the Indignados, who showcase a very diverse and fragmented body of protesters, using a deliberative democratic model of political participation becomes increasingly difficult. They simply do not fit the standard of a traditional way of doing politics, and thus we often fail to recognise them as full members of a political community. This could lead to segregation and a polarisation of our political climate, something which we have to some extent already experienced, with the increasing support for populist politics in Europe; this is a politics which appeals to emotional rather than rational repertoires.[43] Mouffe also argues that since politics of late has been so focussed on consensus, people lose faith in the system, since there seems to be no place for their (possibly) diverging opinions. This can also be seen in the increasing rate of abstention in voter turnouts in several European countries.[44] Mobilisation of voters requires politicisation of issues and with a heavy consensual imperative in institutional politics, there is little room for disagreement. In other words, it seems as though people are in need of a politics with which they can identify and emotionally invest in.

However, it is in Mouffe's works with Ernesto Laclau where a model of political subjectivity constructed around a focus on affect and emotions comes into form. Laclau and Mouffe apply a model of affective politics much influenced by psychoanalysis, especially that of Lacan.[45] Lacan argued that when we invest and commit to a political cause, this is because this provides us with *jouissance*, enjoyment:

> The problematic of enjoyment helps us answer in a concrete way what is at stake in socio-political identification and identity formation, suggesting that support of social fantasies is partially rooted in the 'jouissance' of the body. What is at stake in these fields, according to Lacanian theory, is not only symbolic coherence and discursive closure but also enjoyment the jouissance animating human desire. (Stavrakakis 2004: 4)

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[43] The concept of populism will be discussed in the following Chapter Four. In addition, the concluding Chapter Seven of this thesis will touch upon the most recent developments regarding populism in Europe, and particularly in Spain.

[44] See International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) for exact numbers, but as an example, voter turnout in Spain has dropped from 80% in 2004 to 63% in 2012; Greece has experienced a drop from 87% in 2004, to 63% in 2012 (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2012)

[45] For further explanations on Lacanian theory and politics, please see Stravrakakis (2004); Lacan (1966) and Thomassen and Tønder (2005). This will also be explained in more depth in the following Chapter Four.

In order to understand democracy and political subjectivity, we need to acknowledge the affective dimension of politics. In contrast to the consensus theorists, who believe that a solution which is accepted by all is possible, theories of dissensus, or radical democratic theories, deny that possibility, based on the ground that the disagreement is constitutive of who we are. And since this disagreement is based on an affective dimension, we need to include non-rational ideas of participation and political expression into democratic theory. In addition, Canetti argues that in our highly individualistic societies, the need for group identification is still present, and, as we have seen above, this identification is highly emotional (1960). Politics and the political need, in other words, to account for people's emotional life and satisfy demands that are not purely rational. This entails positing political alternatives outside the consensus model, to which people can connect on an affective level. However, in a partisan-free, consensus-driven political climate, such identification can become difficult, since there are not any viable alternatives for those groups who lie outside the mainstream. This can be compared to the issue pointed to by Rancière above, that the people, and the general will, are not corresponding to the actual will of the people, but instead signifies a miscount, favouring those in majority or in a superior power position. However, there is a need to move further than Rancière and consider the very construction and working of an emotional democratic sovereign.

This chapter has discussed different forms of recognising political subjects and democratic sovereigns, and it has argued that the Indignados are spearheading a new perspective to be put forward. When looking at contemporary theories of democracy, primarily at Habermas' deliberative democracy, we could see that emotions and passions are consistently omitted from the discussion; political subjects and political opinion are chiefly based on rational individuals, who can make political decisions through discursive deliberation. In opposition to this, we must question the constitution of the people, and the idea of a coherent, deliberating popular body which, in the long run, function to sediment existing power relations, not incorporating the voices of the less powerful in political discourses. The alignment between the capability of reason and the according of political voice must also be put into question, in order to problematise the strong divide between emotion/affect and reason. As argued by Norval (2007b: 210), we need to find a framework to 'think systematically about passionate expression' and give the connections between power,

language and affect a stronger presence in democratic theory.[46] Ultimately, the focus of this thesis lies in understanding how we can conceive of an emotional popular sovereign. In order to do so, the next chapter will look into Laclau's concept of hegemony.

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[46] Naturally, Norval acknowledges the works of Laclau and Mouffe and their contributions to this endeavour. As will be explained in the next chapter, the possibility for connecting subjectivity, democracy and affect has been present ever since their publication of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* in 1985. However, the application and usage of Laclau's theory has become (perhaps unfairly) centred on language, which has to some extent over-shadowed the affective components of Laclau and Mouffe's works. This will be elaborated further in the following Chapter Four.

4. Subjectivity, collectivity, democracy: From hegemony to the hegemonic project

The two previous chapters have seen the development of two different academic perspectives, social movement theory and its increased focus on emotions, as well as democratic theory and, especially, deliberative democratic theory. The conclusion from these chapters is that whilst the developments over the past few years have been rapid and also ground-breaking, there are current developments in politics, such as the case of the Indignados, which might be hard to explain and understand relying solely on extant theory.

Chapter 2 focussed on emotions within social movement theory. Moving from an era where emotions were not a topic of discussion, we have seen an increased focus on emotions and also affect over the past 20 years. However, the chapter ended with a critique of the field in its current place: social movement theory leaves us in a cul-de-sac, where we are facing two problems. First, its increased emotional focus is still employing an idea of emotions which is seen as primarily instrumental. Emotions are thought of as means to an end, as tools which can be employed in a struggle for more members and followers, or for more engaged participants. Second, even the increased focus on affect is employing a strong division between the affective and the cognitive, thus reinforcing present dichotomies which ascribe political agency primarily to the latter. As such, social movement theory in its current shape does not contribute to a deepened understanding of the Indignados as an emotional protest movement as a political subject.

Chapter Three discussed democratic theory as explained by deliberative democracy. The deliberative version of democracy, as advocated by Habermas, could be said to produce a variety of exclusionary practices, as mentioned by Young (1996) and Sanders (1997). They made the argument that, in fact, deliberation is always subject to exclusion, where individuals in higher power positions – often white, western, and male – are consistently favoured in the process of speaking. As such, even though on paper it might be an equal procedure, in reality it becomes an extension of existing power relations. Deliberative democratic theory has indeed been developed since Habermas, but the initial problems of rationality and exclusion remain. Even though Habermas, as well as many other deliberative democrats, would readily admit to the imperfections of deliberation, the aim

for the procedure of 'pure' forms of communication still stands (Thomassen 2008: 32). As such, even though deliberation might not be realised in practice, it remains the theoretical goal for the procedure. In opposition to this, the second part of Chapter Three looked into democratic theory focussing on dissensus, and mainly the thoughts of Mouffe and Rancière. In their theories, the imperfections and flaws of democracy are not problems to be solved, but part of the constitutive nature of democracy. To try to erase these imperfections would be to close down the possibility for political debate, 'the political'. Rancière describes deliberative democracy as a practice which is inherently exclusive and based on inequality, rather than equality. In other words, Rancière and Mouffe both argue that the point of democracy is to make a voice for those who have none (Rancière 1999; May 2008, Mouffe 2001). The conclusion of the chapter was that deliberation produces (perhaps unintentionally) an inherently exclusionary practice, and that radical democracy offers a better way to understand the intrinsic conflictual nature of any democratic practice, since it also offers a way to understand disagreement over what speaking means. However, the chapter also concluded that Rancière's radical democratic theory does not delve deeper into the actual composition of democratic claims, and the role of emotions and affect in the creation of political subjectivity.

Therefore, we must turn our gaze elsewhere. Having looked at both social movement theory, as well as deliberative democratic theory, we are still faced with a problematic conception of democracy and of what is regarded political action. When we are looking at the Indignados, both theoretical approaches fall short of explaining and understanding the special features of the Indignados: the initial lack of a common agenda, the initial reluctance to form a political party, the increased focus on emotions. All of these problems throw us back into the discussion of primarily three different concepts:

1. First, this raises questions regarding political *subjectivity* and how political claims are constructed. In much of social movement theory, as well as in deliberative democracy, the subject is mostly conceived of as being coterminous with the *ego cogito*. An individual is able to make informed decisions, and there is no compromise of agency – a claim which has become increasingly questioned. Are individuals always fully aware and conscious, and do they always make decisions based on rationality, reason, or the common good? The observations made in the

research for this thesis tell us otherwise, which is why we need to consider new ways of conceptualising social action.

2. The second question regards the aggregation of the political subject: *collectivity*. Often, collectivity is seen as an arithmetic exercise, where the voice of the movement is the addition of all the individual voices. Is this true, or could we rather think of a social movement as an exercise of subtraction, where some voices are silenced, in favour of a few? Deliberative democracy is facing similar concerns, when assuming unity of the populace. The popular voice is ideally a result of deliberation, a legitimate consensus-building, which takes the unity of the sovereign as its goal, but which does not assume simple aggregation. Nonetheless, this promotes the rational political subject mentioned above, and disregards the political, and potentially exclusionary, effects of deliberation. How, then, can we think of political collectives in a way which makes us better understand the Indignados? How are emotions and affect important for the creation of political identities?

3. The third question regards *democracy*. Where do we stand, when both the subject and the collective might be composed in a manner incompatible with our liberal institutions of today and where current democratic institutions might produce exclusion rather than inclusion? And, how can new ways of conceptualising social action amend this problem?

These questions are pressing and answering them is crucial in order to understand what is currently taking place on our squares and in online communities. In this chapter, I will offer a way of considering social movements and collective action which will be more in line with contemporary developments. In order to address the theoretical challenges to deliberative democracy, as well as social movement theory, I have, as mentioned, turned to radical democracy to further understand the Indignados as political subjects. Radical democracy, as described in Chapter Three, is embodied by a variety of thinkers and theorists. Like any school, it congregates an uneven crowd of backgrounds and disciplines, although most can be said to be working broadly within the field of political philosophy.

However, in order to analyse the Indignados, this thesis has chosen to use the works of Ernesto Laclau. The reasons for this are manifold. First of all, Laclau deals directly with questions of collectivity and social movements, and, in particular, his focus on affect is

pronounced, which is yet another reason for why his works are central when wanting to analyse an emotional and affective movement like the Indignados. His theory manages to unite two fields of research, being influenced and inspired by both psychoanalysis and linguistics (Norval 2005: 92). As will be demonstrated below, Laclau's theory addresses the difficulties identified in both emotional social movement theory, as well as deliberative democracy.

The first part of the chapter will outline Laclau's idea of subjectivity, which combines the Derridian idea of undecidability with Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to arrive at a political subject between abundance and lack (Norval 2005). Then, in the second part, and based on the radical subject, we will move on to a radical idea of collectivity, arguing that any collective is in fact a hegemonic formation, grounded in a radical, affective investment in an empty signifier.

However, it is important to note that theory can often be insufficient when wanting to understand current phenomena, and Laclau's is no exception. For several reasons, there are some analytical challenges occurring when applying Laclau's theory to the Indignados, and these will be the focus of the third part of the chapter. Laclau, being a renowned political theorist, has naturally encountered much critique over the years. There are voices raised against him which argue that a theory of hegemony is passé, that we must find new ways of thinking about social action. Especially, there is strong critique coming from the field of bio-politics and what I shall refer to as theories of immanence. These critiques are often well-founded and must be considered and taken into account. One should also keep in mind that one of Laclau's seminal works, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, co-authored with Chantal Mouffe, was published 30 years ago. This naturally poses some questions to the theory: Is it still up to date? Is social and political action today similar to that of 30 years ago and, if not, what has changed? If it has changed, how can we adjust theory as to also encompass and explain current events?

Based on the critique, as well as the sheer fact that Laclau's works have been published before the rise of the Indignados, I will in the fourth part of this chapter construct a theoretical framework which draws out certain aspects of a theory of hegemony. I argue that these aspects, concerning the affective nature of hegemony, as well as the possibility for multiple hegemonic frontiers, must come to the fore of current discussions on social

action. These modifications, or shifts of emphasis, follow the debates which have taken place in the wake of the rise of Occupy and the Arab Spring, as well as the Indignados, and argue that whilst a theory of hegemony still has a lot to offer, there are valuable insights in the critiques posited against it. As such, I will argue that, rather than using hegemony as a framework, we should refer to contemporary constellations as *hegemonic projects*, taking the new nature of social and political action into consideration. These new factors are mostly found in the rise of social media, as well as the increased focus on emotions and affect. This framework will later be deployed in the subsequent two empirical chapters, where we will encounter in detail how collective identities are indeed hegemonic, but by using the concept of the hegemonic project, we can embrace the tensions between horizontality and verticality.

Towards radical subjectivity: Psychoanalysis meets deconstruction

Laclau (and Mouffe) could be said to represent a continuation of Marxist thought, and primarily that of Antonio Gramsci (Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985]: xii). However, it is important to realise that their relationship with Gramsci, even though he serves as one of their main inspirations, primarily in his breaking from the 'economic' classes to the 'social' classes, is not that straightforward. Gramsci laid the ground for Laclau and Mouffe's argument on the contingency of social identity, and how some claims present themselves as valid for the 'wider masses' (Laclau 1996: 43). However, Laclau and Mouffe break with Gramsci in important ways, arguing that there is a 'last remainder of essentialism' in Gramsci (Laclau 2005: 127). For Gramsci, the collective will, although seen as inscribed in hegemonic articulations, is still seen as prior to that articulation. This is different from Laclau and Mouffe, who argue that the collective will only exists in the articulatory practice, in the hegemonic construction. This is fundamental for the claims of this thesis, since the Indignados are not seen as constituting 'a fundamental class of society' (ibid.).

This is a decisive difference, and points to how the works of Laclau are also influenced by two other strands: Derridian deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis. These influences enable Laclau to embrace the linguistic turn, whilst seeking to understand how identities are formed and compromised. For this thesis, these strands will be of significant import, since the aim is to understand the Indignados as political subjects, departing from explanations which see them as 'classes' or other given identities, since the dispersed and

emotional character of the Indignados largely subverts these explanations. Laclau's merger of deconstruction and psychoanalysis will offer a framework in which subjectivity can move beyond the rational *ego cogito*, as well as beyond sedimented classes, and introduces the influence of affect on the creation of political identities and subjectivities.

For Laclau, the idea of the *ego cogito* as coterminous with the subject is obsolete. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (2001 [1985]), Laclau and Mouffe immediately state that they are building on critique from Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger, in order to reject 'the view of the subject as an agent both rational and transparent to itself; the supposed unity and homogeneity of the ensemble of its positions; and the conception of the subject as origin and basis of social relations (the problem of constitutivity in the strict sense)' (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 115). They also state that their take on subjectivity is rather an idea of the subject position than the unified subject. Thus, they follow the Foucauldian track of the elimination of the 'Age of Man' and rejecting the subject as the origin of social relations.[47] We cannot rely on the agency of the subject in order to fully understand the social. However, neither can we rely on the concept of social classes, since this promotes a reductionist understanding of the subject, sedimenting social structures (ibid. 118). Furthermore, the subject position is never fixed nor closed; there is always change and fluidity in the system. This does not mean that there are no attempts at fixation; rather, since there is a dispersion of the subject position, we are eager to conceive of this as a separation, a categorisation to make sense of the world. As such, Laclau and Mouffe conclude that the idea of the subject cannot be conceived either through the transcendental subject, or through the subject position, which is constantly in flux. The problem with the subject position is that it easily becomes a purely relational concept, where the position tries to separate itself from others. Laclau and Mouffe argue that this is nothing but an attempt at fixation, and this is ultimately impossible. Therefore, both ends of the spectrum are but mere figures of thought and we must turn to an understanding of the subject which recognises these tensions and in-betweens. Thus, what becomes their most significant

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[47] It should be noted here that the partial acceptance of the subject position as an analytical category as expressed in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is later revised in Laclau's work. Therefore, the Foucauldian idea of the subject position is by no means identical with the Laclaudian idea of the subject, which should be clear by the end of this section. For a more in-depth explanation of the differences between Laclau and Foucault, see Newman (2007).

contribution is not the idea of the subject in isolation, but the political nature of the subject and the consequences this entails for our understanding of politics.

The constitutive lack

Inspired by Lacan, Laclau in his later works (1990; 1996; 2005; 2006) highlights the connection between language and identity, and is drawing heavily on the concept of the constitutive lack. Much like Lacan, who argues that the constant failure of identification is producing a constant lack for the individual, Laclau is bringing up the (im)possibility of signification. In one of his seminal essays, 'Why do empty signifiers matter to politics' (published in *Emancipations* 1996), Laclau also rejects the Saussurean (1983 [1916]) idea of the isomorphism between the signifier and the signified.[48] He here follows Lacan in arguing that for there to be any sense in identification through the Symbolic order, one must sacrifice the essence of the signified.[49] In other words, when seeking identification in the Symbolic, we are succumbing to the structure of the signifier.[50] The process of identification results in a lack rather than in fullness. This leads Laclau to the point that the

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[48] Saussure's structuralism offers an idea of language where things are not directly related to their content. The reason for a chair to be called chair is not because there is any inherent connection between the word chair (the sign) and the actual object (the referent), but because this relation has been developed through the internal relationship between the *signifier* as the acoustic sounds and the meaning as inscribed in the *signified*. As such, Saussure's linguistics is relational; it relies on terms being differential from one another, and therefore making signification possible. Since we are using different words for chair and table, we can also distinguish a relation between the two, both for the signifier and the signified (Saussure 1983:66). However, there is no absolute truth in that these objects should be given these particular names, which introduces an element of arbitrariness, which is one of Saussure's most fundamental contributions (Saussure 1983: 67). It should be noted that Laclau's idea of Saussure's structuralism is read through the works of Althusser (1969), as well as Levi-Strauss (1963). See also Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985]: 97) and Dosse (1997).

[49] In his theory, Lacan opens a locus of the signified, which has no direct relation to the Real. As such, the connection between objective reality and the signified is lost, but what is retained is its position, and with it, a desire to understand and tie down this position. In other words, in language we are constantly trying to acquire a signified, to sediment the signifier, the symbolic, to something which is grounded in safety, to recapture the lost signified. As such, we can consider two elements of the signified: first, the signified is an escape of the Real, since there is no natural ground in reality; second, since there is no natural ground, we conceive of an imaginary signified, which is trying to cover up the absence of the Real, and this is produced through the signifier. This is where the third dimension, the symbolic, is becoming a creation of the imaginary signified through the signifier (Stavrakakis 1999: 28).

[50] The ego is always the alter ego, which is also why it can never be fully autonomous, since its centre is always situated and reflected in the Other (Stavrakakis 1999: 18). Consequently, we are looking for other forms of identification, primarily in language. If we cannot identify with the mirror image, then we must substitute this with something else, which, for Lacan, signifies the transition from the Imaginary to the Symbolic. As such, subjectification takes place as the child becomes an agent of language, uses it, and submits to its laws (Stavrakakis 1999: 20). Therefore, the signifier becomes the determinant for the subject, and provides a structure for it (Lacan 1964: 67). However, Lacan also notes that this practice entails a form of subordination (Butler 1997: 7). In order to identify within the frame of language, the subject also needs to succumb to the symbolic order. Similarly, Dyrberg has noted that 'power is coterminous with the logic of the signifier' (1997: 130). This is one of the most innovative thoughts by Lacan, to integrate the Freudian idea of the unconscious with modern linguistics. See also Lacan (1993; 1977).

only reason that the signifier can actually work as a signifier, is because it has no natural content, i.e. it is empty:

> That is, we are faced with a constitutive lack, with an impossible object which, as in Kant, shows itself through the impossibility of its adequate representation. Here, we can give a full answer to our initial question: there can be empty signifiers within the field of signification because any system of signification is structured around an empty place resulting from the impossibility of producing an object which, none the less, is required by the systematicity of the system. So, we are not dealing with an impossibility without location as in the case of logical contradiction, but with a positive impossibility, with a real one to which the x of the empty signifier points.
> (Laclau 1996: 40)

The empty signifier for Laclau is an absence, but at the same time this absence constitutes a presence. The absence of meaning enables the possibility of meaning at the same time as it is constitutively impossible, to be compared with the Lacanian idea that there is a function of the signified, even though the thought of the 'true' signified is obsolete. This indicates how the signifier is always inadequate, since it cannot ever be a true representation. However, this does not mean that identification does not exist; instead, identification is the very moment of signification.[51] It is also important to emphasise that all empty signifiers are not empty, but they always carry the possibility of being so. Naturally, it not the case that signifiers never carry any meaning, however, this meaning is only an attempt at fixation, and emptiness is always a possibility. This will be further elaborated in the section on collectivity below.

Abundance and undecidability

In addition to the concept of lack, the impact of deconstruction has been key for Laclau's works since the early 1980s (Norval 2005: 90; Thomassen 2000). Having criticised the

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[51] This can also be referred to as the impossibility of identity, which brings up the concept of identification. Identity, for Lacan, is obsolete, since this is a stage which is never reached. Instead, we should think of identification as an ever-ongoing process, since the lack is preventing completion. Developing Freud's ideas on identification, Lacan divides this process into imaginary and symbolic identification. The Imaginary takes place in the mirror stage and the Symbolic becomes the rescue from the mirror stage, but is regulated in the structure of the signifier (Stavrakakis 1999: 30-31). Both of these identifications fail to provide the subject with a stable identity, and will always produce a lack.

Marxist idea of the class position, Laclau and Mouffe could be read as eager to 'replace an emphasis on necessity with one on contingency' (Norval 2005: 91). In other words, the move should not be described as a substitution of one structural model for another, but rather of the problematisation of structure altogether.

According to Derrida, we are in a situation of a dislocated structure; the centre of the structure is at the same time the constitutive outside. If there is no clear centre of the structure, such as value grounds or morals, there is nothing upon which we can hinge our decisions, in order to validate them. However, since there is an incompleteness of the structure, and the structure is always open, there is also an abundance of meaning, an abundance of possibilities of sedimentation. Because of this abundance, making a choice in what to think, feel, believe, or say, is always a process of exclusion. Due to the openness of the structure – which is due to the structural displacement of the centre – be that for language, values, thoughts, etc., representation becomes inherently exclusionary. When there is any notion of agency, when an action is performed, this always entails choosing one course of action and not another. As such, representation, in all its forms, is never a repetition of some original presence (Derrida 1978: 36), but an exclusion of other forms of signification. Iterability, the possibility of repetition, is thus what conditions meaning.

For Laclau, the main influence he draws from Derrida lies in the impossibility of fixing any meaning, due to excess thereof. Drawing on the idea of this ineradicable excess and of Derrida's idea of the decentring of the structure, the inside/outside dichotomy,[52] Laclau and Mouffe develop what is commonly referred to as the impossibility of society argument (Norval 2005: 91; Laclau 1983).[53] As such, due to the impossibility of representation, since

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[52] What he argues is that any science which tries to explain a field, be that the natural or human sciences, is trying to position itself as both inside and outside that system. Let us once again take linguistics as an example: If we are trying to create a general theory of linguistics, we are aiming to explain how language and writing work and interact. As such, we position ourselves as being outside the system, since we can look at it in its entirety. We can thus perceive the centre of the system, a fixed origin (Derrida 1978: 352). However, in order to explain the system itself, we are also using concepts and thoughts intricate to the system, which would rather make us the centre than the outside. This dichotomy, or paradox, is what makes Derrida's theory ground-breaking: 'the centre is at the centre of the totality, and yet, since the centre does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its centre elsewhere' (ibid.). What Derrida aims at here is saying that no matter the content of the centre, science has up until now relied on there being a centre in the first place – and that we can understand it – which is also the main characteristic of structuralism. His critique challenges this division, saying that we cannot think of structures as totalities; the centre of any structure avoids the structuration it produces. See also Derrida (1976; 1988).

[53] This argument emanated from an earlier essay by Laclau published in 1983. However, the argument is more elaborated in the later co-authored book with Chantal Mouffe (2001 [1985]).

we have a centre of the structure which is at the same time the constitutive outside, the idea of a fully constituted society becomes impossible. What we have left are attempts to fix meaning, which happens both for subjectivity as well as for society – the impossibility of identity is also the impossibility of society. This is where the idea of undecidability becomes central for Laclau: since we are experiencing a lack, which makes us desire signification of our identity, that is identification, we are eager to sediment our structure. In this sense, the decision can both sediment as well as contest meaning. This is where things become political: in the undecidable terrain, where we are faced with the decision, but we cannot know beforehand what the right solution is; we are posited with a number of solutions, which are always exclusionary. The deconstructive move allows us to recognise this exclusion and become aware of the lack of responsibility for the decision. What Laclau argues, is that in the moment when we are faced with a decision, and we rely on solutions at hand, on the possible, that is where politics lingers. In other words, what makes politics possible, the room for the decision, is also what makes identity and society impossible, since we cannot ever have a total idea of what they are. Laclau relies upon the idea of dislocation in the structure, where the centre is at the same time inside and outside:

> Precisely because of the undecidability inherent in constitutive openness, ethico-political moves different from or even opposite to a democracy 'to come' can be made – for instance, since there is ultimate undecidability and, as a result, no immanent tendency of the structure to closure and full presence, to sustain that closure has to be artificially brought about from the outside. (Laclau 1996: 77)

Radical subjectivity

We can now begin to discern the radical democratic idea of subjectivity. For Laclau, the moment of decision is where we can see the subject at play. However, he also pairs the Derridian idea of the decision with the Lacanian concept of the subject. In doing so, Laclau argues that the very desire for the decision emanates from the constitutive lack: 'lack is precisely the locus of the subject, whose relation with the structure takes place through various processes of identification' (Laclau 1990: 210). Identification, as such, is a radical investment in a signifier. Radical investment becomes key for understanding his idea of the subject, and is, in other words, 'making an object the embodiment of a mythical fullness'

100

(Laclau 2005: 115). Investment represents the affect stemming from the lack, and radical is the contingent chimerical satiation of the lack. One might become confused as to what the stance on agency actually is, since Laclau rejects both the *ego cogito* and the subject position as part of a relational totality. Rather, Laclau says that 'what counts as a valid decision will have the limits of a structure which, in its actuality, is only partially de-structured. The madness of the decision is, if you want, as all madness, a regulated one' (Laclau 1996: 56). One must also recognise that this is the construction of order, of the investment in a particular signifier, which is ultimately a decision in the undecidable terrain. Hence, 'a discourse incapable of generating any fixity of meaning is the discourse of the psychotic' (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 112). Therefore, the Laclaudian subject becomes the very locus of the political, because without its creation there would be no disagreement. In addition, there is structure in the undecidable terrain. Furthermore, the constitutive lack is crucial in the creation of identity politics. It means that no matter how much you might want to grasp the fullness of yourself and your belonging to a group, this will inevitably fail. This does not mean that there will not be any attempts at doing so. The constitutive lack is also inextricably linked to a craving and desire for order and fullness, something which constitutes social relations. In fact, the lack and absence of parts of our identity, is what creates identity in the first place. As such, we can see an idea of the subject which radically differs both from the subject in social movement theory, as well as in deliberative democracy. The argument becomes even more exacerbated when applied on an aggregated level, with regards to collectivity.

Towards radical collectivity: Emptiness and hegemony

In Laclau's works, what is important is not only the idea of the subject in isolation, but how this functions with regards to collective identity. The goal is to determine how political identities are constituted, in case they are not part of a greater superstructure or totality. For Laclau, the issue lies in how we think of subjects and their relations to each another. We can here think of, for instance, different ethnic groups, or any other political gathering. What is it that differentiates *us* from *them*, and what do our relations look like? In many social theories, we assume that we can distinguish groups from one another, and that a group can be perceived in its *totality*. That presupposes a conceptual claim where signification is absolute (when I say tree, I mean tree, and there is never anything else that

anyone could ever think of when I utter this word). However, as we have seen, this is not a possibility for Laclau who adheres to an epistemological tradition where this type of statement is highly problematic.

If we envision a totality, we have to somehow grasp the borders of that totality (Laclau 2005: 70). In a totality, we have to be able to encompass all sorts of entities that are different from one another. When describing the borders and limits of the totality, we have to conceptualise a *different* kind of difference, something which cannot be included in the totality. This is an *excluded difference*, something which the totality expels from itself (Laclau 2005: 70). An example of this could be a people. What happens next is that the individuals included in the totality will have a common denominator in that they are different from those excluded from the totality. In effect, all entities within the totality find themselves being equalled to each other, leading to a diminishing of the original differences within the totality. Thus, all identity within the totality is constructed with reference and in relation to the excluded.

Why is this important? Laclau argues that there is never any complete universal order or a complete particular order. In social relations, we cannot conceive of groups and formations entirely independent from each other, which leads onto a discussion on universality and particularity. A common example here is multiculturalism. Is it possible for different cultures to live alongside each other, separated and isolated, or must there be some kind of universal rules for all? Laclau rejects both possibilities and argues that there can never be any full universality or full particularity: 'To assert one's own differential identity involves, as we have just argued, the inclusion in that identity of the other, as that from whom one delimits oneself' (Laclau 1996: 48).

The reverse is true for universality. If we want to conceive of a totality, this will eventually be impossible, since we need to define the borders of that totality. And, as we have seen above, defining the borders will inevitably include positioning the 'universal' in relation to the outside, which diminishes the universal quality of our entity, as Derrida has argued about the inside and outside of the structure.[54] If we translate this to more political terms,

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[54] This is what Derrida would characterise as dislocation of the structure. If we take the assumption that the centre is at once the internal centre as well as the external point of reference, there is an inherent dislocation of this centre. However, there is still production of meaning, and we have a desire to 're-suture the structure' (Norval 2007a: 142) and a need to stabilise what is essentially unstable (Derrida 1996: 83-84). As such,

this means that with regards to identity, we can never construct or conceive of any identity which is either universal or particular. For instance, let us assume that we have a minority group that wants to be recognised for its particular content. They claim their rights based on their own particularity, for example the right to have confessional schools (Laclau 1996: 49). This assumes that they, in opposition to the majority, have their own particular content, which needs to be accounted for. Nonetheless, however different from the majority this particular group wants to present itself, it is claiming its rights on a basis of equality. Those rights given to the majority should also be given to the particular groups, no matter the extra effort: 'If it is asserted that all particular groups have the right to respect of their own particularity, this means that they are equal to each other in some ways' (Laclau 1996: 49).

The only case where this would not be true, according to Laclau, is when groups are completely content with their particularity and do not feel the need to assert themselves in relation to others. In all other cases there will be an interruption of the particularity based on the claim for the right of particularity. Our identity will always be contingent upon our relations to the Other.

This is crucial when wanting to understand how collective identities are formed. If we picture a social movement, they might have a wide array of characteristics, but there are still some uniting factors, as is the case with the Indignados. We can start with the basis of demands. The group we have in mind is in our model connected with a demand. This could be increased freedoms and rights of any kind. In this model, we presume that there is some kind of force that prevents this group from acquiring these freedoms and rights: the *antagonist*. The antagonist can be many things for instance a political party, an ideology, or a charismatic leader. Laclau argues that against the antagonist, we can construct our identity as *opposing* the force preventing us from realising ourselves (Laclau 2005: 78). In this sense, there are two parts of the identity of a group or individual, as will be explained below.

Derrida's aim is not to say that nothing means anything, but to indicate that there is a possibility of internal mobility, which, in short, can be manipulated and also exercise power.

Identity and the empty signifier

If we think about identity as this circle below, we could say that the circle has an upper and lower half. The lower half is something which is known and fulfilled (this is not to say that it is static; any identity in Laclau's model is always subject to change, even if this change does not occur everywhere all the time). In the lower half we can imagine there to be a particularity. The particularity signifies that specific identity which we can think of as relational: we can distinguish our identity from others. The upper half, on the other hand, signifies that part of our identity which we cannot fulfil. This is connected to the constitutive lack mentioned above, and indicates that if we are aiming at identification through the Symbolic (i.e. through the signifier), we are always experiencing how this Symbolic does not reflect some part of us, or how we must give up parts of the signified. This produces the lack, which can be illustrated in the upper half of the circle, the emptiness of identity, which is 'failed' through identification. The goal then becomes to fill also this emptiness through a signifier.
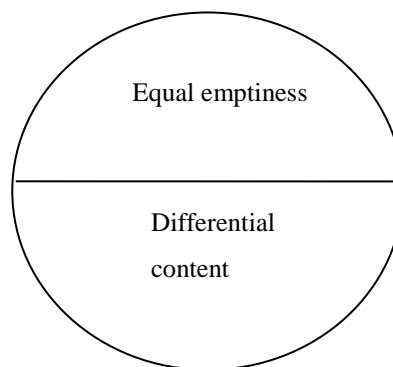
Figure 1: The split nature of identity

If we would then compare this with other circles, we can see that in the lower half of the circles, they have little or nothing in common. However, with regards to the upper half, all identities are equal in that they are unfulfilled. This represents what Laclau refers to as the logics of equivalence (upper half) and difference (lower half). The difference consists in that the claims of the individuals constituting it are not identical. The logic of equivalence requires that no matter the individual differences their claims are equivalent in that they oppose the antagonist (the government, dictatorship etc.) who prevents them from realising themselves. In this sense, the constitutive lack and desire becomes what is the very instigating factor of any group.

Based on the logics of equivalence and difference, Laclau develops a model for how we can think about collectivity. To do this he uses mainly two examples, tsarist Russia and the Peronist era in Argentina.

$$T_s$$

$$D_1$$

$$\ominus = \ominus = \ominus = \ominus \ \ldots\ldots$$
$$D_1 \quad D_2 \quad D_3 \quad D_4$$
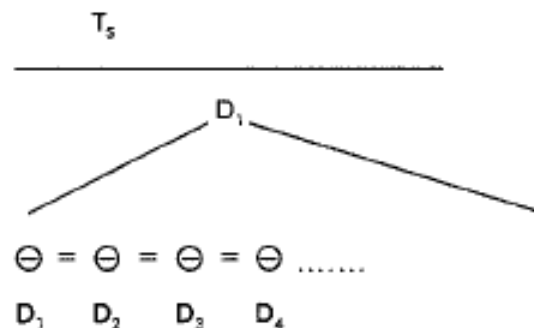
Figure 2: Chain of equivalence/difference and a false universal (Laclau 2005: 130)

The image above illustrates the model. Here we can see the identity circles with their lower differential half and their upper equivalent half. These identities symbolise popular groups in tsarist Russia and Peronist Argentina, which might be very different from one another. One could be an urban conglomerate suffering from a lack of civil rights, which could lead to starvation. On the other hand, we could have a rural community struck by new economic policies which vastly reduce their income, and in the end, they could also be starving. Both of the identities, the urban and the rural, are prevented from leading their previous lives due to the antagonist, tsarism or Peronism. This is their common denominator. As such, when the Russian revolution started, the claim from the people was reduced to 'bread, peace and land' (Laclau 2005: 97), even though the background to this might have been radically different from group to group.

According to Laclau, this is a hegemonic operation. What happens is that one demand, which is named D_1 in the model, takes over, or claims to represent, all demands of all the identities. Since emptiness exists within every one of them and this emptiness is constructed in opposition to the antagonist, T_s, there is an empty space which can be colonised. Since it does not have any particular content, there is room for interpretation, which can be used by the hegemon. The hegemon then utilises that *chain of equivalence* which can be constructed among the different identities. How come the group demands allow this change to take place? Laclau argues that the consent stems from a quest for order, a quest for a decision, which is where he connects his theory to Derrida's:

105

In a situation of radical disorder, the demand is for some kind of order, and the concrete social arrangement that will meet that request is a secondary consideration (the same can also be said of similar terms such as 'justice', 'equality', 'freedom', etc…). (Laclau 2005: 96)

In this sense, the individual particularity or difference will have to stand back in favour of the overall quest for order. It is better to have a unified voice than to stand alone. It would be easy to say that the hegemon is merely a more abstract version of the claims and demands that the individual has, but this, says Laclau, is a dangerous road to take. It is important to remember that the equivalence of the upper half is an equivalence of *emptiness* – the Symbolic which means nothing and has no specific positive content. If it did, the difference among the identities could not have been overcome (Laclau 2005: 96). When dealing with a logic of equivalence, subjects have a relation that has no positive common denominator, the only thing that is shared is an absence, an absent fullness (the upper half of the circle). Laclau argues that this is valid for value-loaded terms that we constantly deploy in politics, such as justice, equality or freedom. In his sense, there is no minimal positive content that is always valid for such terms and concepts (Laclau 2005: 96). Rather, 'the semantic role for these terms is not to express any positive content but, as we have seen, to function as the names of a fullness which is constitutively absent' (Laclau 2005: 96).

As such, Laclau argues that, for instance, justice is not an abstract term, but an *empty* term. In an ideological discussion on whether fascism or socialism is just, justice is not prior to that discussion: it is not a concept which we can grasp in its entirety. Justice is constructed through emotional investment in a term, a process which is attributive-performative rather than logico-deductive. The success of the chain of equivalence is not based on whether it is 'right' or 'wrong', but whether it can take up a position of being 'right' or 'wrong'. This is a false universalism. Emptiness and naming are thus central terms for Laclau. The process of naming emptiness means that something which has no content will gain a symbol or signifier (Laclau 2005: 108; Norval 2007b: 142). Naming, for Laclau, indicates when a signifier (a term, word, or symbol) is assigned to a signified (an object, some form of content). What happens in the hegemonisation process is that one representation aspires to be a totality, fullness. This is also where the concept of abundance becomes relevant.

106

Seeing that all signifiers are potentially empty, there is a need, a desire, to fill them with content. However, this content is not predetermined, and there is no universal rule of how to make the decision. This is the strongest moment of the influence of undecidability.

Affect and hegemony

In order to make use of these quite abstract ideas, we need to consider how collective action works, and especially how we can make sense of emotional movements. According to Laclau, a social movement or a group is never a pure reflection of the particular demands. If an individual, or a smaller group, has a claim, this is a democratic claim. However, when this is aggregated, when these claims about any societal malfunction are to join causes with other groups who also identify societal malfunctions, something happens. Due to the processes described above, one of these claims will rise with an ambition to represent all the claims in the movement, becoming a *populist demand*. According to Laclau, this is impossible, since one cannot represent or embody emptiness (Laclau 2005: 107), but there is still a desire to do so:

> Embodying something can only mean giving a name to what is being embodied; but, since what is embodied is an impossible fullness, something which has no independent consistency of its own, the embodying entity becomes the full object of the cathectic investment. (Laclau 2005: 119)

Laclau makes clear references to Lacan when saying that this driving force, the desire for the universalising process to take place, is central for all collective action. However, Laclau refers to this as radical investment rather than desire. When bringing in the dimension of affect, Laclau points out that this is not very different from his other discussions. His whole approach to linguistics and naming includes a moment of affect, since the desire for identification is strongly instituted in language. Without affect, there would be no reason to why we choose certain signifiers over others, and why we want to keep the ones we have (Laclau 2005: 111). Here we return to the concept of lack mentioned above. Laclau argues, referring to psychoanalysis,[55] that this absent fullness is what drives political structures. The desire to fill the lack is what spurs hegemonic representations which are always false universalities (Laclau 2005: 115). Another

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[55] In addition to Lacan, Laclau has been quite influenced by the reading of Lacan from Joan Copjec (2002).

important note is that there is no predetermination on which particular representation will assume the role as the false universal. Radical investment, in other words, is 'making an object the embodiment of a mythical fullness' (ibid.). Again, investment represents the affect stemming from the lack, and radical is the contingent chimerical satiation of the lack. The constitutive unevenness that Laclau recognises in every individual and thus in the social (that we always have a constitutive lack), is the driving force of social relations. Populism, in other words, is the 'affective [radical] investment in a partial object' (Laclau 2005:116). In a hegemonic situation, it is vital to remember that the signifier is not a totality in itself, but a part which is a whole (ibid. 226). As such, it is indeed a particular concept, which assumes the function of universality.

One might ask, how come there is radical investment in some signifiers and not others? Laclau would answer that it is due to the inherent unevenness of the social (Laclau 1996: 43). This could easily be confused with a return to a purely structural unevenness reminiscent of Marxism, but Laclau argues that it is not. The difference lies in the contingent construction of the chains of equivalence and difference:

> […] these uneven structural locations, some of which represent points of high concentration of power, are themselves the result of processes in which logics of difference and logics of equivalence overdetermine each other. It is not a question of denying the historical effectivity of the logic of differential structural locations but, rather, of denying to them, as a whole, the character of an infrastructure which would determine, out of itself, the laws of movement of society. (Laclau 1996: 43)

In other words, we do have structural differences, but these are contingent. Here, it is also important to point out the difference between the contingent and the arbitrary. As mentioned above, investment is contingent and fulfilment chimerical. This, however, does not mean it is chaotic, or completely random. It does mean, nonetheless, that it is not determined a priori, and it is always in flux and subject to change, but historically situated.

Then what about change? Laclau readily admits that there is fluidity in his system, and neither radical investment nor hegemony is static. In fact, any type of movement will have two dimensions, first, rupture with the existing order, and second, a desire for instituting a

new order (Laclau 2005: 122). In addition, the system with one antagonist and one hegemon is slightly simplified. What if we have many takes on the remedy for the absent fullness? Laclau has accounted for this as well. The two-sided frontier can in fact be more nuanced and unclear. In the picture below we can see how the initial frontier between the antagonist and the oppressed small demands represented by D_1 is accompanied by an additional frontier to the left. This could be constructed by the antagonist (in this case tsarism), in order to disrupt the resistance. Here, a democratic demand can be represented by two different false universals. The equivalential part of the democratic demand is thus not only empty waiting to be filled, but could be referred to as a *floating signifier*, indicating the rival hegemonies that it could potentially belong to. Given these floating signifiers, we can perceive of movement and change between different hegemonic constructions, which give a new dynamic to the system.[56] In Figure 3, below, we can see how D_1, instead of representing D_2, D_3, etc. is forming a new frontier, with demands called b, c, etc.
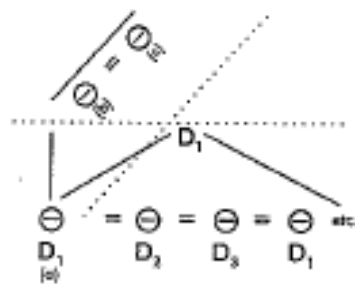
Figure 3: The floating signifier (Laclau 2005: 131)

Because of the intricate workings of identity and claims, a transformation takes place where the initial claims of the movement are subsumed under a common agenda not fully reflective of its origins, and thus the democratic demand is lost. In addition, it is important to note the role of affect in this endeavour.

In sum, the sections above have made a couple of points as a response to the theoretical landscape of both social movement theory, as well as deliberative democracy. First of all, we saw a brief overview of the main influences to Laclau's works, namely Derrida and

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[56] This is where Laclau definitely breaks from the Gramscian idea of hegemony.

Lacan. The lessons learned from the two are the abundance of meaning and the lack in identity. Both of these concepts are vital for Laclau when constructing his own idea of subjectivity. The Laclaudian subject is indeed a split subject, which tries to create identification and order in an abundance of meaning. The subject thus tries to sediment its identity by making a decision in an undecidable terrain. The desire for this decision emanates from the constitutive lack, from the subordination to the structure of the signifier.

The consequences of these insights are rippling into the concept of collectivity. Laclau reformulates the Lacanian signifier as the potentially empty signifier. In addition, he argues that collective identification is made possible due to the commonality of lack among the subjects, which creates chains of equivalences. This enables the space for hegemonic constructions, the overtaking of one empty signifier over others. This is the main lesson about collectivity from Laclau; collective identity can only be made possible through something which is nothing, which can fill a lack present within us all. The role of affect is also central to the creation of the collective. According to Laclau, there would be no attachment to any signifier without affect, and the very possibility of the collective emanates from emotional investment in a specific signifier.

These points have profound impacts on theories of democracy. If the *ego cogito* is absent, or compromised, political action and political subjects must be recognised also in the unconscious, in the affective and in the emotional. In this instance, the Indignados, being a movement which cultivates both rational as well as more affective modes of protest, becomes the norm rather than the exception. As such, not only can a theory of radical subjectivity and collectivity contribute to and develop social movement theory, radical democracy can also further our understanding of the problems faced by many European democracies today. As such, it can contribute to facing both the practical and theoretical challenges posed by the Indignados. By admitting a theory of political and collective action situated in an affective landscape, and by reformulating our contemporary ideas on agency and structure, there is an escape from the exclusionary practices employed towards those who have no voice. In addition, Laclau's theory of hegemony provides us with a clear framework in which affect is not disjointed from signification and representation, but rather central to them. This facilitates analysis of the Indignados, since their subjectivity can be centred on affective and emotional components, rather than on only rational

expressions. In addition, the dispersed character if the Indignados becomes less puzzling if their subjectivity and unity can be present in affect/emotions. However, as mentioned in the introduction, taking Laclau's theory at face value might be a dangerous endeavour. A long time has gone by since the beginning of his contributions to political theory, and we must therefore also consider those critical voices which have been raised against him.

Against hegemony

Below, we will consider some of the most important critiques launched against Laclau, and explain how these are vital when seeking to understand collective action today. Some of the critique is well-founded, and Laclau is most certainly not solving all problems of political analysis. This section will describe three main strands of critique against Laclau: The first criticism has taken stride against the weight Laclau puts on the decision, and how this is almost taking us back to an idea of agency which is not compatible with the rest of his ontological claims, making his theories 'decisionist'. Coming from the other end of the spectrum, the second line of critique accuses Laclau of instead being too focussed on structure, and reinforcing a hierarchical, conflictual idea of politics when in fact recent examples of collective action are telling us different. These two lines of critique thus symbolise interpretations of radical subjectivity and collectivity as either too centred on agency, or on structure. I will, however, argue that neither of these critiques fully appreciates the tensions between these two poles in Laclau's theory, and show how his approach is valuable when wanting to understand the political subjectivity of the Indignados.

In a third line of critique, Laclau is being accused of promoting a linguist reductionism which does not allow enough for a material, corporeal and affective notion of collectivity. In other words, there are concerns that the challenges to democracy posed by the Indignados – their emotional and dispersed character – cannot be accounted for within a theory of hegemony. These critiques will be presented along with Laclau's and other's responses, and conclude that even though a theory of hegemony is far from perfect, it still holds a lot of value when analysing contemporary protest movements. Most of all, the section will argue that reinforcing the dichotomies offers little explanatory value, and what we must do is to embrace the inherent tensions between verticality and horizontality and emotion/affect and reason in the construction of political identities.

111

Hegemony as decisionism?

One of the key thoughts about agency and subjectivity in Laclau stems from Derrida, in particular with regards to the idea of the decision. The decision is that moment when, in an undecidable terrain, the subject chooses something over something else. However, an important thing to remember here is that this is different from mere openness. If we are faced with a decision, where we have no essential way of choosing what is right (such as morals or value grounds), we will try to ground the decision in something to which we can attribute such qualities, i.e. we will create grounds where there are none. This is what Laclau refers to as 'impersonating God'.

However, this is not met without resistance. Laclau's theory has been subject to the critique that he is re-introducing agency and doing so in a manner which goes against the contingent nature of his ontological claims (Norris 2002; 2006). In other words, Laclau is accused of reinventing the Cartesian *ego cogito*, where his intention was to abolish it in the first place. This critique emanates, in my understanding, from a flawed conjecture of the Schmittean influences in Laclau's works. Schmitt, a problematic character indeed, has had a profound impact on Laclau's theory. Most of all, Laclau draws on Schmitt's understanding of the sovereign as a solution of the quest for order. The quest for order, as co-linear with the Hobbesian sovereign (Laclau 2000: 72), is central for Laclau and closely linked with the decision as such (Laclau 1990: 71). Laclau makes the argument that both in Plato and in Hobbes, we can find the preclusion of politics: in Plato because the decision is posterior to the community and in Hobbes because the decision settles on one particular order (ibid.). When we are making a decision, this decision intends to ground itself in a social order, an order which is impossible, but which is desired. As such, this is the moment of self-realisation, but such a realisation is always incomplete and built upon a contingent ground:

> […] autonomy cannot mean identity with oneself, self-representation, because that would precisely restore a rigid frontier between 'spirit' and 'spectre'. But autonomy does not require full identity as its precondition: it can also emerge out of a constitutive impossibility, an absolute limit whose forms of representation will be necessarily inadequate. (Laclau 1996: 71)

112

Zizek has discussed the Schmittean decisionism at length in *The Ticklish Subject* (1999), where he argues that 'the decision is not a decision for a concrete order, but primarily the decision for the formal principle or order as such. The concrete content of the imposed order is arbitrary, dependent on the Sovereign's will' (Zizek as quoted in Norris 2002: 562). I intend to linger at this description, paired with Laclau's above, in order to investigate these two terms: arbitrary and contingent. Some of the critique of Laclau seems to stem from a conflation, or at least insufficient separation, between these two concepts and their relation to the decision. However, recognising the finer differences between them is crucial in order to understand how Laclau's theory does not invoke absolute relativism, or a re-introduction of the Cartesian *ego cogito*. This also counters the criticism put forward by Norris, who argues that Laclau's ontological claims are inconsistent with his theory of antagonism (which will be dealt with more in-depth below).

Norris has argued that, for Laclau, 'the relationship between the "ontological" choice for order and the "ontic" choice for a particular form of order is contingent and wholly open. But this is not quite right' (Norris 2002: 562). Indeed, it is not quite right. To equate contingent with 'wholly open' is to deeply misinterpret the very nature of contingency and to disregard the idea of tradition and history. To argue that Laclau would see all decisions as equally possible is to obliterate most of his work on the unevenness of the social. However, what Norris is getting at is that there is a form of ontological certainty, which would disturb the non-essentialist grounds. This is to misunderstand Laclau's critique of essentialism, its applications and aims. The argument that there can be no axioms (and therefore complete relativism), holds little relevance and bearing when trying to analyse the power consequences of said axioms. Naturally, even a theory against the exertion of power by paradigms and truths rests upon axioms, and to argue that it must be freed of them to be internally consistent is to preclude any form of speech.

If we return to Derrida and the statement that undecidability indicates 'a terrain, not of general openness and contestability, but of a regulated tension and of a suspension in the between' (Norval 2007a: 146), we can discern how arbitrariness and contingency are central. In thoroughly relativist ontology, the decision could take on a number of guises, none which were decided *a priori*. The value added by undecidability, is that those choices are indeed limited; however, they are not structurally determined, as in Marxism. Where

does that leave us? This is the tension which is crucial to understand in order not to have recourse to either extreme. The heart of the matter lies in that Laclau's theory rests upon contingency and not arbitrariness. He by no means says that faced with a series of options, we are just as likely to choose one as the other. Contrarily, our decision is contingent upon something else. However, this does not means that it is eternally bound to this ground, and, as such, the decision rests between structure and agency. The subject hosts agency in the moment of decision, where we are making a choice. However, this agency is inherently flawed, since a complete sense of agency would require a complete sense of the subject as such. This is where subjectivity is at the same time possible and impossible. It is possible because it is not governed by predetermined structure. At the same time it is impossible due to the Lacanian insertion of the split subject. Still, to return to the question of agency and the decision, one must recognise the contingent nature of the same. The decision is indeed an ungrounded practice, but which is influenced by power relations and traditions, and is thus not arbitrary.

Hegemony or multitude?

Whilst the critique above centres on agency and decision, the following is rather concerned about structure, or an idealisation of a vertical structure. It argues that the Indignados (and similar movements) are in fact more horizontal than vertical, and that a theory of hegemony is unable to account for this dispersed character.

Laclau's theory is centred on antagonism, which depicts a conflictual state between the Subject and the Other, and between the People and the Antagonist. Indeed, this has introduced a notion of a hierarchy into politics and emphasises the primacy of the political. Laclau has invested much in the concept of the empty signifier, of the locus of an absent fullness, which we (essentially) lack and therefore desire. However, this is not without problems. Hegemony, identified as the rise of a particular demand to become a falsely universal demand, puts focus on the inherently vertical dimensions of politics, and organises its thoughts around the violence of exclusion, as proposed by Derrida. Doing so has made a great advance in how we conceptualise democratic politics and political identities. Going from aiming for a popular sovereign as one, solid, body of opinions and rational action, as described in deliberative theory, we have now arrived at an idea of politics which allows focus on those excluded voices, on the constitutive nature of

disagreement, an endeavour Laclau shares with Rancière and Mouffe, as described in Chapter Three, above. However, this holds a few problems: Kioupkiolis argues that the theory of hegemony clings to an idea of association which is 'hierarchical, exclusionary, and oppositional' (2010: 140). He makes the claim that hegemony assumes an almost transcendental character, something which becomes problematic when wanting to explain and understand highly complex social action, such as the Indignados. Further, he argues that:

> In the footsteps of modern sovereignty, Laclau's hegemony features a subject that soars above all other constituencies and acts in the name of an ensemble of differences which are subordinated to the universal representative. (Kioupkiolis 2010: 141)

Kioupkiolis makes the argument that since the focus on hegemony is so strong, this precludes other forms of interaction, which need not be as antagonistic and conflictual. In addition, he takes stride against the perceived static nature of Laclau's theory and argues that limits and relations between subjects could also be 'porous, discontinuous, expansive, flexible, that is, responsive and hospitable to extrinsic elements' (Kioupkiolis 2010: 142). As such, Laclau's theory is but one way of conceiving identity in a post-Cartesian world. If we are perceiving identity as contingent and constantly in flux, hegemony and antagonism need not be the only conclusion available to us. Other theories have chosen a path marked rather by horizontal thought, the relationship between political subjects, than by domination and exclusion. Among them we can count Hardt and Negri.

The main critique from Hardt and Negri consists in that Laclau's theory is too vertical. In opposition to focussing only on power relations and antagonisms, they argue that social interactions can function in an entirely different manner. Their understanding of the formation of political identities is not constructed around political conflict but around what they refer to as the multitude. The basis of the multitude lingers in a reconsideration of what labour means. In a post-Fordist world, labour is not only the classical forces of production, producing material goods, but also non-material such as information and knowledge (Hardt and Negri 2000: 287), which constitutes the ground for bio-political production (it should be noted that theirs is a very particular idea of bio-politics, which is not representative of this term at large). Similarly to Laclau, they argue that the working

class is indeed a concept of the past, and should be modelled after current conditions. However, there is a stark difference between Hardt and Negri and Laclau in that whilst the latter completely rejects the concept of class as a productive analytical category – to be replaced by contingent identities – Hardt and Negri would rather say the class struggle has permeated and spread into all aspects of social life, and we must therefore study it in new domains (Rekret 2014). The multitude designates a group which can conduct the class struggle, but which has an entirely different composition to that of Laclau's:

> Multitude becomes a central term in the resistance against a solely vertical idea of social interactions. The multitude is made up of different units which link up with one another as nodes in a complex net. Connections unfold horizontally and possess no centre and no definite boundaries. (Kioupkiolis 2010: 142)

As such, the multitude is rather a horizontal idea than a vertical. Hardt and Negri here refer to simple observations of social actions. Based on new information and communication technologies, on a growing interdependence between countries and people, the conditions for those who must abide to the rules of capital are increasingly similar (Kioupkiolis 2014: 151). This is what they call the 'distributed network' (Hardt and Negri 2000: 294-299). What we are encountering here, rather than an exclusionary power relation with one demand rising above others as a false universal, is a construction of the common. Hardt and Negri thus say that the common is not based on subordination and exclusion, but on mutual interests arisen from similar experiences in the era of capital, based on collaboration and solidarity. The different interest groups, or demands as Laclau would call them, are situated in a complex web, and all demands can talk and interact with all other demands. This makes antagonism and hegemony inaccurate, since the dispersion of interests and the autonomy of the network is much greater than Laclau admits.

Naturally, one can recognise nodes and centres in the network. However, unlike Laclau, Hardt and Negri argue that these nodes are not created through a false universal, which is inherently exclusionary, but through means of discussion: 'The project of the Multitude not only expresses the desire for a world of equality and freedom … but also provides the means for achieving it' (Hardt and Negri 2004: xi). In addition, we are all 'free to act and choose as each of us pleases' (ibid. 241).

To exemplify their argument, Hardt and Negri turn to those very movements which are of interest for this thesis. Looking at the post-crisis eruptions of contention across the globe, Hardt and Negri see these as confirmations of their theory. For instance, they bring up Occupy Wall Street as a clear and emblematic example of a distributed network, of an anti-capitalist being-against congregation. Indeed, their observations hold fast: Occupy Wall Street is an organisation which defies representation, which gathers individuals from many different backgrounds, races, social classes and ideologies. They do not have a clear agenda, and they do not have any assigned leaders, all characteristics they share with the Indignados. Here, Hardt and Negri see that the multitude is the constituent power 'in that they do not make demands to an already constituent power (the state), but instead create a new power (the democratic power of the multitude) and in this way produce the common' (as cited in Thomassen and Prentoulis 2014: 217). However, can we obliterate the concept of hegemony and turn solely to the multitude?

Laclau would say no to this question, for several reasons. In a short review article of Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000), Laclau sets out his response to the criticisms launched at him by Hardt and Negri. Ultimately, Laclau argues that Hardt and Negri, while criticising him for introducing a transcendent hegemony, are resorting to an immanent idea of the multitude, both options which are equally undesirable for Laclau. While Laclau bases his theory on the constitutive lack, Hardt and Negri take their stance in the class struggle (Rekret 2014). As such, for Marx, who had a strong influence on Hardt and Negri:

> […] the universality of the proletariat fully depends on its immanence within an objective social order which is entirely the product of capitalism – which is, in turn, a moment in the universal development of the productive forces. But, precisely for that reason, the universality of the revolutionary subject entails the end of politics. (Laclau 2001: 5)

What Laclau is pointing to here, is that a situation of immanence, when the proletariat can emancipate itself in and of itself, becomes obsolete and precludes the possibility of politics. He accuses Hardt and Negri of romanticising the multitude, as if the multitude was something which we could not problematise or question. How, says Laclau, will this multitude come about? Who will they oppose, and why? These are questions which are left to imagination in Hardt and Negri, and intentionally so. Laclau further argues that the

consummation of immanence, of reaching the multitude, would preclude any form of transcendence, i.e. there would be no vertical unity in the group (Laclau 2001: 5). The discussions on immanence and transcendence are important matters and connect the subject matter with traditions in continental philosophy dating back to Duns Scotus, via Hegel and later Spinoza.[57] However, what can these discussions tell us about current state of affairs of collective action?

Recent debates point to that neither immanence nor transcendence is the answer to the question. In other words, we cannot rely on a transcendent political identity, but nor can we think of identities as contained in themselves. For instance, Thomassen and Prentoulis argue that we must think beyond immanence and transcendence, and autonomy and hegemony, where autonomy connects to the strong anarchist traditions which have been greatly inspired by immanence (Newman 2007). Hardt and Negri refer to the multitude as 'emerging out of Empire in an immanent form, and the multitude is a constituent power opposed to the transcendence of any constituted power' (Hardt and Negri 2012: 71, as quoted in Thomassen and Prentoulis 2014: 216).

What Thomassen and Prentoulis argue is that even though Laclau is being accused of promoting an idea of transcendence, this is a misunderstanding. What Laclau argues is not that hegemony is always successful, or that it is always beneficial or harmful, but that we are encountering a failed transcendence. Hegemony exists, but it never completely succeeds in representing the particular demands. With regards to the emerging protests movements we are encountering, Thomassen and Prentoulis argue that both theories of autonomy and of hegemony have valid explanatory power. First of all, we can observe that the newest social movements (Day 2005) are very much focussing on horizontality, which goes hand in hand with an autonomist perspective. Indeed, many would argue that autonomy and the multitude, as explained by Hardt and Negri, have the highest bearing on our current situation of protest, both the Indignados and other movements.[58] This will be further elaborated in section four, below.

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[57] Thomassen and Prentoulis depict two sides in this argument (2014). On the one hand we have one line from Spinoza to Nietzsche, Heidegger and further on to Deleuze and Foucault. On the other hand we have the Kantian notion of transcendence which runs through Husserl and Heidegger to Derrida. To cover all of these thinkers and their take on transcendence and immanence would be a too large an endeavour.

[58] For studies on the horizontal qualities of Indignados, see Perrugorría and Tejerina (2013); Stobart (2014); Espinoza Pino (2013); Sampedro and Haro Barba (2011); Fominaya (2014); Peña Lopez et al. (2014). For

Can hegemony be affective?

The third critique of the theory of hegemony concerns the lack of engagement with affect, something which is central when wanting to understand the Indignados' affective and emotional character. Yannis Stavrakakis has contributed to the debate on whether Laclau's theory does promote a linguistic reductionism – and not placing enough emphasis on affect – and he argues that whilst some do not believe that hegemony and affect are compatible, this is a grave misunderstanding of Laclau and his intentions. Stavrakakis elaborates on how some believe that the theory of hegemony has itself become hegemonic, which is something we must recognise. In particular, he points out what he refers to as the 'revenges of the real', indicating a return to the corporeal and affective as a response to Laclau's (perceived) linguist reductionism (Stavrakakis 2014: 112; Stavrakakis 2007). Among the critiques Stavrakakis identifies a new materialism of sorts, which argues that what Laclau's theory lacks is a sensory, affective dimension of political life (Geras 1987; cf. the discussion on new materialism and affect theory in Chapter Two). This critique argues that when Laclau fails to recognise the materiality of the signifier, he omits inherent qualities vital to understanding collective action, and the unifying principle materiality embodies. Richard Day (2005) and Scott Lash (2007) have launched a bio-political and affective critique against Laclau. Day, on his part, accuses Laclau of constructing a 'hegemony of hegemony'. He takes issue with the 'politics as usual' saying that the only way to achieve social change in Laclau's model is through representation, when, in fact, representation itself is the very problem. He argues that by focussing so much on the power of the empty signifier, we cannot break with the hegemonic structure. In Day's view – developed in line with the anarchist and post-anarchist tradition – by defying representation and not constructing a universalising counter-hegemony, we can achieve a radical break which is not possible within Laclau's theory (Day 2005: 88). Instead, he advocates a non-representational and physical idea of resistance present in all aspects of everyday life, an argument quite similar to that of Hardt and Negri.

Lash takes this critique even further and argues that not only is hegemony insufficient for the emancipatory project, but it is actually non-existent. He argues that we are now living in a phase of post-hegemony. Since the exclusionary focus on discourse is passé, we must

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studies on Occupy and the Global Justice movement which agree with Hardt and Negri, see Maeckelbergh (2012); Juris (2011; 2008); Sitrin (2012); Williams (2012).

now turn to the material realm of the Real. Utilising the same Lacanian vocabulary as Laclau, Lash argues that post-hegemony is situated in the Real which is 'the motive force, the unfolding, the becoming of the thing-itself' (Lash 2007: 59). As such, everything about social relations and power games are not outside us, but are constitutive forces immanent to our identity. Thorburn makes a similar observation when arguing, in line with Brian Massumi (1995), that:

> Affect is an experience of intensity – of joy, fear, love, sorrow, pity, pride, anger – that changes the state of a body, that has concrete effects on individual and social practice … affect is a key dimension of experience … and one that most clearly marks the movement of cultural studies away from a conception of culture as a signifying practice. (Thorburn 2007: 84)[59]

As such, these critiques situate the prime level of interest in the pre-discursive realm, the realm of the Real, which is beyond the malicious forces of representation. Beasley-Murray is another critic of Laclau's who has argued that hegemony has actually never existed. He thus goes one step further than Day and Lash who both say that post-hegemony is a strictly temporal aspect, i.e. hegemony did exist before but is now in the past. Beasley-Murray also takes stride against the inevitable nature of Laclau's empty signifier, and also questions his reliance on the strong state, an 'indirect acceptance of power structures' (Stavrakakis 2014: 120): 'Laclau takes the state for granted and never interrogates its power' (Beasley-Murray 2010: 55).

Stavrakakis is highly sceptical of this critique. Most of all, he does not recognise the value of positioning horizontality and verticality as opposing schools of thought and argues that 'instead of erecting a wall between horizontalism and hegemonic processes, wouldn't it be more productive to study their irreducible interpenetration, the opportunities and the challenges it creates?' (Stavrakakis 2014: 121). He makes the same argument as Thomassen and Prentoulis (2012), referring to the recent social movements in Southern Europe, saying that in these protest movements there is no pure verticality or horizontality. What they are seeing is that even though there are strong moments of what we might call 'pre-populist' or 'pre-hegemonic' stages (Stavrakakis 2014: 121), there are also moments

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[59] This is in line with what in social movement theory and in cultural studies has been referred to as the affective turn, as described in Chapter Two.

of unity, centrality and representation. These forms might not be co-terminus with what we would traditionally call representation, like spokespersons or leaders, but this is where affect has a role to play, both as a discursive and corporeal sensation. As such, he questions those binaries which the critique against Laclau rests upon: inside/outside, before/after, hegemony/post-hegemony, representation/real, meaning/being, horizontality/verticality, and discourse/affect (ibid.). What Stavrakakis argues is that psychoanalysis lies at the very nexus between all of these binaries. As described earlier in the section on the psychoanalytical roots of radical democracy, for discourses to be successful and effective, they must contain both corporeal and discursive elements. As such, we cannot perceive of, for instance, nationalism as being *either* discursive *or* affective (ibid.). This is the very idea of what Lacan refers to as *jouissance*, which in Laclau is taken up as radical investment. [60]

Whilst Beasley-Murray, in particular, seems to depict immanence and affect as somehow more authentic than transcendence and representation, this becomes counter-productive and contradictory. By submitting to these binaries, Beasley-Murray commits the very flaw he identifies in Laclau, a romanticising of a particular perspective. Instead, says Stavrakakis, we should consider how these perspectives can help us understand protest movements. Also, to accuse Laclau of not engaging with affect is a nonsensical statement, since affect has been a central part of his work since 2003. As noted above, the radical investment, the search for the Real in the Symbolic, is what drives social relations, what makes the social possible, but what makes society impossible (Laclau 2005: 102). As such, this is not a rationalisation, it is not an exclusive focus on language, but it analyses how our affective desires and demands are expressed in language, and how this nevertheless always fails to capture any true identity of ourselves. Therefore, we must realise that 'a *discursive* theory of hegemony is also an *affective* theory of hegemony' (Stravrakakis 2014: 129). Laclau's theory of hegemony could therefore serve as a starting point when wanting to depart from the strong dichotomies between emotion/affect and reason, as described in Chapters Two and Three, above. In addition, it provides a clear framework for the construction of political subjectivity and the central role of affect in the process.

Subsequently, the following section will look into how a theory of hegemony can respond to the critiques posited above and thus also encompass the social movements of our time.

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[60] For more information on this concept and the transition from *jouissance* to radical investment, see Glynos and Stavrakakis (2003) and Laclau (2003).

Both the horizontal and emotional/affective nature of the Indignados could be seen as challenges also to a theory of hegemony. However, is this the case? Returning to the overarching theme of this thesis, the section identifies how the tensions between emotion/affect and reason, as well as between horizontality and verticality are crucial for understanding political protest and political subjectivity today.

Embracing the tension – The hegemonic project

Within political philosophy, Laclau holds a central position, where his idea and format of the political subject is based on two different perspectives, linguistics and psychoanalysis. This is what forms the backbone of his theory of hegemony, where the split subject forms a world ridden with incompleteness and lacks, and where this creates spaces for political oppression and exclusion. This is where politics resides at its fullest, and where our analysis must start.

Naturally, this has been challenged, and as seen above, the theory of hegemony has generated critical responses. The most influential and pervasive critique has come from Hardt and Negri, who by defying the very thought of representation and by promoting a larger focus on horizontality rather than verticality have managed to capture many of the features and characteristics within social movements today. Where does that leave the debate? Does it mean the death of hegemony, or reveal the 'hegemony of hegemony' and does that necessitate a departure from verticality into a full embrace of horizontality and autonomy? These theories promote a dichotomisation or a polarisation of social action, which could omit important nuances in analysis. Instead of emphasising the abyss between autonomy/hegemony, immanence/transcendence, and lack/abundance, I argue that we should focus on the crossovers and how these can help us further understand contemporary forms of protest.

This thesis will join these voices which are critical towards any reductionist forms of explaining social action, and thus the thesis positions itself as an elongation and development of the groundwork laid by radical democracy. As a response to the critique of Laclau, this thesis will side with a theory of hegemony whilst recognising the developing work needed in order for such a theory to work today. In particular, it will emphasise the need for a focus on affect and emotion, a perspective favoured by horizontal, autonomous

movements, which has come to rest primarily within the corporeal realm. In opposition to this, I argue that affect is by no means exclusive to a theory of abundance and is highly compatible and necessary for a theory of hegemony.

A nodal point of this critique and development of theory is what I would like to call the phantasmatic sovereign. This looks into problems which we might encounter when trying to impose this static idea of sovereignty on contemporary social movements, something which is to some extent done by both Laclau and Hardt and Negri. In conjunction with this, I will argue that the development of social media has indeed introduced a new level of horizontality to these movements, but I also argue that this has not completely eliminated hegemonic practices. Juxtaposing the increased focus on affect within bio-politics as well as Stavrakakis' claim that discourses can indeed be affective, this will lead us to a reassessment of the empty signifier as an analytical category. The final point of this chapter will be a revised conception of the creation of political identities, the hegemonic project, which – as will be shown in the succeeding two empirical chapters – can further help us understand the puzzle of the Indignados, a movement which is not one.

The phantasmatic sovereign

Within Laclau as well as Hardt and Negri, we can identify two problems of idealisation of sovereignty. As Laclau has been rightly criticised for, his theory seems to put a bar on the level of flexibility and autonomy in a hegemonic relation. For Laclau, since the focus on negativity and lack is so prominent, the *populus* will have to succumb to the hegemonic, false, universal, at the expense of their own demands. In other words, we have a situation where one demand is aiming at representing a plurality of demands, something which will never be fully reflected. The problem in this lies in the static nature of the hegemon. If we look at Laclau's prime examples, tsarism in Russia as well as Peronism in Argentina, they tell the same story of a strong, oppressive force which is strongly connected to the state and against which the 'people' can – and have to – unite. Is this an accurate picture to be painted today? Many would say no. As rightly pointed out by Hardt and Negri, the struggle can now take on many guises, it cannot be modelled after a two-sided frontier, but must be thought of as a network, as a rhizome, where the people are not supressed by the transcendent hegemon, and where connections among the popular demands are plentiful (Kiuopkiolis 2010). The developments in information and communication technologies are

123

but one fact which significantly changes the game plan. The idea of the strong, suppressive state can also be put into question. In the case of recent protest movements, the Other, the force which is presenting full realisation of the Self, is not one, homogenous entity. Rather, it consists of many Others, which can be capitalism, political elites, monarchy, non-democratic governments, or democratic governments where the people still feel unrepresented. As such, we are encountering a world of many Others. Naturally, Laclau has responded to this critique as well. He would argue that, indeed, the Other can be seen as one political entity, but, in fact, the same hegemonic construction is at play on the side of the antagonist as of that of the hegemon. As such, even though we can think of many Others, we are still facing one antagonist. This requires some elaboration, which we will look into below.

Regardless of their well-founded observations against Laclau, Hardt and Negri do not manage to construct a picture which is fully capturing the nuances and complexities of contemporary social action. By flipping the coin and turning almost exclusively to horizontality instead of (the perceived) Laclaudian verticality, much of the power and thrust of a theory of social action goes amiss. What Hardt and Negri fail to identify, or perhaps choose not to, is the puzzle we are currently faced with: How do we understand the Indignados, a movement which is not one?

> The moment feels magical and enlightening because in being together a collective intelligence and a new kind of communication are constructed. In the occupied squares of 2011, from Tahrir to Puerta del Sol to Zuccotti Park, new truths were produced through discussion, conflict, and consensus in assemblies. Working groups and commissions on topics from housing rights and mortgage foreclosures to gender relations and violence function as both self-learning experiences and means to spread knowledge production. Anyone who has lived through such an encampment recognizes how new knowledges and new political affects are created in the corporeal and intellectual intensity of the interactions. (Hardt and Negri 2012: 37)

Whilst this quote aptly describes the movements, there is no deeper engagement with the question of how political affects actually create political subjects. For Hardt and Negri, it seems as though affect is merely something corporeal and something present, but it is

disjointed from signification and meaning. As such, Hardt and Negri fall in the same trap as the affect theorists described in Chapter Two: Affect is part of the equation, but which part it plays is left unsaid.

If we are to take Hardt and Negri at face value, the Indignados would not be a political entity. It would be to deny them any kind of political voice or subjectivity, since they cannot form any channels of representation. Not only is this unfair, it is also inaccurate. Many are the reports which argue that, despite the talk of defying representation, representation finds its own new ways. Indeed, we are not seeing any official spokespersons for the Indignados, or for Occupy for that matter, but does that mean a complete lack of representation and centrality? In addition, there are other issues with the return to horizontality. For instance, Hardt and Negri are arguing for a world which largely resembles that of a deliberative democratic model. The network and the rhizome is a space for deliberation, it is a space for discussion and dispute. Even though the focus might not necessarily be to create a political consensus, Hardt and Negri seem to regard a special idea of political communication as superior. In that very moment, the developments of democratic theory which have been forwarded by radical democracy are taking at least two steps back. Laclau has also pointed to this fact, which is obvious in the quotation below:

> How can the multitude organise and concentrate its energies against the repression and incessant territorial segmentations of Empire? The only response that we can give to these questions is that the action of the multitude becomes political primarily when it begins to **confront directly and with an adequate consciousness the central repressive operations of Empire.** (Hardt and Negri 2000: 399 [my bold])

As such, even though they are rejecting any form of organisation and representation, they are still succumbing to classical ideas of demands and rights. At the end of *Empire*, they formulate a political programme for the global multitude, which in my opinion bears strong resemblance with representation and centrality, since it settles on a specific agenda, after all. Hardt and Negri do admit that there could be a certain degree of centrality, but it is left unsaid exactly how this is different from representation or deliberation:

125

> Becoming common is a continuous activity guided by the reason, will, and desire of the multitude, which itself must undergo an education of its knowledge and political affects. In order to construct society and generate a constituent process, then, citizens are not obliged to imagine and subordinate themselves to an imperial general will but can create the common themselves through a process that weaves together the will of all. (Hardt and Negri 2012: 51)

Laclau has also recognised this and asks how the common 'being-against' can be political. If there are only punctual and momentaneous forms of verticality, articulation of the common is 'left to God (or to Nature)' (Laclau 2005: 242) and thus it produces a 'complete eclipse of politics' (ibid.). Then, if Laclau's theory focusses too much on the sovereign as an oppressive power, and Hardt and Negri are idealising the autonomy of the people too much, is there another way to conceive of the political identities? Many would say yes to this question. As indicated above, Stavrakakis (2014), Thomassen and Prentioulis (2012), as well as Tønder (2005) all find that the future of radical democracy lies in the embracing of dichotomies, rather than perceiving them as purely conflictual; there is always an inherent tension between horizontality and verticality since they are intrinsically linked. I argue that these views are confirmed by two characteristics of contemporary social movements, and in particular the Indignados: the rise of social media, and an increased emphasis on emotions and affect.

Connectivity and social media – Speeding up the floating signifier

One of the benefits of Hardt and Negri's theory is how it has taken recent developments of social movements into account. More specifically, their network theory can offer a lot of value when analysing social media and connectivity. As argued by Hardt and Negri, the limits of the network are 'permeable, fussy and admit of indefinitely new accretions' (2004: 225). Whilst this is indeed an accurate observation, we can ask how far this statement holds, when wanting to understand how political subjectivities are created and sustained (or broken). The first observation to make is that the speed of the spreading of information has rapidly increased. This means that what 30 years ago might have taken weeks can now be done in a matter of seconds. This has strong percussions for how we perceive the signifiers of social movements, and how quickly these can change. If we recall

126

Laclau's floating signifier, this indicates how hegemonies can indeed change over time, and how the empty signifier, the false universal, can be challenged by a competing discourse. However, Laclau's model is often understood as consisting of relatively stable frontiers, but this might not be the case anymore. Due to the speed of information, the discourse and hegemonies are becoming increasingly unstable and can change from day to day.

This also has consequences for how we perceive the antagonist. Even though Laclau would argue that the antagonist is indeed a congregation of many Others, there might not be ONE stable Other for today's protest movements. Hardt and Negri are right in observing that the general sentiment of the multitude is 'being against', something which is true for many protests around the world today. However, this does not mean that Hardt and Negri are entirely right. The problem with their theory, as identified by Laclau and others, is that it lacks an idea of political articulation and representation. To argue that the political movements of today are exempt from representation and articulation is near-on foolish, given that Hardt and Negri also adhere to political agendas, which they say could be valid for the entire Multitude. The task then becomes to understand how centrality can still exist, albeit in a different form. I argue that by incorporating a discursive notion of affect into the study of social movements, we can allow for a different form of centrality, the empty signifier of *the hegemonic project*.

Affect as corporeal and *discursive*

Following Stavrakakis' idea that affect need not be monopolised by the biopolitical realm, we can return to the concept of an affective discourse. The affective discourse is central when understanding how collective action is constructed and builds on Laclau's influences of Lacan, where radical investment plays a central role. However, what we have to consider is the possibly changed nature of the empty signifier.

In Laclau's works, the empty signifier represents a quite oppressive and totalising hegemonic construction, against which it is hard to resist. However, based on the new features of social movements, the totalising span is circumscribed and we are encountering a different form of hegemony, what I refer to as the hegemonic project. Thomassen and Prentoulis have already pointed to this fact, where they are arguing that even if the focus

on horizontality and autonomy is higher in contemporary movements, there is still centrality:

> The demands of the movement expressed in general terms like 'dignity' were not tied to the verticality of the party or the avant-garde. Rather than supporting a hegemonic formation, the emergence of signifiers such as 'dignity' enables the emergence of an autonomous multitude that does not address the state in its own terrain (Thomassen and Prentoulis 2014: 221).

This indicates that Occupy and the Indignados most certainly do defy the classical forms of hegemony, as described by Laclau. However, Thomassen and Prentoulis also state that:

> Some nodes in the network are privileged, in terms, for instance, of flows of information, and so the network is not completely horizontal and smooth, and everybody cannot communicate directly with everybody else. Communication goes via structures that are to some extent centralised and hierarchical, even as these aspects of the structures are continuously challenged. (Thomassen and Prentoulis 2014: 222).

As we can see, this supports the argument that centrality is still present, albeit in a different form. This centrality does not have to be confined to traditional political leadership, to a party structure, or even to a common agenda. It can exist merely by reference to the empty signifier, and this empty signifier holds a high level of radical investment, i.e. affect. However, we must remember that this signifier is not all-encompassing; it might not have a very long life-span. As such, the days where political movements gathered thousands for the same cause over the course of several years might be over. This is why we need to introduce the idea of the hegemonic project. This version of hegemony will include most features of Laclau's, however, it will also account for a higher level of horizontality based on the introduction of new social media, as well as a higher focus on affectivity as a discursive practice, not solely corporeal, which enables affective forms of verticality.

This chapter has introduced Laclau's theory of hegemony, with a special focus on subjectivity and collectivity. The first part of the chapter argued that a theory of hegemony offers an affective version of political identity construction, as opposed to both deliberative democracy, as well as most of social movement theory. However, Laclau has also

sustained critique from, among others, Hardt and Negri who claim that a theory of hegemony puts too much emphasis on verticality. Ultimately, however, this thesis argues that a theory of hegemony is fully capable of explaining seemingly horizontal and affective movements, such as the Indignados.

In the following two chapters, this thesis will demonstrate empirically how the increased focus on affect (the visceral), as well as the rise of social media (the virtual), contribute to a blurring of the hegemonic frontiers, but how unity and centrality are still present, albeit in slightly different forms. The chapters will address the following questions, in order to show how political subjectivity experiences constant tensions between emotion/affect and reason, immanence and transcendence, hegemony and autonomy, and between verticality and horizontality:

1. Where is the equivalence and difference? What is it that unites people and what is it that sets them apart?
2. Where is the hegemony/antagonist? Can we perceive of hegemonic constructions and how stable are these? In what ways can hegemony also be affective?
3. How can the concept of the hegemonic project better help us understand the Indignados movement?

I will argue, with the help of two sets of empirical data, that representation, nodes and centrality are by no means concepts which we can disregard and think of as belonging to the past. Instead, they are highly central for understanding how political identities and subjectivities are constructed today. I will look into how the Indignados are constructing their collective identity, and how they are using both old and new repertoires of protest, but that these still exhibit the same key mechanism for the making of a movement which is not one: The power of the empty signifier. I argue that hegemonic constructions now take place through two different, albeit interrelated practices: visceral and virtual ties.

5. Visceral ties: Creating a movement which is not one

One puzzling feature about the Indignados is if and how they create unity. When looking at the movement, one sees a myriad of claims and specific interests, but also something uniform: There is a movement called the Indignados. The previous chapter looked into how we construct political subjects, and narrowed in on the debate between a hegemonic outlook on identity construction, *à la* Laclau, and the networked version of Hardt and Negri. The dichotomies within radical democratic theory became obvious: immanence against transcendence, hegemony versus autonomy, and horizontality instead of verticality. The debates are easy to get entangled in, but there can be no way forward without taking a closer look at what is going on within popular movements right now. As such, there is a need to turn to empirics, to see what these tensions and dualisms can offer in terms of furthering our understanding of political action as seen in these new social movements.

The proposition of the previous chapter was that there is no way in which either side of the spectrum can be fully embraced. 'Pure' horizontality or verticality, hegemony or autonomy, will not offer any explanation that fully accounts for contemporary protest. This was also the conclusion of several theorists, such as Stavrakakis (2014), as well as Thomassen and Prentoulis (2012). They argue that current protest movements are rather an expression of the tensions between the poles and a meshing of hegemony and autonomy. This chapter aims at corroborating this claim and conceptualising this assumption within the framework of the *hegemonic project*.

Another central theme of this chapter will be how affect and emotions can be conceptualised within a Laclaudian framework of hegemony. As noted in the previous Chapter Four, there is profound critique from Hardt and Negri (2012) – as well as Day (2005), Lash (2007), and Beasley-Murray (2010) – who argue that a theory of hegemony is unable to account for affective expressions as well as horizontal movements, such as the Indignados. As such, it would seem as though the initial challenges to democracy identified in this thesis – the emotional and dispersed character of the Indignados – would be challenges also for a theory of hegemony. This carries a lot of weight, since the Indignados is indeed a congregation of many different, largely autonomous groups, which

could be seen to support the critique against Laclau. This will also be one of the main foci of this chapter, to show how the Indignados display a wide array of demands.

However, as discussed in Chapter Four, above, this perspective ignores the important theoretical advances made by Laclau, and his combination of psychoanalysis and deconstruction. This chapter will therefore argue that the ideas of social movements unity have to be re-thought, due to the affective components of hegemony. Based on fieldwork conducted in Madrid in 2013, this chapter aims to depict a movement of complexity balancing between horizontality and verticality, which problematises the idea of political representation and subjectivity. It argues against both Hardt and Negri, as well as other affect theorists such as Massumi or Connolly, that affect can and should not be seen as disjointed from signification. This chapter thus emphasises the inherently affective character of hegemony. By allowing for other forms of representation and articulation, this perspective – described as the hegemonic project – opens up spaces for other forms of signification, which might not necessarily pertain to language, but which are equally important in the creation of political subjectivity.

The chapter will argue that regardless of the particularity of any branch or section, the movement's overarching identity is present in the visceral practice. As such, we can discern attempts to create hegemonic constellations. However, by accentuating certain elements of Laclau's theory on hegemony – most importantly its affective nature – the sometimes stale and static usage of the concept of hegemony must be interpreted as incomplete and less over-arching. Where politics might have previously been understood as an antagonism between societal forces – i.e. the State versus the People – contemporary social movements exhibit a more fragmented idea of social antagonism. That is, in previous uprisings the Other could be unified in opposition to the dictatorship, capitalism, or fascism, whereas now, there are many Others. In light of these developments, the hegemonic project offers an idea of the empty signifier as less stable and less all-encompassing. Whilst, historically, the power of the signifier might have been more pervasive and oppressive, today, the unifying practices are less obvious. This is also why the Indignados often suffer the criticism of not having demands and claims that are clear enough. In many ways this is justified: there is no overarching agenda or political programme (before Podemos). This chapter shows how the face of activism is a plural one,

but there is, nonetheless, a form of unity, and that this unity, instead of consisting of outspoken claims, is formed through visceral practices and the affective forms of hegemony. Thus, the movement becomes one in a performance: the forms of action, the emotions, the affects and the space for protest, are intricate in constructing a collective identity.[61]

This shifts the focus of what we conceive as vital to the creation of political subjectivity from centrality and reason to liminality and affect/emotions. Hegemony is not solely based on words, but has strong affective components. However, the focus on affective practices could be better explicated in the applications of a theory of hegemony, and therefore, the hegemonic project sees the affective states of protesters as central to a construction of unity.

Consequently, this chapter will depict two realities, one of the plural and dispersed natures of the Indignados, and one of their affective unity. The chapter will commence by giving an account and justification of the methodological concerns raised during this project, and will argue that ethnography is the most suitable method for studying an emotional and affective social movement. In the second part, the chapter will focus on the different parts of the Indignados movement, in order to portray their quite diverging claims and demands. However, the third part of the chapter will offer insights into how the Indignados create unity through affective practices, such as spatial occupation, silence/noise, as well as aesthetic expressions. The chapter will conclude that these visceral practices are also forms of hegemony, which are fully compatible with Laclau's version of the same. They are, in this thesis, referred to as hegemonic projects in order to emphasise the affective and transient nature of hegemony.

Ethnographic research, social movements and emotions

For this first set of data, this thesis has engaged with ethnographic method in the study of the Indignados for several reasons. As noted above, there is a lack of formal leadership within the Indignados. The movement is divided into small groups and sections, with no overall programme or central management. As such, interviewing key figures in the movement is a difficult endeavour, but it is possible to gain an understanding of the

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[61] As described in Chapter Two, above, emotional practices have gained a more prominent position within social movement studies. However, the focus in this chapter is how emotional practices can be conceptualised within a framework of hegemony, as to also understand emotions and affect as central for the construction of political identities, and therefore popular sovereignty.

movement's organisation from many types of sources. Second, one of the research aims is to understand how emotions play a significant role for social movement composition, and therefore for the construction of democracy. Emotions are a difficult thing to study, since they are rarely palpable or measurable, and come in many different shapes and forms. There have been attempts at measuring emotions through, for instance, focus groups, but, in general, the approach to the study of emotions in social movements has taken place through the lens of ethnography. For instance, many studies employ a participant observation-approach – largely built on an ethnographic framework – to understand the emotional working of a social movement (Allahyari 2001; Summers Effler 2005; Diphoorn 2013).

Ethnography, the way of 'telling it like it is' (Hobbs and May 1993: viii), is a compelling method when wanting to explain or understand a phenomenon which might not have any immediate markers, i.e. there is no obvious way of operationalising the research. In such instances, ethnography can offer a way for the researcher to penetrate the research object, to tell the story from the inside, or 'go native' (ibid.). Having emanated from the anthropological tradition – for instance Malinowski's seminal work on the Trobriands in New Guinea (1978 [1922]) or Evans-Pritchard's on the Azande (1967 [1937]) – ethnography is largely based on going to the site of the research object, to study practices *in situ*. Ethnography can focus on a complete 'live-in' method, where the researcher engages with the daily lives of the research objects. Another method could include in-depth interviews in order to grasp the specific emotional and inner lives of individuals.

One special feature about ethnography is its blatant exposure of the tensions between the research object and subject. When embarking on fieldwork, when going out to meet your research topic in real life, there is always a certain question buzzing at the back of your head: are you a researcher distinct from the people you are meeting, or should you try to fit in? Perhaps, more information can be acquired if the research subjects trust you and can identify with you? These choices and tensions should not be shied away from; rather, in ethnographic method this is part of the process. By recognising these tensions and bringing them to the fore, one can reflect on possible difficulties with, but also gains from being a researcher in the field.

Clifford Geertz put his finger right on this when constructing his argument in *Being Here, Writing There* (1988b). Geertz argues that the field research forces the researcher to sit on two chairs at the same time. She has to be at two places simultaneously, integrating into the culture of the research objects, and thus leaving her own culture behind. However, when coming home she has to communicate the findings to the research community, and therefore, in some sense, reintegrate into her own research subject culture (Hobbs 1993: 51). Hobbs describes the process of re-assimilation as 'pre-textual' where the researcher cannot distance herself from the experiences lived during the fieldwork. Or, in the words of Van Maanen: 'Fieldwork, as its core, is a long social process of coming to terms with a culture. And that includes the culture of the audience who inevitably will inform the shape, density, and ultimately the context of the text' (1988: 117). As such, ethnographic fieldwork entails a balancing between distance and authenticity. The researcher wants to gain as much trust and rapport with the research objects as possible, in order to retrieve the best and most exhaustive results. On the other hand, she wants to retain distance, to be able to re-tell the story when she comes home, and also answer a research question.

This thesis employed ethnographic method when conducting fieldwork in Madrid in May 2013. [62] The primary goal was to gain a more thorough understanding of the movement. From the beginning, I had settled on trying to integrate into the movement as much I could. As such, this thesis has made use of the participant-observer perspective, rather than the in-depth interview, which is also common in ethnographic research (Atkinson et al. 2001). During my time in Madrid, I tried to have as many conversations as possible, with as many different people as possible. Trying to cover the wide range of the movement and their different claims, I travelled through different neighbourhoods, visited assemblies with participants changing in age, class, and ethnicity. This approach allowed me to cover a wider set of material, as a participant-observer.

During the fieldwork, I also encountered the sometimes challenging balance between the research subject and object (Hobbs and May 1993: xi-xvii). Whilst being a researcher was considered better than being a journalist (of which there were many), there was still a distance between me and the members of the movement. Most of all, when mentioning that

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[62] The Indignados protest movement started in May 2011, and since then, May has become a month where there are plenty of demonstrations and protests, hence the reason for the fieldwork being conducted during this time.

I do research on democracy, I was almost always asked if I could give any advice. This was uncomfortable for me, seeing that my aim was not to educate the movement, but to learn from and about them. However, when participating in an assembly, you are always asked to introduce yourself and say a few words about the reason you are there. This provided me with a lot of material about the backgrounds and rationales of my research objects. However, this information could not be obtained without telling my own story, and sharing my own views on the topic of discussion (which could range from civil disobedience, democracy, housing, animal rights, feminism etc.). As such, I had to participate and integrate, I had to affect discussion, and be a part of the movement. On the other hand, I wanted to keep my observing eye, and be able to produce an academic contribution based on the material I gathered. Here, I found Hobbs approach of fieldwork as writing very helpful (Hobbs 1993). While in Madrid I kept a journal, a text which is not only for academic purposes. However, this text and its thoughts had laid the ground for the results described in this chapter. This transition between the lived experience and the academic text has also been described by Geertz:

> This is the world that produces [sociologists], that licenses them to do the kind of work they do, and within which the kind of work they do must find a place if it is to count as worth attention. In itself Being There is a postcard experience… it is Being Here, a scholar among scholars, that gets your sociology read, published, reviewed, cited, taught (1988a: 129-130).

Based on this conflation, or, at least, lack of clear distinction between the research object and the research subject, the text below will describe my own reflections, thoughts, and feelings while being in Madrid, in line with the ethnographic method described above. During my fieldwork, I took part in the movement's activities as much as possible, which included partaking in demonstrations, assemblies, meeting, as well as going to theatre plays and other performances. Therefore, the empirical material ranges from unstructured interviews, regular conversations, photos, videos, manifestos, newspaper articles, as well as my own observations. As is common in ethnographic research, I have made the choice not to focus solely on any one form of material, since the movement puts out their message through very varied channels. In addition, I have used my own emotional experiences in order to capture the affective components of the movement.

Speeches and discussions

One of the most commonly used forms of protesting for the Indignados is to organise assemblies. These assemblies are open to all, and mostly held outside in the squares. This is a return to the Greek notion of the *agora*, creating a space for public deliberation. In these assemblies, there was usually a set of speakers representing different organisations. They would open up the discussion by introducing their end of the story, which would include both overviews of policy changes, ideological statements, as well as personal accounts of how the crisis had affected them. After the opening statements, the organisers would open up the floor to discussion, in which anyone from the audience could participate. I have recorded numerous of both opening statements and discussions and in total I have about 5 hours of audio material.

Manifestos and publications

Even though the Indignados are employing many repertoires of protest, they are also using quite traditional methods. For instance, almost every group has a website and a manifesto, and they also hand out much printed material, such as leaflets, magazines and posters. These have formed a central part of my research.

Pictures and videos

Since I attended quite a few protests and manifestations while in Spain, I managed to take many pictures and also shoot a few videos. In total, I have taken about 200 pictures, which are mostly portraying demonstrations, and, in particular, placards. In addition, I have recorded some songs, chants, and exclamations. These have been included in the analysis below, and some of the pictures I have taken can be found in Appendix A.[63]

Informal interviews and conversations

The rationale for undertaking fieldwork in Spain was that I wanted to acquire a more in-depth understanding of what the protests were about, and what the protesters themselves felt about the situation. Beforehand, I thought that this could be easily attained by conducting interviews with the participants of the protest. However, once I was there, I realised that this might be more difficult than I had previously thought. First of all, it hit me how big this movement actually is, and it was difficult to identify any key persons

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[63] The pictures I have taken have been collected in an Appendix mainly for printing reasons.

whom I would interview. Second, there were several practical difficulties with conducting interviews. When I attended meetings and assemblies, I tried to function as a fly on the wall, and not make too much fuss about myself or my project. However, it is, of course, impossible to go unnoticed, and that would also have diminished my chances of talking with people. Nonetheless, the events that I attended were quite informal, and to then start asking predetermined questions to all people, and also scribbling down their answers or recording the discussion, was quite difficult. Even though I managed to meet some people several times, most of the contacts I made were entirely new, and, as such, I did not find it appropriate to bring the conversation into a formal interview situation. As a result, I have had numerous conversations with many different people. One must also consider the level of trust that is bestowed upon people with tape recorders and/or pen and paper. The discussions that I had did more often than not touch upon quite sensitive issues, people who had lost most of their savings, or were unable to support their families. I made the decision that when they actually open up to me, and we are engaged in conversation, they could find it quite rude, and potentially offensive, if I asked them to repeat what they said into a tape recorder. In addition, I was very often asked if I was from the media. In many of the events, the media presence was quite pronounced, and I feel that they often got different answers and stories than I did. As such, not being very keen on recording or taking notes, like many of the journalists, I have acquired a better understanding of what people felt and thought.

Personal experiences, field notes, and emotions

Another aspect of fieldwork made possible by the ethnographic approach is the reflexive perspective. Since there is no sharp line between the research subject and the research object, I myself am also to be studied. This becomes central when discussing emotions and affect. In many ways, the material I want to capture is not necessarily conveyable through words; I have to feel the experience. This has long been a central part of ethnography, since Geertz claimed that 'the ethnographer "inscribes" social discourse, he writes it down' (1973: 19). As a result, I have used my own feelings and experiences in order to capture the emotional and affective components of the movement. During my time in Madrid, I kept a reflexive journal, gathering all of the thoughts on my work in field notes, which are crucial for ethnographic participant observations (Emerson et al. 2001: 357). The field notes thus constitute a central part of the material, even though they have been

significantly reworked in the presentation below. It should also be noted that field notes are highly selective; they do not in any way claim to produce an exhaustive account of the events, but they frame and present the material in a particular way (Atkinson 1992: 17). As such, the version of ethnography employed for this thesis aligns itself with a perspective that denies any distinction between 'the field and its representational venue' (Gubrium and Holstein 1997: 71). The field notes from my time in Madrid have been especially valuable for the second part of this chapter, where I engage with the visceral practices of the Indignados.

The many – Tracing the difference

The main argument of this chapter centres on the paradoxical nature of the Indignados, and how they embody the tension between a hierarchical hegemonic system and a horizontal networked organisation, and how affective practices are central to understanding this tension. On the one hand, they come across as a myriad of claims and demands; they come from a variety of backgrounds. Still, there is something that unites them. This section will look into these expressions of difference, and how the movement is composed of groups which might not be so similar at first sight.

When analysing the Indignados, one can easily become overwhelmed with the sheer abundance of material available, of the multiplicities of groups and congregations. The analysis below does not in any way claim to be exhaustive; it merely aims at demonstrating the kaleidoscopic nature of the movement, as an ever-changing and dynamic body. Nonetheless, when studying social movements, we pay much attention to how the movement is organised; how they are choosing their leaders, how decision-making is conducted, and how the movements puts forward their claims and demands. This traditional approach, although very useful, can leave out other ways of identity construction. When it comes to the Indignados, they are often seen as an opposition to hierarchies, to strong leadership, and would rather embody a flat organisation, with little central coordination. This is nothing that is specific to the Indignados per se; indeed many movements and groups nowadays try to employ this tactic, for instance the Occupy Wall Street movement, or the World Social Forum. Castells argues that this is the strength of the Indignados, and this is what will ultimately transform social action (Castells 2012: 125). The Indignados themselves are acutely aware of the dispersion of their organisation. Figure

4 below, published in the weekly magazine 15M, shows how they are trying to incorporate a wide variety of claims and groups.
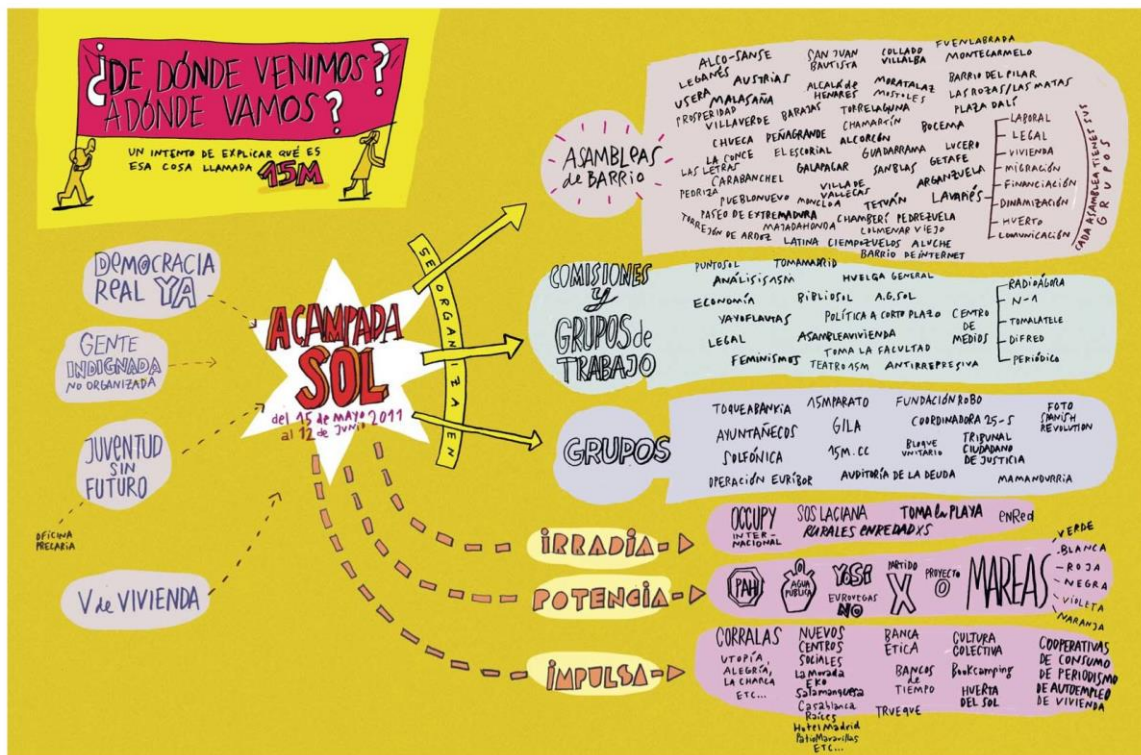
Figure 4: Overview of the Indignados movement (15M Madrid 2013)

This overview is mostly centred on the organisation in Madrid, as shown in Figure 4, above. The centre for the table is what is called *Acampada Sol* (The camp on Puerta del Sol), and refers to the occupation of the main square in Madrid which took place in 2011. *Acampada Sol* is one of the main umbrella terms used to refer to the Indignados, along with 15M. This has later multiplied and rippled into new forms of political action. As the figure above shows, there are now numerous working groups which do not fall under one of the 'main' organisations. In particular, the neighbourhood assemblies have grown to become an intricate part of the movement, advocating different forms of local governance, which can be more easily controlled by the people (Take the Square 2012). [64] Below, I will describe some of the groups which I came across during my time in Madrid, which embody some of the largest groups within the movement. I will describe their main causes,

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[64] Examples of local governance can include preventing evictions, or starting up organic vegetable gardens. This will be explained further in the section 'The neighbourhoods', below.

their main arguments, in order to depict their particularities and differences. This overview is by no means exhaustive, since there is an abundance of citizen initiatives throughout Spain. The list below includes the groups most visible and active in Madrid in May 2013, which naturally changes across time and space.

The homeless – La PAH

One of the most visible sections of the Indignados is the organisation La PAH - *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform for the Mortgage Victims). La PAH was founded in 2009 in Barcelona and, since then, the organisation has grown tremendously and is now represented throughout all of Spain. The main goal of the organisation is to stop evictions, and thus guarantee the '*derecho a una vivienda digna*' (right to decent housing), as it is described in the Spanish constitution (Congreso de los disputados 1978: Artículo 47). One of the most interesting features of La PAH is that they present a different sort of protest profile than what is normally seen in movements like this. *V de Vivienda* (H for Housing) is a similar organisation which is:

> […] a citizen initiative with no concrete ideological affinity, [and] comes from the idea that young and not so young people carry partial responsibility for the irrationality which we are suffering with regards to housing. One principle of the Constitution is the access to decent housing and we are not defending it adequately. (*Plataforma por una vivienda digna* 2014 [my translation]).

Much like in the United States, the 2008 financial crisis started in Spain in the housing market, where the country saw a great boom in the years preceding the crisis, and the price of housing rose 44 per cent between 2004 and 2008 (BBC News 2012). By contrast, it dropped 25 per cent between 2008 and 2012 (ibid.). However, since 2007, there have been more than 350.000 foreclosures in Spain (*Que no te hipotequen la vida*, 2014a). One should also compare the amount of social housing available, 2 per cent in Spain compared to around 20 to 30 per cent in Northern Europe (BBC News 2014).

One of the main problems that these organisations have identified when it comes to housing has been the conditions on which debt is repaid and mortgages are constructed in

Spain. According to the *Ley Hipotecaria* (Mortgage law), Article 140 (Congreso de los Disputados, 1946), a mortgage holder cannot default on a loan, something which has been possible in other crisis economies, such as the United States (Larrain Nesbitt 2012). This problem has given rise to what is commonly referred to as a *Iniciativa Legislativa Popular (ILP)* (Popular Legislative Initiative). The ILP is a separate initiative, which is mostly driven by the PAH, and is an attempt to use existing democratic channels to achieve change. The initiative is asking for three things. Firstly, that Spain introduces the *dación en pago* (payment in kind or non-recourse debt). This would give Spanish homeowners a chance to default and start over, something which is currently not a right, but is given to some borrowers. [65] Second, the initiative asks for a complete stop to evictions and foreclosures. Third, it is asking for a so- called social rent, where the evicted person should have the right to remain in their dwelling paying a rent which does not supersede 30 per cent of their monthly income, for a maximum period of 5 years (*Que no to hipotequen la vida*, 2014a). The ILP was presented to the Congress, but was later withdrawn due to insufficient support (*Que no to hipotequen la vida*, 2014b).

When I arrived at my first La PAH meeting, I was led down into a basement. It was fairly dark, hot, stuffy, and packed with people. I had thought that I could perhaps introduce myself, that the meeting would be much smaller, and that it would be possible for me to record or take pictures. The meeting was started up by a few representatives from La PAH who explained a few of the elementals of having issues with paying your mortgage. The things they said initially surprised me; for instance, they explained that one must always have decisions from the bank on paper otherwise it is invalid. The initial explanation from the representatives was constantly interrupted; people wanted to ask questions all the time, and one woman just stood up and said that she needed help immediately, because she was being evicted within a few weeks. Once the representatives had got through what they were supposed to say, the floor was opened up for questions. This transformed into a very disorganised and at times very angry discussion among the participants. People wanted to tell their own stories of how they were suffering from financial problems; they wanted help

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[65] The Spanish legal system around non-recourse debt is quite inconsistent. The opportunity can be given by a notary, but is not guaranteed. As such, Spanish banks often sell-on the debt to external actors and debt recovery agencies, which creates a very difficult social situation. Whereas this has been seen in other countries as well, most prominently the United States, the lack of an opportunity of default means that the borrower has to leave his/her dwelling, but still retains the debt. This makes it almost impossible to sign a new lease, or in other ways acquire a new residence (Charnock et al. 2014; Larrain Nesbitt 2012).

from La PAH immediately. However, time was scarce, and not all people could speak up. I saw a woman break into tears a few seats away from me, and an older man was so angry that he left. The desperation was very palpable.

What struck me most at this event, apart from it being quite chaotic and very emotional, was the demographic composition of the audience. Where almost all of the events that I had attended so far had been dominated by (mostly white) Spaniards, this crowd was almost all immigrants. Around the room where the meeting was being held, there were quite a few notice boards with advertisements for the Bolivian helpline, the Colombian helpline, plus helplines for a few other Latin American countries. The participants also introduced themselves as migrants who had arrived in Spain a few years ago, or were 2nd generation immigrants. This division was quite shocking to me. Much of the work going on within the Indignados is quite detached from this type of reality. As several of them told me, they would not be likely to attend other assemblies, partly because many of them had issues even getting to work because of public transportation costs, and partly because many of them wanted immediate relief, not a discussion about what democracy should and should not be. At the other end of the movement, people constantly emphasised that they do support all of these groups, especially those who are suffering the most from the crisis. However, the division between these two worlds is definitely tangible.

The young – Juventud sin Futuro (Youth without a future)

The Spanish level of unemployment is lingering around 25 per cent and youth unemployment is exceeding 50 per cent.[66] Needless to say, this is an acute problem for the country. The organisation *Juventud sin Futuro* (Youths Without a Future, JSF) was founded in April 2011, and consists of young people who want to reclaim what they consider being their future taken away from them by the establishment. They argue that the situation for youth in Spain today has worsened when it comes to employment, but also social and educational issues. This is taken from their manifesto:

> We are convinced that those who are governing us will not offer us
> any solution of the crisis, and that they are only concerned with
> creating gain for themselves. We are committed to organise

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[66] In August 2014, general unemployment was 24.4%. Youth unemployment was 55.5% for 2013 (Eurostat 2014).

ourselves from below to offer real alternatives to the youth and to

society in general. Our main conviction is that the only solution to

the crisis is to create democracy. (*Juventud Sin Futuro* 2013 [my

translation])

The organisation argues there is no hope for young people in Spain today. Even though you might have a university degree, breaking into the job market is a nightmare for many. JSF are working for a number of societal changes, which include: the right to housing – and especially an increase in the accessibility to rented accommodation; changes in labour legislation, to account for gender inequalities and a reduction of the working week to 35 hours; changes to the pension system, such as a lowering of the pension age to allow for more space for young people; changes in education, with a complete stop to cuts in the education sector, and an end to elitist educational facilities. Finally, they also call for a spreading of risk, where the risks taken by the banking sector should not be carried by the general people, and the principle of the more money you have, the more you have to pay in times of crisis (*Juventud sin Futuro* 2011: 86-91).

The deceived – Afectados por las Preferentes[67]

In the wake of the crisis, the banks in Spain have been having a difficult time. They have thus made significant cuts in their services, and the value of savings, stocks and bonds that private individuals have held have decreased in value, mostly due to the market failure in 2008.[68] For many, especially the elderly and retired people, this has meant that they cannot retire, or that they have had to sell their houses in order to make it financially. The *Asociación de usuarios de bancos, cajas y seguros* (Association of Users of Banks and Insurances, ADICAE) is an organisation which consists mainly of older people, who feel that the banks have betrayed them, not informing them about the risks of certain types of savings and thus contributing to the difficult situation they now find themselves in. The most pertinent case of fraud (which is what it is most commonly referred to these days) is a banking scandal of so called preferred stocks, *las preferentes*. This was a method of saving

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[67] In Spanish, it reads 'affected by the preferred funds'. This type of high-risk saving scheme meant loss of capital for many of the Spanish elderly.

[68] Similar to the situation in the United States, the Spanish economy also had an overreliance on the boost of the housing sector. Personal savings were often invested in property, and, when the property bubble burst in 2008, this had profound consequences for many savers. However, the saving scheme described in this section was built on investments in saving schemes with high amounts of risk, which became especially vulnerable in the financial crash in 2008.

which attracted numerous people – figures indicate that 700,000 people have been affected (Clavero 2013). In short, savers had not been informed of the risks inherent in these particular forms of saving, and, as a result, they lost on average 75 per cent of the initial value. People on the street also feel that they have been involuntarily transformed from regular depositors to investment professionals (ibid.), and they were not informed or alerted to the fact that the investment was eternal (lasting until year 9999 in some cases). This practice has been made possible due to a lack of control of the Spanish financial system. These services have been offered not only by banks, but also by other companies, such as insurance or energy providers. The rationale behind this form of hybrid saving was an acute need for capital in the early stages of the crisis, where banks and other financial actors were shaken by the developments in the United States and the general instability of the financial markets:

> The companies decided to use their commercial networks to market their product where they could easily profit: their clients, small savers without in depth knowledge of finance who based their relationship with the banks upon trust (Andres Llamas 2014 [my translation]).

In opposition to all of this, ADICAE has made it their task to try to save what can be saved:

> Regrettably, the collective problems of consumers are exacerbated every year: saving products which 'legally' swindle millions of families, commissions without any form of control, etc. Therefore, ADICAE will continue to fight to awaken the individual rage of the consumer. (ADICAE 2014 [my translation])

I met with representatives and activists from ADICAE many times during my time in Madrid. They were protesting outside numerous banks, and were putting up small theatre plays to put forward their message. What struck me the most was the age group: almost all of the activists were over 65, but they had no intention of backing down due to their age. In addition, most of them belonged to the same ethnic (white) group, and seemed to stem from middle class backgrounds. The stories they told me were similar: they had lived their

lives in peace and happiness, but had made the decision to invest some money in a preferred fund. This had then had devastating consequences on their pension. Since unemployment is so high, many of them were also supporting other family members from their pension, and if this decreased, it did not only affect that one individual, but most likely the whole family. In the poster below, we can read *Bankia fraude* (Bankia, a fraud).

Figure 5: Poster from ADICAE May 2013 (circulated at the Toque at Bankia protest May 9 2013)

The sick - La marea blanca (the white wave)[69]

Another effect of the crisis has been that governments, both central and regional, have wanted to privatise parts of the health care system, in order to cut costs. Several hospitals, primarily in Seville and Madrid, have been privatised, but this has produced a major public outcry. The problem, as the public sees it, is that there will be no gain for the health care system itself, and that the companies who are eligible for taking over these hospitals are

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[69] In Spanish, *marea blanca* means the white wave. In the Indignados movement, there are several sections named by different coloured waves. The concept of the wave is supposed to indicate a popular uprising, and recall an image of force.

generally part of an oligarchy where there are only a few actors on the market. Thus, in the beginning of May 2013, there was a public vote organised on the privatisation of the health care system.

The vote was called *Consulta por la sanidad publica* (Consultation on public health care) and encompassed almost 1 million people who signed a petition against both the cuts in the health care system and the privatisations. They answered the question: Are you in favour of a public universal health care system of high quality, and are you against its privatisation and the laws which would permit that? 951 975 people voted and 99.4 per cent answered yes. This vote took place in the municipalities of the Madrid region, but there were similar initiatives throughout the country. In Figure 6, below, we can read *Tú también decides* (you also decide), and the following is taken from their manifesto:

> The Spanish constitution from 1978 recognises the right to the protection of health. The constitution also states that sovereignty resides in the people. It is therefore the people who can and should demand that their rights are respected. We want a public health care system, which is universal and of high quality, based in the principles of solidarity and equality. (Consulta por la Sanidad Publica 2013 [my translation])

Figure 6: Poster from the Marea blanca about the health care vote (circulated at polling stations in Madrid May 2013)

Figure 7: Poster from the Marea Verde advertising the educational strike, May 9 2013 (circulated at the strike).

147

The curious - La marea verde (the green wave)

Another important component of the Indignados is the movement against the cuts in the educational system. In a time where many young people are unemployed, going into university education has become a necessary alternative for many. However, now the fees are being raised, and the number of places has decreased, leaving a greater number of young people outside of the higher education system. This has not been very well-received, and given rise to the *Marea Verde*, and several protests against the educational cuts, such as the poster in Figure 7, above, advertising an educational strike and saying: 'your crisis is evicting us from our classrooms'. The call for better education was initiated in Madrid in 2011. The background cause was the cuts implemented by the Madrid regional government. Since then, the general educational budget has decreased by 16.7 per cent (Silio 2013). Even though the resources have decreased significantly, the government, and especially the Minister for Education, José Ignacio Wert, has tried to take measures against the decreasing quality of Spanish education. They have therefore introduced the so called *Ley Wert* (Law Wert), named after the minister himself, which is officially called *The Organic Law for Improving Quality in Education*. The law contains a bundle of reforms, which are mostly geared towards reducing the cost of education, whilst ensuring a high rate of completion of secondary school, which is very low in Spain in comparison with other countries (Silio, 2013).[70] However, this law has not been met without resistance. Critics have pointed to how the number of state-funded scholarships is being reduced and replaced by confessional scholarships, that is, scholarships funded by the church. The law has thus been accused of being 'no more than the other face of educational cuts, which strives backwards, which will segregate pupils from early ages and which will, in addition, support private schools with public funding and, therefore, the Church' (Aunión 2013 [my translation]). In addition, there are several indications that the law will favour gender-segregated schools, something which has also been very controversial.

In the light of this, *Marea Verde*, the Green wave, has gathered a lot of support from people working in the educational sector, but also from the general public. They argue that 'since education belongs to and is the responsibility of all citizens, and since the school of today is the society of tomorrow, we condemn the destruction of a public teaching system,

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[70] On average, 14.9 per cent of the population in the EU have not finished secondary school. In comparison, the figure in Spain is 24.9 per cent (Silio 2013).

an indispensable condition of a democratic society' (*Marea Verde*, 2013). *Marea Verde* has organised several general educational strikes, and enjoys the support of most educational professionals (El País 2013).

The democracy fighters – ¡Democracia real ya! (Real democracy now!)

One of the most pronounced sections of the Indignados is the democracy section. They have constantly raised the point that this crisis is not only about the issues mentioned above, but, when it comes down to it, the problem lies in that the government and the people do not have enough of a connection, there is a legitimacy crisis, and there is a need to radically change the way in which we think about democracy, participation, as well as representation (see Picture 1, Appendix A and figure 8, below).

Figure 8: Picture from Twitter account @Somos15M 5 May 2014: 'To participate is not only to vote every four years'

I attended a few meetings of the *Grupo de Trabajo de Política a Corto Plazo* (The working group for short-term politics). This working group has also published several works on the constituency in Spain, and how we can reform and rethink what the constituent power means. In Spain, constituency mostly refers to the constitutional power of the people and

how this is respected or not. For instance, this is taken from one of their more recent documents:

> Democracy could be something phenomenal, if it were ever present. The entire world is claiming to be democratic, but always as a second option. First of all, we are Catholics, we are socialists, or bankers, or whatever. It is difficult to find anyone who openly rejects the implementation of democratic decision-making procedures, but even more difficult to find anyone who are willing to do this before their real priorities are satisfied, or before this is imposed by force. But, in Política Corto Plazo, we believe that society can only function in a smooth way when all the people understand that we have to make decisions horizontally and inclusively, and this has to be done as the first option. This is what we are working for within The Acampada. (*Grupo de Trabajo de Política a Corto Plazo* 2013 [my translation])

This fairly advanced text should be contrasted with the absence of any such discussions within the meetings of La PAH that I attended, where the most basic knowledge about banking and finances, such as interest rates, was unknown to many of the participants. This indicates a deep gulf between the different parts of the movement, and different levels of awareness and education.

Most of the people that I have talked with within DRY do not feel represented by anyone, and this gives rise to strong anti-establishment sentiments. If we look at Picture 2 (in Appendix A), we can see a poster saying 'Franco has died, the PP continues, thanks to the PSOE'. The PP, *Partido Popular*, is the conservative party currently in power. The PSOE is the social democratic party, which was in power when the crisis hit in 2008. In other words, the quote means that the differences between the government of Franco, PP, and PSOE are minimal. This picture, coupled with many more and with personal stories told to me, confirms the general sentiment that the gap between the people and the governing power in Spain has grown even deeper, and there is little to no faith left in 'formal' politics.

The neighbourhoods – Toma los barrios (Take the neighbourhoods)

The Indignados also have strong local platforms. In so-called *asambleas de barrios* (neighbourhood assemblies), people gather to try to retain or recover local governance. Even though I spent several weeks in Madrid, having some kind of idea that this is where centre of attention should be, but, while being there, I realised that I might as well have gone to Barcelona, to Malaga, to Valencia, or any other of the bigger Spanish cities. In this movement, having a strong connection with your local community has become very important, and almost all of the organisations that I studied have numerous local offices and branches. These branches are not governed by any central unit, but act independently within a common framework. For instance, they put on their own events, but try to coordinate these events with their fellow branches, in order to attract more attention. In pictures 3 and 4 (Appendix A), members of local branches, Pedrezuela and Villalba, are carrying their banners in the protest march on May 12. On the banners, they have their own logos and names, but they also have references to the bigger movement. The neighbourhood assemblies focus on a variety of issues. One of these is the construction of so called *bancos de tiempo* (time banks), where the currency is time instead of money. The system is supposed to support a higher valuation of services normally done by volunteers (Take the square 2012). In general, the neighbourhood assemblies have created a variety of social initiatives to increase local governance, among which we can include local vegetable gardens as to enhance consumption of locally produced goods, as well as initiatives to counter racist developments in their close area, for instance the campaign 'No human being is illegal', formed by the *Brigadas Vecinales de Observación de los Derechos Humanos* (Neighbourhood Brigades for Human Rights Monitoring). It is most prominent 'in neighbourhoods with big immigrant collectives, with the goal of rendering visible the police raids on the immigrant population, as well as denouncing the xenophobic and racist bias that they usually display' (ibid.).

The pages above have outlined several different sections of the Indignados. The picture is quite clear: the movement is home to a great variety of claims and demands, but also to many different age groups, genders, and social segments. Naturally, there are many attempts at explaining what it is that keeps them together. One of the most common explanations that I often come across is a general critique of capitalism. Many of the problems which the Indignados are facing, and many of the issues which they are

articulating themselves, could indeed be subsumed under a general anti-capitalist agenda. However, there might be more to the picture than that. When I spoke with members of the movement, many of them did confirm this critique of capitalism. Especially for some segments of the movement, often young university students, capitalism is the root of the problem, and the solution lies in a defying of the market economy and what they see as its oppressive structure. However, equally common is a different view: the personal experience. Many participants of the movement did not articulate any specific ideology or cause; they were just experiencing problems in their everyday life, and were looking for a solution or a different alternative.

This leaves us at a crossroad. One the one hand, one can try to assign ideological belonging to the protesters. Whilst this may well be accurate in many of the cases, there might be some in which it is not. This is also a foundational claim of Laclau's idea of hegemony: many small demands are subsumed under, as Laclau argues, one falsely universal demand. In the following paragraphs, I will offer a slightly different take on this. I will argue that the experience articulated by the protesters themselves can actually serve as a sufficient bond between them, and I will refer to this type of bond as visceral ties. I will show how it is, in fact, the practices of the movement which gives it unity, not any specific cause, and that this can be conceptualised in a reworked version of Laclau's hegemony: the hegemonic project.

The one – Unity in the visceral

> Today is an important day. Usually, we focus on our differences, but today, we focus on what unites us. (*Asociación de Facultativos Especialistas de Madrid* 2012 [my translation])

> We are ordinary people. We are like you: people, who get up every morning to study, work or find a job, people who have family and friends. People, who work hard every day to provide a better future for those around us. Some of us consider ourselves progressive, others conservative. Some of us are believers, some not. Some of us have clearly defined ideologies, others are apolitical, but we are all concerned and angry about the political, economic, and social outlook which we see around us: corruption among

152

politicians, businessmen, bankers, leaving us helpless, without a voice. This situation has become normal, a daily suffering, without hope. But if we join forces, we can change it. It's time to change things, time to build a better society together. (*Democracia real YA!* 2011[English in the original]).

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. (*AcampadaSol Madrid* 2014 [my translation]).

As should have become apparent by this time, the Indignados is composed of a wide variety of claims. They care about different issues, and have different ideological standpoints. In addition, they say that they adhere to an organisational model which promotes horizontality over verticality, and, as such, they have no assigned leadership. Nonetheless, as this thesis argues, there is a movement which is called the Indignados. Indeed, it is intuitive to conceptualise the world in people who agree with each other when it comes to content. If both you and I support more resources for health care, for instance, why do we not join forces? Whilst this is a valid way of thinking about social action, is it valid for the Indignados? Can we explain and understand their modes of working solely by considering their claims and demands?

Instead of a claim-oriented way of organisation, in what follows I will suggest that focus be turned towards those elements of protest which have been previously considered liminal, but which, in this analysis, will become central: the visceral. As such, this argument critiques the extant literature on protest and democracy – social movement theory, deliberative democracy, and the bio-political critique of Laclau – as presented in the previous chapters, in three different ways:

1. It turns against social movement theory in that emotions are not solely instrumental, but instead constitutive, in the creating of political subjectivity. In addition, it argues that affect should not be disjointed from meaning-making, in opposition to contemporary affect theorists.

2. It turns against deliberative democracy in the sense that it sees the imperfections of democracy as constitutive, and that affect and emotion are central in allowing for

these imperfections. As such, emotions and affect – and not only rationality – are crucial to the creation of political identities,

3. It turns against horizontal networks, through the sheer fact that the Indignados is *one* movement, although comprised of a sometimes chaotic multiplicity. It argues, in line with Laclau, that denying the existence of nodes is to deny the possibility of political articulation.

Ultimately, it aims to emphasise one important aspect of Laclau's idea of hegemony, that it is both linguistic and material (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 109). As such, the argument centres in on that hegemony is made possible by an absence, but this absence does not necessarily succeed in becoming the false universal as we are used to see it (as charismatic leadership or strong ideological directions). As such, Laclau's notion of the absence as a presence remains central, but the nature of the hegemonic articulation is put into question and the chapter demonstrates the inherently affective components of the hegemonic project, and therefore of political subjectivity.

As such, this chapter focuses on what has been considered being on the borders of social action. By bringing the previously subordinate modes of organisation into the fore, this allows for a deeper understanding of what counts as unity formation. Ultimately, this has significant implications for understanding the Indignados. Within the framework of the hegemonic project, we can perceive of a mode of political subjectivity which is radically different to that of deliberative democracy, but which also departs from the polarisation within the hegemony/autonomy debate. Whilst attempting to emphasise certain elements of a theory of hegemony, the hegemonic project is nonetheless in line with the Laclaudian model. The most important point to make here is that a theory of hegemony does allow for an affective account of political being and becoming. Whilst this is not emphasised as much in the application of Laclau's work as would perhaps be desirable, there are no inherent contradictions between a theory of hegemony and the hegemonic project. The hegemonic project merely wishes to emphasise the affective nature of hegemony, and reinforce the visceral character of the absence/presence nature of the empty signifier.

In contrast to other accounts of social movements, this chapter argues that instead of seeing practices of movements as means to an end, the practices and the embodiments become

ends in and of themselves. In order to do this, this section narrows in on three dimensions: Spatial occupation, silence/noise, and aesthetics. These dimensions all exhibit the same qualities: they are breeding grounds for potential hegemonies. The specific nature of the dimensions, namely an inherent emptiness which can be colonised by a variety of claims and demands, make them excellent spaces for pinning down signification. However, what is different from hegemony is the instability and transience of the hegemonic operation; hence, the creation of the hegemonic project. As will be shown below, the creation of the false universal is highly perishable and does not constitute any long-term hegemonic stability.

Come together – Unity in the common space

One of the most pronounced ways of protest for the Indignados are public assemblies. The assemblies are open to all, and are most often organised by the kind of organisations that I have mentioned above. The level of cooperation between the organisations is fairly high, and they do not seem to want to exclude anyone from this practice. The assemblies are most often opened by one or several representatives of these organisations, who deliver some sort of opening statement. The assembly can also have a quite specific given theme, where the opening speeches introduce said theme, and thus start off discussion. In Figure 9, below, we can see all of the assemblies taking place on May 12, which were divided into different neighbourhoods of Madrid, but which then all gathered on *Puerta del Sol*.

Figure 9: Poster advertising the 2013 May 12 demonstration and its assemblies (circulated at the demonstration)

Typically, this kind of assembly takes place somewhere outside, for instance in a square, and one can come and go as one likes. The organisers provide a microphone for everyone to hear. After the opening statements, the floor is opened to anyone, and, indeed, it is a wide variety of people that decide to speak their mind on things. Some of the opinions voiced go by almost unnoticed, but some of them trigger ovations and also sometimes develop into a debate.

Even though the assemblies were very inclusive of most people, there were differences between them. Some of the assemblies took place very late at night, and consisted mostly of young people, who seemed to combine this practice with their regular evening gatherings (see picture 5, Appendix A). Indeed, the assemblies often seemed to transform into some kind of party, albeit a fairly politically-minded one. On the other hand, there were assemblies that were much more organised. These generally took place earlier in the day and were mostly attended by a more mature crowd, who seemed to have a different approach to the whole assembly as a concept. At those events, there was more focus on the

156

invited speakers, the opening statements, and less focus on the audience as participants in the assembly.

There was also a third kind of assembly, which more closely resembled a workshop. In these meetings, the assembly would split into small working groups, each with a specific theme or question to discuss. The group would then construct mind-maps or posters, writing down the main points of discussion. This, to me, seemed to be quite an effective way of getting to everyone's opinions; in the small groups everyone had to present themselves and why they were there, and this created a much more intimate environment, and also an understanding for the different stories told. Unlike the other assemblies where one person generally talked to an audience, this method became more like a conversation. The output also became much more tangible, as the posters clearly demonstrated what the groups had been talking about. At the end of an assembly like this, the small groups would present their discussions to the general crowd, and there would be questions and comments. Pictures 6 and 7 (Appendix A) give an idea of what the output could look like.

The assembly constitutes a vital and central form of unity. In one of the events I attended was an alternative plenum organised by the *Red por la dignidad de los barrios y pueblos de Madrid* (Network for the dignity of the neighbourhoods and people of Madrid, see picture 8 Appendix A). As we can see in Figure 10, below, the event encompassed many of the different issues which are raised in the movement more generally. In this specific event, they were talking about social security and a minimum income, about mental health issues, about precariousness, about immigration, housing, and education. These are all distinct issues – as already noted, these organisations are all striving for different goals – but they still unite under the same banner, and there is strong sympathy and solidarity between the different sections.

Figure 10: Poster advertising an alternative plenum in Madrid May 11 2013 (circulated at the plenum)

At the protests and assemblies that I attended, people always introduced themselves as coming from a certain community, but then, they connected their local problems to a more general articulation of the political climate. Figure 11, below, is an advertisement for the big protest march that took place on May 12. It is quite telling in that it shows how the different branches of Madrid are starting out in different places, and they have organised their marches independently, but then they all unite at Puerta del Sol, the main square of Madrid. This makes the main square an assembly point for a variety of backgrounds.

158

Figure 11: Map of the demonstration routes in the 2013 May 12 demonstration (circulated at the demonstration)

The assemblies are normally based on a strong sense of horizontality. These forms of discussions reject any kinds of leaders and hierarchies. They are also striving for equal participation and a favouring of storytelling, which posits a stark contrast to other, more formal, kinds of discussion, as seen in this quote from a neighbourhood organisation:

> We believe that if anything has characterised this movement it has been the capacity to put together vastly different realities and propose actions through a complex, but infinitely rewarding, process of assemblyism. This is a way of doing politics and of participating public life which has nothing in common with the narrow borders offered to us by the representative democracy that we know. We believe in our maxim: All power to the assemblies. (Toma los barrios Madrid 2014 [my translation])

However, a consequence of this strong focus on horizontality is that there is no necessary general outcome of the discussions. Many times, people would leave the assemblies saying that they were happy that they got to talk and speak up, but there is not necessarily any forms of final conclusions. As such, the unity which is perceived in the square is short-

159

lived, and may not stretch further than the physical space. Nonetheless, the people on that square, in that very moment, feel a sense of belonging to the movement, myself included.

The idea that space can become a ground for the articulation of political ideas is not novel, but has been given special attention in the field of critical geography (Lefebvre 1991; Holston 1995). The movements of the 21st century, such as the Indignados, but also Occupy and the Arab Spring movements have all had a very strong focus on occupation, on (re)claiming public space, but how does this relate to the creation of political subjects? Many of the critical geographers are expressing the thought that they very physical coming together, not just the sayings but also the doings, are vital in positioning oneself as a political subject, and also as being recognised as such. As Rancière puts it, we need a 'capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience' (Rancière 1999: 35). However, the difference between critical geographical accounts of space and the function of space in the hegemonic project is the emptiness of space (although it is never entirely empty, but always carries the *potentiality* of assuming the role of a false universal). Whilst space for a critical geographer is often something which can be recuperated, or used as a mean for emancipation, space in the hegemonic project functions as the empty signifier, albeit a physical version of the same. Space is not something which is a mean to an end, it not something which is used by the movement to create political identities. Space, the coming-together, and the being-in-common, are in and of themselves creations of identity. When I was in Madrid, I went to assemblies almost every day and night. They could not have been more different. There were people talking about the most varied things, people were being listened to, but without having to subscribe to any sort of agenda, without any further commitment. The unity was made in the physical presence. There is something special about being in a large group. There is something special about going to a live music event, instead of listening to a recording. This feeling instils a sense of commonality, a commonality which can be equally present at a rock concert as at a political meeting in Madrid. Therefore, space is one of the vital components when considering the visceral ties of the Indignados. Importantly, this being-in-common is not an absence of representation or signification. The space can function as the empty signifier, to be filled with various forms of content. As such, these visceral and affective forms of protest could also be forms of hegemony, as parts of a hegemonic project.

Of this we cannot speak – Unity in silence and noise

Moving on from space, but remaining within the remit of common physical presence, another feature about the protests was the use of an absence of words, but only silence or noise. When I watch the video recordings that I have from the protests marches, one can hear a lot of chanting, singing and the like, but quite often, there is no specific direction to the sound, there is no way that one can make sense of what is going on. When showing these video clips to my colleagues, most of them get quite annoyed, it is too loud, there is no pleasure in listening to it, and there is no message in it. They shake their heads and ask me why on earth this is important, people are merely yelling, blowing in their whistles, and the whole thing comes off as quite chaotic. However, while being there, I did not really think about this as not making sense. When I was stood in the middle of the crowd, and almost wanting to cover my ears because it was so loud, what struck me was not the meaninglessness of it all, but rather the powerful effect which it instilled on me. Those moments, when the noise was almost unbearable, was when I felt the strongest emotional effect. This effect was noticeable also among the people around me, who both cheered with joy, or yelled with anger.

As a contrast, there were also very strong moments of silence. In the 12M demonstration,[71] after having marched from different parts of Madrid cheering and making a lot of noise, the protesters all gathered in the middle of *Puerta del Sol* (pictures 9 and 10, Appendix A). The atmosphere was amazing, people were having a good time, the sun was shining, and the whole event was more similar to a feast than an angry demonstration. Speeches were being held at some point, but these were almost impossible to hear due to the many different things going on everywhere, music playing, people dancing and singing. At that point, most of the participants had been on the move for several hours, myself included. Until this moment, I had fervently been taking notes, but now I was experiencing sort of a cognitive drainage, I could not take in more information, I was tired of taking pictures, and I was tired of documenting. Then, at 8 pm, another event was scheduled, a *grito mudo* (silent shout). In the general chaos of the square, which had up until then been a myriad of different expressions of protest, quietude spread. Everything stopped, the singing was interrupted, the chanting halted, the dancing stilled, the speeches silenced. In this sudden vacuum, people raised their hands waving them into the air. All you could hear was the

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[71] In 2013, the anniversary of the 15M movement took place on the 12th of May, hence 12M.

distant buzz of the generators used for the microphones, and some birds in the sky. We stood together, not making a sound, waving our hands, looking up into the blue, seeing all the photographers on the rooftops. This is probably the moment that is the most strongly inscribed in my memory. Rarely have I before experienced such ties with a crowd and that without saying a single word. The gesture itself, moving waving your hands silently in the air, is a gesture commonly used by the Indignados. This is used instead of clapping your hands, instead of saying bravo. As such, as soon as anyone says anything that people agree with, this is met not with words of approval or applause, but with a silent gesture in the air. As seen in Figure 12, below, using muzzles is another silent mode of resistance for the Indignados, and has recently been common in relation to the *Ley Mordaza*.

Figure 12: People in silent protest with muzzles (15M Madrid 2012)

In the hegemonic project, silence and noise can have the same function of resistance and political subjectivity as space. This is supported by some observations made by Slavoj Zizek on the Occupy movement. In a short piece on the Occupy movement, Zizek argues that silence is the ultimate form of resistance: 'Everything we say now can be taken (recuperated) from us – everything except our silence. This silence, this rejection of dialogue, of all forms of clinching, is ominous and threatening to the establishment, as it should be' (Zizek 2011). In addition to being a very sophisticated form of resistance, silence also creates space for new political subjects. In the absence of words, or in the presence of noise, strong ties of unity are created. This was my experience on *Puerta del Sol*, and it was my experience while being in numerous noisy protest actions. My experience was also shared by many others. When I asked people about how they felt

162

about the 12M demonstrations, many expressed similar views, saying that they felt a strong sense of belonging, even though the overall theme was nothing but silence or noise. Indeed, Zizek also criticises the many voices against these types of movement, who argue that 'they need to be for something specific, and not just against something, because if you're just against something, someone else will fill the vacuum you create' (Zizek 2011). This is a vital statement, and something which demonstrates the narrow idea of political protest today. A movement is not seen as a 'proper' movement, unless it channels its demands into something more specific than merely 'being against'. What these sorts of ideas are completely occluding is the possibility for unity in the visceral, and how this sensation is equally strong as to agree on whether to spend more money on education or not.

As such, silence is an intricate part of the hegemonic project. In the empty space, the vacuum, which silence constitutes, there is a possibility for unity, which is formed in that very moment. However, what is important to note is the frail and temporary nature of the hegemonic project produced in silence. Whilst the concept of hegemony seemingly connotes long-lived and all-encompassing ideas or ideologies, the subjectivity formed through silence is fickle and easily put out, like the flame of a candle.

The aesthetics of resistance – Unity in artistic expression

The third dimension of unity studied in this chapter is aesthetical expression. Being a vital part of protest, and widely used as a form of resistance, aesthetical expressions allow for societal critique on a subliminal level. I mostly witnessed these forms of protest in settings like demonstrations, and they are common methods for the Indignados. For instance, using music and dancing has been very present when La PAH are trying to prevent evictions; they gather large crowds of people outside the house of the people being evicted, thus preventing the officials from getting in and taking over the property.

The first day I was in Madrid, I took part in a *Toque a Bankia*[72] protest. This protest was taking place outside of one of *Caja Madrid's* offices (part of the Bankia conglomerate), and consisted mostly of older people with banners. All of a sudden, a group of young people turn up, carrying a large construction, which at first I did not recognise, but later

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

saw was a guillotine. Then, they enacted a small play right there and then, where a man representing a bank director was beheaded under the guillotine (see pictures 11 and 12, Appendix A). I later found out that this group is called *La escuela política La Guillotina* (The political school the Guillotine), and they are offering classes in how people can take part in politics more actively, and want to create awareness of corruption and the flaws in the democratic system. That all makes perfect sense to me, but when I first witnessed the little performance in the square, I mostly saw it with reference to what one first think of when you see a guillotine, namely the decapitation by the people of political leaders that have lost their power. The performance was over in an instant, and the theatre group vanished as quickly as they had shown up. Whilst they were performing, a crowd gathered around them, and I could see that many of my fellow spectators were amused and excited by the show. However, as soon as they departed, everyone went back to the original protest, and the sense of solidarity and community we had for a brief moment shared with the group was gone. When I was in the 12th of May march, almost the first thing that I came across was how much singing and dancing there was (see pictures 13 and 14, Appendix A). For instance, there was one dance performed to a chant, where the lyrics went like this:

Obreros y estudiantes, tenemos un deseo	Workers and students, we have a wish
Que para la privada no haya dinero	That there will be no money for the private
Dinero por aquí, dinero por allá,	Money goes hither, money goes thither
La pública 'pa' lante', privada 'pa' tras'	The public goes forward, the private goes back
Sanidad, sanidad, sanidad, yo quiero	Health, Health, Health, I want
Pública de calidad, pública de calidad,	Quality Public health care
Para el mundo entero	For the whole world [my translation]

This is an interesting song. Whilst the lyrics in this version are indeed quite serious, and touch upon quite an important issue, namely the privatisation of health care providers, we can compare it with the original lyrics for the tune. The song is originally called *Carnaval, carnaval* and is sung by singer Georgio Dann. Dann is famous in Spain for producing so called summer music, something you would play outside in the summer while having a barbeque.

164

Carnaval Carnaval Carnaval te quiero LA la la la la la la Bailaremos sin parar En el mundo entero ...	Carnival Carnival Carnival, I love you Lalalalalala We will dance without stop In the whole wide world [my translation]

One can ponder upon why it is that the activists chose this song for their message. Does it not seem to be slightly out of place? When I asked them, I got the answer that the point is not to have a song which coincides with the message, but something which people can recognise. Also, they wanted to pick a song which 'made people feel happy' and feel a sense of empowerment and community. This is interesting to me. Instead of focusing on spreading a certain message, it was more important for the activists to pick a medium for the message which would instil an emotion and therefore create a sense of community. Indeed it did. I found myself singing the song for days after I heard it the first time. They kept on repeating this song, over and over, and in general, they seemed to be very happy and joyful, dancing away.

During the march, there was also a group of people with all sorts of percussion instruments. One could hear them from afar, and they sounded a bit like ominous-sounding ancient war drums, as you see on film. However, when they came closer, one could hear the rest of it too, and then it resembled more of a carnival feeling. This music did not have any words, nor did it have a melody, it was just a rhythm that you could follow. However, this had a very large impact, and people started to dance all around it, forgetting about their chants and their slogans, just following the beat.

When arriving at *Puerta del Sol*, there was a young man that climbed a statue with his saxophone (see picture 15, Appendix A). He started playing a few songs, and the crowd sang with him. First of all, he played the *Internationale*, a song which I know well, and which I expected to be familiar to the people around me as well. However, not many people knew it, and thus did not sing along. However, afterwards he started playing a song that was previously unfamiliar to me, however, this one everyone knew. They sang as loudly as they could, trying to overcome the noise of the drumming which was right next to us. This song seemed to fill people with happiness and enthusiasm, and later, when I

asked people about the song, I understood why. The song, *A las barricadas*, is a famous tune from the period of the Civil War (1936-1939), and was mostly sung by the anarchists. What surprised me was that although this is a fairly old piece, almost all people around me knew it, regardless of their age group. As seen in picture 15, Appendix A, there is also a flag of the Second Spanish Republic [73] (1931-39), and was also used by the exile government in Spain until 1977, during the dictatorship. These symbols, although quite old, have thus transcended their original meaning, and are now more general symbols for resistance.

Negras tormentas agitan los aires	Black storms shake the sky
nubes oscuras nos impiden ver	Dark clouds blind us
Aunque nos espere el dolor y la muerte	Although pain and death await us
contra el enemigo nos llama el deber.	Duty calls us against the enemy
El bien más preciado	The most precious good
es la libertad	is liberty
hay que defenderla	And it must be defended
con fe y valor.	With faith and courage
Alza la bandera revolucionaria	Raise the revolutionary flag
que del triunfo sin cesar nos lleva en pos	which from triumph unceasingly bears us high
Alza la bandera revolucionaria	Raise the revolutionary flag
que llevará al pueblo a la emancipación)	which from triumph unceasingly bears us high
En pie el pueblo obrero ¡a la batalla!	Worker, on your feet. To battle!
hay que derrocar a la reacción	Reaction must be overthrown.
¡A las Barricadas! ¡A las Barricadas!	To the Barricades! To the Barricades!
por el triunfo de la Confederación.	For the triumph of the Confederation
¡A las Barricadas! ¡A las Barricadas!	To the Barricades! To the Barricades!
por el triunfo de la Confederación.	For the triumph of the Confederation[74]

When I looked around, I could see many people being happy to be hearing the song again. Later, I asked several people about the song, and what it meant to them. I got answers such as: 'it symbolises our struggle' or 'we are used to hearing this song in these sorts of moments'. None of them touched upon the actual background of the song, but were rather concerned with how it had come to mean something wider than its original function.

Another event where singing played a big role was at the end of the alternative plenum that I have mentioned above. Then, the organisers thanked everyone for coming, and it was

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[73] The Second Spanish Republic was instituted after the abolition of the monarchy following municipal elections in 1931, but fell when Franco took power in 1939, after the Civil War (Beevor 1982).
[74] Translation from https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/music/lyrics/es/a-las-barricadas.htm (Accessed 4 June 2014)

obvious that this was the end of the night. All of a sudden, the people broke out in the same song, *A las Barricadas*, which all of them seemed to know. For the participants, it seemed like they were meeting an old friend, someone they had not seen in a while, but were happy to reencounter. The whole night, they had debated their different backgrounds, described their different struggles, and this was the song which finished it all off, and tied it all together.

Another way of protest was theatre and opera. During the weeks I was in Spain, there were several performances throughout the city, which were connected to the 15M. One of them was *El crepusculo del Ladrillo* (The dusk of the brick, see poster in Figure 13), which was described as a critique of capitalism. The opera itself was very interesting, but was struck me more was how it was set up before start. The whole scenography and all of the material used for the performance was gathered with the help of the audience; everyone was supposed to pitch in and help prepare the scene.

Ópera Buffa de Tiempos de Crisis
EL CREPÚSCULO DEL LADRILLO
19 mayo 2013 1pase 18h 2pase 20h
La Tabacalera
actúa Solfónica y más
amadrina Nave Trapecio
organiza Asambleas 15m

Figure 13: Poster for the opera 'El crepúsculo del ladrillo' in May 2013 (circulated at the event)

In addition to this, there was another performance which really caught my attention. This theatre piece, called *La Guerra de las imágenes* (The war of images), is also a critique of the crisis, but goes further when it comes to developing the subtle messages within it. While the opera above was fairly openly anti-capitalist, this play speaks more to our unconscious, and this is also their ambition. In their programme, one can read:

167

> The war of images is a masterly and prophetic tragicomedy, a
> metaphor for the current crisis, and a work with a message about
> the creation of values, of beliefs, and of a freer humanity, more
> concretely; free to feel, capable of governing their emotions and
> beliefs. The freedom to feel, or the knowledge of the emotional
> world has changed entirely in the 21st century with a new frontier
> consisting of several contemporary intellectuals such as Eduard
> Punset, Antonio Damasio, Claudio Naranjo, and also the 15M.
> (Periodismo digno 2013 [my translation])

Thus, in this piece, we are subject to a form of protest which speaks more to our non-cognitive senses; when I saw the performance I found myself not thinking so much about whether or not the austerity measures were justified or not (which crossed my mind fairly often otherwise), but rather it took me on a journey describing different power relations, and people's emotional responses to them. The play does not describe the crisis in an aggregate manner, but gives a personal and intimate account of suffering, of fighting something against which you can never win, and what this does to one's idea of self-governing and power over one's own feelings and actions. It is also heavily based on the idea that emotion and reason are strongly intertwined.

All of the aesthetical expressions above carry similar support for the hegemonic project. The forms of protest for the movement are indeed varied and multi-faceted, but speak to a similar focal point: the sensation. The goal with the protest has been to make people feel something, to make them experience a sense of community and not only a cognitive agreement with the causes presented. As explained by Antonio Damasio (1995), emotions are indeed vital to the whole idea of the self, and not opposed to reason. This is also something which becomes prominent within the Indignados, where their sense of self, their unity, as well as their subjectivity, lingers in the visceral.

The hegemonic project of indignation

Unity in absence – the affective mechanism

In the paragraphs above, a picture of the Indignados as a highly complex movement has emerged. At first sight, one can venture to see them in various ways. One could, for

instance, look at them as completely disparate and dispersed, with no overall claim or agenda, which ultimately makes them inconsequential, which is one of the challenges posed to democracy. This is not the view taken in this thesis, but it is one which needs to be constantly countered and questioned. On the other hand, one could also look at the movement as an expression of two kinds of unity. The first would constitute an anti-capitalist critique of the whole Spanish society, as well as global forms of governance. Granted, there would be a lot of support for such a view. However, what this eliminates is the section of the movement which do not consider themselves as inherently anti-capitalist, who might not find themselves as belonging to a certain ideology, or even be interested in such a discussion. I encountered many such individuals during my stay in Madrid, and to enforce the anti-capitalist stamp on their participation would be a narrow reading of the movement. This is not to say that this does not hold true for some parts of the movement, however, it does not convey the whole story. The second form of unity, or explanation, would be that of a rise of deliberation. If one chose to focus solely on those parts where members of the movement deliberate and discuss (which are indeed frequent), one could conclude that this could be considered a victory for a theory of deliberation, with a return to the agora, to participation in the public sphere. What such a perspective occludes is the multiplicity of repertoires of protest employed by the Indignados. Such as view would also simply ignore that there is no common agenda, nor any over-arching leadership or consensus-building.

As explained in the previous chapter, Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) propose that movements do not have to have a core, and that they can instead function as dispersed and affective networks. It is easy to see why such a view would be quite appealing. In the absence of an overall agenda, it can seem natural to turn 180 degrees, and go in the opposite direction. Instead of seeing a movement which is characterised by unity (albeit a constructed one), we see something which challenges common understandings of social action. This propels theories of protest to also consider the affective, the material, and, ultimately the visceral. The discussion could end here, and we could settle with the thought that the Indignados is a classic example of 'being against' and functions only through a dispersed, horizontal network. However, I argue – based on the theoretical discussion in the previous Chapter Four and on the empirical illustration in this chapter – that to see the movement as an expression of pure immanence, is to deny them political subjectivity,

169

since there is no form of political articulation. Intstead, we could envision articulation as not necessarily tied to language. Importantly, affect in the hegemonic project is closely tied to the possibility of signification and meaning-making, unlike the affective common constructed by the Multitude. As such, affect is seen as the very condition for any form of verticality, and not the confirmation of horizontality.

This chapter shows the tensions between immanence and transcendence, between hegemony and autonomy, and between horizontality and verticality. The idea of a networked horizontal movement highlights some recent developments within social movements, but cannot explain all the sense of unity which I felt and observed. What is this movement called the Indignados? In order to understand what creates this unity, this chapter has emphasised the affective nature of Laclau's idea of hegemony and proposed the concept of the hegemonic project. The character of the empty signifier, which is considered as the node for the movement, has to be reconsidered. For Laclau, the empty signifier is an absence which constitutes a presence, an empty space, which in its emptiness carries the potentiality for false universals. In studies of hegemony, the empty signifier is often a word or a concept, such as justice or equality. Instead, the hegemonic project argues that the empty signifier must place a higher emphasis on affective states and visceral practices. As such, the nodal point for the Indignados does not lie in expressions such as justice or equality, but rather in their visceral expressions.

In the three dimensions mentioned above, absence and emptiness are key components. Common space (or the (re)claiming of the common), silence or noise, or aesthetical expressions, could also serve as empty signifiers. The square can become the promise around which people can unite, even though it is not a word or a concept. Nonetheless, the presence of affect is tangible. The radical investment inherent in all of these practices is very high, which is also what unites them. As such, all of the components have potentialities of becoming hegemonised – and they do – but these hegemonies are fragile and short-lived, which is a founding characteristic of the hegemonic project. What the protesters have in common is an affective response and this affective response can take many shapes and forms, and it can transform into demonstrations, into petitions, and touch upon a wide variety of topics – health care, education, housing etc.

This chapter has shown that the unity and social cohesion in a movement can also be present in the visceral, and that these visceral modes and repertoires of protest are not *means to an end*. This distinction is vital: in the studies described in Chapter Two, above, emotions are seen as tools, as instruments at hand for activists who want to raise member numbers or sustain activism levels. The consequence of such a perspective is that emotions and affect become liminal, when, in fact, they hold a central position in the construction of political subjectivity. In addition, this chapter has offered an account of how affect is not disjointed from meaning-making and signification. Affect and emotion, as described in this chapter by the visceral, does not only pertain to the corporal domain. In fact, as Laclau would argue, affect is highly important for any signification. Importantly, the signifier can in itself also be a practice, and thus the practice-oriented character of the signifier must be emphasised. By employing Laclau's theory of the empty signifier when analysing the Indignados, this chapter can conclude that the promise which the empty signifier carries can be found also in affective practices, and is thus not only limited to language. Silence, space or aesthetics can also be seen as instances of articulation.

Ultimately, the observations above are mainly concerned with the overarching question: How can we understand the Indignados as one movement, and therefore their political subjectivity, and the consequences for popular sovereignty? The Indignados pose several challenges to our traditional understandings of what a movement is. As described in the Chapters Two and Three, above, the popular sovereign has historically often been constructed around rational, self-governing individuals, who are in control of their emotions. Emotions were by no means something desirable for political life, apart from their use as manipulative tools. Whilst this perspective has lost some ground, and emotions have become identified as present and also important for the construction of political identities, democratic theory is still mainly concerned with the construction of demands, and how these demands are palpable and sayable. In today's situation, this is becoming an increasingly difficult picture to uphold. Political subjectivity is not constructed around well-defined demands: the demands are plural, change over time, or are not recognised as demands in the first place. This propels us into thinking about democracy in a different manner: How can we conceive of a movement such as the Indignados as a part of the popular sovereign? This chapter offers one way of doing so. By introducing the concept of visceral unity, of the hegemonic project, it opens up a space for political subjectivity which

lingers in affect and emotions, and does not necessarily transform into stable political demands. Naturally, this viewpoint is by no means an easy way forward. It does not offer any guidebook as to how our democratic system should be constructed in the future. What it does do, is point to those spaces of political action previously ignored, which have now proved to be some of the most central parts of what politics means today.

However, the affective nature of the Indignados is only one of their main characteristics. Another prominent feature of theirs is the use of new information and communication technologies, whose advent has also changed the landscape for social movements and constitutes yet another challenge for democracy, since it is seen to reinforce the dispersed character of Indignados. These new repertoires of action and their consequences for a theory of hegemony will be the focus of the next chapter.

6. Virtual ties: Social networks, identity formation and the hegemonic project

The Indignados movement is, like most movements nowadays, active both in the online and the offline spheres. However, as highlighted by Gerbaudo, the relationship between the online and the offline is a complex process: 'The protest camps in *Puerta del Sol* and several other squares across the country cannot, however, be understood as simple transpositions onto public spaces of practices first established on the web' (Gerbaudo 2012: 96). As mentioned in Chapters Four and Five, one can conclude that the Indignados movement is a highly dispersed and fragmented congregation. This is in line with what has been observed in social movements since the Battle of Seattle in 1999 (protests against the World Trade Organisation), with a higher focus on networks and horizontality, and the Indignados represent a continuation and perhaps intensification of such a structure. This thesis contests this view, and argues that movement unity, verticality and centrality is still present, albeit in slightly different ways; there is a movement we call the Indignados. Whilst Chapter Five showed how offline practices construct movement unity in the visceral, we must also engage with what is going on in the virtual. Even though the Indignados are similar to many social movements of the past, the advent of social media is a true novelty and is something new to our time. Therefore, the question informing this chapter is how unity is created online and how the Indignados are producing what I call virtual ties.

For almost a decade, the opinion has flourished that the rise of new technological advancements has changed the way social action is understood (Latour 2005). Facebook, Twitter and Youtube are all phenomena which could change how people engage in politics. These thoughts become particularly pressing when it comes to social movements and protest actions. In the Arab Spring, the protesters frequently used social media. The fact also remains that some of these movements ignited significant social change, with the fall of the regimes in Egypt and Tunisia (even though these changes have taken new directions of late). Nevertheless, there are also researchers who claim that the alleged impacts of social media on revolutions are over-stated (Morozov 2010; Gladwell 2010) and that we

attribute too much influence to the new media, almost resembling technological determinism, i.e. that technology controls social action. They ask if this means that social patterns in the offline world are irrelevant for the online sphere? Is the online decoupled from the offline? These concerns make it obvious that we must question if social media affect social action, and, if so, in what way? The way social media function, with accessibility to a wide audience as well as ownership of the production of material, brings up important issues on agency and subjectivity. Social media could play a role in the creation of a movement's subjectivity, and it is therefore central to assess the mechanisms by which social movements function in the virtual.

In order to understand social movement action online, one can focus on various fields, for instance theories of social action and the development of new technologies, as expressed by Actor-Network Theory (ANT). ANT represents in many ways the forefront of research concerning online social action, and offers a rigorous account of what happens to social action when we are increasingly influenced by constraints (or possibilities) of materiality (Latour 2005). However, alongside the sociological discussions of ANT, there is also a growing body of research stemming from media studies. This field has been divided between those who believe that new information and communication technologies (ICTs) have had a profound impact and caused immense change for the study of social movement action (Castells 2012; Shirky 2009) and those who believe that the online is not such a big game-changer after all (Fuchs 2012; Dean 2005). All of these perspectives are vital for this project, and have also inspired the empirical work which is presented in this chapter.

This chapter argues that even though the social network could be seen as a confirmation of Hardt and Negri's focus on horizontality, there are clear instances of unity, *id est* hegemony. However, this type of hegemony exhibits similar qualities to the one described in Chapter Five, above. It is less stable and less pervasive, and I therefore choose to refer to it as a hegemonic project. In the first part, I explain how Hardt and Negri's idea of the horizontal network has pervaded social movement theory, but how this, in fact, occludes the tensions between horizontality and verticality.

In the second part, the chapter engages with a more specific discussion on how social movement theory has dealt with the arrival of new communication technologies, describing both a techno-optimist and a techno-sceptical side of the argument. This leads on to a

discussion on how to approach social media methodologically. The position assumed for this project will be that of Richard Rogers (2004; 2013), saying that we should work *with* the Internet as a part of social research, rather than singling it out as categorically different from other forms of social interactions. This perspective allows for a type of analysis which, with the help of new tools, can use 'old' theories, in order to understand the social online.

The remainder of the chapter gives an overview of empirical analysis conducted on the Indignados on Facebook, showing the use of certain empty signifiers. Word clouds, or wordles,[75] represent the main body of analysis, showing the most common terms used by the Indignados, and how these change over time. Drawing on Laclau's example of the Russian anti-tsarism movement's slogan 'bread, peace and land', the chapter concludes with the statement that the Indignados are mostly using terms 'people, money, democracy'; empty signifiers are also present in online social action. However, the longevity of any specific signifier is quite short, and this therefore justifies the turn towards the hegemonic project. In addition, the mechanism of identity creation online can be said to be similar to that offline, albeit in a slightly different form. The visceral practices described in the previous chapter constitute similar expressions of the hegemonic project as the virtual practices described in this chapter. As such, this concludes with an overview of the hegemonic project and what consequences it carries for political subjectivity. The chapter will argue that the hegemonic project reveals and recognises the tensions which are always present in the creation of political subjects: between emotion/affect and reason, and between horizontality and verticality.

Beyond the social network

As described in Chapter Four, there is a strong critique of Laclau and a theory of hegemony from the field of bio-politics, as interpreted by Hardt and Negri (2004; 2012). Their argument entails a proposition for a turn to autonomy and horizontality, thus criticising Laclau's idea of hegemony and verticality. However, as described in Chapter Five, the networked organisational model is not freed from or devoid of hierarchical

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[75] A word cloud is an illustrative tool which analyses a number of words, and then weighs the more frequently used words, making them bigger than the others.

structures. Chapter Five argued that by focussing on the visceral, unity and nodality could be seen to lie not only in specific ideologies or values, but also in affective practices.

Based on the strong online presence of the Indignados, however, the analysis of visceral ties and affective verticality needs to be complemented by a virtual component. When one looks at social movements online, one often starts with the social network. The function of platforms like Facebook or Twitter promotes and enhances linkages between opinions, friends, communities and continents and it could be said to be the very epitome of the social network. This has also been picked up by supporters of a bio-political model of social movements. There is an abundance of research which emphasises the perfect fit between the rise of the virtual social network and the network theory of Hardt and Negri. Facebook and Twitter are said to facilitate and enable exactly the form of social interaction which they have described for more than a decade. Therefore, the horizontal network theory has been given a lot of attention and praise in the wake of the rise of social media (Maeckelbergh 2012; Sitrin 2012; Williams 2012).

Nonetheless, this only paints one part of the picture. Similar to the non-recognition of the unity and nodality in visceral practices, a theory of the multitude or social network theory seems to be somewhat blind to the tensions between horizontality and verticality, autonomy and hegemony, which also exist online. Since social media are new phenomena, the possible implications of and problems with their usage have not been sufficiently studied. The existing literature on the topic is rather overwhelmingly positive (Juris 2011; Castells 2012, Peña Lopez *et al.* 2015), claiming that the social network renders new possibilities and opportunities for democracy, ignorant of the constraints, both technical and social, for such a conclusion.

Contrarily, this chapter argues that the existing tension between horizontality and verticality as described by Laclau – later supported and emphasised by Stavrakakis (2007; 2014) and Prentoulis and Thomassen (2014) – is very notable also on social media. The claim that the social network ensures 'true' horizontality and an absence of hierarchy is highly problematic, since the online discussions, just like the offline, are centred on nodes of discussion, which create direction for the seemingly amorphous body of Internet activists.

Ultimately, what is argued is that that a social movement, like the Indignados, relies on *empty signifiers*. These signifiers are potentially empty terms, and can as such be filled with any content, and are key mechanisms for creating unity among groups, which initially might not identify with each other. This chapter returns to Laclau's theory of the empty signifier as a model for social movement formation, arguing that this model of politicising representation and language can also be used for online research. However, the chapter argues that the nature of the empty signifier is of a slightly different nature than in Laclau's original model. Therefore, the chapter returns to the concept of a hegemonic project, where, given the specificities of social media, the fluidity, instability and volatility of hegemony are more pronounced.

The main reason for using existing social theory to analyse social movements online – instead of solely relying on the growing literature on social networks – is the inherently political nature of representation.[76] If we problematise representation, communication is always mediated, no matter if it is through people, or through objects and material artefacts. I will in the material below show that this could be explained by using a reworked use of Laclau's theory of the empty signifier, the hegemonic project, in order to understand how empty terms become dominant in a movement, thus creating a sense of unity, which is in fact built on an absence of specific content. However, this has, as explained in Chapter Four, become increasingly difficult to show empirically, since the social movements of today demonstrate such a dispersed nature. No longer can we detect the over-arching, hegemonic waves, as seen in, for instance, the labour movement, and in several anti-authoritarian struggles.

This does not mean that we must turn to a completely networked idea of how social movements work. In the sections below, I will show that there is a sense of commonality and centrality, which lingers in certain signifiers. These signifiers, however, are fragile and quickly change over time. Therefore, the hegemonic project accentuates the fluid and transient nature of hegemony, and how hegemonic structures in the Indignados movement are momentaneous and short-lived. What the material below will also show, is that there is a clear presence of empty signifiers, which unite a seemingly ungovernable movement. As such, there are strong instances of verticality and hegemony.

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[76] By representation I refer to it in its broadest sense, and not confined to political representation, such as our current democratic system. Rather, I refer to the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

Understanding subjectivity online

There is much polemic within the field of social movement theory when it comes to social media. Social movement theorists and media theorists argue over how the Internet has affected political protest,[77] and there are two main sides in the debate: the optimists and sceptics. Ultimately, these sides are arguing over the subjectivity ascribed to social movements on social media. Where one side, the optimists, argues that social media have indeed increased the possibilities for action and change – ultimately an increase of autonomy – the sceptics are claiming that power for social movement remains the same, in the online or in the offline. The pressing question emanates from the idea that the presence of technology in itself changes social action, and, especially, social movements.

Objects as actors

Actor-Network theory has become known for also incorporating objects into their research, and claiming that these profoundly change the way that we think about the social. This is a wide-spread thought and highly important when we study online interactions:

> The origins of 'virtual methods' may lie in the U.K. virtual society research program of the late 1990s. In particular, the virtual society question mark was emphasized. The research challenged the then dominant division between the real and the virtual realms, empirically demonstrating instead the embeddedness of the Internet in society. The desire to innovate methodologically saw perhaps its greatest challenge in ethnography, with the desire to put forward and defend a new strain of scholarship, 'virtual ethnography' that combined the terrains of 'the ground' with the online. Special skills, and methods, were developed to gain entry to and study communities now rooted both in the offline and the online. Questions revolved around how to adapt methods from social science to the online environment. (Digital Methods Initiative 2013)

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[77] I would like to point out that what this thesis does not perform any type of social network analysis. This has become a very large field in the past few years, see Crossley and Krinsky (2014) and Tremayne (2014), but it deals more with describing the networks and their intricacies, whereas I am more concerned with understanding what people connect around and what forms a social movement online.

Having discussed the political subject and the political action, we have so far focused most of our attention on what could be called 'traditional' actors, be that groups, individuals, et cetera. However, for this analysis, which is taking place in the virtual world, we have to ask ourselves the question of the agency of objects. Many would say that they have none; if I use a hammer to hit a nail into a wall, am I performing that action, or is the hammer? Previously, we might say that the hammer is indeed a tool used by me, and is indeed an accomplice in this action, but then again, is it a social action? Is the hammer in itself social, is it a mediator (which changes the content of the action) or merely an intermediary (which carries the content without changing it)? Does it change my (perceived) intention of hitting the nail, or is it just executing my actions? Latour's idea of this is quite clear:

> If you can, with a straight face, maintain that hitting a nail with or without a hammer, boiling water with and without a kettle, fetching provisions with and without a basket, (…) are exactly the same activities, that the introduction of these mundane implements change 'nothing important' to the realization of the tasks, then you are ready to transmigrate to the Far Land of the Social and disappear from this lowly one. (Latour 2005: 71)

Latour then emphasises that this is not to say that objects determine action, that they alone perform the task. However, he wants to make the claim that to merely discharge them as unimportant for our social world is also a mistake. To say that there is nothing between being a conscious actor and a passive intermediary is incorrect; this is not to say that objects work like humans, but to argue that within the social, we must allow for analysis of the non-human (Latour 2005: 72). To make such a sharp distinction between the material and the symbolic is equally to dismiss that very intricate relationship and co-constituency. To argue that technology lives in one universe, and society in another, is an absurd thought for Latour.

In which ways can we perceive of the material as social? Latour brings up the argument of a road bump which makes us slow down our pace; do we slow down because of the road signs, because of moral and convention? Or, do we slow down because we do not want to damage our car? In either way, the very materiality of the road bump constitutes and spurs a social action. Both are social, because the materiality fills a function beyond its material nature. Of course, some would say that this function is the intended outcome of the road

sign designer. However, the designer is not present while slowing down, and thus the material becomes the symbolic. Ultimately, what becomes interesting is whether objects act as mediators or intermediaries. Many would say that objects are indeed mere intermediaries. When I write these words on my desktop, the very letters I put in are also the ones appearing on screen. As such, it can be difficult to trace how objects act as mediators. This discussion on the agency of materiality, and the following effects on movement agency, has rippled into social movement studies in two different forms: Techno-optimism as well as techno-scepticism.

Techno-optimism

The first camp can be referred to as *techno-optimism*.[78] On this end, we find views reflecting a strong idea of agency and influence of the new information and communication technologies, and that this influence is indeed beneficial for democracy and society. These theorists, among which we can count in particular Castells and Shirky, argue that the arrival of social media has truly reformed the idea of political protest, made it more available to everyone, and thus strengthened civil society (Castells 2012; Shirky 2011). They bring up examples of what is commonly referred to as *Twitter revolutions*; how, for instance, the uprisings in Iran in 2009, as well as the revolution in Tunisia in 2011, would have been completely impossible without the use of Twitter, YouTube, and the like. For them, we are now entering a completely new era, an era in which we cannot stop the people, where freedom of press and freedom of opinion is truly achieved, and sovereignty is restored to the people. As blogger Andrew Sullivan, referring to Iran, put it in 2009:

> You cannot stop people any longer. You cannot control them any longer. They can bypass your established media; they can broadcast to one another; they can organize as never before. It's increasingly clear that Ahmadinejad and the old guard mullahs were caught off-guard by this technology and how it helped galvanize the opposition movement in the last few weeks. (Sullivan 2009)

Similarly, Shirky makes the argument that:

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[78] This is a term borrowed from Christian Fuchs (2012).

Our social tools are dramatically improving our ability to share, cooperate, and act together. As everyone from working biologists to angry air passengers adopts these tools, it is leading to an epochal change. (Shirky 2009: 304)

Castells, a leading Spanish sociologist, has recently published the book *Networks outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age* (2012), where he attributes much importance to the Internet age, indicating that there is indeed a shift from what has been before. Today, he says, social movements have gained a huge opportunity to communicate and organise with the arrival of the new ICTs. This has enabled them to perform so called scale-shifts, that is, attracting a much larger number of participants, and thus making their voices heard. One of his most important points is that social media can mediate emotions around certain societal problems, and thus transform them into political movements.

A condition for individual experiences to link up and form a movement is the existence of a communication process that propagates the events and the emotions attached to it. […] In our time, multimodal digital networks of horizontal communication are the fastest and most autonomous, interactive, reprogrammable and self-expanding means of communication in history. […] the networked social movements of the digital age represent a new species of social movement. (Castells 2012: 15)

Techno-scepticism

Against these views, there is a more *techno-sceptical* position. For instance, Gladwell (2010) argues that ties formed on social media by no means reflect the sort of social ties that we experience in real life, and that a Facebook friendship is nothing but a 'weak tie', which could not lead to 'real' activism. Real activism, for Gladwell, entails putting one's life at risk, becoming the victim of violence, and making sacrifices in general (Gladwell 2010: 47). Here we also encounter the concept of slacktivism; pushing a button online could never be equated to taking to the streets, and, as such, having a lot of members in an online network means little in terms of democratic participation or civil society vitality. Morozov argues along the same lines, saying that:

Slacktivism is the ideal type of activism for a lazy generation: why bother with sit-ins and the risk of arrest, police brutality, or torture if one can be as loud campaigning in the virtual space?' (Morozov 2010: xiii)

Similarly, Dean (2005) argues that slacktivism results in post-politics. Rather than enhancing political participation, social media functions as false substitute for 'real' politics, leading us into the illusion that writing something online would be as important as going to vote. This could also be aptly illustrated by the abundance of social media campaigns, which has resulted in next to nothing, for instance, KONY 2012 (Campbell 2012).[79] In addition to the idea of slacktivism, the techno-sceptics are concerned with what they call *technological determinism*. Fuchs (2012) argues against Castells, saying that:

Formulations such as the ones that the Internet resulted in the emergence of movements, that movements were born on the Internet, that protests were conveyed by the Internet, or that movements are based on the Internet, convey a logic that is based on **overt technological determinism: technology is conceived as an actor that results in certain phenomena that have societal characteristics**. (Fuchs 2012: 781 [my bold])

What Fuchs is most strongly opposing is that Castells, and other techno-optimists, seem to think that Internet is a space which is decoupled from society, that the societal patterns and hierarchies that we encounter in real life seem to be absent from our virtual life. In other words, the social determinants do not lie in the online world itself, but in existing power relations and politics which are present everywhere, online and offline (Fuchs 2012: 781). To think that social media in itself would be the cause of revolutions and rebellions seems naive and simplistic, according to Fuchs. To say that social media caused, or at least played a major part in, revolutions, becomes absurd when looking at the Internet and social media accessibility of different countries. For instance, since the Internet access rate among the population was a mere 5.9% in Libya in 2011, it is unlikely that social media alone was the cause of the emergence of the revolution (ibid. 782).

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[79] KONY was an online campaign which took place in 2012. The campaign's purpose was to catch Joseph Kony, a militia leader in Central Africa, in order to be able to charge him for crimes against humanity, based on his use of child soldiers in Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo. The organisation behind the campaign, Invisible Children, has since been accused of using donated money for their own marketing purposes, and that the campaigns have had no effect (Campbell 2012).

In this sense, the Internet becomes but a means to an end, in itself not decisive when it comes to social events. Another issue which Fuchs criticises is the idea that online activism should in any way be more democratic and horizontal. This is a common argument; that since everyone can participate, there is no need for leaders, and thus no hierarchical structures. Fuchs here refers to the work of Gerbaudo, a communication theorist, who has worked extensively on social movements and social media. What Gerbaudo concludes, in his book *Tweets and the Streets: Social media and Contemporary activism* (2012), is that even though the argument above has some bearing (there is indeed high accessibility for everyone, and there are no obvious leaders), this does not equate with a leaderless organisation. Rather, we have invisible leaders, who can become very influential, although covertly so. This develops into a virtual *esse non videri*, being without being seen, which has just as detrimental and exclusionary consequences as strict hierarchical structures. Gerbaudo's argument builds on the claim that behind each Facebook or Twitter account, there is *one* person speaking. The (often significant) numbers that they claim to give voice to are in fact orchestrated by a mere handful, creating what Gerbaudo refers to as the *choreography of assembly* (Gerbaudo 2012: 139):

> […] the use of social media in directing people towards specific protest events, in providing participants with suggestions and instructions about how to act, and in the construction of an emotional narration to sustain their coming together in public space. (Gerbaudo 2012: 12)

Gerbaudo here touches upon something central for social movements on social media: an underlying force of thought, a (clear) direction. His argument is contradicting that of Hardt and Negri, who would argue that social media enhances the horizontality of a social movement. Instead, Gerbaudo argues that, in fact, there are forces which govern how social movements function online. However, what Gerbaudo does not allow for, or detail, in his argument is if this kind of centrality and nodality could be possible without any kind of mastermind, without the person behind a certain account or forum? In his view, there are always leaders and hierarchies, but these leaders are always real people. However, we might inquire as to whether centrality must necessarily take the form of leaders, or if there are other ways to construct unity. How can we think of central nodes within a dispersed social network? And what do these nodes consist of in the Indignados movement? Are

there signs of hegemonies online, and if so, which are their main characteristics? These questions will be further discussed in connection with the empirical material in this chapter, but, first, there is a need to consider some methodological concerns regarding the study of social media.

Social media and methodology

New media have opened a space for new methods; however, at present none of these are particularly well-developed or widespread (Rogers 2013; Venturini 2012). The intermeshing of the online and the offline is a reality that social movement research is increasingly facing, and, thus, the research methods have to change and adapt accordingly. One of the biggest challenges lies in the connection between what is referred to as traditional materials (such as interviews or political manifestos) and those materials which are new to our time (such as social media and networks, Facebook and Twitter to name but a few). It could be argued that there is no difference between the two; the social in social media is the same as the social in demonstrations and assemblies, it has merely assumed a different form. However, as we have seen above, an increasingly large contingent of the research community on social movements and digital networks are claiming that there is indeed something particular about the social online. Can we really make the same assumptions about things that go on online as we can about social relations in the non-virtual world?

There are several debates on how we can *study* things that are going on online. In this situation, we can distinguish between what Rogers refers to as the natively digital and the digitised (Rogers 2013: 15). With this, Rogers wants to point to a separation which is commonly used in research on new media, which argues that there are things native to the online world, and things which have migrated thereto. The question then becomes how this plays into the idea of methods and use for the social sciences. First of all, we might inquire into the *ontology* of the virtual. Some researchers, like media theorist McLuhan (2001), argue that different media spur different sensational experiences in humans. This means that online media will be distinctively different from the offline. Cultural theorist Raymond Williams (2005), on the other hand, argues that there is no essential difference among media, but that we can experience a *constructed* difference, where there is a change in perception, but no essential dissimilarity. Further, Katherine Hayles has argued that the

very materiality of different media is the crucial focus (2005). As such, we need not to focus on text itself, but in which form text materialises. A book is different from a newspaper is different from online text. This medium specificity is important, but what is more vital is to understand how such specificity, if any, affects the way in which we can study what goes on online, which is what Rogers has described as 'web epistemology' (2004). His argument in later works also aims at diminishing the divide between the real and the virtual, arguing that there is no way in which we can confine social behaviour to only one realm, and the distinction thus becomes obsolete. In other words, the discussion of whether the social online is different to the social offline is not a productive question, since the two are constantly intertwined and feed off each other. As an example, Rogers bring up the (somewhat) new IP-to-geo technology, where we can pin user activity to a certain physical space. For instance, we can look at the Google Flu Trends, where Google maps the rise in flu-related search terms, in order to predict outbreaks. Or, on a more positive note, we can map taste preferences around Thanksgiving by geo-locating recipes searched for within specific regions (Rogers 2013: 5). Based on this, Rogers argues for the 'death of cyberspace' (ibid. 13), since it is no longer possible to argue that things only happen online without a connection to the offline.

This does not obliterate the initial question: even though there might be differences among the online and the offline, will our methods have to be entirely new? As an answer to this, Rogers puts forward the idea of *online groundedness* (2013: 23). This approach tries to embrace difference rather than accentuating it, in order to 'conceptualise research that follows the medium, captures its dynamics, and makes grounded claims about cultural and societal change' (Rogers 2013: 23). As such, the online is not another universe; it is not something which should be entirely separated from other forms of research, but 'the online […] is the baseline against which one might judge the extent of a perceived societal condition' (Rogers 2013: 24). In other words, even though there are differences between reading a book and reading something online, we might consider the online to be another form of data, complementing the ones we already have. The point for Rogers is then not so much to try and analyse what differences there are between the online and the offline, but to work *with* the Internet, in order to better understand the social; the primary concern is to understand human behaviour, not to understand technology as such.

185

This project assumes a position, which lingers in between the optimists and the sceptics, drawing from both areas. First of all, I agree with the optimists in saying that the virtual is important; arguing anything else would be sticking one's head in the sand. However, this is not to say that the virtual and the Internet have profoundly changed all of the conditions for social movements, nor the ways in which we can study them. Social action need not be categorically different online, and there I would agree with the sceptics, but there are certain characteristics to online action which could be significant. Such characteristics could for instance be the limited space available to make comments, which forces writers to express themselves concisely. As such, I would agree with the optimists to some degree in arguing that there are some peculiarities to online action. However, this does not mean that we cannot use existing social theories in order to understand the Indignados online, and there I would agree with Rogers, saying that we should rather work *with* the Internet, as another field of social action. In the section below, I will employ this perspective when analysing the Indignados movement on Facebook. In doing so, I will not assume that the online is separate from the offline, and this will also enable the application of existing theory onto online material. The following section will demonstrate how, despite its seemingly horizontal character, online social action contains clear moments of centrality.

Indignate![80] **Online action since 2011**

When looking at the Indignados and the possibility of unity online, this thesis asks a few central questions:

1. The first question is: *which are the main online communities in the Indignados movement*? This is important since the whole movement is quite an intricate network, and there is limited possibility for this thesis to cover all branches. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Madrid, as well as a continuous engagement with the online community of the Indignados, the analysis in this thesis focusses on three specific accounts: *Democracia Real Ya!*, *AcampadaSol*, as well as *Movimiento 15M*.

2. The second question pertains to *which are the main topics that people are talking about*. When having figured out who the main groups are, we would like to know what it is that their conversations and interactions are about. In order to do this, I

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[80] *Indignate!* is the title of the book which has given the name to the Indignados. It is written by Stephane Hessel, a French philosopher, and carries the original title *Indignez-vous!*. In English the title is 'Time for outrage' but the Romance language version is an imperative, similar to 'Be indignant' or 'Be outraged'.

will use a quantitative form of analysis, sketching what the most talked about topics are.

3. This chapter then discusses *what people connect around*, and this chapter describes how online discussions centre on certain signifiers. The chapter will show that there are empty signifiers which function as the adhesive force for these discussions online and which produce a certain form of hierarchy, which is short-lived, but nonetheless present. This is a form of hegemony.

When analysing social media, many would instinctively think about Facebook as the primary tool for people to interact and this is why Facebook forms a crucial part of this research project.[81] In order to extract data from Facebook, I have used the Netvizz application, which is connected to one's own Facebook account, and from there you can download data from groups or page that you like or are a member of. The difference between a group and a page is that a group is more collaborative, and all members are allowed to post things on the group wall. A group can be open or closed, and is thus a more selective form of community. A page, on the other hand, is something which is managed by a page administrator, who can decide on whether people who like the page can post on the wall or not. This is a crucial difference, you can only *like* a page, but you are always a *member* of a group. A page is thus less of a collaborative effort, but, on the other hand, is open for anyone to like. All of the accounts I have chosen to analyse are pages, and they are all open, which means that anyone is free to post on the page wall. In this case, it is also important to mention that it is also open for anyone to comment on the posts.

Netvizz counts the number of times that users have interacted with one another and how they have interacted (Rieder 2013: 300). The data output that we can get from Netvizz about pages tells us how many posts there have been over a certain period of time, how many users that have been active, and how many interactions there have been. By *interactions*, Netvizz counts *likes, shares, and comments* on a post. Apart from this frequency data, the output consists of both network files and tabular files,[82] of which mainly the latter is relevant to this analysis. Since the question is *what people are talking*

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[81] In Spain 2012, Facebook was the most used social network with a penetration rate of 36.8 per cent of the population (17,590,500 users). This can be compared with the Twitter penetration, which was around 14 per cent in 2013 (Internet World Stats 2014).

[82] Network files contain data which allows for drawing of the network nodes and connections. Tabular files, on the other hand, are the type of files you could read in Excel, and contain tables with information, in this case number of comments and interactions.

about, we would like to see the comments on all of the posts. While the posts on the page itself are often posted by the administrator, which, most of the time, consists of a few individuals, the comments represent a much larger sample of individuals.

In order to analyse this data, I have exported all of the comments into a regular spreadsheet, where I could work with them more freely. To illustrate the comments, I have used word clouds, or wordles. The total number of comments analysed in this study amounts to around 110,000. Since the accounts analysed are quite large, the time frame will be restricted to the month of May over three years, 2011, 2012, and 2013. The reason for choosing May is that that is when the movement started in 2011, and since this has become a central time for protest in Spain. Since the word cloud is quite the new analytical tool, reasons for using it will be outlined below. The word cloud weighs the words, so that the ones used most frequently are also the largest (Feinberg et al. 2009). For this study, I have used wordle.com, which is an online-based tool in which you can paste a large amount of text and it then draws the cloud for you. One might ask why the study has not been performed with a more common form of quantitative content analysis. For a quantitative content analysis, one first analyses a smaller sample of the material, developing codes for the automated analysis (Schreier 2012; Bergström and Boreus 2005). There are several issues with this when it comes to social media research. First of all, the data analysed in this study amounts to about 100,000 comments on Facebook, spanning over three years of activity. The diversity and the reach of the topics discussed are thus very wide, and developing codes valid for the whole sample could prove to be a difficult endeavour.

There is another point to be made about the difference and deductive and inductive inference. Whilst traditional forms of content analysis are indeed inductive in their initial, code-developing, stages, the latter part of the analysis is deductive research. When the research question is only concerned with what it is that people are talking about on these pages, deductive inference could prove to be producing a flawed and biased result, which is only showing what we are looking for. In this study, the concern is not to find anything *particular*, but merely to understand which the most common signifiers are, and if there are any at all. Here, the word cloud offers an inductive method of analysis, letting the material speak for itself. It thus preserves the nature of the discussions, without too much

interference from the researcher. The interpretive nature of the work is thus postponed to the analytical stages, when the descriptive part of the research is completed.

Below, I will show examples from the three organisations chosen: Democracia Real Ya!, Acampada Sol, as well as Movimiento 15M. The material will begin with frequency analyses of online action during three months (May 2011, May 2012, and May 2013). This will facilitate the next step of the data analysis, the word clouds. The words clouds will present the most common words in the discussion during these time periods. For each organisation, the most common terms will be explained and analysed, in order to contextualise and make sense of the words. After this, the chapter will turn to a more over-arching analysis of the dominating words, in order to make sense of them within the framework of the hegemonic project.

Democracia Real Ya! (Real democracy now)

Democracia real ya! is one of the biggest accounts on Facebook being part of the Indignados, with around 535,000 likes in April 2014. First, one can look at how the interactions have changed over time, and then what they have talked about.
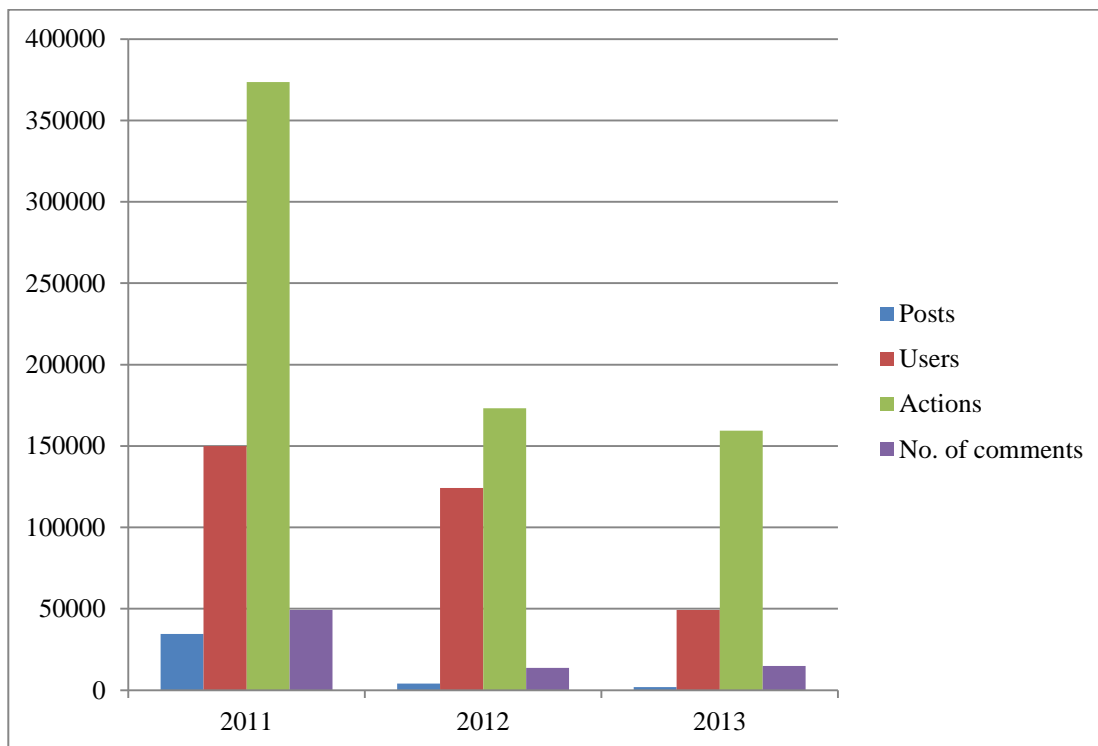
Figure 14: Plotted frequencies of DRY (scale 0 – 400 000)

	2011	2012	2013
Posts	34473	4102	1987
Users	149990	124212	49388
Actions	373501	173232	159506
No. of comments	49379	13678	14969

Figure 15: Frequencies for DRY

This diagram and table show us the levels of interactions on the Facebook account from May 2011, May 2012, and May 2013. What we can see is that the level of activity in 2011 is very high; on some days there are 130,000 interactions in just one day. The number of users is also impressive; around 150,000 people have liked, shared, or commented on something happening on the page. The number of posts in itself is low in comparison, and this tells us why it is important to look at the comments rather than the posts. What happens after 2011 is that the level of interactions goes down significantly; this is also in line with most impressions of the Indignados: they have lost a bit of momentum. There is also a significant drop in the number of posts, which supersedes the decrease of interactions. The number of users active has not suffered as heavy of a loss between 2011 and 2012, signalling that even though people might not post as much, they are still visiting the page and liking or sharing its content. It should also be mentioned that the number of current likes is over half a million. However, these numbers become even more interesting when we compare them to the contents of the discussions. For this very large account, I have been unable to construct one world cloud for the whole month, since the amount of data is so large. Therefore, I will present the data from May 2011 and May 2012 weekly, whereas 2013 will be presented in one cloud only.

Figure 16: Word cloud for DRY the first week of May 2011

Figure 17: Word cloud for DRY the second week of May 2011

Figure 18: Word cloud for DRY the third week of May 2011

Figure 19: Word cloud for DRY the fourth week of May 2011

In these clouds, we can see the words that are most used in discussion. In the first week, we have a strong presence of the word *calle* (street), which refers to one of the most used slogans in the Indignados, *Toma la Calle* (take the Street). This is followed by a strong presence of the word *gente* (people) and *manifestación* (demonstration). In the second week, there presence of *gente* remains, but is also accompanied by *democracia* (democracy). The same pattern is noticed in the third week, where we can see words such as *movimiento* (movement) and *partidos* (parties). In general, the topics of discussion seem to be highly pertinent to discussions about democratic participation. This also has natural explanations: In May 2011, when the movement broke out, there were municipal elections on May 22. This was also one of the instigating factors of the movement, since the frustration among the population over the crisis management had reached an apex at the time. As such, it is no surprise that the discussions are centred on questions about democracy and elections. One of the most common words in week 3 is *blanco* (blank), which refers to an increasing willingness to vote blank in the elections. This is also what happened later on. A study by Jimenez Sanchez (2011) shows that the municipal elections held a very large increase in blank and nullified votes, the largest since 1987, reaching 37 per cent and 48 per cent increases, respectively. As such, the clouds above, together with the actual increase in blank and nullified votes, support the view of an increased frustration with the current political system. Other words worthy of mention should be Sampedro, which refers to the late writer José Luis Sampedro, the translator of the work *Indignez-vous!*

(Time for outrage) by the French philosopher Stéphane Hessel (2010) into Spanish, one of the sparking works (and also the root of the name) for the Indignados.

Looking at the following year (below), we can see that things have indeed changed. First of all, following the frequency analysis, it is obvious that the page did not have as much interaction, with the level being cut by more than half, but with the users only dropping from 150,000 to 125,000. As for the content of the clouds, we can see a degree of change. Some words remain, such as *gente* and *Toma la Calle*. This is not surprising, since in week 2, the demonstration of May 15 took place, which indicated the beginning of the encampment on – and occupation of – Puerta del Sol, Madrid's main square. Taking to the street is thus no surprising find. However, in the last two weeks of May 2012, we can see a strong rise of the word *dinero* (money). Whereas most of the discussion so far had been about topics of political nature, we can now see an introduction of something pertaining to a more material and economic nature. Another word which was not important in the year before is *España* (Spain). In May 2012, there were large protests against the banks in Spain. In Barcelona, protesters gathered outside one of the *caixa* (Catalan for bank), concurringly as a hashtag was spread on Twitter, *#lacaixaesMordor* (the bank is Mordor).[83] The end of May 2012 also coincided with discussions in the International Monetary Fund, as well as in the Eurogroup, of potential bailout of Spanish banks (which was also later granted, on condition of partial nationalisation, as well as increase control and austerity measures (European Commission 2012). As such, the increased focus on money is not surprising, and is constantly accompanied by the word *gente* (people).

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[83] This has later also been mirrored in the Spanish organisation *La Banca es Mordor*, which is working towards less bank influence in public and private affairs.

Figure 20: Word cloud for DRY the first week of May 2012

Figure 21: Word cloud for DRY the second week of May 2012

194

Figure 22: Word cloud for DRY the third week of May 2012

Figure 23: Word cloud for DRY the fourth week of May 2012

The last year, 2013, did not include as many comments, and, as such, it is fitted into a single word cloud. As for the frequency, the drop in users from 2012 to 2013 is significant. Having been at 125,000 in 2012, we only have around 50,000 users active in 2013. There is also a bit of a change in the words present. *Gente* is still there, as before, but *dinero* has gone down significantly. Another observation is that the word cloud does not have a word as dominating as before. In 2011 and 2012 there were words which were much larger than the rest, signalling a very frequent use. However, in 2013, the cloud is more scattered, and does not have a word which comes across as the most important one. This becomes important when looking at the frequency levels. One could make the argument that since the movement is lacking the overall narrative or signifier, it has also lost some of its attraction, in other words, the hegemonic project has failed or broken down.

Figure 24: Word cloud for DRY May 2013

AcampadaSol

The next page for analysis is *AcampadaSol* (Camp on Sol, which refers to the camp on the main square in Madrid, *Puerta del Sol*). Below we see the frequency analysis conducted for the page. It should be noted that the time period analysed in 2011 runs from May 23 to June 23, since the account was created on May 23.

Figure 25: Plotted frequencies of AcampadaSol (scale 0 – 50 000)

	2011	**2012**	**2013**
Posts	5011	1488	480
Users	14823	8416	11451
Actions	44943	26096	35811
No. of comments	7061	1760	1388

Figure 26: Frequencies for AcampadaSol

The first observation is that this page has had less activity than DRY, however, the numbers are still quite high. In May 2011, a whole of 45,000 interactions were recorded, with around 15,000 users. In addition, while the activity decreased in 2012, it increased in 2013. One possible reason for this could be that AcampadaSol has gained more importance as questions of space have become more central in the general debate. AcampadaSol started in late May 2011, with an occupation of *Puerta del Sol*.[84] The housing question in Spain is something which has been given more and more attention as an ever-increasing number of individuals and families are being evicted from their homes (see details on La PAH from Chapter Five, above). This has raised strong views on what space is, what is public, and what kind of right an individual has to a dwelling. Occupation and questioning public space has become commonplace, and is also one of the most used repertoires of contention among the Indignados, as mentioned in the previous chapter. This could explain the rise in activity from 2012 to 2013. Another point to be made is that the number of users, just like for the DRY account, is not subject to as much fluctuation as the interactions. In 2013 and 2011, there are a number of users who interact with the page to a significant degree.

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[84] There is a corresponding page for the camp in Barcelona, which was also significant in numbers. However, I have chosen not to include this in the analysis, since much of their conversation is done in Catalan, which would disturb the comparability of the accounts.

Figure 27: Word cloud for AcampadaSol May 2011

As for the content, there are singular word clouds per month for the AcampadaSol account. Similar to the discussions made in the DRY account for the same time, we have words such as *gente* (people) and *movimiento* (movement) as being the most important ones. These are also quite dominating, and it is clear that the words people and movement are very frequent. The word *acampada* (camp), *Sol* (the square) and *asamblea* (assembly/meeting) are also common, but seem to be more referring to the actions undertaken by the movement, rather than any specific content. Another word is *ahora* (now), indicating the perceived urgency and immediacy of the movement.

Figure 28: Word cloud for AcampadaSol May 2012

For the next year, things have changed again. Much like the discussions of DRY, AcampadaSol now has a strong presence of the word *dinero* (money). This is completely new for 2012, but can similarly be explained by the ongoing discussion of the Spanish bank bailout. We also have words such as 15M[85] and *puede* (can) which, probably, refers to the popular slogan *Si se puede* (Yes, we can).[86] Apart from this, the presence and domination of the word *gente* is prevailing, as it did with the DRY account. It should also be mentioned that *pueblo* is quite a common word, which is another word for people. It is important to note the differences between the words *pueblo* and *gente*. While *gente* is referring to a crowd of people and has quite a quotidian use, *pueblo* has a usage which is much more value-laden. It refers either to a nation, or to the working class. For 2013 (below), the picture is somewhat similar. As before, *gente* is by far the most dominant, but now even more accompanied by *pueblo*. Another interesting observation here is that the word *lucha* (struggle) has made an entrance, which indicates a gear to a more ideologically settled discussion, using terms which are common to a leftist or Marxist vocabulary. Other important words include *puede*, with a similar explanation as the previous year, referring to

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[85] The Indignados movement is also called 15M, 15th of May. The names are used interchangeably among the protesters.
[86] There are discussions on whether this is an accurate translation. Grammatically, it would not be the case, it would be more similar to 'yes, it is possible'; however, the context in which it is used is best translated with 'yes, we can'. *Si se puede* is an old slogan originally used by the United Farm Workers in Arizona, US, in 1972. This has since been widely adopted by various union movements in the US, as well as the pro-immigration movement (Martinez 2006).

the slogan *Sí, se puede*. Another one that has come up is C3, which is a combination of letters which comes up if you post a link. This would mean that there is an increase in the use of links on the page.

Figure 29: Word cloud for AcampadaSol May 2013.

Movimiento 15M

The last account studied is Movimiento 15M. This one has kept the original name of the movement, 15M, referring to the start date. Not surprisingly, the account of this movement was started on May 17, 2011, which means that the analysis for that year spans from May 17 until June 17.

Figure 30: Plotted frequencies for Movimiento 15M (scale 0 – 45 000)

	2011	**2012**	**2013**
Posts	16360	2534	885
Users	10571	12979	8143
Actions	38347	34297	21141
No. of comments	17027	3415	1002

Figure 31: Frequencies for 15M

The levels of activity for 15M are similar to those of DRY and AcampadaSol. We can see that the interactions are steadily decreasing over the years, but what is interesting to note is that the number of users is actually increasing between 2011 and 2012, to go down again in 2013. However, the sample that we are looking at, that is the comments, is significantly higher in 2011 than in the other years.

As for the content of the word clouds, the cloud for 2011 (below) is showing a similar picture to the other 2011 ones. The word *gente* (people) is by far the biggest one, followed by *movimento* (movement). Just like in the DRY 2011, most of the words are pertaining to discussions around elections and democracy, such as *partido* (party) and *votar* (vote).

However, there is also a presence of *pueblo* (people) which would indicate a reference to the nation or to the workers.

Figure 32: Word cloud for 15M May 2011

Figure 33: Word cloud for 15M May 2012

In the 2012 cloud, we can see that *gente* is still one of the main words, but this has now become accompanied by *dinero* (money). In addition, the word *pueblo* is quite large, as is

España and *bancos* (banks). We can also see the introduction of the word *trabajo* (work), which has not emerged before. All of this confirms the increased focus on banks and their bailouts, but also on other economic terms. This trend continues into 2013. In this cloud, as we see below, there is an even further push towards more economic, but also more technical and value-laden terms. All of these are, however, connected to the very strong presence of the word *dinero* and *gente*, but there are also other words which are equally common. However, the nature of these words is slightly different. The word *deuda* (debt) has become one of the main ones, together with *trabajo* (work), *base* (base/basis) and *sistema* (system). These words are thus pertaining much more to an economic realm, revealing an increased interest in financial questions. Others, like *crecimiento* (increase) or *sostenible* (sustainable) are also words which have not been seen before, and also give sign of a more specific discussion. This should be paired with the fact that the number of comments in May 2013 for 15M only amounted to about 1,000, in comparison with the 17,000 in May 2011.

Figure 34: Word cloud for 15M May 2013

People, Money, Democracy – the new Bread, Peace and Land?

In the paragraphs above, I have sketched a picture of what the main topics are that are being discussed in some of the online branches of the Indignados movement. The preceding sections have covered frequency analyses, as well as an overview of the most common terms, and possible explanations for these terms. However, what can this tell us

about the creation of subjectivities online, and how does this relate to the debate about horizontality and verticality?

In the paragraphs below, I will outline the relationship between these word clouds and the Laclaudian empty signifier, as described in Chapter Four. Laclau makes the point that due to the presence (or absence) of the empty signifier, language is never constituted by a complete totality, and nor is identity. This has significant implications for how a social movement works, and how it builds its cohesion. However, as argued in Chapter Four, the pervasiveness of the signifier might change in character when we focus the discussion on what I have referred to as the visceral and the virtual. I have argued that the nature of social action online allows for a higher degree of fluidity in the empty signifier, and that this should be called the hegemonic project, as to emphasise the ever-becoming nature of hegemony.

In support of this argument, I make three observations. First, the word clouds confirm the dominance of certain words, primarily *gente* (people) and *pueblo* (people) and *dinero* (money). In addition, the nature of these words is worthy of attention. What is most striking is the absence of words that directly reflect any of the specific issues (such as health care, education, housing, etc.) that the Indignados are facing and this is especially true for the clouds in 2011. As mentioned in Chapter Five, when looking at the Indignados, they convey a wide range of issues, from unemployment, to health care, to education, to evictions, to feminism, or environmental concerns. However, none of these particular words are common in the word clouds of 2011. Instead, we see words which are talking about issues of democracy, of distrust in the system, and of *the people*. This connects well with Laclau's idea of the hegemonic, empty, signifier. Recalling at his model of the individual demands, as described in Chapter Four, we can see that due to their empty top half, they are possible to be included in a chain of equivalence. One signifier, the false universal, thus becomes the signifier for all of the individual demands. In this instance, the word *gente* (people) becomes the signifier for a large range of demands, dealing with different issues, but they can all connect to a more broad discussion on *the people* versus the state.

Secondly, however, the word clouds do not portray one signifier which is constant over time. What Laclau has introduced in later years, the floating signifier, indicates the

possibility for change of the hegemonic mechanism. This is also prevalent in the word clouds. Even though *gente* (people) is continuing to be a common word, it is also accompanied, and sometimes overtaken, by *dinero* (money). This is not surprising, since the hegemonic signifier, much like every other component in Laclau's theory, is subject to change. The change of signifiers in the word clouds is obvious. Some of the words persisted throughout, but, generally, there were new words being introduced constantly. In addition, there was often several dominant words simultaneously.

Third, one can also ponder upon this change from having *people* as the main signifier, to *money*. In this instance, the frequency analysis of the movement becomes relevant. What is true for all of the accounts analysed is that the combined activity on the website is significantly higher in 2011 than in the following two years, which has to be taken into consideration. One of the observations made is that the word clouds for 2013, when we have the smallest number of participants, also contain the most technical terms. Some of the word clouds for 2013 also lack any dominant word. This could tell us that the movement is going through a specialisation, focussing on a narrower set of questions. This is not to say that the hegemonic signifier is not present, but it might be weaker, or of a different nature. It might also have migrated on to a different platform. Similarly, terms pertaining to a specifically leftist discourse are absent in the 2011 clouds, but more common later on. Words such as *pueblo* (people, or workers), or *lucha* (struggle) are quite common in 2012/2013, which would indicate a shift from a more general dissatisfaction with the political landscape, to a more narrowed down and ideologically determined discourse. Nonetheless, this happened in an environment with much less participants, in a situation when the movement was significantly weaker than in previous years. This could have enabled and facilitated co-optation from other political actors, primarily left-wing parties and unions, which has resulted in the more technical vocabulary.[87]

All of the points above lead us in the same direction: Laclau's theory of hegemony does work, and there is support for the presence of the empty signifier, which does not directly correlate with any of the specific demands which are mentioned by individual groups or

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[87] The analysis of online action within the Indignados was completed before the rise of Podemos. In other words, the quite clear channelling of demands into a party structure was absent. The rise of Podemos and its possible consequences for a theory of hegemony will be further elaborated on in the concluding Chapter Seven.

people. However, this seems to be the case only for a short period of time. The movement is constantly changing its focus, and it is happening rapidly. The prime example of Laclau's theory, the slogan of the Russian anti-tsarist movements 'Bread, peace and land' was a trope which persisted for a prolonged period of time, but due to the arrival of new ICTs the fluidity and volatility of hegemony have rapidly sped up, producing a much less stable form of hegemony: the hegemonic project.

As such, in this chapter, I have given an overview of disagreements over studying social movements online. In media studies, we can discern two main strands of techno-optimism and techno-scepticism. Against both of these, Rogers has tried to find a middle way, seeing the online as just another space for action, defying the online-offline dichotomy. Taking off from this point, I argued that in addition to this, we should consider the political nature of representation. Communication is always mediated, no matter if it is through people, or through objects and materiality, whether it is online or offline.

In order to better understand the political nature of representation, I returned to Laclau's theory of the empty signifier, and how this affects social movement action. Empirically, I have engaged with material online, showing the most common words used within three branches of the Indignados. Quite in line with the argument of the empty signifier, the word clouds drawn from Facebook reveal that the most common words actually do not say much about specific political issues, or any of the profile questions usually associated with the Indignados, but could be appropriated by a variety of claims. People, money, and democracy are all words many could connect to, regardless of their own specific problems with today's political landscape. This supports the idea that online activism largely builds on empty signifiers; that the social ties that we form online are possible because the connectors are potentially empty terms. While this can be said also for offline activism (there are plenty of examples of non-specific political slogans or mottos), I believe that social networks such as Facebook and Twitter also showcase such mechanisms. Since they are constructed the way they are, they tend to mediate communication in a certain way, which is then geared towards short, empty, phrases or words. Hence, I draw the conclusion that virtual ties are prime examples of the use of Laclau's empty signifier, which is vital for understand the creation of political identities. However, I also made the argument that,

instead of a theory of hegemony, we should turn to the hegemonic project, which incorporates the very prominent features of the Indignados: viscerality and virtuality.

The advent of social media does change things, but perhaps not in the way we anticipated. The claims that new forms of communication greatly affect the possibilities for social movements to put their claims forward and make their voices heard carry some truth, but also tell another story. In this chapter, I have shown that the social network might have other characteristics which have not received enough attention. When the focus tends to be on their horizontal and non-hierarchical qualities, I have turned to those instances where there is unity and direction, showing that there are indeed currents in social movement action online, something which should not be ignored.

Visceral and virtual: Two instances of the hegemonic project

Above, I have discussed how Laclau's theory of hegemony can offer an analytical framework when wanting to further understand the political subjectivity of the Indignados movement, a movement which is not one, regardless of their horizontal and affective character. This has been done through two different sets of data which described both the visceral and the virtual ties within the movement, which both showed instances of verticality, albeit in forms different from common understandings of movement unity.

Chapter Five dealt with the hegemonic project as shown through visceral practices. It argued that centrality within the Indignados must not necessarily be present within a specific concept or ideology, but could also be found in affective practices, such as spatial occupation, silence/noise, or aesthetical expressions. The common denominator for all of these, is their potential functions as empty signifiers, and therefore also potential carriers of hegemonic constructions. As such, Chapter Five concluded that a theory of hegemony can account for the Indignados, if placing a larger emphasis on the affective components of hegemony, as seen in the hegemonic project.

This chapter also argued that there are elements to a theory of hegemony which need to be more emphasised, mainly with regards to the lack of stability and the possibility for fluctuation. Ultimately, the chapter argued that what we are witnessing on social media today is not a purely horizontal network. Contrarily to what several social media theorists argue, also supported by the network theory of Hardt and Negri, the social online is subject

to similar hierarchical patterns as the social offline. What we have seen is that some words and terms, regardless of their content, rise to become the signifiers of the movement. Naturally, this does not mean that people have completely lost a sense of agency or their own subjectivity. Subjects are capable of encompassing both their own particular difference, as well as the universal equivalence. In other words, when users online are talking about money, or the people, they can do so in their very own content. However, there are still currents and directions to the discussion. This chapter does not, however, argue that there is a cyber-mastermind responsible for said direction. What it does argue is that to deny any such presence of direction, is to render impossible the very moment of subjectification as constructed on social media. Therefore, the horizontal network is only possible due to its inherent potentiality of verticality: the hegemonic project.

After having explored the limiting or enabling forces of the virtual, we might ask how the visceral and the virtual are together relevant for the hegemonic project. Although the two instances can come off as rather different at first sight, both of them play into the same picture: they are moments and spaces where the Indignados construct unity. The visceral showed how unity and cohesiveness can be created on a different level than merely the spoken or written word, and how emotional and affective practices are in fact central when considering social movement unity.

Similarly, the virtual practices point to those realms of social movement action which we might dismiss as insignificant. It is true, the Indignados have failed to sustain the mass movement they managed to mobilise in 2011. However, does this mean that there was nothing there? Was it all built on a dream and a sudden thrust of madness? This chapter argues that subjectification and unity was created in terms and words which hold little specific value. Money or the people are both terms which can speak to a large crowd of people, who come from drastically diverse backgrounds.

Importantly, the virtual social sphere should not be seen as entirely separate from offline modes of action. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, some would argue that social movements function differently online than in the offline world. As already mentioned, the stance taken in this chapter is that there are indeed particularities to the online, but, ultimately, online social action within the Indignados movement exhibits similar patterns as the offline modes of action. In both instances, there are clear moments

of unity, which can be subsumed under the concept of hegemony. In addition, when looking at the comments there are always strong connections to the offline world, signalling that the online does not work in a vacuum. As such, I argue that the theories available to us to study social action offline will also be valid for online interactions. In other words, social networks are just another space for action, which does have its media specificities, but is still a social forum.

What both the visceral and the virtual are pointing to is the fragile, volatile, instable and incomplete nature of hegemony. The visceral and the virtual are rather building on the very moments which create the tension between autonomy and hegemony, and horizontality and verticality. What is important to recall is that these are not liminal or passing stages of social action. Rather, as shown in this chapter and in the previous Chapter Five, the virtual and visceral practices are where the potentiality for collective identities lies. As such, the liminal is in fact central, and the practices which we might have dismissed as collective madness or irrational inconsequential actions carry the most weight for the creation of a social movement. For the Indignados, uniting in the subtle and subliminal is what actually matters and, ultimately, what works, even though this might be only for a very confined period of time.

As such, this chapter reinforces the argument set out in Chapter Four: There is no stable dwelling in either horizontality or verticality. The theory of the social network as a flat congregation of completely autonomous individuals does not provide a useful analytical framework, nor does the model of a hegemonic, all-encompassing oppressive regime. Social movements linger between the two extremes, and the Indignados further pushes us to rethink this polarity. When looking at the practices and the customs of the movement, it is difficult to place them at either end of the spectrum. This perfectly illustrates how social movements are always in tension between horizontality and verticality, which becomes constitutive of their political subjectivity.

Political subjectivity revisited

This chapter must conclude with a return to the question of the thesis: Can the Indignados spur a new understanding of democracy? In order to engage with this question, I have argued that we must question the limits and forms of political subjectivity. As I have

shown, the forms of unity expressed in the Indignados have previously been regarded as secondary, liminal, or inconsequential. This is important also when we are considering the effects for contemporary ideas of political subjectivity. If subjectivity is formed, not through consensus-building or ideological similarity, but rather through visceral practices and empty, momentaneous, signifiers, the theoretical framework used to understand the Indignados must also include this type of identity formation. The hegemonic project allows for exactly this type of political subjectivity. By acknowledging that hegemony can occur at a spur of the moment, and by recognising that it might be much less palpable than previously thought, we can also understand that the Indignados is *one* movement, based on commonality in the visceral and the virtual.

The hegemonic project also demonstrates the tensions which political subjectivity is always caught in. First of all, there is a strong tension between emotion/affect and reason. This tension has produced a favouring of rational action over other forms of political expressions. However, as Chapter Five has shown, affect is central to create any type of movement identity, and therefore also central to the creation of political subjectivities. Importantly, affective practices can function as political articulations. Second, there is a strong tension between verticality and horizontality. As both Chapters Five and Six have argued, there are strong instances of unity and centrality in this seemingly horizontal congregation. As such, to claim that a movement would be either horizontal or vertical does not capture the nuance and complexity of contemporary political action. In addition, these two tensions converge in that the type of verticality experienced within the Indignados movement has a strong affective character, something which pushes the limits of the creation of political subjectivity into new realms and confirms the need to move beyond stale dichotomies.

7. Conclusion: Facing the challenges for democracy

Democracy in Europe is increasingly being put into question. Time and time again, and with continuously greater scale and gravity, there are challenges to present forms of democracy. This takes many different expressions, some of them being demonstrations, occupations and large congregations of people on the streets. This bears witness to a growing discontent within Europe over the meaning of policy.

In Spain, this has recently been illustrated within the Indignados movement. As shown in Chapters Five and Six, the movement has gathered a wide variety of claims, but there is still a movement which we can call the Indignados. Could they perhaps be seen as a potential re-articulation of politics in Europe? However, the crude reality of this movement – as a movement and not as a political party – is that they have gained little formal political influence so far, despite their large popular support. This creates a paradox: There is plenty of political activism, yet few consequences, which brings us back to the overall research question of this thesis:

Can the Indignados spur a new understanding of democracy?

This question, broad as it might be, narrows in on the topic of political subjectivity. If the people can affect politics mainly through democratic elections, what happens to the concept of political subjectivity when these channels seem to be no longer sufficient?

As pointed out in the introductory chapter, the Indignados pose several challenges to democracy, by problematising the idea of who is regarded a political subject. *Practically*, they are questioning the representative and electoral system by turning to other ways of doing politics. However, I have argued that this also has *theoretical* and *analytical* repercussions, and that these dimensions are co-constitutive. At the heart of this argument lies a critique of the strong dichotomy between emotion/affect and reason, as well as horizontality and verticality, which produces hierarchies between different kinds of political subjectivity.

Following two observations about the Indignados, their emotional profile as well as their dispersed nature, I argued that these pose *theoretical* challenges to existing literature, which does not see these as key components of a valid political subject. When talking

about emotional/affective social movements, or political subjects, one could turn either to social movement theory, or to democratic theory. However, as Chapters Two and Three, above, showed, neither of these fields manages to satisfactorily account for a movement such as the Indignados as political subjects and both fields retain a sharp division between emotion/affect and reason. In addition, there is a lack of interaction between the two approaches, producing a lack of understanding of how emotions function in the creation of political subjectivities. As such, the Indignados pose significant challenges to extant theory.

This thesis has argued that a response to these theoretical challenges can be found in a different branch of democratic theory, radical democracy, and most prominently in the works of Ernesto Laclau. His theory of hegemony and populism is very apt for analysing the Indignados, since it highlights the importance of emotions/affect for the creation of political subjectivities. However, there are challenges also to Laclau's theory, given that almost 30 years has passed since its inception. These *analytical* challenges, mostly represented by the theory of the multitude by Hardt and Negri (2000; 2012) are countered with the introduction of the hegemonic project, which addresses two main adjustments necessary for a theory of hegemony to work today: an increased focus on affect and the transient nature of hegemony as witnessed on social media.

Ultimately, this thesis has argued that political subjectivity is always caught between two tensions. First, there is a tension between emotion/affect and reason, and second, there is a tension between horizontality and verticality. In conclusion, this thesis has also shown that these are interrelated, and that the constant favouring of reason over emotions also affects the movements' perceived organisational structure, since emotion/affect is not recognised as a legitimate form of centrality, which contributes to the lack of political subjectivity.

Revisiting the emotion and reason divide

As shown in Chapter Two, above, social movement theory has oscillated between several, quite different, attitudes towards emotions. Having moved from a perspective where the masses were always emotional, passionate and therefore politically inept, the complete rationalisation of the social movement dominated the field until the early 1990s. Thereafter, the field witnessed a very promising emotional turn, which recovered a focus and an interest in emotions (which had been so long forgotten), trying to amend important deficits

in the current understanding of emotions. The move from a purely rationalist perspective is commendable, and has indeed proved to be a successful tool in furthering research about social action. However, as pointed out by a number of researchers (Gould 2009; Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005; Calhoun 2001), the emotional turn has, in fact, only managed to rationalise emotions, and not include emotions as such into the picture. In other words, emotions are seen as tools, as resources to increase participation, engagement, and mobilisation. As such, whilst analysis including emotions is now possible and largely accepted, it is nonetheless conditioned by a restricted cognitive understanding of what emotions are, what they mean, and how they can be utilised to benefit the movement. Such a perspective omits a significant part of what activism is about, and is still somehow lingering in the old perspective that the passions of the masses need to be controlled and do not really fit into political life. Anger, rage, joy, or fear is invited only on the condition that it can be explained and tied to a cause. This does not, however, place any emphasis on the affective and performative dimension of protest, nor does it explain the Indignados very well. The movement, which has a dispersed nature, is an emotional movement, but with emotions that are not necessarily tied to a specific cause, but to a myriad of different causes.

This has spurred an affective turn in social movement theory. Building on affect theory, several scholars have made successful contributions to the field of how corporal sensations in fact affect our political lives. As shown by Gould (2009) and Massumi (1995), among others, affect plays a significant part in how we perceive of political events, and how our thoughts are shaped in relation to them. This addition to the emotional turn which the affective turn symbolises, signifies an important addendum and can broaden the idea of how social movements form and develop; not merely through cognition, but also through corporeal sensations. However, as argued in Chapter Two, this turn to affect in social movement theory suffers from two problems. First of all, it entails a far too great focus on affect as corporeal. Whilst it can be, this thesis asked the question of whether we can conceive of any other mode of affect, which might not limit itself to bodily sensations. By pairing affect with the body, the dichotomies of mind/body and rational/emotional persists, which does not further the understanding of a social movement, since affect is seen as disjointed from signification and meaning-making. Secondly, and as a result, the affective

turn in social movement theory still suffers from a lack of focus on the movement as a political subject.

For this reason, Chapter Three turned to democratic theory, where, however, similar problems were detected. The idea of the democratic sovereign, which is paramount to the creation of any democratic legitimacy, has been thought to consist of a unified people with a single, well-explicated, will. This perspective, which has emanated mostly from liberal thought, has been further re-worked in order to be more inclusive of the general public. This is the main thrust of Habermas' deliberative democracy: to include people in the process of deliberation and thus create a consensus which is agreeable to all, and creates a common good. However, this theory is fundamentally based on a very specific idea of reason. Reason and the possibility of learning are cornerstones for deliberative theory which argues that the process of rational communication is the most just mode of decision-making.

What such a theory does not consider, as argued in Chapter Three, is the practice of exclusion. By advocating the treating of the democratic sovereign as an ideally unified, rational entity, deliberative democracy fails to recognise those voices which fall outside the blueprint, such as the Indignados. In other words, the space for the democratic sovereign, and for political subjectivity, is conditioned upon compliance with rational procedures; disagreement does not incorporate contention over what speaking means. Rancière and Mouffe both point to this, and argue that democracy is in fact always based on disagreement and exclusion. They also argued that this perspective reinforces the divide between emotion and reason, and places the latter as superior to the former. As such, this could also be seen as reminiscent of a conservative perspective where emotions have no space in public life, and where reason is the right way to do politics. As such, deliberative democratic theory as well as social movement theory fail to sufficiently engage with emotions as a mode of doing politics, and reinforce the Cartesian division between emotion/affect and reason. This becomes highly problematic when looking at the Indignados. However, Chapter Three also pointed to the fact that there is a need to go beyond a critique of reason, and engage with how emotion/affect can influence the creation of political subjectivities.

The hegemonic project: the affective political subject

As a response to the problems outlined above, this thesis turned to the theories of Ernesto Laclau. Chapter Four examined Laclau's theory of hegemony where there is space for affective forms of political identity, since discourse is always both pertaining to language and materiality. Integrating lessons learned from both psychoanalysis as well as Derridian deconstruction, his theory of hegemony connects the affective with the creation of political demands. Laclau's model of hegemony, where one false universal rises to become the signifier for a chain of different demands, has a lot to offer when it comes to understanding the Indignados. Since it combines the affective, radical investment in a signifier with the possibility of centrality and political articulation, it can make sense of a movement which is not one. However, even though a theory of hegemony does provide an affective model of how political subjectivities are constructed, there are a couple of concerns. Since Laclau and Mouffe published their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* in 1985, there are new developments in social action which need attention. First of all, whilst the prime examples of hegemony in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* include Peronism in Argentina and tsarism in Russia, social antagonism today seems to be constructed around more fragile and transient constellations. The previous examples, where dual poles are built up over many years, and there is a prolonged duration of hegemonic positions, might not apply to the social movements of our time. Rather, as was shown in the empirical material of this thesis, hegemony should be thought of in the framework of the hegemonic project.

The hegemonic project is a direct response to critiques posited against a theory of hegemony. As elaborated in Chapter Four, a theory of hegemony is not the only possible explanation at hand. The connections between emotions/affect, horizontality, and social movements have also been put forward by Hardt and Negri (2012) whose theory of the networked multitude has got a lot of attention in regards to the social movements of our time. Hardt and Negri have accurately observed that movements nowadays – from the World Social Forum, the Global Justice movement, or, more recently, Occupy and the Indignados – put a large focus on their horizontal qualities. They argue that this horizontal network is a result of affective congregations which do not necessarily centre on a node, and, as such, defy common conceptions of representation. However, much like the affective turn in social movement theory, the concept of affect for Hardt and Negri seems to be confined to bodily sensations and corporeal experiences. In addition, even though the

focus on horizontality is a real development within movements today, does this preclude the possibility of any centrality? In Chapter Four, I argued that when siding either with the horizontal, immanent perspective or with the vertical, transcendent perspective, one is still a captive in dichotomies which sediment and corroborate a division which must be overcome, if the Indignados are to be studied in-depth. The theory of the networked multitude thus reinforces the belief that affective movements are necessarily horizontal. As such, and similar to deliberative democratic theory and social movement theory, Hardt and Negri posit unnecessary restrictions on affective modes of politics and confine them to the networked multitude. Again, affect is seen as disjointed from representation, much like the affect theories as described in Chapter Two.

Visceral and virtual ties: Studying other forms of political subjectivity

As a response to these analytical challenges posited to a theory of hegemony, this thesis develops the concept of the hegemonic project, which suggests two main re-articulations of the theory of hegemony. First of all, it calls for a higher emphasis on the possibility of an affective hegemonic constellation. Even though this is present in the works of Laclau, the leverage of argument coming from affect-based theories, such as argued by Hardt and Negri, and the observation of the horizontal, affective nature of contemporary social movements, creates a need for the affective nature of hegemony to be pronounced more clearly. Second, the hegemonic project points to moments of unity which are highly precarious and perishable, much due to the arrival of new information and communication technologies.

This thesis thus made the argument that we can witness the hegemonic project in primarily two forms, the visceral and the virtual. Both the visceral and the virtual point to a broader conception of what an empty signifier can be. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Madrid, Chapter Five described how unity often takes place through visceral practices. As such, the commonality for a movement does not only linger in a common message or ideology, but can be embodied in the visceral. The practices most pronounced within the Indignados were spatial occupation, silence and noise, as well aesthetics. The squares of Madrid, and of other Spanish cities, where people can gather and congregate, function as empty spaces, which can be filled with many different contents. This is also what happens in the Indignados, where people from different locations and backgrounds gather to hold an

assembly or a demonstration. The overall unity here is not necessarily in any specific words or thoughts, but rather in the very physical presence of the activists. The feeling of belonging emanates not from a common message, but from a common presence. As such, the square becomes the empty signifier, the promise. What is important to note is that the square in this sense is a representation, an affective investment in a signifier, which is not disjointed from signification.

Similarly, moments of silence and noise become spaces for inscribing feelings among the members of the Indignados. The practice of the *grito mudo* (silent shout) is something which has been witnessed before, but then it was almost always connected to a special cause. When the Indignados organise these protests, the causes are highly diverse, and people gather in silence in a similar way as they do in a common physical space. As such, silence can be seen as the ultimate empty signifier, a presence which is an absence, a space for unity with no specific content. Similar observations were made about noise, which instils a strong physical reaction, still, with no particular agenda. Aesthetics could also be said to function in the same way. Resistance through artistic expression has, of course, existed before. The reason for bringing up aesthetics as an example of the hegemonic project is not to point to its novelty, but rather to point to its relevance for the democratic subject. As such, art, dance, and music, can also function as empty spaces for unity, as potential sites for the empty signifier. What unites space, silence/noise and aesthetics, is the possibility for unity in the visceral. Offering an empty space, which can be filled with multiple contents, the visceral can be said to embody a very effective empty signifier.

This thesis also analysed online material, in order to depict what were termed virtual ties. Virtual ties, much like their visceral equivalents, function through similar mechanisms. Even though online communication is indeed taking place in social networks, there are moments of centrality and unity. Chapter Six showed how, on Facebook, there are certain terms which are more frequently used than others. As such, online discussions are not completely horizontal or rhizomatic, but have strong centres or nodes. What was also observed from the online data was that these nodes and centres change at a rapid pace. While at its inception the Indignados movement was focussed on words and terms which were largely pertaining to democracy and movement action, over time, the focus shifted into a much more economistic agenda. *Money*, *banks* and *struggle* were terms which

217

subsequently gained leverage, fitting a more orthodox leftist ideological discourse. However, one should also note that the numbers of activists were much higher in the beginning.

Importantly, the underlying mechanisms of identity and unity creation are similar online and offline. Affect plays a central role in both cases. Offline, radical investment offers the potentiality of unity among diverse protesters in space, silence/noise and aesthetics. Online, radical investment in a certain term or word creates unity, centrality and direction of the discussion. This investment is identical online and offline, but comes in different forms and outlets and is always highly affective.

The democratic subject: movement or party?

The visceral and the virtual point to two different instances of movement unity, which have previously been considered liminal. However, within the framework of the hegemonic project, these are central mechanisms. This thesis has showed that political subjectivity and unity can also be conceived as affective, a conjecture which turns against previous thought and theory on social movements and on democracy. The affective in the hegemonic project occupies a central role, and defies the rational, which has for a long time colonised theories on the popular sovereign. This not only poses challenges to existing theory of social movements and democracy, but also shows that creating sharp divisions between political and democratic theory on the one hand, and social movement theory on the other, eliminates the possibility of understanding the Indignados. In order to fully appreciate the puzzles they pose to existing literature, we must make use of both sides of the story.

As such, this thesis argues that political subjectivity today carries a number of characteristics previously connected with a lack of agency. The affective nature of contemporary movements and the precarious, perishable and transient nature of the hegemonic project both blur, obfuscate and challenge contemporary ideas of the democratic sovereign. Political identity lingers in the constant tension between emotion/affect and reason, horizontality and verticality, autonomy and hegemony, and immanence and transcendence. This creates instability and uncertainty, which have previously been regarded as pariahs in democratic theory.

However, the possibility and potentiality of rapid change could also be what empowers social movements today. The break from clearly defined political positions opens up spaces for action, and these are also being utilised to the maximum. As such, although repeatedly having been swept under the carpet, affective protest could come to signify one of the most transformative forces of our time. This thesis therefore argues that in recognising the importance of affect in the creation of political claims, there can be theoretical advances and some of the challenges posited by the Indignados can be addressed. However, does this translate into practice?

One of the most pressing observations in wake of the protest 2011 is the rise (or return) of left-wing populism in Europe, although right-wing populism is also a prominent development. Parties such as the Spanish *Podemos* or the Greek *Syriza*[88] are new constellations which in many ways re-draw Europe's political map. One could say that this confirms the functionality of the present representative system. If, as is now happening, the movements are converting into parties, then should this not be seen as an indication of the soundness of our political model? Do the Indignados really challenge current ideas of democracy? Indeed, both Podemos and Syriza have chosen to 'play the game' and seek electoral support through already existing channels. As noted in Chapter One, many see Podemos as the natural continuation of the Indignados movement. Is this perhaps the way for the movement to gain more political leverage? However, several voices claim that these parties are not the continuation of the movement itself, and that Podemos and Syriza only reflect parts of the movements, whose stakes and scopes are much broader than currently expressed in the party aims.

Here, it is important to emphasise that Podemos – even though they are trying to push for a more inclusive idea of organisation – increasingly resembles a traditional political party. With a very central leadership and an engagement with politics which has a higher emphasis on the electoral side than the non-electoral, the progressive nature of the party might be reduced. As such, to claim that Podemos is a natural continuation of the Indignados movement might not only be inaccurate, but also in some ways counter-productive. Podemos is reinforcing the type of behaviour which the Indignados criticised

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[88] Syriza, a party re-founded in 2012, could be said to be similar to Podemos, and also has strong ties to the Greek Indignados movement. They are currently in power in Greece, after having formed a coalition with the party Independent Greeks.

from the beginning. As such, there is a large potential for the Indignados to spur a different understanding of democracy and political subjectivity, but if the movement will be equated with the political party, and the structures which naturally follow, this potential might diminish.

This brings back the question of hegemony and the hegemonic project. It indicates a distinction between those moments of unity described in this thesis (the visceral and virtual) and the type of hegemony which was originally constructed by Laclau, with more stable antagonistic positions. A party construction could be seen as a sedimentation of the antagonism and can also act as a false universal. Podemos and Syriza, in this sense, become the false universal. There have been some attempts at labelling the initial stages of the Indignados as pre-hegemonic or pre-populist (Stavrakakis 2014). A danger in this label is that it could indicate a temporal aspect of hegemony: first, there is a radical investment in a signifier, then, this sediments into a hegemonic construction. This confirms the claims made by this thesis, that political subjectivity is ascribed to either vertical or rational actors, without recognising the constant tensions in which political subjects always find themselves.

It is also important to recognise that the presence of emotion/affect has probably not decreased with the arrival of Podemos. However, the unity within the party could be said to be embodied in the central leadership rather than in the affective or virtual practices described in Chapter Five and Six; the party demonstrates clear vertical structures. This is something which is of interest for further research, since Laclau's theory of populism, fits very well with the rise of Podemos (Laclau 2005; Barriere, Durgan and Robson 2015; Iglesias 2015; Errejón 2014). However, it seems as though emotional and affective populist parties can gain more political influence than emotional and affective movements. In this sense, unity in affective practices, as seen in the hegemonic project, which have not transformed into stable hegemonies, are thought of as weaker and less important. This carries with it the insight that political subjectivity is always caught in the tensions along two planes or axes:

1. Firstly, this thesis has illustrated the tension between emotion and reason. Within both theory and practice, there is a clear division between rational actors and emotional actors. Importantly, rational action is more often than not valued higher

than emotional action. This has profound implications for the recognition of political subjects, as has been described above. This thesis has argued that this division also reinforces a separation between affect and signification. By doing this, affective practices are deprived of their potentially political function, something which this thesis has strongly disputed by pointing to the unity within the Indignados created through affective means.

2. Secondly, subjectivity is always caught in the tension between horizontality and verticality. As argued in Chapter Four, above, neither of the poles will ever be reached, but the only possibility is a constant in-between. The important realisation of this thesis is that the tension between emotion/affect and reason is connected to the second axis: horizontality/verticality. Traditionally, emotion/affect has not been seen as a possible form of unity for a social movement or a party, unless this included manipulation of the masses, which was seen as highly undesirable. As such, the affective unity which has been described above is often not accorded political subjectivity. However, as this thesis has shown, the verticality within the Indignados and their moments of centrality are to be found in affective practices as well as within the seemingly horizontal virtual networks.

The tensions for the composition and the construction of any political subject are not sufficiently recognised, neither in theory nor in practice. This lack of attention to the tensions between emotions/affect and reason, and horizontality and verticality, sediments the dichotomies and thus reinforces already present ideas of what political subjectivity can be. As such, political subjectivity today, as seen with the Indignados, carries a number of characteristics connected with a lack of agency. In this endeavour to further understand the Indignados, a theory of hegemony will be central, and especially the theory of the hegemonic project, since it manages to combine emotion/affect with the formation of political subjectivity. Therefore, the Indignados could spur new understandings of democracy, if these rigid dualisms can be overcome.

Limitations of this research and further research trajectories

There are, of course, limitations of the scope of this research. In many ways, the Indignados could be seen as a beginning of a re-articulation of politics in Europe. The events included in this thesis are not the end of the story, but the developments continue to

221

unfold. Therefore, further research on the topic is necessary. As such, this thesis will enable me to continue this research along a number of interrelated directions. Below, I will outline a triptych of pathways which are central to the continuation of the discussions started in this thesis.

New media, new methods

As for the empirical work on this thesis, there are a couple of points to be made. I have worked with methods which are new to our time, especially in the section on social media. This has several implications. First, there are no major textbooks, or codes of best practice, and the researcher is left to combine present knowledge on methodology with the new methods available to us.

One of the more significant challenges in this project arose when trying to get access to the online material. When dealing with material online, and especially on big social networks such as Twitter or Facebook, one always has to remember that private companies own the material. Therefore, the researcher is constrained by the conditions set by these companies, not least their privacy settings. This has definitely limited my research. Since May 2011 is one of the key periods of time which I wanted to analyse, I needed access to social media material from that period. However, this proved to be a difficult endeavour. Whilst I managed to get access to the historical Facebook discussions, the Twitter material was very hard to acquire. In order to get historical tweets and discussions, one must either harvest them as they as produced, or buy them from a company with which Twitter has an agreement. Since I had not embarked on my PhD in May 2011, I did not harvest them back then. In order to buy the tweets, I would have had to pay around 2,000 USD, which would perhaps not even cover the material that I wanted. None of these options were plausible, which is why I have focussed only on the Facebook data. Of course, doing a Twitter analysis would have been interesting as well, and is something which I believe would be crucial for future research, now that the tools are more readily available, and harvesting could be done simultaneously. As such, the presence of online methods in my material has posed some challenges, however, the possibilities and the insights from the material presented in this thesis exceed possible concerns over the intricacies of online research. The material gathered for this thesis could also be studied further, in order to map the changing discourse of the Indignados. For instance, one could pair qualitative forms of

222

textual analysis with the quantitative analysis already present, so as to nuance and expand on the discussions and their instances of verticality and direction.

In addition, further research should be conducted across multiple social media platforms. Virtual realities change rapidly, and social behaviour fluctuates and migrates onto new territories and into new forms. This is also something which has to be taken into consideration for the conclusions made in Chapter Six. Even though the data showed a clear decline in participation (which also coincides with general observations made about the Indignados), one should study further the possibility of a change of medium, and nuance the picture of the steep decline. For instance, the rise of Instagram as a social network platform, or the construction of smaller, closed, online forums, is something which should be studied further. For each new social media platform, there are new methods which need to be developed. At the moment, the Digital Methods Initiative in Amsterdam offers many of the latest developments of analysis of not only words, but also pictures, and network structures. The tools available today are of a much wider range than when I started this project, and, as such, further research is required where these new tools can be utilised as to give a more nuanced and in-depth picture of these movements.

In addition, one could also consider a merging of the methods used in this thesis. A new form of analysis, netnography (Kosinets 2012), is a form of ethnography conducted online. By using this method, the researcher integrates into a social forum, as a kind of participant observation online. This could prove useful when wanting to map affective and emotional responses in the virtual, and is something which should be investigated further.

Beyond Spain

This thesis focusses exclusively on the Indignados movement in Spain. One could ask a few questions about using Spain as a singular case and not taking a more comparative approach to the current developments in Europe. As mentioned both in the introduction and throughout the thesis, this should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon particular to Spanish politics. Indeed, the Indignados are situated in a wider context of dissent, with the events in the Arab Spring, with Occupy, and the Indignados' sister movements in Greece and Portugal. Consequently, they embody a wider trend.

As such, this thesis is limited in its scope, but that is not to say that the insights from this thesis could not be valuable also for the study of other movements. The hegemonic project could offer a theoretical framework which could be applied to several contemporary protest movements, as to further understand why or how these movements are ascribed political subjectivity. Naturally, there are certain specificities to every movement, but the hegemonic project allows for many different constellations. The wider trend of protest could be seen as a trans-nationalisation of claims, and the hegemonic project could serve as a useful tool for understanding how affect and emotions helps a movement function across borders. As such, this thesis makes a contribution to theory development, but further research is necessary in order to more strongly corroborate the claims made.

With the recent developments in Greece, where Syriza are currently in power, there is much to be said about the relationship between movement and party. Further research is necessary to see how these new parties continue to reflect the movements that spawned them and thus offer a form of resistance, or whether their presence signifies simply a concession to the existing representative system. Ultimately, such research could offer useful insights on the constant tensions between horizontality and verticality, and emotion/affect and reason, so acutely expressed within contemporary social movements and their party equivalents, and also shed light on the use of emotions and affect within these parties.

Populism(s): Progressive and reactionary

This thesis has focussed on movements which are often labelled as leftist, even though this does not paint the whole picture. The Indignados movement is home to a variety of ideologies, but it is true that none of them would place themselves at the far-right end of the political spectrum. However, in Europe right now, there are strong movements also on the right. The rise of far-right parties in many European countries, which have also enjoyed significant electoral success, is something which also constitutes challenges to democracy. For a long time, the political landscape has been settled on a left-right scale which has not stretched much beyond conservatism on the right or social democracy on the left. However, this has rendered a pervasive sense of eternal consensus among the political elites, and the correlative view that the people have lost their say in political matters. The Indignados and its sister movements are one response to this development, but another response is the rise

of far-right extremism. There is a clear limitation in the scope of this project, in that it solely analyses one side of the response.

This is not to say that the political turmoil in the wake of the rise of far-right parties and movements being witnessed in Europe right now could not be analysed through the lens of affective politics and a theory of hegemony. Rather the opposite, affect and hegemony can function both in a progressive and a reactionary way. This has also been recognised by Laclau, who argues that populism exists both on the right and on the left (Laclau 2005: 176).

As such, the affective elements of political identity, as described in this thesis, could very well be applied to a reactionary political movement. The creation of identity within the far-Right would, I suspect, be equally susceptible for visceral and virtual unity. This is something which could also shed light on the success of these movements and parties, by not trying to rationalise their actions, but rather to look at the role of emotions and affect. In this case, a theory of the hegemonic project could again prove helpful and this is therefore another area for further research.

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243

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Appendix A: Pictures from fieldwork

1. Picture from the May 12 demonstration, 2013: 'They call it democracy, but it isnt'.

2. Picture from the May 12 demonstration: 'Franco has died, the PP continues, thanks to the PSOE', Madrid 2013.

3. The popular assembly of Pedrezuela, from the May 12 demonstration, Madrid 2013.
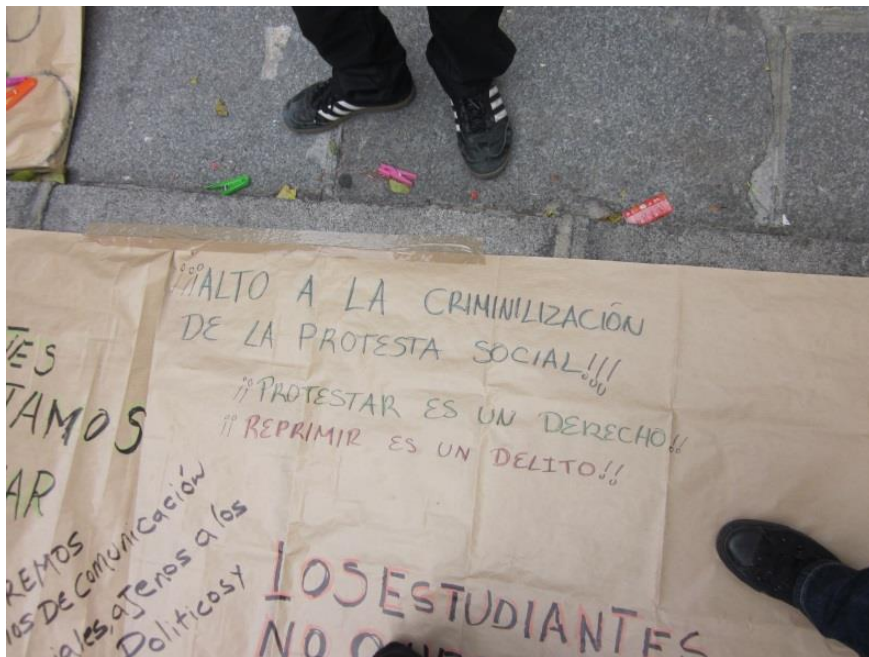

4. The popular assembly of Collado Villalba, from the May 12 demonstration, Madrid 2013.

5. Picture from the assembly *Noche en blanco por la Democracia* (night in white for democracy), a late night event, May 10, 2013.

6. Image from the assembly on civil disobedience, May 23, 2013.

7. Image from the assembly on civil disobedience, May 23, 2013.

8. Picture taken at an alternative plenum organised by *Red por la dignidad de los barrios y pueblos de Madrid,* May 18, 2013.

9. Picture taken from the *Grito Mudo* protest, Madrid May 12, 2013.

10. Picture taken from the *Grito Mudo* protest, Madrid May 12, 2013.

11. Picture from the Guillotina movement, Madrid May 8, 2013.

12. Picture of graffiti in Madrid referencing the Guillotina movement, May 10, 2013.

13. Picture with people dancing in the May 12 demonstration, Madrid 2013.

14. Picture with people dancing in the May 12 demonstration, Madrid 2013.

15. Young man playing the saxophone at *Puerta del Sol*, Madrid May 12, 2013.