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### Democracy, Indignados , and the Republican Tradition in Spain

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# DEMOCRACY, *INDIGNADOS*, AND THE REPUBLICAN TRADITION IN SPAIN<sup>1</sup>

*José Luis Martí*

Over the course of the current economic crisis, Spain has been the focus of much world-wide concern. The crisis is particularly acute in that country, some of the worst fallout being extremely high unemployment rates, reaching 25% in 2014. As the thirteenth-largest economy in the world and the fifth largest in Europe, Spain's turbulence has seriously affected the rest of the globe. In 2011, however, the country caught the eye of the world in a different, more positive way.

In May 2011, hundreds of thousands of citizens took to the streets of major Spanish cities to protest against cutbacks in the welfare state imposed by the Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Commission, European Central Bank) and approved by the government of President Rodríguez Zapatero. As part of the protest, thousands camped in the central city squares for several months. Some of the protesters had read *Indignez-vous*, a small pamphlet by Stéphane Hessel calling citizens to take action to resist the injustices of capitalism and defend democracy (Hessel 2011). Some began to call themselves *indignados* ("the indignant"), and the label was quickly popularized in the media. The movement also became known as *15M* in reference to the start date of the protests (May 15).

What the *indignados* were demanding was much more than a review of austerity policies: they were seeking a true democratic revolution (Serrano et al. 2014; Taibo 2011b; Viejo 2011). Dissatisfied and disappointed with Spanish democracy in general, they were outraged with politicians, political parties, and the representative institutions in particular. *No nos representan* ("they do not represent us") was their main slogan. Spain's representative institutions had, they felt, deceived and betrayed the people (Taibo 2011b; Velasco 2011). Their aim was to bring about a profound change to the democratic system, fuelled alike by outrage and hope alike (Castells 2012; Perugorria and Tejerina 2013).

The *indignados* movement had, and continues to have, an enormous impact on Spanish politics. It mobilized hundreds of thousands of citizens, significantly influenced public deliberation, created successful new parties, and is now forcing the traditional political parties to adapt their discourse to these new circumstances. Its most valuable contribution to Spanish democracy, however, was the result of what happened in the squares: protesters began to experiment with democratic revolution by themselves, spontaneously and with no support from public institutions. They organized open and innovative face-to-face deliberations, creating a grand forum for public participation and deliberation, and an excellent school of democracy and

civic culture was created. Their actions constituted one of the most interesting spontaneous initiatives in participatory and deliberative democracy ever seen.

In this chapter, I interpret the *indignados*' concerns, values, and proposals, as well as their innovative actions and methods, as distinctly republican. I argue that this movement is in fact a continuation of a long tradition of republican thought that has remained very influential among scholars and intellectuals in Spain. The next section briefly summarizes the main facts of the *indignados*' protests and the evolution of the movement. In the following section, I offer a reflection on the crisis of democracy in Spain and elsewhere, necessary to understanding the scope and aims of the *indignados* movement, as well as its potential impact. This is followed by a brief survey of the long republican tradition in Spain. Finally, in the last section I return to the *indignados* movement to highlight its republican elements.

### ***Toma la plaza: how the indignados occupied the city squares and the public sphere***

It all started on May 15, 2011. Thousands of citizens marched through the streets of major cities in Spain. A myriad of very small social organizations including Democracia Real Ya, NoLesVotes, and Anonymous had called for the protest. The number of participants in these demonstrations was significant (50,000 in Madrid, 20,000 in Barcelona, and 10,000 in Valencia; see Castells 2012), but still a long way below some earlier protests in Spain, such as the march against the Iraq war on February 15, 2003 (1.5 million in Madrid and 700,000 in Barcelona).

The participants were moved by outrage and indignation over the effects of a crushing economic crisis that had been created by the economic and political élite (Castells 2012; see also Perugorria and Tejerina 2013). They protested against the austerity packages imposed by the Troika and approved by the Spanish government the previous year. They were deeply disappointed with politicians and political parties. They no longer trusted their representative institutions. They felt politically orphaned and unrepresented (della Porta 2012; Hughes 2011; Maeckelbergh 2012; Martí i Puig 2011; Ovejero 2013; Romanos 2016; Taibo 2011a, 2011b; Viejo 2011), and they felt they had to do something to change the system. After the demonstration, about 40 protesters decided to camp that night in front of the city hall of Madrid in Puerta del Sol, one of its central squares. The police pulled them out, and 19 were arrested.

The following evening, May 16, dozens of people returned to Puerta del Sol; others did likewise in Plaza de Catalunya in Barcelona. The idea was to occupy the square, worded in Spanish as *tomar la plaza*. Two days later the number of protesters gathered in Madrid rose to 10,000, and those in Plaza de Catalunya numbered in the hundreds. They decided to stay at least five days more, until May 22, when local elections were to take place in the country. The initiative spread to other large cities very quickly. *#tomalaplaza* and *#spanishrevolution* became popular slogans and Twitter hashtags. The idea was not only to protest, but also to take control of part of the public sphere in the form of public squares. When on the following day the National Electoral Commission in Spain declared the sit-ins illegal by electoral law, the government did not dare to order police to pull all the protesters out by force; the numbers were unexpectedly high, and the world's media were already covering the events. Pictures of big tents sheltering the crowds of young protesters in the main squares of Spain resembled recent images of the Arab Spring, especially those of Tahrir Square in Cairo just five months before. In fact, there is a connection between the two movements despite their many differences, and they link up also with later events in Portugal and Greece and the Occupy movement in the US, the UK, Canada, and other countries (Byrne 2011; Gould-Wartofsky 2015;

Meyer 2015; Milkman et al 2015; Romanos 2016). More recently, we have witnessed similar civil demonstrations in other countries, including Turkey, Brazil, and Hong Kong. In every case we find the same combination of outrage over a lack of democracy and transparency in the country's government together with the hope for change (Castells 2012; Perugorria and Tejerina 2013; Romanos 2016).

The precise demands of each movement were, of course, very different. While the Arab Spring protesters demanded more transparency, the granting of a small number of rights, and free elections, the *indignados*, and later Occupy, expressed their dissatisfaction with these same minimal conditions of democracy. Yet they all pursued the goal of a democratic revolution that would improve the democratic conditions of their respective countries.

In addition, these movements all had another significant element in common: the generalized, frequent, and highly efficient use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and social media. ICTs were used to coordinate action, call for general support and participation, keep the public informed, and connect with other similar movements or supporters around the world. Technology became more than a tool for coordination and communication, however; it helped participants to create new networks of power, and for *indignados* and Occupy protesters it was also an essential part of their ideology and culture. Many of them shared the values and principles of free culture and the culture of the commons (Byrne 2011; Castells 2012; Fuster 2012; Gould-Wartofsky 2015; Milkman et al 2015; Monterde et al. 2015; Peña López 2013; Peña López et al. 2014; Romanos 2012, 2016; Serrano et al. 2014).

The *indignados* occupied the city squares of Spain for several months in 2011. In less than one month they had gained the respect of the public and received substantial popular support. In response to their call for a massive demonstration, on June 19 a million citizens marched through the streets of Madrid, Barcelona, and other Spanish cities. Eighty-one percent of Spanish citizens believed that the *indignados* were generally right in their claims, and 66% felt sympathetic towards the movement's methods (Castells 2012, 121).

By the end of that month, however, the *indignados* in Barcelona and other cities had been moved out by the authorities. The movement held out somewhat longer in Madrid. Several marches began in July in a number of cities and continued for hundreds of miles, with the goal of converging on Madrid. On July 23, 250,000 protesters gathered in and around the Puerta del Sol to keep the flame of the movement alive. Throughout August, Sol was cleared and re-occupied several times. Finally, on October 15, the *indignados* and Occupy coordinated their efforts and millions of people marched in approximately 900 cities around the world. Once again, hundreds of thousands of Spanish citizens took over the streets to express a wish for a profound change in Spanish democracy (for a full and detailed chronology of the movement, see Castells 2012, 248–252; see also Milkman et al. 2015).

After that day, the *indignados* movement underwent a transformation. Leaving the city squares, it spread throughout major cities to work directly in the neighborhoods on a more local and focused basis. Several other demonstrations and assemblies, some of them virtual, took place in 2012. Several campaigns and initiatives were organized, such as 15MpaRato and Democracia 4.0. Organizations that had emerged from the movement, such as Democracia Real Ya, were consolidated, and new political parties, including Podemos and Partido X, were created.

The effects of these events remain visible in Spanish politics. In the European election of June 2014, despite having been dismissed or largely ignored by the mainstream media, Podemos was the fourth most popular political party, with 8% of the vote. In the legislative elections in December 2015, Podemos was again the fourth most voted party, gathering more than 12% of the vote. And in June 2016, in the following legislative elections, they consolidated as the third

most popular party, with more than 13% of the vote. We still do not know where all this will end. But the powerful impact on Spanish democracy sought by the *indignados* has already been achieved.

### The crisis of (Spanish) democracy

What made the *indignados* seek such a transformation of Spanish democracy? Why did they demand a “Spanish revolution”? After the long authoritarian regime of Francisco Franco, democratic elections in Spain were held in June 1977; since then twelve other general elections have taken place. Three different political parties, one with a centrist ideology, one leftist, and the other right wing, have been in power. Six different prime ministers, two from each party, have held office. The Spanish constitution of 1978 has the honor of being by far the longest to have endured in the history of the country. Two kings have exercised symbolic powers, and despite the coup d’état attempt of February 1981, the transition to democracy in Spain has been successful and admirable in many respects. There is no doubt that democracy is fully consolidated in the country.

However, one of the two main concerns for the *indignados* in 2011 was the state of democracy in Spain, the other being the economic crisis. While deeply dissatisfied with the austerity policies of the Zapatero government the previous year, the protesters’ complaint was much more general: “They do not represent us.” Disappointed with politicians in general, and political parties in particular, they claimed that the Spanish parliament did not truly and effectively represent the judgments and preferences of the people. Politicians were corrupt and subordinated to the interests of the financial system and the economic élite. They had contributed to the political alienation of the Spanish people by fooling them into believing they were living in a real democracy. They claimed that political parties in Spain were simply hierarchical, opaque organizations disconnected from the real needs of the people. It is telling that the main social organization associated with the *indignados* was named Democracia Real Ya (“Real Democracy Now”). Much of the content of the manifesto promoted by this organization in 2011 was intended to incite a profound revolution within Spain’s democratic institutions (DRY 2011).

If we look carefully at the concrete proposals, however, we see that the “democratic revolution” advocated by the *indignados* was in fact more reformist than revolutionary. It was a call for, among other things, a more proportionally representative electoral system; compulsory referendums on the main issues on the parliamentary agenda; initiatives to make the internal activity of political parties more open, transparent, and democratic; tougher rules against corruption, including more institutional transparency and accountability; and less control over the Internet (DRY 2014; Velasco 2011). These proposals, and many others related to the economy, formed an ambitious reformist agenda with the explicit aim of regenerating and deepening democracy, but they did not represent a revolution.

Is it plausible to say that Spanish democracy was in crisis in 2011? First, it is important to note that in some ways democracy has been in permanent crisis throughout its entire history. The institutions associated with democracy have been undergoing constant change and evolution from the very outset. Intellectuals and scholars have often singled out the deficits and flaws of their respective democratic systems. Thinkers as dissimilar as John Dewey, Carl Schmitt, and Harold Laski all proclaimed the crisis of democracy in the first half of the twentieth century. Since the 1960s, many political scientists – including Campbell, Almond, Verba, Crozier, and Huntington – observed very poor turnout rates in elections and raised the alarm about the political disinterest and disaffection of citizens in consolidated democracies. It is telling, however, that at this exact time several social movements in the US and Europe rose

up to call for more direct participation, and a new model of participatory democracy emerged, defended by theorists such as Pateman, Barber, Macpherson, and Mansbridge.

In any case, it is true that political distrust and disaffection has grown in most consolidated democracies, including Spain. Electoral turnout and political interest were understandably very high during the first two decades of Spanish democracy after almost forty years of authoritarian regime and oppression. The Spanish people were very enthusiastic about their new democratic institutions. However, in the last decade they began to experience the same kind of political disaffection as their counterparts in other consolidated democracies (Montero et al. 1998; Torcal 2006; Torcal and Montero 2006).

By 2011, the distrust among Spanish voters towards government and its representative institutions skyrocketed to a higher degree than in any other Western democracy. According to results from the national polling center in Spain, the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* in June 2011, 84% of citizens believed that corruption was very widespread or quite widespread in Spain. Sixty percent considered it to be a problem of maximum importance in Spanish democracy – scoring between 8/10 and 10/10 in terms of concern. Seventy percent of Spaniards considered Spain’s political situation to be bad or very bad, and only 2% felt it was good or very good. Although only 14% of Spaniards were completely dissatisfied with Spanish democracy, politicians and political parties were cited as the third most serious problem in the country, after unemployment and the economic situation in general. In line with these results, 70% of polled citizens reported that they had a positive or very positive opinion of the *indignados* protests (CIS 2011a).

The situation had not improved by October that year, when 38% of citizens polled said they had zero trust in political parties, and political parties were seen as the least trustworthy institutions in Spain. In addition, very low levels of confidence were expressed in the government and in parliament. When asked what they felt about politics, 40% of respondents said “distrust,” 16% “indifference,” 15% “boredom,” and 13% “outrage.” The most widespread positive feeling was “interest,” expressed by only 9% of participants (CIS 2011b).

The *indignados* believed democracy was in crisis in Spain, and most citizens agreed. What they wanted was a more authentic form of democracy. They did not reject the idea of representative institutions, but such institutions were expected to truly represent the people and work for the common good, not for the interests of the powerful. They were required to engage in dialogue and close contact with their constituents. They had to be under the effective control of the people. The *indignados* also wanted more emphasis to be placed on public deliberation, and they intended to play a central role on it.

All these beliefs, claims, and proposals are essential to the republican view of politics and democracy, which has a long-standing tradition in the political history of Spain.

### **A historical overview of the republican tradition in Spain**

Republicanism is a venerable strand of political thought that has its origins in the works of Aristotle and Cicero. These two thinkers had already outlined most of the distinctly republican ideas that have characterized this tradition for the past 25 centuries. First and foremost, the republican form of government – the government of the many, as opposed to monarchy or oligarchy, the government of one or the few – is characterized by the idea of mixed government, which includes some kind of proper separation and balance of powers. Another central idea is the importance of the common good as the supreme political value. The main ingredient of this common good is the central value of freedom, which is mostly understood as the absence of domination and can only be realized within the framework of the rule of law.

The idea of *vivere libero*, living free from the domination of others, articulates a holistic political vision in terms of the role of government – the establishment of laws and institutions necessary to make such freedom possible – and the role of citizens, who are required to be virtuous, active members of the community, committed to the common good and participants in the common affairs that protect their freedom through processes such as public deliberation. Citizens may only be free in a republic in which these freedoms are protected by law and the citizens themselves have ultimate control over all public decisions made by the government and democratic institutions (for a complete definition see Martí and Pettit 2010; Pettit 1997, 2014).

In modern times, republicanism is usually identified by way of the Italian Renaissance (with Machiavelli as its leading figure), the commonwealth tradition of seventeenth-century Britain (Locke and Harrington), pre-revolutionary France (Rousseau and Montesquieu), and eighteenth-century America (Madison and Jefferson). Historians, however, have largely neglected the significant role that republicanism played in Spain, especially from 1300 to 1700 (some exceptions include Alonso Baelo 2007, Gil Pujol 2005, and Villacañas 2005). Spanish republicanism in that period was exceptional, distinctive, and nearly as important for Spain as it was for Italy.

Machiavelli was certainly a central figure in rehabilitating and adapting the ideas of Aristotle and Cicero for modern times. However, Cicero's ideas had never completely disappeared from the Spanish Christian tradition: they were in fact preserved and disseminated through the work of early medieval thinkers such as Isidore of Seville (560–636). The first clear precedent of Hispanic republicanism was the fourteenth-century Franciscan friar Francesc Eiximenis (1330–1409), educated in Oxford, Paris, and Toulouse; yet his contribution to Spanish republicanism has been largely ignored (for an exception see Giner 2010). However, his book *Lo Regiment de la Cosa Publica* (*The Rule of the Commonwealth*, the twelfth book of his magnum opus *Lo crestià*), addressed to princes and higher officials and, remarkably, written in Catalan, provides us with an entire treatise on good government containing many republican ideas. He defended, for instance, the modern idea that the government and the prince should receive their power exclusively from the people, who would transfer it only through a type of covenant or agreement which was designed for their mutual advantage, and which made it clear that the essential condition of this transfer of power was that government should be concerned with promoting the common good and preserving the freedom of the people.

As in northern Italy, the explosion of republican ideology in Spain came with the Renaissance in the sixteenth century, associated with Christian Scholasticism and the School of Salamanca in particular. Its greatest representative was the Dominican friar Francisco de Vitoria (1485–1546), one of the fathers of international law (Miras Albarrán 2009; Villacañas 2005). Vitoria was deeply influenced by Aristotle and Cicero, but also by Isidore and Thomas Aquinas. Like Eiximenis, he believed that the people were directly sovereign, that their authority had been granted by God and that they could in turn delegate it to the king. Furthermore, the king's powers were also conditional on the preservation of the common good and the liberty of the people.

Before Vitoria's main works were in print, Alonso Castrillo published in Castile his *Tratado de republica* (1521), a treaty on the ideal organization of the community and its cities, which once again cited Aristotle, Cicero, and Isidore, and argued for the active role of citizens in the management of public affairs. Castrillo wrote his treatise in reaction to the commoners' revolt in Castile from 1520 to 1522 (Alonso Baelo 2007; see also Gil Pujol 2005), which started as a protest against excessive taxation by Charles I but evolved into a general movement advocating the freedom of Castilian cities, with the explicit aim of becoming free republics.

It is important to mention, on a more practical level, some remarkable and enduring republican institutions which were created in certain Castilian towns in that period, including the *Concejo Abierto*, an open council through which Castilian citizens (i.e., male property owners) were able to directly participate in the governing of their towns by gathering and deliberating in the town's main square. These *concejos* were genuine bodies of deliberation and direct participation, and were exported by the Castilians to the South American colonies, where they have endured for centuries. Some historians in fact see them as a precedent for the *indignados'* deliberations in city squares (see Botella-Ordinas, Centenero and Terrasa 2011).

In addition to Vitoria and Castrillo, many other important theologians and humanists advocated republican ideas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Bartolomé de las Casas, Domingo de Soto, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Fernando Pérez de Oliva (who notably offered an early defense of liberty as the basis of human dignity in his *Diálogo por la dignidad del hombre* of 1585), Juan de Mariana, and Diego Saavedra Fajardo, among others. Three names from those centuries, however, merit closer attention: Juan Luis Vives, considered the father of modern psychology and one of the greatest European humanists of his time; the great jurist Francisco Suárez, with his outstanding and highly influential *De legibus* (1612); and Baltasar Gracián, whose three remarkable political works *El político* (1640), *El discreto* (1646), and the earlier *El héroe* (1637), in which he describes the ideal of the good citizen and good government in moral terms, act as a counterpoint to Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

Spanish republicanism, however, dramatically declined during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and part of the twentieth centuries. In the eighteenth century, it is worth noting the enlightened ideas of intellectuals such as Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos. In the nineteenth, three outstanding politicians again maintained and advanced republican ideologies, and in fact became presidents during the *Sexenio Democrático* (1868–1874): Francesc Pi i Margall, Nicolás Salmerón, and Emilio Castelar. In the first forty years of the twentieth century, important intellectuals and politicians such as Francisco Giner de los Ríos, Julián Besteiro, Adolfo Posada, Pablo Iglesias, Indalecio Prieto, and Manuel Azaña took credit for maintaining republican ideas which ran counter to the dominant ideologies in the rest of Europe, namely liberalism, communism, and fascism. Spanish republicanism, however, was not as strongly articulated during this period as it had been during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries though, paradoxically, this is the period that has been studied most, at least by Spanish historians (see Gil Novales 1996; Martínez López and Ruíz García 2012; Suárez Cortina 2011, 2013).

It was not until the restoration of democracy in 1978, and particularly during the past thirty years, that Spain really saw a remarkable revival of republican thought. Important Spanish intellectuals such as Salvador Giner, Félix Ovejero, Antoni Doménech, Victoria Camps, Fernando Vallespín, Andrés de Francisco, Adela Cortina, Aurelio Arteta, Ramon Vargas-Machuca, and José Rubio Carracedo, among many others, have produced an endless list of books, journal articles, and newspaper editorials in defense of republican political ideas. In fact, there is probably no other country in which republicanism is currently as strong and widespread among intellectuals and scholars as Spain.

It should not have been surprising, then, when in 2000 José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, newly elected the leader of the Socialist Party, then in opposition, introduced himself ideologically as a republican and heir to Pablo Iglesias and Indalecio Prieto, and a particular disciple of Philip Pettit. Rodríguez Zapatero won the next legislative elections in 2004 and became president of Spain. According to some analysts, his first term in office served to advance a truly republican agenda (see Martí and Pettit 2010). Reelected in 2008, he remained in power until December 2011. His second term, however, was marked by the economic crisis. His policies



and strategies to address it, especially after 2010, when he adopted the austerity measures imposed by the Troika, became a prominent target of the *indignados* in 2011.

Some have interpreted the *indignados*' opposition to Rodríguez Zapatero's economic policy as a clash between two forms of republicanism: one more vertical and favorable to the representative governments associated with President Rodríguez Zapatero and the ideas of Philip Pettit, the other more horizontal and inclined towards direct participation and popular assemblies as embodied by the *indignados* (Botella-Ordinas 2011). But exactly how republican are the ideas and values defended by the *indignados*?

### **The republican character of the *indignados*: deliberation, popular control, and the common good**

As stated in previous sections, the *indignados* movement has had an enormous impact on Spanish democratic politics. Besides the direct effect it may still have on elections and the institutional system, its most important aim was to change the way in which ordinary citizens engage in politics by improving their capacity for political judgment and increasing their control over institutions and political parties. They wanted to transform and strengthen public deliberation within the informal public sphere, and in this respect they had remarkable success.

The *indignados* were able to organize themselves in the squares in an innovative, deliberative, and complex way. They immediately formed open, horizontal popular assemblies, which were the only empowered bodies in the movement that could decide on what initiatives to undertake (Maeckelberg 2012; Serrano et al. 2014; Taibo 2011b). Despite their permanent, mutual communication and coordination, these assemblies (one in each occupied square) were totally autonomous. The assembly of Puerta del Sol was independent from the assembly of Plaza de Catalunya, or any other assembly in Spain. The most interesting aspect of this, however, was that each general assembly was divided into different, autonomous subgroups to discuss the main topics of concern (Benski et al. 2013; Hughes 2011; Ovejero 2013; Romanos 2011, 2016; Tejerina et al. 2013). Such deliberative groups were numerous, highly diverse, decentralized, independent, and open to any citizen who wanted to participate.

The *indignados* constituted a very heterogeneous and diverse movement. The core protesters, the most active members who took part in demonstrations and sit-ins from the beginning, were more homogeneous as they were essentially both young and educated. Some had considerable experience participating in anti-capitalist and anti-globalization movements, while others were participating for the first time (Taibo 2013). All the other participants – people who came to the squares and took part in deliberations, as well as those who only attended large demonstrations – were much more diverse: they came from all age groups and had varying levels of education and a wide range of different life experiences (Ferrer et al. 2014).

Each deliberative group was meant to specialize in one issue or a range of issues, but deliberations flowed freely, and a group could decide to discuss topics that in theory were not relevant. No topic or issue was excluded, and ideologies were neither prohibited nor presupposed, nor were they taken for granted. Moreover, each group was able to make its own decisions, even if they were contradictory to the decisions made by other groups. This sometimes presented a problem in terms of developing a single collaborative strategy. However, the goal was not always to propose joint actions, but rather to improve their own understanding of the situation and achieve some degree of consensus.

Social consensus about the main issues under debate was in fact the central aim for all these deliberative groups. Despite the initial diversity of views, the *indignados* aspired to find widespread general agreement that could represent society as a whole. For that reason, they

tended to avoid divisive issues that might bring about a clash of interests among citizens, as did Occupy, who claimed to represent 99% of the people (Byrne 2011; Gould-Wartofsky 2015; Meyer 2015; Milkman et al. 2015; Romanos 2016). Their focus was on the common good, the underlying assumption being that when something is part of the common good, everyone can recognize it as being in their own interest, at least after a fair process of deliberation. This ideal of the people acting together in defense of the common good was exactly what, according to the *indignados*, political parties and partisan politics had forgotten, ignored, or neglected, and it constituted one of the most distinctively republican features of the movement. Decisions were thus not being taken by majority rule. This aspect was in stark contrast to previous, otherwise similar movements such as Alter-globalization, which viewed the pursuit of consensus as conducive to impasse or blocking actions (Maeckelberg 2012). Total unanimity was not required by the *indignados* either, but it was necessary to find at least some degree of general agreement. Given the diversity of the participants, this made it naturally impossible for groups to make decisions on many issues and, again, there was an opportunity lost in terms of joint action. Their main focus, however, was not on action, but deliberation.

The *indignados*' deliberations were very well organized. They aimed to generate direct political participation in qualitative public deliberation among ordinary citizens by using all available technology while relying at the same time on face-to-face conversations and personal contact. They normally involved a chairperson or facilitator who structured the conversation and maintained order, but leadership was avoided as a rule. From the very beginning, the *indignados* who camped in the squares refused to choose their own leaders, representatives, or speakers. This was a problem, especially for the political authorities who wanted to negotiate and the media who wanted information; as a horizontal movement of ordinary citizens, no bosses or leaders were allowed. They shared an almost visceral rejection of the emergence of leaders, who were seen as potential power-seekers and dominators. The intervention of participants who tended to assume a main role or exert some leadership were discouraged or minimized. Their desire to avoid leaders was so strong that even the position of chairperson or moderator had to rotate permanently from one volunteer to another to avoid certain faces becoming too prominent. This avoidance of leadership stalled the efficient organization of action, but action was, of course, not the main objective, and was only pursued when full consensus had been reached, as a sign of having achieved a truly common good. This interest in avoiding potential domination by such leaders connects very clearly with republican ideas.

The discussions held in city squares were substantial despite the objective difficulties of the meetings (Ovejero 2013): the groups were too large and they had no proper space in which to deliberate; they made do with sitting directly on the paving stones. Many participants were very poorly informed about the issues at stake, and the range of knowledge and experience varied greatly. As ordinary citizens, not experts or technocrats, some did not even read the newspaper. However, the *indignados* displayed a high level of civic virtue in most of their actions, as republicanism demands. They were not violent and showed great respect for the rule of law. While they opposed the existing democratic system, their aim was to reform it through legal procedures. They were also very respectful of the diversity of their own views (Ferrer et al. 2014). In addition, they proved to be strongly engaged in political issues in a disinterested way, without looking for immediate rewards or compensation. They wanted to learn together.

Discussions were held together, generally as a cooperative educative process, and most people were happy to learn and felt that they were all in the same boat. Their constant search for consensus as a means to identifying the common good, and their avoidance of divisive issues that could only be decided on the basis of simple majority, helped them to sustain this

feeling. It was for this reason that there was very little of the hindrance or resistance normally seen in partisan political conversations. Deliberations were more likely to involve genuine exchanges of arguments and reasons, allowing participants to learn from others' points of view and sometimes producing a change in opinion (Martí 2006; Ferrer, Martí, and Fernández et al. 2014). Once again, this way of characterizing public deliberation as a cooperative, communal process is recognizable as a distinctively republican claim.

The *indignados* did not intend that this model should replace parliament in the manner of a popular Athenian assembly. They were aware that they had no authority to make binding political decisions on their own. They were simply trying to improve and take part in public deliberation within the informal public sphere. However, they also aimed to exert some effective control over their government and representatives. The central idea of the movement was that this type of ultimate control by the people is not possible unless citizens are empowered, sufficiently knowledgeable, and possess reasonable judgment. On this basis, *indignados* can accurately be described as a participatory, deliberative social movement, and in this respect it can be linked to republican concerns.

In short, the *indignados*' republican affinity is clearly visible in various features of the movement. These include: its commitment to deliberative democracy, with special emphasis on spontaneous public deliberation occurring in the informal public sphere; the vindication of citizens' political participation and ultimate control over the representative institutions; the insistence on the common good as the only legitimate political goal; the rejection of all divisive issues and decisions; the reticence displayed towards any kind of political leadership as a potential form of domination; and the idea that citizens should be empowered but also display adequate civic virtues in order to participate politically (see Botella-Ordinas 2011; Martí and Ovejero 2011; Pettit 2011).

Ultimately, what occurred in the public squares of Spain in 2011 was one of the most remarkable experiments in popular deliberative democracy in history, and an extraordinary school of civic culture for those who took part in it. The *indignados*' ultimate aim was to carry out a democratic revolution, and take significant steps towards genuine participatory and deliberative democracy. Only time will tell if they succeeded.

### Note

- 1 I thank Sabrina Voss for editing the final version of this chapter.

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