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Introduction: crowds and love

- 1 On September 16th in 2013 the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2013) spoke at Zuccotti Park, where Occupy Wall Street was held. He commented on the political situation in general and gave an enthusiastic socialist speech addressing the collective situation of the crowd with the following words:

There is a danger. Don't fall in love with yourselves. We have a nice time here. But remember, carnivals come cheap. What matters is the day after, when we will have to return to normal lives. Will there be any changes then? I don't want you to remember these days, you know, like 'Oh, we were young and it was beautiful'. (Žižek, 2013)
- 2 Why did he use the concept of "love" in that regard? Interestingly, he is not the first to frame the affective quality of crowds with the word "love". The French sociologist Gabriel Tarde spoke of "crowds of loving" in his seminal text *L'opinion et la foule* of 1901 (here: 1989), while describing crowds as a form of perfect sociality in which imitation may spread without friction (cf. Borch, 2012, p. 57 and ff.). Phenomenologically, love is not an intentional act but rather an atmospheric emanation of intentional feelings (Schmitz, 2005, p. 321 and ff.).
- 3 Žižek (2013) went on and interpreted the crowd of protesters as a spiritual community:

What is Christianity? It's the Holy Spirit. What is the Holy Spirit? It's an egalitarian community of believers who are linked by love for each other, and who only have their own freedom and responsibility to do it. In this sense, the Holy Spirit is here now. And down there on Wall Street, there are pagans who are worshipping blasphemous idols. (Žižek, 2013)

- 4 His allegory for describing the crowd resonates with the phenomenology of atmospheres. The atmospheric has been described as being semantically rooted in a religious interpretation of experiencing an ultimate 'Other'. The German phenomenologist Hermann Schmitz in particular linked these narratives to the theological concept of the Holy Spirit (Schmitz, 2014, p. 48; Schmitz, 2005, p. 271 and ff.) and developed an agnostic understanding of collective atmospheres that are bound to shared situations (Schmitz, 2014, p. 50).¹
- 5 The aim of this article is to unpack these poetic metaphors provided by Žižek and translate them into a theoretical understanding of the spatial politics of protesting crowds by drawing on social phenomenology. I argue that the term "atmosphere" is helpful to understand the spatial dynamics of emerging collectivities and their affective cohesion. The article provides a conceptual framework that may prove to be useful for empirical research on how social movements materialise in protesting crowds, how protests start and people become mobilised to join, and how we can understand the temporal and spatial stability of protest gatherings. It links the phenomenology of crowds of Elias Canetti (1984) and the sociological concept of "imitative action" of Tarde (1903) with the phenomenology of atmospheres and situations of Schmitz (2014).
- 6 In general, phenomenology is considered to be a rather apolitical endeavour. Nonetheless, social phenomenology is able to contribute to the understanding of social interaction and crowd dynamics. Thus the following conceptual suggestions are not necessarily limited to crowds engaged in political movements. Still, approaching the social phenomenon of protesting crowds phenomenologically has limitations. Phenomenological approaches seem to miss the causes of protest and activism that are rooted in various local contexts but also in the crisis of capitalism. However, phenomenology has some potential for contributing to the understanding of the political (Jung, Embree, 2016) as long as it moves beyond foundationalist premises of consciousness or *Sein*, as Held (2010) argued in his phenomenology of "political worlds". Engaging with phenomenological explorations of protesting crowds seems to be an entry point, because when it comes to protesting crowds and social movements, it is important for the interplay of emotion, space and collective action to be seen in relation to questions of the mobilisation of protesters, the stability of the social organisation of protest movements, and also the policing of crowds (Wahlström, 2010). However, Jasper (1998, p. 397) and Ossewaarde (2013, p. 147) point to the fact that social movements and protests should not be blended. Further, Borch (2012, p. 259 and ff.) shows that the study of social movements developed in stark contrast to the research on crowds. I will argue that these research foci and distinctive semantics can be harmonised. Further, I will focus on crowds, because the collective intentionalities represented in crowds are mundane phenomena of political articulation (cf. Bookchin 1968, 2004, p. 15). However, it is important not to render crowds as generally homogenous, but to bear in mind the diversity of intentions and feelings that come to be imitated within protest gatherings or other crowded geographies. Of course, protesting crowds are spaces of dissent, discord, dispute but also of (spontaneous) solidarities, friendship, shared sorrows and excitement.

- 7 Thus I propose to focus on the atmospheres of protesting crowds that are rooted in collectively shared situations of social movements. The role of emotions within crowds on the one hand and social movements on the other has been addressed by various scholars (Lofland, 1985; Jasper, 1998; Goodwin, Jasper, Polletta, 2000; Flam, King, 2005; Jasper, 2011; Blocq, Klandermans, van Stekelenburg, 2012). The relationship of crowds and atmospheres² has only recently been examined by a few scholars (Anderson, 2009; Runkel, Pohl, 2012; Edensor, 2015)³. Few scholars have addressed the role of atmospheres within protesting crowds (van Leeuwen, Klandermans, van Stekelenburg, 2015; van Leeuwen, van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, 2016).
- 8 How can we understand the often ephemeral character of crowds and their atmospheric spatialities without falling prey to moralisations of protesting crowds, or disregarding the liberating power of articulating protest collectively on the streets?

Canetti's phenomenology of crowds

- 9 Crowds are mostly viewed quite negatively in classic accounts. This is especially true for the so-called founding father of crowd theory, Le Bon. His influential essay "The Crowd: a study of the popular mind" was published in 1895 (here: 2009) and established the scientific study of masses and crowds from a psychological perspective. Like many of his contemporaries, Le Bon focused on the latent criminal nature of crowds that seemed to threaten liberal and individualistic notions of society, at least from an elitist point of view. Liberalism and individualism seemed to be at stake when crowds and their suggestive power appeared on the scene. The irrational, violent, de-individualising crowd questions the ideal of the modern subject, and in doing so it presents itself as a "political matter of concern" (Borch, 2012, p. 16). The influence of Le Bon's criminological and moralising perspective on crowds was immense – literally: his plea for strict governance regimes for crowds found its concrete manifestation in the renaissance of stadium constructions on the one hand and eventually in the Nazi party rally grounds in Nuremberg, Germany on the other. Nazi-fascists were keen readers of Le Bon's writings and Hitler adopted the idea of ignorant crowds (Borch, 2013). However, negative and sceptical notions of crowds run like a common thread through the body of literature on crowd theory and eventually reappear in conservative cultural critiques of mass society.
- 10 It was the writer Canetti who at first eschewed such moral connotations to great extent (McClelland, 1989, 2011; Sloterdijk, 2000; Borch, 2009; Brighenti, 2010). In 1960 (here: 1984) he published a book called *Masse und Macht* ("Crowds and Power"), in which Canetti provides an extensive phenomenology of crowds. His phenomenology is rooted in the idea that crowds can be classified based on the *tragender Affekt*, which I prefer to translate with "prevailing affect" rather than "prevailing emotion".⁴ Canetti's highly metaphorical typology of various types of crowds acknowledges the fact that crowds are not homogeneous but multiplex. He started his study with the premise that people lose their fear of being touched within crowds. Canetti pins down four attributes of crowds. His first premise was that the crowd always wants to grow (Canetti, 1984, p. 29) and its growth knows no natural limits, but only artificial ones. Here, Canetti implicitly acknowledges the spatial and material dimension of crowds. The second premise is that within the crowd there is equality (*ibid.*), but this experience of equality lies within its energy to demand justice. The third thesis is that the crowd loves density. Again, another crowd theorist is using the term "love" to describe a "feeling". Canetti linked density to the

crowd's feeling of being "strong", although he probably erred insofar as he stated that a crowd can never feel too dense. However, with regard to new crowd technologies (Durrheim, Foster, 1999; Vehlken, 2014), he was right to assume that "one day it may be possible to determine this density more accurately and even to measure it" (*ibid.*). The fourth statement given by Canetti is that the crowd is in need of direction and is always in movement: "Its constant fear of disintegration means that it will accept any goal. A crowd exists so long as it has an unattained goal" (*ibid.*).

- 11 This is however only one dimension of Canetti's phenomenological typology of crowds. He discussed the spatial dimension of crowds at length, with its cardinal distinction being whether it is an open or a closed crowd (*ibid.*, p. 16 and ff.).⁵ The openness of the crowd is facilitated by its attribute of wanting to grow: "The open crowd exists so long as it grows; it disintegrates as it stops growing" (*ibid.*). The closed crowd "puts the stress on permanence" (*ibid.*, p. 17). This is of course spatial, because the closed crowd
creates a space for itself which it will fill. This space can be compared to a vessel into which liquid is being poured and whose capacity is known. The entrances to this space are limited in number, and only these entrances can be used; the boundary is respected whether it consists of stone, of solid wall, or of some special act of acceptance, or entrance fee. Once the space is completely filled, no one else is allowed in. (*ibid.*)
- 12 At this point, Canetti appears to be the first theorist of spatial crowd management, although he basically spoke more of "crowd containers" than of crowds itself and seems to deploy a container theory of space. The co-constitutive character of crowds and (physical) space however becomes more nuanced when he remarks that "the building is waiting for them [the crowd]; it exists for their sake and, as long as it is there, they will be able to meet in the same manner. The space is theirs, even during the ebb, and in its emptiness it reminds them of the flood" (*ibid.*). Although Canetti has the tendency to use naturalist metaphors in his phenomenology – in his seminal study on crowd semantics Borch (2012) pointed out that crowd terminology is not innocent – the relation of crowds and physical space resonates with Gibson's (1979, 2015) concept of "affordances" (or what Schmitz (2009, p. 33) calls *Aufforderungscharaktere* or Thibaud (2015, p. 44) calls "invitation"). In connection with that, Canetti pays special attention to one particular spatial form of an enclosed crowd: in a chapter titled "The Crowd as a Ring" he deals with the arena as a crowd container that affords the crowd the opportunity to become doubly closed (Canetti 1984, p. 27 and ff.).
- 13 Beyond these static spatial manifestations, Canetti's phenomenology is clearly rooted in the idea of crowd dynamics. Two other key distinctions he draws are crowds that are between "rhythmicising" and "stagnating" or "the slow and the quick crowd" (*ibid.*, p. 30). Rhythm seems to be of major importance within the movements of the crowd, although Canetti only linked this to actions like marching and dancing: "When their excitement is at its height, these people really feel as one, and nothing but physical exhaustion can stop them" (*ibid.*, p. 32). However, we may expand the idea of rhythms of the crowd as its temporal function by linking it to Tarde's concept of imitation which proceeds rhythmologically, and Borch suggested making use of rhythmanalysis to understand imitation (Borch, 2005, p. 92). Borch (2005, p. 95) wrote that "crowds organize their unity and contagious imitation through rhythm". Further, the rhythmic situation of a crowd may find its affective expression as atmosphere. The atmosphere emerges between the relational rhythms of the self, the crowd and its environment (cf. Højlund,

Kinch, 2014). Thus, the affectively embodied temporality of crowds, its rhythm, is intrinsically linked to the affectively embodied spatiality of crowds, its atmosphere.

- 14 Adding the concept of atmosphere to Canetti's phenomenological classification of crowds provides a better understanding of the spatial politics of crowds. He classifies five types of crowds: the baiting crowd (*Hetzmasse*), the flight crowd (*Fluchtmasse*), the prohibited crowd (*Verbotsmasse*), the reversed crowd (*Umkehrungsmasse*) and the festive crowd (*Festmasse*) (*ibid.*, 48). His argument is that these are the main forms based on their "emotional content" or their "prevailing affect". Regardless of whether we agree with his typological categories, the use of prevailing affects as categorical markers of crowds allows him to solve the social theoretical tension between the individual and crowd. The point here is that we can think of crowds as affective bodies that even liberate the individual (Borch, 2009, p. 282). However, what Canetti calls "emotional content" or "prevailing affect" can be understood as a collectively shared situation which is expressed by a prevailing or overarching atmosphere. Canetti's phenomenology outlines the temporality and spatiality of crowds. In the following section I will put my understanding of situations and atmospheres in concrete terms.

Schmitz's phenomenology of situations, atmospheres and sense of justice (*Rechtsgefühl*)

- 15 The term *atmosphere* is iridescent. The rise of the term in recent years reveals its charm but also points to its vagueness. The various ontological and epistemological nuances of the term make it a "floating signifier" (Lévi-Strauss, 1987, p. 63) that can be used in a wide range of language games. The literature on atmospheres has massively increased over the last years and the diffusion of the term has produced new variations in different scientific contexts. However, the most extensive and deep phenomenology was provided by Schmitz, whose system of philosophy has not gained much attention⁶, but who inspired the well-cited work of Böhme (2013), who discussed "*Atmosphären*" in the light of aesthetics and architecture.⁷
- 16 Schmitz' philosophy exceeds Böhme's theory of aesthetics and provides a phenomenology of intuitive and spontaneous experiences that centre around the concept of the lived body. Schmitz' elaborated concept of atmospheres is rooted in an ontology of situations. Schmitz explains that nothing is singular, but everything is entrenched in situations (Schmitz, 2014, p. 53). Situations dominate all social relations:
- Situations are absolute or relative chaotic-manifold entities, which are at least connected to states of affairs, mostly also programmes and wishes, purposes ... as well as burdens such as concerns and riddles and anything beyond that like humans, rocks, glances, colours, numbers, and activities but also atmospheres of weather or feelings.⁸ (Schmitz, 1993, 35 quoted in Düttmann, 2000, p. 108)
- 17 States of affairs or circumstances (*Sachverhalte*), programmes (*Programme*) and burdens (*Probleme*⁹) are the constituents of situations. First, circumstances can consist of persons, things and half-things. In contrast to things, the permanence of half-things is interruptible and their impact is immediate, because cause and impact concur (Schmitz, 2014, p. 39). Examples of half-things are atmospheres – which will be explained below – emotions, voices, pain, wind, or melodies (*ibid.*). Situations, whether collectively shared or not, can be laden with atmospheres, and collective atmospheres¹⁰ are always grounded in situations. Second, programmes consist of purposes and wishes. Examples are rules of a

game or a language (Schmitz, 2014, p. 55) and affordances (*Aufforderungscharaktere*) (Schmitz, 2009, p. 33), but this can be expanded to political ideas, moralities, ideologies, and theologies. In connection with that, Schmitz (*ibid.*) mentions the examples of affordances of appeal, repulsion, prestige, properness or correctness and viability. I will return to these aspects in the conclusion. Third, situations can be constituted by burdens such as riddles, dangers, sorrows, or traumatic memories (*ibid.*). Of course, political violence may also lead to corporeal experiences that constitute a burden (cf. examples discussed in Protevi, 2009).

- 18 The atmospheres of protests do not appear out of the blue. Protest movements are rooted in situations, which become collectively shared. Schmitz differentiates between a variety of situations. First, situations can be current, like motor actions, chats, fantasies and so on, but also current states, like languages, personalities, intellectual competencies, political attitudes, personal facial expressions, and even regionalised customs (Schmitz, 2014, p. 54). Thus, such situations can be personal or shared. However, personal situations can become bound in collectively shared situations (Schmitz, 2014, p. 54). The situation of a protesting crowd is inclusive insofar as it loosely corresponds with personal situations. My argument here is that the situation of a crowd is best described by Canetti's four attributes. Furthermore, I argue that crowds are collectively shared situations that always develop atmospheres, and thus are spatial manifestations of protest movements.
- 19 Atmospheres are half-things in Schmitzean phenomenology. He writes:

An atmosphere [...] is the complete occupation of a surfaceless space in the region of experienced presence. [...] There are also atmospheres that do not completely occupy the space of experienced presence. [...] Such merely corporeal atmospheres are locationally circumscribed. This stands in contrast to the way in which emotions are (or have a claim to being) unboundedly poured out [...]. Objections to the spatiality of emotions of the sort that they are not three-dimensional bodies, surfaces or lines, that they are not round or square, that they could not possibly be located at this position or that distance, are based on the false presumption of an [sic] space containing surfaces. (Schmitz, Owen Müllan, Slaby, 2011, p. 255)
- 20 Schmitz' notion of "surfaceless space" as a pre-dimensional non-Cartesian space (Riedel 2015, p. 100) is of major importance for understanding the spatiality of atmospheres. Phenomenological examples are the spaces of sound and silence, weather spaces, the spaces of water a swimmer crosses, and of course felt spaces such as atmospheres.
- 21 As stated above, collective atmospheres are always based on situations which can be current and more or less spontaneous (e.g. an atmosphere within a stadium depends on the course of the game) or grounded within a current state that endures for a longer period of time.¹¹ Collective atmospheres rely, according to Schmitz (2014, p. 56), on encorporation as a form of corporeal communication (*leibliche Kommunikation*). Two forms of encorporation exist in Schmitz' phenomenological system: antagonistic (either one-sided or mutual) and solidary encorporation. It seems that Schmitz hints here at forms of social power relations, because antagonistic encorporation is centred around the idea of suggestive dominance of felt movements or movement suggestions (*Bewegungssuggestionen*) (Schmitz, 2014, p. 56). However, in regard to crowds, solidary encorporations matter most. Crowds share an impulse that binds them together without the need for people to turn to each other.¹² Further down, a connection is made between solidary encorporations and aspects of Tarde's idea of imitation that allows us to understand the diffusion of atmospheric sentiments within protesting crowds.

- 22 Schmitz (2014, p. 60 and ff.) gives two examples of collective atmospheres that are rooted in relatively static situations: a collective sense of justice (*Rechtsgefühl*) and love. The collective sense of justice constitutes itself as collective emotion of a shared situation based on a “population of experiences of coping with anger and shame” (*ibid.*, p. 61). That which is considered “just and reasonable” in a particular community is based on solidary incorporation (*Einleibung*) and can be passed onto others. Anderson (2009, p. 77) quotes Marx’ famous speech from 1856: “[...] the atmosphere in which we live weighs upon everyone with a 20,000-pound force, but do you feel it? No more than European society before 1848 felt the revolutionary atmosphere enveloping and pressing it from all sides.” The question “do you feel it?” is still important today for emerging protest movements. It is an imperative for the political transmission of solidarity. Thus atmospheres make injustice which is part of a situation noticeable through solidary incorporation. Further, Schmitz (2014, p. 61) speaks in this regard of receptivity (*Empfänglichkeit*).
- 23 Schmitz’ second example is love. In his phenomenology, love is a feeling within a situation. Love is an atmospheric emanation that overarches the situation (Schmitz, 2014, p. 60), although love might have varying emotional nuances¹³. Understanding love as atmospheric emanation does not mean that love is essentialised and static rather than performative and unfolding. With such love, there is always tension between the atmosphere and its underlying situation. This tension can be loose or tight. When it only loosely flares, it may disappear. If it is too tight, it fuses with the situation and eventually becomes gridlocked: “The emotion is still there but can’t become mobilised in current situations offhand, because it is stuck within internally diffuse meaningfulness in states of affairs, programmes and especially burdens of communal life”¹⁴ (Schmitz, 2014, p. 60). From the perspective of phenomenology, Žižek’s warning that the Occupy protesters should not fall in love can be interpreted insofar as there is a danger that the social emotions of the protesters either evince themselves as ardent love, but eventually a ‘flash in the pan’, or succumb to its static situation like a long love gone cold. It could even splinter into various situations and the protest could become a “constructive failure” as Micah White (2015) described the Occupy movement in an interview.
- 24 While love seizes everyone individually – and in an emotionally nuanced way – and is thus indivisible, a collective atmosphere of love can be shared like a communal endeavour. It is an atmosphere that both surrounds (spatially) and radiates (socially), to pick up an observation made by Anderson (2009, p. 80). Schmitz (2014, p. 60) exemplifies this with intimate relationships between lovers but also families as well as secular or religious groups. Protesting crowds can be described as loving crowds and as spiritual communities. Žižek’s use of the holy spirit as a metaphor for an “egalitarian community of believers who are linked by love for each other” very much resonates with Schmitz’ (2005, p. 515 and ff.) reappraisal of scholastic pneumatology that proclaimed that the holy spirit dwells within humans through love for each other. Schmitz’ phenomenology allows us to understand the atmospheric politics of identity within the spatiality of protesting crowds and how atmospheres in fact stabilise protest – quite literally through an understanding of what it means to become ‘moved’ by protest movements.
- 25 However, from the perspective of social sciences, Schmitz’ neo-phenomenology remains a little unsatisfactory when it comes to addressing social relations and collective action. However, his concepts and terminology such as *corporeal communication* and (*solidary*) *incorporation* provide an unusual but fruitful set of ideas. In the following section, the concept of *solidary incorporation* is linked to Tarde’s concept of imitation.

The imitation of sentiments: insights with Tarde

- 26 The co-creator of the Occupy movement, Micah White, expects that “the next revolutionary movement will be a contagious mood that spreads throughout the world and the human community” (2015). But in what way can a mood or, more clearly, an atmosphere become contagious? How can an emotion become transmitted and why is this of such importance for social movements? These questions have lain at the heart of crowd-related research since its beginnings in the 19th century, and it was Tarde in particular who developed an advanced social theory that was inspired by his observations of crowds. It is beyond the scope of this article to deploy Tarde’s sociology in full detail, which has attracted more interest in recent years, especially through the works of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Latour (2001) and Sloterdijk (2004) (cf. Runkel, 2017). Nonetheless, I will provide a short introduction to his ideas in the following paragraph.
- 27 Tarde developed his concept of imitation in “The Laws of Imitation” that originates from 1890 (here: 1903). Imitation, according to Tarde, is the permanent flux that constitutes the social. It is the fabric of society and is driven by beliefs and desires (as monadic forces). Everything happens either as invention or imitation, although inventions are only the crossing or re-combination of at least two imitative rays. In his social analysis, Tarde at first identifies the universal phenomenon of repetition. This phenomenon manifests itself within the social realm, and Tarde goes on to identify what he calls “logical laws” and “extra-logical influences” of imitation. His laws substantiate the idea of peaceful harmony and progress through social cohesion. The extra-logical laws outline imitation more specifically. The first extra-logical law implies that imitation moves from within to without: “Imitation [...] proceeds from the inner to the outer man” (Tarde, 1890, 1903, p. 199). Tarde is even more precise and explains that “imitation of ideas precedes the imitation of their expression” (*ibid.*, p. 207) and “the imitation of ends precedes imitation of means” (*ibid.*). The second extra-logical law states that imitation proceeds from inferior to superior, which subsequently leads to the formation of social hierarchies (*ibid.*, p. 213 and ff.).
- 28 Tarde’s monadological social theory is of course more complex than that, but I want to point to his ideas on imitative rays of sentiment that are linked to the first extra-logical law: the imitation of sentiments precedes the imitation of ideas (Tarde, 1890, 1903, p. 197). Further, the imitation of sentiments is more stable than the imitation of ideas. Tarde (1890, 1903, p. 196) writes: “All those throngs of people which end in bringing on revolutions in religion, government, art, and industry begin to collect under the sway of [...] sentiment.” However, imitation does not necessarily rely on co-presence, as in the case of crowds. A reduction of Tarde’s theory on the micro-sociological paradigm of interactionism would be fatal (Borch, Stäheli, 2009) but nonetheless direct communication facilitates imitation. Tarde (1903, p. 204) is actually quite speculative when it comes to understanding communication in the absence of speech and turns to hypnotic suggestion as a possible explanation of communication in prehistoric times: “It is not difficult to understand how the first inventor of speech set to associating in his own mind a given thought and a given sound (perfected by gesture), but it is difficult to understand how he was able to suggest this relation to another by merely making him hear the given sound” (*ibid.*, p. 204). My claim here is – which hints at Tarde’s bracketed remark “perfected by gesture” – that Schmitz’ concept of corporeal communication and

more precisely encorporation might even be more suitable than Tarde's turn to hypnotic suggestion. It is not within Tarde's theoretical scope to actually explain how imitation and contagion work in social interactions, although he acknowledges that it involves perception and practices. He pushes these questions off to the field of psychology (anticipating recent findings in neuropsychology), despite his anthropological and even phylogenetic speculations, although I would suggest that it could also be discussed in the light of theories of practice (cf. Schatzki, 2016, 10). However, regardless of whether we agree with Tarde that imitation plays the most essential role in society – and, by the way, Tarde does not necessarily reduce everything to imitation, which is for him only “the most salient and typical form [...] of universal repetition” (Tarde, 1903, p. 7) within the social realm – we can probably agree to say that imitation cannot be reduced to either speech or some form of somnambulism. Schmitz' concepts of corporeal communication and movement suggestions allow us to understand the experience of the suggestive power of imitative action without a speculative presumption of passive subjectivity, mass hypnotism, or without leaving space for understanding practices of resistance (cf. Sampson, 2012, p. 170).

- 29 Schmitz (2009, p. 33) describes suggestions of movement as a perception of *Gestalt* (and subsequently manifestations of *Gestalt* (*Gestaltverläufe*) that can be felt by the lived body. He exemplifies this with auditory and musical perception such as rhythms, motifs and melodies, but also points to other sensuous perceptions. Encorporation is, according to Schmitz (*ibid.*), the most common type of visual perception. My argument is that imitation within crowds is typically facilitated by solidary encorporation that can affect a person as visual or auditory perception, but first and foremost can be felt, because collective atmospheres rely on this form of corporeal communication. Since the imitation of sentiments precedes the imitation of ideas, the atmospheric attunement facilitates imitative action due to solidary encorporation within crowds. This allows us to link the emotional crowd dynamics to the various actions of protesting.

Conclusion

- 30 The focus of this paper has been on the conceptualisation of collective atmospheres of protesting crowds. As quoted before, White recently stated in an interview (2015), that “what we learned from Occupy, and also with the Arab Spring, is that revolutions happen when people lose their fear. So, I think the main trigger for the next revolutionary movement will be a contagious mood that spreads throughout the world and the human community.” Losing the fear of touch is the starting point for Canetti's phenomenology of crowds. The spatial forms of moods are atmospheres, as has been phenomenologically explored by Schmitz. The notion of contagion and imitation is at the heart of Tarde's social theory.
- 31 First, I argued that Canetti's phenomenological perspective on crowds helps us to understand the link between the affectively embodied temporality of protesting crowds and the affectively embodied spatiality of protesting crowds. The rhythmic appearance of imitative waves of sentiments and ideas manifests itself in an overarching atmosphere. Second, I shed light on the spatial manifestations of protest movements by deploying Schmitz' differentiation between collectively shared situations and atmospheres. With Schmitz, we understand how atmospheres in fact stabilise protest. Third, I illustrated that an understanding of imitation as solidary encorporation reveals how social cohesion

within protesting crowds works. This provides a better understanding of the link between the emotional crowd dynamics, collective action and the emergence of communal atmospheres of protest.

- 32 Thus, in contrast to Žižek's remarks I argue that there is a need for crowds to "fall in love," otherwise protests cannot "move", the crowd cannot grow, people cannot become mobilised and the spatial diffusion of protest disrupts. Crowds form themselves through "acting in concert" with peers (Arendt, 1970, p. 82) and through that they open up a new space. It is the "space of appearance" that is a shared situation created through collective action and speech (Arendt, 1958, 1998, p. 199): "Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and forever" (*ibid.*). Atmospheres of protesting crowds and their emotional dynamics offer an energetic social form of resistance. In other words: the Arendtian space of appearances comes alive for the lived body as an atmosphere of power.
- 33 Recent protesting crowds around the world have been implicitly aware of this insofar as they engage in collective identity-building through visual arts, music and what Schmitz calls – in regard to habitation and dwellings – "holding sway over the atmospheric" (2009, p. 77). At this point Schmitz is quite close to Böhme's (2013) idea of "staging atmospheres", when he speaks of more or less spontaneous "techniques" (cf. Yang, 2005, p. 83) for cultivating a protective, spatially enclosed and intense emotional climate. The stability of protesting crowds – and the spatial visibility of protest movements – is dependent on the cultivation of atmospheres. On the one hand, these atmospheric spaces allow what Brown and Pickerill (2009) call "emotional sustainability" but on the other hand they also appear as spaces of emotional resistance or prefigurative political spaces of emotion. Territorial strategies of protest movements to occupy and block – of course already occupied – urban spaces and to erect protest camps and dwellings within an ideologically negotiated space (cf. Ramadan, 2012) provide vivid examples of the proliferation of atmospheres within protesting crowds, their spatial politics of identity, and direct action through imitation as solidary encorporation. Engaging creatively with atmospheric techniques will eventually facilitate the stability of protest. These atmospheres are in constant need of creative techniques to proliferate the emotional endurance of the crowd. We do however need to acknowledge that despite all efforts to stage atmospheres, their character always remains volatile; staging or even scripting protests certainly has limitations.
- 34 Atmospheres are not only participatory but highly contagious, so to speak, because of their immersive character. Protest camps for instance offer counter-atmospheres. The importance of protest camps lies in the fact that they aim to erect a place to dwell within Apollonian landscapes of a stable order "beyond the control of the state and outside the normal political order" (Ramadan, 2013, p. 146). Such movements and crowds create, as Bookchin (1968, 2004, p. 14) argued in the 1960s, "an atmosphere of general lawlessness" that "circumvent restriction in every facet of daily life" so that society itself "becomes disorderly, undisciplined, Dionysian". Ossewaarde (2011, p. 135) writes that "the emerging post-modern crowds are crowds that express their resistance to global capitalist powers all around the world and, through the use of new social media, manage to make their presence real for distant spectators." This management of making presence real, as I argued above, is possible through imitative waves of sentiment that become spatialised in atmospheres. Building on shared situations, protesting crowds inspire and

eventually create collective atmospheres as counter-atmospheres, though often they are ephemeral and fluid in character.

- 35 Nonetheless, atmospheres are ruptures for predominant power structures as a mode of “politicisation of aesthetics” (Benjamin 1936) or an atmospherisation of politics, with its most advanced territorial form being to inhabit ‘public’ space. To understand the atmospherisation of politics, I propose to turn to phenomenology, which has some potential to contribute to a ‘more-than-representational’ (Müller 2015) understanding of the political. Despite the fact that phenomenology has been the theoretical framework for the understanding of emotions, affects and the (lived) body for many decades, recent scholarship working on the nexus of bodies, emotions and political protest (cf. Goodwin et al., 2001; Gruszczynska, 2009) rarely engages with this theoretical approach.
- 36 Thus, drawing on Schmitz’ flat ontology of situations, I argue that programmes and burdens that co-constitute situations present a valuable theoretical opportunity to connect corporeal experiences with the worlds of political reasoning and meaning. The examples of affordances (of appeal, repulsion, prestige, correctness and viability), which Schmitz mentions rather *en passant*, open up perspectives for discussing the aesthetics of political worlds in alignment with their affective qualities. Populist politics in particular tend to systematically create atmospheres with the help of particular affordances (cf. Schurr 2013). A phenomenology that eschews foundationalist premises (and one which especially takes into account the fact that the experience of atmospheres cannot be essentialised) could certainly help us to understand more about these qualities and provide interesting methodological and theoretical perspectives on the various temporary autonomous atmospheres (cf. Bey, 2003) that are always unfolding within protesting crowds.

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NOTES

1. The philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (2004) expanded the idea by exploring the societal spheres of psychosocial communality.
2. In their remarkable study of the environmental psychology of football grounds, which is rooted in a Behaviorist approach, Canter, Comber and Uzzell (1989, p. 127) use the term *atmosphere* to describe the experience of being in a crowd. However, they use this term only with inverted commas.
3. Inquiries of collective affects exist, although without theorising the concept of atmospheres: see for instance Brennan (2004) and Protevi (2009).
4. The phenomenological usage of this term may need some clarification. The German term *Affekt* in Canetti's book is mostly translated into English with the term "emotion". However, the ontological subtleties of the English term "affect" as it is used in non- or more-than-representational theories in current debates seem to interfere with Canetti's use of the term. "Affect" in current debates is commonly based on Spinoza's philosophical discussion of feeling (Massumi, 1995), although Anderson (2009, p. 80) pointed out that the concept of atmosphere unsettles the distinction between affects and emotions. Canetti did not provide a more detailed explanation of the term, but it appears that it differs from Spinozist terminology. Schmitz (2005, p. 97) criticizes Spinoza's notion of affect from a phenomenological point of view as "inexpedient". Instead, he refers to a more open and vague understanding of affectivity as in the writings of Eugen Bleuler (*ibid.*) and even suggests that the term *Affizient* better describes what leads to an affective involvement (*affektives Betroffensein*) of an affected person. Examining the (in-)compatibilities of differing notions of "affect" and atmospheres is a task that remains inchoate but has been addressed from different perspectives (cf. Seyfert, 2012; Bille, Bjerregard, Sørensen, 2015). Nonetheless, I would argue that both translations of Canetti's term either as "prevailing affect" and/or as "lasting emotion" could work, but "affect" should neither become confused with a Spinozist understanding nor should the challenges that the term "emotion" may pose to a phenomenology of the lived-body, space and temporality become overlooked. However, I do use the terms *affect* / *affective* to acknowledge the embodied experiences of becoming part of a crowd from a phenomenological stance (cf. Bille, Bjerregard, Sørensen, 2015, p. 35).
5. Although Canetti later added a third to these two forms: crowd crystals. In contrast to closed crowds, crowd crystals are limited not by external (e.g. material) boundaries but social ones: "everyone belonging to it [the crowd crystal] constitutes part of its boundary." (*ibid.*, p. 74).
6. One reason for this is that almost nothing of his work has yet been translated into English. An exception is a short introduction to his key arguments (Schmitz, Müllan Owen, Slaby, 2011) and a translated article on atmospheric spaces (Schmitz, 2016). This might explain his absence in well-cited publications that have promoted the term "atmosphere" in Anglophone academia since 2000 (Anderson, 2009; Ingold, 2011).
7. There are significant analytical distinctions between Böhme and Schmitz (Runkel, 2016).
8. My translation of the original text: *Situationen sind absolut oder relativ chaotisch-mannigfaltige Ganzheiten, zu denen mindestens Sachverhalte gehören, meist auch Programme und Wünsche, Zwecke ...*

sowie drittens Probleme wie Sorgen und Rätsel und darüber hinaus beliebige Sachen, darunter neben Menschen, Steinen, Blicken, Farben, Zahlen und Tätigkeiten eben auch Atmosphären des Wetters oder des Gefühls.

9. Regarding context and connotation, “burden” rather than “problems” seems to be the most appropriate English translation.

10. Private atmospheres can appear without situations (Schmitz, 2014, p. 55).

11. Another form of a collective atmosphere features more heavily the material side of environments. Schmitz (2014, p. 62) speaks of bridging qualities of the material environment that affect the lived body (*leibnahe Brückenqualitäten*), suggestions of movement (e.g. architectural forms) and synaesthetic characters (e.g. smell, sound, fog, air, rain etc.). He refers to urban atmospheres.

12. The examples Schmitz (2014, p. 57) gives do not really differ much from Canetti’s prevailing affects of crowds: turmoil, the frenzy of crowds, communal singing and music-making, spontaneous team play, spontaneous cheering and Mexican waves, etc. However, Schmitz does not elaborate his usage of the term “Masse” or differentiate between different forms of crowds.

13. Understanding love as atmosphere may face the charge of essentialism. However, it is clear that there is no such entity as proper love. Love is a contested feeling with many affective facets, and, as Wilkinson (2017, p. 66) argued, love is an “(im)properly political concept” pointing towards “a multitude of different affects”.

14. My translation of the original text: *Das Gefühl ist zwar noch da, kann aber nicht mehr ohne Weiteres in aktuelle Situationen hinein mobilisiert werden, weil es in Sachverhalten, Programmen und besonderen Problemen des Zusammenlebens in binnendiffuser Bedeutsamkeit gefangen ist.*

ABSTRACTS

The paper provides a conceptual framework for understanding collectively shared political agency in public space. By using a phenomenological approach, it explores the spaces of protest movements by deploying Elias Canetti’s perspective on crowds and links this to an affectively embodied spatiality of protesting crowds, which is conceptually framed as atmosphere. This endeavour is substantiated with the differentiation between atmospheres and situations as in the neo-phenomenology of Hermann Schmitz on the one hand and the social theory of imitation by Gabriel Tarde on the other. The key argument of the paper is that the rhythmic appearance of imitative waves of sentiments and ideas within protest movements spatially manifests itself in an overarching atmosphere of protesting crowds. The paper contributes to a better understanding of the links between social movements, emotional crowd dynamics and the emergence of communal atmospheres of protest. It concludes with the argument that such atmospheres and techniques that facilitate them are of major importance for the understanding of the stability and sustainability of protest movements.

Cet article propose un cadre conceptuel pour comprendre l’action politique partagée collectivement dans l’espace public. À l’aide d’une approche phénoménologique, il explore les espaces des mouvements de protestation, en utilisant la perspective d’Elias Canetti sur les foules qu’il lie à la spatialité des manifestants, matérialisée sur le plan affectif et envisagée conceptuellement comme une atmosphère. Cet objectif est étayé, d’une part, par la différenciation entre les ambiances et les situations, telle qu’elle apparaît dans la néo-

phénoménologie d'Hermann Schmitz, et, d'autre part, par la théorie sociale de l'imitation de Gabriel Tarde. L'argument clef de cet article est que l'apparence rythmique des vagues de sentiments et d'idées par imitation, qui apparaissent dans ces mouvements de protestation, se manifeste spatialement au sein même de l'atmosphère globale de la manifestation. Cet article contribue à mieux faire comprendre les liens entre les mouvements sociaux, les dynamiques sensorielles des foules, et l'émergence d'ambiances communautaires de protestation. Enfin, il conclut sur l'idée que les ambiances et techniques qui facilitent ces liens ont une importance majeure pour la compréhension de la stabilité et de la durabilité des mouvements de protestation.

INDEX

Keywords: crowds, protest, phenomenology, atmospheres, Elias Canetti, social movements, Hermann Schmitz, imitation, Gabriel Tarde, love

Mots-clés: foules, protestation, phénoménologie, atmosphères, Elias Canetti, mouvement social, Hermann Schmitz, imitation, Gabriel Tarde, amour

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