

Affect and Effect:

Artful Protest and Political Impact

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This paper aims to clarify a question, and identify a possible problem, for academics studying new forms of civic participation and activists protesting to bring about social change. The question is this: What is the political *effect* of protest designed to generate *affect*? More specifically, what is the democratic potential of the creative, artful, and often spectacular protests that seem to define a great deal of global activism today? The problem: that this form of protest may not have the political effect we traditionally expect and, as such, it asks us to reconsider both the function of contemporary protest and corresponding structures of political organization.

First premises

Since I was trained as a Marxist—though, admittedly, I have strayed—I want to begin with First Premises: *Every age creates a form of protest appropriate to its hegemonic power.*

This is not some mystical process—a Hegelian unfolding of the dialectical spirit of History—but rather a social one: the result of people interacting with and reacting to their political environment. For experienced activists this process is a conscious one, and entails a thoughtful study of how power works and the careful creation of protests that speak to or against a particular regime of power. More

commonly, however, protest is less self-consciously crafted. It is the reactive expression of people whose perceptions of power have been framed by the social, economic, and political conditions of their time. They create protests that simply "make sense" to themselves and their audiences.

For examples of this process in history, let us start with the rule of Monarchy, Autocracy and Dictatorship. Here, power is dependent upon tradition and/or physical might, and sovereignty resides in the king, the aristocracy, or the dictator. Power is situated, and located in a particular place: a palace, castle, government building, or other site. A familiar Western example might be the Ancien Régime in France, where authority was vested in the king and aristocracy, and after 1682, when Louis XIV moved his court from Paris, located at the Palace of Versailles.

Responding to regime such as this, protest takes the shape of mobs and insurrections, aimed at the—often violent—overthrow of centers of power. In the French Revolution, we might think of the Women's March of October 5, 1789 in which Parisian women, incensed at the price and scarcity of bread, stormed the city armory and with arms in hand marched to Versailles to confront King Louis XVI. Similar protests might include the storming of the Czar's Winter Palace in St Petersburg during the Soviet Revolution. While Kings and Czars are increasingly rare these days, both this form of power, and that of protest against it, can still be witnessed in contemporary struggles against dictators and oligarchs. In each case, "the people" constitute a mass directed at overwhelming and overthrowing a fixed site of power. In terms popularized by Antonio Gramsci, these are classic tactics of the War of Maneuver (Gramsci 1971).

In part because of the success of these types of protest, monarchy in the West gave way to a new regime of power: National Representative Democracy. Here power is vested in a bureaucratic state, and sovereignty—at least theoretically—is located in "the people," not as a physical mob, but through their representation by elected politicians and other officials. Power is still situated spatially, usually

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This model of power engenders protests which take the form of public petitions and usually non-violent mass marches and rallies. These protests are representations of "the people" in physical time and space, directed at locations of democratic power, be they presidential offices or parliament buildings. The aim of these protests is the leveraging of voting power (or potential voting power) of "the people" over their elected representatives and a political system dependent upon popular consent for legitimacy. An early example might be the Chartist Petitions for universal (male) suffrage delivered to the British Parliament in 1839, 1842, and 1848, each petition accompanied by parades of people who wished to have their political voices heard and their beliefs represented.

This is the power and protest that still come to mind when we think of "social movements": mass marches of people, winding through city streets, holding aloft placards identifying their cause, culminating in mass rallies that fill public squares, where movement leaders tick off grievances and make demands. In Europe and the US, women employed protests like these to gain political representation in the early decades of the twentieth century. The successes of the Civil Rights movement for African-Americans later in the century depended upon similar tactics, for example the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, where the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech (as well as legal challenges, lobbying and civil disobedience). These protests delivered the goods: women won the franchise by the 1920s and a year after the March on Washington, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, guaranteeing African-American political representation, was passed by the US government.

Yet even at this moment another form of protest—and power—was being born. King articulating his dream of racial justice before a sea of people may be the iconic image of the US Civil Rights movement, but other scenes of protest are seared in the collective memory as

well: Rosa Parks claiming her seat on a segregated bus, or fire hoses turned against black protestors. Protests like these were held to compel the government to represent African-Americans as part of "the people," yet a closer look suggests that another type of pressure was being exerted on a different form of power.

The story of Rosa Parks is well known. On December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Parks, a tired black seamstress, refused to give up her seat on a public bus to a white person and this brave act launched the Civil Rights Movement. This is the tale taught to every schoolchild in the US. What is less frequently mentioned is that Rosa Parks was not some political innocent, but a seasoned activist. She was raised in an activist family, trained at the Highlander Institute, and was secretary of the local branch of the National Association of Colored People (NAACP). Parks may have been tired that day, but her refusal to give up her seat was a carefully crafted symbol of resistance. And that famous photo of her seated on the bus, looking out the window with determination in her face while a white man glowers behind her? It was staged, shot a year later with a sympathetic wire service reporter sitting in as the white man (Applebome 2001).

Protest as performance became a standard tactic of the Civil Rights Movement. Another well known, if not well understood, example was the protest organized by King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to desegregate Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. The news pictures from that event—black protestors being beaten by police, attacked by dogs, or blasted by fire hoses, the lines of young children marched off to jail—shocked the nation and the world. These images are well known; what is lesser known is that the protest was stage-managed by the SCLC. MLK and his lieutenants picked Birmingham for good reason. The Southern city had had a long history of union and civil rights organizing, as well as white racism and violence, but what Birmingham also had was Bull Connor. Connor, the Commissioner of Public Safety of Birmingham, in charge of both Police and Fire Departments, was an open racist and ardent segregationist. The activists wagered that Connor would

over-react—and he did: performing acts of white brutality and violence upon peaceful black protestors in front of a global news media. These pictures engendered widespread sympathy for the movement, and embarrassed a United States busy positioning itself on a world stage as the bastion of freedom during the Cold War. In the words of civil rights historian Doug McAdam, King possessed a “genius for strategic dramaturgy” (McAdam 1996, 348).

To say that Parks’ and King’s protests were performances meant for media distribution and mass spectatorship is not to say they were somehow not real. Parks was tired and not allowed to sit in the front of a bus, and African-Americans were (and still are) routinely subjected to state-sanctioned violence. What the activists understood, however, is that reality needs to be staged in order to be widely seen, and protest must be made into an emotionally charged spectacle for injustice to be felt.

Such spectacular protests have become commonplace in the past half century. When anti-Vietnam war protestors marched on Washington in 1967, it may have looked like a standard march to petition a representative democracy to end an unpopular war, but the protest ended with a call by organizers Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and others to encircle the headquarters of the US Department of Defense and chant incantations in order to levitate the building and drive out evil war-mongering spirits. The Pentagon, predictably, failed to levitate, but the function of the protest was never aimed at a real place (the Pentagon) with a real intent (drive out evil spirits), rather it was an event engineered to capture media attention and stimulate the imagination. Similarly, when the Zapatista Army of National Liberation marched out of the Lacandon Jungle to declare war on the political oligarchy of Mexico on January 1, 1994, it may have appeared to be a traditional War of Maneuver, with an armed guerilla force attempting to violently overthrow a centralized power. Yet the Zapatista “army” marched on the regional capital with far more sticks than guns, and carried with them magical realist communiqués ready to be uploaded to global networks,

thus launching a multi-year “war” waged with creative provocations and performances rather than armed assaults. (In January of 2000 the Zapatistas launched their “air force,” writing notes to soldiers asking them to lay down their arms, which they then folded into paper airplanes and flew over the fences surrounding an army encampment.)

Over the past two decades, activists have turned the “march and rally” model on its head: no longer sober citizens petitioning for their democratic rights, these protests take on the look and feel of celebratory carnivals with costumes, props, and performances. Reclaim the Streets, Alter-Globalization, G-8 summit, and COP protests all follow this model, as did the dramatic occupations of public squares in Cairo, Madrid, New York and around the world in 2011. So what explains this turn to creative, performative, spectacular and “artful” protest? Let me return to my first premise: every age creates a form of protest appropriate to the hegemonic power. Artful protest is the response to a new regime of power: global Neo-Liberalism.

Neo-Liberalism, in the words of David Harvey,

is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (Harvey 2007, 2)

Neo-Liberalism, however, is not merely a discreet economic entity; it pervades all aspects of life. As such, it relies upon information and communications. As Harvey continues:

[Neo-Liberalism] holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market. This requires technologies of information creation and capacities to accumulate, store, transfer, analyze, and use massive databases to guide decisions in the global marketplace. Hence neoliberalism’s intense interest in and pursuit of information technologies. (Harvey 2007, 3)

Neo-Liberalism operates in terms, not of localized power, or the nation-state, but global flows. Arjun Appadurai identifies five dimensions of this global flow: *ethnoscape*: moving people, *finanscape*: moving money and credit, *technoscape*: moving technology, *mediascape*: moving media and image, and *ideoscape*: moving ideas and ideology (Appadurai 1990). All these flows are flows of information, for even people, be they business executives, migrant laborers or summit-hopping activists transport ideas as well as their labor power. Like all systems of power, Neo-Liberalism is created and sustained—and challenged and dismantled—by systems of meaning, understanding and legitimation. As such, it depends upon the flow of culture: images, ideas, signs and symbols, and those who can manipulate, communicate, and distribute such information—what former US Labor Secretary Robert Reich called “Symbol Manipulators” (Reich 1991).

To these conditions of power contemporary protest is a response: mediated images of dissent, revelations of injustice and performances of an alternative, directed toward networks of communication and created for a global audience. Attention is given to aesthetic concerns and protest is approached as an art: how it looks, how it will be reproduced and distributed, and what sort of emotional resonance it will have. Instead of seizing a site of power or making a case for political representation, its aims are disrupting the dominant information flow: shaming political elites, tarnishing corporate public image, or shifting the discourse on an issue (CAE 1996; Groys 2014; Mouffe 2007). This is Gramsci’s War of Position: challenging “normal” political modes culturally rather than militarily, or politically by (re)presenting an alternative (Gramsci 1971). It is, in a word, “artful” protest.

Effect and affect

Generalizing about “contemporary activism” must be done judiciously. The intended *effect* of these forms of protest vary considerably, be it civil rights for African-Americans, ending a foreign war, bringing down military dictators and calling out corrupt governments,

protesting non-democratic economic institutions, pressuring world environmental policy or responding to economic crisis and income inequality. However, while the intended political *effect* of these protests may differ, the means used to bring about this effect was similar: the creation and mobilization of *affect*.

The words "effect" and "affect" are sometimes used interchangeably but their meaning differs subtly, and critically. The verb *effect*, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us, means "To bring about (an event, a result); to accomplish (an intention, a desire)." To have an effect is to cause a demonstrable, often physical and material, change. *Affect*, the same source informs, means "To have an effect on the mind or feelings of (a person); to impress or influence emotionally; to move, touch" (*OED* 2015). To generate affect is to stimulate feelings, or create an emotional state in a person or group of people. When we think of political protest we often think in terms of its *effect*. This makes sense. Activism, as the name implies, is the activity of challenging and changing power relations. There are many ways of being an activist, but the common element is an activity targeted toward a discernible end: mobilizing a population, changing a policy, or overthrowing a dictator. Simply, the goal of activism is to generate an *effect*.

Affect, however, is a term we usually use when speaking of the arts. Art tends not to have such an instrumental use. It is hard to say what art is for or against; its value often lies in showing us new perspectives on our world. Its impact is often subtle and hard to measure, and confusing or contradictory messages can be layered into the work. Indeed, good art always contains a surplus of meaning: something we can't quite describe or put our finger on, but that has an impact upon us nonetheless. Its goal, if we can even use that word, is to stimulate a feeling, spur us emotionally or alter our perception. Art *moves us*.

Stripped down to essentials the relationships might look like this: Activism → Effect and Art → Affect. At first glance these aims seem at odds with one another. Activism moves the material world, while Art moves the heart, body and soul. The scope of the former

is social change, while the latter is individual impression. But effect and affect can be complimentary.

The social is not mere abstraction. Society is composed of people, and change doesn't just happen; it happens because people make change. As such, the individual and the social are intertwined. This is obvious. Less obvious, perhaps, is *why* people make change (or prefer stasis). Classical democratic and economic theory would have us believe that people enact change because they have been "enlightened" to do so through a process of reasoned deliberations and rational choices. As I have argued elsewhere, this faith in political reason is just that: a faith (Duncombe 2007). As any seasoned activist can tell you, people don't soberly decide to change their mind and act accordingly, they are moved to do so by emotionally powerful stimuli, be it love, hate, fear, hope or compassion (Ganz 2011). And, as recent developments in cognitive science suggest, we interpret our world less through reasoned deliberation of facts, and more through stories and symbols and metaphors that allow us to "make sense" of the information we receive (Lakoff 1996). As such, when it comes to stimulating social change, effect and affect are intertwined. We might think of this as *Affective Effect*. Or, if you prefer, *Effective Affect*. We can simplify both with the following—invented—term, using a grapheme familiar to those in Denmark: *Æffect* (Duncombe and Lambert forthcoming).

That protests using performance, sound and visuals are designed to be *affective* is not surprising. But the importance of *affect* goes further than the protest itself, to the characteristics of the media used to convey this "artful" content. Recent scholars of social media and social movements point out that activist Tweets work most effectively as personal communications; activist Facebook pages and posts work best as virtual community; activist YouTube videos are most successful when portraying a dramatic moment; and social media, writ large, facilitates activists' ability to tell personal, emotional stories. In other words it is the *affective* capacities of these communications platforms that made them politically *effective* (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Gerbaudo 2012; Papacharissi 2014).

The dark side: A brief, but necessary, detour

There is a problem (one of many, I am afraid) with this type of artful, affect generating protest: it lends itself very well to unsavory forms of politics. Masters at politically mobilizing affect include demagogues like Donald Trump in the US and the Dansk Folkeparti in Denmark. Equally skilled are the terrorists of Al-Qaeda in their creation of spectacles like the attacks on 9/11, or the Islamic State with their internet distribution of videos of grisly beheadings. And no discussion of affective politics is complete without consideration of the political masters of the move from *affective* protest to *effective* governance: the Nazis. From their days of protest in the 1920s and early 30s to their time of rule in the later 30s and 40s, the National Socialist Party of Germany continuously and consciously mobilized myth, performance, design, architecture, and sartorial style (Spotts 2003). Hitler may have been a failure painting streetscapes of Vienna, but in the medium of politics he was a true artist. Artful protest fits all too well within a form of politics in which “the people” are not engaged, educated, and included in governance, but rather considered an unreasoning body to be enthralled, enraptured or frightened, that is: an anti-democratic politics.

This is what democracy looks like

But affective politics and artful protest need not only serve the dark side. A look at the global occupations of public spaces in 2011 gives a glimpse into what democratic and progressive artful protest politics might look like.

In the US activists use “protest” and “demonstration” interchangeably. The double meaning of the word “demonstration,” however, reveals something valuable about the nature of contemporary protest. Demonstration, in an activist context, may mean protest, but in wider use the word means to show or communicate. One might say: “I am going to a demonstration against the government,” just as one might argue that the demonstration *demonstrates* popular dis-

sent against the government. (This is also true, for instance, with the Spanish word for protest: “manifestación.”) What is striking about the occupation protests of 2011 is what they, using the latter definition, *demonstrated*. Some examples from Occupy Wall Street:

General assemblies

The General Assembly, or GA, was the favored decision-making process of OWS. It is a large public assembly in which everyone can speak and decisions are made by consensus. What is striking about the GAs, however, is how badly they worked for their ostensible purpose. In practice, giving everyone a chance to speak often meant that the meetings went on forever and favored those with the most free time and the fewest responsibilities like jobs, families, children, etc. Because consensus was illusive, few real decisions were made in the GAs, and important concerns regarding strategy and tactics were frequently unresolved or decided upon in smaller affinity groups. In sum, the GAs failed as decision-making bodies. But where they failed materially, they succeeded symbolically. Every General Assembly was a virtuoso performance of a radically democratic, communitarian political process in which every voice is heard and valued.

People's mic

The People's Microphone was a social communications technology born of necessity. Protestors in New York, denied a microphone permit by authorities, developed a novel solution: the speaker in the middle of a crowd says a few words, which are then repeated by the those who can hear her. These words are repeated by people further back, and then repeated by those even further back, until the speaker's message ripples out to the edges of the crowd. The People's Mic became a hallmark of OWS, used even when the size of the crowd did not warrant it or other means of communication were available. Its popularity, like that of the GA, is hard to understand

from a purely functional level. In brief: it didn't function very well. Since about seven words is the maximum that can be communicated at one time, communication took the form of shallow sound bites, precluding any sort of deep theoretical engagement or sustained analysis. There was also the problem of miscommunication. Anyone who has played the children's game of Telephone, or Chinese Whispers, in which one person whispers a message into their neighbor's ear, and they into their neighbor's, around a circle until the message returns in garbled form, can understand why this might be the case. But, like the GAs, the People's Mic functioned brilliantly as an evocative performance. Through human repetition, it made each speaker's individual ideas the possession of everyone in the crowd. It also de-centered authority, undercutting the traditional leadership of "the man with the megaphone." As a symbol of collective communication and ideology, the People's Mic demonstrated the values of the movement as a whole.

Signs and messaging

One of the aspects of OWS that frustrated mainstream political pundits, as well as seasoned activists, was the refusal of protestors to decide upon a unified message for the movement and deliver a universal list of demands. Indeed, OWS seemed to pride itself on the plurality of their demands and messages. The closest that Occupy New York ever got to a "unified message" was a poster-sized "Declaration of the Occupation of NYC" which, in crazy quilt form, listed literally hundreds of grievances and demands—some contradictory, but all interconnected. People were encouraged to craft their own messages and demands, and sign painting areas with paint, brushes and cardboard available for common use was a familiar sight at OWS encampments. If one regards the function of posters, placards, banners and other propaganda of a movement to be the communication of a movement's aims to an outside audience, then, once again, this was a failure. But imagined another way, once again,

it was not. The plurality of individual messages communicated a collective message: the ideal of democracy as a forum for discussion and dissension rather than adherence to singular ideology (Rancière 1999; Laclau and Mouffe 1985). In other words: the very incoherence of the Do-It-Yourself messaging of OWS was a vivid visual demonstration—borrowing a phrase favored by OWS protesters—of “This is what democracy looks like!”

Through the examples above I am suggesting that certain key features of OWS did not work in terms of intended *effect*. General Assemblies failed as decision-making bodies, the People’s Mic failed as a communications technology, and the DIY messaging of OWS failed to deliver a coherent idea of what OWS was for and what they wanted to change. Yet understood in terms of *affect*, all these failures can be reconsidered as successes. Each aspect, as a performance meant to maximize affective experience and communicate and re-generate this experience via the media, worked brilliantly. The effect of OWS was largely affective: it was artful protest.

Problems of protocol

The function of political protest, however, is not to create affective art, but to challenge and transform power—to have an effect. Appraising the three best-known occupations from 2011, the political effects of these affective protests were decidedly mixed. In Egypt, the ground opened up by the occupation was seized by the better organized Muslim Brotherhood, who were then replaced by a return to power of the old military and political elite. In the US, Occupy Wall Street succeeded in introducing the issue of income inequality into the mainstream political discourse, but dissipated rapidly as a movement after the occupations were uprooted. Considering only these examples, the conclusions regarding the effect of contemporary protest are sobering. “Artful” protest does not seem to be able to deliver the goods. It is not very *Effective*.

Why? Perhaps because there is a mismatch between the *form* of contemporary political protest and the *necessities* of contemporary political organization and social change. Neo-Liberalism may have ushered in an era of global flows and de-centered power, yet vestiges of the older regime, with its political, social and economic institutions, still remain. Significant decisions regarding policies on the environment, migration, education, policing, war, income redistribution and so on, can, and still are, made and carried out by recognizable, and ideally representative, institutions. In order to have a demonstrable effect on these institutions, protest movements must be able to interface with them.

A metaphor might be helpful to illustrate the importance of interface. Readers of a certain age will remember connecting to the Internet through a dial-up modem. Initiating a connection, one was assaulted by a strange melody of hisses and pings, bonks and beeps. This was the sound of the machines on either end of the telephone line working out a common protocol with which to communicate a message: a digital "handshake." This handshake still happens—though now without the buzzing and beeping. The `http://` that prefaces a web address stands for HyperText Transfer Protocol, the underlying protocol used by the World Wide Web that defines how messages are formatted and transmitted, and what servers and browsers should do in response to commands. Sharing a common protocol allows different machines to work with one another.

What does this have to do with protests and politics? In order for social movements to have an impact on institutions of political power, they do not need to agree with one another, or share one another's ideology, but they do need a shared protocol, something that allows them to communicate ideas, visions, critiques and solutions. This is true whether the political organization is one which shares the protestor's aims or opposes them. The problem with affective protest may be that there is not a working interface with effective political organization; they may be operating according to different political protocols. For example:

Speed: Protest is immediate, occurring over relatively short durations of time, and is then represented, communicated and distributed nearly instantaneously. Political organization, however, is built over years. By the time that Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream" speech, the Civil Rights Movement had been formerly organized for at least fifty years, with the founding of the NAACP in 1909. The protests of the Arab Spring began and ended in less than a year; the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928. Occupations were a novel way of dealing with this protocol problem by creating a relatively durable protest stage for thinking, learning, organizing and performing, yet a few months of occupation cannot compare to decades of organization.

Structure: Contemporary protest prides itself upon being radically de-centered, with no formal leaders or organizational hierarchies, headquarters or bureaucratic structures. Yet political organization—even in a neo-liberal age of globalization—remains organized, with demarcated roles and structures of command. When the Mayor of Denver, Colorado asked the protesters of Occupy Denver to elect someone with whom the city administration could negotiate, the occupiers chose as their leader "Shelby," a three-year-old Border Collie who had been hanging around the encampment. As a statement of their refusal to adopt traditional political structures, electing a dog as their leader was funny, provocative and symbolically sophisticated: an inspired demonstration of an ideal. It was also—at the level of interface with power—completely ineffective. Occupy Denver, like all the other occupations, was soon roused by the police on orders of the city.

Incompatibilities in speed and structure point to a larger problem of protocol: negotiating between *Tactics* and *Strategy*. Protests are a tactic: an action in a particular time and space, often fleeting. Yet what is needed for substantial and sustainable social change is a long-term plan into which these actions fit: strategy. Art is primarily tactical: the immediate expression of the artist's vision, perspective or idea, communicated through an artwork that has immediate impact.

The artist may hope for a longer term *effect* of their work upon their audience, but it is not something they can command and control. Approaching art as an instrumental means to a larger end, and as one step amongst many along a pre-planned path, is largely anathema to the modernist aesthetic tradition; it is what separates "art" from propaganda or advertising. Creative forms of protest, following this artistic tradition, result in the privileging of the tactical at the expense of the strategic. All strategies depend upon tactics, yet the artistic impulse which animates much contemporary protest means that the link between tactics and strategy is under-considered, or worse: not considered at all.

Following this line of argument leads to a depressing conclusion: contemporary protest works as performative spectacle, as media-ready communications, and as affective expression. But it may not work as a form of organization and power that can bring about sustainable social change. As such, it is an image of politics without any of its world-changing capability.

This spectral nature of protest politics was recently illustrated by the "hologram demonstration" against a Spanish law banning protests outside governmental buildings. On April 11, 2015, outside the Parliament building in Madrid, protesters projected ghostly images of themselves marching, chanting, and speaking. It was aesthetically striking, it conceptually conveyed their message brilliantly, and was ingeniously created to be recorded and distributed by the news media and across the Internet (indeed, from the street it would have looked very different). And it was hauntingly insubstantial; a sort of phantom politics.

Artful politics?

But this is not where I want to end. For just as there are reasons to be pessimistic about the political effect of affective protest there are also reasons to be optimistic, both practically and theoretically.

A case for practical optimism

I wrote above of the practical failures of the occupations of Tahrir Square and Occupy Wall Street, but what of the M15 movement that occupied Puerta del Sol in Spain? This occupation, too, was a case study in affective protest politics. How else to describe its signature "Silent Scream," wherein, at the stroke of midnight of the day the Spanish government had decreed a moratorium on political speech in advance of the upcoming elections, protestors held a moment of silence, and then, as a mass, bellowed out a full-throated scream of disgust, joy and resistance! Throughout the Indignados movement in Spain, activists have, again and again, succeeded in creating artful protests. Yet in the Spanish case, the activism didn't dissipate when the squares were cleared but persisted, and took on new forms. What started as artful protest led to the founding of Podemos, a political party that has had impressive success in Spanish elections. Seen in this light, the hologram protest in Madrid was not ineffective phantom politics but, to crib from Marx, a spectre haunting Europe.

Certainly there are problems with the transformation of affective protest into effective political power. Podemos is having difficulty retaining the non-hierarchical, open-access, expressive model of protest in their transition to an electoral party, complexities exacerbated as they have taken power and now must govern. But these complications are not cause for depression, but instead demand exploration and explanation: What facilitated the move from affective protest to effective political structure and organization in the Spanish context? What factors retarded this move from protest to politics in other instances? What protocols were developed in Spain that allowed this interface? And how have the artful, affective roots of Podemos effected its organizational structures and political actions? (Is there an artful way to run a sanitation system?) Questions like these call for further empirical research. But in addition to making a call for such research, I also want to suggest a theoretical move that repositions how we think of political efficacy in the first place.

A case for theoretical optimism

In this paper I've been limiting my definition of *effect* to having a demonstrable and immediate impact on *power as we know it*. This sort of power is important. If citizens' lives are going to be made better, if immigration policy is to improve, if economic, educational, ecological progress is going to be made, we need power, often state power. And we need it *now*. But what of the future?

While it is true that artful protest is calling out for a form of politics that is not there, one might argue that *this is exactly its point*. By calling out in a new language, with a new grammar and structure, artful protest is asking us to bring into being a politics that *can* reply. The problem with protocols—from a standpoint of social change—is that in the effort to communicate with what is already an accepted protocol one inevitably reproduce it. In an effort to be legible, one re-inscribes the status quo (Althusser 2001). To really change the world a new form of communications, a new way of being and acting in the world, has to be created. To borrow a phrase from Jacques Rancière: a new “distribution of the sensible” is necessary, a new “delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and stakes of politics as a form of experience” (Rancière 2004, 13). The fact that the “handshake” of artful protest is not being recognized by the political structures that many activists want to change may be a sign of its efficacy. In other words, artful protest is a *pre-figuring* in the form of performance and spectacle a new type of politics that needs to be—must be, will be—built out in the world of movements, organizations, governments and power in the future.

It is an old, and tired, criticism to juxtapose the artful politics of affective protest to the “real work” needed to bring about effective social change. This distinction misunderstands the importance of creative imagination in the real work of politics (Duncombe, 1997). Revolution must be rehearsed before it is enacted, the radical dramaturge Augusto Boal argues, and, as Marx writes in *Capital*, “what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that

the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality" (Boal 1985; Marx 1967, 178). Social change needs to be imagined, and acted out, if it is to ever be realized.

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