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# Ideas and Practices of Democracy: the reactualisation of isonomy and isegory within social movements

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## Abstract

How is public participation achieved within social movements? Does it fundamentally rely on politico-economic conditions or does it primarily refer to the ideal or discursive sphere? This problem is addressed through a critical synthesis of theories that deal with this issue (resource mobilisation theories, political process model, Jürgen Habermas, Richard Sennett and Alexis de Tocqueville) and, empirically, through the observation and analysis of concrete modalities of public participation within Portuguese social movements (from a “qualitative” sociology or an ethnography of some movements carried out in Lisbon between 2010 and 2012). In this context, as elsewhere, public participation especially rests upon two linked ethical and political axioms: isonomy - the same law for everyone, the economic basis of public participation - and isegory - the same time to speak for everyone, the ideal foundation of public participation. Thus, to understand the how of public participation within social movements, it is necessary to overcome the traditional dichotomy between materialistic theories that stress the economic dimension of public participation and social movements, and idealistic approaches that address the symbolic and cultural aspects.

Keywords social movements; activism; public participation; public sphere; Portugal.

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## I. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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Social movements, a traditional object of study for sociology, can be defined, as a whole, as spaces wherein a certain quantum of people have decided to gather because they hope together to reach some social change, because they share some common concerns. The social, collective or public character is therefore a key property of social movements, as it is also explicitly suggested by their name. In this sense, public participation *sensu lato*, that is, which concerns both the forms of commitment of the members of these movements within these movements and, beyond, those of the public at large within society and with which activists interact or attempt in part to interact, is a core dimension of these actors. Furthermore, public participation entails dynamics or processes of formation and reformation as the phrase social movements suggests again and the expression public participation itself points out. Dynamics or processes refer to a fundamental question that is the how of phenomena, that is, how are phenomena produced?

The question of the how has been central in sociology since its origins, from positivism and Auguste Comte (1975 [1830-1842]) - for whom the question of the how is the study of relations between phenomena and this study is the main task of sociologists as that of any scientists from many disciplines - and beyond, including within paradigms that are opposed to positivism, such as inside paradigms and theories influenced by economics and some forms of utilitarianism (like the ones that will be addressed in this text).

The question of the how is also a significant question in the specific field of the sociology of social movements, a question that mainly regards in this field

of the discipline the economy or the social conditions of possibility of social movements.

Social movements' existence requires a certain form of organisation, a kind of structure, resources, people who manage them, objectives to be reached through appropriate strategies and actions that must also take into account the current and future state of the political and socio-economic environment. Consequently, does public participation within social movements essentially depend on economic or strategic factors, such as it is notably suggested by resource mobilisation theories and the political process model?

However, public participation refers to forms of discourses and practices that deal with expressiveness, communication, the generation, diffusion and understanding of signs, the symbolic and ideal. Thus, does public participation within social movements not rely more on the discursive and ideal? Does it not require more a hermeneutics or semiotics rather than a political economics?

How is public participation therefore achieved within social movements? Does it essentially rest upon purely economic elements or, to the contrary, can it be only conceived in terms of discursivity or textuality?

In a first part, we shall seek to solve this problem of the how of public participation within social movements and, in extenso, of the how of social movements themselves through a critical discussion of theories that focus on their economy (resource mobilisation theories, political process model) and of theories that, by contrast, have stressed languages and ideality by putting forward the concepts of publicness, publicity or public sphere (Jürgen Habermas, Richard Sennett, Alexis de Tocqueville).

The two other sections will show and analyse concrete modalities of public participation within social movements from a "qualitative" sociology or an ethnography of Portuguese movements carried out in Lisbon between 2010 and 2012. As for every ethnography, the research was in situ, focused on some movements (three in total), and privileged the techniques of fieldwork, participant observation, conversations with actors, the study of diverse emic written documents, frame and discourse analysis, data comparisons.

The studied movements, which were, at the time of the ethnography, the most visible and active ones in the field, are related to the phenomenon of alter-globalisation to the extent that their members explicitly aspire to "another world" that is not submitted to the logic of capital and market, and because they are associated all around the world with other social movements that share the same commitment against the globalisation of capital and for a world that is socially fair and respectful of the environment.

In this sense, beyond the local character of our ethnography, our study will be also comparative in order to show that the Portuguese context is not an isolated case and that there exist influences between different locations, both in the space and time, which make public participation within social movements transnational and historical.

These examples will allow to underpin the main thesis advanced in the first section and therefore to respond, with this thesis, to the aforementioned problem and questions.

## II. Economy and Publicness

Within the literature regarding the sociology of social movements, the question of the how of social movements has been mainly addressed by resource mobilisation theories, one of the most important schools of thought in this field

of study, especially in the United States (Melucci 1982; Della Porta & Diani 2006 [1999]). More specifically, in the case of these theories, this question regards the economy of social movements or the social conditions of their possibility. And, as their name explicitly points out, this economy is studied through the mobilisation and management of different kinds of resources by the activists who integrate these movements. One of the core identified resources is the social movement itself, or more exactly, its underlying structural organisation to the extent that any social movement needs some form of organisation, whatever its degree, in order to exist in the short, medium or long term and not to be an ephemeral phenomenon or an epiphenomenon.

John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1977), the two founders and core advocates of these theories, even compare what they name “social movement organisations (SMOs)” to business corporations, which act within markets - “the social movement industry (SMI)” that comprehends all the SMOs dealing with the same issues and “the social movement sector (SMS)” that embraces all SMOs and a fortiori all SMIs -, which are in competition with each other and with other social actors constituting the third sector (alongside the State and the economic private sector) for the appropriation of scarce resources, which are run by sorts of managers who essentially make decisions on the basis of cost-benefit calculations for the development of their movement and its actions, which respond or aim at responding to some social needs or demands through their services or supply.

Alongside the organisation, other resources have been highlighted, such as, obviously, economic resources, then, people (effective members and external supporters), social networks - associational and institutional partners, such as external supportive or “service organisations” (Kriesi 1996).

The political process model is related to these theories. It has been implicitly influenced by the strategic theory in general and in particular by the SWOT analysis or matrix (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), an analytic tool that is principally used in applied sciences, such as management and business, to evaluate the possibilities of a project or programme (social, economic, political) or those of an organisation. The two former variables respectively regard the positive and negative features immanent to an action or group while the two latter ones respectively consider in the environment of an organisation the advantages that can be profitable and the inconveniences that may be detrimental for an action of an organisation or for an organisation itself. For the political process model, in the same way as resource mobilisation theories, social movements’ strengths and weaknesses depend on their resources. Opportunities, a concept that has been sometimes translated by that of “political opportunity structures” in this particular model (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 2003 [1998]), refer to the possibilities in political, economic or social terms that are offered to social movements by other actors located in their environment - echoing Charles Tilly (1978), these latter actors may be governments, “members and challengers of the polity”, and so forth. By contrast, the related and antithetic concept of threats makes reference to political, economic or social potentialities that may undermine social movements, such as state repression, economic crisis (for these theoreticians, social movements are more likely to exist and grow during periods of economic prosperity than over times of recession insofar as they are likely to receive more economic funds stemming from external actors). All these four variables combined in a certain fashion according to their content and the historical and geographical context show how social movements are formed or the conditions of their appearance, of their existence or non-existence, of their development and end.

Thus, one of the main merits of these theories is that they have highlighted the organisational dimension of social movements, even though, prior to them, the Marxist theory had already stressed its importance in relation to the working-class movement. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1998 [1848]) claimed the international union of all the workers in order to face the domination of the capitalist class, seize power and transform the bourgeois society into a communist system. For Lenin (2010 [1916], 1966 [1902]), the communist revolution could be only achieved by means of the leading political party of the proletariat, a professional, organised and disciplined revolutionary vanguard formed by an intelligentsia or professional Marxist intellectuals. Antonio Gramsci (1999 [1971]) advocated the formation of workers' autonomous councils within factories (*commissioni interne*) in order to run not only these factories but also society at large by being the centre of power (political, economic, social, cultural). Furthermore, he supported the creation of alliances and networks between industrial workers and peasants to constitute a strong and genuine revolutionary basis.

In any case, this emphasis on the organisational or economic dimension is a point of view that has diametrically counterbalanced another significant school of thought called collective behaviour theories. Indeed, according to the latter, social movements are movements of the masses or crowds that are characterised by a set of negative predicates. Thus, they appear as unorganised, disordered, unstructured, spontaneous, ephemeral, anomic, uncontrollable, unpredictable, eruptive, irrational, violent, dangerous, among other depreciative epithets. In this sense, for Herbert Blumer (1955 [1939]), social movements are sorts of "elementary interactions" where behaviours are particularly unstable and erratic, emotions are strong and people's ability for reflection and control is low. According to Neil Smelser (1962), they are a direct effect of "structural strain" within social systems, thereby expressing anomic tendencies within society. For Ted Gurr (1970), they are violent and stem from frustrations among their constituents.

However, the other side of the coin, by stressing the economic side of social movements, resource mobilisation and political process theories tend to be economistic and materialistic. In other words, they tend to emphasise the economy of social movements to the detriment of their symbolic or ideal dimension, a core dimension to the extent that one of their *raison d'être* is to deal with, create and diffuse ideas, points of view, *koines*, *ethos*.

The most visible recent studies on recent mobilisations in Portugal fall within these approaches. Estanque, Costa and Soeiro (2013) mainly feature recent social protests in Portugal as "a new cycle of collective action" in the wake of Sydney Tarrow and the political process model. Similarly, Accornero and Ramos Pinto (2015) "map the cycle of anti-austerity contention", while Baumgarten (2013) focuses on their "organisational structures".

Correlatively to the fact that they have not addressed, or only in a superficial and hasty fashion, the symbolic dimension of social movements, they have not focused on the concept of public and *a fortiori* on that of public participation, at least at the ideational level, to the extent that these concepts are irreducible to an economy and have an important symbolic weight.

A way of approaching the symbolic in general and public participation in particular under its ideal side consists in critically considering some propositions put forward by some theoreticians such as Jürgen Habermas, Richard Sennett and Alexis de Tocqueville who dealt with the related concepts of public, publicness, publicity, public sphere, although it was not specifically within the framework of studies on social movements.

Habermas (2010 [1962]) considered the public sphere as a social space located between the State and the private sphere (embracing the intimate sphere of the family as well as the economic and business sphere), wherein people have decided to gather in order to create an informed public that critically and rationally discuss public and political matters. Nevertheless, for him, public sphere only characterised a sole social class at a particular time and place: The bourgeoisie in Great Britain, Germany and France between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

Sennett (1976 [1974]) opposed the public realm or the *res publica* to the private realm. The former is the space of polity wherein people are linked by collective concerns that transcend their mere particular individual interests whilst the latter is the intimate space, which is organised according to personal ties and individuals' personality. In his view, the private domain has continuously extended and developed since the nineteenth century to the detriment of the public sector due to capitalism, market expansion and the growing secularization of society. As a result, nowadays, the public realm would have vanished; it would have been absorbed into the private realm insofar as the "culture of personality", a major organisational principle of the private realm, would greatly condition the political and public life.

Referring to the instance of the United States of his time, Tocqueville (2010 [1835, 1840]) asserted that the equalisation of social conditions - social democracy; the levelling of social positions - is necessarily accompanied by the equalisation of political conditions that may lead to two antithetic consequences; either to political democracy and freedom - all the people are sovereign, each citizen has the same political rights and duties, may participate in the public affairs and power - or, to the contrary, to despotism and unfreedom - none governs, except the despot, and the people are subjected to his will. All the democracies potentially present this risk because the improvement of social conditions that is also an effect of their equalisation or of social democracy may lead the people to exclusively focus on their business or private affairs - to the extent that they may still wish to improve their social situation - at the expense of their commitment to public and political affairs - insofar as if they spend more time and energy in the former, they logically have less time and resources to dedicate to the latter that is a separate realm. One can see that it is this antinomy between the public and the private that was explored and developed later by Habermas and Sennett.

In sum, to understand the how of public participation within social movements, it is necessary to combine some of the positive aspects of the economic perspectives on social movements with the positive points of some theories on the public and public participation. In other words, both the materiality and ideality of public participation must be considered through the materialistic how, put forward by resource mobilisation theories and the political process model, and the ideal how approached by the three latter aforementioned thinkers by critically extending it to the realm of social movements.

Thus, following resource mobilisation and political process theories, public participation will be examined through the immanent organisation of social movements as well as via their transcendent organisation that takes the form of associations between different social movements. In addition, in the wake of the aforementioned theoreticians of the public, public participation will be also addressed through its discursive side that is central.

Notwithstanding, unlike Habermas's view, public sphere was not exclusive to the English, German and French bourgeoisie between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Contrary to Sennett's perception, the civic commitment has not disappeared in Western societies.



Indeed, contemporary social movements are spaces that nurture public participation by fostering critical and rational discursive activities in public on public issues among their members and beyond. In other words, they are sectors of the public life that offer individuals the possibility of communicating, informing, being informed, training, being trained and debating on political subjects. Alongside their economy, social movements' existence relies in large measure on these properties; social movements are formed by people in order to generate public spheres and correlatively to foster public participation. However, beyond abstraction, what are the concrete modalities of this public participation?

### III. Isonomy: Organisation and Networks

All the studied social movements espouse a certain legal form, have some degree of institutionalisation. They have the official status of association or non-governmental organisation (NGO) and are composed of leading organs (executive, audit committees), core representatives (a president, vice-president, secretaries). Thus, one of the movements is “an association of non-partisan and global political intervention”, “a non-profit association, with an unlimited number of associates, undetermined capital and indefinite duration”. Another one is legally “an environmental NGO” after having been successively a student association and a youth association. The third movement is “a non-profit collective entity” that is “established for an indeterminate time”.

This institutional formalism allows them to have a social existence known, recognised and accepted by authorities and to act within society in order to change, to some degree, society according to the law, the allowed, or at least, the tolerated.

However, despite this juridical formalisation that obeys utilitarian and pragmatic reasons and that is especially intended for the exterior, social actors situated outside the field of social movements and their allies and that can be potential or actual adversaries such as the State, the studied movements also have an immanent economy, intended this time for their members and advocates, which follows principles that are diametrically opposed to those that orient institutional formalism. The structure of these movements is therefore dimorphic since they own two different and antithetic forms; each of them being adopted according to the situations and actors that they have to face.

These inner principles that may also be qualified as esoteric or acroamatic axioms are horizontality, autonomy, diversity, creativity, accountability, newness, openness, criticism, participation, lability. They co-exist and contrast with their outer principles or exoteric criteria that suggest, for external actors in order to satisfy their social requirements, verticality, hierarchy, standardisation, reproduction, dependency, conformity, hermeticness, a-criticism, representation, inertia.

At the basis of these esoteric axioms that effectively orient activists' practices within their movements and with their supporters, there is the principle of isonomy that means, according to its etymological sense, the same law for everyone, a principle that has its origins in the idea and practice of politics in Ancient Greece.

Indeed, in spite of a certain formalism, these movements are not really divided between rulers, on the one side, and ruled on the other. Regarding the decision-making or policy-making process, they tend to work with assemblies and each member is entitled to vote. Generally, policy decisions are taken by consensus or majority vote. Some activists saw their movement as “existing thanks to the diversity, accountability and autonomy of its members” and as opposed to “the vertical principle of hierarchy”. Others stated that their movement owns “a

strong activist component, resorting to non-violent and creative direct actions”, is “a non-partisan, co-operative and non-hierarchical association” that fosters “activities from the grassroots”, seeks to encourage “civic autonomy, self-training and participation”. They emphasised that, regardless of its official statutes, their “NGO has always maintained a horizontal structure, by accepting new activists, their projects and ideas, by facilitating their achievement”. They added that it is entirely independent and “free from any economic, religious, political, racial supervision”, which allows them to freely develop a critical discourse from below on globalisation, social injustice and climatic change. Similarly, in another movement, activists perceived it as an association “independent of any political-partisan forces, economic groups and religious confessions”. They rejected “executive management, by deciding everything in assemblies”, thereby “showing a strong political signal of horizontality”.

The principle of isonomy has been recently re-actualised by linked contemporary philosophical doctrines, namely anarchism, post-modernism, post-structuralism, as well as by “the new social movements” of the 1960s and 1970s in most Western countries, which influenced and were influenced by these latter philosophies. Thus, despite their differences and their singular propositions, these philosophies share some common ideas, such as the criticism of authority and systems, the apologia of power decentralisation and autonomy. “The new social movements” appeared as small, local and decentralised spaces instead of being big, national and centralised mass movements that especially characterised traditional workers’ movements. They were fluid and flexible instead of being rigid, disciplined and bureaucratic such as the latter movements.

Alberto Melucci stressed that “new social movements” are epitomes of “individual autonomous centres of action”, and Alain Touraine featured these movements as spaces seeking to defend “the autonomy of civil society” (Della Porta & Diani 2006[1999], p.9, p.55).

From a structural point of view, present-day movements are therefore close to “the new social movements”. They remain influenced by them as well as by the philosophies that are attached to them. Alongside dimorphism, the morphology of social movements tends to be isomorphic; the forms of social movements tend to be similar, there is a certain structural homology among them. And, the principle that is the source of this isomorphism is isonomy. The proposition that states the same form for all the movements (what does not impede differences in terms of contents among them) is a logical and direct consequence of the precept that stipulates the same law for everyone.

In one of the studied movements, some of the participants explicitly acknowledged their affiliation with libertarian or anarchist movements. They notably referred to present-day squatters’ movements whose members occupy, in the city or countryside, abandoned premises and/or fields in order to convert them into social and political spaces that claim and practise autonomy and grassroots power, the right to housing, a political organisation without a chief, and simultaneously that denounce private ownership, urban speculation and elitisation. Less recently, they also fitted their movement into historical anarchism, essentially the past experiences of anarcho-sindicalism (workers’ trade unions run by all the members) in Spain at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century until the Civil War (1936-1939) as well as in Portugal during the First Republic (1910-1926) through the activities of the leading trade union of workers, the *Confederação Geral do Trabalho* (General Confederation of Labour, CGT).

The immanent organisation of social movements is also reflected in their transcendent organisation under the form of networks between different social movements beyond national borders, networks that are material and immaterial



- the Internet plays an essential role in activists' mobilisations (Masse 2010; Campos, Pereira & Simões 2016), even though activism cannot be reduced to this mere means (Masse 2010).

The network is a system of agency gathering several structures that are more or less similar. It is generally open, inclusive, potentially infinite, malleable, horizontal, dynamic, kinetic, inchoative (it fosters novelties and inventions). Unlike classical organisations, the network does not really have a centre and tends to follow a centrifugal expansion. There is not a strict division of labour between its various elements either. Each of them firstly exists in itself and for itself, and not, as an organ, for a totality that encompasses them. Each element can enter into contact with any other one and not exclusively with some of them (Moulin 2006[1999]). In this sense, this structural form is concretely in line with the principle of isonomy and the further and aforementioned esoteric axioms.

The networks of the studied movements are therefore influenced by the "new social movements" again. Moreover, more recently, the instance of World Social Forums is also determinant when it is about uniting worldwide civil society actors, creating an international solidarity or building trans-national associative alliances.

Some activists stated that their movement is "a new organisation, structured in accordance with the idea of network" and that "another world is possible" if and only if simultaneously local struggles proliferate and resistance globalises. They considered that their movement is "at the core of the alter-globalisation movement", has "the vocation of alter-globalisation association" and "of non-partisan political intervention". In a further movement, it seems necessary "to break the isolation of the exploited people, to create bridges that permit visibility, protest and mobilisation". The studied movements integrate into general diverse national, European and international networks. They took part in the Acampadas, popular camps held in the main squares of the big cities, which spread all around the world during spring 2011. One of the movements is close to Via Campesina, one of the most paradigmatic international peasant movements as well as one of the main alter-globalisation social movements.

#### IV. Isegory: Speeches and Songs

In the same way as isomorphism, isegory that entails the same time to speak for everyone is also a logical and direct consequence of isonomy. Since their origin, that is, since Athenian democracy in ancient times, the idea and practice of isegory have been closely associated with those of isonomy.

Currently, among the studied movements, the principle of isegory is applied either successively through individual speeches in urban public spaces that regularly alternate each other or simultaneously via collective song performances.

Participants of one of the studied movements organised, every Thursday afternoon, over the months of September and October 2010, at the centre of Lisbon, in Largo São Domingos square, near Rossio square, an action that they named "speakers' corner action". The aim of this action was to open a space for public gathering and discussion in the streets. One of the slogans for these days was "join our debate, listen, speak, intervene, participate!". It was about, in activists' view, "bringing democracy to the streets because democracy means the people's opinion and power", because representative democracy via elected politicians for occupying the power institutions is a partial democracy that must be completed by participative democracy, the political participation of the people that can effectively change things. In this sense, the organisers of the event invited every person in the streets to participate and present his/her views on po-

litical topics. The issues chosen by activists and discussed by people (activists and bystanders) were “the end of poverty”, “social justice or the matter of wealth redistribution”, “democracy, citizenship and the public sector”, “alter-economy and labour rights”, “globalisation, world peace and solidarity”. The public debates in the aforementioned square were stirred up by a young woman activist. She started the discussion by posing some questions and problems linked to these issues, a microphone in hand, to the public that was formed around her by a group of bystanders.

Actually, gradually as the discussions progressed, the frontier between activists and bystanders disappeared to the extent that by taking part in the conversations, people became active, involved and ceased to be mere spectators. Successively, different individuals (immigrants, students, workers, artists, retired persons, activists, women, men, young and older people) took her microphone, spoke before the public and expressed their views on the discussed subjects, often in an argumentative and critical fashion.

Thus, speakers’ corner action recalled the famous and original north-east corner of Hyde Park in London, a place intended for public discussion, or the “sit-ins”, “happenings” in the 1960s orchestrated by “new social movements”.

A general aim of one of the studied movements is explicitly “to fight against the ‘dictatorship of the markets’ and to give back to individuals the capacity of participating in the processes of political decision-making that affect them”. In other words, it seeks “to re-conquest the space lost by democracies before the financial sector, marked by the prepotency of capital, its earnings and speculations”, or “to promote and achieve all kinds of action that allow the winning back, by citizens, of the power that the financial sector exerts on all the aspects of the political, economic, social and cultural life in the world”. Because political decisions that have effects, often negative, on all the planet and its inhabitants are increasingly taken within closed circles that escape from citizens’ judgement and control, thereby making them mere passive spectators and receptors of these policies, for these activists, it is imperative “to break this passivity” and restore “participative democracy”.

In this sense, the Acampadas (literally, accommodated in a camp) or daily popular assemblies, which mainly took place in Lisbon at Rossio square in spring 2011, were also an epitome of public participation in the streets that fosters isegory or successive individual talks in public. The main battle cry of this action was “true democracy now. Let’s go to fill Rossio!”. Every people was “urged” to participate “in the streets, in the squares, in each corner, under the shade of each statue!”.

The main concrete targets of the studied movements are what they called “The Troika”, a media-related category that refers, in the Portuguese context and elsewhere, in other concerned countries, to an institutional triad composed of three international organisations that are core worldwide policy-makers, namely the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the European Commission. Historically, since their creation at the end of the Second World War, the two former organisms have been closely associated and have usually worked together in the countries where they have provided their economic programmes and loans that entailed, in return, strict and austere socio-economic conditions to be obeyed by the debtor countries (Masse 2007). This triad appeared, according to activists, as “kidnappers” because they have “kidnapped democracy and people’s lives”, because they aim at creating and consolidating “structures of governance that are external to the rationality of the public sphere, structures resting upon the so-called necessity of reducing decisions to their ‘scientific’ foundations, that is, reserved for the sole ‘experts’,

technocrats and bureaucrats, thereby rendering them de-politicised and undemocratic”.

One of the studied movements, in particular, also took part in demonstrations against the G8 (nowadays G7) summits that, through various acts of “civil disobedience”, as activists claimed, that is, through public irenic activities that do not follow the law on behalf of the public good, contested the legitimacy, morality and democratic character of this association of the eight or seven major economic powers in the world, whose leaders regularly meet in order to decide and define global policies that concern all the planet and the whole of the societies. Similarly, they called into question the Climate Change Conferences, promoted by the United Nation Organisation (UNO), which are again, in activists’ view, an “illegitimate decisional space, which not only has been totally ineffective in the reduction of carbon emissions” (a core official objective of these conferences), “but which has also accentuated social injustices through market mechanisms and other schemes that are typically colonialist”. They stressed that “the UNO summit is only a new legitimisation of the old colonialism, again in the realm of the most sought-after resources, this time, the right to pollute”, and that “before a serious crisis of civilisation, they [politicians] offer us a political circus that plays for big corporations’ interests”. The aim of some activists is therefore “to delegitimise the negotiations that are made from above” and “to take part, to some extent, in protests that seek to block these summits and simultaneously to initiate new grassroots processes that can open paths for a true climate justice”.

Some activists, to face neo-liberal ideology and financial hegemony, especially count on “understanding” and “awareness”. This implies in concreto carrying out and bolstering “activities of debates and formation of a critical and alternative thought”. In their view, the realm in which their movement can make a significant contribution is indeed that of “reflection and the promotion of the critical thought”, firstly, by working with universities and workplaces - determinant “action fields” insofar as they are core places of knowledge production within society, can help activists to “develop and exchange it”, and in order to better “understand the social fabric” that they seek to transform -, but also, by organising their own “schools” and “seminars” over the year “wherein it is possible to discuss, learn and agree about politics”.

More generally, their movement in itself has been converted into a theoretical and practical school or organ, a social laboratory, wherein people are able to develop their knowledge, notably in economics or political economy, even though they are not originally economists or they have not been trained in economics at university or other school institutions. Over their commitment in their movement, activists are led to learn economic theories, to understand economic and political actuality, to acquire a certain economic culture through symbolic interactions among them and with outer actors (trade unionists, journalists, academics, politicians, and so on), through the reading of books, articles and other forms of texts related to this scientific discipline, via the preparation of documents intended for the public and for themselves, the diffusion of economic information and analyses (on the Internet, printed on paper), via the writing of articles and other types of texts (pamphlets, tracts, and so forth), the organisation of public discussions in Lisbon and other cities, in brief, through a set of various epistemic praxes. This learning in and by activism conduces them to develop a critical and reflective sense of the socio-economic and political situations in Portugal and the world. In this sense, they become alter-economists or economic critics by calling into question the principal propositions of the current and hegemonic economic model that is largely inspired by neo-liberalism or neo-classical economics.

For instance, during a “popular dinner” held at a community centre located in the Mouraria area, in Lisbon, I met Helena, an activist and retired person who was fond of camping, and Sofia, a young woman activist and physician. They told me that they had little knowledge of economics. They added that they were not experts in economics because of their respective professional and educational background. They therefore considered that it was sometimes difficult for them to understand and follow all the discourses and actions made in their movement. In their terms, they sometimes felt down over the preparation of written documents of the movement and during the participation in collective debates. Notwithstanding, despite these personal statements, while they were talking with me, they showed *de facto* that they were perfectly able to put forward critical, interesting and accurate analyses about the current economy and with relevant historical references to support and illustrate their words. In spite of their own claims, they paradoxically seemed to have a solid critical culture in economics. During this dinner, and in other occurrences as well, their comments on the financial system, financial and economic exchanges, economics, in general, were deep. In this case, as in other occasions, they were able to spontaneously, successively and publicly describe in detail, with artistry or a significant oratory ease, during several minutes without any interruption, without any previous formal or pre-planned preparation, and in a critical fashion, the macro, meso and microstructural mechanisms of the debt, their links, its origins and effects.

A further studied movement organised and took part in festivals that were meeting points for sessions of information and debates to the extent that its members considered that this kind of occurrences could be experiences that allow to learn, to gain knowledge, to create “spaces to discuss about environmental and social justice” combined with “festive spirit, between concerts and relaxation”. As the former movement, these participants have also launched their “schools” and have been invited to give lectures at Portuguese schools and universities, to increasingly participate in debates, conferences and projects orchestrated by educational institutions. They also organised regular public meetings in their community centre. They were the occasion, according to their own terms, “for exchanging knowledge and thinking in a critical way”.

Some activists perceived their movement as “a movement of ideas”, “a movement of persons and wills”, “a free space” in which every person may reflect on the problematic of work and the ownership of the means of production, pose new questions that better correspond to their lived experiences and find new answers. They claimed that their movement is eclectic and that people inside it may “communicate and be associated, in a permanent dialogue, for an open intervention that renders the mobilisation against the silent powers possible”. In their movement, they “transform the streets and squares into a space wherein diversity and the refusal of a lifetime broken into pieces march”. In other words, they stated that: “Who has made this crisis are bankers and speculators who play with our money. We are before a huge transfer of wealth from the poorest people to the richest ones, with the complicity of the governments, European Commission and European Central Bank. Therefore, we will not be silent. It is not us who have made this crisis. For this reason, we bring solidarity to the streets, a solidarity committed with all the victims of this situation for a social alternative that carries justice in our lives”. In their eyes, building this kind of free space for collective discussion is actually the main and more urgent task of their movement and this should be the same priority for the whole movements, whatever their speciality and objectives.

Related to the systematic organisation of events or actions that encourage successive individual speeches in public places in the city on public matters, there are the iterative practices of simultaneous collective song performances;

both are often present and alternate each other over the same type of action or social gathering.

During speakers' corner action, music and songs performed by some "artists" (a neologism created by activists and that merges the words "artists" and "activists") also played a key role. They not only served to cover the periods of silence between two speeches - a silence that was literally rejected because of its symbolic connotation that recalls dictatorships or authoritarian political regimes where free public talks are forbidden or, at least, strictly controlled - or to render the event more festive and entertaining, but they were also a form of discourse in themselves that took shape following the traditional forms of discourse. Their text was critical, described and analysed social realities, and put forward fears for the future and hopes for change. In their way, songs continued collective discussions. The public accompanied artists by singing, clapping and dancing with them. Before singing and when introducing himself, one of the rappers publicly stated that he makes his music in order to attempt to communicate to others what he sees, his experience during the daily life and from that in order to try to render the social system better.

Over public meetings held in the community centre of one of the studied movements, while some participants played music at a certain time, the rest of people collectively sang, especially texts related to political ecology, leftist philosophies, progressive and revolutionary doctrines.

In the course of significant demonstrations in the streets of Lisbon, notably on the 25 April (a date that commemorates the Carnation Revolution, the end of dictatorship and the rebirth of republic and democracy) and on the 1st May (Labour Day that has been converted into Precarious Labour Day by some Portuguese movements), most activists collectively sang, clapped and danced, while listening to music. Among their vast eclectic musical repertoire, it was possible to note traditional and famous songs inherited from the time of the Carnation Revolution in 1974, reggae, African music, soul, rock and roll, dance, techno. They also sang their own songs that they invented as well as known songs re-elaborated with their own words. The texts often referred to the precarious situation of Portugal at every societal level, but they also mixed reflective criticism and pessimism with hopes and optimism.

During Carnation Revolution Day, activists repeated in chorus historical slogans that have marked this commemorated period until today, such as: "Somos muitos, muitos mil, para continuar Abril!" (we are many, many thousands, to continue April!), "25 de Abril sempre, fascismo nunca mais!" (25 April always, fascism never again!), "Abril está na rua, a luta continua!" (April is in the streets, the struggle continues!), "Abril de novo, com a força do povo!" (April again, with the strength of the people!).

On 1st May 2010, demonstrators together sang the following texts in a sort of soul version: "I have a precarious work. I feel to complain. Including Portugal! Come with me, give me your hand, we are going to escape from the danger by shouting 'No to exploitation!' Because a country without culture does not have legs to walk. Including Por-tu-gaaaaaal!"; "Everything is counted. Everything must suffer. Including Portugal! (bis). Come with me, give me your hand, we are going to speak very loudly, in order to end the situation. Because a country without culture does not have legs to walk. Including Por-tu-gaaaaaal!".

Thus, this close interdependence between music and activism in the studied Portuguese movements reminds us of the American civil rights movements and the peace and student movements in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. As Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1996[1991], 1998) highlighted, one of the main features and strengths of the American civil rights movement was its



collective and public song performances, namely its “social gospel” and “freedom songs”, whereas, in the case of the peace and student movement, it was rock and roll and folk music, which have shaped Western culture and beyond in general by rallying the youth of the time and the subsequent generations. Present-day Portuguese movements also have, to a certain extent, their own “social gospel” or “freedom songs”, their own transformative rock and roll and folk music.

In fine, public participation within social movements is mainly achieved via the practice of isonomy and isegory, two core and related axioms inherited from Ancient Greece’s politics and expressed under different modalities by contemporary philosophies linked to representations and actions of present-day movements and movements of the 1960s and 1970s, that is, anarchism, libertarianism, post-modernism, post-structuralism. In this sense, public participation is not only transnational or cross-border, it is also historical, that is, it is both synchronic and diachronic.

## V. Conclusion

How is public participation achieved within social movements? The question of the how of social movements has been traditionally approached by what has been called resource mobilisation theories and the political process model. These theories have permitted above all to highlight the organisational and rational aspects of social movements, a perspective that has counterbalanced a dominant sociological approach related to collective behaviour theories and that considered them, often by ideology, as unstructured and irrational masses or crowds. Notwithstanding, by stressing these aspects, these theories have tended to be economic or materialistic and simultaneously to put little emphasis on the ideal or symbolic aspects of social movements and, correlatively, of public participation within them.

It is therefore necessary to complete an economic perspective of the how of public participation within social movements with an approach more centred upon the ideality of this how, notably through the related concepts of public, publicness, publicity or public sphere, such as those advanced by Habermas, Sennett and Tocqueville, even though they have not properly dealt with the issue of social movements.

Concretely, public participation is mainly achieved through the actual application of two related and fundamental political and ethical principles: Isonomy and isegory.

Inherited from Ancient Greek politics and re-actualised to a certain fashion by contemporary social movements’ politics related to anarchism (or libertarianism), post-modernism, post-structuralism and the “new social movements” of the 1960s and 1970s, the principle of isonomy - the same law for everyone - entails forms of public participation in the city based on horizontality, autonomy, diversity, creativity, accountability, newness, openness, criticism, liability, networks (virtual and actual). It refers more to the economic dimension of public participation.

The principle of isegory - the same time to speak for everyone, a principle that is a direct, logical and necessary consequence of the previous principle and that therefore have an origin and re-actualisation analogous to it - implies modalities of urban public participation wherein successive public talks (speakers’ corner action, the promotion of forms of participative democracy, Acampadas, civil disobedience acts, grassroots initiatives, schools, seminars, festivals, educational activities) and simultaneous collective performances of songs (speakers’ corner action, community centre, demonstrations on the Carnation



Revolution Day and on the Precarious Labour Day) take place. For its part, it especially falls within the ideality of public participation.

The influences on social movements are synchronic. At the present time, various social movements stemming from different geographical and cultural spaces inspire the public participation of social movements in general (World Social Forums, social movements related to alter-globalisation at large, squatters' movements). However, they are also diachronic. Beyond the space, the time is also determinant. Past movements are a fundamental source of inspiration (anarcho-syndicalism in Spain and Portugal at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, "the new social movements" of the 1960s and 1970s in most Western countries, the civil rights movement at this time in the United States). Notwithstanding, these transnational and historical experiences are not merely copied; they are reshaped according to the local and present context to make public participation meaningful, firstly for activists themselves and then for the public at large. In turn, to a certain extent, these local transformations affect the general ideas and practices of public participation within social movements and beyond, and they may inspire further forms of public participation in other contexts, now and/or in the future.

This analysis of determinants of public participation does not pretend to be exhaustive; other conditions of public participation surely exist. We have retained those that are the most significant in relation to our context of study. However, the latter does not constitute an isolated case, other contexts are also strongly concerned by the principles of isonomy and isegory as our comparative approach has shown.

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## Ideias e práticas da democracia: A reatualização da isonomia e da isegoria dentro dos movimentos sociais

### Resumo

Como a participação pública é alcançada dentro dos movimentos sociais? Ela realmente depende de condições políticas e econômicas ou se refere majoritariamente à esfera discursiva ou das ideias? Esse problema é abordado através de uma síntese crítica de teorias que tratam da questão (teorias de mobilização de recursos, modelo de processo político, com base em Jürgen Habermas, Richard Sennett e Alexis de Tocqueville) e, empiricamente, por meio da observação e análise de modalidades concretas de participação dentro de movimentos sociais portugueses (a partir de uma sociologia qualitativa e etnografia de alguns movimentos conduzida em Lisboa entre 2010 e 2012). Nesse contexto, como em outros, a participação pública se ampara em dois axiomas éticos e políticos que estão relacionados: isonomia - a mesma lei para todos, a base econômica da participação pública - e a isegoria - o mesmo tempo de fala para todos, o fundamento ideal da participação. Assim, para o modo da participação pública dentro dos movimentos sociais é necessário superar a tradicional dicotomia entre teorias materialistas (que enfatizam dimensão econômica da participação pública e dos movimentos sociais) e abordagens idealistas, que se reportam aos seus aspectos simbólicos e culturais.

Palavras-chave: movimentos sociais; ativismo; participação pública; esfera pública; Portugal.

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