CONSTRUCTING CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

THE RENEGOTIATION OF CITIZENSHIP VISUALISED IN THE PERFORMATIVE ARTS DURING THE AFTERMATH OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN VALENCIA

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Paz y Amor
Caroline
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Ever since I was young I have a fascination and interest for the staged stories. During and after primary school I have been part of all kinds of theatre groups and it always fascinated me how these performances provoked me in taking an unusual or new perspective towards the world around me. The world was the same, but I was not. Sometimes just for a moment – hours or days of fresh inspiration triggered by the performance – while other times something connected in my head: I had learned something! The latter learnings followed my teenage years that were more about “the moments”. Especially at the beginning of my post-high school adventures – when I spend long periods in Italy, India and later also in Spain and Mexico. I familiarised with political theatre, written by the actors-activists themselves and narrating socio-political topics highly accurate at the time. In Mexico, for example, I saw a play on gender inequality and the difficult realities of women in the country – suffering from the patriarchal oriented society. It awoke a reflection that is still ongoing, on my role, position and privileges in the world. As a matter of fact, the insights in different state of the art debates happened also while reading prose or listening to music. Art, for me, pilfers new ways of thinking and performing, like a knowledge facilitator. It is therefore the first source of inspiration of the thesis topic I am about to introduce to you.

The second source of inspiration stems from only a couple of years ago, when I read the essay ‘Indignez-Vous!’ from Stéphane Hessel (2010). This essay-manifest voiced some of my personal concerns with today’s society. Hessel remembered us of the universality of human rights and called out to everyone, and especially to the younger generation, to get up and ‘get concerned’ about this world. A burning world, according to Hessel, where capitalist neoliberalism is augmenting the differences between rich and poor. Hessel writes that his generation had a clear fire they were fighting – poor human rights protection in the post-World War II situation of Europe - he invites people to a personal search for the modern fires in Europe (and the rest of the world). A search that, after being accomplished, would lead to an honest personal concern about the above stated increasing injustices. Hessel argues that this honest concern – the outcome of the personal search – is what Europe desperately needs (Hessel, 2010). Hence, identifying the fires of today can feed into the performance of a more social and human centred society.

The connection of these two sources of inspiration, although not yet so obvious, will gain significance towards the end of the thesis. For now, they are merely two separate pillars on which I will start building this first introductory chapter.

Giving social change a chance
The search for the possibilities or desires of social change has been of interest to philosophers as well as to revolutionaries like Emilio Zapata, Che Guevara or Gandhi. More recently, the Moroccan
scholar Alain Badiou described the outburst of an “event” or crisis as an historical turning point in time after which the political and social landscapes are malleable again (Badiou in Bassett, 2008). Badiou is interested in how these reality-shattering shifts, – called “events” in his analysis - take place, and how they abruptly interrupt everything we took for granted. Leading for example, to transformations of the current political situation (Johnston, 2009: xxviii). The “event” can be seen as “the alternative” within a situation that is visualised by the happening of an event. The alternative stems from within a situation but is not part of it, in Badiou’s terminology this is the perspective of the “excluded part”, but that will be properly introduced in the next chapter. Social change is subsequently identified as inherent to the aftermath of an “event”.

Those that revolt are adding another voice to the arena; from a position of exclusion (at the end of the revolt the group can no longer be left unrepresented or excluded). The necessity of this voice is defended for example in post-colonial theory. Post-colonial theorists argue that modernity is claiming ‘the monopoly of representation’ (Icaza and Vázquez, 2013: 696) and colonialism in modernity is whatever modernity renders invisible (hence, “the excluded part” of the situation according to Badiou). The invisibility within the “epistemic hegemony of modernity” can be challenged by political events in order to achieve epistemic justice – meaning: the end of economic exploitation and cultural alienation (Icaza and Vázquez, 2013: 683). A second point of post-colonial theorists is the necessity to not see social struggles within the chronology of our time. In other words: their point is to challenge the idea that history forcefully follows a linear process and prevent the inherent process of normalisation of every epistemic struggle - in this way any struggle would always be interpreted as a normal part of the system and can in no way be seen as a legitimate alternative to the former situation.

Struggles that are analysed from a post-colonial starting point focus on social struggles, not as opposing certain world views, but interrogating world views (ibid.). In order to see the creative power of the alternative voices and visualise them, they should be taken serious and not normalised – they are not the linear consequence but a challenging alternative. Post-colonial scholars and activists generally try to make an effort to re-think the political, to unlearn the learned and contribute to a diversification of spaces, concepts and thoughts about politics and life. Additionally, they explicitly accept the limits of the academic framework, a framework which should always always always be as open as possible for emergent alternative perspectives and frameworks (Mignolo, 1997, 2000; Santos, 2006; Waller and Marcos, 2005; Icaza and Vázquez, 2013).

Judith Butler visualised power and counter-hegemonic practices – her way of spatialising places where the pluralisation of the narrative takes place, like activities of neighbourhood communities (Schurr, 2014) She is ‘interested in questions of how social change occurs within and despite of a hegemonic order’ (Butler in Schurr, 2014: 105). “Counter-hegemonic” activities are, according to Butler stemming from feelings of repression and frustration with the current hegemonic system
In their theory social changes can occur when boosted and embodied by the so-called counter-hegemonic activities (Schurr, 2014). In a more advanced stadium these activities can lead to general demands that in turn would demand the hegemony to change (Ibid.). The term “counter-hegemonic” should be used carefully, since it implies opposition, while the intention rather seems to be to see “opposition” to the dominant neoliberal paradigm as alternative manifestations of socio-political ideas. This is relevant because the word “opposition” has a negative connotation and in this sense the conventional socio-political narration has the monopoly on “positive” or constructive power, and can be argued to be the only eligible candidate for political legitimacy. Hence, shutting the door for newcomers to the political arena.

During the ongoing aftermath of the most recent economic crisis, that started in 2008, citizens are struggling with the post-crisis measures imposed by their governments. The most commonly used label of these initiatives is the (normalised) label of “anti-austerity movements”. But are austerity measures the only reason for the protests? The assignation of a social movement as being an “anti-austerity” movement not only normalises their struggle in opposition to the governmental measures, they also merge a variety of sentiments that now appear to be only directed towards the economic measurements. As Icaza and Vázquez (2013) put it: the revolt is reduced to the outcome of capitalism itself and justified with the historical ruler. Hence, this “chronology of narrativity” rules out the possibility of transformation or social change within any paradigm. Subsequently, it also hides the creative power of living in a world where a plurality of epistemic narratives are at home.

The normalisation of socio-political struggles is a pity, agrees Naomi Klein (2007). The scholar states transformational opportunities that events bring along are rendered invisible with it (Klein, 2007). An example of the economic crisis is such opportune and pliable moment in which the modern hegemonic paradigm – capitalist neoliberalism - tries to tackle the diverse social movements by cornering their protests and initiatives: moulding them into the above identified anti-austerity voices. Klein (2007), like Badiou and post-colonial theorists pleas in her book for a less breaking with the binary thinking, breaking with the “historical narrativity”.

The Spanish chronology

At the moment Spain is the playground of socio-political struggles that are related to the aftermath of the economic crisis. Additionally, on the Iberian island the amount of alternative voices that have become visible since the inception of the crisis is bewildering, and introduces a ‘shift in the power of mobilisation in Spain away from parties of the left and traditional movements [...] give a voice to the excluded’ (Hughes, 2011: 413).

In Spain, the economic crisis that started in 2008, was translated into political and societal consequences in 2011. It was, in other words, the start of period when the austerity measures were no longer speculated about but were implemented. Spain stood, as soon became clear, at
the beginning of big socio-economic trouble. After the first round of cuts at the start of the crisis, the second round in 2011 centred around cutbacks in social rights, health care and pensions. In spring of 2011 the Spanish people were losing trust in a solution that, they feared, would make them jobless, without a decent health care system and homeless. On the 15th of May of 2011 massive demonstrations were convoked by collaborating collectives and organisations throughout Spain. These revolts led in Madrid to an encampment on the main square, Plaza del Sol. The first overnighter in Madrid spilled over to many other cities who started to set up their own encampments on public squares. The lack of confidence of the Spanish population in their government would in 2014 be as high as 80%- compared to the 35% of 2008 (Dekker and Feenstra, 2015: 8). Especially young people were affected, of the 20- to 24-year-olds 40% was unemployed in 2011 (Perugorría and Tejerina, 2013: 427). Unable to pay for their own living “70% of the 18- to 29-year-olds still lived with their parents” (Ibid.).

Two years after the spring protests of 2011 a new political voice started to arise in the political landscape; the political party Podemos (we can). Influenced and motivated by “15M” – one of the biggest movements that was shaped by the crisis . Podemos was a strong alternative voice sprouting from the political crisis. This party based its electoral program on the assemblies of 15M and the self-organised assemblies – called “carracoles” (snails). They have been fomenting ideas of re-organising the economy in a non-capitalist way (more about this in chapter 3).

Scholars of political and social sciences have been eager to investigate the aftermath of the economic crisis that made the world tremble. However, most research on the impact of the crisis has focussed on health related issues, on political consequences and on the economic collapse itself. What these insights did not cover is the possibility for plurification of the hegemonic narrative – that would favour societal transformation with a non-linear analysis (Castells et al., 2014). Only a few scholars touch upon the possibilities of activism for transformation. However, they only focus on the political arena (Ibid.). This is surprising because, the economic crisis is also a societal crisis (Perugorría and Tejerina, 2013; Dekker and Feenstra, 2015). Castells et al (2014) state that Spain is in a historical period of transition. Their research maps out the social consequences of an economic and political crisis and indicates that the situation of Spain today is one greatly affected -on the economic and on the social level- by the crisis. Castells’ research focuses on what flourishes in this transition. They identify ‘cultural vanguard[s] searching for a different way of life’ (Castells et al, 2012: 12) - people and movements who are exploring alternative ways of living. Castells et al (2012) bring forward very recent examples of micro economies that are, inter alia, build around small-scale farming.

Another way to explore alternative visions is by analysing the performance art theatre as a discourse - a discourse refers to communication, written or speech (historical documents to art performances) about a certain topic or subject (Barnett, 2006). Knowledge production is, as we know, not only limited to scientific investigations, it is also produced through social interactions
and cultural expressions (Bleiker, 2003). The value of an artistic discourse like theatre is that it can unravel state of the art discussions and struggles in society because theatre has the ability to mirror a society’s sentiments. Hence, it can reflect how the new meaning of life has been shaped by the crisis, challenging like this ‘the entrenched forms of representations that have come to circumscribe our understanding of social political reality’ (Bleiker, 1999: 1140). Art gives space to marginalised visions and likewise boost the emancipation of it (ibid.). In line with Butler, “counter-hegemonic spaces” can be spaces where art is created or performed. Including these spaces would offer an unconventional map of the desires and performances of change that are expressed at other “lower” political levels of society.

In my thesis I want to give space to the transformative movements in order to go beyond the chronological analysis of the economic crisis that has provoked anti-austerity movements. Rather I would like to highlight perspectives that are speaking from the performing art form: theatre. The socio-political reality in Spain is very complex at the moment. In order to grasp transformation, and zoom in how social movements are influencing todays socio-political landscape. A perspective from the arts might be able to provide us with an alternative insight that is not captured by any other methodological endeavour - in other times of crisis or conflict theatre has proved to be essential for a better understanding of the situation.

Central in the analysis of transformation will be the political subjects of Valencia. An important concept is “citizenship”, I will discuss this with much more detail in chapter 2. A recent approach towards this concept is the tendency to see citizenship as a political struggle. In other words, it give space to analyse transformations in society by analysing civic struggles - analysed through “acts of citizenship” (Adrijasevic, 2013; Isin 2008/2009 and Dagnino, 2008). While traditional citizenship theory looks at requirements of membership and citizenship as a status, I aim for a study that steps beyond these legal fundamentals and rather focuses on how citizenship is currently under construction. My focal points are those activist citizens that are currently enacting the kind of city they want. This tendency visualises a shift from ‘citizenship as a formal status towards the question of how subjects constitute themselves as citizens irrespective of their status, and in doing so makes collective and marginal struggles its entry point of analysis’ (Andrijasevic, 2013: 49).

The contribution of this thesis consequently will consist of different aspects that can be divided in a scientific and societal one. The scientific value of this research is a methodological exploration of how theatre might provide a critical perspective and generate knowledge on the chaotic aftermath of the economic crisis. Especially as analytical tool of social transformation (citizenship transformation) because especially in times of struggle art (theatre) is able to mirror sentiments in a way conventional science cannot. Theatre will be used as a discourse and framework - together with the Event theory of Badiou and the concept of citizenship as defined by Andrijasevic (2013), Isin (2008/2009) and Dagnino (2008) - to look at the aftermath of the economic crisis.
The societal relevance of this research is twofold: First, in line with post-colonial theorists – who argue that we cannot assume that the protests and social movements stemming from this crisis are a “logical” reaction – I aim to step away from historical chronology and analyse the complementary societal struggles that appear in the current aftermath. In order to elaborate on narrative of the rising social movements, the new political subjects. Second, I aim to visualise the contribution of the “counter-hegemonic” activities, like political theatre - which acknowledges the importance of spaces where all sorts of daily cultural/political activities are carried out. These activities constitute a “counter-hegemonic” position (Butler in Schurr, 2014) and therefore might inform us about the struggles and acts of citizenship that inspire social change that are currently germinating in unconventional political spaces. Through theatre I aim to gain insight in local transformations of citizenship that eventually can lead to challenge dominant power structures and catalyse social change.

All in all, if a perspective on the post-crisis Spain that comes from the performing arts and artists is added to the palette, we might achieve a broader and deeper insight of the impact of it on the people in Spain.

Methodology
The two central research questions that guide this activist study is formulated as follows:

What changes in citizenship do artistic expressions from the performative arts visualise? Followed by four sub questions:

I. To what extent is the economic crisis of 2008 an “event” following the definition of the event by Alain Badiou?
II. What changes in citizenship can be observed in conventional literature and analysis of post-crisis Spain?
III. What changes in citizenship does theatre show?
IV. In what ways does theatrical discourse offer valuable or complementary insights in the ongoing changes of citizenship during the post-crisis?

To answer the central question of this thesis I will use different methodological approaches, literature reviews, participant observation, interviews and my research diary. Literature reviews will be carried out largely in the first part of this thesis.

Chapters 2 will be used to explore the socio-political landscape of Spain and the city of Valencia and chapter 3 to develop a theoretical framework with the concept of citizenship, the theory of the event and the discourse of theatre as a way of knowing. In chapter 4 the curtains will be opened for the theatre plays and playwrights. Finally in chapter 5 will consider the contributions of
the theatrical discourse to the analysis of social transformation in the aftermath of the economic crisis.

To answer the central questions the interviews were held with artists and with their public visiting the performance. I furthermore focused on artists and art that had a clear link with the political or social situation today in Valencia. Participant and site observations are based on my fieldwork and internship in Valencia.

Listos? Vamos…
Chapter 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*Happiness is what happens when you discover that you are capable of something*
*that you did not know that you were capable of.*

*Alain Badiou*

Introduction

May, 2016. I arrive in Valencia, the third biggest city of Spain. Since 2011, the economic crisis, joblessness, fraud and corruption have been constant worries for the inhabitants of this city (and actually in the rest of Spain as well). Everything has been at stake for the bulk of the Valencianos: their job, their standards of living and sometimes the right to a place to live. At the peak of the crisis, banks evicted over two hundred families per day from their houses. My curiosity that leads me to travel to Valencia stems from a desire to investigate how people deal with the “new” reality, how they re-define their life in the aftermath of this tremendous breakdown. Most importantly: if this breakdown has led to shifts in the everyday practices of Valencia’s political subjects. In this chapter I will explore concepts that help me to better understand these shifts. In the first paragraph I will discuss the concept of citizenship and possibilities for its renegotiation. In the second paragraph the Theory of Change in relation to an Event will be explored. Subsequently, I will elaborate on an unconventional way of knowing, namely exploring the performing art form “theatre” as a mirror of society. Ultimately, I will present the research questions that I aim to answer.

§ 2.1 Negotiating citizenship: Crisis and Social change

Depending on the angle that one picks within political philosophy citizenship is studied and defended otherwise (Pierson, 2008; Kymlicka, 2002). The revival of citizenship studies can be explained by the coming into being of increasing pluralistic societies and processes of globalisation (Leydet, 2014). Concurrently, during the present post-war era, Pierson argues, citizenship is the most important ‘constituting principle of the modern nation-state’ (Pierson, 1996: 106).

The most influential approaches to citizenship studies are the traditional conceptualisations of the liberal and republican advocates - who build on the hierarchies and legacies of feudalism that recently ‘have given way to more socially mobile and fluid societies in which contractual relations (above all, those of the marketplace) are dominant’ (Pierson, 1996: 110). An example of such a contractual relation are the EU’s agricultural import and export policies applied on the farmers

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1 Davidson (2015)
from the African continent. Contrasting the traditional angle of the liberal and republican advocates a recent approach is the alternative tendency to see citizenship as a political struggle - analysed through “acts of citizenship” (Adrijasevic, 2013; Isin 2008/2009 and Dagnino, 2008). This tendency visualises a shift from ‘citizenship as a formal status towards the question of how subjects constitute themselves as citizens irrespective of their status, and in doing so makes collective and marginal struggles its entry point of analysis.’ (Andrijasevic, 2013: 49). A shift in other words from “who is the citizen” to “what makes the citizen”. Nonetheless, traditional and less conventional political-philosophical perspectives on the concept also have some overarching features. This common core of citizenship harbours, according to Kabeer (2005), values of justice, recognition and solidarity. Where justice can be understood as the right to equal treatment for everyone; recognition as ‘the intrinsic worth of human beings […] and respect for their differences’ and; solidarity as ‘the capacity to identify with others and to act in unity with them in their claims for justice and recognition’ (Kabeer, 2005: 4-7).

Next I will briefly discuss the already mentioned most influential and historically salient approaches to citizenship: (1) the liberal view and (2) the republican view. After which I will turn to two contemporary interpretations that further expound on and contrast these historical approaches: (3) the neoliberal notion around active citizens and (4) the critical notion and alternative perspective of citizenship as a political struggle and the activist citizen.

§ 2.1.1 Liberal and republican notions of citizenship

Both liberal and republican notions of citizenship are about the legal status of a citizen within a community, prescribing how this relation should be shaped. They differ especially on the aspect if the crux in the concept should be about political agency (republican) or about the legal status, hence the right to have rights (liberal).

The classical liberal notion defines citizenship on the basis of the relationship between the state and its citizens. It proclaims that citizens’ rights and duties are unconditional; the state enacts the role of the guardian of those rights - ‘individuals enjoy them by virtue of their status as citizens, regardless of any action or inaction on their part’ (Kabeer, 2005: 17). People are free and equal and the government provides the law that makes this possible without (much) participation of the population. Consequently, the liberal notion of citizenship differentiates heavily between the private and the political sphere. It is an individualist notion of citizenship, where the government, as much as possible, facilitates personal freedom in return for adherence to the law and the duty to engage in the economy - as an employee and taxpayer. The exercise of the rights and

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2For more information see background articles of the UN and Al Jazeera:
freedoms of each citizen is generally carried out in the private spheres (Leydet, 2014) – what people do in their spare time with their own means and in mutual accordance.

Critique on the liberal take on citizenship focuses on the apathetic, laid-back attitude that is fostered with this sort of social contract. Bellamy (2000) argues that libertarians foster a society with an increasing lack of political engagement and preoccupied with navel-gazing.

In the republican notion of citizenship rights are the result of the enactment of the contract between citizens and the state (Miller, 2000). Participation is a moral obligation and “political agency” is key in this model. To be a citizen is to appear and engage in the public political sphere and a presupposition for citizens to be part of society. Citizenship is not a property of a citizen it is an act - ‘[...] active participation in processes of deliberation and decision-making ensures that individuals are citizens, not subjects’ (Leydet, 2014). Participation should be characterised by a strong commitment to fellow representatives of the society in question and a just as strong engagement in the private and public political field (Miller, 2000). Citizenship then is essential for a flourishing and humane society where solidarity is part of the basis for the advancement of the common good in the republican notion.

§ 2.1.2 Neoliberal notion of citizenship: Active citizenship

The neoliberal notion of citizenship stands in sheer contrast with the classical liberal notion of the term. Neoliberals eschew the state as the protector of citizens (like in the classical notion). Instead they argue that a citizenship status needs to be gained through performing duties and taking responsibility – not like in the republican view through political participation, but rather by engaging as consumers and entrepreneurs, who are at the basis of the neoliberal capitalist state. Similar to the republican perspective rights are only granted in return for complying with duties, but there is a stronger separation between the role of the government and that of the citizens. The role of the state here is the promotion of self-reliance, while emphasising duties over rights and applauding for those who commit to necessary production for the capitalist market. Following this line of argumentation ‘duties have to be regarded as prior to rights and the condition for rights’ (ibid.). Citizenship, Kabeer argues, has become ‘owning a house and paying taxes’ (Kabeer, 2005: 17).

In western societies neoliberal governments have been promoting the term “active citizenship” since three decades (Verhoeven and Tonkens, 2013). Active citizenship is an umbrella term for participation efforts, or, even simpler: duties. Proponents of active citizenship judge that citizens have become too self-focused and should participate more in activities that lead to the benefit of the whole community. Active citizenship emerged from an idea of neoliberal governments who
feel that people lack feelings of responsibility or engagement and need more guidance in the “duties” part of the social contract (Lister, 2005). As a consequence of these responsibilising practices of governments, like our Dutch government, the welfare state dependence is reduced. ‘Active citizenship has become almost synonymous with decreasing citizen dependence on social services and other welfare arrangements.’ (Verhoeven and Tonkens, 2013: 415). Pierson (1996) is very critical about these developments. He states that although active citizenship can be seen as a virtue, it is due to the precondition of fulfilling these duties that one has rights. Active citizens are expected to perform a growing range of duties in order to be seen as a worthy member of the nation state. Noteworthy is, that the activities citizens are expected to perform, are more often for the benefit of the state than for themselves or society - ‘Citizens are expected to shoulder tasks formerly performed by the state, such as providing care and support to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups’ (Verhoeven and Tonkens, 2013: 415). Although this notion starts from the idea of mobilising citizens because they lack engagement or are lazy, the results of Lister’s (2005) study show that there is no solid foundation that (young) people shelter a lack of engagement sentiments in the own political community and subsequently there should be no need for pressing awareness of citizenship related responsibilities (Lister, 2005).

§ 2.1.3 Critical notion of citizenship: Activist citizenship

I will now turn to a group of scholars that define citizenship as a political struggle over rights, a definition that I will make use of in this thesis (Dagnino, 2008; Andrijasevic, 2013; Isin, 2009; Isin and Nielsen, 2008). Some scholars of this group claim that studying “acts of citizenship” is the best way to advance the insight in the concept of citizenship. In contrast to the republican and liberal perspective citizenship is not necessarily perceived as a status nor is it prescriptive in its foundation. It is rather a negotiation of citizens with their representatives. Studying acts of citizenship in this negotiation means investigating transformations of power relations and stretching boundaries of inclusion and exclusion debates.

To find out more about the actual performance of citizenship Kabeer (2005) focuses on the “excluded groups”, aiming to discover how such groups bring about transformation of rights and duties and challenge the boundaries of citizenship. Kabeer (2005) argues in favour of a more inclusive approach towards citizenship that goes beyond the relation between the state and the individual who hold separate (or similar) rights and responsibilities. Her conceptualisation of inclusive citizenship focusses on collective rights and responsibilities and the collective development of these from below. Kabeer (2005) investigates boundaries of citizenship by focussing on a group that fights the frontiers the most, the so called “excluded”. This development is at the heart of this critical notion of citizenship: citizenship is always under construction and should be seen as a political struggle over rights (Dagnino, 2008; Andrijasevic, 2013; Isin, 2009; Isin and Nielsen, 2008).
Unfortunately, as an effect of neoliberalism citizenship has ‘begun to be understood and promoted as mere individual integration into the market.’ (Dagnino, 2010: 63). The implication of this for the understanding of the term is that it is essentially about the *economisation* of people as taxpayers and employee/employers. This appears to be a too strict interpretation of citizenship, Dagnino (2010) argues that citizenship therefore needs to be redefined. Crucial for deepening democracy and the theoretical conceptualisation of the term citizenship, according to Dagnino (2008) and Kabeer (2005), is the political endeavour by (minority) groups struggling for recognition and the right to have rights. The redefinition should take place in everyday practice and carried out directly by ‘participation of civil society and social movements in state decisions’. (Dagnino, 2010: 65). This is essential to the redefinition because ‘it contains the potential for radical transformation of the structure of power relations. Political practices inspired by the new definition of citizenship help one to visualise the possibilities opened up by this process’ (Ibid.).

Similarly, feminist scholars on citizenship initiate from the point of view of the “excluded” - in feminist terms the “oppressed” - seeking the role of marginalised social mobilisations in the process of citizenship construction. Andrijasevic (2013) states that the marginalised have the power to decentralise standpoints of the political elite. In fact she is criticising mainstream research to be limiting and promotes unconventional perspectives that have been neglected – she names mobilisations of people movements like student collectives, workers movements, migrants, but also the *Indignados* in Spain- to be taken much more serious. This current omission has led to a divergence of ‘how citizenship is enacted ‘on the ground’ and how it is theorised’ (Andrijasevic, 2013: 61). The scholar suggests that the struggles of the marginalised can be seen as catalysers for citizenship transformation.

[...] Acts of citizenship' shifts attention from citizenship as a formal status towards the question of how subjects constitute themselves as citizens irrespective of their status, and in doing so makes collective and marginal struggles its entry point of analysis. [...] Conventional approaches to EU citizenship typically do not recognize, how mobilisations by ostensibly marginal groups constitute European citizenship. (Andrijasevic, 2013: 49 + 61).

Claiming rights seems to come close to the neoliberal perspective, yet Isin (2008/2009) sees the claimer of rights not as an active citizen but an *activist* citizen. He argued that a new vocabulary is necessary to cope with the developments that concern the concept of citizenship in the 21st century. Additionally, Isin and Nielsen (2008) argue, citizenship theory should include more analyses on the “acts” of citizens to gain a different perspective on the rights and responsibilities of citizens captured by the concept. Acts of citizenship are to be found ‘around concrete issues and immediate needs in the social and community sphere [...] springing from impulses for social
justice, for desires for recognition and dignity and from the need to confront concrete social needs and issues that affect everyday life’ (Kabeer, 2005 in Gaventa, 2010: 65). In other words, according to the scholars, civic acts create ruptures and constitute new perspectives. Therefore at the core of “acts of citizenship” is the shift from the question of ‘Who is the citizen?’ to ‘What makes the citizen?’ (Isin 2009: 383). In such a conceptualisation of citizenship “acts” are the entry point and the definer - they change the perspective from a static perception of citizenship to an understanding of the practice of citizenship (see figure 1). Additionally, it investigates how claims and obligations are enacted and citizens constituted “through struggles for rights among various groups in their ongoing process of formation and reformation”- (Isin, 2009: 383). Opening spaces for inclusion and challenging established structures. These formation and reformation processes are best studied through acts (Isin, 2009). An historical example of a transformative act was the hunger strike of suffragette Marion Wallace Dunlop, who’s revolt triggered understanding and transformation (Isin and Nielsen, 2008). Andrijasevic (2013) adds hereto that revolts open ways for the forming of new political subjects. The scholar does not only take political struggle as the entry point to citizenship but shows it can function as an alternative mode of knowledge production on citizenship and its re-articulation (Andrijasevic, 2013: 62).

Figure 1: Timeline Citizenship Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is the citizen?</th>
<th>What makes the citizen?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship is about:</td>
<td>Participation, engaging in the contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights as citizens social contract</td>
<td>Sober welfare state and focus on self-reliance and fulfilling duties in the context of a sober welfare state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take on membership:</td>
<td>Active citizenship; collaborate with state Citizen becomes consumer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal status</td>
<td>Political agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this paragraph on citizenship as a theory I have discussed the two mainstream entry points in the debate: the liberal perspective and the republican perspective. Although the details of both perspectives vary greatly they are both about the status and agency of citizens – engaging in the social contract - and their inclusion and exclusion in the political community. Both are prescriptive attempts to theorise citizenship. The second part of this section focussed on a more recent

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3 ‘We can define acts of citizenship as those acts that transform forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) and modes (citizens, strangers, outsiders, aliens) of being political by bringing into being new actors as activist citizens (that is, claimants of rights) through creating or transforming sites and stretching scales.’ (Isin, 2009: 382)
debate within citizenship theory. On the one side this is shaped by the neoliberal concept of Active Citizenship - focusing on the simplification of the welfare state and the promotion of self-reliance as well as responsibility. On the other side by a critical group of scholars who consider citizens as activists that are constantly re-defining and re-negotiating their position in society vis-a-vis their role in the political process. This latter group attempts to gain insight in the concept of citizenship by analysing the acts of citizenship themselves “what makes the citizen?”. This simultaneously represents a less prescriptive and more concrete, decentralised perspective by departing in their analyses from information collected from observable acts of citizenship, like protests and people movements. These scholars aim to analyse possible transformations in society and possibilities for a more inclusive citizenship.

For the purpose of this research - in which I will look for citizenship changes in society that are related to the economic crisis - the choice for the critical perspective (activist citizenship) is self-evident. It allows for the analysis of transformation through struggle. While traditional citizenship theory looks at requirements of membership and citizenship as a status I aim for a study that steps beyond these legal fundamentals and rather focuses on how citizenship is currently under (re)construction. Therefore, my focal points are those activist citizens that are currently enacting the kind of city they want. I will look for and analyse concrete acts, claims and other expressions stemming from theatre plays and interviews with playwrights to identify people's enactment of justice; struggles for rights; demands for recognition; constructive stances towards the community; and the deep motivation to transform or resist established political structures that affect their daily lives in Valencia as a Valenciano.

§ 2.2 Event Theory

Different contemporary philosophers have tried to grasp possibilities of social and political change. Most of them were concerned about the social injustices, inequality and the ever more complex and bureaucratic power of the state. Probing for changes that would mean advancement of a better, more just world. With this purpose scholars from a variety of disciplines in this paragraph have been investigating and identifying moments in time that they call “events”, as particularly useful to analyse social change. The word “event”, according to the Cambridge dictionary, means ‘anything that happens, especially something important or unusual’⁴. Slavoj Žižek has specified it with a supernatural adjective, the event has something inherently ‘miraculous’ to it, a ‘surprising emergence of something new which undermines every stable scheme’ (Žižek, 2014: 6). In other words, moments that swing change into society as if it was a miracle. Interest in events and the change they bring about, is found in the works of prominent intellectuals of the 20th century, like Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida (Basset, 2008). Currently the

⁴ Citation [def. 1] (n.d.) In Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus, Retrieved 25 April 2017, from: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary
most influential scholar who dedicates his time to the development of the concept is Alain Badiou (Ibid.). Badiou grounds his theory in a very specific area of mathematics - set theory. The concept he “proves” with this theory (the event) can also be a useful framework for social scientist investigating social change, without further digging into its ontological (set theoretical) foundation. Events, as I will explain in further detail below, is provoked by a part that belongs to the situation - the situation can be understood as the dominant “ideology”, the state, the count-for-one – but has been repressed by it before the happening of the event. The excluded part only appeared because it was triggered by chance.

Next I will discuss the concept of the event according to Alain Badiou's Theory of Change and how it is transformed into a framework that identifies social change. This will help me further on in the thesis with identifying the possibility of momentous social change in the aftermath of the economic crisis in Valencia.

§ 2.2.1 Theory of Change Alain Badiou

There are three prominent features to the Theory of Change by Badiou: “the excluded part” -the invisible, oppressed, part of the situation-, the “event” itself - the moment the excluded part causes a crack in the status quo - and the “truth procedure” - the practical change carried out by the new political subjects that revolt and are faithful to the new situation (Robinson, 2014b). In the most concise definition of the event, as Badiou describes it, the event is ‘a major historical turning point, or moment of rupture in time and space, which brings something new into the world’ (Badiou in Basset, 2008: 895). At this point the theory of the event sounds like the analyses of a revolution. Badiou’s favourite examples are indeed those political happenings that are able to change something in favour of the un(der)represented, although this is not a necessary requirement - scientific revolutions can be an event too (Robinson, 2014b). A well-known example of Badiou is the Paris Commune in which aftermath the proletariat could no longer be excluded from the political arena.6

The excluded part

The excluded part refers to a part of the situation that before the event was invisible and as a consequence unrepresented (Robins, 2014b). Badiou often refers to this part as the “void” of the situation. Badiou “proves” that this excluded part of the situation will rattle the ontological order, ‘every situation is assumed to have a part of this type, for mathematical reasons’ (Robins, 2014a). Note: the excluded part might be invisible nor recognised but does count as a part within the situation. Additionally the excluded part is very political; it has every intention in interfering in the

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5 The logical mathematical study of objects that are belonging together (Basset, 2008).
6 At the end of this paragraph, after the presentation of the theory, I will present in paragraph 2.2 two examples “the Paris Commune” and “the Arab Spring”.

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existing order of the state. In finding evidence for the start of an event it is important to analyse the reaction of the conformists to the situation, who at times of an event are the antagonists of the actors that revolt.

The more angry conformists get, the more evidence we have that we’ve found a real excluded part! [...] It feels threatened by this part, which has no interest in the status quo. So it resorts to forms of naming which attach labels so as to exclude or suppress this part. In general, the state of the situation will remain intact if it can successfully attach a collective label to the excluded part and Evental site. This might consist of things like calling protesters “extremists” or “terrorists”, criminalising dissent, or dismissing a minority as fanatical or backward. (Robins, 2014a)

The excluded part has to deal with the discourse of the dominant group trying to stop the event from happening. The excluded part consequently must fight hard for even the smallest crack in the dominant order to commence an actual realisation of a “Badioun event”.

**The event**

Like mentioned here above, if the excluded part becomes visible it manages to cause a crack in the social order, it then will be perceived as ‘traumatic for the mainstream, and exhilaratingly transformative for participants’ (Robinson, 2014b). As Hallward (2003) suggest; sustaining the status quo is absolutely of no interest by that particular part of the situation (the excluded part). ‘An Event happens when the excluded part appears on the social scene, suddenly and drastically. It ruptures the appearance of normality, and opens a space to rethink reality [...]’ (Robins, 2014b). Hence, the excluded part aims for a revolution, where “the excluded” become subjects - in Badiou’s theory people are only able to become subjects when they are faithful to the event. The event, in other words will triggers sizeable social change. Of particular interest of Badiou is the effect caused by the rupture to the dominant order - after which social change begins; the social contract can be rewritten, hierarchies can be overthrown and changes to the way we think about fundamental, constitutive parts of our society can be re-thought. Another essential point for Badiou is the naming of the event. It is very important since it is this decision that provokes the scission: by naming it you change the situation and decide to break with the situation and how it was previously understood. The naming can be thought of as more radical than the content of the event.

For Badiou, the basic aspect of intervention is simply to decide that an Event has or hasn’t taken place. It is the existence of the Event, not its meaning, which is at stake. Often this is a decision on a name – to recognise or not recognise a named Event – say, the Russian
Revolution, rather than a power-grab, or the Paris Commune, rather than a rabble converging. (Robins, 2014b)

For a final concise definition of the event I build on Robins and Feltham. In order to count as an historical event the following characteristics must be present: (1) the event is an effect of chance - ‘it is outside the normal structures of social control. An Event interrupts the continuity of determinism. It allows something completely new to come into existence’ (Robins, 2014b); (2) there is no legal foundation for it to happen, although later the social contract can be rewritten, it is, in other words revolutionary; (3) it takes place at a particular location, called the evental site; (4) it is hard to distinguish if the event is part of the situation from the situations perspective; (5) it can only named in retroactive effect (Feltham, 2008). Robins adds an additional feature; (6) the manifestation of the event happens with great magnitude, it is *unneglectable* (Robins, 2014b).

Lastly, I think a small warning is in place: according to Badiou events are not so common. They are rather rare and we should be careful not to identify an event too soon. Conflicts are not immediately evental revolutions. Sometimes political confrontations are just that: a confrontation, no new subjects are launched into reality. In order to apply for an event the happening must make ‘something “appear” in the situation that was not already there.’ (Robins, 2014b).

**Truth procedure**

A truth unfolds by the effort of its actors, it was made accessible by the event although the subsequent process of realisation depends on the struggle of *faithful* subjects. ‘The truth is constructed, bit by bit, from the void’ (Hallward, 2003: 122). We can understand truth as the ‘alternative within the present’ (Pluth, 2010: 5), this truth brings a different lens of looking into the world by the efforts of the faithful actors. Robinson (2014) calls the truth a type of attachment, experience, or belief. The practical change, which is what Badiou ultimately tries to grasp, is the unfoldment of a truth procedure, and change the present with it (Pluth, 2010: 5). In order for a truth procedure to settle down it has to start from the very use of language and the way things are thought of (Robins, 2015).

Truths always remain truths: former situations are maybe less urgent than the current but they certainly prevail (Robins, 2015). Actors proclaiming the truth can only speak this truth if they keep away from corruption – Basset (2008) calls this betrayal, delusion and terror (Basset, 2008: 899). A nice example Badiou likes to give is the very evident case of love - ‘A third person looking in on a loving couple may be charmed or irritated, but is unlikely to share in the experience of love itself (Badiou in Hallward, 2003: 128).
The carriers of the revolution become subjects at the moment they start identifying themselves as individuals who carry out the revolution of their membership in a particular “situation” (Robins, 2015). The carriers of Badiou can be linked to the activist citizens of Isin (2008) – who, like the revolutionaries, are enacting a transformation in their citizenship. A truth process can only unfold if the subjects who can carry it decide to do this. Then, and only then change can take place (Robins, 2015).

Badiou defines the subject as any local configuration of a generic procedure by which a truth is sustained. This means subjects do not pre-exist the truth process that inspires them. The truth process is a process of ‘subjectivisation’ whereby the human animal, normally bound to a dull, unquestioning reproduction of the status quo, becomes a real subject. (Basset, 2008: 899)

A last aspect belonging to the process of truth is “fidelity”. A faithful subject is actively engaged in the construction of a new present. It is the ‘capacity of humans to be seized by an eternal truth’ (Pluth, 2010: 5). Making the truth procedure a success and keeping the dedication of faithful subjectivities is another endeavour of Badiou (Pluth, 2010).

In summary an event is something so new that penetrates the situation extremely unexpectedly, like an unusual or magical happening. It is a transformative happening, in the sense that it makes sure it transforms radically how we look at the situation, think of the situation and act on this truth. It entails an excluded part that revolts, the event itself, a truth procedure, and faithful subjects. I will end this section with an emblematic example of Badiou in Hallward (2003) about actors and their fidelity and connection to the event. Badiou relates here to the student uprising in France in 1968, he himself has attended this uprising and it changed his entire life:

‘yes we were the genuine actors, but actors absolutely seized by what was happening to them, as by something extraordinary, something properly incalculable... Of course, if we add up the anecdotes one by one, we can always say that at any given moment there were certain actors, certain people who provoked this or that result. But the crystallisation of all these moments, their generalisation, and then the way in which everyone was caught up in it, well beyond what any one person might have thought possible -that's what I call an evental dimension, None of the little processes that led to the event was equal to what actually took place...; there was an extraordinary change of scale, as there always is in every significant event...’ (Badiou in Hallward, 2003: 123).
§ 2.2.2. Two examples of historical events: the alternative is possible

Example I: Paris Commune

For the first example I will draw on Basset (2008) who elaborates on one of Badiou’s favourite examples: The Paris Commune of 1871. During almost three months—from March 18 to May 28—of the spring of that year, Paris was ruled by a radical socialist political body. The context was as following: Napoleon had left the stage and the Third Republic of France that arose in his footsteps lost the war with Germany. Consequently, the French government had to concede with many claims of their neighbour, a fact that led to a conflict between the capital Paris and Versailles—where the government was residing—finally when Versailles intended to disarm Paris it led to a war between the two (the direct incentive being Versailles that tried to remove a cannon in Montmartre) (Basset, 2008). Tensions grew and Parisian works with a selection of the National Guard decided to take control of Paris (Ibid.). After this happening the population started experimenting with new forms of democracy. After two months ‘regular troops broke into the city and after a week of bloody street-fighting the Commune was suppressed after the slaughter of around 20 000 Communards and the arrest of around 40 000 others.’ (Basset, 2008: 896).

Many years later, Marxists said the time was ripe for working-class; Libertarian/humanist said it was a conflict with the urban life and modernisation processes, and the commune was an attempt to reclaim social community in order to ‘regain a lost sense of community’ (Ibid.). So, why can this historical event be named also a Badiouan event? The focus of Badiou, according to Basset, is on the new and what was nonexistent before 18th of March. Theorising, according to the scholar, means in addition to visualise the formerly excluded, ‘rescuing the Commune both from the clutches of the right (the Commune as failure, and revolutionary end point), and from the traditional left (the Commune as viewed through the lens of the subsequent Leninist party-state)’ (Basset, 2008: 900).

In Badiouan terms: the excluded part, was disclosed the 18th of March the proletariat appeared. The site—a divided political landscape after France lost against Germany—was ruptured (event) by the population and some troops of the National Guard that prevented the cannon to be eliminated. A truth procedure followed: Badiou identifies the identity of the political subject “worker-being” that was not visible before the Paris Commune and now unsusceptible to possible fraud (Basset, 2008: 901). Their offence was sudden and was faithfully “completed”. ‘Although the Commune-event did not overthrow the power structure at the time, it did destroy something more important—the political subordination a perceived subjective incapacity of workers as agents of transformation,’ (Ibid.). Transformation in the sense that they were now part of the political arena, politicians and parties (the bourgeois) could not continue to exert their power without the support of the “worker-being”. The truth of “the worker being”—inexistent before the event—is the alternative on the “worker-being” not included in the political arena. Their struggle gained universal validity and the proletariat entered the political stage, a radical change for that time.
Example II: The Arab spring
The second example is a more recent example that concerns the revolts from 2011 onwards in some Arab countries, the Arab Spring - the event of this example. For this illustration I will make use of Badiou’s book “The Rebirth of History” (2012). In 2011 when the Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, gained universal validity in a very short time frame. It was only a matter of days that the excluded part needed in order to make itself visible (Badiou, 2012). Hence, Egypt “became” of those present in the square, of those that believed in the riot and showed civic disobedience by delegitimising the dictatorial powers of the state. (Ibid). This all led to the possibility of the alternative, of change...

[...] a change of world is real when an inexistent of the world starts to exist in this same world with maximum intensity. This is exactly what people in the popular rallies in Egypt were saying and are still saying: we used not to exist, but now we exist, and we can determine the history of the country. This subjective fact is endowed with an extraordinary power. The inexistent has arisen. That is why we refer to uprising: people were lying down, submissive; they are getting up, picking themselves up, rising up. This rising is the rising of existence itself: the poor have not become rich; people who were unarmed are not now armed, and so forth. Basically, nothing has changed. What has occurred is restitution of the existence of the inexistent, conditional upon what I call an event (Badiou, 2012: 56).

The new subjects of this truth process - the historical riot was shared by many different people and movements, it was not deducible to only one group - succeeded in overthrowing the regime of Mubarak. Subsequently elections were held, and, exemplifying the radicality and the first part of the truth procedure 'a new constitution was installed signalling a concrete political transformation' (Sorochan, 2012: 121). It is good to point out again the difference between a political happening or protest and a historic event. The latter is also called: revolution and ‘breaks with the established situation and promises a new beginning, [...] a ‘political creation’ different from previously known models, whether that means Western capitalist ‘democracy’, nationalism or twentieth-century state socialism’ (Barthélemy, 2013). Evaluating the above it is argued by Badiou (2012) that the Arab revolts in Egypt led to a partial transformation. Although a new regime was installed after the general elections the real change is still on hold: old schemas are used to integrate the outcome of the riots (Badiou, in Barthélemy, 2013). On the other side, the alternatives that were presented have found resonance in other - Western - countries. Sorochan (2012) concludes that Badiou tentatively interprets these resonances as the ripening of the alternative to neoliberal global capitalism.

This last suggestion actually offers me a nice bridge to the situation of Spain about which Badiou (2012) also writes in his book. The 2011 uprisings can be related to the uprisings of the Arab Spring (Badiou, in Sorochan, 2012). The uprisings in the plaza del Sol in Madrid appealed to their regime and all other neoliberal capitalist regimes in the West. ‘The Spanish Indignados have encapsulated such de-localising extension of the site very well: ‘We are here, but anyway it’s global, and we are everywhere.’ (Badiou, 2012: 95). At the same time Badiou sees various limitations in the movement initiated by the Indignados compared to the above outlined Arab revolts. ‘To demand ‘real democracy’, as opposed to bad democracy, does not create any enduring dynamic’ (Ibid.). In other words it is not as radically different as it should be and remains too close to the already established democracy. Rather it should ‘Break with the “democratic” consensus and its sanctimonious propaganda’ (Badiou, 2012: 97).
§ 2.3 Performing arts as a way of knowing

Disparate ways of knowing lead to sometimes clashing and at other times deepening insights on the same topic. It is important to bear in mind that all of these practices of ways of knowing inform us about ways of doing. In this paragraph, contrasting conventional methods, I will focus on unconventional ways of knowing within social scientific research: theatre. While addressing the ongoing social struggle in the aftermath of the economic crisis, I argue that theatre can offer valuable insights into citizenship transformations in the lives Valencians. In this paragraph I will go into more detail about how and why using theatre as a way of knowing could offer insights that conventional research is not able to capture. However, in order to embed this unconventional way of knowing within the broader academic landscape, I will first start with a quick positioning of my thesis within the positivist - constructivist research divide.

§ 2.3.1 Approaches to Human Geography: values and consequences of positivists and constructivists

The argument for a non-mainstream perspective is fervently supported by the human geographers duo Gibson-Graham (2008), especially in the light of advancing the relationship of academia and praxis. Gibson-Graham point to the importance of creativity in academic research as a solution and an ‘experimental rather than critical orientation to research.’ (Gibson - Graham, 2008: 629). This scholar couple calls out to their fellow academic researchers to go beyond the dominant visions, in this case, within Human Geography. The way we know is of utter importance, the scholars argue in their reflective investigation, ‘to change our understandings is to change the world’ (Gibson-Graham, 2008: 615). They therefore consider their work as an ongoing experiment ‘about how it could be improved as an agent of change’ (Gibson-Graham, 2008: 629). It is in this experimental dance between subject and object that I too aim to find new honest and humane ways of positioning myself and this research.

A perspective found right on the extreme opposite site of what critical creativity geographers Gibson-Graham (2008) defend are the positivist scholars. In this kind of scholarly work academics search for regularities, logic and laws to explain human behaviour. They expand their knowledge using (mostly) quantitative data. Analysed by a process of verification and/or falsification. Only data that is verifiable is authentic knowledge. These scholars would ask a question like: is the aftermath of the economic crisis the cause for higher rates of depression?

In reaction to the above mentioned positivist scholars, scholars who take a constructivist perspective centre around the notion that knowledge is contextual and based on perceptions and personal experiences. This view is highly connected to a specific moment in history in the 1970s when the critique of an dehumanised Human Geography was fiercely directed at the positivist
practices. Humanists were the first to promote a people-centred alternative, ‘an alternative vision of humans as complex intentional agents.’ (Entrikin and Tepple, 2006: 36) Currently these insights are taken into account by most ways of knowledge endeavouring. The perspective ‘became a taken-for-granted aspect of geographic research’ (Ibid.).

In my endeavour, to gain more insight in social transformation in general and citizenship transformation in specific, I will attempt to break down power relations into its everyday manifestations. In order to dismantle change - and in line with Badiou, who localises transformation in historical events starting from the oppressed - I will enter the research from the standpoint of Valencia’s activist citizens during the aftermath of the economic crisis. I will analyse the aftermath of the event from the standpoint of these (faithful) subjects - subjects caught up in the emancipatory practices of citizenship. This unconventional perspective allows for a decentralisation of stand points of the political elite (Andrijasevic, 2013). Based on the above, a constructivist approach seems the most suitable place to embed the perspective taken from theatre - since everyday human experiences are essential to understand the world.

§ 2.3.2 Knowledge in theatre: theatre as a discourse to be analysed

The knowledge that is transmitted with a particular discourse informs our values and standards of conduct on the individual and collective level, like a ‘flow of knowledge throughout time’ (Jäger and Maier 2009: 35). The analysis of any discourse starts with a societal problem and looks how a discourse copes with it (Ibid.). For discourses themselves wield power, at the core of all discourse investigations is the focus on revealing power relations that a certain discourse contains (Jäger and Maier, 2009). The forces behind the (re)productions are the people intervening in a discourse - from the position of the academy to the political sphere and the everyday life (Jäger and Maier, 2009). Discourse investigations can be especially useful when investigating a changing status quo, because they can dig into an ‘ongoing production of reality through discourse, conveyed by active subjects’ (Jäger and Maier, 2009: 37). This last remark is especially valuable for the present research since activist citizens in Valencia are struggling with the aftermath of the crisis. It is this struggle where I aim to reveal transformational insights by means of theatrical discourse analysis in the way citizenship is being (re)constructed on a daily basis.

The importance of unconventional critical discourse analysis in the social sciences and the development of critical methodologies departing from such analysis is supported inter alia by Delyser and Sui (2013). They call for an ‘engaged openness with a generosity towards methods (emerging and enduring) that are different from our own, for such methodological pluralism will be

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7 A discourse refers to communication, written or speech, about a certain topic or subject. ‘All sorts of things could be understood in terms of discourse and the production of colonial subjectivity – scientific writing, historical documents, official reports, literature and poetry, the visual arts, as well as academic discourses such as anthropology, geography, or linguistics’ (Barnett, 2006: 150).
vital for our intellectual enterprise’ (Delyser and Sui, 2013: 295).

In different disciplines there has been a growing interest since the end of 20th and beginning of 21st century in combining the perspective of the arts with the perspective of the academy. Particularly the concepts of performance and performativity became important within social sciences. Scholars like Judith Butler and Paulo Freire8 have - both in a very different way - contributed enormously to the intersection of performance, politics and academic research. In general there is a broader scholarly understanding of performance than purely the live arts. It is also ‘sport, ceremonies, and everyday actions like waving to someone you know [...] protests, carnival, play, music, theatre’ (Rogers, 2012: 61).

What first triggered the interest of cultural geographers in performance was the use of it in research on the formation of identity. It started in the 90ties as a critique of and as an escape from environmental determinism, by including the influence of communities in shaping the environment. (Richardson, 2013). This was a radical rethinking of the cultural geography. The use of performance became part of this new experimental phase and can be broadly divided in two groups, the metaphorical use of the concept and the more literal use of performance, like in the performing arts. (Ibid.) Although the focus will be on the latter - performing arts – the two are not mutual exclusive.

Performativity (and performance) is increasingly being employed to emphasise the complex registers through which the constitution and negotiation of human subjects takes place. Such explorations demonstrate how the conditions and conditioning of subjectivity cannot be limited to an isolated and (often textual) social construction but involve everyday practices of embodiment and emotion (Richardson, 2013: 125).

The way I see it there are broadly two tendencies regarding the role of theatre in a social scientific research design and how this can provoke a critical perspective. On the one side scholars have used performance to identify agency and seeing performance as a way to bend reality (Augusto Boal in Robins 2016; Nordström, 2016; Nash 2006; Richardson, 2013) while others have used theatre like a mirror of society and its socio-political concerns (Rogers, 2012; Bleikier; 2003; Nussbaum in Bleikier 2006). I will now address briefly both tendencies although it is this latter perspective - theatre as a mirror of society - that will be used in this thesis.

8 Judith Butler (1956) is a philosopher and gender theorist. Famous for a book on Gender Trouble. Paolo Freire (1921) is a philosopher and critical pedagogue. Known for his work on Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
Playwright and politician Augusto Boal - inspired by Paulo Freire - has been combining different forms of theatre with the goal of engaging citizens and sharpening political insights. These plays were not only a performance but also a performed transformation. Boal has been especially interested in how oppression can be visualised on stage and connected to insights of current socio-political realities (Robins, 2016). Theatre, we might deduct, is a tool to visualise hidden (damaging) power structures. It is consequently inherently political, Boal states (Ibid.).

Oppression goes hand in hand with voicelessness and the inability to act on one’s own desires. As such, Boal insists that ‘to speak is to take power’. Theatre is one of the domains of the resultant struggle. [...] Theatre is about power, human relationships, and who gets to speak. (Robins, 2016)

Human Geographer Nordström articulates that theatre triggers creativity and ruptures previous ways of seeing, leading sometimes to a change in thinking. She analyses human geographical previous research and concedes it is not until recently that artistic gazes have set the first footsteps in cultural geographical terrain. Although mostly as a material means to gather information and not primarily as a way of knowing. In her case study she applied theatre to gain insights in urban planning. It appears that theatre brought a reflection that moved beyond ‘a representational situation’ (Nordström, 2016: 2).

A growing number of geographers find especially the connection between place –context- and performance –theatre- appealing. Particularly how the two shape ideas and actions of a community. Thrift (2004) resums this quite eloquently what is interesting is ‘its evolution from the notion of ‘life is like theatre’ to a notion that ‘life is like performance’ (Thrift, 2004: 225). In social scientific research metaphors drawn from performances are more prevalent than before although still unconventional (Ibid.).

In sum, in this perspective, theatre is most close to the legislative theatre of Boal - a theatre form that rehearses in dialogue with citizens and policy makers for legislative change. From this perspective a human geographer searches for desires of change and engagement (i.a. in planning). And, as expressed by Nash (2000), performance here is an embodied way of ‘rethinking the relationships between determining social structures and personal agency’ (Nash, 2000: 654). It is used as means to imagine a different (better) society. (Richardson, 2013). Hence, performance as activation.
The second perspective I will summarise as theatre as a mirror of the ongoing struggles of society. Everyday practices of subjects are seen as performances, and, when translated to an art form like theatre, they are in a way poeticized. Consequently, according to Richardson, they ‘elucidate much broader concerns about the world we live in, and provide a means by which we might re-imagine it’ (Rogers, 2012: 60). Theatre, on these grounds, is a way of framing our experiences and concerns, often metaphorically. If we take this to the analytical level, the place of theatre shows the influences of the places we live our daily lives. Using the theatrical discourse in academic research in general and in human geographical research specific can then be valuable for it mirrors our connection to our socio-political context.

Bleiker (2003, 2006) is another scholar trying to bridge the arts and the academy. His interest lies particularly in the potentialities for art to deal with the aftermath of an event. For instance by the use of poetry. He researched the tragedies that struck New York on September 11 2001 by means of this literary genre. To broaden the understanding a concrete issue during the aftermath of the disaster, in this case of security challenges, Bleiker (2006) analysed perspectives stemming from the arts. Especially the visual arts, literature, music and architecture. Emotional and artistic perspectives provide alternative insights, Bleiker states ‘that can be as revealing and as important as conventional knowledge forms, such as those emanating from social-scientific inquiries.’ (Bleiker, 2006: 78). Although scholarship continues to pay minimal attention to this kind of ways of knowing, that rest upon alternative starting points, Bleiker argues in favour of artistic knowledge to be included in politics - like his study on deepening the understanding of security issues in the aftermath of 9/11. With his analyses of 9/11 and the way art could give insight in security challenges on the political level Bleiker (2006) found that art attributed important awareness to the issue. Especially on the understanding of basic human rights, memory and freedom of fear (Ibid.).

Positivistic ways of conducting science may present many hard scientific insights they can be so dominant as to rationalise subjective feelings in a great amount of issues. Art reframes and can add to a different understanding of moments like these, where insights from feelings (of in this case insecurity, sadness and anger) are required to interpret and enhance the socio-political context of a city. Bleiker builds further on the findings of philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who has investigated the relation of ethics and emotions. She argues that emotions are ‘important forms of knowledge and evaluative thought. Literature, music, and other works of art offer possibilities to express these emotional insights in ways that cannot easily be achieved through conventional accounts of events’ (Nussbaum in Bleiker, 2006: 90). In other words, art –including the performance arts - filter or capture human experience and mirrors a reflection that are rarely that direct and cannot be obtained in a different way.
From the above it has become clear that discourses in general can be useful to study an ongoing struggle in society. The arguments that lead to the conclusion that theatre in specific can serve as an unconventional and decentralised mirror of society that unravels (hidden) power structures and offers insights from feelings, memory and basic human rights. Analysing the theatrical discourse seems therefore the adequate tool to gain insight in the (new) socio-political landscape and the citizenship (re)construction efforts of activist citizens. I expect the theatrical discourse to be a tangible and powerful mirror of the everyday environment of aftermath of the economic crisis. It is therefore, the starting point of analysis in this thesis.

§ 2.4 Research questions and operationalisation

In the analysis of the theatre plays, that will be carried out in chapter 4 of this thesis, I will focus on the transformations regarding the concept of activist citizenship. I will use theatre as an interpretive framework and perspective using different theatre plays and interviews with current playwrights in the city of Valencia as a means to achieve this. The character of this thesis therefore is activist in the sense that I will be looking for transformations regarding citizenship in the performing arts of Valencia. The central research question that guides this activist study is formulated as follows:

What changes in citizenship do artistic expressions from the performative arts visualise?
Followed by four sub questions:

I. To what extent is the economic crisis of 2008 an “event” following the definition of the event by Alain Badiou?
II. What changes in citizenship can be observed in conventional literature and analysis of post-crisis Spain?
III. What changes in citizenship does theatre show?
IV. In what ways does theatrical discourse offer valuable or complementary insights in the ongoing changes of citizenship during the post-crisis?

In order to answer the above formulated questions I have made use of different methods. A combination of literature analysis and a qualitative fieldwork that consists of in-depth interviews with playwrights; the visits and analysis of theatre plays in local theatres that are independent - meaning not (entirely) funded by governmental money - and; analysing scripts of the theatres plays. All the plays were selected within a timeframe of half a year, from May 2016 until October of the same year. The selection process of the cases I based on snowball sampling - where the playwrights I interview suggested other playwrights and/or plays. It helped me develop a dense network in Valencia. Additionally, it helped me mapping my research landscape in a fairly short amount of time and reach subjects that were not easily found online. Another way I selected the
theatre plays was through the detailed online cultural agenda of Valencia.\(^9\) Where I selected plays that were written and performed by local playwrights and actors who’s topics had to do with socio-political issues.

A possible bias in the selection process of the theatre plays is a joint one. A first bias is the personal agenda of the writer. Although this might always be the case - writers want to mesmerise their audience with their story - with political theatre the political persuasion is almost inherent to the discipline and therefore a specific shortcoming of this method. A second bias in the selection process stems from the snowball sampling strategy. This strategy is prone to “community bias” - in which my first interviewees might have thrown the angling rod, allowing me to fish only from one pond in town.

Both shortcomings I have attempted to tackle with my lengthy stay in Valencia and complementary research methods - like I stated here above, apart from analysing plays I conducted interviews and an extensive literature analysis. In total I spent 6 months in Valencia and I therefore had the chance to visit most of the small autonomous theatres in Valencia. In total I interviewed 19 playwrights and analysed 28 theatre plays. In order to enhance the comparability of the interviews I created four categories of themes that were discussed during the in-depth interviews. The creation of the four categories of themes was based on my research questions. The four themes were subsequently: (1) The personal position of the playwright within the socio-political context of Valencia; (2) the impact of the economic crisis in the private sphere; (3) a thorough analysis and discussion of their theatre play(s) in relation to the contemporary socio-political landscape of Valencia and; (4) expectations and ideas about the future of the city.

In order to embed the data provided by the case-studies of theatre plays I conducted a thorough literature analysis of the socio-political context of the city of Valencia - Chapter 3 - and of the concepts of economic crisis as an event and activist citizenship. This analysis gave insight in the young democracy of Spain and the recent unfolding of the economic crisis in the city and its neighbourhoods. Additionally, as I lived in one of the most activist neighbourhoods of town - El Cabanyal - I could study my research field from a very intimate perspective. While I lived in El Cabanyal I biked to my destinations daily – the university was located right between El Cabanyal and the city centre and, as I will illustrate later, the theatres I encountered were situated in many different neighbourhoods around the centre of town (Including, but definitely not only, El Cabanyal).

Lastly, I also read the local newspaper El Levante on a daily basis, to gain insight in the local  

issues and the moves of the new political leaders of the city council of Valencia.

A mayor challenge that comes with the choice for this unconventional perspective of the performing arts, consists of the legitimisation of the knowledge obtained through these artistic insights. Scientific insights that are not verifiable nor collected by empirical methods are mostly looked at very sceptical. However, the value of it might be precisely that it ‘cannot be attained in any other way’ (Gadamer cited in Bleiker 2006: 92), leading to knowledge that no positivistic informed scholar would be able to offer. A second challenge may be the generalizability of this research in terms of how representative a case study from a limited amount of interviews and analyses of theatre texts is. Although this might be for a regular hard science scholar a relevant argument, in this case the texts combined with the in-depth interviews create a thorough insight that therefore can unravel a hidden discourse – a position that would not have been grasped with a quantitative questionnaire. Also, dominant discourses are usually produced by the hegemony and become widely accepted, by analysing theatre will shed light on a perspective – in feminist terms: the oppressed – that allows for the visualisation of possible transformations in a society struggling during the aftermath of the economic crisis. Lastly, unavoidable is my personal perspective, my personal bias in the entire research. It is for this reason that I (1) always verified my analysis of the play with the playwright of the play in question, interviewing him or her afterwards, and (2) compare in chapter 4 the theatrical discourse analysis to the literature analysis of this chapter and to chapter 3 “the political struggle for civic space”.

My ultimate goal is to contribute in twofold. Firstly, by advancing and exploring this discourse and research methodology and secondly, by gaining insight from an alternative angle into an ongoing socio-political crisis that has the potential to lead to permanent social transformations.
Introduction

This song from Obrint Pas - a Valencian political punk rock group – was originally written in 2004 to make a political statement referring to the Valencian language, that had been oppressed under the dictatorship of Franco. In 2011 it became regained popularity during the anti-austerity protests in town. People felt identified with the lyrics that emphasised solidarity towards those that struggle for recognition and freedom in Valencia. At the same time it is a song that lights a flame of hope for the those struggling for a better world in general.

To understand the current hopes, dreams, social changes and political aspirations it is important to at least spade a little the top layers of Spain’s metaphorical backyard. That this is quite arduous, you will discover in a few seconds. finding an unambiguous perspective is even a more serious challenge. Nonetheless the recent happenings can only be understood in relation to its historical context. Therefore – before I will let theatre speak in the next chapter - let’s see what a selection of historians, political scientists and activists observed about the recent past of Spain and Valencia. This will chapter will subsequently serve as the more conventional analysis of the aftermath of the economic crisis.

After the first World War, and a few evenings before the Second would kick-off, the Spanish civil war held the country in its grip. From 1936 until 1939 Nationalists and Republicans fought over power. The Nationalist under General Franco – the future dictator of Spain - feared the country might fall apart and supported a central monarchy (Payne, 2012). The Republicans on the other hand - a left-wing group that supported the Second Spanish Republic\(^\text{11}\) (Ibid). In 1939 Franco’s Nationalists won. Franco would rule the country with an iron fist for the subsequent 36 years. A process of transition from autocracy (dictatorship?) to democracy only started after his death in

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\(^{10}\) Political punk rock group of Valencia. Translation from of this valencian strophe: ‘We are the tears in the eyes; we are the courage that continues; we are the wound that never healed; we are the story that they did not write.’ For the whole song listen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kN3UJR0SB48

\(^{11}\) A regime that came into place after King Alonso XIII who had supported dictator Primo de Rivera had left the country – that only lasted from 1931 until 1939. See for more background information on the Spanish civil war Payne (2012)
1975. This transition recently has been brought in relation with the aftermath of the current economic crisis. At both moments in time hopes and desires of extensive political change were widely shared by the Spaniards. Secondly, at both moments a sudden visibility of social movements and their “new” dynamics became important reference points. It is therefore, that if we want to understand the current aftermath and maybe a “the second transition” we must begin right there at the transition of Spain from dictatorship to democracy...

§ 3.1 The dictatorship of Franco and the transition to democracy

Francisco Franco managed to link politics and religion with the private life of the ordinary Spaniard. He promoted a traditional patriarchal family with a father in charge, a mother leading the household caring for children. During the dictatorship Castellano was the only official language –Franco is known for repressing fervently the other languages of the Iberian Peninsula; Catalan, Basque and Galician. The dictator successfully connected the dictatorship with the (idealised) Spanish family life. It helped Franco to reduce social and political conflict between his government and the Spanish population to a metaphorical parents-children conflict. Solutions always had to be found in favour of the entire family (Tusell, 2007). With his death the identity he had created for Spain started to shake and, literally, needed to be re-narrated.

In the year 1975 the repressions of the dictator, that were severe until his last day of life, ended. Pablo Iglesias, leader of the new political party Podemos, writes in his book “Politics in a Time of Crisis” (2014) ‘El 20 de septiembre de 1975, muere, en cama de un hospital de Madrid, uno de los mayores asesinos del siglo XX: Francisco Franco’ (Iglesias, 2014: 104). The period that follows is called “the transition to democracy” - the period between the death of Francisco Franco in 1975 and the presentation of the new Spanish Constitution in 1978. Others in contrast consider the first democratically elected parliament in 1982 to be the official end of the transition to democracy. Despite the clear ending of the dictatorship, there is also a group that holds the opinion that in practice actually never a transition has been realised. Whatever view taken, the transition to democracy was a difficult period.

The king Juan Carlos I, out of office during the dictatorship, had a key role during the transition to democracy. (Tusell, 2008). Franco selected him himself as successor. The King was openly supported by loyal Francoist - people that did not support a thorough transformation of the structures of the dictatorship - consequently a disassociation from the dictatorial administration and its basis for the constitution became hard to imagine for especially the progressive and the left (Rodríguez Lópe, 2015). Tusell (2008) notes that, on the other hand, the King was also ‘the representative of a legitimate dynasty and, moreover, his person was linked to his father’s activity

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Translation from original: ‘the 20th of September 1975, dies, in a bed of a Hospital in Madrid, one of the biggest assassins of the twentieth century: Francisco Franco’ (Iglesias, 2014: 104).
in – or at least his degree of collaboration with – the liberal opposition to the dictatorship’ (Tusell, 2008: 273). Therefore the King was not entirely on the side of the loyal Francoist and was granted at least some legitimacy from the opposition. On the left spectrum Rodríguez López (2015) gives an insightful assessment of the transition period and argues that today’s ‘democracy’, put into place after the dictatorship, was never a real one. A lot of his critique on the results of the transition to democracy in Spain is directed to the liberal mould that was applied to Spain. According to Rodríguez López (2015) it insufficiently fitted the specific needs of Spain – a European country that was after almost forty years transitioning to democracy. About the return of the King Juan Carlos I after the dictatorship he states the following:

Casi se puede decir que Juan Carlos fue un producto de los militares franquistas que tutorizaron una parte importante de su formación. Para el alto mando militar español, así como opera la clase política franquista, el rey simbolizaba no solo la continuidad institucional, sino la persistencia del ejército […] Juan Carlos era considerado el vehículo más apropiado para conducir un cambio sin traumas.’ (Rodríguez López, 2015: 87/88).

With the dismantling of the dictatorship and the King in place, the plurality of parties was theoretically reinstalled -and the negotiations for a new constitution could start. In praxis however the level of public participation remained low and the influence of the King and loyal Francoist was not diminished a bit. The constitution was negotiated and formulated nearly exclusively behind closed doors and without the possibility for the population to engage in a public debate about it. In a survey of 1978 – when the final draft of the constitution was written - 46% of the Spaniards believed Spain to be a democracy (Rodríguez López, 2015). The critique of Rodríguez López is especially directed to the limited involvement of other voices, like the workers movement - the rapidness of the consolidation of the new democracy had hasted them into a formal structure that did not fitted well their consensus decision making processes (Rodríguez López, 2015: 172). On the other hand Tusell (2007) points to some positive sides of the transition to democracy; there was not much violence during the process of regime change, only 460 deaths - including the terrorist attacks from ETA in that time - and the mass protests and strikes - 36 in total - were always peaceful (Tusell, 2007).

As for political parties shaped by the transition to democracy it is interesting to note that left and right had now one dominant party. On the right this was the Partido Popular (PP –Popular Party), on the left this was the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE- Spanish Socialist Workers Party). Both parties gained a lot of members from 1976 to 1978. The PSOE for example grew from 10.000 members to more than 100.000 members (Rodriguez López 2015: 218). This explains the

13Translation from original: ‘One could say that Juan Carlos was a product of the Francoist military who tutored an important part of his education. For the Spanish high military command and the Francoist political class the king symbolised not only institutional continuity but also the tenacity of the army […] Juan Carlos was considered to be the crucial vehicle to conduct towards change while avoiding traumas’ (Rodríguez López, 2015: 87/88) (Rodríguez López, 2015: 87/88).
dramatic change of the average PSOE-member profile. While initial members were anti-Franco activist and socialist militant, the new average profile was a middle aged Spaniard without (much) education and often without visible previous political activity (Ibid.). In 1982 PSOE won with an absolute majority the national elections of Spain and ruled the country for the subsequent 13 years.

The church - a prominent and essential part of Franco’s dictatorial regime and of the big Spanish religious family image - of was another pillar that was kept in place. Abortion and anti-conception continued to be highly prohibited, adultery despised and divorce not even present in legislation (Rodríguez López, 2015: 229).

Rodríguez López, at the end of his book, refers to the transition period as a failed opportunity for change. The expectations of the labour class were not even nearly met.

Con trazo grueso se puede decir que la Transición supuso un cambio político y cultural, pero apenas un cambio social. Ni las clases medias, ni los tradicionales sectores oligárquicos, ni el capitalismo familiar español atravesaron este periodo con mayor amenaza a sus intereses que la meramente retórica. Esta fue la cláusula intocable de los acuerdos entre el reformismo franquista y la izquierda política. (Rodríguez López, 2015: 351).14

In sum, the transition period is generally looked back upon as a difficult period for the Spanish population, who was still traumatised with the legacy of the civil war earlier that century. Rodrigo López motivates a double fail: on the one side the “new” parties failed - PSOE and PP focused on the middle class and marginalised the massive innovative labour movement of the 1970s - On the side the labor movement itself failed because it was unable to translate its demands into a political project and preferred to trust the newly established political left too soon with the representation of their needs. This latter reason is explained by the feelings of disillusion, the labor movements’ desencanto of the slow and bureaucratic machinery transformations of town councils that were in sharp contrast with their own direct democratic way of organising.

And so the period of regime change was concluded with a quick re-writing of the constitution but missed this chance to explore a more democratic system based on demands stemming from the massive revolts of the labor movements. At least that is the opinion of those critical on the aftermath of the dictatorship.

14 Translation: Roughly sketched it is possible to conclude that the transition to democracy meant a political and cultural change, but hardly caused any social change. Neither the middle classes, nor the traditional oligarchic sectors, nor Spanish capitalism made it through this period with other than mere rhetoric threats. This was the untouchable clause of the agreements between Francoist reformism and the political left. (personal translation from Rodríguez López, 2015: 351)
It is not surprising that scholars connect this period with the current aftermath of the economic crisis, the malleability of the historic moment of the transition period was definitely a chance for more radical change (that just did not happen then).

We now jump into the future, from 1982 to 2008 when Spain, 26 years after the transition to democracy, slips into a major economic crisis and towards a new malleable moment.

§ 3.2 The economic crisis in Spain

With the stock market collapsing, banks disappearing, the housing bubble bursting and public and private debt rising; a political and social crisis inaugurates the 21st century in Spain. In the next part of this chapter I will go into the national situation of Spain in the midst of the collapse resulting in new forms of social movement and the formation of new political parties. In the final part I will zoom in on Valencia’s socio-political landscape and its current flourishing social movements.

§ 3.2.1 The collapse of Spain and severe austerity measures as a solution

The global financial crisis started in 2008 with the mortgage bubble in the United States. This was followed by a banking crisis. The central world banks ended up needing governmental help in order to survive but the collapse of the market could not be prevented and spilled over to Europe. European governments had to implement rescue operations to help the central banks in their countries avoid bankruptcy. Especially the European southern countries Spain, Greece and Portugal experienced great difficulties, resulting in the fact that EU an IMF in 2010 decided to act as watch dogs and sometimes - whenever they found it necessary - directly intervened with (additional to the national) austerity measures. The consequences of the economic crisis for the Spain are numerous and had an exceptional social impact.

José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero was the Spanish prime minister and member of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) from 2004 until 2011. The measures Zapatero was forced to implement –under great pressure of the EU and IMF - to face the economic crisis were in line with the western neoliberal policies (Romero et al, 2015). The growing dissatisfaction with austerity policies, high unemployment rates, rising public and private debt and a terrifying number of people unable to pay for their mortgage caused Zapatero's PSOE an unprecedented dramatic electoral defeat and to a strong (absolute) majority for its enemy-opponent: PP. What the population maybe did not expect was that the real thumb screws on the welfare system were soon to be fixed by Zapatero's successor, PP leader Mariano Rajoy. His austerity program meant the backing of ‘a great reduction in social public spending, privatisation of the welfare state, and a major boost for political recentralisation processes' (Romero et al., 2015).
Nevertheless, Rajoy is still\(^\text{15}\) in office as prime minister of Spain. During his first term he realised a sizeable amount of cuts. Additionally, as a response to the crisis he also changed legislation on numerous accounts. Rajoy became known for favouring to pay off Spain’s debt than inverting in the welfare state (Tejerina, 2013). Most felt were the cutbacks on health care of €10 billion and on education, another €10 billion (Portos, 2016: 201). To comply with EU and IMF also major tax rises (about €15 billion) were realised (Tremlett, 2012).

Compared to other European countries Spain performed especially poor; employment rates dropped significantly more and inequality rose to a new record (Romero et al, 2015: 82). The declining economic position of the Spanish population has affected ‘income and equality of opportunities, and has a remarkable impact on vulnerable groups such as young people, migrants, women, and the long-term unemployed’ (Ibid.). The impact of all the measurements being unequally harsh for the vulnerable and lower income families. Oxfam’s investigation points the finger at the additional austerity measures issued by the IMF -not only have these measures not worked beneficially as a solution to the social and economic crisis they ‘[...] have in fact harmed the prospects for growth and equality’ (Oxfam, 2014). A questionnaire of 2014 shows that 8 out of 10 people in Spain believed the government to take decisions that were in mere favour of the richest layer of society (Ibid.). Concurrently, only 10% of the population held trust in their political leaders and democratic structures (Dekker and Feenstra, 2015: 8). The economic crisis had been converted into a regime crisis - with 90% of the country being nauseous of the way the Spanish ship was being sailed by their politicians.

What distinguishes Spain furthermore from other European countries in crisis, is the way its real-estate business was exploited by contractors, bankers and businessmen since the end of the 1990s. The consequences were (and still are) devastating. Since the piercing of the bubble in 2008 an exorbitant number of people has not been able to pay for their mortgage. The very strict mortgage law in Spain especially harmed the people already most affected by the crisis. The law makes sure that if you cannot pay your house, not only will you lose your house but you will also lose all the property in your name. Assets and bank accounts are collected by your bank and you lose the options for declaring bankruptcy while the whole execution process is done through a court. It was this law that caused foreclosure and eviction rates to go through the roof. From 2008 to 2012 no less than 362.776 evictions took place (Colau and Alemany, 2013). In other words: everyday about 200 households were falling down the abyss. Data on foreclosures and evictions from the start of the crisis are a little opaque and vary sometimes up to 67%. The data presented here was gathered by the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform for People Affected by Mortages, PAH) analysed and compared in the 2013 by Ada Colau - current mayor of Barcelona, and former frontrunner of PAH. Interesting to note is the fact that moments before the

\(^{15}\) In the summer of 2017
housing bubble exploded hundreds of thousands houses were completed and currently over 3,4 million homes are vacant in Spain (Romanos, 2014). They now are left for the dust to decorate. This is an especially sensitive issue in Spain since many people were evicted from their homes for inability to pay their mortgages. ‘The crisis brought an end to the expansive phase of the Spanish economy and marked the beginning of a period of recession that is still ongoing’ (Romero et al, 2015: 75).

Some authors suggest that the crisis has been the result of the fast neo-liberalisation of Spain since the transition to democracy (Romero et al, 2015). Arguing that choices were made in the mere advantage of the financial markets for over two decades. Especially in the cities of Madrid and Valencia where conservative leaders have been at the steering wheel since 1991. The authors call the dedication with which the neoliberal line of governing has been implemented the “neoliberal turn” (Romero et al, 2015: 74). A turn that favoured real estate business over all other economic activities. According to Romero et al. (2015) this led to a speedy urbanisation of the cities, numerous residential developments, the mortgage law reforms in favour of banks and huge investments in gigantic projects, events and infrastructure – as will be illustrated for the case of Valencia later on in this chapter.

§ 3.2.2 Social mobilisations and protests: PAH and 15M

The above described financial and governmental collapse in Spain led in 2011 to a societal response which has triggered innovative activism and new political parties. Hereunder I will discuss this changing socio-political landscape in reaction to the crisis.

Although antagonistic voices have always been present in times of conflict Walliser (2013) notes that the role of activists in the city is diversifying and changing. The new movements - he calls them “new urban activists” (NUA) – are especially visible in neoliberal cities in crisis. NUA’s use a transformative form of activism that foment change in often a very creative way. Fundamental in these forms of activism are the central position of public spaces and at times, the (temporarily) confiscation of it (Ibid.). Temporal occupations can be a breakfast meeting convoked through social media while more permanent interventions intend to tackle particular issues of a specific public space in an innovative way. Walliser mentions community gardens and self-managed open social centres in publicly owned plots or buildings. The impact of these new reactionary movements in the 21st century is most notable on the neighbourhood level - serving as platform and public meeting point (Ibid.). In Spain the sustainability of the movements and the creative actions in the light of economic crisis have been both new and extremely visible.

The persistence of the reactionary movements can be explained by a ‘more general anti-austerity fight and the strategic alliances - with varying degrees of formality - that new civil organisations forged with the unions’ (Portos, 2016: 181). This collaboration - between unions and other social movements – was also visible during the transition to democracy at the end of the seventies.
Other movements that gained visibility were the squatter movements, student movements - like *Juventud sin Futuro* (Youth without future) and *Free Culture and Digital Commons Movement* (Portos, 2016: 192). But, the two organisations that became the real protagonists because of their impact and sustainability during the crisis are (1) *la PAH* – *La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipótesis*\(^\text{16}\) and (2) *15M* – the offline platform of its digital backbone *Democracia Real Ya!* (Real Democracy Now! DRY).

### La PAH

Augmenting house prices caused by the inflation of the housing market from 1999 onward led to the explosion of the housing bubble in 2003 (França, 2014). Since 2008 an ever increasing amount of people was evicted from their homes and this poignant reality was the direct incentive for *la PAH* to start its platform. In no time its chaptered out all over the country and developed similar platforms in 209 Spanish cities and villages (Ibid.). *La PAH* – a platform that is horizontally structured and decides on the basis of assemblies and is not affiliated to any political party - was funded for people encountering difficulties with paying their mortgages, people confronted with evictions or foreclosures and people that out of solidarity wanted to be involved with these issues (Ibid.). Their main purpose is to help those affected by the mortgage law: threatened with eviction or in difficulties to pay their mortgage. Together they prevented 2045 evictions\(^\text{17}\). During a “prevention ritual” *PAH*-members show up at the apartment or house of a the person or the family that is about to be evicted and they literally block the way when the bailiff attempts to enter the house. Another, less direct, tactic used by *la PAH* to improve the situation of cornered *PAH*-members, and in general those affected by mortgages, is promoting the visibility of the issue and campaigning for the mortgage law to change (Romanos 2014). Visibility is enhanced by *escraches* - this is a ‘form of protest which consists of the public condemnation of those responsible for an injustice with the objective of exposing and upsetting them’ (Romanos, 2014: 297). These *escraches* are new ways of exposing vigorously but pacifically political delegates and bankers by publicly shaming them. Many Spanish citizens felt they were the victims paying an exorbitant price for damage that was not their fault. (Ibid.) Campaigns were designed by, for example, Ada Colau – the driving force behind the first chapter in Barcelona. Their actions reached until the courts of the EU in the emblematic case of Mohammed Aziz who on 20 of January successfully claimed that ‘the Spanish law infringed the rights of people affected by it’ (Romanos, 2014: 300).

Romanos observes another interesting new feature of modern protests, in his analysis he points to a changing relation between politicians and protesters in Spain. Since the end of the dictatorship politicians in power, afraid of big protest isolated politics from social movements. For example by making it hard for movements to present their demands via a popular initiative

\(^{16}\) Platform for those affected by mortgages

\(^{17}\) Retrieved from their website: [http://affectadosporlahipoteca.com/](http://affectadosporlahipoteca.com/) last visited 7 january 2017
protected politics from civilian interference. In Spain the government now requires 500,000 signatures before allowing popular initiative to be submitted to the agenda. Nonetheless PAH activists have been looking for ways to influence legislation through political networks, and with success – they are influencing legislation with their proposals for a new mortgage law (Romanos, 2014: 301).

La PAH apart from a collective demonstration of solidarity, seems to be taking the responsibility to protect when the welfare state falls short. A sign of resonance of their initiative is the fact that the former leader of the PAH - Ada Colau - made it to major of the second town of Spain: Barcelona.

15M: Real democracy now!

15M or los indignados - after Stephane Hessel's essay “Indignez-vous” - a citizens initiative currently active in over 50 Spanish cities. 15M’s digital backbone was the online platform Democracia Real Ya! (Real Democracy Now! DRY) which was also one of their slogans “Real democracy now!” (See picture). This self-proclaimed apolitical movement states that citizens are not represented nor listened to in the current political system. 15M is strongly related to DRY, but has been the more “informal” platform. They convoked to take the streets in 2011. This platform was able to mobilise a great number of people for a series of protests that voiced the widely shared concerns and anger about the direction the authorities were taking (Castells, 2012). By the innovative use of social media this movement could reach out to kindred spirits throughout the whole country and soon spilled over to another 675 cities all over the world (Castells, 2012: 196). In their manifesto they speak to the Spanish people, and the people all over the world - stating to be ordinary people that “like all of us” are fighting for a better world, against the corruption of politicians, businessmen and bankers. In their manifest they gloss out what should be the political agenda of the people, one with intentions to work towards a real democracy, one that is at the service of the ordinary people.

[...] facilitando la participación política ciudadana mediante cauces directos y procurando el mayor beneficio para el grueso de la sociedad, no la de enriquecerse y medrar a nuestra costa, atendiendo tan sólo a los dictados de los grandes poderes económicos y

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18 Compare this for example to the Netherlands where it is required to present “only” 40.000 signatures - taken into account the amount of inhabitants of each country this means a Spanish initiative needs 10 times as much signatures.

aferrándose al poder a través de una dictadura partitocrática encabezada por las inamovibles siglas del **PPSOE**.  

“PPSOE” -the combination of initials stemming from Spain’s two biggest parties: PSOE and PP-is, as deducted from the above statement seen by the 15M as one side of the same coin. The platform pleads for an ethical revolution by investing public money in social projects and stop putting people in service of money. According to Tejerina (2013) the 15M reflect the ‘overwhelming rejection of the most negative consequences of the processes of globalisation and neoliberal adjustment’ (Tejerina, 2013: 437). In the immediate aftermath of their first convoked protest the movement settled down on one of the most central public squares in Madrid’s - plaza del sol - and the realised many public assemblies. Their strength was inter alia their ability to be able to serve as an umbrella for many different voices because it was not affiliated to any political party - ‘from its inception, the movement had a strong impact on the Spanish political debate, gaining broad popular sympathy, and giving place to an almost instant cascade of commentary and analysis, generally combining activist and academic voices’ (Franquesa, 2016: 71). The peaks of the demonstrations lasted just for a moment, but in the years that followed it became clear that 15M sowed the seeds for abiding influence on Spanish politics (Franquesa, 2016). They have been organising uprisings against education reforms (called “green tide”) and neoliberalisation in general (called “white tide”) (Ibid.).

In May 2016 – 5 years after their first massive demonstration - the movement called out not to go to sleep again but to stay awake and keep up the spirit. Accompanied by political parties **Podemos** and **Izquierda Unida** again thousands of people showed up for the demonstration and shouted - referring to the changing the system - “Sí, se puede!” (García de Blas and Manetto, 2016). In the last years the movement has found resonance with Plan B Europa - an anti-austerity network from ex-minister of finances from Greece; Yanis Varoufakis.

PAH and 15M react[ed] upon harsh austerity measures and their consequences. They were and still are present in the everyday lives of those who were most affected by the economic crisis, organising assemblies, preventing evictions and organising sensibility activities (Franquesa, 2016). Both la PAH and 15M are characterised by their apolitical chore, their innovative reactionary way of channelling their impact and the way they managed to gain an overwhelming support of the population. 15M was backed by 80% of the Spanish population when they were camping on the squares and writing their manifesto in the spring of 2011 (Europa Press, 2011). La PAH was able to write a popular initiative that was supported by 87% of the Spanish citizens (El Pais, 2013).

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20 Translation: A democracy should facilitate citizens political participation through many direct channels and seek the greatest benefit for the bulk of society. Not enriching and growing at the populations’ expense while only attending the dictates of the great economic powers and maintaining power through a patriarchal dictatorship headed by the immovable initials of the PPSOE. (Democracia Real Ya, 2011)

21 Two left-wing parties I will refer to later in this chapter.
Tormey (2015) analysed dissatisfactions converted in revolts against - inter alia corruption and austerity measures from the elites – that are enabling and nurturing a real democracy and impacting democracy. Current anti-TTIP and CETA movements are supported – hence, the trade international trade agreements are rejected - by the same groups like 15M and PAH in Spain but also the international Occupy Movement. What becomes clear is that these movements appeal to a widely shared anti-globalisation network that through solidarity camps, the occupation of public squares and direct actions are intervening as political subjects in on a national and international level. This context will therefore help understand the situation as I zoom in on the city of Valencia in the last parts of this chapter.

§ 3.2.3 Analysing the aftermath: re-neoliberalisation versus the new political landscape

In this section I will discuss two distinct traditions that are simultaneously at work during the aftermath of the economic crisis. One tradition is the way the government is renewing the system in order to cure Spain from the crisis – I will call this “re-neoliberalisation”, based on Bloom (2016). The second tradition is favouring transformation as a reaction to the crisis - the development of what came to flourish because of the crisis. Although I will discuss both tradition it is the latter – transformative reactions - that will be the main focus here for it will also be the centre of the rest of this thesis.

Bloom (2016) links events like the crisis with the paradoxical aim of renewal of capitalism – paradoxical according to the author, since it was this very system that he argues led to the crisis in the first place. The reaction of Spanish politicians to calm the population down in his view are a blend of past ideals with future progress and stability; prioritising and idealising the free-market economy over social investments and reinforcing consequently the “old” ideologies (Bloom, 2016). He bases this argument in the example of prioritising cutbacks on healthcare and education, the increasing of taxes, the push for privatisation, the dilution of the worker right - over social investments (Ibid.). The psychological distress a society in crisis feels can be swiftly alleviated with the use of fantasies about a better future. The specifics about that future are filled in with “good” experiences of the past ‘the discourse of crisis attached to a fantasy of capitalist recovery helps to temporarily alleviate and postpone the deeper crisis of identity experience during these times of economic meltdown and uncertainty’ (Bloom 2016: 165). The essential claim of Bloom is: the creation of a crisis-narrative that is idealising history, in this case the history of capitalist neoliberalism, provokes fantasising about a future where the bases’ of what brought us this crisis are the fundamentals of the “new” system. ‘As revealed in the current economic crisis, capitalism […] has the potential to remain paradoxically stronger in the face of its own crisis, ensnaring aspirations for change within the past confines of its own idealised future.’ (Bloom 2016: 174). Nonetheless, what is most important is that he shows that in times of crisis what a

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22 Polemic international trade agreements of Europe with the United States (TTIP) and Canada (CETA).
population desperately needs is stability. This need for stability can take the shape of renewing the familiar system that once was stable. On the other side it can lead towards transformation - endeavouring new ways of organising and experimenting with a new political landscape.

In the case of Spain the PP could consequently win the elections in the heat of the crisis (2011) with the promise of neoliberal austerity measures and law-reforms that were favouring the economy over social investments. A choice that was based on re neo-liberalisation ideas. This choice contrasted with the huge protests and the formations of two big apolitical movements –la PAH and 15M – that were persistently demanding a “real democracy”. In 2014 the appearance of a new political party “Podemos” that is representing those in favour of change.

From 1982 – when PSOE won the first democratically organised general elections – until now – 2016 – no other political party than PP or PSOE has ruled the country with a majority or a minority government. In other words, in 21st century Spain on the national level there has never been a coalition ruling the country. This is also called the two-party system. The 2011 general elections were the first held in Spain since the start of the economic crisis. Between 2011 and 2016 urban dissatisfaction scaled up and became an ever more visible, serious, organised player in the political arena - for example in the shape of the new political party Podemos (We can), formed by 15M sympathisers and members, political scientist and other intellectuals. An ‘institutional alternative’ consolidated in 2014 (Portos, 2016: 206). The widely shared feelings of disillusion with politics and democracy was translated by the Podemos initiators into a political agenda. Another political party – Ciudadanos (Citizens) – was already established in 2005 as an option for the right-wing electorate. The next section focusses on these transformative political pioneers that chose transformation over renovation.

The authors Ruiz Rufino and Alonso (2017) argue that the “satisfaction with democracy”-level dropped significantly when the financial crisis forced the government of Spain ‘to programmes that served as an information release mechanism […] voters soon found out that voting was no longer about choosing since the room to decide on domestic policies was curtailed by the impositions of the bail-out conditions’ (Ruiz Rufino and Alonso, 2017: 338). The “intrusion” by the EU and IMF was an important factor adding to the widely shared political discontent.

The electorate of the new parties Podemos and Ciudadanos tend to be young people that punish the traditional parties for their corruption and past failures (Rodon and Hierro, 2016). Their level of dissatisfaction with the current way of doing politics appears to be much higher among youngsters (Rodon and Hierro, 2016; Orriols and Cordero, 2016). The differentiating aspects of the new parties Ciudadanos and Podemos versus the traditional parties PP and PSOE are ‘a young leadership, a democratic internal structure and the use of new forms of political communication’ (Rodon and Hierro, 2016: 354). Despite their short political track record the new
parties have already influence the national politics taking in the – until a few months ago - untouchable seats of the PP and PSOE (Orriols and Cordero, 2016). Since the end of October 2016, PP is ruling for the first time since the dictatorship with a minority government and the tacit support of the biggest opposition party PSOE – who has only just a few more seats (85/350) in parliament than Unidos Podemos (71/350) and never before provided a support of any kind to its rival PP.

Cordero and Blais (2017) state that although former studies already showed partisanship and a lack of information have to do with the loyalty of the PP-voters the authors add that in times of crisis apart from political voting also economic voting takes place. The authors, following this economic voting theory, concluding that there has to be a strong and reliable alternative to vote for or ‘voters may be less harsh towards a corrupt party when they believe that the other parties are also corrupt’ (Cordero and Blais, 2017). Gillespie (2016) found that Rajoy had been able to win because the economic topic put much more weight in the balance than corruption and the PP is perceived to handle economic issues better than PSOE. On top of that Rajoy – the soon to be re-elected president – provoked rightwingers to vote “strategically” in the preamble of the second round of elections in June 2016: ‘Rajoy was able to use opinion poll predictions of a sorpasso by Podemos over the PSOE to present the contest in stark left–right terms, which encouraged many who had switched votes to C’s in December to go back to the PP’ (Gillespie, 2016: 4).

Let’s take a look at PP’s most threatening opponent: Podemos who gained 71/350 seats. The founder and frontrunner of the party Pablo Iglesias Turrión (see left picture) – professor of political sciences at the Complutense University of Madrid - founded Podemos just one year before the general elections and in the middle of the economic crisis. Apart from Iglesias other university lecturers of the Complutense University of Madrid and activists and 15M activists were the parties first members. The

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23 Unidos Podemos is the team of Podemos and Izquierda Unida who teamed up since the general elections in December 2015. PSOE won 85 seats and Unidos Podemos 71.

24 Two recent corruption scandals are the “Bárcenas papers” and the “Opaque cards” (Cordero and Blais, 2017). The Bárcenas papers refers to an investigation of El Pais – a national newspaper - which discovered a bookkeeping fraud within the political party PP. The fraud concerns a big amount of illegal bonuses that were transferred for over 20 years to high figures in the party - inter alia the current president Rajoy. The “opaque cards”-case is a scandal that took place within Bankia – a bank owned by the regional government of Madrid. Bankia was ‘investigated for the misuse of credit cards. The investigated individuals, most of them related to the political party PP, spent €15.5 million in expenses of representation’ using the company’s cards for personal purchases including clothing and travel, and cash withdrawals (Cordero and Blais, 2017: 650).

25 Ciudadanos, the rightwing option for PP was only able to win 32/350 seats (El Pais, 2016)

party is perceived much more anti-mainstream than the already longer established Izquierda Unida (IU, United Left, founded in 1986) and is the “natural” consequence of –what Iglesias calls the regime crisis in Spain:

In Spain, as in other Eurozone countries, the economic meltdown and the measures imposed to ‘save the single currency’ raised the spectre of an organic crisis, which led in political terms to what we call a regime crisis: that is, the exhaustion of the political and social system that emerged from the post-Franco transition. The principal social expression of this regime crisis was the 15-M movement, the vast indignado mobilization which, starting on 15 May 2011, occupied city squares across Spain for weeks on end. Its principal political expression has been Podemos. (Iglesias, 2015: 10)

The consequences of the politics of austerity have been and still are horrific according to the politician. The main problems he points out in the late 2013 are: 6 million jobless, 60% youth unemployment, intellectual youth that migrates, every fourth person in Spain is suffering from poverty, the PSOE and PP reducing workers’ rights and FMI and European Commission forcing to reduce salaries in Spain with an additional 10% (Iglesias, 2014: 128). In his book Iglesias makes clear how Podemos is clearly disputing the current democracy in Spain. According to Iglesias the neoliberal system is not a human centred system, it is only in favour of the 1% and it is actually a way of breaking down the welfare state (Iglesias, 2014: 130). He supports this argument by pointing at the Spanish government who socialised the debts of the banks by converting them into national debts. It is only in this context we can understand the rise of this anti-systemic political party, the numerable cases of fraud are no longer individually looked upon, they are revealed as the political body of a democratic regime that has no right of calling itself “democratic” (Iglesias, 2014: 146). In short: Podemos, according to Iglesias will turn the system upside down if they were to gain popular support. But, will they stay as popular as they are after the elections of 2015/16? According to Gillespie (2016) there is already some disappointment noticeable, especially in relation to its failure to become the alternative for the administration of Rajoy. Halikiopouou and Vasilopoulou (2016: 19) argue that neither Podemos nor Ciudadanos are really transforming Spain ‘[…] neither of these two parties is extreme. Although critical of the status quo, these parties operate within the existing system of representation rather than putting forward an alternative vision altogether’. The general elections that took place in June 2016 eventually made sure Podemos became the third biggest party in Spain –together with their partner for this election round IU. Although Podemos did not make it into the government they are present with a big number in the opposition seats.

Ramiro and Gomez (2016) note the biggest greatest challenge of Podemos might be stabilising its supporters. The bulk of its followers are ‘less ideologically radicalised groups’ (Ramiro and Gomez, 2016: 16) but mainly supporters who at the moment are very dissatisfied and upset with
the corrupting and fraudulent government. Precisely because of their ideological lack they might switch back to one of the bigger parties – expectedly PSOE, since it is the mainstream party on the left side of the political spectrum. Others are less sceptical and believe the current political landscape since it seems to have entered a phase of momentum in which the new voices will be able to widen the cracks they caused in the bi-party democracy.

It seems likely that the ongoing problems facing the traditional Spanish parties will offer further opportunities for the forces of radical transformation to resume their progress in the future. In the meantime, success for Podemos at sub-state governmental levels already provides it and its allies with opportunities to demonstrate in cities such as Barcelona and Madrid that the new politics is actually more responsive to citizens and is able to make a difference (Gillespie, 2016: 7).

There remains quite an amount of uncertainty about the future of the young democracy of Spain. The two traditions (1) re-neo-liberalisation and (2) transformation are both unfolding while the country is reaching for stability. From this delicate moment I will now take a turn in order to approach the centre of this research’s setting: Valencia.

§ 3.3 Valencia in Crisis

Some characteristics of the current socio-political landscape that I just outlined for Spain as a whole are also found in the city of Valencia. What makes this coastal town so interesting is that it experienced a radical political turn - after 24 years of PP rule the city council now is in the led by the coalition of PSOE and a new leftist party Compromís – and additionally because the city is known for its vibrant social movements. In the next three sections I will zoom in on the current local realities of the of Valencia after which I will turn to its main activist neighbourhood initiatives, and lastly to its post-2015-election issues and the touch upon the local theatrical context.

§ 3.3.1 Valencia's Social and Political landscape

Valencia, the eponymous capital of Iberian state Comunitat Valenciana, is home to more or less 791,632 people. It is cut in two by the river Turia. This river was dislocated in the fifties after it inundated the old centre of the town. It now flows into the sea a few kilometres south of town. The empty riverbed has been drained and converted


into what people call the ‘green lungs’ of Valencia; an enormous city park that meanders through
the old town. Valencia is geographically also a known locality by means of its huertas – very
common in Spain and Portugal. ‘In addition to the ‘real city’, it has one of the five biggest huertas
of the western Mediterranean area’ (Romero et al. 2015: 80). Huertas are in essence highly fertile
grounds where fruits and vegetables are cultivated. Mostly this labour is provided by members of
one or more families. They are rectangular pieces of land surrounded by irrigation canals. In
Valencia many neighbourhoods share boundaries with the huertas and families cultivate for
personal consumption vegetables and chufas – the latter is the dominant ingredient for the local
drink Horchata. Apart from the huertas Valencia is surrounded by many rice fields. The famous
rice plate Paella has its origins in Valencia. Other emblematic features of the Mediterranean town
are the famous yearly festival les Falles –where big cardboard statues are built by local artists only
to go up in flames on the last night of the festival; the Valencian harbour, it is the biggest
commercial port of Spain; and lastly the unique skyline adorned with big surrealistic white
buildings which constitute the City of Arts and Sciences and is designed by Santiago Calatrava –
the “river” Turia starts (or ends) with these white “highlights” that host amongst others a scientific
museum, a planetarium and an opera-house. Prytherch and Maiques (2009) summarise a bit more
concise than me:

Valencia is a place of contradiction and juxtaposition, where global mega-events and
neighbourhood festivals, avant-garde architecture and two-millennia old croplands exist
side by side. If these complex dynamics are not unique, they are powerfully exemplified in
this Mediterranean city navigating between global modernity and regional tradition
(Prytherch and Maiques, 2009: 103).

It is understandable that tourists have not left Valencia in peace. From the nineties until now there
has been a real tourist boom. ‘While in 1992 less than 400,000 tourists visited Valencia, by 2007
this number was nearly 2 million’ (Prytherch and Maiques, 2009: 110). I first got to know Valencia
in 2012 as an exchange student during my bachelor Spanish Culture & Literature. Especially, for
the so called “Erasmus students” - students supported with an Erasmus scholarship – the city is
very attractive and every year they arrive to the city in bigger quantities. While I did love that the
sea was my new neighbour back in 2012, it was during those months that the cities
contradictions already had me in its grip.

Politically Valencia’s recent history has been extremely constant. From 1991 until 2015 the right-
wing party Partido Popular (PP) has been behind the political steering wheel at both the provincial
as well as the municipal level. For 24 years Rita Barberá (PP) was the towns major. Under her
supervision big development plans were carried out (Navarro Eslava, 2014). Big investments - in
mega events and projects like the organisation of the 32nd Americas Cup in 2007, the

29 A sailing race which paved the way for a whole different infrastructure and fancy hospitality businesses.
The construction of a Formula 1 circuit and the City of Arts and Sciences – a cultural and architectonical masterpiece of the architect Calatrava - were not eschewed.

The hegemony, indeed absolute majority, of the PP and its neoliberal ideology set the stage for aggressive growth since the 1990s, coinciding with general expansion in the European economy. Residences (43,968 units) were constructed between 1991 and 2000 (3000 more than the previous decade), and half again that many between 2001 and 2004. (Prytherch and Maiques, 2009: 108)

When the crisis finally came it had a disastrous impact on the city. ‘Nowhere are the effects of crisis and corruption more visible than in the region of Valencia’ (Badcoack, 2015b). The mega projects and events had gulped down a lot of money but they did not pay off to the taxpayers at all. On the contrary: they became the symbol of bad governance (Ibid.). The costs for the City of Arts and Sciences turned out to be €1300 million (Ibid.). Although this City should have been the famous figurehead of Valencia it introduced the municipality to a dangerous amount of debts. The Formula 1 circuit –a just as big of a miscalculation- was built but rarely has been used after its inauguration and the reconstructed port in the preamble of the America’s Cup (2007)–the sailing competition- attracted an enormous hospitality business that has been falling down the abys since the start of the crisis, hence the port currently looks abandoned.

Other consequences of the economic crisis were the growth unemployment, increasing socio-economic divides and the rise of people living under the poverty line (Tarazona Vento, 2017; Romero et al. 2015). In the meanwhile people were losing trust in politics and the general sentiment of political discontent was shared all over the country (Romero et al, 2015).

While the state carried the financial risks and remained bankrupt, the construction and property sectors reaped the bulk of the economic benefits generated by megaprojects and event [...] The most evident results of Valencia’s urban policy, besides the physical transformation, were social inequality, underinvestment in social services and fiscal crisis, in short, a net transfer of wealth from the public to the private sector through the built environment (Tarazona Vento, 2017: 80).

These “market enablement policies” at the same time transformed Valencia in an important centre of the free-market and have enhanced social economic inequalities in the city’ (Navarro Eslava, 2014: 51). Political scientists point out that Valencia and Spain in general were - until the economic crisis - the perfect students of the western neoliberal project (Ibid.). In 2013 the public debt in Valencia was as high as 968 € million (Romero et al, 2015: 80). Budget cuts were affecting especially the pillars of the welfare state; health care and education; undermining ‘society’s capacity for innovation and adaptation to changes in the productive system’ (Romero et al, 2015: 85). Eventually under the administration of Rita Barberá (PP) Valencian city council was declared
bankrupt and needed rescuing from the national government (Badcock, 2015b). Furthermore the Barberá’s administration became known for the numerous corruption scandals ‘more than 100 Valencian PP officials have been targeted in slow-moving judicial corruption probes. In 2013 the party’s leader in Castellon was given a four-year sentence for tax fraud’ (Badcoack, 2015b). The uninterrupted rule of the PP might have developed these mega-project and advanced the urbanisation there was simultaneously a substantial growth in inequality and corruption.

Over the course of PP’s 24 years also new political voices were active but they did not bear a chance until the economic crisis came ashore and the course of Rita Barberá was vigorously attacked. In Valencia two parties in particular arose in the chaos of the crisis: València en Comú (Valencia in Common) and Compromís (Compromise). València en Comú with Jordi Peri is a platform that was born in 2014 with the clear intention to bring an end to, what many Valencianos saw as, the dictatorship of the PP. Their electoral program consisted of thirty action points prioritising the defence of basic human rights that were being exploited, in their view, by PP’s neoliberal agenda (Maroto, 2015). It was formalised in 2014 and has strong ties with Podemos and with the local chapters of 15M. ‘The deliberations in the occupied squares – besides an opportunity for many of hearing an account of mega-projects different to the official one and to imagine a different Valencia – became the symbolic representation of a new way of doing politics’ (Tarazona Vento, 2017: 81).

Compromís, led by Joan Ribó, has been in the running a little longer but is nonetheless a product of the economic crisis. In the winter of 2010 it presented its electoral program. Ribó expressed the importance of working closely with neighbourhood movements – Valencia has several very active neighbourhood movements (Badcock, 2015a).

24th of May 2015 the local elections finished with what was left of the PP –corruption scandals, austerity measures, neoliberal priorities over social investment etc- the population was sated. Especially Compromís obtained an impressive result, they received 23% of the votes (Badcock, 2015a) . During that spring of 2015, after a quarter of a century, a brand new local government was inaugurated. Compromís and PSOE are now in charge of the city council with the tacit support of Valencia en Comú – the most left administration ever - acceded the office. There focal points being the renewed investment in public services (Rodon and Hierro, 2016).

This win would not have been possible without the efforts of the new political faces but neither without the high levels of civic participation in the neighbourhoods. These collectives and associations were born or regained strength during the economic crisis and helped pave the way for a political (and social?) change.

30 Retrieved from http://valenciaencomu.org/va/
§ 3.3.2 Social movement in the barrio: the case of el Cabanyal

The next section is dedicated to the most important local resistance group of Valencia—but please bear in mind that they are just taken as an example and that I could give an example of neighbourhood associations in every corner of the town.

When I arrived in Valencia for my research, in the warm month of May of 2016 I, had to look for a place to live. Through my connections in town with Paula – a friend of a friend that also happened to be program officer of a small independent theatre - I got the recommendation to deduced that I wanted to live in el barrio del Cabanyal – the neighbourhood of the Cabanyal. This neighbourhood is situated next to the port, clammed between the sea, the port and two big avenidas.

The Cabanyal used to be a fishermen village but is now part of Valencia –although people still say before a visit to the centre “Voy a Valencia” –Spanish for “I am going to Valencia”. Until late in the nineties of the last century people would just leave their doors unlocked when leaving the house. It is still a neighbourhood with a very high social cohesion (Cuesta Ávila, 2011). Most of the old small houses are tiny but very charismatic (see picture), my flatmate who studied architecture explained why; the houses were decorated with thousands of tiny tiles –sometimes resembling a mosaic artwork- in a very specific way because of the popularity of Art Nouveau in the late 19th century. It is known for its resistance against another mega-modernisation-project: the prolongation of the avenida Blasco Ibañez. One would be able to drive in one straight line from the centre of town to the beach. Tourism would be boosted, hospitality business’ as well, and at the same time the neighbourhood would be modernised and reconstructed. The inhabitants of the Cabanyal were against it for a simple reason: half of their barrio had to be teared down. The decision was made 18 years ago, in 1996, and only now (May 2016) by the time I was moving to the hood the project was officially wiped of the table by the new city council. I decided I wanted to get to know one the towns biggest neoliberal resistances as an example of a more general resistance directed towards the local and national “democratic” system.

The plan of “destruction for construction” came from Rita Barberá (PP) and consisted in the demolition of 450 houses and buildings that harboured 1651 households and a price-tag of 300 million euro (Cuesta Ávila, 2011: 125). ‘El derribo de estos significa borrar no solo la memoria colectiva del barrio y de sus gentes, sino desterrar también de la realidad a una buena parte de la valencianidad’ (Cuesta Ávila, 2011: 125). Resistance was a fact since the reconstruction was first announced by the PP (Ibid.). The strong social cohesion stood dramatically opposed to the undemocratic way of deciding over the heads of the people about the radical transformation of

31 Concha Baeza, a woman I met in the neighbourhood.
32 Retrieved from: http://viva-valencia-cabanyal.com/
33 Translation: ‘The demolition of these would mean erasing not only the collective memory of the neighbourhood and its people but also banish from reality a significant part of Valencianity’ (Cuesta Ávila, 2011: 125)
their living area. Cuesta Ávila (2011) points to the performance of citizenship that was no longer guaranteed – recognition, collaboration and participation were threatened and ignored. Another important point is the intentional aggressive attitude of the municipality in manipulating the social context in their favour (Romero et al, 2015). Changing amongst others the law in 2004 in order to be able to intervene in spaces protected by the Bien de Interes Cultural (cultural heritage register in Spain) (Cuesta Ávila, 2011). Racism and intolerance were fed on a daily basis; squats were not removed, as for the houses that were cornered the doors were closed with bricks and for example gypsies received a lot of the blame. Cuesta Ávila (2011) writes in her analysis the following on this topic:

Evidentemente no eran los gitanos del barrio sino otros “llegados” o “traídos” de fuera, según relatan los vecinos. El barrio comenzó a degradarse rápidamente y los escenarios positivos dieron lugar a los imaginarios negativos. Tanto es así, que de los 17 “puntos negros” por venta de drogas o inseguridad localizados en la ciudad de Valencia, 12 de ellos se encuentran en la zona de El Cabanyal, concretamente en la zona destinada a derribarse para dar paso a la prolongación de la avenida de Blasco (Cuesta Ávila, 2011: 125).

Neighbours and artists increasingly got angry and started to organise in increasingly more coordinated way. Salvem el Cabanyal (Save the Cabanyal) was formed by a group of neighbours pleading for the rehabilitation of the area – the material damage that the municipality caused is huge, locals call the most affected spaces that are in line with the planned prolongation “Ground Zero”- and a complete halt to the implementation of the plan. On a weekly basis the group meets, they organise their assemblies in one of the cornered houses. One of their first and most visible activities was Portes abertes (Valencian for “open doors”) a cultural project where expositions were held inside the emblematic houses of the Cabanyal. It was ‘[…] a way of using art and vernacular architecture to reinforce neighbours’ claim in their struggle’ (Navarro Eslava, 2014: 47). It allowed people from all over town to empathise and inform themselves on the situation of a part of their hometown. Salvem el Cabanyal really managed to gain the support of the whole neighbourhood. The strength of the organisation showed with the legitimate claims they expressed in 2004 when they opened a petition and raised signatures with which they went to the Supreme Court and realised a construction delay of years (Navarro Eslava, 2014).

Apart from Salvem el Cabanyal there has been another organisation that has been putting the urgency of the area on the map: Cabanyal Intim. Emergency theatre –avant-garde short theatre plays- performed during one week in May inside of the houses and on the public squares.

34 Translation: ‘Obviously they were not the gypsies born in the neighbourhood but others that “arrived” or were “brought” from outside, according to the neighbours. The neighbourhood began to degrade rapidly and positive seascapes gave rise to negative imaginaries. The scale of the deterioration is also visible through the fact that 12 of the 17 “black points” for drug sales or insecurity located in the city were in the area of El Cabanyal - specifically in the area destined to be demolished- in order to give way to the prolongation of the avenue of Blasco Ibáñez’ (Cuesta Ávila, 2011: 125).
Recently this organisation managed to attract 8000 visitors in a week. More about this theatre will follow in chapter 5.

The current state of the conflict is in favour of those against the prolongation. In June 2016 with the new government in place the plan has been completely deleted and a budget has been made available to start rehabilitation of the neighbourhood as soon as possible. Although the new government has the intention to include the collectives of the area in the rehabilitation program, gentrification, because of the idyllic houses, the exceptional location and the current numbers of tourists, is luring (Navarro Eslava, 2014).

§ 3.3.2 Valencia post-2015: the curtains open

Although the economic situation of many is “regular” to “miserable” (71%)\(^{35}\) spaces of encounter – the innumerable cafe-bars in the neighbourhoods – are highly visited. As my flatmate Eduardo states; the coffee and beer prices are still affordable, we always keep on talking and meeting each other, he explains; spontaneous and on a daily basis.

Last November (2016) PP’s Rita Barbera died (Durán, 2016). Only a small year after the coalition of left parties moved in the city council’s governing offices. This new coalition has to deal with enormous expectations of the electorate and with the pile of political scandals of the former government. After 20 years a fresh (?) wind is blowing through town but the heritage of the PP is huge. It is a crusted political system on top of that the population and local authorities are unfamiliar with change. My own generation has never seen a change of government (!). Subsequently expectations are sky high and demands endless… In the midst of what appears to be the first malleable moment in 20 years, a different kind of populism seems to have woken up, a kind where people are fed up with the political elite deciding on the course of society. Some have lived through the military dictatorship of Franco and saw it change only to be substituted by a less visible unequal power system: the capitalist marked. The economic elite stayed in power and so many important “puppets” did not move but just changed into different suits.

Only recently, in 2016 the survey of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) showed that three issues that concerned and affected the citizens of Valencia most since the economic crisis (multiple answers were possible): unemployment (71,1%) political corruption and fraud (36,6%) and problems related to the economy (23,6 %) (CIS, 2016). Although the percentages declined over the last five years they are still very high for a democratic country. These numbers portray how precarious the current situation of Valencia still is - people continue to be highly concerned about their status quo.

In the light of Badiou - who identified historic events as radically rupturing and a transformative

\(^{35}\) CIS, 2016
happening that changes the way people think of a situation – the economic crisis seems to possess some of the characteristics such a historic event. The situation – where the excluded part is fighting to become visible - then are the activist citizens in the the neighbourhoods around the centre of town and the new political movements in Valencia - people that do no longer accept poverty, joblessness or political corruption are emerging subjects. The revolts were everywhere in 2011 and resonated through 15M all over the country and since then, the democratic system - as it had been since the transition to democracy - has been questioned. A struggle for political space seems to have started – remember 15M, la PAH, Valencia en Comú, Podemos etc. - but not ended yet.

§ 3.4 Conclusion

The transition to democracy and regime reform since the death of the Spanish dictator Franco are perceived to have led to a “fake democracy” in the eyes of many Spaniards. The current economic crisis seems to be a new turning-point in history. New political parties and innovative social movements are growing as a consequence of the financial collapse. Six years after the big national protests of spring 2011 -which was only the spectacular beginning of many a protest that would follow- the national political arena in Spain is moving. About thirty years of alternation between the two mainstream parties in Spain -the People’s Party (PP) and the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE)- has come to an end. New political parties are standing up. Especially Podemos – a political party full of intellectual activists – and to a lesser extend Ciudadanos have had a leading role in all of this.

Locally, in Valencia, similar processes are unfolding. The torment of the economic crisis has dramatically raged through town but now seems to be on its way out. This time of austerity and fear also it created a momentum for numerous social movements. It is therefore that Valencia appears to be a fascinating research field for analysing these emergent voices and dive in possible new ideas and transformations in the practice of citizenship.

This chapter has provided a literature analysis on the status quo of Spain and Valencia. From this analysis, activist citizenship in the aftermath of the economic crisis, can be understood as the struggle of new political subjects - in the shape of Podemos politicians and social movements integrants - trying to conquer negotiation space in the political arena of PP en PSOE. The economic crisis, seen as a Badioun event, has triggered chaos in the socio-political landscape of Valencia that has opened, at leas some, space for newcomers to step in.

The question now seems to be: where is Valencia going? Since the struggle for a civic space and citizenship is not entirely nor objectively measurable - but is essentially about perceptions and personal and political relations - it is important to shed light on the irrational, sensitive activist citizen. I will therefore appeal to theatre plays that are currently – spring, summer and fall 2016 -
staged in town. In chapter 4 I will analyse the plays I have seen and analysed during six months of 2016. By doing so I hope to gain a more human centred vision on citizenship in Valencia today.

Hence, six years after the start of the protests in 2011 this study will look into the social and political transformations in relation to citizenship that are taking place on the local level. In order to gain insight in the cities ongoing struggles. These struggles will be analysed as counter-hegemonic activities that explicitly must not be seen, in opposition - which would shut the door for newcomers in the political arena - but as an alternative voice diversifying the current political landscape. I will use the theatrical discourse to step beyond the capitalist neoliberal paradigm and look into today’s situation of (post)economic crisis.

_I quan la nit ens ve a buscar_
_som tot un món per estimar,_
_som una història per guanyar,_
_tot un futur per començar._

_Obrint Pas_36

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36 Translation: And when the night comes and looks for us; we are a whole world to love; we are a story worth winning; an entire future about to start.
Chapter 4
RENEGOTIATION OF CITIZENSHIP AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN VALENCIAN THEATRE

Character Rómulo sets off in “Sindrhomo” from Iaia Cárdenas

RÓMULO: Nadie recuerda cómo o por qué. Quizás nadie llegó a saberlo. Los supervivientes más viejos conservan recuerdos de su niñez: ciudades en llamas, familias enteras obligadas a huir presas del terror, la sociedad sumida en el caos... Extrañas noches que el cielo incandescente hizo que parecieran plenamente teñidos de sangre. Ahora el mundo no es lo que era. Mira a tu alrededor. Está claro, no cabe duda, ya no lo es. Pero cierra los ojos y abre tu mente. Algo anda mal. Hay algo que aúlla en los límites de la percepción, siempre presente, lleno de bronca e impotencia. De eso, de la vorágine psíquica del mundo, no hay refugio donde protegerse.

Introduction

‘The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear’ (Gramsci, 1971: 276). Although crisis’ are certainly not unique to this time period they are shaped by a historical and cultural contexts of it. In the aftermath of the most recent financial crisis – as argued in the former chapter - exists the opportunity to analyse possible changes and chances regarding citizenship. Therefore hereafter an extensive analysis of the current political and social landscape, by use of a theatrical lens, will be presented. This analysis intents to contrast the more conventional literature analysis of chapter 3 by providing insights from the theatrical discourse analysis.

Let’s first return briefly to May 2016. With the framework and the context theoretically set out, the time had come to start ploughing around in my research. It started, earlier than expected, while I was looking for a place to live. Like I briefly stated in the paragraph on Valencia’s socio-political landscape, my friend Paula had suggested me by email to look for a place in El Cabanyal for several reasons. Firstly, it was close to the sea (and I was going to spend the entire Valencian scorching hot summer in the city, so this of course made much sense to me). Secondly, because it was very affordable and lastly, because it was a very interesting neighbourhood – these reasons were obviously equally important. As I explained in chapter 2 El Cabanyal has a recent history of activist citizens resisting neoliberal reforms in a very creative way. During my room-search I got in contact with several people and within two days I had not only found a room to live but I had also assisted the neighbourhood’s assembly and met with some new neighbours I discovered through the housing website. At the assembly I ran into my first links to neighbourhood theatre: Cabanyal Intim and to another interesting house in the neighbourhood La Colectiva –a place where different cultural projects were at home, most of them profoundly connected with the neighbourhood. The mapping had started. A little later that week I met Carme Melo, my internship supervisor at the University of Valencia. As it turned out her sister –Ester Melo - was one of the central figures in

37 All the long citations are translated to English but not in the footnotes, they can be found in Appendix 3.
Valencian contemporary theatre and would prove to be essential in my spider web. After the suggestions of the artists at the assembly and those of Ester Melo my visits to cultural hubs soon filled my weeks with long interviews, the collecting of theatre plays and the visits to theatres all over town. It did not take me long to ascertain: Valencia was talking crisis and citizenship every night.

When we see citizenship as being forever under construction - in line with Dagnino, 2008; Andrijasevic, 2013; Isin, 2009; Isin and Nielsen, 2008 - its ennoblement, its re-negotiation and re-definition is a struggle about what makes the citizen, about the practice of citizenship. In this chapter activist citizens constructing contemporary Valencia will be spotlighted and given the stage. Voicing their struggle and analysing how the boundaries of political subjects and the concept of citizenship are being stretched I aim to learn about citizenship transformation in the aftermath of the most recent economic crisis. In the first part I will discuss the six themes that were prevalent in Valencian “crisis-theatre”: (1) Local agency (2) Political consciousness and civic outrage (3) Changing perspective; from macro to micro (4) The system collapsed (5) Generational rupture (6) The malleable moment. The last part of this chapter will connect these themes with the theory discussed in chapter 2 in order to connect observations in theatre performances with literature on activist citizenship.

§ 4.1 Local agency

A first theme featuring strongly in the theatre plays concerns the local emancipatory efforts that address the re-empowerment of dignity and the right to the city.

Instead of relying on the authorities - to provide justice, jobs a good health system or to defend citizens from banks evictions - citizens in Valencia started creating safety nets themselves and initiated networks for knowledge generation. These efforts appear as a emancipatory form of local agency. An agency that aims at alleviating oneself and others by moving away from certain

MARA: He pasado media vida entre estas ocho paredes, las diez pantallas de mi imaginación.
VERA: He viajado por planetas y medio en busca de consuelo, navegando ciudades que ahogaran mis preguntas. No quiero seguir recordando lo que podría haber sido.
MARA: No quiero tener que morirme para que alguien me recuerde, para que alguien hable de mí. No estamos muertas, aún no. ¡Todavía tengo tanto por hacer! No quiero seguir siendo la heredera de una Casa y de un Mundo que no me pertenecen porque yo no los inventé.
VERA: Esa no es nuestra cuenta pendiente. Podemos salir o entrar, dormir o soñar.
MARA: Podemos dibujar una cartografía que sea nuestra, escribir el futuro…

GOLPES puerta

VERA: (Asomada a la ventana, habla con la multitud congregada en la puerta de la Casa) Gracias. Podéis marcharos. Lo que había que defender aquí, ya ha sido defendido.
MARA:… inventarme una ciudad con las coordenadas dislocadas.
VERA: El corazón, la dignidad y el fuego son mucho más que estas doce paredes que se tambalean, que estos cien muros que se desintegran.
awkward and, at times outright miserable, situations while at the same time avoiding institutional structures.

One emblematic example appears in the play “Y si hablarán de nosotr@s?” (What if they talk about us?) written by Anna Albaladejo and performed by, again, Anna Albaladejo and Maribel Bayona.38 This piece is about two sisters that find themselves moments before they will be evicted from the house where they lived with their mother. It is a very intimate story that shows the effects of the crisis in the case of this family. The play expounds how every intimate space has a story to it and its memory extends the concrete-borders of the house. The crisis is causing more than mere economic harm: it harms intimate memories and puts values on the balance. The protagonists are mirroring these struggles with their own small biography. Finally, re-empowering themselves in the middle of the chaotic saddening crisis: the play ends when the girls decide to hand their family house over to the bank, they don't want it anymore, they empower themselves with this decision and find back their dignity.

Immediately after the play the Albaladejo and Bayona organised a debate with other actors and social movements involved with people that suffered from evictions and are amongst the most effected by the crisis –movements like PAH (see chapter 3). Ana stated in the interview that took place in September that Valencia has been dispossessed by the banks and the 24 years of right-wing government (Rita Barberá’s PP). With her plays and the erection of a network between artists and people movements she is not only advocating for dignity she is performing a bridge between re-empowerment and people movements.

Cabaynal Intim - theatre festival organised on a yearly basis in El Cabanyal by different playwrights and actors/actresses. This festival is also an example of the “local agency” theme. Amongst the organisers are Isabel Caballero and Ester Melo whom I interviewed in June 2016. ‘Poder apoyar a través de las artes la lucha como activista y como creadora es importante para mi [silencio] estar haciendo algo [silencio] que sirva de algo...’ (Caballero, 2016)39. The situation of the neighbourhood El Cabanyal - see chapter 3 - made Isabel and the other playwrights want to do something to visualise the struggle of the barrio and share in solidarity the claim of the people living there. While at the same time stimulating public consciousness of the issue ‘Hacer nada simplemente no era una opción’40, Isabel elaborates, the crisis threw a spotlight on everything and taking sides became an internal necessity for many. ‘Era de qué hago? me corto las venas y

38 See appendix 1 for more information on all the actors, actresses and playwrights mentioned in the thesis.

39 Translation: ‘To be able to support this neighbourhood struggle using theatre makes me feel like I am doing something that really matters’ (Caballero and Melo, 2016, personal interview)

40 Translation: ‘Not doing anything was simply not possible’ (Caballero and Melo, 2016, July 15) Personal interview.
me voy de esta ciudad? o me quedo y peleo por mis narices' (Caballero, 2016). Melo elaborates that the festival has searched collaborations in all the outskirts of town in order to intervene in the city through the arts. The result was the Plataforma d’Iniciatives Culturals Urbanes de València (Platform of urban cultural initiatives, PICUV), a joint platform that currently reaches more than 100,000 people every year. The platform seems to be fostering a decent impact on socio-political knowledge through their activist shape of the theatre plays - ‘En épocas de crisis se agudiza el ingenio’ (Melo, in Caballero and Melo, 2016). PICUV also enhanced the revival of theatre in the periphery and contributed to socio-political consciousness in the neighbourhoods. In relation to this Ester Melo is very proud of the work she realises with collective Cabanyal íntim ‘Nos hemos acercado a un público que de otra forma no iría a ver este tipo de teatro’. (Melo, in Caballero and Melo, 2016).

The reaction of Maribel Bayona (2016), director of Espacio Inestable – an initiative that already exists for over a decade and presents plays in their small workshop hidden in the old centre of town, where they also serve as a platform for young playwrights - speaks volumes:

Muchas veces no podemos desvincularnos del momento histórico en el que vivimos, es que forma parte de nosotros.. Valencia acaba de vivir un momento difícil y ver cómo podemos superarlo; resistiendo, estando juntos, igual desvinculándonos de lo institucional, generando nuevas redes, nuevas posibilidades entre ciudadanía y artistas (Bayona, 2016).

Despite the small budget Espacio Inestable according to Maribel Bayona (2016) has created ways to stage political and economic issues and contribute, through theatre, to local memory and resistance.

Victor Sánchez mounted Wichita Co in 2013. At the most deserted moment of the crisis and out of social commitment and uneasiness with his own generation - ‘fue un compromiso con la perplejidad y con el cambio’ (Sánchez, 2016). Victor was born in 1982 and is seen by other playwrights in Valencia as the example of how post-transition generation –born after 1978- thinks. recurrent themes in his plays are the empowerment of citizens and the re-definition of the contemporary identity for the young Spanish democracy. According to Victor, Valencia is thinking about what she wants to become now. In my interview with him he points out that during the transition to democracy the mirroring of other countries in the west by Spain was fateful. While in the Spanish people were keeping their mouth shut, he states, the new government was not busy

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41 Translation: It was like, what do I do? I cut my ties and I leave this city? Or, I stay and I fight with all the power I have in me’ (Caballero and Melo, 2016, July 15) Personal interview.

42 Translation: ‘Times of crisis sharpen the intellect’ (Melo, in Caballero and Melo, 2016).

43 Translation: ‘We arrived at an audience that would not have visited this kind of theatre’ (Melo, in Caballero and Melo, 2016).

44 Translation: ‘a commitment with bewilderment and with change’(Sánchez, 2016).
building a democracy but international networks Sánchez, 2016). With his theatre plays he wants to add to a new narrative that does speak out and helps in the construction of a new Spain from below (Ibid.).

Creo que es el momento en el que gran parte de la sociedad está pensando cómo convertir Valencia en valentía. una ciudad de valientes. creo que va por ahí. realmente se está cuestionando que quiere ser. Claro también es este momento de perplejidad. Pero no hay un solo discurso, los discursos de antes decían: hacia donde miramos? Hacia Barcelona? Hacia Madrid? Es el momento en que Valencia tiene que mirar sobre si misma para decir hacia dónde queremos ir, Y no cerrarse! Es una buena oportunidad para vertebrar políticas sólidas que no nos pase como pasó... sabes... (Sánchez, 2016).

Carla Chillida, from theatre group Atiro Hecho – a young collective of actors and actresses that is rooted in social movements - works for example on the “Plan B” movement with Varoufakis (Greek ex-minister of finances) by performing their critical play on the trade agreement TTIP. Her life did not change through the crisis, she states, she has had this sensitivity for inequality her whole life (Chillida, 2016). However, Carla did notice the rest of the city waking up with the collapse of the economy (Ibid.). Although the city is awake now, the dream she pursues – changing the system - has a long road ahead, she elaborates. The spirit of the 15M has inspired many people, Carla states, but it still has much work to be done. Nevertheless, at the moment she is very proud of what people movements have achieved in the recent years:

Valencia también pese a todas las imposiciones políticos que hemos tenido ha desarrollado una red alternativa, una red de vanguardia que creo no está en todas las ciudades, por lo menos que yo he visitado. Yo creo que esta red se hace cada vez es más fuerte y más consolidada. [...] fuera de lo que está establecido se generan redes y actividades que nadie las puede parar (Chillida, 2016).

In conclusion: the crisis provoked many by creating direct tangible needs, that made it for a lot of citizens impossible to look away. “Local agency” is the blending of a growing local consciousness and the will to act on pressing situations related to the crisis. The performances of artists reflect on this “new” local agency by the visualisation of intimate social struggles like evictions and a tribute to those that were affected by the crisis. Observable are also playwrights and actors/actresses that engage in direct interventions aimed at improving the situations for citizens in Valencia: building networks between artists and people movements, the contribution of memory-creation and the construction of a contemporary identity that includes rethinking the system- in and outside of public spaces by means of theatre.
§ 4.2 Civic outrage and political consciousness in the neighbourhood

A second theme featuring strongly in the theatre plays is “civic outrage and political consciousness in the neighbourhood”. Or, as Paco Zarzoso - one of Valencia’s most respected playwrights - reflects; outrage is connected to the growing awareness about the fraudulent and corrupt political system (Zarzoso 2016).

People are increasingly aware of their (political) rights in the aftermath of the crisis. Outrage about politicians who were ‘infecting’ the country, and alternatives that arose – like Podemos - made Paco Zarzoso start voting. He had never voted until these last elections. In his plays – like in “Ni Noble, ni Bueno, ni Sagrado: Bankia” - he talks about what is rotten in the current society in order to poke political consciousness (Zarzoso, 2016). The fragment here above is from his most recent play. It is inspired on an advertising spot of Bankia, a big bank in Spain that has been in and out of the news because of corruption scandals. The commercial can be summarised as follows: it advertises that men should definitely trust their financial savings to Bankia, because the only interest he will pay is that of forgetting the anniversary of his wife – who will charge him with interests, interests that consist of accompanying her to a theatre play in ancient Greek. Zarzozo’s play therefore starts in Greek (!). The opening scene is repeated in Spanish in the very last minutes of the play. Only then you find out its not really a Greek Tragedy but a modern tragedy “la Tragedia Banquera”. Although it looks like it is actually an ancient Greek scene (even Medea appears), it is about the scandal of Bankia and how this caused many innocent people – of whom many lived in Valencia - to lose all their savings and still dares to make such indecent commercials. It is, in summary, a play that voices outrage - of those who are affected by this scandal - towards the capitalist system.

In general, to be aware of the context where one lives means in Valencia at the moment much more than knowing where the closest metro station is or where the best bakery resides. A gigantic
outburst of civic outrage since 2011 has raised political consciousness about local issues in one’s living area.

Valentia of Xavi Puchades talks about cuts in education and the health system. Three small stories humanise the effects of these cuts in the day to day life’s of people in Valencia. The protagonists that are talking speak out of solidarity (Puchades, 2016). The perspective is very important: it is not really for the public it is more for those who are affected, by honouring them Puchades aims to spread empathy en consciousness in times of crisis. He insists empathy can only grow by learning from those that have been resisting most, ‘la Resistencia tiene que ver con trabajar con grupos que realmente están resistiendo’ (Puchades, 2016). Puchades feels that resistance should be something like a moral obligation for every citizen (Ibid.). Together people have to resist and fight to change these themes - he mentions cuts in education and in the health system. To my question about how exactly he states that it is especially worrisome that politicians are promoting the vision that in the past things were better. Maybe things were better but they were not good, ‘Era poco, prácticamente no era nada, pero era algo’ (Puchades, 2016). Puchades, although furious and active in different social movements, is pessimistic about change. The recalibration of the damage that “Rita” - the former mayor - has done over de last 24 years will not be completed before the end of the 4 years-term of the newly installed city council.

COS, the organisation of Vicente Arlandis (2016) provides a space to connect to each other and to the public spaces around ones house through theatre and dance sessions. Arlandis states that the awakening of the neighbourhood especially incentivised people to see the necessity to reconnect to each other and to reclaim the neighbourhood collectively. Now, he states, even if the municipal budget is zero- people are organising activities to make the neighbourhood a cleaner, nicer or better place. His own project is an example of this sprouting consciousness and activation.

Yo creo en esta época ha afectado, me ha afectado a nivel de dinero, claro. Pero luego también creo que ha despertado cosas. Un espacio como este hubiera sido imposible hacer hace unos años. No se tenía una consciencia. Con todas estas problemas económicas que ha habido se ha puesto que antes no mirábamos. Las mirábamos pero muy de lejos. Por ejemplo en los barrios. No había la conciencia de donde vivo. Cuales problemas hay y de que manera se podrían solucionar? De que manera puedo yo participar como ciudadano para solucionar eso. Hasta entonces la responsabilidad era de no sé quien y que arregle eso! Yo no me implico y no participo. En valencia ha habido este problema que nadie se hacía cargo de nada. A nivel político teníais un problema en tu barrio y estos ni te escuchaban. Yo iba a hablar con el alcalde y él nunca te iba a recibir. Entonces había una

45 Translation: ‘Resistance has to do with fighting side by side with those who are really resisting’ (Puchades, 2016).
46 Translation: ‘It was little, almost nothing, but it was something’ (Puchades, 2016).
ruptura quien debería solucionar los problemas y los ciudadanos, en muchos casos los ciudadanos, se organizaban. Si ellos no solucionan los problemas pues algo tendremos que hacer para solucionarlo (Arlandis, 2016).

The horror of the crisis created a critical awareness about a wide range of topics that are structuring our life’s in relation to (political) institutions agrees also Víctor Sánchez (2016). It is as if, according to Sánchez, people were wearing blinders before the crisis, that made them blind for certain political issues and injustices. These blinders have been dissolved: it is like the birth of a political subject (Sánchez, 2016). ‘De repente se han caído muchos mitos, muchas maneras de ver la vida, quizá hay algo en que nos convertimos en personas más negativas, seguramente... o más críticas pero también más empoderadas de alguna manera yo creo que he desarrollado más como sujeto político en estos años que en toda mi vida.’ (Víctor Sánchez, 2016)

In Penev, a play written by Xavo Giménez, the anger of the protagonist about the Spanish malaise and fraudulent state leads him to kill the Spanish president. The play actually is a dialogue of two adult men - Javier and Antonio - that are coping with life in Valencia. Giménez uses very interesting techniques to give different angles to an issue, the actors sometimes play different characters in the life of the other. For example, at one point Javier plays Antonio’s mother to expound worries about her “sons” life now he is jobless. At the end of the play the Spanish president is killed by Antonio, who is very disappointed and helpless about the crisis-situation. The direct incentive had been that Antonio was unable to pay a ticket for the football match he wanted to take his son to.

A different topic within this theme is the ideas and prejudices of the employed and unemployed workers of the city. The crisis led to a lot of cuts in every sector and so people were obliged to stay home – unemployed. In the play “Fermín Jiménez” of theatre group Pont Flotant, this topic is dismantled from a very intimate perspective. They talk on stage about questions like: how can we be “free” in the current society? How can we feel socially “realised” by things unrelated to job but related much more to the intimate and private spheres of oneself?

In sum, many of my interviewees used the metaphor of “waking up” and “taking of the blinders” to describe the present situation. For 24 years Valencia was ruled by the PP, it meant for all of them the prolongation the dictatorship of Franco. In “Síndhomo” from Iaia Cárdenas the protagonist Rómulo, a fictitious character obsessed with the malaise of Valencia, turns off the lights of the entire town at the end of the play as ‘un ejercicio de fumigación’ in the name of

47 Translation: ‘Suddenly a lot of myths fell off their pillar, there are so many ways to look at life, maybe we have grown to be more pessimistic people, surely... or more critical, but also in a way empowered, I think I have developed myself as a political subject more during the last years than in all my life’ (Sánchez, 2016).
‘terrorismo solidario’ (Cárdenas, 2015)48. The core of this message is shared widely by playwrights in Valencia: outraged has triggered a local awareness and responsibility.

Exemplary for “outrage” is also the next song, from the play of Paco Zarzoso “Ni noble, ni buena, ni sagrada: Bankia”.

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<th>“Rata de dos patas”</th>
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Adapted versión of the song of Paquita la del barrio. Part of “Ni noble, ni buena, ni sagrada: Bankia” of Paco Zarzoso

Music of original version: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9obV_MFMaY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9obV_MFMaY)

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48 Translation: ‘Exercise of fumigation’ ‘solidary terrorism’ (Cárdenas, 2015)
§ 4.3 Change perspective from macro to micro

A third trend I found in theatre plays was the presence of the macro socio-political reality translated into a micro-translation of peoples’ situation within the four walls of their house. Playwrights have sharpened their words and pointed them to the polemic local realities of the aftermath of the crisis; joblessness, impunity, and other issues.

The theatre group Pont Flotant – mounted in 2000 by a group of friends - is always looking for new ways of storytelling. Their plays are based on their reflections of their intimate personal biography that –according to the four members- is always very political (Muñoz, 2016). Their stories are not fiction but based on a profound research of themselves in relation to a particular socio-political issue. In the above fragment from the play “Fermín Jiménez”, the four actors reflect on freedom in times of crisis and the necessity of “having a job”. It is a very strong example of how people in the theatre world are busy with identity issues that are connected to the aftermath of the economic crisis.

After the transition to democracy Spain had been focussing on international networks and the neoliberal restructuring of the country as a whole. Spain was positioning itself in Europe and the rest of the world. Socio-political critique in theatre plays had therefore a more global character in the nineties and start of the new millennium, but this perspective reversed and turned inwards (Puchades, 2016). The economic crisis has presented a focus that has been more intimate (Ibid.). When in 2011 the impact of the economic crisis becomes increasingly visible in the streets – shops remain closed and constructions are left unfinished - this deserted society becomes the focus of storytellers.
Xavi Puchades intents to visualise the impact of the city councils decisions in El Cabanyal with a story about a local inhabitant from that neighbourhood. The female protagonist hijacks a tourist bus – the typical ones that have no roof and are a hop-on hop-off bus that connects highly touristic dots of the city map. She forces the bus to take an alternative route, in order to show the tourists the other side of town - El Cabanyal - a part of town that the ordinary Valencian has to deal with every day.

The play “Zero Responsables” is the emblematic example of this turning point from macro to micro. A play directed by a collective of playwrights from Valencia in 2010 and coordinated by Josep Lluis Sirera – researcher and playwright. It is written in reaction to the impunity of the Valencian government in the aftermath of the terrible metro accident that took place in 2006 at the metro stop “Jesús” (which was probably caused by a lack of maintenance). The accident became highly linked to the theme of corruption. The convergence of the metro accident and the economic crisis opened the eyes of many citizens on the theme of corruption and its sickening impact on their everyday environment (Puchades, 2016). This accident caused 43 deaths and 47 people were severely injured. The way that is dealt with the accident by the city council is the direct incentive for playwrights to turn their perspective inwards - plays becomes much more localised (Puchades 2016; Zarzoso, 2016). “Zero Responsables” was written in 2010 and refers to the fact that - until then (actually until today) there has not been any clarity about the cause nor whose responsibility it was. A few years after the accident, in 2010, playwrights united their pens to honour the victims and their family and friends. Puchades states that theatre was used here for the first time - or at least for the first time in a very long time - to denounce impunity and corruption of the local government. It was in fact used as a tool to honour people that were seeking justice while it simultaneously cried for dignity.

Paco Zarzoso states ‘A partir de Zero Responsables nos enfoacamos más en Valencia que en el neoliberalismo en general. Lo que estaba pasando aquí era muy terrible’ (Zarzoso, 2016)⁴⁹. In my interview with him he states that his plays, from that moment on, were exclusively on the local issues of Valencia. Not as a rule, but out of personal necessity. According to Zarzoso, now it is time to look each other in the eye and name the problems we have so we can solve them. For example the monopoly of financial markets and banks, like the scandals of the bank “Bankia”, or how the supermarket Mercadona - a Valencian chain - is treating its personal and its providers. The latter was Zarzoso’s incentive to write the play “doce razones para no comprar en xxxxxxxx”⁵⁰. He identifies theatre is increasingly also a space where questions can be asked and

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⁴⁹ Translation: ‘As of Zero Responsible we are focusing much more on Valencia than on Neoliberalism in general (Zarzoso, 2016).

⁵⁰ Translation: “twelve reasons why you should not buy at xxxxxxxxx”, the “x” stand for “mercadona”.

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ethics re-discussed - ‘La crisis ha hecho posible que los creadores - especialmente los jóvenes - no temen de expresar su frustración, ahora tienen mucho más coraje y hablan sin tapujos’\(^{51}\).

The importance of linking the questioning of societal issues to personal spheres in theatre is enormous, Xavi Puchades states. He argues that if you talk about local issues, you will generate knowledge about it, and not only that: you generate memory – people will not forget intimate political stories (Puchades, 2016). It is normal to reject negativity but it is dangerous too, Puchades continues, because that is not how you change but how you will fall in the same trap over and over again.

Changes in the way politics is perceived meant a transformation in the habits of many citizens. The crisis broke some essential ideas –like the one that our representatives steer the country in the right direction and are immune for corruption because of their commitment to the people - and made room for a genuflection of much more critical ideas – like the development of Podemos. Anna Albaladejo states that there is a change in perspective of what is or should be politics a “política del vínculo” (Politics of the connection). This has been fore fronted by the 15M since 2011 the playwright continues. It is about the change of space ‘15M takes the streets and succeeds to unite different groups. Plus it breaks with the regulatory rules and bureaucracies of what we cannot and what we can do…’ (Albaladejo, 2016).

These public spaces that are –at least symbolically- appropriated have to re-brought to life in a different way. Vicente Arlandis tries with his pieces to break the logic of this institutional macro spaces with new micro experiences. What this means in praxis is that he animates institutional spaces with the result that “actual things happen”. Art has the power to move away from the structure of that particular space and because of the highly political space they are animating it is a political act. Challenging according to Arlandis discipline and (body)language. He calls his

\(^{51}\) Translation: ‘Crisis made possible that playwrights –especially the young- have not fear of showing their frustration, they have become courageous and outspoken!’
political interest “política de la esencia”, meaning he cares about the actual acts, the observable political behaviour.

Que es más político compartir un coche entre cinco personas que hablar de qué mal está la frontera... digamos que me parece más importante lo que haces de lo que dices. Tiene que ver con acción y actitud. ¡Ojo! También otro tipo de manifestarse me parece súper bien, eso de unirse enfrente de la casa de migrantes y pedir mejores condiciones me parece excelente. [...] yo creo que hoy después de todo lo que hemos pasado la gente es más crítica. Ahora la gente quiere hacer las cosas más diverso y la diversidad es lo más político que hay (Vicente Arlandis, 2016).

The theme glossed out in this section shows how the economy is no longer “out there”. It is something people have internalised and identified with: “I am Valencia” and “I am the economy”. Playwrights stage a certain type of theatre that centres around the micro story in which the macro issues are reflected. In Valencia the focus becomes the ordinary (but quite miserable) situation of the everyday citizen of Valencia that is worrying about joblessness, a tiny budget or the lack of trust in the future. A reflection, through theatre, of the political system from a very intimate starting point.
§ 4.4 The verdict is: “The system” has failed

A fourth theme featuring strongly in the theatre plays is the idea that “the system” -the city council - has failed to meet the civil needs. Especially the younger playwrights, like Xavi Puchades (2016), Víctor Sánchez (2016) and Carla Chillida (2016), refer with their “verdict” to the young democracy and the big chance that was lost after the dictatorship of Franco.

From “Síndrhomo” by Iaia Cárdenas.

NEVIA: No pienses, Rómulo. Este es el mejor momento para la venganza. Se van a cagar en las patas, ya verás. No el año que viene, ni el próximo. Ahora.

RÓMULO: ¿Vengarnos? Yo no me estoy vengando. Es un ejercicio de fumigación, nada más.

NEVIA: ¿Por qué no podemos vengarnos? ¿Qué tiene de malo?


NEVIA: Ponele el nombre que quieras. Esto es venganza, Rómulo. Venganza. Quizás de chiquito te dijeron que la venganza no es buena, que la justicia bla bla... Pero ahora ya sabés cómo funciona el mundo. Ya sos grande. Hay frases que se repiten y se repiten, de generación en generación, frases que nos van comiendo el coco, pero eso no quiere decir que sean ciertas. A la mierda la justicia. ¿quién dice lo que es justo? Y si en vez de vengarnos estamos poniendo las cosas en su sitio? ¿Es eso te hace sentir mejor? ¿Te gusta más así? ¿Cuánta gente debería haber hecho antes lo que nosotros vamos a hacer? ¿Cuántas personas se detuvieron a pensar en lo correcto y dieron marcha atrás? Y además, ¿qué carajo es lo correcto?! ¿Qué es lo correcto?! ¿Qué lo hace sentir mejor? ¿Qué piensa de lo que nos pasó? ¿Qué piensan de lo que nosotros somos? ¿Qué piensan sobre lo que esta haciendo? Mirá, cuando terminemos, viviremos aquí los tres juntos, con Álex si querés, a mi me encantan los niños. Los tres juntos como antes. Volver a ser una familia.

RÓMULO: No es tan fácil.

NEVIA: Claro que lo es. Lo difícil es seguir intentando entrar en un sistema que nos pisa los pies descablos una y otra vez. Lo difícil es intentar dejarlos contentos porque nunca lo estarán. Hoy es tu casa, mañana tu hijo.

RÓMULO: Pasado tu hijo. Mirá, no sé qué vas a hacer pero yo no pienso contenerme si después te arrepentís de no haber hecho nada. No cuentes conmigo para eso. ¿Vos pensáis que los padres son incondicionales? ¿Te pensás que yo soy incondicional? Bueno, no, no los somos. ¿Me entendiste? Te estoy preguntando si me entendiste.

NEVIA: ¡Saquémonos las ganas entonces! ¡Qué revienten! ¡Que exploten como la pólvora!

Síndrhomo52 was one of the first plays I saw in Valencia, right after I got to know Tiziano, a protagonist of the play “Thursday Today” - that I saw on my first saturday in town. He had invited me to see this particular play, Síndrhomo, because he thought it would be an interesting introduction to Valencia. The characters in the above scene from Síndrhomo are Rómulo -the protagonist, a man in his forties suffering from de syndrome of Diogenes – and Nevia - an Argentinean travesty that, in this slightly absurd situation plays the substitute mother of Rómulo and his sister Gloria. The whole play is set, according to Iaia Cárdenas’ (2016) indications in the

52 Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX0sSVWRSpE&feature=youtu.be
During the play you realise that each of the three protagonists agrees on the fact that the current city council has failed in all its aspects. This particular selection of dialogue takes place just a few moments before the grande finale - when Romulo will push the button in order to turn off the lights of the entire city of Valencia.

During the first part of the play we also find out that “the system” did not care about Gloria and Rómulo. In fact, they were stepped on their thwarted over and over again. Rómulo, in his flat, works on a plan for the system to reboot; Valencia will be dis-illuminated. A (symbolic) change called by Romulo earlier in the play that will ‘cambiar la mierda por abono’

This is a very apt metaphor because the surroundings of Valencia are full of vegetable gardens - “huertas” (see chapter 3) - that are fertilised every year, after which the entire city smells like it – like excrements - if the wind turns the right (hence, wrong) way.

La mierda convertido abono: no tenemos que esperar a que nos cambien la vida los políticos, somos nosotros los que tenemos que iniciar... en esta obra los que inician el cambio son unos locos. El personaje que hago yo está completamente fuera de su cabeza. Está en su mundo pero al final se descubre que está haciendo esto, algo real, quiere dejar sin luces a la ciudad. Es un cambio simbólico que a partir de ahí - de apretar un botón y que la ciudad quede en obscuras- y al final no se sabe si lo ha conseguido o no, si está todo dentro de una locura o si fue verdad (Manuel Valls, 2016).

Also Xavi Puchades (2016) sees the current democracy as a failure. It was crafted too hastily during the transition to democracy after 40 years of hard core dictatorship (Puchades, 2016). His last piece is “Saqueo” - the robbery. Referring to more than just the economic robbery (of banks and the city council) but most importantly the robbery of humaneness by the capitalist government. His metaphor of the current state of mind of Valencia 2016 is a scene from this same play: It stinks enormously at the beach, it is the rotten smell of a whale that had been drifted ashore and had been laying there for 40 years. It’s gone now, but its smell remains. This rottenness is the metaphor of Puchades for corruption - invisible but it is still here, it hides in our nostrils (Ibid.). Puchades states that in every café and bar-conversations we hear and see fascism dressed up like democracy.

In Valencia, as I explained in the former chapter, investments of the city council in projects like the Formula 1 or the City or Arts and Sciences, meant underinvestment in poor neighbourhoods far away from the centre. A poverty that became during the financial crisis, according to Paco Zarzoso (2016), has become misery - Spain, he argues, has become a monster. ‘España es un

53Translation: ‘an apartment of a flat caught up in the claws of the new world’

54 Translation: ‘Change shit for fertilizer’ (Cárdenas, 2015).
gran esperpento. Somos como un pueblo casi de mentira. Casi ficcional, por lo ridículo y absurdo de algunos’ (Zarzoso, 2016).

Vicente Arlandis elaborates on his connection to the city in my interview with him, especially how important the 24 years of PP majority has been. Ever since he moved to the city to study at Bellas Artes he became more and more aware of how many people actually perceived to be out of touch with their city, with politics (Arlandis, 2016).

Quien gobierna la ciudad no es importante a priori. Luego esto se va haciendo importante y lo vas viendo cada vez más. Se va filtrando esto un poco en tu mirada. Esta manera de tratar lo social, lo cultural... y eso ha sido muy fuerte, y muy negativo... yo lo fui notando poco a poco (Arlandis, 2016).

In his work and personal life Vicente remains positive: a lot of good things are happening because of the crisis and the 24 years of destructive politics too, he states. People are react and reclaim the city for themselves. Vicente insists it is important to value those kind of activities (Arlandis, 2016).

The girls from theatre group La Subterránea - Lucía Abellán, Lucía Sáez and Ester Martínez - state that the disconnection of what people want from their city council and what in reality happened has led to a deep social depersonalisation. As citizens born and raised in Valencia, they reflect on the political and social disenchantment from a very personal position in their creations. Their starting point being their own micro biography.

Atiro Hecho – the political theatre group of Carla Chillida - does this in a more explicit, not eschewing a more pamphleteer-like, way. For example, in their play about the implications for Valencia if the trade agreement TTIP will become reality. In my interview with Carla she describes a scene from this play to illustrate her point of the failure of this current system:

Una imagen muy fuerte y que es una imagen de la realidad, es la de mi compañera Marta, absolutamente llena de bolsos, de todo lo que se ha comprado y no lo puede ni siquiera llevar. Luego como desprenderse de todos para que quedarse completamente desnuda. Para mi es una de las imágenes más fuertes de la obra. Ver a una persona que no puede llevar más cosas encima, cosas que ha comprado. […] Yo creo que la gente que vea esta escena se siente identificada porque de alguna manera hemos crecido en una sociedad consumista y adquirimos constantemente cosas que no necesitamos. Yo no voy mucho a los centros comerciales pero cuando voy están mucho más llenos que los teatros.

Translation: ‘Spain is grotesque. We are a population that is just almost a lie. Almost fictitious due to the ridiculous and absurd behaviour of some’ (Zarzoso, 2016).
Muchísimos más llenos. Entonces yo no sé si esta realidad se está cambiando, o si la gente cuando ve esta escena quiera cambiar la realidad. La gente que viene al teatro es también gente con una cierta sensibilidad a lo mejor habría que llevar esta escena y hacerla dentro del Corte Inglés. Para que la gente vea lo absurdo que es de lo que están haciendo. Es que es difícil hacer esto. Comprar es un consuelo de un sistema que te hace infeliz. Es un sistema capitalista en la cual la felicidad no es lo más importante. Como no existe esta felicidad, pues yo me compro cosas es como un placer, de repente soy muy feliz que tengo una ropa nueva pero si quitas estas cosas te darás cuenta que no, que vives en un sistema que no te hace feliz. Porque no puedes hablar con tu vecino, porque estamos completamente individualizados, entonces claro el consumismo tiene que ver con esto. Con esta búsqueda de la felicidad que no te la da el sistema (Chillida, 2016).

Using a fresh tone with the right amount of humour and sarcasm added to the topic Atiro Hecho points its finger towards the system, sentencing it – trade agreements are only good for the big companies not for the local farmers or entrepreneurs (Chillida, 2016) - and proposing reflection and action – activating people through factual information in the plays and inviting for demonstrations - to change it (Ibid.). ‘Lo único que hacemos es estirar un poco, exagerar un poco esta realidad para que las personas que vienen a verlo se den cuenta y vean las cosas a partir de este momento con otros ojos’ (Chillida, 2016).

Hidden in what Atiro Hecho states are two important overarching conclusions of this section. (1) The system has revealed some ugly, corrupt sides of itself and does not meet the expectations of society. (2) The neoliberal system has it’s dark sides and criticism is often directed towards the exploitative symptoms. What all of these examples show is that for 24 years the capitalist neoliberal city council and more importantly the Spanish government (the system) has failed and a desire for a more people-centred system is growing. The much wanted democracy, after almost half a century of dictatorship, should not be looking like this, is the verdict of the plays and their writers.
§ 4.5 Generational rupture: dystopia

A fifth theme that is highlighted by many playwrights is the feeling of the younger generation of living in a dystopian society, the generation that was born in the times of the transition to democracy.

From “No nos mataremos con pistolas” from Víctor Sánchez Rodríguez.

BLANCA: ¿Qué te ha pasado, Miguel?
MIGUEL: No lo sé (a todos) Parecía que teníamos el mundo entero a un tiro de piedra pero resulta que no fue así. Resulta que ya estaba, todo estaba hecho, que ya no se podía creer en nada, salvo en el trabajo. Salvo prosperar. Así que dijimos: oye, pues tengamos la vida de nuestros padres, total es una vida digna, una vida de cenas los sábados con amigos y buena bebida. Oye, y estudiemos una carrera que sea creativa, porque, ¿cuál es el fin de la democracia en última instancia? Que todos seamos artistas. Y oye, nos educaron bien. Siempre haciendo trabajos en equipo, enseñándonos ya de chavales mantras tan valiosos para el día de mañana como: “es que los extremos se juntan”, o “más vale malo conocido que bueno por conocer”, o “es lo que hay”. Y miranos ahora: mi trabajo es una mierda pero es lo que hay; a mí me gustaría ser madre pero entre lo que ganamos mi novio y yo no nos llega para mantener a un hijo, qué se le va a hacer, es lo que hay; yo quisiera vivir en una aldea realmente global en la que las fuerzas productivas estuvieran al servicio del conjunto de la humanidad, yo quisiera vivir en una república socialista, sí, y quisiera darles el paseíllo a todos esos eslovenos de pelo perfecto que con sus decisiones macroeconómicas al servicio de una oligarquía generan más hambre y muertes que judíos se gasearon en todos los campos de exterminio nazi, pero, ¿ves? Es que los extremos se juntan, y eso ya no funcionó, así que me quedo con mi democracia liberal y con toda mi precariedad porque es lo que hay. Pero oye, un momento: es que eso no es para nada lo que nos prometieron. Porque dices: empiezan los treinta y, ¿dónde está mi gordura de satisfacción, mi coche, mis dos casas, mis vacaciones? ¿Y mi pareja? Mires dónde mires sólo hay gente sola que mira y escribe por el móvil. Así que, amigos, esta es la vida que nos tocó. ¿Quién se la ha cargado? ¿A quién está destinada sumar el cuerpo roto de nuestra amiga? No es más que otra niña de clase media que eligió el camino del medio. ¿Y ninguno de nosotros sintió esa rabia? ¿Ninguno boicoteó su vida? ¿Qué tenía ella para seguir adelante? Porque uno crece y los hábitos van perdiendo el sentido y uno deja de creer en ellos. Y sí, tenéis razón, a mí sólo me consuela conocer a un hombre que busca que le acaricien la nuca detrás de un arbusto. ¿Qué pasaría si aún eso dejara de tener sentido y yo también pasara a engrosar la lista de mártires vacíos de la sociedad? ¿Diréis lo mismo de mí que decís de Paula reunidos tras años de silencio porque la vida golpeó fuerte? La enfermedad, la enfermedad. En este pueblo se disparó la tasa de cáncer desde que se instaló la planta química, pero eso no es más que una casualidad. Quizás fue un copete en la playa que lo trajeron de tanto ir de aquí para allá. ¿Quién se iba a atrever a decir que no viniera la planta con la falta que hace el trabajo? Y yo me pregunto: ¿Cuántos han aparecido colgados de sus techos desde que el deseo se convirtió en doctrina pura? Me gustaría pensar que el asco de vivir viene de fuera, y no de dentro, que somos lienzos en blanco, mañana clara, día que empieza sin pretensión. ¿Queréis hacer algo por mí? Coged vuestros asuntos y miradlos a la cara por una puta vez, que seguro encontraréis cosas de vosotros mismos como para preocuparos.

The above example is a selection from the play “No nos mataremos con pistolas” (We will not kill ourselves with guns) of Víctor Sánchez (2014). The play is set in a small village close to Valencia where a group of five friends - Miguel, Blanca, Marina, Elena, Sigfrido - are having a reunion. They meet for lunch at the house of Blanca’s parents. It’s July 6, the day of “la Virgen del Carmen”, also the first day of the local festivities that take place every summer. This is very typical in Spain - every village has it saint and connected to it local festivities.
People from my own generation in Spain were born after the death of Franco. They were raised by parents who were filled with expectations for the democracy-to-be. These expectations, passed on to the next generation, have led to feelings of disappointment and frustrations with the realities of the 21st century. Related to these “dystopian” feelings different themes have appeared in the theatre plays of today. First, in many plays the link between two moments in the recent history have been connected: the aftermath of the dictatorship (the transition to democracy period) and the aftermath of the economic crisis - both periods that vibrate expectations of many. Secondly, today’s’ young generation shares the feeling of living in a farce, life could not fulfil at all the dreams that their parents harboured and passed on to them.

The difference of generation post and prior to the transition to democracy is for example observable by the dedication and loyalty towards either PP or PSOE –who have been taking turns both on the national and on the local level. Until 2016 no coalition had ever been realised. But since a year, at least on the regional level, in Valencia a left-wing coalition has been formed. Isabel Martí and Miquel Viñoles (2016) state that they do not believe this political change will lead to deeper changes. Not until their parents - the former generation - will die. The big bulk of the older generation votes without real critical consideration, according to Martí and Viñoles (2016). It is more out of tradition or blind faith in the parties that have led the country towards democracy (Martí and Viñoles, 2016). Lucía Sáez and Lucía Abellan (2016) add to this argument that the city has been sedated by the 24 years of policy of the same political power, people have learned to just accept it. The girls compare this political faithfulness to PP or PSOE to the literary picaresque novel: ‘En España estamos marcados socialmente por la llamada picaresca donde la sociedad comprende en sus carnes y acepta la corrupción bajo el lema “si yo pudiera también lo haría”’ (Abellán and Sáez, 2016).

Patricia Pardo (2016) notes that the new generation does it differently than their parents: young people do not accept bluntly the story that is told from above about their history nor their future (Pardo, 2016). This young generation looks through a different lens, she states; social media has made sure access to information is at everybody’s hand and created an unstoppable flood of information and many alternative and critical explanations of the economic crisis.

In the cited part of the play “No nos mataremos con pistola”s of Victor Sánchez the overarching theme is: the generation of our parents misinformed us, our life is not something we can mould anyway we like. Personal merit and a job won’t lead us to that place that we - or our parents - imagined for ourselves (Martí and Viñoles, 2016). In the play “No somos nadie” (we are nobody), Martí and Viñoles make this same point, by putting authorities in ridiculous positions – they over emphasise the rules and narratives of institutional structures to highlight their point- and put

56 Translation: ‘In Spain we are influenced by the so called picaresque in which the society is in its core very conscious about the corruption, but accepts it under the motto “if I could do it, I would do the same”’ (Abellán and Sáez, 2016).
forward how out of touch the current politics are with the younger generation. Víctor Sánchez (2016) talks about this too and expounds on the necessity for institutional changes; young people therefore, according to the author, have a crucial role in the current aftermath.

In this section it has become clear that there is a clear divide between generations. Especially how the two generations see the political power of the city council or the state. The older generation – alive during the dictatorship and with vivid memories of the transition to democracy – does not seem eager to punish the traditional parties for their bad governance or corruption scandals. They lean on the credits these parties have acquired during the years. The younger generation does not believe in these credits and is open for change and does not believe in impunity. They do not shy away from accusing the parties for what went wrong and hold it against them that the austerity program failed and that so many citizens were not protected against the power of the banks. Especially this latter perspective has added to the idea of seeing the current times as a dystopia, exemplary are for example the plays of Sánchez (2016), Martí and Viñoles (2016) and theatre group La Subterránea (2016).
§ 4.6 The malleable moment

The last theme that I witnessed in the theatre plays is the “the malleable moment”. This moment of 2016-2017 when the city council finally changed colour - Barberá made room for Ribó- and the future for many feels so uncertain, so malleable... many things can happen. Both pessimistic and optimistic views are frequently staged.

The crisis woke many people up. Playwrights agree that many citizens were asleep by the relative “stability” of the PP. Now issues are on the balance again. In other words: it seems there is some space for hope again. In the middle of the new instability and uncertainty a malleable momentum seems to have loomed up. Dialogues have been opened by the new city council – playwrights have already been asked to share their views at designated moments within the city hall. But after the first outbursts of hope (between playwrights and the arts in general) impatient citizens hoping for the radical reforms is starting to crumble.

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JESÚS MUÑOZ: Estás en un país nórdico y miras al cielo y no sabes si es de día o de noche. Así es: no sé si se está haciendo de día o si se está haciendo de noche. A veces tengo esta duda. Y si se hace de día pues a ver como se amanece, y si se hace de noche, a ver cuánto durará la noche. [...] En el fondo pienso que se va a hacer de día pero a veces tengo dudas.

GABI OCHOA: Estamos en un momento conveso, es decir de movimiento, porque ha habido un cambio político, este cambio ha hecho que despertáramos, creo que no estábamos despiertos, y esto es importante. [...] adiós años ochenta hola siglo 21.

VICTOR SÁNCHEZ: Creo que es el momento en el que gran parte de la sociedad está pensando cómo convertir valencia en valentía. una ciudad de valientes. Creo que va por ahí. Realmente se está cuestionando que quiere ser.

LA SUBTERRÁNEA: ha cambiado el gobierno pero la desconfianza ciudadana es continua, así que ahora mismo personalmente hay incertidumbre y esperanza de que realmente haya cambios que se mantengan en el tiempo.

MARIBEL BAYONA: Valencia está viviendo una posibilidad! Está viviendo una posibilidad! Está pasando por un momento en el que PUEDE que haya un cambio. En el que PUEDE que haya esperanza...En el que PUEDE ... pero hay como una encrucijada... pero... a ver dónde vamos!

The crisis woke many people up. Playwrights agree that many citizens were asleep by the relative “stability” of the PP. Now issues are on the balance again. In other words: it seems there is some space for hope again. In the middle of the new instability and uncertainty a malleable momentum seems to have loomed up. Dialogues have been opened by the new city council – playwrights have already been asked to share their views at designated moments within the city hall. But after the first outbursts of hope (between playwrights and the arts in general) impatient citizens hoping for the radical reforms is starting to crumble.

Todavía no sabemos por dónde nos va a llevar eso. Evidentemente hemos pasado de una lucha de un estar en un momento en que todavía no sabemos bien por donde va a tirar pero no nos relajamos hay cosas que no nos están yendo bien... (Esther Melo in Caballero and Melo, 2016).

It might be a small thing (to have hope) but it is big change in mentality Patricia Parco (2016) points out; to be able to think things can be different after 24 years is a big change. ‘La crisis ha provocado hacia este giro intuitivo o racional hacia la izquierda porque hay gente que lo vive una
manera ideológica y otra gente que lo vive de una manera instintiva, no es capaz de analizar el por qué - pero eso vale...’ (Pardo, 2016).  

Others (for example Arlandis, 2016; Martí and Viñoles, 2016) are a little more skeptical about the malleability of this particular moment. Arlandis (2016) compares it to whipped cream: the cream is whipped now, it is foamy, but that is this moment, in a year from now it will probably be dwindled. It won’t be all gone, he insists, but the huge changes we are expecting now are simply too high (Arlandis, 2016). Martí and Viñoles (2016) find it hard to believe in the power of the new leftist party Podemos - ‘me está pareciendo que la capacidad del poder de reabsorber todos los movimientos políticos que intenten cambiar el sistema desde dentro del sistema es tan grande que es difícil y creo que van a destruirlos [podemos] antes de que lleguen a algo’ (Viñoles in Martí and Viñoles, 2016). Manuel Valls is the most sceptical, he feels that the city is still too comfortable to give real change a chance.

Síndrhomo también toca el tema de las fallas en este sentido, de hacer la mega fiesta, los pim pam petardos, el jolgorio, la fiesta y tal y claro si tú ves la acción en un momento en que todo el mundo parece estar de fiesta cuando estas personas están intentando de salvar a la humanidad. Las fallas quedan retratadas de una manera muy frívola. La obra no es un ataque a los fallas ni mucho menos pero es un ataque a esta parte muy frívola que tenemos todos en vez de tomar las riendas de determinadas cosas, que es mucho más fácil dejarse llevar y asegurar lo poquito que tenemos en vez de realmente iniciar una revolución, es la pereza... nos tenemos que quitar muchas más cosas para que inicié la revolución y aquí hoy en día no va a pasar nunca. (Valls, 2016).

On the other side there are also playwrights that are straight out militantly optimistic about the possibility of change. Especially the younger post-transition to democracy writers like Chillida (2016) and Sánchez (2016). Victor Sánchez stands out with words he chooses to describe this feeling. He connects the current uncertain but malleable times with the necessity to rewrite a narrative for the country. Spain’s completely complex recent history is confusing – ‘who the fuck is Spain?!’ - but, in order to find a better and more human-centered direction seems fundamental to use this space to advance in some re-narration.

Se pone en entredicho la narración que se llama el régimen del ’78 porque es cuando se considera que se entra en la transición española. Hay nuevas narraciones, la de Podemos, como la de los movimientos más horizontales – bueno Podemos empieza muy horizontal

57 Translation: ‘The crisis provoked an intuitive or rational turn towards the left because some people live this moment very ideologically while others have more an instinctive reaction, they are not able to analyse the moment, but that is fine too...’ (Pardo, 2016).

58 Translation: ‘It seems to me that the capacity of those already in power is so big that they will absorb all the political movements that are trying to change the system from within, I think it is that difficult that I think they will destroy them [Podemos] before they can really do anything’ (Viñoles in Marté and Viñoles, 2016).
pero se acaba instrumentalizando como partido – ahí empiezan a surgir diferentes narraciones, sobre todo las que cuestionan este momento e intentan crear un espacio nuevo de convivencia. Para lo cual es necesario que hay un relato –de país no?– [...] Es una de las naciones más antiguas… y uno, o yo, arrastro siempre “qué coño es España?” (Sánchez, 2016).

In sum: some playwrights are optimistic about transformation, while others are significantly more pessimistic about possibilities of change in the near future. Despite their differences they share a sensation of malleability of this moment in time.⁵⁹

§ 4.7 What does theatre show about activist citizenship and change?

Remember that activist citizenship - in contrast to other more prescriptive conceptualisations of citizenship - is about the practice of citizenship, analysing the acts of citizenship and guided by the question: what makes the citizen? A political subject is, according to these practitioners, constructed through the enactment of its position in the city – for example they might study a person’s engagement in her or his neighbourhood. Chapter 3 argued that in order to come closer to the transformations of citizenship in Valencia using the theatrical discourse would provide a more human centred insight in Valencia today.

In this final section of chapter 4 I will connect the above identified six themes that featured strongly in the plays to the bigger picture; the theoretical framework I presented in chapter 2 and the analysis of the socio-political landscape of chapter 3.

The first three themes - (1) local agency, (2) civic outrage and political consciousness in the neighbourhood, and (3) change perspective from macro to micro - show the birth of the emancipating periphery. The birth of a political subject who – after 24 years of PP – is described by many, as the political subject that awakes by the severity of the economic crisis. This citizen struggles with the aftermath of the crisis in which he or she cannot afford (or simply out of solidarity or conviction, does not want) to keep its mouth shut nor its arms dangling. It seems to be a visualisation of an emancipatory process of the periphery – periphery in the sense that most of the voices that are present in the theatrical discourse are located just outside the centre of Valencia.60

10 out of the 14 different places where I have visited a performance are located outside of the city centre. Of the 4 places in the centre 1 is Espacio Inestable– the already mentioned platform for young or new playwrights and actors/actresses, that has existed for over a decade now. The

60 City map of Valencia, purple are the theatres I have visited and green the alternative stages.
other three are Teatro Talia, Teatre Principal de Valencia and Teatro Rialto. The reason these three are on the list is threefold. Teatro Talia is on the list because Victor Sánchez won a price for his theatre script “No nos mataremos con pistolas” for which reason he was welcomed by one of the biggest theatres in Valencia: Teatro Talia. Teatre Principal hosted a theatre collective “Teatro del Barrio” critical theatre group from Madrid that has been directed by the well known Alberto San Juan\textsuperscript{61}. Finally, Teatro Rialto is an art house cinema and sporadically also hosts theatre plays that were received well in smaller outskirt theatres - in this case I went to see “Thursday Today” on my first saturday in Valencia. All the other locations are in neighbourhoods that more or less border with the centre.

The green-marked places are unconventional venues for theatres – like squatted houses, public squares, a sport centre, a gallery, a hairdresser, etc. The map shows that most of my data has roots in the periphery of Valencia. The connection between place of performance and the expressions of activist citizens becomes quite evident. The periphery of town seems to speak louder than the centre, and, following Nash (2000) and Richardson (2013), their engagement are visualised by their embodied theatrical way of expressing political agency. It can be argued that the way engagement is embodied and connected to the political has taken the shape of an emancipatory process - narrated and performed from the stages. Citizens are fighting their perceived oppression by claiming justice and a change of the system (in line with the first protest of the spring 2011 a “real democracy”). The claim was enacted by citizens involving themselves in support networks out of necessity and/or solidarity. Struggling over for example, the right to a home, people were united in the enactment of seeking justice (inter alia found in Albaladejo, 2016). Simultaneously, this meant a repositioning in relation to the city council - critique that was followed up by actions. In theatre this repositioning becomes visible through discussions on the perspective towards the city of Valencia and the way it is governed. The plays show that when the micro perspective was activated a struggle in the everyday life increasingly opposed the macro-logic, and a struggle for the right to have rights emerged (Dagnino, 2008).

A civic verdict that the system had failed was discussed in theme (4). Feelings of aversion towards established institutions are made explicit. The economic crisis seems to be perceived as a sign that the system that was created during the transition to democracy failed. The civic claims of changing this system into a real democracy are frequently enacted on the theatrical stages of Valencia. (in inter alia “Síndrhom” from Iaia Cárdenas).

In theme (5) the generational rupture and the feelings of living a dystopia of the young was discussed. Kabeer (2005), who I have discussed in chapter 2, states that acts of citizenship are stemming from ‘impulses for social justice, for desires for recognition and dignity and from the need to confront concrete social needs and issues that affect everyday life’ (Kabeer, 2005 in

\textsuperscript{61}Alberto San Juan is a well known actor of for example “Masacre – Una breve historia del capitalismo español”.

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Gaventa, 2010: 65). The needs of a new generation – young playwrights born after the end of the dictatorship, now in their twenties and thirties, are expressing a break with their parents tradition to follow their party - PP or PSOE - to the end of the world. The trust in the old two-party system is zero. At the centre of their practice of citizenship we can find expressions of dystopia.

Lastly, in theme (6) the malleable moment was discussed. Currently, during the aftermath of the economic crisis, that started in 2008, a malleable moment has been created. Playwrights seem to be part of an emancipatory force that is moulding this malleable moment. After the discourse analysis of the plays it remains difficult to say if the current moment will lead to permanent changes in the experience and practice of citizenship in Valencia. What can be concluded, based on the analysis, is that playwrights and their characters generally perceive a profound feeling of uncertainty and share in the conviction that the “here and now” in the city of Valencia is extremely important: like Muñoz stated ‘no sé si se está hacienda de día o si se está haciendo de noche’.62

A first tentative conclusion based on the above might be that citizenship is always a struggle, like the scholars in chapter 2 argued, but since the recent rock bottom of the Spanish economy the activist citizen has emerged with a powerful emancipatory courage to re-negotiate political space – by challenging with the micro perspective and localised engagement the hegemonic macro-logic – and thereby re-defining public political space. The enactment of this cities’ activist citizens expressed in the theatre plays and interviews have filled the metaphorical stages and show an emancipated periphery, who’s voices are currently penetrating the heart of town.

In praxis this means citizenship transformation has become visible through the localised militant position of playwrights that have started to address political issues that are on many Valencian tongs and therefore in everyones frame of reference. The militance of this activist citizenship is mirrored in theatre and the struggle for a society that centres around human well-being and solidarity with a desire to disassociate from the current feeling of dystopia is widely shared. In the local politics a transition has been achieved in the aftermath of the crisis and the right-wing party PP after 24 years has been replaced. The latter being a perfect example of the way power structures have been under attack and in theatre the hope of real profound change with the new political situation is extensively discussed.

A second important conclusive reflection after the theatrical discourse analysis, has to do with the question if Valencia meets the criteria deducted from Alain Badiou’s theory of Change: the Event. Three observations lead to the argument that – although Alain Badiou is not convinced by the 15M, Valencia has some important features of the historical event, following the theory of Badiou.

62 Translation: ‘I am not sure if it is becoming day or becoming night’ (Muñoz, 2016)
Firstly, the emergence of a generation since 2011 that is ready to challenge the status quo and punish the traditional political parties that were caught up in heavy corruption scandals while implementing draconian austerity measures – this would be the excluded part that revolt in Badiouan terms.

Secondly, the fact that the shared verdicts of these new political subjects is that the system failed. Continuing in Badiouan vocabulary, the truth procedure carried out by faithful subjects, have been channeling their commitment to the event into social movements like la PAH or the political party Podemos.

Thirdly, the most important point for this argument, is the appearance of the malleable moment. A very characteristic feature of the aftermath of the event in Badiou's theory. The theatre plays and their writers are experiencing this moment in time as being particularly unsure, particularly exciting, particularly malleable. Badiou (2012) himself expressed that the happenings of 2011 were not exactly in line with the simultaneous unfolding of the Arabic Spring – which he identified as an event. The 15M were not enacting the alternative within the situation, they were demanding a “real democracy”. Therefore it seems that Badiou sees the event not as a “real” threat to the dominant capitalist neoliberal paradigm. Despite this meagre disapproval – because it does not seem to be a flat negation from Badiou either - the emancipatory peripheral voices are growing and they are alluding their struggle is not over yet.

‘Valencia está en proceso y yo soy un obrero de la ciudad.’
Xavo Giménez, 2016

Translation: ‘Valencia is moving, I am a construction worker of the city’ (Giménez, 2016)
The introduction of this thesis narrated my experiences of playing theatre since I was young and attending the Rudolf Steiner school in Apeldoorn. From staging the seasonal plays - appearing sometimes as the protagonist, other times in a supporting role, like that of being a tree - I grew to like theatre a lot. Ever since I left that primary school I continued going to theatre schools and I also started going to performances of other groups. There happened what I described in my introduction as the “connection”, I learned that a theatre performance can provoke feelings of empathy, it can make you reflect with the societal mirror it holds up to you, or, it can trigger you into a reaction. Back then it made me recognise the indirect knowledge theatre encloses. Subsequently, the introductory chapter made a bridge to Stephane Hessel and his essay “Indignez-vous”. An “essay-manifest” in which he pleads for a reaction of especially the young generation – towards the increasing inequality despite the prospering of the neoliberal western countries. First, I interpreted his statement ‘to resist is to create and to create is to resist.’ (Hessel, 2011: 19) – as just a call for political resistance, but a few weeks later it awoke a profound curiosity in the performing arts in Spain: what were their plays about in these troublesome times? If we see theatre as a mirror of society, what was it reflecting? In the last four chapters I have analysed the mirror that theatre provides on Valencia; the perspective from the performing art form theatre. The goals of this analysis were twofold (1) gaining a deeper understanding of citizenship during the aftermath of the economic crisis and, (2) a methodological contribution, by

The picture opening this chapter is from my friend Damián Leverkus.
analysing the theatrical discourse I aimed to advance theatre as a tool to gain insight in an ongoing societal struggle. In these next, and last, three paragraphs of this thesis I will bring together the main findings of this research.

§ 5.1 Studying citizenship through theatre

From May 2016 until October 2016 I worked as an intern for Carme Melo Escrihuela at the University of Valencia. While Carme Melo Escarihuela. Her research is more than a scholarly product, it is always an investigation with combined with a political aim to contribute to a transformation of, mostly, the profit neoliberal oriented decisions of the PP which threaten the fertile soils of the huertas of Valencia. I learned a lot walking up and down the bridges between academy, art, and the daily realities in Valencia with Carme.

The first goal was studying citizenship through theatre in order to gain deeper insight in the transforming socio-political landscape of Valencia, specifically the transformations in citizenship. My central research question consequently was: what changes in citizenship do artistic expressions from the performative arts visualise?

In the aftermath of the economic crisis political subjects of Valencia have become visible in the revolts that took place in the city. In chapter 2 different perspectives on citizenship were considered, some more prescriptive and some more descriptive. An important contrast was observed between the neoliberal concept of “active citizen” and a concept developed in critical theory “activist citizen”. This latter perspective was adopted in this research because it spotlighted the acts of citizens within the socio-political landscape, who were caught up in an emancipatory and transformative process. The acts of these activist citizens, were analysed in theatre plays (chapter 4) through a theatrical discourse analysis. These plays are considered catalysts of citizenship transformation (Isin, 2008; Adrijasevic, 2013) because they are challenging the dominant discourse of the hegemonic system. This brings me some final observations based on the six themes that were found in chapter 4.

First, the playwrights by localising their critique and observation in their plays have achieved to break macro-views of political or societal topics down to the everyday reference scheme of the Valencians. This way playwrights enhanced the integration of the staged stories as a source of information into the everyday activities of people. Sometimes connecting topics to social movements like la PAH by organising a meet-up directly after the performance. This way they were underscoring the necessity for a decentralised responsibility to take over from the traditional, political elite. On stage they visualised spaces of inclusion by enacting possibilities for engagement and disobedience. While off stage they connected their audience to direct actions and citizen initiatives.
Another observation that is connected to the localised perspective, is the resonance of socio-political issues and consequently theatre managed to “bring the crisis home”. The mood of time has been captured by many playwrights and plays by the “conscientisation” of outrage – disagreements with the political response to the crisis of its city council have caused outrage but also the birth of many unconventional neighbourhood responses. Leading to the challenging of power structures of the state and questioning its legitimacy. The theatrical discourse, part of the social movements in question, showed an ongoing struggle for political space: tensions became framed around identity issues that were related to the city of Valencia and Spain – “what kind of country is Spain?” “What kind of country do I want it to be?” - especially among the “new” generation – the post transition to democracy generation.

Finally, it appeared that in Valencia’s urban periphery the vocabulary of the new political parties reverberates and the malleable moment is at the centre of the attention of the citizens. In short: by challenging the ordinary theatre spaces by moving to gardens and living rooms to express their politicised perspectives on the ongoing struggle the issues around citizenship seem to be caught up in a re-negotiation. This aftermath of the economic crisis seems to be building a bridge between social movements and citizens looking for transformation in their socio-political everyday context. One that they want to influence and mould into a more human and less capitalist oriented direction.

**Societal relevance**

I aimed to step away from historical chronology and analyse the complementary societal struggles that appear in the current aftermath not as the linear consequence but as a challenging alternative - in line with post-colonial theory. In order to elaborate on narrative of the rising social movements, the new political subjects. Through theatre I aimed to gain insight in local transformations of citizenship that eventually can lead to challenge dominant power structures and catalyse social change.

My conclusion of this section comes very close to that of Andrijasevic’ (2013) argument who argues that citizenship is always a struggle. Since the recent rock bottom of the Spanish economy the activist citizen has been particularly visible in the re-negotiation and re-definition of citizenship. Citizens are pushing for the political space to change into a more human-centred arena that does not exploit its citizens but enables a local politics that is less alienated from society than the current political system. The latter observation might be inherent to the activist understanding of citizenship, during this aftermath the struggle is particularly visible and vigorous. The sensation of passing through a malleable moment seems to enhance the citizens to join the struggle with many and make put their issues on the table. Arriving, at what I called: the emancipatory re-negotiation of citizenship.
§ 5.2 Theatre as a research tool

The academic research I have been conducting before this master thesis has been mainly through literature analysis. Especially fascinating for me was making sense of data that was not first translated into an academic format but were theatrical stories which narrated everyday issues of the citizens of town. Putting theatre at the centre of my analysis allowed an unusual creativity into this academic research. Theatre texts and performances being my primary source of information have proven to be a fascinating mirror of the Valencian socio-political landscape as well as a critical research perspective. The perspective of a part of society that is not expressing itself in quantitative questionnaires nor do they appear in academic journals, they speak from the periphery in an aesthetic political language about Valencia and about themselves. In line with Delyser and Sui (2013) this diversified the knowledge that already has been written down or reproduced on the effects of the economic crisis. The findings of the research centre CIS - Centre of Sociological Investigations - portrayed the biggest problems of Spain in 2016 to be unemployment, political corruption and fraud and problems related to the economy (CIS, 2016). These findings show numbers next to the frustrations of the population but they do not tell the whole story. They lack nuance and merely confirm an anti-austerity sentiment that protesters on first sight share. But, above all, they narrate a superficial story and lack an in-depth analysis of the socio-political context.

Secondly, discourse analysis in general starts from a societal problem and puts the puzzle pieces of a certain topic together in order to reconstruct how the discourse copes with this particular issue of citizenship transformation. The theatrical discourse analysis of the Valencian theatre plays appeared to be very useful, in the sense that currently in Valencia theatre is a place where people are expressing their engagement and perspective on the event not just marginally but with, metaphorical megaphones.

Lastly, by providing a creative rupture with the scholarly work on the economic crisis by political scientist or other social scientist, previous ways of seeing the aftermath of the economic crisis has made space for a more diverse socio-political landscape in which current activist citizens have been the protagonists.

Scientific relevance

This thesis has been a methodological exploration of how theatre might provide a critical perspective and generate knowledge on the chaotic aftermath of the economic crisis. Principally as analytical tool of social transformation (citizenship transformation) because, according to the literature, especially in times of struggle art (theatre) is able to mirror sentiments in a way conventional science cannot. Theatre has been used as a discourse and framework - together with the Event theory of Badiou and the concept of citizenship as defined by Andrijasevic (2013), Isin (2008/2009) and Dagnino (2008) - to look at the aftermath of the economic crisis. When
comparing the literature analysis of chapter 3, in which the socio-political landscape of Valencia was argued to have entered a malleable moment - a socio-political situation that is sensitive for social change after the happening of an event - to the theatrical discourse analysis some differences become evident.

In the literature analysis the connection between the political chances for change during the transition to democracy and the current aftermath of the economic crisis was made by, inter alia, Rodríguez López (2015). While the transition to democracy and regime reform since the death of the Spanish dictator Franco are perceived to have led to a “fake democracy” in the eyes of many Spaniards, the current economic crisis seems to be a new turning-point in history. New political parties and innovative social movements have been growing as a consequence of the financial collapse. The insights from this literature analysis on the transformation of citizenship are mainly the fact that currently 24 years of PP have come to an end, and some cracks that were caused by activist citizens resisting the old regime are abiding. In order to gain a deeper insight in this transformative process of the city I studied the political subjects that were part of this change - political subjects, faithful in the Badioun sense, and “activistly” inserting playwright creativity in the struggle over a new political space. The theatrical discourse analysis has highlighted important aspects of this citizenship transformation that through conventional literature analysis could not have been revealed. Theatre added substantial insights in: how a macro- perspective of the political has been brought back to the everyday experience of the political; how the economic crisis has been “brought home” - outraged citizens are taking matters in their own hands and putting their energy in community projects, and; the re-negotiation of political space and what is the role of the neighbourhood in politics should be.

§ 5.3 Reflection on the research

In reflection on this research negative and positive points come to mind. What helped me a lot was the additional information I could gather by living for such an extensive time in Valencia and feel how it is to be part of the aftermath of the economic crisis in a country where the severity of it is incomparable to that of my own country of residence: The Netherlands. The neighbourhood El Cabanyal has offered me many sites to meet interesting activist citizens. A big part of my investigation took place during the summer and therefore the barrio - located just next to the beaches -

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65 Picture is of one of my favourite bars in El Cabanyal “la Paca”. Picture retrieved from: http://blogs.lavanguardia.com/districte-onze/2015/10/17/tres-llicons-de-valencia-94650/
was encountered frequently by citizens from all over town, whom I would meet in theatres, squares, café’s and bars around my house. My internship at the university of Valencia also gave me access to a lot of experts that were investigating local social movements, especially the economic geographers suggested me interesting papers on the local socio-political context. The collaboration with Carme Melo Escrihuela, my supervisor on location was also very constructive. We gave a whole seminar on my thesis topic towards the end of my time in Valencia. In the discussions that would follow a class I had the chance to compare the information I gathered in the field to the experiences of these bachelor students involved in the aftermath of the economic crisis.

Nevertheless also negative aspects can be identified in the process of the unfoldment of this thesis. An important shortcoming is related to the method. As I mentioned before the personal political agenda that the playwrights might hold has been the biggest bias of this thesis. Although the political theatre plays that I studied where highly insightful, it must be noted that they all harboured the same core of critique. A critique consistently directed towards the political behaviour of those in charge of the city of Valencia. And, although this can be seen as inherent to the discipline “political theatre”, it is the biggest shortcoming of this method, because there are also many citizens that still support more traditional visions of politics and stick with the PP or PSOE. This contrasts sharply with the preferences of the people I interviewed were highly sensitive for newness and visibly demotivated by the old structures.

After all, the aim was to visualise “counter-hegemonic” activities (Butler in Schurr, 2014) and while I conducted research in Valencia all of the theatrical counter-hegemonic activities were full of the above mentioned critique, I therefore argue that the theatrical discourse analysis is able to provide a realistic mirror of the ongoing struggles around citizenship today.

**Recommendation for praxis**

The knowledge that could be revealed by the theatrical discourse analysis has, finally not only deepened insights in the socio-political struggles during the aftermath of the economic crisis, the arts presented the insight that these struggles are expressing desires to open up the political arena and create a democracy that fits the needs of today’s people living in Valencia.

Since this case study of Valencia has led to the observation that Valencian citizens are caught up in an emancipatory struggle and try to seize the possibilities of this malleable moment, to formulate a recommendation for praxis that is more overarching in nature and will lead to the benefit of all of those involved is hard. However, the highly irritated relation between Valencians and the political arena in the aftermath of the economic crisis might benefit from political structures that integrate the perspective from the arts as a measure to gain insight in societal
sentiments and needs. In order to be open to transformations and less viable for corruption a diversification of the political landscape might help with the re-negotiation and re-definition of Valencian citizenship.

I therefore end with a citation that fits this malleable juncture very well:

STEPHÁNE HESSEL: *To you who will create the twenty-first century, we say, from the bottom of our hearts: TO CREATE IS TO RESIST. TO RESIST IS TO CREATE.*

(from Hessel, 2011: 19)
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Zarzoso, Paco (2016, September 21) Personal interview.
## APPENDIX 1: list of theatre plays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>Iaia Cárdenas /La Teta Calva</td>
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<td>Xavo Gimenez</td>
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<td>El Mercado es más libre que tu</td>
<td>Carla Chillida y Elías Taño/ Atiro Hecho</td>
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<td>Paco Zarzoso</td>
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<tr>
<td>A España no va a conocer ni la madre que la parió</td>
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<td>2014</td>
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<td>L'enderrocament / Escena Valentia [V]</td>
<td>Xavi Puchades</td>
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<td>Xavi Puchades</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>No somos nadie</td>
<td>Isabel Martí y Miquel Viñoles/ Els Indecents</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<td>Yo de mayor quiero ser Fermín Jiménez</td>
<td>el pont flotant</td>
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<td>Cul Combat / Culo de Combate</td>
<td>Patricia Pardo</td>
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<td>Fandango de Marx</td>
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<td>Thursday Today</td>
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<td>No mires a los ojos de la gente</td>
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APPENDIX 2: profiles of interviewees and playwrights

Anna Albaladejo

Anna Albaladejo (1976, Valencia) is an actress and playwright. Since 2000 she has been playing her own plays alone or in collaboration with small theatre companies in Valencia. She has been involved in several squatter movements when she was younger. Currently she is working on plays that are connected to social movements and civil organisations. She combines her work with audio visual work from a creative team that supports her plays. She aims to perform her new plays in the near future on the streets of Valencia – leaving the theatre stage for the moment because the topics are so important they should be interacting with people on the streets.

Carla Chillida (A Tiro Hecho)

Carla Chillida (1986, Valencia) is an actress and playwright born and raised in Valencia. She studied physical theatre – a style of theatre that uses physical movement to support the storytelling. This is highly useful for connecting to the audience or even provoking its participation. Carla set up a theatre group together with a friend in 2011 that they called A Tiro Hecho. Their intention is to point to socio-political issues in (mainly) Valencia. After their first play they continued with the subtitle “teatro físico-político” because they started to feel it was more important to enact their preoccupations than to make physical theatre (which it nonetheless continued to be). Carla publicly supports anti-TTIP campaigns and was involved in many protests that started in Spain 2011 (note this was the same year A Tiro Hecho was born). Profoundly against the current Spanish political system.
Gabi Ochoa

Gabi Ochoa (1976, Valencia) is one of the best known playwrights in town. Besides playwright he is also director and teacher. It is important for him to offer platform for starting playwrights of the city of Valencia. His analyses of the theatre discourse is very sharp. He collaborated with many other playwrights in the making of the collective play Zero Responsables. A play he defines as the breaking point of for theatre in Valencia: since that moment (2010) playwrights start to focus on the analysis of the city, their identity in relation to it and their commitment to it.

Isabel Martí and Miquel Viñoles (Els Indecents)

Isabel (1982) and Miquel started Els Indecents during the economic crisis when they could not find the means (money) to support their play. They are very critical about any possibility of political change for as long as the generation of their parents is still voting.

Jaume Policarpo

Jaume Policarpo (1962) is born and raised in the city of Valencia. He is an actor of a more traditional track. He owns a theatre company (Bambalina) since the 1990’s and creates theatre for children. Although they are often reproduction of existing tales he re-writes them with attention for gender roles and empowerment for oppressed identities. He also collaborated in Cabañal Intím – a creative initiative that reclaims the space of neighbourhood Cabanyal. He is pessimistic about political change at the moment. He was hopeful but is disappointed by the elections and the absence of more radical resistance.

Jesús Muñoz (El Pont Flotant)

The group Pont Flotant is a theatre group of friends that is making political theatre from a very intimate perspective since the year 2000. I interviewed Jesús Muñoz, member of this group in September 2016. The group looks for new ways of storytelling and their plays are based on their reflections on the personal that –according to the four members- is always also political. Their stories are not fiction but based on a profound research of themselves in relation to a particular socio-political issue.
Lucía Sáez and Lucía Abellán (La Subterránea)

Together with Ester Martínez this couple forms a La Subterránea. Young girls born in the mid and late 1980s. Their first play is Pussy Koan and is presented in 2014. They define their work like a search for their own identity in relation to the commitment for socio-political context of Valencia. Combining in their reflections, in their own words ‘tears and shouts of laughter’. They are inspired by Alejandro Jodorovsky, one of the founding fathers of “the panic movement” that rehearse their ideas from experiences of confusion, memory, humour and panic releasing themselves to find harmony.

Manuel Valls

Manuel (1974) worked at the local tv-station of Valencia until it went bankrupt. This was soon after the economic crisis had just started. He has ever since leaving Bellas Artes been both playwright and actor. The same week he lost his job his twin-girls were born. He still manages to make a living out of his actor work but he is very angry with the authorities of the city. Although people woke up from the crisis he is very sceptical about real political change.

Maribel Bayona

Immediately after finishing drama school Maribel (1979) founded together with some friends a collective called Espacio Inestable. A platform for engaged theatre creations and a stage for new theatre makers. Besides offering and creating space for these groups or solo performers they also wrote their own plays. Always starting from a personal concern and a subsequent analysis on that socio-political issue that was unfolding in their ‘most immediate present’.
Iaia María Cárdenas

Iaia (1970) was born as María in Argentina but moved to Valencia in 1999 and never left without a home waiting for her since. Iaia started together with her partner Xavo Giménez the theatre company La Teta Calva in a deserted Valencia 2013 out of a necessity to speak out and be independent in deciding on which topic. With Penev, Sindrhomo and Llopis they wrote from three very different perspective on the political and societal bankrupt of Valencia. Iaia’s theatre is an extremely precise and poetised analysis and critique of the malaise and injustices she stumbles into in town. A unique perspective.

Isabel Caballero and Ester Melo (Cabañal Íntim)

Isabel (1973) Esther (1982) are two of the founders of the political theatre festival Cabañal Íntim that was first organised in 2011. Esther has a focus in contemporary flamenco, as a dancer and as a teacher. She teaches in the community centres of the outskirts of town children this dance as a way to deal with the sharper points of life. Isabel has travelled for a long time after finishing drama school while making her living with writing and acting with different collectives she encountered on her way. Both Isabel and Esther act from a profound feeling of solidarity, of talking with people and sharing in their struggle. The festival, that opened the doors of many living rooms in this neighbourhood, contaminated other neighbourhoods to share in solidarity the claim for the right to their (El Cabanyal) neighbourhood.

Paco Zarzoso (L’Hungaresa)

As a weapon against the precariousness that has deserted Spain Zarzoso (1966) uses empathy and beauty. Especially to counter negativity. The arts have the power to transform pain in beauty he states. Zarzoso has been writing and directing for a long time. Although he has been considered a critical thinker and poet he has been directing his critique to the capitalist system in general, considering himself an anarchist since he was a teenager. Since the recent economic crisis Zarzoso has experienced an internal change of perspective. He now writes about
socio-political issues in his immediate surroundings. The personal stories behind the collapse of the economy trigger him to write about the ongoing injustices within Spain and especially Valencia. Besides writing theatre for the small independent neighbourhood theatre Sala Ultramar he is looking to bring theatre as a way dialogue and critical thought to other public spaces. When I talked to him he was just back from a trip to the woods in the surroundings of the city of Zaragoza (north of Spain) where he worked with a group of blind people on local issues concerning the privatisation of central heating problems.

**Patricia Pardo**

Patricia (1975) is an actress that communicates her messages through the discipline of clown. Acts and reacts out a deep feeling of compassion and moral commitment. Although as a clown you search for screams of laughter she does not chose superficial topics. Putting political issues on the balance she easily swings with her trapeze from the miserable to the phenomenal. Consequently the everyday is not only considered addressed without fear or coverall but sharp and poetic at the same time. Themes that prevail are class and gender inequality.

**Vicente Arlandis**

Vicente (1976) is at the moment researching performance and free play. Although born and raised in the south of Spain Vicente has been in Valencia since he went to drama school. He has an extremely positive mind-set. He wanders around while constantly questioning, proposing and changing. Focussing on the human connection. A first glance does not reveal an enormous political sensitivity but the opposite is the case. Vicente’s work is highly political but breaks activist politics down and brings it to the intimate spheres. It is about the daily choices, body language and language in general. The topic of play in everyday situations fascinates him because of the creative output it fascilitates. ‘it creates and breaks logic’. Game is like anarchy for Vicente and invites to (re)create.
Victor Sánchez (Wichita co)

Victor (1985) is considered one of the most emblematic voices of the young/new Spanish generation. A generation that was born after the Spanish transition to democracy and consequently only knows about the dictatorship through the stories of their parents and history books. He finds the current moment of Valencia and Spain in general paradoxical - on the one side his generation has a historical responsibility and on the other side many do not accept this responsibility. The years since the economic crisis were his most fruitful and revealing and enlightening years of his life. He developed as a political subject. ‘We are horrified, like, this is unbelievable!’ His theatre collective Wichita Co gives words to this new generation, people in the end of their twenties and beginning of their thirties are analysing the current times in Valencia –in which themes like urbanisation politics of the PP, memory and identity development prevail. Since he won a prestigious theatre price in Spain he got the chance to show his plays in two big theatres of Valencia: Teatro Rialto and Teatro Talia.

Xavi Puchades

As doctoral student Xavi (1973) studied under the supervision of Josep Lluís Sirera a very well-known playwright of Valencia after which he dedicated himself to writing and directing for theatre and television. Xavi writes in Valencian. His tone has changed during the recent recession. His recent reflections are about resistance, the tension between work and free-time annulation and the creation of memory of happenings; ‘you decide to accept a certain thing or decide not to’. In his work he uses theatre as a loupe aiming to discover how we function detecting many small essential elements.

Xavo Giménez

Xavo (1975) conceives the city of Valencia currently as out of touch with itself. He was born and raised in this city and was here/there during the entire 24 years PP and Rita Barberá. The fall of the city into capitalist hands is what caused people to disconnect with their immediate surrounding and become too self-focused and egocentric. During the crisis he founded a small theatre company La Teta Calva. This was his commitment to unnormalise the problems in his hometown: corruption and fraud. His first play written in the crisis is called Penev and although it is full of street slang and an accessible topic –football- it is a fervent critique towards the corrupt Valencian city council and the Spanish politics in general.

66 https://wichitaco.wordpress.com/equipo/
APPENDIX 3: Translation of long citations

p.52
Romulo: Nobody remembers how or why. Maybe nobody was ever going to find out. The most ancient survivors conserve some memories of their childhood: cities in flames, entire families obliged to flee, for the terror had imprisoned them, the society tumbled in chaos... Strange nights that because of the glowing sky seemed no different than the days. Days were coloured by blood. Now the world is not what it used to be. Look around you. It’s clear, there is no shadow of a doubt, it just is not. But close your eyes and open your mind. Something is going wrong. There is something screaming on the limits of your perception, always present, full of anger and impotence. Of this, the psychic maelstrom of the word there is no safe haven, no possibility to protect oneself. (Character Rómulo sets off in “Síndrhomo” from Iaia Cárdenas)

p.53
_From “Y si Hablarán de Nosotr@s?” by Anna Albaladejo._

KNOCKING on the door
Mara: I have spend half of my life between these eight walls, the ten screens of my imagination.
Vera: I have travelled one-and-a-half planet searching for consolation. Navigating through cities that drowned my questions. I do not want to continue remembering what could have been...
Mara: I do not want to die in order that someone will remember me, in order that someone will talk about me. We are not death yet, not yet. I still have so much to do! I do not want to be the heir of a House and a World that does not belong to me, I did not invent them.
Vera: This is not our debt to pay. We can leave or enter, sleep or dream.
Mara: We can draw a map that is ours, write about the future.

KNOCKING on the door
Vera: (looking out of the window she talks to the crowd gathered in front of the door of their House) Thank you. You can leave know. Whatever had to be defended here has been defended.
Mara: ... to invent a city with dislocated coordinates.
Vera: the heart, the dignity and the fire are so much more than twelve walls that are drumming, than these hundred walls that disintegrate.

p.55
Often we cannot unlike ourselves from the historic moment that we are living, it is like it is part of ourselves... Valencia has just gone through a difficult period and it remains to be seen how we can overcome it. Resisting, remaining together, maybe disconnecting from the institutional, generating new networks, new possibilities between citizens and artists. (Bayona, 2016)
I think at the momento a big part of society is thinking about the best way to convert Valencia into a city of the brave. I think we are about there. The city is really questioning itself on what it wants to become. But of course it is also a moment full of bewilderment. There is not only one speech: before they were saying: to which example are we looking? Towards Barcelona? Towards Madrid? This is the moment that Valencia has to look inwards and decide in which direction it wants to go. And not closing itself off! It is a real good opportunity to vertebrate sound politics... and hopefully what happened in the past will not happen again... (Sánchez, 2016)

Despite everything that happened, all the political impositions, Valencia has developed an alternative network, an avant-garde network... I don't think you find that in every big city, at least not in the cities that I have been able to visit. I think this network is growing stronger by the day, everyday more solid [...] far from the established there are networks and activities generated and nobody can stop them from growing. (Chillida, 2016)

“Not noble, not good, not holy: Bankia” by Paco Zarzoso.
Jasón: Excuse me, could you take notes? Could you take notes? Take notes.
Medea: That writer from Granada died mixed with the rebels; those are the accidents of the war. We lived through terrible days. I do not want to see anybody. The earth and me. My crying and me. And these four walls. Capitalism keeps us drugged and the hurry and the distractions keep us increasingly far away from ourselves, from others and from the important things in life. You have a bit of snow and a plasma and you can be happy. The possession of several credit cards make you feel like you own the world (or at least you feel like you are similar to the three or four that actually do). Macri is from terror and so is Rajoy and Merkel: servants of multinationals, slaves of the Panama papers. Complete shit. That is why I think ours, the fleshless political theatre is totally militant. De voice of the minstrels of the middle ages, those Marquis’s de Sade that are illuminating the poor and ignorant, pulverized by sleeping pills and anesthetized we are caught up in this therapy that is life. Passed by an operating room where the soul has been extirpated, the hearts, the bones

(A part of the group starts singing “Non, je ne regretted rien” and the other part responds with “shouting”, until the two songs merge. Chaos.)

I think this era has affected me, it has of course effected me on the financial level. But beyond that I think it has waken up things. A space like this one would have been impossible to create a few years ago. There was not really a consciousness. With the arrival of all those economic issues
something we could not see before has shown itself. Maybe we were seeing it but from very far.
For example in the neighbourhoods. There was no consciousness about where one was living.
What kind of problems do we have and how could we solve them? Like questioning in what way
we as citizens could participate in finding a solution. Until that moment the responsibility was of
who knows who... and let that person solve it! I do not get involved and I will not participate. In
Valencia there was a problem of this kind and nobody was taking care of nothing. If you had a
political problem in you neighbourhood nobody would listen to you. I went to talk to the mayor
and he would not even listen to me, he would not receive me. At a certain moment there was a
rupture in the sense of who was going to solve the problem, and the citizens, very often the
citizens, were organizing themselves. Like: if they do not solve the problems, well something we
will have to do ourselves to solve it. (Vicente Arlandis, 2016)

p.60
Filthy rat
Creeping animal
Slag of life
Shoddy banker

Subhuman
Ghost of hell
Damned filthy thing
How much damage you've done

Vermin
Greedy thief
Worn out by the bank
O, I hate you and I despise you

Two-legged rat
You've stolen a lot here
And is that a banker bug
Even the most evil one
Compared to you
Is nothing

Damned bloodsucker
Damned cockroach
You infect wherever you bite
You lie and you cheat
Vermin
Greedy snake
Violating banker
I hate you and despise you

Two-legged rat
I am talking to you
Because an usurer
A thief and a scavenger
Compared to you
Is nothing

You're hearing me you useless shit
Hyena of the bank
O, how much I hate you and despise you

Adapted versión based on the song “Rata de dos patas” of Paquita la del barrio

From “Fermin Jimenez” by Pont Flotant.

Jesús: a good person works. And if there is no work he will invent work. He gets busy. He just transforms a limping table in a non limping table. He will just transform a piece of fabric into pants. Transforms time in money and money in a trip to Carrefour. I have learned to work and not to wonder why I am working, for whom I am working or how I should work. I have learned to despise people that do not want to work and feel sorry for who wants to work but cannot. Just because working is always Good. Always. Also if you end up exhausted, stressed or sick. “Do not complain, Jesús, because at times like this it is a privilege to work.” I acknowledge that I admire people who go to work even though they are sick. I do feel privileged every time I realize myself at work.

Alex: I am trying not to do things that are no obligation.

Jesús: they told me there is a time for everything: there is a time for fun and there is a time for work. .. There is time for love... and you cannot ever mix these times!

Alex: I do not try to take weight off things, not everything is so important

Jesús: They taught me work is dignifying. Waking up late is a bad habit. If somebody wakes you up by calling you “you just cover that fact up”. They taught me that yawning in public is impolite. They taught me not to be bored. They also taught me to accept that there are people that will never have to work. But not only they themselves do not have to work, their children will not have to work, nor the children of their children. In return, within a second, they will have what I will earn during the rest of my life. They told me that a professional is the person that earns money with that activity. A dancer is the one that earns a living by dancing. Earning a living. Like our life would
not be our life. Work to pay for our life. They have balls. Paying for a living, that is the taxation, that is the “contribution” for belonging to this species. (silence)

p.63
During the first moments of the 15M or with Zero Responsible we reacted on deep impulses, reactions like NO! Denouncing because you see that something is really unfair. There is simply this moment when the glass is full and you react, but then the glass descends and the time it takes to be refilled is about the time one withholds the world from her/his reaction. The key is: what did you learn from this? In this particular situation that you reacted against something very specific. On the level of your performance towards others, in your job, in your reaction towards your friends, towards your family... if this first response is really able to sow something it should start right there. You should not wait until anyone will water your seeds. If you always have to wait for an external impulse until you can react as a revolutionary, well that will never happen. If you start to change to see things differently, your surrounding will start changing, your friends will change - or you will change your friends. (Puchades, 2016)

p.64
What is more political, to share your car with five other people or to talk about how bad the borders are... Let’s say I find it much more important what you do than what you say. It has to do with action and attitude. Watch out! Also other ways of expressing I think are very much necessary. For example to gather in front of the migrant shelter and claim better conditions seem I think is an excellent way [...] I think that today, after everything that happened to us, we are much more critical. Now people want to diversify everything, and diversity is the most political it can get. (Vicente Arlandis, 2016)

p.65
*From “Síndrhome” by laia Cárdenas.*
NEVIA: Don’t think, Rómulo. This is the best moment for revenge. They will be scared to death. You will see. Not in a year from now, nor the next. Now.
RÓMULO: Revenge? I am not taking revenge. This is an act of fumigation. Nothing else.
NEVIA: Why can’t we take revenge? Is there something wrong with that?
RÓMULO: This is not good. My mother would not like it. This is an act of love. Solidary terrorism.
NEVIA: Name it the way you like. This is not revenge. This is revenge, Rómulo. Revenge. Maybe when you were little they told you revenge is not good, justice and bla bla bla... But in the mean time you got to know the world and the way things are. You’ve grown up. There are sentences that are repeated and repeated, from generation to generation, sentences that follow us everywhere. But this does not mean they are true. Damn justice. Who decides what is just? What if, instead of revenge, we are just putting things in place, there where they belong? Would this make you feel better? would you like it more? How many people should have done what we are about to do? How many people stopped to think about what would be the right thing and backed
off? By the way, what is the right thing anyway?! Who says so?! By any change they are thinking about doing the right thing?

RÓMULO: It is just...

NEVIA: No. Listen to me very carefully. Listen very carefully to what I am about to say! Are you thinking that they are feeling bad? And you Gloria. Your husband, did he care about your feelings when he left you without a home, without a kid, without a life? Did he think about how you would feel? Did he do it for “your own good”??!! And you Romu? Are you going to let them take away all your memories, your uterus, your dignity? Do you think they are feeling bad every time they start their bulldozer? Every time they turn on their lights, every time they throw their firecrackers, that well to fritters. Do you think they are thinking about how we are feeling? Do you think that they are thinking about “doing the right thing” every time they overturn you, that they laugh about you, that they see you as a weird bug? Look, when we finish all of this we can live together right here, the three of us. With Alex if you want, I adore children. The three of us, just like before, we will be a family again.

RÓMULO: It is not that easy.

NEVIA: Of course it is. What is really difficult is trying to fit in in a system that steps on our bare feet over and over again. What is really difficult is trying to make them happy, because they will never be. Today it is your house, tomorrow you son and next your liver. Look, I don’t know what you are going to do, but I don’t think about containing you if later you harbour regrets because you did not do it. Don’t count on me for that. Do you think parents are unconditional? Do you think I am unconditional? Well, no, we are not. Did you understand me? I am asking you if you understood what I just said?

RÓMULO: Yes, yes… I got it, mama.

NEVIA: let’s untie that desire! Let them burst into pieces! May they be blown up like dust!

p.66

Shit converted in fertiliser: We should not wait until politicians change our lives. We should be the ones to do it.. In this play, the ones that start the change are some crazy people. The character that I interpret is completely out of his mind. He is caught up in his own world but in the end we find out that what he is actually doing is something very real. He wants to leave Valencia without any light. It is a symbolic change, from that moment -when he touches the button and leaves the city in the dark - and finally you don’t know if achieved it. We don’t no if it was al inside the mind of a crazy man... (Manuel Valls, 2016).

p.67

Whoever governs the city is not important a priori. But later, this becomes important and you are noticing its influence more and more. It starts to filter a little your gaze. They way they treat social topics, cultural topics.. this has been devastating, very negative. I started to notice it little by little. (Arlandis, 2016).
A very strong image, is an image taken from our play. It is from my colleague Marta. She is absolutely covered from the bags she pulls and pulls and finally she is completely naked. For me this is one of the strongest images of our play. To see someone go down/surrender under the weight he or she collected by buying so much. [...] I think that people that see this scene feel identified with it because we all grew up in a consumerist society, everyone knows what it is to buy things we do not actually need. I do not go often to shopping centres but when do go they are so much more packed than are theatres. Much more packed. I actually don’t know if we are changing this image nor if people who see the scene want to change their reality. I think people that see our plays are a little inclined to already have certain ideas... maybe we should perform this piece in El Corte Inglés. In order to make people see how absurd the whole situation is. But this is really hard. Buying is actually comforting, it is like buying gives you a little relief from the system that makes you unhappy. It is a capitalist system which happiness is simply not the most important constituting principle. So, if you cannot find happiness in your day you buy stuff that helps you to be satisfied. All of the sudden you are happy because you have some new clothes. When you cut out these things you realise that you are living within a system that does not make you happy. You cannot even talk to your neighbour because we have become completely individualised. Of course consumerism has to do with this. With this search of happiness that this current system deprives you of. (Chillida, 2016).

From “No nos mataremos con pistolas” / “we will not kill ourselves with a gun” from Víctor Sánchez Rodríguez.

BLANCA: What happened to you Miguel?
MIGUEL: I don’t know (directs himself to everyone) It seemed like we had the entire world at a stone’s throw away, and now it turns out that it is nothing like that. And actually everything was already there, already made, we cannot create anything new anymore. The only thing we can create is work. Although we cannot prosper. So we said: well, let’s just have the life of our parents, its a decent life, a life with dinners with friends and lots of drinks on saturdays. And hey, lets study something creative because: what is the purpose of this democracy anyway? Well, that we are all artists. And hey, they educated us well. We were taught to work in teams on assignments. Learning us important mantras for the future like: “The extremes meet”, or “Better the devil you know than the devil you don’t”, or “it is what it is”. And look at us now: my work is shit, but is what it is; I would like to have a child but adding my salary and that of my boyfriend we simply can’t. And what are we going to do about it? It is just what it is. I would really like to live in a global village where the produced forces are at the service of everyone, of the entire humanity, I would like to live in a socialist state. Yes, I would like to give a ride to all those dressed up men with perfect hair with their macro-economic decisions that are favouring the oligarchy and
generate more hunger and death than Jews were gassed on all the German nazi grounds... but, don’t you see? The extremes meet, and this just didn’t work, so I will just stick to my liberal democracy, with all my precariousness, because it is just what it is. But hey, just stop it for a moment here: this is not what they promised us. Because look, now we are almost thirty and where is my car? my two houses? my holidays? my partner? Wherever you look there are just solitary people that look and communicate through their mobile phones. So, my friends, this is the life we had to live. But who can be charged for it? To which statistics can we send the broken body of our friend? It is just another middle class girl who took the middle road. And no one of us felt this anger? No one boycotted his or her own life? What did she have to finish it? Because you grow up and habits start to make no sense anymore, and you just stop believing in them. Yes, you are all right, for me the thing that makes sense is to get to know men and cares there nape behind some bushes. What happens if this stops to make sense to me and I me too, I will be added to the statistics and thicken the list of empty martyrs of society? Will you say the same about me that you are saying now about Paula? United over years of silence because life hit you hard? The illness, the illness. In this village cancer rates hit the sky when the chemical plant was build. But this is just coincidence. Maybe the birds brought it. Who dared to say it was the chemical plant when it provided so many people a job? And I wonder: How many have appeared hanging from their ceilings since the desire became hard doctrine? I would like to think that the disgust of living comes from the outside and not from inside, that we are white sheets, a clear morning, a day that starts without any pretentiousness. I would like to think that we all were born with as much joy as pity and they give us life and we will just decide what to do with it: yes we pick the middle path and we eat ourselves. The life they gave us has something to do with us of course. But I do not consent that you look at me as if I was a disabled man, because in your life there is as much shit as in mine. Do you want to do something for me? Take your own issues and look them in the eye for fucks sake. Surely you will find shit where you can worry about.

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We are at the moment at a time with historical responsibility while at the same time we are a generation that does not want assume this responsibility... redefining a world, because if we are not going to do this the next generation will be fucked. We got to know new realities and therefore somehow we are pioneers, we are at a historical moment of where every impulse is vital...

(Sánchez, 2016)

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From personal interviews

JESÚS MUÑOZ: You are in a nordic country and you look at the sky, and you realise you don’t know if it is going to be night or day. It is exactly like that: I don’t know if is getting daytime or nighttime. Sometimes this doubt is very clear. Well, and if it is getting daytime, well, who know how we will wake up, and if it is getting nighttime, who knows how long this will last [...] basically I think it is getting daytime, but sometimes my doubts remain.
GABI OCHOA: We are at an exciting moment in time, everything is in motion because we just had a big political change, this change woke us all up, I think we were not really awake [...] goodbye 1980s hello 21st century.

VICTOR SÁNCHEZ: I think it is this moment in time that a big part of the city is thinking about how to convert Valencia in courage. A city of the courageous. I think it is more or less like that. Valencia is really thinking about who she wants to be.

LA SUBTERRÁNEA: The city council has changed but the distrust is not over. For me personally this means insecurity, insecurity mixed with hope that there are going to be real changes that will endure with time.

MARIBEL BAYONA: Valencia is living a through a moment where everything is possible! She is living a possibility! She is living through a moment in which it is POSSIBLE that something real might change. A moment in which it is POSSIBLE to harbour hope... a moment in which it is POSSIBLE... It is like a crossroad... and... let’s see where it brings us.

We still do not know where this situation is taking us. Obviously we went through a big struggle and now we are at a moment in time where we actually do not know yet where it will take us, so we are not yet putting our arms down. There are a lot of things that still are not going well... (Esther Melo in Caballero and Melo, 2016).

Síndrhomo also touches upon the topic “fallas” in the sense of celebrating life, throwing huge parties, the boom boom firecrackers, all the revelry, the festivities... of course if you see the “action” at a moment when everyone else seems to be celebrating while these people are trying to save the humanity the “fallas” are portrayed like something frivolous. The play is not an attack directed towards the “fallas” it is an attack to this very frivolous part of life that we all share. Instead of taking the reins of certain things, it is much easier to let go and assure what little we have instead of actually initiating a revolution, it is laziness... They will have to take away much more of our commodities before the real revolution will start, and here, at this moment in time, it is just not going to happen. (Valls, 2016).

The narrative called the regime of ‘78 is called into question because it is considered the end of the transition of democracy in Spain. There are new narratives, like the one from Podemos, or the ones from more horizontal organisations - actually Podemos started off as being very horizontal ended up institutionalising as a party - anyway new narratives start to arise that are questioning
the status quo and try to create a new space for coexistence. But for that, it is necessary to have a story, an identity, as a country. Isn’t it so? [...] it one of the oldest nations... and one, or well I always drag with me this question of “who the fuck is Spain?” (Sánchez, 2016).
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis focuses on the socio-political struggles that take place in Valencia, Spain, during the current aftermath of the economic crisis that started in 2008. The impact of the economic crisis has been extremely arduous, it caused many Valencian citizens their savings, their job or even their house. The response of the national government and the local city council by means of a harsh package of austerity measures as well and the coinciding unrevealing of numerous corruption scandals and the lack of justice after a major metro accident added to the discontent of the population. A result of this discontent has been the flourishing of neighbourhood movements and a struggle for socio-political justice. The most commonly used label to identify the protesting voices that appeared was that of “anti-austerity movements”. But, are anti-austerity measures the only reason for the protests? The assignation of a social movement as being an “anti-austerity” movement not only normalises their struggle in opposition to the governmental measures, they also merge a variety of sentiments that now appear to be only directed towards the economic measurements. The polemic issue of this kind of labelling is that it shuts the door for a society where a plurality of movements can influence the socio-political arena.

The analysis of the societal struggles in Valencia until now focussed on general cultural and political changes in the aftermath of the crisis - inter alia that of the changing two-party system in Spain and the innovative way Spanish social movements have been present. This research added to these studies by taking an unconventional research perspective on the socio-political impact caused by the economic crisis. The purpose of this research was to deepen the insight in the changing socio-political landscape in general and citizenship in specific - understood as the ongoing emancipatory struggle around the right to have rights - during the aftermath of the economic crisis through theatrical discourse analysis - analysing theatre plays, theatre performances and interviews with playwrights. Consequently, at the start of this thesis two goals were formulated: (1) to enhance the understanding of citizenship transformation in the aftermath of a crisis and (2) to realise a methodological exploration of how theatre can provide a critical perspective and generate knowledge, because studies show that especially in times of struggle art (theatre) is able to mirror sentiments in a way conventional science cannot.

The three pillars that gave this thesis its theoretical foundation were the theory of the “event”, the concept of citizenship and theatre as a mirror of society. The Event theory of Badiou - crisis' provoke malleable moments, meaning they provide fertile ground for socio-political change - served as a analytical framework for the socio-political changes in the aftermath of the economic crisis for the case of Valencia. Secondly, to gain insight in the current citizenship transformations in Valencia, the concept of citizenship was understood in line with Andrijasevic (2013), Isin (2008/2009) and Dagnino (2008), who see citizenship as an emancipatory struggle that should be analysed by looking at the actual acts of activist citizens - citizens that are struggling for the right...
to have rights. Finally, in the analysis of citizenship transformation theatre functioned as the expression of an unconventional discourse to deepen the insight in a transforming society.

The data collection process took place in Valencia from the beginning of May 2016 until the end of October 2016. During this period I visited theatre performances, collected theatre scripts and interviewed playwrights. The analysis of this theatrical discourse shows that the socio-political reality in Spain is very complex at the moment. My first conclusion comes very close to that of Andrijasevic’ (2013) argument who argues that citizenship is always a struggle. Since the recent rock bottom of the Spanish economy the activist citizen has been particularly visible in the emancipatory re-negotiation and re-definition of citizenship. According to the theatrical discourse analysis citizens are pushing for the political structure to change into a more transparent and human-centred arena that does not exploit its citizens with corrupted politics but enables a local form of politics that is less alienated from society than the current political system. The sensation of passing through a malleable moment seems to enhance the citizens to join this struggle for socio-political change and put their issues on the table. In sum: the theatrical discourse analysis shows that in Valencia an emancipatory re-negotiation of citizenship is taking place.

The second conclusion, related to the methodological exploration of how theatre can provide a critical perspective and generate knowledge, is that theatre was able to provide an alternative insight that conventional literature analysis was not able to capture. While conventional research was able to identify more general socio-political changes on a national level this research provided a deeper insight in the local struggles of Valencian citizens. A disadvantage of this method has been the personal political agenda of the playwrights that were interviewed and of whom the theatre scripts were studied. The mirror of the Valencian society that these theatre plays depicted nonetheless new insights in civic expressions that has not been captured by other scientific analysis of the socio-political transformations in Spain.

Since this case study of Valencia has led to the observation that Valencian citizens are caught up in an emancipatory struggle and try to seize the possibilities of this malleable moment, to formulate a recommendation for praxis that is more overarching in nature and will lead to the benefit of all of those involved is hard. However, the highly irritated relation between Valencians and the political arena in the aftermath of the economic crisis might benefit from political structures that integrate the perspective from the arts as a measure to gain insight in societal sentiments and needs. In order to be open to transformations and less viable for corruption a diversification of the political landscape might help with the re-negotiation and re-definition of Valencian citizenship.