Democracy and the Dynamics of Indifference

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ABSTRACT:
The present study addresses the problem of citizen indifference in democracy and argues that there is a causal connection between sovereign state interest and the pervasive influence of indifference among the citizenry. This research argues that political indifference is the result of precise dynamics that gradually dissolve the democratic foundations of the state and impose a stronger authority. As a consequence, three dynamics of indifference are proposed as drivers of sovereign interest to render a citizenry passive on issues of democratic importance. These are the 'paranoid thinking' based on fear, where a problem marked by urgency activates insecurity and instigates citizens to request the state's strong intervention.

Democracy is traditionally defined by the concepts of citizens' participation and deliberation and ideally characterized by an equal, transparent distribution of power that is achieved by consensus. Contemporary democracy has certainly progressed in a more participatory and deliberative direction, involving, in the ideal at least, the active involvement of citizenry as a dynamic political force. In the pragmatic political space, however, the empirical application of democracy in Portugal, like in many other democracies, comprises of decisions marked by an absence of collective participation. It seems that many citizens refuse to get involved in politics and become passive and subordinate spectators. In Portugal this is strikingly illustrated by the rate of voting abstention, scarcity of support for the official political parties, but also by decreased collective engagement in political actions. Conversely, the movements of *indignados* in Spain, the *movimento cinque stelle* in Italy or the αγανακτισμένοι in Greece openly express dissent of their governments and the way the European Union operates. However, even these movements seem unable to really challenge both politics and foster citizens participation.

Behind the façade of everyday politics, democracy is more an "institutionalisation of uncertainty," (Przeworski, 1991, 12) a system of paradoxes and contradictions that citizens seem utterly incapable of cogently knowing and using. Worldwide democracies appear no longer able to contrast persistent skepticism about politics and their representatives, and citizens' indifference appears a normal phenomenon that almost overrules a need for rationalization. Mostly, political indifference is interpreted as a mere disturbance of democracy, without taking a clear position whether indifference is either a sign of protest or a form of pure disengagement on the part of collective, almost disregarding the symbiotic relationship between citizenry and democracy.

The example of electoral absenteeism raises doubts about the practical engagement of citizens and about how traditional methods of participation and deliberation may sustain democracy. In fact, an indifferent citizenry results in a demarcated political space of artificial agreement and unity, where citizens have no reason to contribute to democracy at all. But what is political indifference? How does it affect democracy? In practical terms, indifference makes the democratic process less prone to dissent and prevents the fulfilment of egalitarian principles, as political practices are moved from citizens' prerogatives to the state's direct authority. In other words indifference severely limits public debate and transforms citizens into political subjects who cannot prevent or control the abuses of authority by the sovereign power.

This study suggests that political indifference functions as a precise political mechanism that redefines the meaning of democracy according to sovereignty's specific interest. This process works inside conventional practices of politics with the objective of realizing a sort of passive obedience among disengaged citizens. In a system where people are disengaged, democracy is redefined in narrow terms as no longer able to representation the totality of polity. As a result, indifference cannot challenge the imperfections of governance and, forsaking the use of reason and argumentative debate, it cannot produce a political alternative. This contradicts the prevalent view of political indifference as an act of protest that contests political institutions and enhances citizens' independence from the state.

This study argues that political indifference is motivated in significant part by evolutional political changes of the state rather than being a personal behavior or an existing social inclination in the citizenry. I suggest that indifference is largely created and reinforced by state sovereignty in the form of a culture of individualistic detachment to subvert the democratic impulse toward citizen participation and discussion. Sovereignty constructs a modality of apathy that influences indirectly and almost imperceptibly "the substrate of force relations" (Foucault, 2009) of the system. In other words, the state – rather than directly exerting its authority over citizens, like in the classic theory of sovereignty – infiltrates its control into the social and political realms through the transient movements of dynamics. That is, this strategy progressively diverts the initial engagement of citizenry into a detached de-political attitude that reinforces authority instead of the deliberative capacity of democracy. Three conditions seem to be recurring in creating a progression that gradually initiates and then fosters political indifference. These dynamics, I argue, explain how indifference progresses in society: (1) a problem marked by urgency that activates fear and insecurity and instigates citizens to request the state's strong intervention. I name this dynamic "paranoid thinking"; (2) a progressive pluralisation of powers, with political practices increasingly subtracted to the public's jurisdiction and placed under the state's direct influence. This dynamic is the "epistemology of control"; (3) and finally, the disappearance of the initial problem that is, of the object toward which indifference is aimed. I name this dynamic "invisibility and marginality". These specific dynamics develop according to the state's shifting reactions to contingent events. While the first two dynamics seem to foster citizens' participation and discussion, they will gradually disqualify the very notion of functioning citizenry with a third dynamic (of invisibility) further disempowering criticism.

The 'epistemology of control' based on a central structure of command marks the second dynamic as a progressive pluralisation of powers, with political practices increasingly subtracted to the public's jurisdiction. Finally, the third 'dynamic of invisibility and marginality' signals the disappearance of the initial problem from the public interest. I suggest that the use of discourse constructed around these three dynamics is the key to controlled opinions *in lieu* of a flagrant ideological indoctrination. The resulting effect is that the state is strengthened whilst the civic engagement of citizens disintegrates, yet within processes that remain 'democratic' in form if not substance.

Keywords: Democracy; Citizenry; Political Indifference; Sovereignty.

1. Political Indifference and "Paranoid Thinking"

When fear, anxiety, or what I call a "paranoid thinking" influences citizens, their demand for government protection offers the state the opportunity to extend the writ of its power over its own peoples. In this sense, sovereignty is indirectly authorized in an exercise of force by the pragmatic request of the protection of citizens. An explicit reference to threats, for example, reinforces the idea in the public conscience that the state has an obligation or responsibility to protect citizens at the expense of any deliberative, and sometimes legal, procedure. This also implies that citizens weaken their role both in delegating their power to sovereignty and in supporting coercive components intrinsic in the exercise of authority.

Translating this argument into the dynamics of indifference, I suggest that the sudden appearance of a problem marked by urgency starts the process of indifference. The originating problem is an event constructed around negative instances and an overall sense of fear. Generally, the problem rarely touches the majority of citizens and is not ever directly experienced or distinctively known by citizens. Research in political communication suggests that the escalation of civic anxiety based on subliminal messages is foundational to the development of specific political guidelines of retaliation, demonisation and "less evil" (Ignatieff, 2004). This dynamic repositions the conceptual and analytical understanding of "the originating problem" within a negative setting (ethical, and/or political or legal) and permeates public consciousness with a sense of anxiety. In other words, this overall imaginative fear endangers stable subjectivity while generating incoherent, and unpredictable actions that are generally not equivalent to the real and concrete value of the initial threat. Insofar as a problem is associated with a discourse around the embodiment of inchoate dangers, "the originating problem" is charged with categorically identified threats of ascriptive characteristics (Parikh, 1997). The effect of such a process upon citizens is to centre their attention on emotional, even unconscious, instinctive factors. In fact fear and paranoid thinking inverts the values of cooperation and solidarity into more individualistic principles, thus restructuring the perception of collective rights. Fear and protection become justificatory, or in other words, they sanction an exclusionary applicability of the democratic rules, based on narrow empathies mixed to an intense consciousness of national identity. This causes citizens to feel compassion for some victims but insensibility to others, for example, in a restricted interpretation of justice and solidarity, self-referenced to limited interests that exclude "the others". In light of this collective understanding, justification of the use of threats substantiates

concepts of "less-evil", "right intention" and "a just war" in unilateral interpretation of rights and norms.

Not always does fear initiate a process that leads to indifference. In fact, threats and fears may be controlled when democracy and public reasoning work together with international organizations, so that the use of democratic mechanisms and diplomacy deal adequately with threats before escalating into military operations. This approach is best typified by strategies of containment and negotiation that help to prevent the outcome of indifference and to incentive collective engagement. Containment and negotiation, in other words, can counteract and ameliorate the public fear of any potential or hypothetical hazard that has to be contained. Crucially, this interpretation tends to avoid a strong emphasis on fear, or, in other words, to minimize fear as a temporal rather than crucial threat. As a result, fear may be almost effortlessly absorbed over time. Equally importantly, in Habermasian terms, the continuous debate may strength the cognitive dimension of criticism and public understanding.

Conversely, paranoid thinking is structured around exasperated agonistic themes and enemies that heavily influence citizens' beliefs and behaviors (Barber, 2003; Zarako, 2011). It also plays around ideas of partisanship and self-identity and pressures citizens on principles of defense and security. Most of the time, fear is anchored to an incumbent danger, "susceptibility to mortality prime laden" (Pfau, 2007, 230) and easily transmutes in collective panic, bypassing the need of a rational discussion. Accordingly, defensive democracy becomes more controlling than deliberative, centered on high security issues. This attitude escalates pressure and cultivates a climate of compulsive reactions in a typical Manichean approach of contrastive virtues in an endless search for an enemy. There is extensive literature to explain how fear is functional to power as a mechanism of domination and coercion both domestically and internationally. Hugh Mehan, for example, reads fear in policy as part of a continuation of the Cold War doctrine in "an inward search for a new enemy, fluctuating back and forth between a worrisome politics, established in terms of 'us v. them'" (Mehan, 1997, 267). Paul Ricœur similarly argues that fear is an immediate factual cause, "a force of adhesion which holds together the members of the body politic" (Ricœur, 2010, 28). The logical implication is that the state constructs an aggressive political approach based on a concept of "ontological security", a means of coercion that works on the conceptual distinction between negative and positive values to reinforce the state's physiognomy and categorization of power.

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It is obvious that the conceptualization of the good/bad or right/evil binary mixed to paranoid thinking is most frequently associated with the recent war on terrorism. It is commonly argued that a clear dichotomization of principles has been the favourite terrain of rhetorical policy. However how does the process evolve from inflamed rhetoric to indifference and detachment? I suggest that this analysis does not completely clarify why paranoid thinking emerges under some governments or why unequivocally it generates indifference in the public. This historical recurrence of fear as political instrument reveals that the true object of contention is, in fact, not only the eruption of paranoid thinking in the political arena or the search of an enemy to justify some countries against others. Similarly, terrorism and conflicts alone appear insufficient to explain the extensive use of paranoid thinking for political purposes.

I argue that the relationship between paranoid fear and democracy goes well beyond the generic notion of fear and national interests. One of the distinctive aspects of fear, I argue, is the attempt to overpower political opposition through the exploitation of factors that are easily understood and feared in the public opinion. Yet, more importantly, paranoid thinking exposes the citizenry's unbalanced relation to authority. It is crucial to highlight that, in name of emergency and national urgency, a state may supersede embedded rules or even temporarily interrupt legal norms without calling for deliberation, while silencing dissent, for example, as unpatriotic. Therefore it makes consensus easily malleable, and serves to amalgamate a collective approval necessary for the enactment of an authoritative power. The consequences of these mutually reinforcing expectations and practices are the primary drivers of political detachment. This means that sovereignty can legitimate itself across the political and legislative spectrum avoiding the scrutiny of the procedural conditions of minimal control and openness. As Jacques Rancière states, this procedure without citizens' participation is the death both of consensus and of politics, "politics ceases wherever this gap no longer has any place, wherever the whole of the community is reduced to the sum of its parts with nothing left over" (Rancière, 1999, 306). Anxiety or fear activates a mechanism that supports sovereignty's operations, like a legitimacy-conferring force. The consequence is the formation of normative and causal claims that negatively unbalanced the critical, dissenting voices and decrease the levels of public accountability of power. This process is crucial for sustaining sovereign power to rule autonomously while depoliticizing citizens. At this point, the process toward indifference, through the use of fear, begins.

2. The Epistemology of Control

The move from paranoid thinking to institutional crisis management under the control of sovereignty operationalizes the second dynamic of indifference: the epistemology of control. I employ this phrase to explain the progressive reinforcement of sovereign interest through a fragmentation of commands, the parallel weakening of the public sphere, and the implicit concentration of power. Large scale emergences or threats potentially destabilizes a state via the loss of public belief in a government's power to protect or to maintain territorial and/or legislative control, both of which are central in defining state authority. Therefore state can react to a crisis by seeking to reaffirm its power through the direct control of institutions in a bid to restore confidence. This mode of governing through the operational cultivation of fear reminds of Hobbes's Leviathan state, that is of a power who forges manageable subjects with the use of fear: "the only ones fearful were capable of being governed. Subordinating the spiritual authority to the political sovereign mitigates the disruptive and uncontainable fears the former implants in the imagination" (Sokoloff, 2001, 12).

I suggest that state develops its capacities around two distinctive directions. One is to reinforce "state capacity" which involves the development of specific instruments such as the bureaucracy, military and levels of associations. This creates a fragmentation of powers and a proliferation of roles. They are all put under state control in order to directly regulate and manage resources from society. The other element is to bolster "state accountability" to operationalize the rules that structure the state's power over society. Consequently, responding to a threat creates an operational space that initially tends to produce a proliferation of both non-formalized and high-specialized institutions or agencies.

As I previously discussed, there are two elements here that matter for my argument of indifference: the role of sovereign power and its relationship with citizenry. From the perspective of democratic theory, some changes in governance, like decentralization might be interpreted either as a decline of sovereignty, or conversely, as an empowerment of citizenry through collective organization and affiliation. The emergence of multiple actors, groups and also communities has commonly been considered a sign of a vibrant democracy that expands the boundaries of civic involvement. My essential argument is that political life is not about only procedures and rules, but rather domination, upheaval, and the equilibrium of element of crisis and dissent. I suggest that a multiplication of powers especially

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evident in times of crisis (particularly the military and bureaucratic functions) is concealed under the democratic illusion of formalistic principles of diversity and freedom. This redefines the power under a stronger authority, yet disguised in its antidemocratic tendencies. Likewise, in a parallel process, state incorporates indifference as a very ordinary, normative micro-process that redefines the meaning of democracy according to sovereignty's specific interest. This 'epistemology of control', I argue, is pursued in the dual effort of limiting a direct culpability of the state on one hand, and, on the other, facilitating the consolidation of a positive imaginary of a protective, almost paternalistic state, actively involved in defending citizens and excluding the "others". The central aspect in this scheme is that the state redesigns the political space in an intense network of civic associations and democratic allure. However, the simultaneous presence of multilateral agencies does not necessarily indicate a reduction in the hegemon's exercise of power. Overall, new bureaucracy is empowered with a range of newly created instructions yet authority remains strictly under the central control of state, in a hybrid form of centralization. Such a fragmentation of power is balanced by an exteriorization and aggrandizement of a system of security where formal lines of authority and hierarchical commands have all interlocking effects on legal and political structures. This is not new in itself, as use of fear, mixed to an empowering of sovereignty has frequently happened in history. Similar to Max Weber's argument of a bureaucracy to the service of power, "the power position of a fully developed bureaucracy is always over-towering. The 'political master' finds himself in the position of the dilettante who stands opposite the 'expert' " (Weber, 1970, 232).

What is developed in the present thesis is that the stage of paranoid thinking elides with the process of epistemology of control in several ways. First, it elevates the structures of power as the primary site though which the state can protect citizens, hence executive or sovereignty is the prevailing authority over military and judicial. Second, the "epistemology of control" involves a redefinition of rights and a parallel separation between what is allowed and what is prohibited. Rephrasing Sheri Berman, the fragmentation of power is "politically neutral" because, it "is neither inherently good nor inherently bad, but rather dependent for its effects on the wider political context" (Berman, 1997, 429). The above examples indicate an interpretation of democracy anchored to the concept of collective security (instead of mutual benefit) and directly dependent on sovereignty power and principles. The dictum that "protection comes first" is the self-justification that provides the rationale for the state's action, in "a perverted understanding of means and

ends" (Robin, 2007, 367). That is, the provision of security enables the state to assert force and collective rights in the first place. Third, fear becomes the basis for advancing new sets of rights such as protection, defense and self-preservation that implicitly rearticulate the meaning of common good and consequently the duties of the state and the structure of power.

Similarly, this strategy redefines the parameters of what is permitted and what is prohibited, hence reducing the range of rights in favor of civil duties and responsibilities. The relationship between citizens and the state is built around a series of duties and rights. While the citizens owe the state obedience, sovereignty in turn owes protection to citizens. It follows that sovereignty has a prevailing role over citizenry that consents sovereignty the use of discretionary power. I argue that a consolidation of power authorizes visible amendments in political and legislative directions that often undermine democratic procedures and disregards for public scrutiny. Therefore, the framework that demarcates citizens and sovereignty's reciprocal rights and duties may be to the disadvantage of citizens and makes it difficult to classify what is properly perceived as "public interest" and what is not. This line of reasoning compromises individual or personal rights as mutable values. Rights, thus, are tradable in the name of a greater and common good for something with qualitatively lesser worth. The implementation of security is, in the end, not so much about freedom as it is about protecting and implementing citizens' obligations and contract rights. And to the degree that such a strategy generates and sustains a limited interpretation of rights, it is quite reasonable to think that an epistemology of control goes beyond the legitimate defense of citizens and into the realm of the politically oppressive. As a result, rights, by which provision citizens assert and guarantee their own power, become instead discretional in their use and dependent upon who is offering the protection. This dynamic subjugates citizens to an external power, and transforms rights into arbitrary privileges.

In a context where paranoid thinking has become established, it might yet appear that the democratic space is formally active and full of public energy. However, enforcement and aggrandizement swing between two contrasting articulations: centralization and fragmentation (Carter, 2002). On one hand, state presents a separation and apparent dispersion of powers through bureaucracy and military. On the other hand, government is built around a synthesis of functions in a stronger executive acting as an "encroachment of the police state," (Paul, 2003, 12) and performing to contain any potential menace and minimize dissent. There is an

evident contrast between a normal representative democracy whose functions are determined by the logic of representation, and an "expert democracy" validated on the basis of a fast (and sometimes lacking) deliberative agreement, by virtue of perceived, but procedural, popular support.

The essential consideration here is that the strengthening of the executive does not happen in a multidimensional policy space marked by rational communication but rather in a narrow democratic space where paranoid thinking works as the "tipping point", as De Londras and Davis posit, "at which laws and policies can be introduced that aid in the fulfillment of this aim" (De Londras and Davis, 2010, 23). This also explains how the mechanisms of power – both executive and military – can be toughened rapidly and successfully, even by means of complex pieces of legislation that were unlikely to have been spontaneous promulgated and ratified in a normal situation. Likewise, it seems doubtful that popular support could have been reached on establishing *a priori* a strong political agenda. This produces a qualitatively different relationship between citizens and the sovereign in an evident democratic asymmetry between state's decision and an almost insisting procedure of deliberation. As a result, democracy has a "greater dependence on the nation-state as a means of security" (Smith, 2010, 2).

3. Invisibility and Marginality

The third dynamic of indifference emerges from the apparent resolution of the initial problem, which converts a visible, major threat into an invisible, minor matter and restores a sense of collective liberation and security. While the issue (or problem) is not re-absorbed into society, it exists in such a way that explicitly eliminates the previous dynamics of fear and security. Therefore, emergency is not longer mentioned and seems forgotten in the collective discourse. As a result, the dynamic of invisibility further disempowers the citizenry, nullifies criticism and harms citizenry's moral and cognitive rationality.

I suggest that for power, of all the three dynamics, invisibility is the most challenging to realize, because it requires the suppression of both the previous dynamics. In the case of an errant excess of paranoid thinking or an uncontrolled emergency, a threat may progress haphazardly and chaotically, hence evading the state's control. In this case, state cannot completely employ the dynamics of indifference as the whole system may be at risk of being capsized. In other words, a failure to control the previous dynamics may undermine the intended transformation of

the *status quo* into a more authoritative system. The underlining risk for sovereignty is to derail the whole process and devastate the social regulatory dimension initiated with the dynamic of fear and the dynamic of epistemology of security.

The importance given to a fear and protective dimension of state actions and policies introduces a condition of enmity or relentless antagonism to every threat. Joseph Pugliese calls this logic a "thingification of Being" (Pugliese, 2002, 31) as a constitutive or legitimating condition of power upon which dominant subjects manipulate bodies as if they were simply objects deprived of humanness. What this means is that all the discussed dynamics subversively disrupt contemporary responsiveness and conscience in matters of rights. Marginality and invisibility are the ultimate consequence of this rationale. The results are subordinating human beings to the state's necessity and enhancing general citizens' disinterest. Ultimately, this reflects in a collective indifference that obscures humanity of other human beings and inhibits an obligation in conscience to counteract defective legislation or policy.

Roberto Esposito's bio-political theory of a power that immunizes itself against danger somewhat explains why the state pursues a logic of marginalisation and invisibility (Esposito, 2011). Following the lead of Esposito and other theorists such as Foucault and Agamben, I agree with the bio-political approach that a political power hinges on the sanctioned elimination of the marginal or rightless individuals as a menace and source of contagious threats. Therefore annihilation, "not of a particular body but of the human being, of the species as the most brutal and/or absurd countermeasures" (Levinson, 2010, 239) is the result of a strategy that a sovereign power has enacted to "protect" itself, or "its biological wellness" (Levinson, Ibid.). In other words, when a subjugating power acts in a process of hegemonic signification, threats are reconceptualised in terms of the offenders whom a country must isolate, sanitise and removed from a regulated landscape. Accordingly, this concept of "political pathogenesis" demonises individuals and/or group of people as though they were supposed sources of danger or lethal diseases.

It would be a mistake to assume that this mechanism progresses effortlessly. Invisibility and marginality of a crisis seek to erase paranoid thinking from public opinion while avoiding a situation in which an emergency has to be controlled through extra-constitutional power. In essence, the state needs to consolidate its power without being subject to the ambivalences of popular worries or the chaos of a permanent state of emergency as dominant political rule. This imposes on the state the need to self-regulate its authority and to evolve from a punitive sys-

tem to a "pardoning power" in order to continue legitimizing its use of force on rational grounds, as a new strategic direction that replaces security with stability.

I previously argued that the dynamic of security, as source of authoritarian legitimacy, relies on paranoid thinking as an element of signification for the state in a contradictory amalgamation of fear and protection. It is not incidental that fear and protection are opposite notions yet their significance conflate into one concept because of sovereignty. In other words, rephrasing Spinoza's aphorism, "there is no hope without fear and no fear without hope," (Spinoza, 2002, 313) fear and hope are mutually interrelated to each other in a process where the dialectical opposition between two different concepts is eventually subsumed into a higher synthesis, which legitimizes the authoritarian rule. Protection has a dual role of defending sovereignty in a potentially reiterative dichotomy of a protector who needs protection to justify itself. It is axiomatic that this logic advances the perpetuation of fear and violence. It is paradoxical that a power intent of eliminating violence to re-establish stability and order to consolidate its supremacy is, at the same time, reliant on violence to strengthen its own durability.

Nonetheless, paranoid thinking cannot be a self-sustainable strategy in the long term. Both paranoid thinking and emergency are double-edged weapons. The enactment of sovereignty undertakes different degrees of intensity in distinctive conditions of crisis. The attempts to overcome an emergency and the connected fear work in a context where failure is a real possibility. Emergency raises a number of difficulties, not least the capacity for containment and unresponsiveness to political and military action, hence, frustrating instead of promoting citizens request of security. As in the classical myth of Pandora's box, opening the box of fear may let all the catastrophes of the world fly out, with hope or, in this case, security, the only thing left behind. Such a full use of fear, drives state to create an apparatus of security that emphases inherent (and near limitless) constitutional powers but dangerously has to rely on an unendingly reference to emergency to maintain its power.

Other elements of consideration are the large-scale warfare or emergency costs. They impose huge economic and financial expenditures that have to be negotiated with citizens, while increasing the chance of engendering social conflicts. Historical evidence proves that economic crises "can undermine whatever political system is held responsible for the outbreak of the crisis" (Kalinowski, 2007, 350). This suggests that, in an uncontrolled emergency, if state is not able to address anxieties with effective solutions, citizens may reconsider the costs and negative

outcomes of the system and impose a change in the government, through demo-cratic or revolutionary measures. Therefore the state has to push for an alternative to collective security, protecting the country, defending the economy, and simul-taneously overcoming the crisis. This suggests that the state is forced to neuter fear and enforce a mechanism of marginality and invisibility that reduce the very mechanism of paranoid thinking. The state's guiding platform eliminates from the public visibility the previous antinomies of a security based on fear, and the crisis remains absolutely insulated from direct public knowledge. The process of marginality, or "distantiation" rephrasing Benhabib (Benhabib, 1992, 227), con-trols the disruptive effects of the previous dynamics with a system of knowledge/communication that moves the dominant discourse around the parameters of invisibility/silence.

Sometimes this marginalization works through judicial mechanisms such as am-nesties, executive decrees and pardons in transitional justice where power relations remain intact and where there is no any serious structural change in power. At other times, marginality prevails as a collective innocence. Thus, in spite of re-maining a challenging presence within the state, threat is moved to the margins as an irrelevant and distant problem. More importantly, this framework of hege-monic invisibility makes invisible both the threat and the operating epistemology of control. Therefore, the use of the military and coercion becomes divorced from that of actually wielding of public power. Agamber, for example, argues that peo-ple detained at the military prison of Guantanamo Bay are neither recognized as prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention nor as criminals under American law, in a state of undefined legislation, that renders them abstract, hence, invisible individuals to the rest of society (Agamben, 2003, 4). This structure poses a real challenge to the notion of rights because it reframes the obligations of the state to people – from people who are considered "threats" to ordinary citizens. The problem is that when rights are weakened in their moral and legal distinctiveness, they lose their normative-epistemological dimension. The rights that the state seems to privilege are defined by reference to procedures and side-constraints; in other words, individual rights appear important as long as their application does not contravene state or collective decisions. The implication is that, once again, the fundamental notions of rights are utilized mostly as formal references to legality yet they are separated from the ethical dimension of universal rights.

Paradoxically, I suggest that the above schema of dynamics substitutes fear and anxiety among the citizenry with an alternative sense of liberation, so that people

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are passively manipulated at the emotional level thereby neutralizing their independent will. This leads citizens to accept a controlling power and a legislative framework that curbs civil liberties and civil awareness. In fact, when citizens are convinced that a power works in their interests, they can become passive spectators, adherent to state decisions, in a way that begins to reveal the three dynamics of indifference named here. It is therefore prudent for the state, in a situation of supposed emergency, to adopt policies that encourage consensus and allegiance to a normative foundation (such as 'national interest') while minimizing dissent, particularly if it is not widespread. The trouble is that, when security is re-established and citizens experience a peaceful relief, state interest if unaccounted has effectively created an entrenched passivity, which disengages any previous commitment via, according to Ian De Vos, a process of "participation without participation and emancipation without emancipation" (De Vos, 2013). This process of detachment not only tries to explain why citizens are impotent in the face of state power, but also how deliberation tends to focus on immediate micro-aspects rather than discussing any long-term improvements and future outcomes of democracy. Thus, a lack of interest in the aims and goals of politics make discussion a (redundant) justification in favor of the comforts of the *status quo*. Building on this analysis, I argue that with the use of specific dynamics impacting personal and social behavior, sovereignty effortlessly discourages the active functions of the public sphere and encourages people to become spectators of government actions and thus as "interpassive" subjects (Žižek, 1997).

In summary, I suggest that the use of the dynamics described above – paranoid thinking, an epistemology of control, invisibility of subjects – is motivated by an interest to counteract an independent citizenry and control the limits of democratic consensus. Fear weakens democratic processes of engagement because it convincingly discourages independent convictions while formalizing a system of controlled participation. From this perspective, for the ruling power to win public acceptance on specific policies, it no longer needs to make concessions nor have reasoned debates and discussions with the citizenry. Rather, it simply needs to induce paranoid thinking, develop anxieties, promote fear and a sense of insecurity in citizens and eliminate dissent making the initial problem marginal and irrelevant.

As a result, within the public sphere, citizens' rights and their moral and legal authority are damaged as citizenry's civic and cognitive rationality is put under pressure. The use of such dynamics consciously functions to polarize public opi-

nion and construct majoritarian consensus over divisive issues that "separate(s) voters into interest groups and mobilize them to action and weaken(s) the position of an opposing candidate" (Wiant, 2002, 278). This explains, for instance, why paranoid thinking generates only rapid debate, as discussion is compressed via the crisis-driven logic of 'the need to decide. Thus, I contend that indifference dynamics are a priori fundamentally anti-democratic in the evident lack of trust in the transformative power of public discourse.

With the dynamics of indifference, consensus is reached by reducing decision -making processes to the shortest time. In other words, debate does not cover a broader array of interests nor is a mechanism of multiple checks and balances, as it should be according to the deliberative procedures of a representative democracy. This has two obvious consequences. Firstly, majoritarian consensus is achievable, even when citizens are not completely autonomous or reasonably independent in their decision. Consequently, society has to abide by decisions reached by a few, which is obviously detrimental to citizens' freedom and autonomy. Secondly, consensus functions, not as the beginning of public argumentation, but as the result. This exposes the dependence of sovereignty to the use of consent as way of legitimation, and democratic correctness that aim at satisfying citizens, while in reality reject modes of popular control with an enhancement of the executive. As Bryan Travis McGraw argues, the search for consensus "make(s) political coercion justifiable philosophically and they help reassure those who are being coerced (and by definition feel aggrieved) that the coercion is politically reasonable" (Travis McGraw, 2005, 109). It further clarifies why power, pressure and even coercion may become foreseeable aspects of democracy in the formation of consensual unity for the state.

This indicates that the use of indifference dynamics signal a different way that citizens and sovereignty value freedom and rights. While citizens tend towards a positive interpretation of liberty based on equality and autonomy aiming to resist abuses of power and subjugation, sovereignty privileges the negative or more inclusive self-rule as a strategy to consolidate its own power. Thus between these two poles of power (between citizenry and sovereignty or the state), the contrast is situated between a positive freedom based on non-interference and a negative freedom centered on self-rule. This clearly implies an implicit disagreement between rules and modes of exercising power.

The danger, I argue, lies in the fact that the achievement and implementation of civil and political rights (the widening of positive freedom) requests in democracy

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upsets the current balance force of the whole system. The crucial problem here it that the dynamics of indifference, disregarding the elements that are perceived irrelevant or divisive, promotes individual's restricted interests (or disinterests). Indifferent people are individuals lacking the political dimension of citizenry; their indifference releases them from any obligation to the rest of collectivity in an empty solipsism that further restricts a subject's evaluative and moral stance. That is to say that political events maneuvered by sovereignty are crucial to the achievement of indifference, with the role of altering the cognitive basis of polity and crumbling collective consciousness, and moral objectivity. In fact, when citizens are convinced that a power works in their interests fell into apathy, in the vagueness of being passive individuals who do not exert any longer their political and moral autonomy and control authority.

I suggest that more citizens' aspiration to freedom becomes visible and potential able to question authority and more is difficult for state to impose authoritarian decisions that overcome public scrutiny and demobilize democratic will. When the equilibrium between citizens' powers and sovereignty power becomes unbalanced, the two freedoms convert into adversarial forces. This may engender a reactive curtailment or even an overturning of previously possessed rights. In this context, the dynamics of indifference function like psychological and regulatory mechanisms for controlling the civic sphere itself. The central issue of dynamics thus does not involve exclusive categories of patriotism, defense, inclusion and the war on terror but is much more about the categorical distinction between the individual's freedom and rights and the state's interpretation and use of collective rights. In addition, the structural problems of the organizing power around consensus results in a form of "subjectship" in the relationship between citizens and authority expressed through a further entrenchment of hierarchy and a parallel rising of citizens' detachment to politics. The resulting effect is that state is strengthened with an intensity equal to the disintegration of civic and moral engagement of citizens.

4. Conclusion

This study has addressed the problem of citizen indifference and argues that there is a causal connection between sovereign state interest and the pervasive influence of political apathy among the citizenry. Political indifference creates a homogenous, absent citizenry, with the steady erosion of both deliberation and a rational debating public sphere. This suggests that state or governance rather than

directly exerting its authority over citizens – as in the classic theory of sovereignty – fosters indifference as a very ordinary, micro-process to control collective behavior and eliminates political dissent. If dissent is essentially perceived in terms of unnecessary opposition from social or political norms, then in a democracy that struggles to produce a unifying, universal consensus, indifference is to be used to ingurgitate opposing ideas and make them virtually non-existent through general disinterest. This translates into a more procedural approach to democracy, instead of the traditional collective deliberation and decision-making. Certainly, aggregation of decisions through majority rule does not mean the destruction of the democratic nature of our governments. The risk of indifference is however to disarticulate political dissent especially the one that openly attacks the state and directly contests the political power. On this basis, I argue, indifference alters the democratic equilibrium of powers making easier an aggregation of preferences among elites or restricted groups in ways that were previously unthinkable and therefore deserve further analysis.

The central paradox in the current form of democracy is thus the disappearance of an active function citizenry, both as an instance of a lack of democratic legitimation and as an instance of an inexistent control over the state's authority. The consequence is that democracy no longer has the possibility of being grounded in values, such as self-government, egalitarianism and inclusion. Not surprisingly we can find the same line of reasoning in Jacques Rancière's argument of an ultimate ambiguity at the basis of democracy. However, while citizens don't have the ultimate control over political decisions, democracy seems to continue in a securely institutionalized manner, without any procedural changes. This condition of democratic normalcy has the result of stabilizing citizens' exclusionary status and accentuating the prevailing sense of passivity. Citizens are pushed to the marginal role of inaudible voices, merely echoing the dominant discourse. As a result, democratic accountability is obscured by a lack of popular scrutiny to the point of non-existence or irrelevance for citizens now rendered indifferent. That is to say, the very democratic principle of an active role of citizens in practical terms is non-existent as it is paradoxically based around the absence of a consistent part of citizenry. Therefore, this condition of antagonistic emptiness dramatically alters the nature (and future) of democracy as a mere consensual administrative apparatus paradoxically based on an exclusionary basis.

Hitherto, indifferent citizens have the effect to indirectly suspend democracy in a context of normative ordinariness. As a result, any attempt to investigate elec-

toral disillusion and democratic deficiency runs against the major paradox of the emptiness of the polity, or in other words, of the disappearance of citizens from the political realm. What is arguably taking place is not a simple deliberative or electoral crisis but a new self-established hybrid system constructed around the notion of civil detachment and sovereignty as the lone authoritative power, with no hegemonic alternative. To simply put, citizenry has become an empty concept in a bare democracy in which one sole actor performs on stage in front of a dormant mass of citizens.

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