Towards an Affective Turn in Theories of Representation: The Case of Indignation

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ABSTRACT
Despite a political context marked by affective explicitness and an ongoing affective turn in social sciences, representation theory rarely takes affects and emotions into account. In this article, I respond to this gap by focusing on indignation, as a key affect of the crisis of representation. Building on recent constructivist theories of representation and affect theory, I unpack three affective dynamics of indignation which play a constitutive role in representation: affective imitation, affective transformation and the creation of affective publics. I conclude by raising normative questions on the role of indignation, and affect at large, in theories and practices of representation.

1. Introduction

In recent years, political representation has been characterised by one main thing: its rejection by increasing sways of the citizenry. Distrust, hate and disdain (Hay, 2007), feelings of abandonment, anger and mourning (Hochschild, 2016), resentment (Fleury, 2020; Fukuyama, 2018) and indignation (Innerarity, 2019): all these emotions are part of today's 'crisis' in citizens' relation to political representatives and other formal institutions.

Yet, despite this affective explicitness (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019; Webster & Albertson, (2022), representation, as a concept and organising principle, has shielded itself from the realm of affect and emotions. Just like many other scientific fields, representation theory has cultivated a negative bias towards affectivity. This bias is rooted in our broader modern imaginary (Calhoun, 2001; Taylor, 2002) which favours reason over emotion, objectivity over subjectivity, and has resulted in a theoretical blindness for the affective dynamics that populate the current crisis of representation: from the anger of the Yellow Vests directed towards governments and elites (Knops & Petit, 2022) to the 'love and rage' of Extinction Rebellion, and the fear and panic of an entire generation expressed at leaders and older generations (Thunberg, 2019). Understanding these affects and emotions is important precisely at a time that is characterised by both affective explicitness and polarisation, but also by a sense of 'affective disconnection' (Lordon, 2016) and remoteness between citizens and political representatives

(Saward, 2010). Integrating affects and emotions in our conceptualisations of representation may help us to envisage pathways towards a more affective type of politics, based on empathy, care and affective connection, and provide a different normative direction for democracy. It may foster the development of affective intelligence in politics to better understand what moves groups and individuals beyond rational interests only.

In this article, I propose to start looking at the affective dynamics which populate the crisis of representation by focusing on *indignation*. The choice to focus on indignation rests on the following reasons. On the one hand, indignation is often hailed in theories of representation as important phenomenon of contemporary politics, and in particular of today's crisis of representation (Zicman de Barros, 2020; Innerarity, 2019; Lordon, 2016; Van de Sande, 2020). It emerges when trust and loyalty diminish in representational relationships (Benski & Langman, 2013) and expresses contestation against political representatives. It is also described as the 'ground zero' of representation, as the place from which denunciations emerge to feed the full cycle of representation (Latour, 2003). On the other hand, indignation is also defined as an affective trigger of protest (Jasper, 2014) and raw material for revolt and rebellion (Hardt & Negri, (2009); a context which is often described, in representation theory, as laying the field for non-electoral forms of representation – representative claims (Saward, 2006, 2010, 2020) – to emerge. Indignation is thus both the affect through which citizens and groups can contest existing representative institutions, and an affect from which alternative forms of representation may emerge.

Somewhat surprisingly, despite its strategic location between rejection and practice of representation, indignation has not been thoroughly approached in the recent representation literature, beyond its mention as contextual factor (the movements of *indignation* where representative claims emerge). In particular, I identify three blind spots. First, despite the prolific attention to processes of subjectivation in representation (Disch, 2011; Hayat, 2013; Saward, 2010), and despite evidence that affects and emotions intervene in this process (Ahmed, 2004; Athanasiou et al., 2009; Williams, 2007), representation theory does not engage sufficiently with the affective foundations of how groups and subjects are brought into being. Second, despite attention for the representative claims articulated by *indignant* movements in recent years (Brito Vieira, 2015; Zicman de Barros, 2020; Hayat, 2021; Prentoulis & Thomassen, 2013; Van de Sande, 2020), insufficient attention has been paid to indignation itself, as an affect. Third, in this context, while representation theory often pitches the rejection of representation and its non-electoral practice as a contradiction, it does not propose a conceptual language that overcomes this tension.

In this article, I show how the affective dynamics of indignation help to shed light on these blind spots. Drawing on literature of the affective turn in social sciences (Clough & Halley, 2007; Knudsen & Stage, 2015; Lordon, 2016; Marcus, 2002) and the constructivist turn in theories of representation (Saward, 2010; Disch, 2011; Montanaro, 2012; Severs, 2012), I unpack three affective dynamics of indignation. First, I show how *affective imitation* connects people through a feeling of likeness and compassion and creates the first steps of alternative subjectivities, outside the boundaries of electoral democracy. Second, drawing on the work of Knops and Petit (2022), I shed light on indignation's role as a moment of *affective transformation*; from feelings of powerlessness and experiences of struggle, to feelings of empowerment. I argue that this is important to provide a

more embodied and situated understanding of why representative claims emerge in the first place. Third, I show how these dynamics participate in the creation of *affective publics* beyond the indignant citizen only, and how this helps to overcome the tension between rejection of formal representation and its non-electoral practice.

The article is structured in five parts. In the first section, I review the neglect of emotions and affects in representation theory and introduce some insights derived from the recent affective turn in social sciences. In the second section, I show how the constructivist turn in theories of representation could be seen as a first step towards a better inclusion of affect and emotions, albeit with some limitations. In sections three to five, I unpack and discuss the affective dynamics of indignation in the light of representation theory. I conclude by raising normative questions and questions for future research.

2. Affect and (the Crisis of) Representation

Affect is an ontological category that covers emotions and emotional expressions (anger, fear, joy, sadness, etc) but also the relations that these emotions elicit. Affect is the 'power to act' (Negri, 1999) *and* 'to be affected in return' (Lordon, 2016; Williams, 2007; Ruddick, 2010) and is therefore grounded in a relational ontology. As well summarised by Papacharissi, 'emotion is subsumed within affect, and perhaps the most intense part of affect. Yet, affect itself extends beyond feeling as a general way of sense-making. It informs our general sensibility toward the world surrounding us' (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 15). In this article, I side with the use of affect proposed by Sara Ahmed (2004) who uses affect and emotion interchangeably, all while acknowledging that 'affect' is a broader ontological category that encompasses emotional states (fear, anger, sadness, joy and any of their derivates) and the relations, subjects and performances that these emotions bring into being (Papacharissi, 2015; Slaby & von Scheve, 2019). From this perspective, affect becomes an intractable and constitutive part of how we relate to one another, build collective identities and subjectivities (Williams, 2007; Ruddick, 2010).

Since the 1990s, affect has re-emerged significantly in political research under the so-called 'affective turn' (Clough & Halley, 2007; Marcus, 2002). This affective turn emerged in reaction to decades of neglect for the role played by affects and emotions in politics, which had left political scholars with many unresolved puzzles (Flam & King, 2005) and 'missing pieces' (Groenendyck, 2011). This chronic neglect for emotions and affects in political science found its roots, amongst others, in the location of affects and emotions on the 'embarrassing side' (Calhoun, 2001, in Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001, p. 52) of the body–mind dichotomy that structures our modern scientific imaginary: one that 'designates reason the fount of knowledge, and confines emotions to the domain of superstition' (Ost, 2004, p. 231). Consequently, political science built its own credibility by rejecting emotions and affects and focusing on the reasonable and the rational, the objectively observable and by siding, by and large, with standards of rational deliberation as normative direction for democracy.

Today, this neglect for emotions and affect also concerns one of political science's central fields: political representation and the study of representative politics. Indeed, over the last decades, conceptions of political representation have either ignored the field of emotions and affects entirely (leaving these dimensions to other fields such as

sociology, anthropology, cultural studies or political psychology), or treated them in a derogatory fashion.

Overall, contemporary conceptions of political representation still often go back to Hanna Pitkin's seminal definition of representation (1967), as a form of 'acting for others in a manner responsive to them'; a relational conception of representation which has led many scholars to focus on the distribution of powers in this relation, its direction and underlying normative principles. Scholars have focused on the authorisation procedure embodied by elections and the distribution of powers between elected representatives and represented (e.g., Bengtsson & Wass, 2009; Carman, 2006, 2007), through the famous 'mandate vs independence' controversy. At times, concepts of democratic legitimacy, (in)congruence, accountability and responsiveness (e.g., Andeweg & Thomassen, 2005; Severs, 2010) have been used to flesh-out more substantially what goes on in and around representative relationships. Elsewhere, the relation implied by representation has been defined as a form of 'indirect power', and a 'complex political process that activates the sovereign people well beyond the formal act of electoral authorization'; a process of 'unifying and connecting the atomic units of civil society by projecting citizens into a future-oriented perspective' (Urbinati, 2006, pp. 5–6).

Across these studies, representation, from a normative perspective, has mostly been conceptualised *against* the realm of emotions. In other words, the opposition to the affective realm is the way in which representation, as a concept and organizing principle, built its own credibility. As noted by Mark Devenney (2019, p. 226), this opposition against the realm of affectivity has been tied to the intrinsic democratic credentials of representation; that the indirectness of representation is what shields us from the 'harassment of words and passions' (Urbinati, 2006). Hanna Pitkin clearly expresses this rationalistic bias in her treatment of symbolic representation. In particular, Pitkin says that symbolic representation seems to rest on '*emotional, affective*, *irrational* psychological responses rather than on rationally justifiable criteria (…). It covers the *irrational* responses in bringing about the condition of representation' (1967, p. 100, emphasis added). This betrays both her acknowledgment of the importance of emotions (as what underlies symbolic representation) and her normative suspicion of them, by contrasting them to 'rationally justifiable criteria'. A normative suspicion which is further confirmed by the derogatory association of emotions with populism; both known for its highly emotional repertoires (Cossarini & Vallespin, 2019; Mudde, 2004) and assimilated by some scholars to the 'pathology' of representative politics (e.g., Taggart, 2002).

This denigration or neglect for the emotions that populate representation has direct implications. At the empirical level, the lack of conceptualisations of representative affects and emotions finds an extension in the dominant practice of representative politics based on cold, distant institutions, and symbolised emblematically by images of 'ivory towers' and of delegation to a 'higher' power. At the conceptual level, it means that the affects which characterise today's representational relationships remain unexplored or out of theoretical reach: from the general climate of affective explicitness, to more specific forms of anger, resentment or feelings of affective disconnection expressed at political representatives and institutions.

In reaction to this cross-cutting suspicion of affect and emotions, the affective turn in social sciences (Ahmed, 2004; Clough & Halley, 2007; Marcus, 2002) has sought to bring them back to the heart of political research. Drawing on insights from affect theory (e.g.,

Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Brian Massumi), feminist studies, cultural studies and psychoanalysis (in particular Lacanian psychoanalytical theory), the affective turn has encouraged researchers to embrace 'the myriad of practices that unfold in the constant dynamic of governing and resisting' (… .), and to look

> beyond reductionist characterizations, such as those that see politics as a game of negotiating purportedly rational political interests (… .) and look more closely into the fine-grained intricacies of political interaction (…): the intimate, the everyday, that which is only possible, yet not realized, and how these are entangled with the public, the extraordinary, and the real (Slaby & Bens, 2019, p. 348).

Overall, from a normative point of view, the affective turn challenges existing biases and distinctions between reason and emotion by situating the latter as 'blood-life' (Marcus, 2002) and 'fabric' of politics, rather than its pathology.

Crucially, the affective turn re-habilitates the role of affects and emotions in relation to power and subjectivity, situating them as the 'enabling condition for subjectivity' (Anathasiou et al. 2008; Slaby & von Scheve, 2019), rather than an externality. Scholars have drawn attention to the 'visceral register' of subjectivity, by tapping into the realm of sensibilities, affective relationships and attachments (Connolly, 2005; Williams, 2007) to understand how subjects are brought into being. Elsewhere, coming from the more psycho-analytical branch of the affective turn, scholars show how the emergence of subjectivities involves an 'affective investment' of the subject, which materialises in desires, fantasies, imagined futures and enjoyments (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008). Affect, they argue, accounts for a large part of the 'grip' and power of attraction of political subjectivities, beyond the initial subject formation. From this perspective, affects become a crucial part of democratic politics itself; of how groups form, re-form, ally and oppose each other (Mouffe, 2005, 2018).

The crucial role played by affects and emotions in the constitution of political forms of identification and subjectivation speaks directly to theories of representation. Indeed, under the constructivist turn in theories of representation, representation has ceased to be solely confined to formal institutions, to embrace the process through which new voices and subjects come to the fore – outside the boundaries of representative democracy. As well explained by Lisa Disch (2014), representation relies both on subjectivation-processes – the definition and evocation of groups and subjects ('constituencies') – and has various subjectivation effects in bringing new groups into being (Hayat, 2013). However, despite the relation between, on the one hand, subjectivation and representation, and, on the other hand, the role played by affects in processes of subjectivation (see *supra*), the constitutive role played by affects in representation has remained largely unexplored. And this, despite the concrete entry points found in two strands of the literature: symbolic representation and recent constructivist accounts of representation.

3. Affective Representation? The Limits of the Constructivist Turn and the Role of Indignation

Recent work on symbolic representation (e.g., Lombardo & Meier, 2018; Tremblay, (2019) has, for example, underlined the important role played by affective objects and

symbols in narrating groups into being. In her case study on the role of emotions in political representation, as performed by out-LGBTQ politicians, Tremblay (2019) explicitly situates symbolic representation as entry point to bring emotions and representation into conversation. Amongst others, she shows how the personal is emotionally narrated (here by representatives) to create meaning and feelings of belongness among LGBTQ communities, and to create a sense of political constituency. The interplay between the affective and the symbolic is also very well captured by Monica Brito Viera in her work on 'voice' and 'silence' which she develops to overcome 'the binary economy of the symbolical order of politics; between voice, action, presence on the one hand; silence, inaction and absence, on the other hand' (Brito Vieira, 2020, p. 977). By unveiling how silence may act as alternative form of democratic engagement, Brito Vieira opens wide the door to affect to talk about representation in a more embodied, and 'affective' manner. Drawing on the concrete example of the Women in Black movement, she says: 'when collaboratively performing silence in public […] the Women in Black movement destabilises the extant political order by *staging maieutic silence* as a receptive practice giving space to and eliciting *the inexpressible* (Fiumara, 1990, p. 98, in Brito Vieira, 2020, p. 978); (…). Their *mourning silence* is an agonistic bodily sound rather than a nonverbal voicing (Athanasiou, 2017, in Brito Vieira, 2020, p. 978, emphasis added). This example is emblematic of the broader field of symbolic representation which offers an entry-point to discuss the role of affects and emotions in representation: to grasp both the affective dynamics inherent to symbolic representation, but also of other forms of representation which rely on different types of symbolic 'evocations' that are intrinsically affective (Tanasescu, 2020).

Besides the work on symbolic representation, the recent constructivist turn in theories of representation (Saward, 2006; 2010; Disch, 2011; Severs 2012; Montanaro, 2012) also offers an entry point for affect by revisiting the conditions and dynamics of subjectivation which take place in the practices of representation. This is captured, amongst others, by Michael Saward's model of the representation claim (Saward, 2006, 2010) which was designed to incorporate the 'symbolic, mimetic, individual, electoral […] and the multiple particularities of political representation' (Saward, 2010, p. 6). Under this model, representation is an interplay of representative claims or discursive utterances 'to represent something or somebody, to know what is in the interests of the represented, or to embody the needs of a group of people' (Saward, 2010, p. 3). These claims can be made by elected representatives or by non-elected actors, e.g., citizens or social movements. Here, the specific link between Saward's representative claim model and affect can be seen in at least two ways.

On the one hand, at the empirical level, this model has emerged in the context of an increasing recognition for the *hate* and *disdain* of citizens (Hay, 2007) towards elected representatives, *the feeling* that there is a division between citizens and political elites (Zicman de Barros, 2020, p. 7), and that citizens 'no longer trust politicians, but rather *harass, deride, resist* and *oppose* politicians and the political class' (Tormey, 2009). In this light, the work of constructivist scholars can be interpreted (amongst others) as an attempt to grasp and understand the multiple feelings expressed by citizens towards representatives and the alternative ways they develop to make their voice heard.

On the other hand, the constructivist turn produced two major advances in the theoretical literature which draws attention to the subjectivation dimensions underpinning

representation (Disch, 2014; Hayat, 2013), and by extension, offers a possible entry point for the role of affects and emotions in this process. Indeed, the constructivist turn advances the fact that represented groups and subjects do no pre-exist representation and that they are constituted through the performance of representation itself (Devenney, 2019). Here, a logical extension of this idea would be to acknowledge the role played by emotions and affects in these performances; the feelings, affective experiences and resources that groups tap into to develop a collective sense of belonging and identity.

Building on this, it seems that some constructivist scholars have already opened the door to affect, although without engaging with it explicitly. Saward, for example, speaks the language of 'wants', 'desires', 'embodiment' (Saward, 2010) and acts of representation that 'give a voice to *the affected*' (Saward, 2009, p. 8, emphasis added). He also develops the idea of 'shape-shifting' representation (Saward, 2014) and performances of representation (Saward, 2020) which emphasise its multiple, unstable and fluid boundaries – which may fit under a broader paradigm of affective representation. Similar observations can be made when observing the work of other constructivist scholars. Laura Montanaro (2012), for example, explicitly points to the entanglement between feelings, affect and the creation of a new demos in the making of representative claims: 'once the claim is made, *the affected constituency* has a point of identification around which they might coalesce as a "people" or demos defined along *some dimensions of common interest, for example, problems, feelings, and experiences of injustice*' (Montanaro, 2012, p. 1099). An idea which has also been extended in the work of feminist scholars Karen Celis and Sarah Childs (2020). Elsewhere, Lisa Disch (2011) pitches a 'mobilizing' conception of representation which brings to the fore a number of important inter-active dynamics in the constitution of 'the people', beyond 'preferences' and 'interests' only. Similarly, the influential work of Rosanvallon (2011) on alternative forms of democratic legitimacy explicitly situates care and compassion as constitutive of alternative generalities.

In addition to these tentative moves towards affect, very recent constructivist studies have come even closer to bringing affect and representation together through the recurring mention of *indignation*. However, while indignation is often defined as a moral emotion (e.g., Jasper, 2014) or an affect (e.g., Knops, 2021), when it is invoked in representation theory (Zicman de Barros, 2020; van de Sande, 2020), its affective nature is largely ignored.

In representation studies, authors argue that the eruption of citizens' indignation – be it during the *Indignados* and Occupy movements of 2011 or today's Yellow Vests – signals the presence of representative claims made in the name of 'the 99%', 'the People' and other subjects. Here, much of the discussion has focused on distinguishing between claims that translate a complete and direct rejection of representative politics (including its very logics and underlying principles) and other claims which may be expressed against the current practices, style and actors of representation (but not against representation as overarching principle). Here, somewhat problematically, all indignant citizens are assigned a 'representative' function, as makers of representative claims even those who explicitly reject the representation paradigm.

This is the case of Monica Brito Vieira's work (2015) on the representative politics of Occupy Wall Street – a movement well-known for both capturing and channeling the indignation of a large number of citizens (Gerbaudo, 2017; Castells, 2015) and making

representative claims on behalf of 'the 99%' (Sintomer, 2013). Although Vieira says that 'the characterization of Occupy as a self-authorized representative *is far from controversial*' (2015, p. 8, emphasis added), it still contradicts the movement's own explicit refusal and resistance towards representation. In this context, van de Sande (2020) attempts to make sense of this tension by developing the concept of 'synecdochal representation' which opens the door to a more affective conception of representation, compared to the language of claims only. A synecdoche implies a metonymic relation where '(…) the signifier is itself a constitutive part of the larger part it signifies' (2020, p. 404). Applied to the language of representation, it means that a claim-maker is a constitutive part of the group it invokes into being, rather than being in a hierarchical or subordinate relation; that the *generality* invoked into being (the people, the 99%) is being 'represented' but without glossing over the *particularities* of individuals who compose this wider group. In a similar vein, Thomas Zicman de Barros (2020) argues that the claims made by indignant citizens (be it from the Occupy or Yellow Vests movements) should resolutely *not* be considered as instances of representation, but rather as post-representative claims to grasp the fundamental rejection of representation *tout court* expressed by indignant citizens. Building on this, Samuel Hayat goes a step further and examines the *unrepresentative* and *negative* claims, to grasp the refusal to be represented voiced by the Yellow Vests movement (Hayat, 2021).

Overall, despite the valuable insights of these studies, much of the work has remained trapped inside the language of representation that is precisely rejected by indignant citizens. The prolific terminology which has emerged in this field testifies to this tension: from self-authorised representatives (Brito Vieira, 2015), to self-appointed representatives (Montanaro, 2012), synecdochal representation (van de Sande, 2020), post-representative claims (Zicman de Barros, 2020), claims of misrepresentation (Guasti & Almeida, 2019), and unrepresentative and negative claims (Hayat, 2021). But for all the nuances these labels bring to the discussion, they also leave the heart of it untouched: the indignation, the hate, the love, the compassion, the hopes and the joys, the *anger of the people* – as the Yellow Vests claim to be – which underlie these 'claims' in the first place.

This lack of engagement with affects and emotions in recent constructivist representation theory is manifest in three blind spots. First, despite the prolific attention to processes of subjectivation induced by the constructivist turn, and despite the role that affects and emotions play in this process, representation theory does not engage sufficiently with the affective foundations of subjectivation. Second, despite the attention for the representative claims articulated by indignant movements, insufficient attention has been paid to indignation itself, as an affect. Third, in this context, representation theory often pitches as a contradiction the rejection of representative politics, and its non-electoral practices; yet without offering a conceptual language to overcome this tension.

In the following sections, I lay out how a better engagement with indignation sheds light on these three blind spots. As I explain, indignation is not just a label that designates contemporary social movements, nor the context in which non-electoral 'representative claims' are made. Indignation is a connective affect (Grattan, 2011) which partly explains how collective subjects and representative claims 'stick' together, to borrow Sara Ahmed's expression (*affective imitation*). It is also a distinctive affect-intensive

moment which draws attention to the lived experiences and power-dynamics that underlie the making of representative claims by indignant citizens (*affective transformation*). Lastly, it is a public, talkative affect which makes it particularly resonant and creates *affective publics*; a concept that bypasses the tension between rejection of representation and its non-electoral practice.

4. Indignation as Affective Imitation: Feeling for and Like Others

Indignation is an affective reaction to a situation of injustice or a harm which has been committed; whether experienced, witnessed or imagined. Crucially, indignation can be expressed on one's own behalf, or at the sight of an injustice committed to others whom we consider as ones *like us*. This affective process of recognition is called *affective imitation*. It is an intrinsic part of indignation (Stolze, 2019) and, as I argue here, of representation.

Affective imitation is 'the imitation of another's affects' (Stolze, 2019) and is at play when we feel indignation in the face of an injustice or suffering which affects another; a *victim* whom we identify with. For example, we may feel pain at the sight of someone's suffering, we may feel sadness when witnessing another person's sorrow, or experience a form of boiling anger in the face of another's misfortune or mistreatment.

This is strikingly at play in the indignation we experience when confronted with images of human torture, discrimination, or suffering inflicted upon other humans, for example in the context of humanitarian disasters or in the specific context of migration. Here, as Luc Boltanski explains, indignation is the 'natural feeling that boils in the soul of the spectator in the face of injustice' (1993, p. 96); it is an affect that creates a bond between an indignant spectator and a victim who is suffering. In that sense, as well explained by Sonia Paris-Albert (2013), indignation rests in large part in our ability to engage in the process of mutual recognition; a moment where in recognising 'you', I also recognise myself, and a process whereby 'I acknowledge the traits we have in common and the ones that make us different' (2013, p. 4). Indignation hence becomes a 'connective' affect, as well summarised by Sean Grattan: 'indignation *connects* people. Any time we are affected by indignation there are at least three actors: ourselves, someone we imagine like ourselves getting hurt or oppressed, and *the person doing the hurting or oppressing*' (2011, p. 9, emphasis added). Indeed, the process of affective imitation and mutual recognition between 'ourselves' and others we imagine like 'ourselves' is also connected to a third party: the ability to target a common culprit for the injustice or oppression that is denounced. In that light, indignation can be defined as a three-part
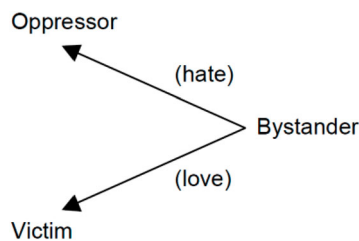
Figure 1. Indignation's affective system of relations, by Spinoza (Stolze, 2019).

connective affect between an oppressor, a victim and an indignant (or bystander below). This is well summarised by Ted Stolze, who draws on Spinoza's definition of indignation as '*hatred towards someone who has injured another*' (Spinoza, 2002) (Figure 1).

It is here that one can seize how affective imitation, as key dynamic of indignation, intervenes in 'bringing others into being' . On the one hand, the *love* between indignant (the bystander) and victim provides the first steps of a broader generality, what Kaufmann calls 'the contours of a *collective subject*, more or less temporary, more or less exclusive, but always concerned' (Kaufmann, 2019, author's translation, emphasis added), and what constructivist scholars may describe as representative claims. This is partly because love, as affect, is constitutive of a whole, beyond individuals and particularities: love is '*a union whereby both the lover and what is loved become one and the same thing, or together constitute one whole*' (Spinoza, 2002, p. 69). Sara Ahmed (2004) documents the role of love as political binder in her study of Aryan rhetoric and how 'claims' over the nation (although she does not use this word) are constructed. Here, Ahmed unpacks how love, rather than hate, binds individual white bodies to the broader body of the nation. On the other hand, the hate branch of indignation, as the *hatred one feels towards someone who has injured another* (Spinoza, 2002), informs us on the relation to the oppressor, the culprit who is being blamed, and against whom counter-claims of representation are being formulated (e.g., the state, governments, political representatives).

The articulation of this love-hate relationship, based on affective imitation (love) and blame (hate), sheds light on some of the affective underpinnings of the subjects brought into being through non-electoral representation; the affective bonds and ties which make different parts of claims 'stick' together (Ahmed, 2004). One can think here of the 'Love and Rage' expressed by Extinction Rebellion in the name of nonhuman others; the fear, rage and shame that pervade Greta Thunberg's claims on behalf of future generations; or the anger at representatives that underlie the claims of the Yellow Vests in the name of 'the people' (Knops & Petit, 2022). Recognizing these different emotional textures is important at the descriptive, empirical level, to truly grasp what goes on in representation, but also at the normative level. Representative claims rooted in compassion for others, for example, do not carry the same normative load compared to those fueled by disgust; an emotion which, as Cordell explains, 'reduces our ability to recognize others as properly human' (Cordell, 2017). By extension, understanding affective imitation may also help us to recognise when it is being instrumentalised by actors to create affective polarisation among the citizenry and elicit love and hate towards imaginary victims or oppressors.

5. Indignation as Affective Transformation: Feeling that the Time Has Come

Beyond acting as an under-layer of subjectivation, the process of affective imitation also serves as resource for the mobilisation of individuals in broader movements. This is the case of the numerous #RefugeesWelcome movements, which have emerged out of citizens' 'indignation' and compassion towards 'these other humans like *us*' (Knops & Severs, 2019). The precise moment when affective imitation turns into protest and mobilisation can be understood, from a social movements perspective, as indignation's role as

raw material of revolt and rebellion (Hardt & Negri, 2009) and trigger for protest (Jasper, 2014). But it can also be seen, as explained by Knops and Petit (2022), as a moment of affective transformation: the moment when the spectator of an injustice decides to take action (Boltanski, 1993); from feeling pity, resentment and powerlessness, to feeling empowered and joining collective action.

In recent years, the role of indignation as igniter of protest has been explicitly at play in the context of the crisis of political representation. Large movements of indignant citizens (from Occupy, to the Arab Spring, Nuit Debout, or the Yellow Vests movement) have emerged to contest the legitimacy of elected representatives and institutions (Castells, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2017). Here, indignation took the form of 'the expression of political subjects faced with unfreedoms and injustices of power' (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 235); a kind of natural impulse of subjects to coalesce against their sovereign (Matheron, 1993/2011); the moments when people decide to 'rise-up and get going' (Bensaïd, 2001, pp.106–107; in Benski & Langman, 2013, p. 81). Knops and Petit (2022) go a step further and unpack the ways in which indignation *affects* and transforms individuals in the context of mobilisation, both in terms of their own feelings of empowerment and their relations of power with the state and political authorities. Building on their study of the Belgian Yellow Vests movement, they describe indignation as a tipping point, a culmination of resentful feelings – built over years of struggle and difficult life experiences – and its transformation into feelings of empowerment and the reclaiming of political power. They argue that indignation captures precisely those 'boiling points' (Lordon, 2016) where a situation is no longer tolerated and where citizens come together to contest and develop a sense of collective identity and belonging. In the specific context of the Yellow Vests, the narratives of '*We* want to live not survive!' or '*We* take back control!' (see Knops & Petit, 2022) translated both the individual tipping points and struggles of Yellow Vests activists – their everyday experience of precarity, their difficulties to make ends meet – but also the feeling that their struggles concerned a much broader group signified as 'the working poor' and 'the people'.

Attention for these moments of affective transformation allows us to better understand what goes on in the contemporary crisis of representation, by taking a more embodied perspective. It draws attention to the fact that what is often described as 'gaps' or 'distance' between rulers and ruled are anchored in real-life events and experiences. Looking at these moments of affective transformation sheds another light onto the crisis of representation; not only as a crisis of 'legitimacy' or instance of 'incongruence' but as an affect-intensive moment filled with personal experiences, stories of struggle and feelings of powerlessness and empowerment. It brings into the conversation the moments of the ordinary that draw a line of intolerable between citizens and representatives and push individuals to claim a stake on behalf of a broader generality. It brings into focus both the conditions under which individuals feel powerless (e.g., increasing socio-economic inequalities, structural forms of discriminations), and the tipping points where the affective balance shifts towards a desire to reclaim political power.

6. Indignation and Affective Publics: Beyond Others Like Us

So far, I have shown how indignation can help us both to understand some of the affective dynamics of the subjectivation process of representation (*affective imitation*)

and the moments where citizens decide to join broader movements of 'indignation' where claims of representation are being made (*affective transformation*). Here, I show how indignation also helps to understand how indignation mobilises beyond 'me and others like me' and leads to the creation of *affective publics* (Lünenborg, 2019; Papacharissi, 2015; Slaby & von Scheve, 2019). This, I argue, helps to overcome what is often perceived as a contradiction between the rejection of representation and its non-electoral practice.

To understand this, one needs to go back to a critical feature of indignation: its propensity to be 'told, chanted and shouted' (Plantin, 2012). This 'talkative' nature of indignation (Knops, 2021) turns it into a particularly 'contagious' affect (Boltanski, 1993) and, consequently, a public affect which spreads from the private to the public sphere, and across multiple networks of actors. This specific articulation – the 'contagion' of indignation – can be defined as *affective resonance* (Mühlhoff, 2019, in Slaby & von Scheve, 2019); a process through which one's own situation of injustice resonates with a wider group, and where an indignation becomes so widely shared that it contributes to the re-definition of the tolerable and intolerable underpinning society (Lordon, 2016). Transposed to the language of representative claims, affective resonance can be seen as the process through which a claim is received by a wider audience, and explains how some claims 'resonate' with this audience, while others don't. In turn, affective resonance is part of what affords the links between claims, actors and networks in broader affective publics.

The emergence of affective publics was clearly at play during the indignant movements of 2011, as well explained by Margreth Lünenborg (2019) and Zizi Papacharissi (2015). In particular, Lünenborg (2019) develops the notion of affective publics to examine the particularly 'turbulent', 'unstable' and 'fragile' character of publics that emerge in the context of protest and mobilisation. Here, she unpacks specifically how the resonance of citizens' indignation, in the context of the 2011 mobilisations, was afforded by digital networks and practices, and how it was instrumental to the creation of a broader affective community of indignant citizens. She unveils in particular 'the affective formation' of publics through the 'affective rhythms' of storytelling and denunciations of indignant citizens. In the context of the Arab Spring, Papacharissi says that these affective rhythms 'reproduced and reinforced feelings of community for an *existing public of indignant citizens who had had enough*' (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 62; in Lünenborg, 2019, p. 326). Papacharissi shows how the notion of affective publics allows us to articulate both the personal and the political claims as part of a more open, networked practice of politics; a place where micro-representations of the self are imbricated within the broader political context, and where political practices engage the personal and the political, and traverse from the private sphere to the public sphere (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 65).

One can easily see how the creation of affective publics, through the process of affective resonance (whether digitally afforded or not), has also been at play in more recent contexts of indignant mobilisations. Contexts where individual indignations are surpassed by a common affect, and where 'my story is representative of what we are all going through, in spite of the obvious differences between us' (van de Sande, 2020, p. 407). One can think here of the emblematic case of the #MeToo movement which features as prime example of what Lünenborg conceives as contemporary affective public, but also of the Yellow Vests movement. Here the emergence of an affective public

around the figure of the 'indignant citizen' was also at play and afforded, amongst others, by the materiality of the yellow vest (the jacket). The vest served as a meeting point between personal struggles and collective claims: the physical place where participants shared their personal grievances (e.g., written on the back, often in the first person) and signalled their recognition for each other's struggles (Knops & Petit, 2022).

Looking at the discourses of indignant citizens through the concept of affective publics brings a distinctive texture to studies of representation compared to what is permitted by the language of 'claims'. A language which, admittedly, still evokes images of cold hierarchical relations and verticality (despite the advances of the constructivist turn). It allows us to situate the claims made on behalf of 'the people' or 'future generations' along a more horizontal and networked perspective; one which doesn't demand to distinguish between instances of 'representation', 'post-representation', or 'unrepresentation'. Affective publics acknowledges the more fluid relation and possible contradictions within indignant performances and discourses and doesn't pitch indignant citizens as *de facto* self-authorised or self-appointed representatives. It embraces the fact that invoking 'the people' in the case of the Yellow Vests, for example, is not a formal act of representation, even though it has everything to do with representation and what's wrong with it (Hayat, 2021). Rather, as well summarised by Knudsen and Stage, indignation allows citizens to develop their own, alternative forms of representation by offering individuals the opportunity to bypass institutional hierarchies and evoke new social connections with other bodies (2015, p. 1). Affective publics offers a concrete way to capture these connections and relations with other bodies without falling back into the representative traps which indignant citizens are trying to denounce.

7. Concluding Remarks

Why do we need affect to better understand representation? And what do we learn about its current crisis, by focusing on indignation? In this article, I have attempted to start answering these questions by unpacking three affective dynamics of indignation: affective imitation, affective transformation and the creation of affective publics. I have showed how these dynamics shed light on overlooked dimensions in existing representation theory: (1) the lack of attention for the articulation between affect and subjectivation, (2) the insufficient attention for 'indignation' itself, as affect, even when indignation and representation are brought into the same conversation, (3) the lack of conceptual language to reconcile the tension that is often pitched in representation theory between rejection of representation and its non-electoral practice.

First, the affective imitation dynamic at the heart of indignation – the propensity to feel with and for others – sheds light on some of the affective bonds that make representative claims 'stick'; the love between an indignant and 'similar others', and the hate between an indignant and an oppressor (e.g., the state). Here, representation becomes intertwined with an innate ability to feel and express love and compassion, but also to hate others, identified as culprits and oppressors. Affective imitation provides a new normative direction for evaluating representative claims, by analysing the affective textures and power-differentials that underpin the process of affective imitation, and whom or what it may concern. Introducing this conceptual language in theories of

representation brings the discussion to the fundamental question of whom is considered as similar other, in the eyes of whom, and how these are represented.

Second, by turning to indignation as affective transformation, I show how we can seize the lived experiences, feelings and struggles that prefigure the moments where individuals decide to join a broader movement and make counter-claims of representation. While representation is often thought as a relation of power between citizens and representatives, affective transformation provides the conceptual language to discuss power-relations all the way from individual agentive capacities, to relations with the state. It provides an embodied reading of the crisis of representation by fleshing-out the affective trajectories of indignant citizens, beyond their 'claims' only. This, in turn, opens alternative pathways for the normative evaluation of representative claims; between those that are rooted in historical and structural forms of oppression and others who may be performed on the back of affective co-optation and imagined victimhood.

Third, through the concept of affective publics, and drawing on examples of affective publics which have emerged in the context of recent indignant mobilisations, I propose a pathway to overcome the tension that is often pitched in representation theory between the rejection of representation and its non-electoral practice. Here, I emphasize in particular indignation's publicness and talkative nature which generates affective contagion and communities, across multiple spheres and networks, beyond the indignant citizens only. Affective resonance helps us to seize how affective publics are created, without the need to establish whether the 'claims' of indignant citizens are representative, post-representative or unrepresentative. It helps to further develop our affective understanding of the crisis of representation. It may suggest for example that what is often conceived as 'gaps' or a 'distance' is rather a question of affective resonance which has been interrupted or the absence of an affective public, all together.

Finally, in this article, I have proposed tentative steps towards an affective turn in theories of representation by unpacking the affect of indignation. Evidently, this does not mean that all affectivities of representation can be reduced to the case of indignation only, nor that all forms of indignation lead to political representation. In particular, my understanding of indignation is rooted in particular cases of 'mobilising' indignation, for example in the context of recent social movements. As a result, this understanding also overlooks other forms of indignation that are less mobilising and which may have different effects on society. Further research should thus pay attention to different types of indignations which currently saturate the public space and examine their longer-term effects on democracy and politics at large (see de Sutter, 2019; Latour, Godmer, & Smadja, 2012).

In that spirit, this article raises broader questions on the affectivities which should underlie democratic politics and political representation, and whether a more affective type of democracy needs representation at all. What kinds of anger, and in what measure, are *good* in mobilising new types of subjectivities? What are the effects of hope? How to transform fear and anxiety in emancipatory collective passions and resources of mobilisation? These questions are important at the theoretical level but also at the empirical level to question and investigate the climate of affective explicitness and affective disconnection that characterizes citizens' relation to politics. Addressing these questions may also help us develop more affective intelligence in our understandings of politics and political representation; its affective appeal or its lack thereof, and the

different types of political-affective susceptibilities that co-exist and move society in different directions.

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