

Affect in political protest –The sound of anti-austerity demonstrations in Lisbon

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Learning to listen to protest

My research on the sound of protests against austerity measures in Lisbon was part of a university course about the sounds of the crisis at the Institute for European Ethnology at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Only one of the other participants spoke Portuguese, so I thought it would not make much sense to show them my recordings of Lisbon demonstrations when I presented my investigation. However, as they kept being curious about the sounds of the crisis in Portugal, I decided to play a fragment of my recordings. The one I played first was from a protest of public transport workers in Lisbon on 14.11.12, the day of the general strike, right before the police started to disperse the demonstrators' sit-in. The second, for comparison, was a fragment of a speech of Arménio Carlos, the leader of the trade unions federation CGTP, recorded a few weeks before.

When I played the first sound object and asked my colleagues what they had heard – a method that will be explained later on – I was surprised. Without knowing the contexts and without understanding the meaning of the words that were said, they understood a great part of what happened. In the first recording, they heard bodies moving quickly and people performing collectively with their voices, and they also heard how I positioned myself as a researcher in that situation: They could understand that I was approaching the sit-in and moving away with the recorder, and leaving completely as the police arrived. Basically, they heard my physical responses to the situation, and through this, they understood the atmosphere of the strike.

This observation didn't lead me to abandon the analysis of data content, but it did teach me to listen carefully to what lies beyond purely textual and visual content. Additionally, it taught me to accept what students of ethnography are told right from the beginning: There is no such thing as objectivity. However, this is not going to be an auto-ethnography or an analysis of my very own psychological reactions to protest. It tries to exemplify, without ignoring the researcher and her part in it, the importance of what is in-between bodies and beyond the conscious for the study of social movements and political protest.

The concept of *affect* as applied by political philosopher Brian Massumi and others proved to be a very helpful approach to understand those embodied qualities of protests. According to Massumi, affect has recently become more important to understand power in politics than ideology. In his opinion, the modulation of affects even substitutes traditional ideologies (Massumi 2010:55). Referring to Spinoza, he perceives affect as a resource of creativity and potential and suggests that alternative politics should also make use of it. Based on these assumptions, I want to investigate how affect modulation is used by different groups in the framework of current political protest in Lisbon. With the idea of an ethnography of sound as a methodological background, I do not only assume that affects are important in protest, but also that they are – at least partly – hearable. I suppose that affects can be perceived through the sounds of demonstrations: the way somebody talks while giving an interview, not only the

content of political slogans but also the way they are shouted, the fact that some things are audible at a demonstration and others not etc. And I also suppose that affects are transferred through sound, that listeners get affected by them. Deriving from the central question of the university seminar, “What does the crisis sound like?”, the questions posed on my field material are: How do affects in protest sound like? Are there differences between the affective dimension of institutionalized forms of protests, which are presumed to rely more on ideology, and contemporary forms of protest? And, last but not least: What kind of potential does that create both for social movements and for social movement studies?

The field

The data for this investigation was recorded during two weeks of significant protest events against austerity measures of the Portuguese government in September respectively November 2012. On *September 15th 2012*, *Que se lixe a troika*, a protest alliance which had been founded only a few weeks before, organized one of the biggest demonstrations in Portugal in recent decades. The preparations for the demonstration coincided with the announcement of new austerity measures by Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho, an occurrence that surely contributed to the high number of protesters that took to the streets on that day. The demonstration on September 15th was exceptionally huge, but demonstrations have not ended since then. On November 14th, the Portuguese trade union federation CGTP appealed for a General Strike that largely paralyzed public infrastructure.

The emphasis of my investigation is placed on these two big events including their surroundings. The material does not only consist of field recordings; participant observation, guided interviews with activists and informal conversations were also part of the methodical repertoire. Sound, nevertheless, plays a significant role in my studies. In the following I will specify my theoretical and methodological approach.

Feeling protest: Emotion in social movement studies and affect as a theoretical concept

Until recently talking about feelings when referring to protests was quite unpopular in social movement studies, and it still causes ambivalent responses amongst scholars. Deborah Gould explains this suspiciousness toward any connection of protests with the unreasonable by the aftermath of psychological theory of mass political action, developed by Gustave Le Bon at the end of the 19th century (Gould 2010:18). Like many others after him, he reduced alternative politics to the destructive behavior of mobs, pathologizing both protest and protesters. He did what many politicians and the mass media still do – pitting emotion against reason and therefore putting it on a level with irrationality. For him a crowd simply was a reckless unit of barbarians (ibid.20).

In the middle of the 20th century many of Le Bon’s followers engaged in group behavior study argued similarly, stating that people protested not because of political reasons, but “because social changes made them psychologically unstable and emotionally overwrought”, as Gould puts it (Gould 2010:21). In their opinion protesters were narcissistic and unfulfilled in their personal lives, and their practices of protesting were something that legitimate political actors did not do.

Thus protest was delegitimized completely by deeming emotions instinctive inner forces, always at the edge of bursting and therefore needing to be controlled by reason (Scheer 2011:66).

In the 1970s, when protest was considered as normal political behavior in the field of social movement studies, emotions were expelled almost completely in order to demonstrate the rationality of protesters (Gould 2010:22).

It was only in the 1990s that scholars in the emotional turn started to offer a more multifaceted picture of protest, regarding emotion as a ubiquitous feature of social life (ibid.23). Many scholars now accept emotion as motivational political force, but differentiate political emotions from other emotions, suggesting they depend on cognitions and are almost rational. Gould states that in doing so they might try to avoid returning to the collective behavior literature's equation of emotionality with irrationality, and claims not to mistake *nonrationality* with *irrationality* (ibid.25). She stresses the importance of those aspects of emotion that are not the product of logical reasoning and cognition and emphasizes the bodily qualities of feelings. Erika Summers Effler joins this reasoning by criticizing the fact that the body is generally ignored in the strong cultural approach of social movements literature (Summers Effler 2012).

Based on these concerns, which I share, I start with political philosopher Brian Massumi's definition of affect as a basis for a theoretical concept. Later on, I will supplement and revise it by comparing it with other approaches.

Massumi follows Deleuze and Guattari by using Baruch Spinoza's definition of affect as the body's "ability to affect and to be affected" (Massumi 2010:69). Affect is not just subjective or individual. There is a focus on the in-between, on potential relationships between bodies and their surroundings, on interactions. According to Spinoza, affect increases or diminishes the body's capacity to act. He defines affect as a way of embodied, vague thinking, and emphasizes its fluidity and the potential it holds. Anger, for example, has a lot of positive potential because it can force the situation to reorganize and reconfigure itself, as Massumi explains.

A central point in Massumi's work is the differentiation between emotion and affect.

According to him, emotion is the individualized and socialized part of affect, its coded and conventional expression in gesture and language (Massumi 2010:54). Massumi separates the rational, conscious and articulated components and names them *emotion* while reserving the term *affect* exclusively for the non-conscious and non-rational components.

At this point I disagree with Massumi and rather prefer to follow Michael Hardt's perspective. He argues that affect is not only a synthesis between body and mind, but also one between reason and passion (Hardt 2007). Massumi's separation between affect and emotion might be useful at some points, but I propose not to consider them as two detached things, but rather as two faces of the same coin that just reveal different emphases. Mutual affection is neither fully conscious nor completely unconscious. Affect is not autonomous, pre-social and just „in the air“. It is produced by people and between them. Of course, affect often is of inchoate and inarticulate intensities, unbound and fluid (Gould 2010:26), but it cannot be separated from one's personal expression that is structured by social convention and emotional codes.

Barbara Rosenwein uses the term "emotional communities" to focus on uncovering what she calls "systems of feeling" in social communities: "what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them; the evaluations that they make about others' emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore" (Rosenwein 2002:842). Emotional codes are not always binding – they can be fulfilled or broken by the practices of individuals or groups.

For this study there is no need to separate between affects as pre-social and non-rational and emotions as socially structured and rationalized feelings, because both are interwoven. It makes more sense to use a non-hydraulic approach in order to recognize the complexity of

emotional life. Deborah Gould points out that “affect necessarily is *in relation* to the social and the cultural and thus cannot be thought of as some pure outside, but neither is it reducible to such forces” (Gould 2010:31).

Also, if we reduce affect only to the unconscious and exclude the conscious, the intentions of the actors are completely disregarded. Affects in the political sphere might not always be predictable and logical. An actor-centered perspective, however, is indispensable to acknowledge that emotions can also be very reasoned practices that are used to achieve certain aims. Monique Scheer suggests the term “practices of emotion”¹ to refer to the act of labeling emotions, for example (Scheer 2011:68). Performative practices make affects tangible; they provide changes in the embodied experience and in the expression of affects. Feminist movements, for example, taught women to feel angry rather than depressed by labeling that feeling, as Gould points out (Gould 2010:34).

Nevertheless, I don’t want to break completely with Massumi’s approach. Some of his points prove to be very useful for this investigation, namely his emphasis on the body and on the in-between that allows new ways of thinking about subjectivity, an opportunity to which I will come back later, and his focus on the potential liberated by the openness of affect.

Another very useful point is his emphasis on the importance affect has on current politics. According to him, affect has recently become more important to understand power than ideology. Massumi refers to hegemonic politics when claiming this; in his essay “Fear (The Spectrum Said)” he analyzes for example the creation of a climate of fear by the Bush administration in the post-9/11 United States, in which people are controlled by affect modulation (Massumi 2010:105-129). He also says that alternative political practices should use affect to become more influential and powerful.

Therefore, one way to try to understand affect in political protest is to study how it is used and what its function is in a specific context.

But how can we study affects, if we cannot even always define them completely? To what extent are they measurable anyway, how can they be seen, heard and felt by others and thus be recognized, studied and analyzed? There is another approach to study affects that takes these doubts as a point of departure, which is to make an experiment on oneself. I tried both of them, and after a brief introduction to my methodological approach I will start with understanding the use of practices of emotion in Lisbon anti-austerity protests.

Sound recording as an ethnographic method and the audibility of affect

The approach on sound as a method that we used in the course didn’t have much to do with the study of sound as it is taught in sound study readers. The most important thing before working with sound is learning to listen carefully. Thus, instead of using an abstract way of approaching sound, we started by doing sound walks through the streets of Berlin to practice. This might seem somehow experimental and not quite legitimate, but only after exercising oneself in listening, one realizes that in everyday life we don’t pay attention to the audible at all.

A concept that helped us to train our listening competences was Pierre Schaeffer’s model of the four dimensions of listening. When people are asked what they hear, they normally identify the source of the sound. Listening to recordings of a big demonstration, they might

¹My translation. The original German term she uses in her text is „Emotionspraktiken” (Scheer 2011:68).

say they hear people shouting slogans, a megaphone and whistles. Pierre Schaeffer's model is based on four different but intertwined modes of listening: listening, perceiving, hearing and comprehending.² It teaches to ask for and to identify other dimensions than the indexicality, like the social meaning or the memories we associate with a certain sound – and also the physical response, the embodied reaction to it. Talking about the same sound, people might say now that they heard energy, anger and indignation, that they noticed that the microphone was in the middle of the crowd, that the sound sent them shivers down their spines and they felt excited because they remembered a successful demonstration they took part in themselves etc.

When listening to the sound objects of protest and strike I recorded in Lisbon and playing them to others, I realized that these recordings can transfer part of the affective dimension of the situation, better than written field notes could. The situation with my fellow students I described at the beginning is not the only example that proves that this also works by playing the sound objects to others. Sound easily transmits affects to other people – probably because we respond to it with our bodies, as I tried to explain with Schaeffer – or as Brandon LaBelle puts it, sound cannot be ignored, but asks for participation and “explicitly brings bodies together” (LaBelle 2010:xxiv).

A useful method to focus on the body is Murray Schafer's *soundscape recording* – the attempt to contain everything to which the ear is exposed in a given setting (Meintjes et al. 2010:330). I followed it by trying not to pick out just the sounds that seemed interesting to me, but to record everything around me and to regard it as a whole. Fortunately the recorder is less selective than the human ear.

However, I did not only keep my ears open, but also my eyes. In the following the emphasis will be put on the sounds, but other influences will be reflected as well. Before I take a closer look on some examples how sound was used in its affective dimension at the general strike, I will focus on the relevance of affect in recent anti-austerity protests in Lisbon.

Affect modulation and practices of emotion in the *Que se lixe a troika* movement

Massumi claims a performative, aesthetic and theatrical approach to power (Massumi 2010:58). What does that mean for affect in protest, and how is the potential of affect and affect modulation already used in protest? Or – to talk with Monique Scheer's actor-centered perspective – how do activists in Lisbon practice emotion, and how do they mobilize emotions to achieve their political aims?

Actually, what Massumi demands is already happening – affect modulation is not only used by the political elite, but also by the resistance. One example is the *Que se lixe a troika* movement in Lisbon. I argue that for the preparations of their first demonstration on September 15th, affects played an important part.

Let's start with the most obvious – the name. Few days after September 15th, I asked one of the organizers of the protest in an interview³ why the demonstration was such a success when it comes to the number of people that took to the streets. She assumed that one reason was the name and the slogan the group had chosen: *Que se lixe a troika – queremos as nossas vidas!*, loosely translated *Troika, go to hell – we want our lives!*,

² For a detailed description of the four modes of listening see Chion 1983:19 pp.

³ By request of the activists I interviewed, they have been anonymized. All interviews were conducted in Portuguese; translation by C.A.

“worked out very well [...] because it had a lot to do with a constantly increasing sensation, and I think we managed to comprehend this sensation.” (Activist I)

As Deborah Gould states, movements can name affects and thus direct emotions. She describes social movements as sites where meaning is generated and disseminated:

“Social movement contexts not only offer a language for people’s affective states, they also provide an emotional pedagogy of sorts, a guide for what and how to feel and for what to do in light of those feelings. Movements, in short, “make sense” of inchoate affective states and authorize selected feelings and actions while downplaying and even invalidating others.” (Gould 2010: 33)

Que se lixe a troika’s strategy was to be diverse, to involve as many people with different backgrounds as possible (activist I). Also for this reason, there was no concrete political or ideological message or, to be more precise, there were many of them. The days before the demonstration, each one of the subscribers of the manifesto published a text about their personal motivations that took them to the streets. These texts and the slogan with its immediacy and urgency, but at the same time vagueness and openness, provided a vast affective potential to identify with. Even people not that involved in politics could see themselves in it, and it gave them the possibility to express their anger and their desire to just live their lives without all those problems caused by austerity measures.

There was another slogan directly linked to the movement which also helped to express the urgency: “É preciso fazer qualquer coisa de extraordinário” – “Something extraordinary needs to be done”. Thus, even before the demonstration took part it was already special, and the big protests on that day liberated a lot of affective potential themselves, too. Since then the 15th of September figures like a turning point, a proof of success of what people are capable to do if they only want to. In a smaller scale, it is comparable with what Emma Dowling said about the atmosphere at the protests against the G8 meeting in Heiligendamm in 2007, where people felt like they were winning even though from a common perspective they did not (Dowling 2012a). This affective potential helps movements after the demonstrations to organize further protest events.

A protester I met on the train on my way home from another *Que se lixe a troika* demonstration told me, still very excited and thrilled by the atmosphere of September 15th, that that day could have been the beginning of a revolution because the atmosphere was special (field notes, 21.09.2012). What he felt was the potential for more. It is superfluous to say that this was not an objective or scientific analysis, of course, but it shows how an individual is affected by protest. It is the potential of affect Massumi talked about that is seen here and that Gould also refers to: “[In affect] there is always something more than what is actualized in social life.” (Gould 2010:27)

Talking in a more general way, social movements have always been charged with emotion. Revolution and romance seem to make just the perfect combination.

In the history of Portugal, there is at least one big example for this: The Carnation Revolution, a historical event that surely created a big potential for affection in protest in Portugal. The official memory of it bursts with emotion-charged elements: Red flowers in gun barrels, a song with lyrics full of solidarity and brotherhood that awoke the people from long years of dictatorship and called them to reclaim their country. But is this just the media and the official symbolism of the communist party, or do protesters actually refer to it with their practices?

If we look at the recent protest events in Lisbon, we see that *Grândola, Vila Morena*, the song of the revolution, is not only played and sung at protest events of the CGTP or political parties, but also within newer protest movements.

I argue that they refer to it mostly because of its potential to affect. It is a kind of embodied affective memory that comes into play here - the symbolism of the Carnation Revolution is used as an instrument to create a feeling of community, solidarity and power. In this case, the affective dimension is much more important than the ideological – the Carnation Revolution holds few real solutions for the current situation because it is completely different from how it was almost thirty years ago, but the affect might be somehow similar: Many people don't feel represented by their government, they feel like their government is completely against them and they can't do anything about it. This affect and the collective performance of the bodies by experiencing it is more important than the political context. Crowds have sung *Grândola* in recent demonstration events nearly countless times, but there was one line which was always sung louder than the rest of the song, being almost shouted in some cases: “O povo é quem mais ordena” (“It's the people that command”).⁴

This leads us to the importance of sound for affection in protest.

Sounds that disturb normality: The general strike on November 14th

As I will exemplify, the use of sound by individuals and by collectives played an important role to produce certain affects at the Portuguese general strike in November 2012.

If people who have no voice because they do not feel represented by the political elite protest loudly, they do politics as defined by Jaques Rancière: They make themselves hearable and break with the established order (Rancière 2002). In protests sound is an instrument to literally get a voice and to affect others. Brendon LaBelle writes that

“demonstrations produce an audibility that seeks to overturn or overwhelm the written record, the law, and house rule with a meaning determined by volume and the promise embedded in making a noise”
(LaBelle 2010:109).

Activists use sound to cause certain effects amongst the protesters and also on people who are not involved in the protest. One of those effects is the disruption of normality, as I will show in the following by describing a situation I experienced during the picket of the public transport bus drivers in Lisbon.

It was early in the morning, just before sunrise. The pickets and their supporters were trying to prevent the non-striking bus drivers from starting the service to fulfill the minimum transport plan. I had just arrived with a group of activists that wanted to support the picket line when they started a sit-in to block the exit together with the strikers. A few minutes later, the police dispersed the sit-in. Everything was quite calm – the policemen carried away the strikers one by one, almost as if they were following a routine, and the protesters let them carry them away.

Suddenly, a girl started to scream loudly as she was lifted from the ground and kept on screaming without a break until she was put down again. “She is screaming on purpose, they don't harm her”, a guy standing next to me said.

Following Monique Scheer, the girl used a practice of emotion; from a rational point of view

⁴ Interestingly enough, the *Que se lixe a troika* movement also makes use of this line of *Grândola* to appeal for their next demonstration.

there was no need for her to scream in that situation, but she used her voice and thus her body's ability to affect other bodies. Clearly the girl applied emotional codes to disrupt the routine. In that emotional community such behavior causes certain affects – screaming just doesn't leave people cold. We can go along with Emma Dowling's rhetorical question: What is affect in protest supposed to do if not disturb and disrupt normality? (Dowling 2012a)

Another kind of routine was disrupted a few hours later at the "mobile picket" of some activists of *Que se lixe a troika*. With a megaphone in their hands they went from shop to shop down a big avenue in the center of Lisbon to restrain the employees from working and to appeal for joining the big demonstration that was announced to take place in the afternoon. When listening to the recordings later on, I realized that on one recording, everything was unusually quiet. You could even hear the steps of the activist with the megaphone as she entered a building. There were only her movements and her voice, otherwise there was silence. I remembered then that this was recorded at a branch bank and that there were employees in the room, but they just did not say anything and ignored the protester who broke the silence.

In the situations described above affect was used mainly by individuals to provoke disruption, and this disruption became hearable. However, just as much as affect serves to disturb, it can be used to bring bodies together and to create an atmosphere of belonging, as we know from music in demonstrations (LaBelle 2010:115). Just like in the case of *Grândola*, songs are sung and slogans are shouted sometimes not so much because of their literal meaning but rather because of the atmosphere they create, even though those two sides are intertwined. As Erika Summers Effler writes, "we still focus too much attention on emotional *content* expressed in discourse" (Summers Effler 2012). She demands for bringing the body back into the focus when talking about social movements. Indeed, the question is: Which atmospheres are created by protesting bodies, and how can we interpret them politically?

As Jonathan Sterne shows in his article about the use of casseroles in many recent demonstrations, noise making opens demonstrations for more people. The instruments are improvised and the music is deliberately non-professional. In this way differences are transcended and different people are invited to participate (Sterne 2012). Making noise with casseroles was not very widespread in the demonstrations I observed, but there were similar ways of using music in order to embody protest. One example is a group of percussion players who always take part in Lisbon anti-austerity demonstrations. They provide the rhythm for the slogans people shout and allow a collective performance of the bodies moving to their music.

Different practices of emotion and new forms of political subjectivity

What I have shown so far were examples of some practices of emotion that lately have been used in anti-austerity protests. What has not been focused yet is if there are any differences in the use of affect between the established leftist protest and recent protest groups. At this point of the research it is impossible to make a satisfying comparison, partly because the differences are not that clear. As Sterne explains, even the increasing popularity of pot-banging protests has traditional roots: "They are, after all, embodied acts in the old-fashioned sense, performed loudly and defiantly by people in the streets" (Sterne 2012). "Established" protest is not always completely separable from "new" protest. Despite mistrust on both sides there has been some rapprochement – if only for strategic reasons. Nevertheless, some insights into different emotional practices can be gained.

In the protest events that I attended and the sounds that I recorded there, what I call “established protest” is represented mainly by trade unions. Let us one more time go back to the listening session I described at the beginning. My colleagues did not only react to the first recording, but also to the second one, which was a fragment of a speech of Arménio Carlos, the leader of the trade unions federation CGTP. The reactions to this sound object were quite different from the ones to the recording of the public transport workers’ sit-in. Asked what they had heard, people gave answers like “pathos” or “routine” (field notes, 29.11.2012). There was no trace of empowerment or liberated potential in their associations, even though that was clearly the speaker’s aim.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to deny the affective dimension in Arménio Carlos’ speech. In fact, the institutionalized, traditional protest uses affect a lot, but apparently lacks in credibility.

I suggest that one reason for this is that trade unions seldom use affect in its open and inchoate form. Instead, emotions are already defined, and there are fixed names for them in the ideological discourse like “solidarity”. If the channeling of affects is too predictable, the potential of affect, its fluidity and power, get lost. This is what Deborah Gould means by writing that “[a]ffect [...] greases the wheels of ideology, but it also gums them up” (Gould 2010:33). There is no contrast between affect and ideology, as Massumi suggests – in the end, ideology has a lot to do with affect. It is nothing without its affective dimension, but the affect can’t be too pretentious either. Affectivity can be planned only to a certain point – the rest is inchoate, uncertain, undefined, and fluid. The CGTP tries just too hard to evoke certain affects; they make a routine out of it which is hearable in the speeches and in the voices that shout their slogans. The trade union is often criticized because many people have the impression that it’s all just show as usual and nobody really cares about doing anything extraordinary to change the situation. In that case, the emotional codes are not coherent with the practices.

Another point is that at trade union strikes, people need to identify completely with the group, they are addressed as a unity and as a collective identity.

However, as Antonella Corsani states, the identification with a collective “we” can only be a partial and temporary construction (Corsani 2007). Positioning oneself is always the product of a relationship not of the individual to the collective, but between individuals and their others. Following Kevin McDonald, new social movements have recognized the need to break with the idea of a collective identity. There is no representation, and no group identity needs to be manifested through action. They are rather organized in heterogeneous networks than in homogeneous communities and can be explored in term of an “experience of difference” (McDonald 575): The people that constitute them do not share an identity, but an experience or situation. Under these conditions it is impossible to continue with a universal political subject like “the working class” (Corsani 2006).

McDonald argues that forms of embodied communication are more and more important for these new forms of organization. This leads us back to the concept of affect which, as defined at the beginning, consists of interactions, of relationships between bodies.

Other than trade unions or political parties, new social movements correspond to the need for new ways of thinking about subjectivity. They allow wider interpretations of emotions and, along with this, more diversity. As I already explained, the *Que se lixe a troika* movement made use of the plurality of experiences as their strategy. The activists tried to evoke certain affects, but in a more open way than the CGTP, so that more people could find themselves in them. Another good example for a relatively new social movement with a successful labeling practice is the movement of the *indignados*. In this case, a complex affective state was translated and summed up into one word that formed a common ground for the group.

Social movements can thus benefit from using affect to mobilize people. They respond to the need of other kinds of political subjectivities. In the last chapter, the advantages the concept of affect provides for social movement *studies* will be discussed.

The affected researcher and what affect can contribute to social movement studies

There is an important element of the concept of affect that has been ignored so far in this text. As we know, affect does not determine a fixed group identity, but a fluid condition that responds to new forms of non-representational democracy. Thus, using this concept to understand protest also means to consider it as a way to critique subjectivity *through methodology*. If affect allows the deconstruction of the individual, it is not only a theory, but has also methodological consequences. If the focus lies on the relationships between people, there is a need for a different research perspective which also includes an emphasis on the researcher's own affection.

I argue that the researcher's affection reveals more than just an individual condition. Since the writing culture debate it is common knowledge between anthropologists that objectivity does not exist, but the affects I experienced are not only individual either. There is always something objective in the subjective, even related to the conditions under which scholars produce knowledges.

My experiences at the general strike showed that doing research in protests always involves the researcher's body. Instead of ignoring this, we should make use of it by asking: How can our own affections contribute to the analysis, and which kind of material do they provide?

First of all they are a proof that affect is something that happens between bodies and concerns everyone. In the middle of a sit-in at four in the morning it is just impossible to be unaffected by protest. The fact that the screaming girl makes me feel uncomfortable and gives me the creeps without any rational reason should not be ignored. In fact, it tells me something about the function of affect and practices of emotion. Of course it makes no sense to assume that everybody feels the same, but my affection is an indicator for the affective potential of an interaction. If we do not ignore it, but make use of it to get a deeper insight into this potential, a truly thick description – enriched with meaning – can become possible.

Affect can be a motor of change. However, the dangers of affect for social movements cannot be ignored and must also be taken into account in social movement studies. Clare Hemmings criticizes Massumi's perspective on affects as one-sided because it only highlights the positive potential. In fact, there are not just "good" affects – they also have the potential to support "bad" things such as "[t]he delights of consumerism, feelings of belonging attending fundamentalism or fascism" (Hemmings 2005:551). Massumi does not explain how to differentiate here.

As Gould states, new social movements often begin with an inarticulate and inarticulable sensation that something in the established order is wrong (Gould 2010:32). Social movements can try to channel this feeling, but affect is not completely controllable. In the case of a big demonstration based mainly on negative feelings of a great number of people toward their government, it might be difficult to create a common political awareness. Some of the activists of *Que se lixe a troika* told me about their concerns about racist and fundamentalist tendencies in the crowd (activist II and field notes, 20.09.2012). If social

movements rely on affect rather than on ideology to mobilize people, finding a political consensus is almost impossible.⁵

The other way around, affect also can help scholars to understand why some activist groups just don't cooperate with each other. Sometimes the significant factor is not their political differences, but just personal – thus affective – discrepancies between some activists.

Last, but not least: What sound investigation can contribute to social movement studies

Using sound recordings as an anthropological method breaks with the ocular-centricity of modernity by doing fieldwork which explores the acoustic construction of knowledge. Without this focus on the hearable, one wouldn't listen so carefully to the 10th time they play *Grândola*.

An emphasis on sound also helps to alienate known things. After all, looking – and listening – to things from a different angle is what ethnology is supposed to do.

On the other hand, there is no reason for euphoria. The analysis of sound might help us to understand certain things better, but it should not be mistaken for the key to a better reflection in general. Just as in the case of other empirical material, we as researchers still are the ones who decide what is made audible and what remains silent, and we need to reflect on this decision.

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⁵ The activists of *Que se lixe a troika* respond in different ways to this problem. Some of them separate clearly between the organization of a big demonstration as a way to get many people on the streets to cause attention and their activities in other areas in which the political content is more important.

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