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This is a repository copy of *A new 'Europe from below'? Cosmopolitan citizenship, digital media and the indignados social movement*.

Abstract

This article asks whether the Indignados social movement can be seen as a counter-public that is capable of fostering genuine forms of cosmopolitan citizenship. It is argued that via the artful use of the possibilities of digital media (e.g. social networking websites, live video, blogs) the Indignados social movement goes on to devise new forms of public discourse and organized protest as well as shared ways of thinking and acting that are capable of fuelling cosmopolitan solidarity. It is suggested that the movement serves as a springboard to analyse how new forms of public communication can foster both a shared sense of European solidarity and cosmopolitan publics. Looking at examples of protest camps in various European settings and their public communication, the paper puts forward the claim that the movement's self-definition as leaderless, global, inclusive and non-hierarchical owes much to its performative dimension. This latter dimension is visible, for instance, in the theatricality of the protest camps, ludic forms of protest (e.g. the carnivalesque use of the V for Vendetta Guy Fawkes' mask), and forms of public debate and decision-making that are underpinned by embodied practices (e.g., silent gestures) as much as by the procedural legitimacy of rational-critical discourse. In targeting the political and financial elites (including those associated to the EU), the performance of protest offers new insights on what it means to be a European citizen against the backdrop of the EU debt crisis, the emergence of unelected governments in Italy and Greece, and the so-called 'dictatorship of the markets'. We will see that this transnational movement goes on to engender radical modes of citizen participation that while locally-rooted are also powerfully shaped and informed by the creative appropriation and reinvention of a shared repertoire of European symbols, meanings, and values.

Keywords: Europe, public sphere, protest, digital media, performance.

A New Europe from Below? Cosmopolitan citizenship, digital media and the indignados Social Movement

Introduction

On the 15th of May 2011 the platforms Democracia Real Ya (Real Democracy Now) and Jovenes sin Futuro (Young People with No Future) organized a demonstration in Madrid's square Puerta Del Sol that attracted unexpectedly large numbers of protestors (around 20.000 people) through a call for action that went viral on Twitter. At the end of the demonstration, a group of about a hundred protestors decided to occupy the Puerta De Sol. This occupation was followed by a violent eviction attempt by the police that that the effect of attracting thousands of protestors and wide popular support. This event marked the birth what Indignados [Indignants] social movement which is also known as 15M movement. Coined by the Spanish press, the term 'indignados' was borrowed from the title of the pamphlet Indignez-Vous! written by French Resistance hero, Stéphane Hassel. Inspired by the Arab uprisings and the struggle for democracy that dramatically unfolded in Tahrir square, the movement went on to spark a wave of occupations throughout Europe and the Occupy sit-in protests in the U.S. As occupations of squares rapidly spread across Spain and other EU countries (such as Italy, Greece, France, and Portugal) what becomes clear - against the backdrop of the EU debt crisis and unprecedented mass unemployment in many EU countries - is that underlying the indignados struggle for people's social and economic rights (Sanchez, 2012) is also a crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy. This grassroots mobilization for the renewal of democracy – that reportedly drew up to 8% of the Spanish population (see Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2012: 111) – responded to this crisis with the creation of alternative networks of direct

democracy, self-organization and mutual aid with the purpose of disseminating public awareness about possible alternatives and discuss future pathways for the movement (Roos, 2012). Similarly to other social movements (e.g., the European Social forums and the European counter-summits) whose grassroots models of political participation the indignados adopted, the fight for social justice and democracy 'from below' is at the heart of the narrative frames employed to express grievance and discontent. But while the former were open to representatives of all civil society groups, relied on alternative media practices and emphasised mobilization for concrete demands, the indignados advocate locally-rooted forms of citizen participation and face-to-face communication through long-term occupations of public spaces – streets and squares. One year on, as the encampments got dismantled the movement's strong local identity is retained as the movement spreads through neighbourhoods generating new kinds of occupations (Ainger, 2011).

In their public communication, the indignados present themselves as a leaderless and non-partisan social movement of ordinary citizens demanding participatory forms of democracy. It noteworthy that while EU affairs and issues feature prominently in public debates and protest events, in their self-definition the indignados do not present themselves as a specifically European social movement, but rather as a movement of global citizens. This is visible, for instance, in the English-speaking page of the Facebook page of the Spanish grassroots platform, Democracia Real Ya (Real Democracy Now): 'We understand this revolution is made up of global citizens facing global issues, therefore, one of our goals is to create a net of volunteers and activists from around Europe to fight for our common goal'. Against this background, this paper argues that the indignados social movement engenders radically new modes of citizen participation that while locally-rooted are also underpinned by a shared repertoire of European symbols, meanings, and values. I argue that via the artful use of the possibilities of digital media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, blogs, alternative media magazines), a shared visual culture,

and occupying tactics that recast public space as the site par excellence of the public sphere, the indignados go on to devise new forms of communication and organized protest as well as shared ways of thinking and acting in a transnational communicative space. Hence, the movement serves as a springboard to analyse how new forms of public communication can foster both a new sense of European solidarity and forms of cosmopolitan citizenship. Looking at examples of protest camps in various European settings (Lisbon, Madrid and Barcelona) and their public communication, the paper puts forward the claim that the movement's self-definition as leaderless, global, inclusive and non-hierarchical owes much to its performative dimension. This latter dimension is visible, for instance, in the theatricality of the protest camps, ludic forms of protest (e.g. the carnivalesque use of the V for Vendetta's Guy Fawkes' mask), and ritualized forms of public debate (e.g., daily general assemblies, caceroladas[1]).

The movement targets grievance and discontent towards the political and financial elites (including those associated with the EU) not only discursively – in their manifestos and public debates taking place in assemblies and working groups – but also in stylized material objects (e.g. the V for Vendetta mask) and expressive performances (e.g., caceroladas) that connote oppression by the political system. We will see that what is at issue here is an attempt to give public visibility to the breakdown of public accountability of politicians, whose interests are perceived as aligned with those of the financial elites and corporate capital. In this context, the performance of protest offers new insights on what it means to be a European citizen against the backdrop of the EU debt crisis, the emergence of unelected governments in Italy and Greece, and the so-called 'dictatorship of the markets'.

This paper starts by probing the connection between transnational social movements, meanings of Europe and the public sphere in order to challenge the claim that the Europeanisation of social movements is conducive to a stronger European identity in a European-wide communicative space. It then goes on to explore how the occupying tactic of 'taking the square'

recasts the public sphere as the site par excellence of cosmopolitan public culture, before showing how the sophisticated use of digital media and the possibilities of web 2.0 has led to the rise of a cosmopolitan counterpublic through the consolidation of more expansive forms of solidarity and collective identity in a transnational public sphere. We will see that digital media – in particular, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter - facilitated the communication and organization of protest events and collective action in ways that helped to connect protestors gathered in different squares. Finally, I argue that the indignados paved the way for an emerging European public sphere, not because the on-going discussion across national borders of contentious EU issues generates a sense of a shared European identity, but because the discussion of contentious issues (not necessarily EU issues) is conducted in a synchronized way (i.e., similar issues are discussed simultaneously in different squares and media platforms), helping to consolidate the movement's identity and values. We will see that the possibility of the indignados as an embodiment of a 'Europe from below' – a Europe of Citizens – is ultimately predicated on the performance of protest; i.e., on expressive and theatrical modes of communication and collective action that enable the protesters not only to transcend the barriers of linguistic and national differences, but also to creatively draw on a shared repertoire of European values and meanings in order to achieve public visibility and collective self-representation.

Europe and social movements

This paper contends that the indignados social movement goes on to engender radically new modes of citizen participation that while locally-rooted are also powerfully shaped and informed by the creative appropriation and reinvention of a shared repertoire of European symbols, meanings, and values in a transnational public sphere. In order to understand this

contention, it is important to explore the linkages between European social movements, the public sphere, and meanings of Europe.

There is already a solid body of work that looks at how European social movements set the stage for an emerging critical and transnational European public sphere (De La Porta, 2003, 2005; De La Porta and Caiani, 2009; Doerr, 2010; Feron, 2007). Notably, a key concern in this literature is how European social movements and particular media practices foster the emergence of European identity within a European communicative space that is understood as self-contained. Much of this work aims to assess the existence (or not) of transnational social movements at the European level and is predicated on the assumption that European identity comes in 'various national colours' (Risse, 2010). Europe is here understood as a self-contained political or cultural space that is neatly distinct from other parts of the world. In what follows, I will pay special attention to the limitations of Della Porta and Caiani's Social Movements and Europeanization (2009), before setting out my analytical approach to the study of cultural understandings of Europe. For the purposes of this paper, their work is of particular interest because it includes a comprehensive survey of thousands of activists interviewed at international protest events targeting the EU, discourse analysis of documents and transcripts on debates on European policies and politics, as well as a systematic analysis of the daily press in a number of EU countries in selected years.

For Della Porta and Caiani (2009), protest events, such the European Social Forum and the EU counter-summits, played a key role in the elaboration of activists' attitudes towards the EU, as well as in the formation of a European identity The authors argue that transnational protest events such as the European Social Forums were 'consciously constructed as critical and open public spheres' in which 'Europe is not rejected – far from it: there are constant appeals to the construction of a Europe of rights, a social Europe, a Europe from below. The activists not only

feel quite attached to Europe but perceive themselves as promoters of a cosmopolitan vision, part of which is an open European identity' (De La Porta and Caiani, 2009: 158).

However, this notion of a shared European identity is problematic if one wants to argue – as Della Porta and Caiani do – that transnational protest events occur in a transnational communicative space that can be understood as a critical and cosmopolitan European public sphere. Their contention is that the Europeanization of social movements stems from public debates that involve 'a growing recognition of similarities among national causes and, therefore, the construction of a shared European identity' (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009: 171). The underlying assumption here is that Europeanised protest events facilitate communication and emotions, which foster a sense of a shared common European culture and identity, via a range of informal and formal European-wide networks. There is here, nonetheless, little recognition of Europe as an idea that is open to invention (Delanty, 1995) and of the way in which certain imaginaries of Europe are deeply interconnected and intertwined with the histories and imaginaries of other peoples and cultures deemed non-European (e.g., the idea of postcolonial Europe) (Gilroy, 1993, 2004; Gruzinski, 2004; Euben 2006; Holton, 2009). Importantly, even though Della Porta and Caiani use the label 'cosmopolitan' to characterize an emerging European public sphere, they never quite clarify what makes the critique of the EU by European social movements a cosmopolitan critique and, indeed, what is meant by cosmopolitanism.

Furthermore, the claim that Europeanization from below – the construction of European-wide networks and of a European discourse in transnational protest events – goes in tandem with processes of 'globalization from below' (De La Porta and Caiani, 2009: 183), suggests that Europe and the global are seen as mutually exclusive categories. What is being overlooked here is a sense of how certain meanings of Europe are, on the one hand, partially constituted beyond European-wide networks in dialogue with alternative postcolonial narratives and non-Western

imaginaries; and on the other, through global logics, i.e., historical processes and phenomena of transnational contact, travel and migration, which disrupt the idea of a single European entity.

I find compelling the authors' contention that European social movements can be seen as an embodiment of a 'Europe from below' that is underpinned by a critical, open and cosmopolitan public sphere, and that public debate about EU issues in transnational protest events can generate different visions of Europe ('Social Europe' vs. 'Neo-liberal Europe', 'Europe of the market', 'Europe of the elites'). However, such an approach to cultural understandings of Europe is problematic to the extent in which it does not only presuppose the idea of Europe as a unified, organic, bounded space of belonging - at the expense of other non-western meanings and European imaginaries (i.e., Europe imagined from elsewhere) - but also fails to account for the changing nature of European space and imaginaries within the dynamics of globalisation (Rovisco, 2010; Biebuyk and Rumford, 2012: 11-16). Because cosmopolitanism is treated in rather abstract terms, and its meaning and usefulness for the conceptualisation of a European public sphere are never clarified, what is missing is a more thorough explanation of how characterizations of cosmopolitanism – as both a practice and an ethico-political project - can inform our understanding of the indignados social movement as an embodiment of Europe from below.

Looking at the case of the indignados social movement, I propose a different analytical framework for probing the possibility of multiple meanings of Europe vis-à-vis social movements. Instead of asking how European social movements Europeanize - as Della Porta and Caiaini (2009: 168) do - I ask why and how certain meanings, ideas and symbols of Europe are mobilized by the indignados to help them communicate 'who they are' in a transnational communicative space. In this context, it is important to ask why certain meanings and symbols of Europe become more salient and politicized when they do. Social groups' interests are not

necessarily long-standing and are often connected to particular political or organizational conditions (Poletta, 2006:17). One of the propositions of this paper is that it is not accidental that the indignados social movement emerged against the backdrop of the EU debt crisis and the constitution of two unelected governments in Italy and Greece. As Kaldor et al (2012) found out in their research on the new political parties and public protests against austerity and the political system across Europe, those who live in formerly authoritarian cultures such as Central or Southern Europe were more inclined to favour the European Union as a guarantee for democracy.

My approach to meanings of Europe is concerned with processes of collective identification – in particular, with the question of what does it mean to be European against the backdrop of the EU debt crisis and a social and political crisis caused by rising mass unemployment in many EU countries. However, a sense of collective identification with Europe is not conceptualized here in terms of the protesters' collective attachments to Europe understood as a unified space of belonging.

My contention is that a sense of European identity (even a radical European identity) cannot be predicated on national similarities that allegedly unite fellow EU citizens, but on a shared repertoire of European values, meanings and symbols that enables ordinary citizens to develop shared ways of thinking and acting beyond the local and the national. Hence, European identity opens the prospect of solidarity and identification with other peoples and nations deemed not European. A notion of cosmopolitan solidarity - understood in terms of shared ways of thinking and acting that enable ordinary actors to 'direct solidaristic practices toward a coherent articulation of transnational political action aimed at redistribution and recognition' (Kurasawa, 2007: 158) - proves useful to characterize the indignados social movement as a transnational movement that involves expansive solidarities and banal cultural practices beyond the nation-state.

Cosmopolitanism is also significant as an ethico-political project that can be found in public discourse and tied to European intellectual traditions. In a post-World War II context, the normative project of Europe has developed into the vision of cosmopolitan Europe – as an antithesis of nationalist Europe (Beck, Levy and Sznaider, 2009: 118) - that emphasises the commitment to the universal values of democracy, peace, social justice and human rights, against a European past blighted by colonialism, imperialism and fascism (Stevenson, 2012). As a project of resistance that combats the horrors of European history, cosmopolitan Europe has become the institutionalised way of self-critique of the European way (Beck, Levy and Sznaider, 2009). In this context, the idea of Europe loses its referentiality to Europe understood as a single space of common culture and identity, and becomes understood through a set of European values which, at least since the nineteenth-century, have been diffused as universal values across the globe (see Pim de Boer cited in Habermas, 2001: 19).

It is against this backdrop that is interesting to ask how and why the indignados social movement can be seen as an embodiment of 'Europe from below' – a Europe of Citizens - which requires transnational interventions from below (Beck, 2011). As we shall see, the indignados invoke those universal values of democracy from below, solidarity and human rights, which are commonly associated with the normative self- understanding of Europe, as they attempt to communicate the movement's identity and values in a transnational communicative space. Arguably, then, what makes the protestors European is not that they belong to Europe as a unified space of belonging, but that they become the carriers of values associated to the normative self-understanding of Europe. These are values which the protestors perceive as threatened by the bureaucracy, neo-liberal drive and remoteness of the EU (see Kaldor et al, 2012: 18-23).

Taking the square: the rise of a cosmopolitan counter-public and digital media

Occupations are a common tactic of protest and citizen participation, which also serve to reinforce the bonds of solidarity developed through collective action (Mathers, 2007: 92) So what is radically new about 'taking the square' as a mode of citizen participation? Why is it that the indignados - starting with the occupation of Plaza Del Sol in Madrid on May 15 2011 - inspired a wave of occupations of city squares across Europe (e.g., Barcelona, Lisbon, Athens) and then the Occupy Movement sit-in protests in New York's Zucotti Park in September 2011? Why did the 'taking the square' occupations galvanize the attention of mainstream media in a way that past occupying tactics used by European social movements did not?

My argument is that the indignados recast public space as a place where the public sphere takes place. In occupying concrete public space as a forum for public debate, the indignados remind us that the public sphere was originally a distinct form of verbal and written interaction, distinct by virtue of taking place in public fora and in print. In considering Habermas' influential theorisation of the public sphere, it is noteworthy that as Habermas shifted towards a discourse ethics (Habermas, 1996), the public sphere became a space generated by a certain kind of communication, rather than a space in which a certain kind of communication could take place (see Hirschkop, 2004: 50-51; see also Lunt and Livingstone, 2013: 92). While certain scholars argue that contemporary approaches to the public sphere tend to dismiss its theatrical and performative dimension (see Warner, 2002; Young, 1987) it is also important to consider what are the implications of reconstituting public space – for example, the city square - as a site where the public sphere happens (italics added for emphasis). Warner's conceptualisation of counterpublics (2002: 115) suggests the performative dimension of public discourse – gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice – or what Young calls 'wild public' (1987) - is often misrecognized because address to a public is ideologized as rational-critical discourse. However, his approach is still dominated by a vision of the public sphere as a space where

communication between interlocutors is primarily mediated by the print press and the written word within a nationally-defined public sphere. While he suggests that counterpublics are mediated by print, theatre, and diffuse networks of talk, he is primarily concerned with 'the kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation – like the public of this essay' (Warner, 2002: 66). In fact, most contemporary approaches to the public sphere go on to conceptualise the public sphere as an institutionalised form of mediated verbal and written interaction (Papacharissi, 2010; Lunt and Stenner, 2005). In recasting the square as the site of cosmopolitan public culture, the indignados work well as a paradigmatic case of a counterpublic that is constituted as much through symbolic, expressive and face-to-face forms of communication in public space as through rational-critical debate.

If we accept that a social movement is a form of acting in public (Eyerman, 2005: 43), then it is important to ask what are the implications of bringing back to the square forms of public expression and individual expressive capacities – that had been relegated to the intimate sphere of the family.

The square becomes a vital theatre where the individual and collective identities of the protesters are formed and changed via a kind of carnivalesque and ritualized interaction among strangers in public, which might lead to collective public action (see McQuire, 2008: 135). Sennet (1977) and Giddens (1991) lament the depersonalization of public life and the retreat of authentic personal interaction into to the realm of the family as being at the heart of the decline of cosmopolitan public culture in the late nineteenth-century modern city. The result was a public culture characterized by detachment and civil indifference as the social capacity for public expression became a quality associated to charismatic leaders, actors, musicians and politicians (see McQuire, 2008: 134-35).

Warner (2002: 56) has argued that counterpublics 'are defined by their tension with a larger public. Their participants are marked off from persons or citizens in general (…). Discussion

within such a public is … structured by alternative dispositions or protocols, making different assumptions about what can be said or what goes without saying'. Arguably, then, the indignados tactic of taking the square – toma la calle – can be seen as an attempt to recast the square as the place for a vibrant public culture among strangers; a place alike those eighteenth-century century public spaces, e.g., parks and theatres, where strangers could meet, interact and discuss via face-to-face communication issues of common concernCosmopolitan solidarity among strangers is understood here as the result of new forms of public sociability and citizenship, which reject a public culture marked by atomised competitive advantage and individualism, offering the possibility of a cosmopolitan culture and politics from below (see Stevenson, 2006). As Vanessa, a 30 year-old student from Madrid puts it:

> The camp was configured like a small city. From the beginning streets were established where people could walk. Different areas were marked by coloured tape, including spaces for walking, sleeping, eating, and leisure. Diverse commissions were created to organize the camp. In the corner of love you could chat about metaphorical matters and meditate; there were places where you could get a massage after a tiring day at the camp; and there was even a children's library with a small nursery. Everyone was living for the movement, for their belief that it would all work out. (see Feixa, 2012).

While protest camps are both a very local and specific strategy of protest and a transnational or global practice (Feigenbaum et al, 2013: 2), the encampments (Acampadas) can also be seen as an experiment on radically new modes of citizen participation that open up the prospect of social solidarity with strangers, i.e., bonds of solidarity and feelings of collective identity with disparate groups of protesters gathered in other squares. Solidarity with protesters gathered in other squares and feelings of collective identity are forcefully articulated in the manifestos,

published in several languages, at the blogs of the encampments. For example, the protestors gathered at Rossio Square in Lisbon state on their Manifesto of the 22nd of May 2011:

> We, citizens, women and men, workers, migrants, students, unemployed and retired people, united by our indignation … join those that around the world today fight for their rights against the constant oppression of the ruling economical-financial system. (…) We refuse to accept the theft of our future. We intend to assume control of our lives and intervene effectively in each and every process of political, social and economic life. We are doing it, today, in the popular assemblies gathered all around. We appeal to all the people to join, in the streets, in the squares, in each corner, under the shade of every statue so that, united, we may change once and for all the rules of this crooked game. (#acampadalisboa)

The public sphere emerges here as a forum in which people without official power rely on the mode of open argument as well as on satirical and visual language to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion (Habermas, 1989: 25). We are dealing here with a paradigmatic case of a truly open and inclusive public sphere to the extent in which public dialogue is open to all and governed by transparent and universalistic principles. Yet, as we shall see, this is hardly the nationally-defined public sphere envisaged by Habermas.

Public debate is governed by deliberative practices and strict codes that allow anyone to intervene while being respectful of others' proposals and ideas. Ordinary citizens are welcome to participate in the assemblies and all meeting minutes are public. As emphasized by Baiocchi and Ganuza (2012: 115), the central organizing principle of #acampadasol is individual participation: 'it reflects, on one hand, its participatory ethos: everyone is expected to participate actively in all aspects of the group. But it also rejects the principle of representation

itself. Whether an individual belongs to a group or organization, whatever their ideology, within #acampadosol, individuals do not speak for groups or collectives'.

It is important to note that left-wing platforms such DRY, Attac, Anonymous and Youth Without a Future did play a crucial role in the organization of a March on 15 May 2011 that took 200,000 protestors to Puerta Del Sol and marks the beginning of the indignados social movement (Baiochhi and Ganuza, 2012: 113; Feixa, 2012). In the months prior to the 15-M, DRY attracted thousands of unpoliticised young people, creating a platform of protest which transformed individual experiences of frustration and indignation into collective political passion (Gerbaudo, 2012: 83). Furthermore, as noted by Gerbaudo (2012: 88) with regards to the use of Facebook by DRY in the early stages of the movement, 'as Wael Ghonim had done with the Khaled Said page, the DRY admins spent a lot of time acknowledging and replying to the comments, so as to sustain the impression that users were taking part in an interactive conversation rather than simply "liking", the content fed to them'. However, it is noteworthy that one of the distinctive features of the indignados' identity is the fact that they do not present themselves as representatives of political parties, unions, civil society groups or organized platforms, but as ordinary citizens who, regardless of their political affiliations and ideological leanings, come together to express their grievance and discontent against the political and financial elites (including those associated to the EU) and the breakdown of accountability of a political system.

As occupations of squares spread across Europe in a matter of days, the indignados soon evolved into a global movement of ordinary citizens united in their anger at the banks, corruption, the electoral system, the global financial system, and the press (see Puig, 2011). As noted by Lamm (2011), 'On Oct. 15, these indignant Spaniards spurred a coordinated global protest that spanned 90 countries and 1,000 cities. In Spain, several hundred thousand people participated, supporting the view that the Indignados have become an inspiration and

coordinating force for actions beyond Spain's borders'. In the marches of the Indignados, one could see Egyptian and Icelandic flags instead of the traditional trade union flags or party flags (Kaldor et al, 2012: 11). Notably, the principles of nonviolence, non-partisanship, leaderlessness are powerfully articulated in the manifestos as narrative frames that help the indignados make sense of 'who they are', while also inviting scholars to rethink some of the traditional elements of politics and protest (see Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2012: 112). This is apparent, for instance, in the following excerpt from the Manifesto issued by #Acampadasol:

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

While the occupation of public squares emerged as one of the iconic images of the movement, it is also important to pay attention to the role of digital media, in particular, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, as means of mobilization and organization. One striking characteristic of Spain's Indignados social movement has been the pervasive, sophisticated, and widespread use of social media by bloggers, students, grassroots activists, and, more importantly, countless ordinary citizens (Postill, 2012).
Calls for protest directed to the general public feature prominently in the blogs and websites of the encampments. For example, videos uploaded onto the blog of #Acampadalisboa rely on the

use of audio-visual forms of communication to personalise the cause of the protesters while also inviting close identification of the audience with the person filmed. The short videos typically document collective action (e.g., individual interventions in general assemblies or working groups and marches; caceroladas). Often they broadcast a short statement by an individual who attempts to move and mobilize the distant and invisible general public.

In terms of its capacity to communicate and organise, the Spanish M15 was a 2.0 mobilisation (Puig, 2011) - 65,3 % of the protesters declared, in a multi-choice survey that they found out about the call for protest via Facebook/Twitter compared to 34,7% who found out from a friend (see Calvo, Gómez-Pastrana y Mena, 2011:11). Clearly, corporate social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook allowed the rapid and unexpected spread of collective action throughout many EU countries, attracting to city squares (e.g., Syntagma Square in Athen; Rossio Square in Lisbon) unprecedented numbers of ordinary citizens who had never been involved in social movements. However, although the possibilities of digital media facilitated new forms of public communication and mobilization in a transnational communicative space, the fact that the movement both advocates and puts into practice locally-rooted forms of citizen participation and public sociability suggests that communication does not take place in a deterritorialized cyberspace. This is, in part, because 'protest camps function simultaneously as a "staged" and symbolic protest for the media and the public, and as "activist spaces" where protestors plan, organise and live' (Feigenbaum *et al*, 2013: 74). Thus it is debatable, as suggested, for example, by Castells (2009) and Juris (2005), that new media now constitute the only real, practical field of action where transnational social movements are contested, created and played out (see Lievrouw, 2011: 156). Looking at the global justice movement both Castells (2009) and Juris (2005, 2008) argue that new media and ICTs enable those networking logics through which transnational activists develop their concrete goals, demands, identities, and values. Hence, activists are not simply users of new media and digital technologies, but

ended up absorbing the 'cultural logic of networking' (Juris cited in Lievrouw, 2011: 166) into the movement values and identity. In his recent book, Castells (2012) suggests that 'while the occupation of public space was essential to make the [indignados] movement visible, and to provide support to the key organizational form of the movement – the local assemblies – the origin of the movement, and its backbone throughout the protest can be traced back to the free spaces of the Internet' (Castells, 2012: 116). Castells insistence that the space of the new social movements of protest is a hybrid third space, which is 'always made of an interaction the space of flows in the internet and the wireless communication networks, and the space of places of the occupied sites and the symbolic buildings targeted by protest actions' (Castells, 2012: 222), fails to illuminate what is the differentiated role of communication that takes place through embodied occupation and communication that takes place in the cyberspace,

Yet, with regards to the indignados' organisational and communication strategies, it is possible to suggest that we are not dealing with a decentralized, large-scale, and highly mediated movement social movement (such as the global justice movement), but with a transnational movement underpinned by intense interpersonal networks and face-to-face communication as much as alternative media practices.

Interestingly, in her conceptualisation of the transnational public sphere, Fraser (2007) argues that:

> the 'who' of communication, previously theorized as a Westphalian-national citizenry, is often now a collection of dispersed interlocutors, who do not constitute a demos. The 'what' of communication, previously theorized as a Westphalian-national interest rooted in a Westphalian-national economy, now stretches across vast reaches of the globe, in a transnational community of risk, which is not however reflected in concomitantly expansive solidarities and identities. The 'where' of communication,

once theorized as the Westphalian-national territory, is now deterritorialized cyberspace (Fraser, 2007: 19).

Contra Fraser, I argue that the Indignados social movement offers a springboard to rethink the transnational public sphere not as deterritorialized cyberspace, but as a transnational communicative space in which digital media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, blogs, livestream television, alternative online magazines) act as platforms of communication and organisation to enable protesters to act together in new ways, places and in situations where collective action was not possible before. For example, protest events such as demonstrations, caceroladas, the marchas populares de indignados in Spain, the marches to Brussels and the major demonstration on October 15th 2011 which was part of a day of global action (see Roos, 2011), all required a great degree of coordination and communication across national borders. Digital media in the form of alternative media outlets such as the online magazine – ROARMAG.ORG – Reflections on a Revolution – and the English-speaking Facebook group platform – European Revolution – played an important part in the organisation, coordination and communication of transnational protest events. In a nutshell, digital media – in particular, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter – not only crucially mobilized many ordinary citizens, but were also vital tools in the coordination of protest events (marches, demonstrations) that required both high levels of face-to-face communication as well as forms of digital communication. What is at issue here is a transnational communicative space that is not incompatible with expansive transnational solidarities and identities.

Significantly, while collective action within some of the encampments is well documented via videos and hundreds of photos posted into the blogs the *Acampadas*, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of these visual and audio-visual archives on either national or global mass publics. The number of people who have accessed such photos and videos rarely amount to more than

a few hundred, which suggests that these audio-visual archives did not attract a large mass audience of interested citizens. What is interesting in this context is how engagement with the general public – what Eyerman (2005) calls the 'outside the movement' – is assured by the use of a shared visual language and symbolic modes of expression that enable the protesters to communicate not only grievance and discontent, but also the movement's values and identity through engagement with both mainstream and alternative media outlets. As insightfully noted by Fraser (2007: 19), the transnational public sphere now encompasses 'a vast translinguistic nexus of disjoint and overlapping visual cultures', which is also indicative of the relative decline of print and the literary.

Hence, I want to argue that the possibility of a new 'Europe from below' – of a 'Europe of Citizens' – as played out by the indignados is predicated on artistic and theatrical modes of expression that enable the protesters not only to transcend the barriers of linguistic and national differences, but also to develop new ways of thinking and acting beyond the local and the nation.

Towards a European public sphere - from the performance of protest to the 'Europe of Citizens'

In its normative dimension, the public sphere is an idea that is not incompatible with multiple and real (counter) publics (Warner, 2002; Paparachissi, 2010). As I have suggested above, the indignados social movement can be seen as a cosmopolitan counterpublic that is not only capable of fostering new forms of public communication in a transnational communicative space, but also a new sense of European identity. This begs the question of whether this communicative space can be understood as an emerging European public sphere. In privileging modes of audio-visual communication and stylised symbolic language over the literary and print media, the indignados have developed new forms of public communication to more

effectively 'move' and influence a 'general public' that is not restricted to purely local or national borders. It is also the case that the discussion of EU affairs – e.g., in the blogs and general assemblies at the encampments - is often linked to the perceived crisis of legitimacy of the EU due to its inability to resolve the debt crisis while bypassing national sovereignty and parliamentary democracy. It is interesting to note how the empirical research conducted by Kaldor et al (2012: 21) shows that in protest camps in Greece and Germany references to the Troika (the IMF, the European Central Bank, and the European Commission) dominate public debate.

Addressing the issue of the democratic deficit of the European public sphere, Habermas has argued that the European public sphere must encompass 'a network that gives citizens of all member states an equal opportunity to take part in an encompassing process of focused communication' (Habermas, 2001: 17). For Habermas (2001: 18), a European-wide public sphere will emerge from the 'the mutual opening of existing national universes to one another, yielding to an interpretation of mutually translated national communications'. The underlying assumption here is that the emergence of a European public sphere depends on a discussion about the future of Europe in inter-linked national public spheres in a synchronized way, and that the basis for this is that transnational mass media can establish a multi-lingual communicative context (Habermas, 2006: 87-88). The problem with this view of the European public sphere is that it fails precisely to address the democratic and legitimation deficit that is often associated to attempts to theorise the European public sphere. As Habermas ends up conceding, this transnational and multi-lingual communicative context would only be possible 'if the national school systems ensure that Europeans have a common grounding in foreign languages' (Habermas, 2006: 87). However, it is the case that communication in a putative European public sphere more often takes place in English-speaking forums dominated by the

business elites (Schelesinger and Kevin, 2007) or in micro-publics of English-speaking activists debating contentious EU issues (Doerr, 2008).

In the absence of a truly multi-lingual European public sphere supported by mainstream media, scholars (see e.g. Doerr and Mattoni, forthcoming) have emphasised that it is important to direct the research lens to grassroots forms of communication and mediation that involve protesters in on-going public discussion about contentious issues which are no more merely national, but become more and more European, while paving the way for a fragile and temporary European public sphere. Looking at the public communication of the indignados, it becomes apparent that communication takes place primarily in a national language; the language used in the blogs set up for each local encampment is usually a national language (with the exception of the Manifestos that are published in several languages). Public debate and decision-making in the participatory General Assemblies and working groups are also conducted in a national language. If communication takes place primarily in discrete national languages, how can we speak of a European transnational public sphere? How is the movement's identity communicated beyond national borders?

My argument is that the Indignados social movement sets the basis for a European public sphere not because on-going discussion across borders about contentious EU issues makes the protesters more European (in the sense of a shared European identity), but because the discussion of contentious issues (and not necessarily EU affairs) is conducted in a synchronized way (i.e., similar issues are discussed simultaneously in different places and media platforms) that helps to consolidate the movement's identity and values across national borders. Feelings of solidarity and collective identity arise, in part, from a sense that the issues of contention - e.g., the crisis of legitimacy of the EU, the so-called 'dictatorship of the markets', the lack of democracy from below, the breakdown of accountability of the political system - are shared by fellow EU citizens. It could be argued that this emerging European public sphere is also

developing through forms of collective action and communication that are shaped and informed precisely by those universal values of solidarity, democracy and human rights, which are part of the normative self-understanding of Europeans. The fact that some of the manifestos define the protestors as global citizens is a reminder of how the commitment to European values does not necessarily imply that such values are exclusively European or necessarily shared by all European peoples (see Stevenson, 2012: 118). It is also interesting to note how the so-called EU's democratic deficit is, to a certain extent, challenged when contentious EU affairs become widely debated as indignados turn to streets and squares to protest against a EU that is failing to do justice to the normative project of Europe. For example, a banner that was widely seen at #Acampadalisboa is 'Europe is not of the banks, Europe is of the people'.

As argued by Therborn (2000: 49), 'The Council of Europe with the European Convention of Human Rights, and its European Social Charter, have transformed Europe into an area of human rights, more specific and more binding than in any other area of the world'. Arguably, then, by putting into practice modes of citizen participation, which are informed by a set of universal values which are deemed European, the indignados establish the basis for the emergence of a Europe from below: i.e., a truly democratic Europe of citizens.

As a cosmopolitan counterpublic, the indignados are deeply aware that democracy from below also involves a mutual recognition of the differences between strong national cultures. While communication is conducted primarily in a national language, it could be argued that the indignados keep the normative project of Europe afloat by constructing what Habermas calls 'new and ever more sophisticated forms of 'solidarity among strangers' (Habermas, 2001:21), without necessarily shedding away national and local attachments. Yet, what is at work here is not the more politically and culturally integrated Europe ('an ever closer union') envisaged by Habermas (2001). Rather, what is at issue is a new European imaginary (Biebuyk and Rumford, 2012: 6) that allows many ordinary citizens – and first-time protesters - to take an affirmative

or negative stand on issues of concern to them through public debate in city squares. As insightfully noted by Balibar (2011), 'it is the intellectuals and activists and their capacity for analysis and indignation, which will provide (or not) the symbolic means for revolt' (Balibar, 2011). That intellectuals such as Balibar (2011) and Beck (2011) have publicly intervened in support of the indignados' cause and message with opinion articles in the so-called 'serious press' is consequential for the international recognition of the indignados as the legitimate bearers of the European project, and for occupations of squares as exemplary acts of citizen participation. As Alexander (2011: 71) reminds us with regards to the protest events that took place at Tahrir Square: 'that the revolutionary performance inside Egypt unfolded not only before local but international audiences was a critical reason, not only for its ultimate success, but also for its ability to proceed'. In contrast to other transnational social movements (e.g., European Social Forum; Global Justice movement) that were deeply suspicious of mainstream media (see Lievrow, 2011: 55), the indignados have engaged much more closely with mainstream media in order to achieve public visibility in a transnational communicative space. In the absence of a multi-lingual transnational public sphere, the struggle for Europe from below is carried through stylised acts that draw on a shared repertoire of European symbols and values. Cultural understandings of Europe, including conflicting interpretations of Europe, stem from the collectively shared interpretation of the common experiences of Europeans (Wagner, 2008), which needs to be kept alive in people's minds both symbolically (e.g. flag of the European Union; mottos such as 'unity in diversity') and discursively (e.g. forms of public debate about Europe). If Europe has been understood through a commitment to human rights and democracy, which informed, for example, the eastwards expansion of the EU, or through a commitment to social solidarity - which sets Europe apart from the US - it is because there have been collective efforts by particular carrier groups (see Alexander, 2011b: 203) - e.g., public intellectuals, social movements, politicians - to imagine Europe through a commitment

toward certain value orientations. Notably, the latter are capable of guiding a common course of action, particularly, in moments of crisis (see Wagner, 2008: 360). If the indignados can be seen as a carrier group for the normative project of Europe, this is, in part, because in the process of making sense of their identity and demands they are able to communicate European values and symbols to mainstream audiences.

Drawing on Eyerman (2005), it could be argued that in the case of the indignados social movement the *narrativisation of protest* (i.e., who we are, what we demand, the collective story) matters less than the *dramatization of protest* (i.e., the staging of their identity through symbolic acts and objects) in order to assure the movement's visibility and collective self-representation. Rather than promoting multi-linguism, the protesters rely strongly on the use of a shared visual culture and the performative to express discontent and to communicate 'who they are' to a transnational audience of interested and engaged citizens.

The protesters have a peculiar awareness of contemporary media culture as images and buzzwords are selected, captured, and subverted and recombined to produce new meanings. The use of alternative images and texts in the redefinition of the meanings of urban space is a tactic and style of protest that can be traced back to the Situationists and their critique of post-war French society (see Downing et al., 2001). Through their 'presence' in urban spaces and the re-organization of public space in resistance to the existing order of space (i.e., depoliticized space) (Dhaliwal, 2012), the indignados share with the Situationists a penchant for a 'remix culture' that involves sampling, fragmentation and recombination of different elements of text, image and sound (see Lievrouw, 2011: 29). The emphasis on the dramatization of protest as a style of protest is not new, particularly in the way it combines 'radical politics with provocative new uses of media, performance, and language' (Lievrouw, 2011: 28). What is novel is the way in which the protesters developed a highly stylised and shared visual language, which helps them to overcome linguistic barriers and national differences. As insightfully noted by Doerr

(2010) visual images have the potential 'to trigger cognitive linguistic deliberation (and new cultural meanings) through transnational interaction between people'.

Unlike previous social movements that used visual images primarily as a means of mobilization, the indignados artfully use visual images and stylised acts and objects in their public communication to better communicate 'who they are' to a range of alternative and corporate media outlets. For example, European flags with the stars replaced by swastikas could be seen in Syntagma square connoting the failure of the EU to do justice to values of democracy and human rights. In a similar vein, a stylised protest act such as carrying around the neck huge black balls, reminiscent of prisoner chains and embellished with the symbol of the Euro, connotes the perceived oppression of ordinary Spanish citizens under the austerity measures imposed by the Troika.

[Figure 1]

Mass media, from alternative and activist new journalism to web-based media - such as blogs and social media - to national broadsheets, played a crucial role in the translation of the meanings of certain symbolic acts and objects. The media did so by debating and communicating the meanings of particular objects (e.g., the mask of V for Vendetta) and ritual performances (e.g., daily participatory people's General Assembly; *caceroladas*) to a transnational audience of engaged and interested citizens.

What is interesting in this context is the way in which carnivalesque and theatrical modes of protest emerged as successful tactics for collective action as they become symbolically tied to the defence of universal values of solidarity, democracy and human rights, which have been meaningfully associated to the normative self-understanding of Europe. It is through the creative appropriation and reinvention of a shared repertoire of European meanings and values,

which mainstream cultural objects - such as the mask of V for Vendetta - and ritualistic political performances – caceroladas and public forums such as the daily General Assemblies – acquire new meanings and the power to engage global civil society. To briefly illustrate this point I consider now the case of Guy Fawkes' mask and the ways in which this mainstream cultural object came to symbolize the movement's values and identity. It is important to note that before becoming an icon of both the indignados and Occupy social movements, the mask had already been associated to the hacktivist group Anonymous in 2008. The Guy Fawkes' mask, popularized by the 2006 Hollywood film V for Vendetta, went on to be widely used by the indignados in the encampments and in a range of protest events. Through the use of irony and humour, the protesters appropriated a mainstream cultural object – the Guy Fawkes mask – which was drawn from popular culture, to advance alternative meanings. If we accept that 'the affective reaction to and the tactical selection of symbols is important in sustaining the movement' (Eyerman, 2005: 46), then it becomes easier to understand how a popular object such as a mask could be transformed into a symbol of the indignados' struggle and identity. The mask is originally a symbol of English provenance and a symbol of Catholic demonization in early modern England. Guy Fawkes was a Catholic who led a plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament and bring down England's Protestant monarchy. The foiled plot is celebrated in annual celebrations on the 5th of November as a reminder of the threats of disloyal Catholics. During the 1980s, English children were often seen using a Guy Fawkes mask during the celebrations of bonfire night. The iconography of the mask can be traced back to the graphic novel V for Vendetta, created in the early 1980s by artist David Lloyd and writer Alan Moore, about a masked rebel, V, who fights a fascist government in a futuristic Britain. The 2006 film adaptation of the novel features a rebel hero wearing a Guy Fawkes costume and ends with a scene in which a whole movement of discontents wearing Guy Fawkes costumes watch the Houses of Parliament burn. Drawing on the iconography of comic strips and a Hollywood

movie, the mask appropriated by the indignados – as well as the occupy protesters in the U.S. - does not connote a violent, anarchist antihero who fashions himself as a modern Guy Fawkes rebelling against a fascist government. Instead, and as writer Alan Moore puts it – the Guy Fawkes mask 'represents the fact that the people have the real power'. Wearing the mask in the encampments and in protest events is part of a collective self-presentation, but is also empowering and transformative. Hence, the iconic mask of V for Vendetta effaces the individual whose face it conceals to express a sense of collective identity and solidaristic ties among protesters spread around the world.

[Figure 2]

Unlike Zorro or Batman (or even the Anonymous hacktivists) who acquire superhuman qualities by using the mask to conceal their identities in their fight to protect the weak and the poor (see Manghani, 2012)., the indignados use the mask of V of Vendetta to represent an idea: while people might be censored or crushed, the voice of the people and the struggle for democracy are unstoppable As meaningfully put by the character V of V for Vendetta (2006): 'behind this mask there is more than just flesh. Beneath this mask there is an idea... and ideas are bulletproof'. Ultimately, what I want to argue is that the mask is not to be seen as a symbol of European provenance, but as a mainstream cultural object that is mobilized by the indignados to symbolize their collective struggle and identity, which are underpinned those universal values of democracy from below, solidarity and human rights which are part of the normative self-understanding of Europe.

Dr Maria Rovisco is a Lecturer in Media and Communication at the University of Leicester, UK. She has published articles on cosmopolitan cinema, cosmopolitanism and religion, and on the cultural borders of Europe and globalization.

[1] Caceroladas are protest events that involve the banging of kitchen utensils such as pots and pans to make as much noise as possible in organized protests. On the 13th of October 2012, protesters in Spain and Portugal invited people from around the world to join them in a Global Day of Noise.

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Figure 1

Figure 2