Enacting Candor: Podemos and the Analytical Potential of Ocular Democracy

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► **Abstract:** Most citizens of representative democracies do not take political decisions in their everyday lives. Although participation in periodic elections, political parties, or social movements varies, above all, according to socio-economic status, taking a political decision is, in general, a relatively extraordinary event for the vast majority of citizens. The everyday political experience of these citizens is rather structured by watching and listening to political elites. Unlike the tenor of democratic theory, this quotidian mode of passively following politics is ocular democracy's starting point. So far, the debate on ocular democracy has emphasized its shortcomings as a normative theory. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, this article illustrates the potential of ocular democracy as an analytical tool in the context of intra-party democracy. Podemos' intra-party procedures are analyzed by complementing an institutional perspective with ocular democracy, thus showing how a party leader inclined to appear particularly venturesome undermines ambitious forms of intra-party democracy.

► **Keywords:** audience, citizenship, intra-party democracy, political leadership, plebeianism, plebiscitarianism, spectatorship, visual politics

Ocular democracy is a marginalized meaning of democracy. Its marginalization is, however, paradoxical. Ocular democracy claims to describe accurately the everyday experience of citizens who do not hold office. This experience mainly consists of passively following (seeing and hearing) the actions of political elites.¹ Ocular democracy assumes the observation of elites to be the standard form of "political involvement" of roughly 60 to 70 percent of the population in (Western) representative democracies (Green 2010: 49–50; Abbey 2014: 205). Besides describing how contemporary democracies operate, ocular democracy also is a normative account of the way contemporary democracies should operate (Green 2017: 13–14). As a normative model (Green 2010: 8–15), ocular democracy focuses on the (collective) gaze of those citizens who do not hold office as the *organ*

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necessary for democracy. Citizens direct the gaze at political leaders as its central *object*. The normative model's *critical ideal* is "*candor*", also in a social-psychological sense of leaders' authenticity but primarily in the institutional sense "that leaders not be in control of the conditions of their publicity" (Green 2010: 13, emphasis in original). If, on the descriptive level, ocular democracy approximates convincingly the functioning of contemporary representative democracies, ocular democracy's marginalization seems to depend on its standing as a normative model of democracy.

In *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship* (hereinafter EOP), Jeffrey Green (2010: ch. 3) dedicates a whole chapter to trace the dominance of the standard "vocal model" of democracy from the eighteenth century until today. This conventional vocal model "holds that the *object* of popular power is *law*. . . , that the *organ* of popular power is the *decision* (expressive determinations, like voting and public opinion, that pertain to what a polity should do), and that the *critical ideal* of democracy is therefore *autonomy*" (Green 2010: 8, emphasis in original). According to Green (2010: 102–119), the dominance of the vocal model leads even astute scholars, who otherwise fundamentally challenge the assumptions of this model, to deceive themselves into affirming it. Cases in point are findings about unstable and inarticulate preferences as well as theories of retrospective voting. How can electoral decisions based on unsteady and inconsistent preferences and conceived as "reactive, binary, and infrequent" (Green 2010: 106) judgments about past action purposefully guide representatives to decide on laws? Political science glosses over the contradictions to the vocal model lurking here based on the "assumption that there simply is no alternative to the vocal model" (Green 2010: 119). In addition, Green considers Bernard Manin's (1997: 218–232) "'audience' democracy" to be consonant with the tenor of the vocal model. In Green's view, audience democracy is not an actual departure from the vocal model, because it does not give an elaborate account of spectatorship and relies too heavily on voting, that is, on a primarily vocal instrument, as the audience's means of political involvement (2010: 110–112). Indeed, while "audience" and correspondingly "stage" as metaphors for politics may evoke spectatorship (Manin 1997: 226), Manin explicitly limits their meaning to the reactive character of voters' choices to the "competing images" (1997: 227) proffered by relatively independent politicians skillfully communicating via the media.² So what about ocular democracy, Green's own alternative proposition, and its relation to the vocal model?

Whether ocular democracy is an alternative to the vocal model was debated by several contributors to a symposium on EOP in *Political Theory* (Avramenko and Schwartzberg 2014). However, in assuming that

the alternative is exclusive—vocal *or* ocular model—and in rejecting the ocular model mainly on the normative grounds of the vocal model (Landemore 2014: 196; Schwartzberg 2014: 190), they miss the point of considering ocular democracy in two ways (Brodocz 2017: 87–89). First, the exclusive juxtaposition of the models: vocal and ocular democracy are not only abstract normative models but also descriptive approximations. The institutions and practices of representative democracies may be delineated merely according to the vocal perspective. This, however, risks missing aspects of these institutions and practices that are only discernible from the perspective of ocular democracy. By referring to these as forms of ocular democracy, it is possible to analyze their characteristics as well as their specific normative problems. Moreover, the various ways in which vocal and ocular forms of democracy complement and collide with each other can be examined (Green 2010: 12). Second, the rejection of the ocular model on the normative grounds of the vocal model: from Green’s realist perspective, the relative precedence of the ocular model in certain contexts is primarily an empirical question.³ While considering ocular democracy only on normative grounds and as a supposedly exclusive alternative to the vocal model misses these points, it achieves something else: ocular democracy’s *theoretical* marginalization.

In contrast, my aim is to show that engagement with ocular democracy is fruitful for democratic theory insofar as scholars take into consideration how “vocal and ocular mechanisms intersect” (Green 2010: 12) and that normative criticism of both models as well as their relative priority depends on empirical observations. In the following, I seek to outline a plausible account of one possible approach. I propose to study the interaction of vocal and ocular forms of democracy in the context of intra-party democracy, illustrating my argument by reference to the Spanish party Podemos.

In intra-party democracy, for the rank-and-file, both voting (for or against the party leaders, on certain policy proposals, etc.) as well as watching (the party leaders) are important. Although scholars point to the relative inactivity of the majority of party members (Young 2013: 66–67), many parties provide for various avenues of member participation. Therefore, party members are at least potentially more engaged than the average citizen Green has in mind. This has several advantages for demonstrating ocular democracy’s analytical potential. First, since vocal forms of democracy are often more varied in intra-party decision-making and used more frequently than on the state level that Green refers to, their relation to ocular forms of democracy can be analyzed in a more specific and explicit way. Second, if ocular democracy’s usefulness can be shown in a setting where there is greater potential for passive spectators

to turn into active decision-makers, intra-party democracy becomes a strong case for the theory's productive applicability in diverse contexts that do not conform in every respect to the broad picture Green sketches of contemporary democratic politics.

Podemos⁴ is an extreme and, in this sense, very helpful case to illustrate my approach. The relatively young party founded in 2014 claims to be a substantial gain for democracy in Spain, which in Podemos' self-conception depends on its democratic internal organization. As will become clear, the party offers a diverse array of institutions for vocal member participation and uses these institutions recurrently. Yet, Podemos also exhibited a predominant leader, Pablo Iglesias, whose paramount role makes this case also extreme in what Green's theory assumes to be general features of contemporary democratic politics: media skill and exposure as well as personalization (Casero-Ripollés et al. 2016; Gerbaudo 2019: ch. 8). Again, this renders the analysis of the relation of vocal and ocular forms of democracy more concrete, but it also balances case selection with a view to Podemos' pronounced participatory aspirations. Many scholars even see Iglesias' exposed role as contradictory to Podemos' claim to be internally democratic (della Porta et al. 2017: 98; Gerbaudo 2019: ch. 4, 7, 8; Lisi 2019; Nadal 2021). To interpret this contradiction, several studies suggest a reflexive analysis of the party leaders' theoretical background in radical democratic and left-populist thought (Chazel and Fernández 2020; Kim 2020; Kioupkiolis 2016; Kioupkiolis and Seoane 2019; Nadal 2020; 2021). However, this interpretive frame has its limitations. Although Podemos' leaders are transparent about their intellectual inspirations, as Laura Chazel and Guillermo Fernández (2020) show, sources are more diverse than often acknowledged. Moreover, reflexive analyses depend on scholars' interpretation of works of political theory, which then must be related to or even shown to coincide with the specific reading of Podemos' leaders (Kim 2020). My second aim in this article is therefore to demonstrate that ocular democracy provides a fresh approach, deemphasizing which books leaders may or may not read and take into consideration for political action and attaching greater importance to leaders' actual behavior by theoretically informed descriptions and interpretations of their actions in relation to Podemos' vocal institutions. In this way, ocular democracy provides a helpful analytical perspective on the perceived tension between participatory and leadership orientation in Podemos. Ocular democracy enables political theory to examine how ambitious forms of intra-party democracy and strong leadership may depend on or contradict each other. From the perspective of ocular democracy, there does not seem to be a contradiction in principle here. Rather, by examining the interaction of institutions of member

participation and party leaders' behavior through the lens of vocal and ocular forms of politics, ocular democracy helps to specify the conditions in which forms of interdependence turn into contradiction.

In the next section, I will introduce Green's view on the central conditions of contemporary politics and the conclusions he draws from this for ocular democracy. My focus in this section is on ocular democracy's descriptive perspective. Subsequently, I will outline in what way ocular democracy may be helpful for the analysis of intra-party democracy, while also introducing certain adjustments necessary in the context of political parties. Then, I will illustrate these considerations with an analysis of intra-party democracy in Podemos. To conclude, I will sketch avenues for further research and briefly address the normative weaknesses of ocular democracy the analysis has uncovered.

Candor: Institutional and Psychological

Ocular democracy's starting point is the observation that (passively) watching political leaders is pervasive among citizens without political office in contemporary representative democracies. In metaphorical terms, the observant citizens may be described as an audience that follows the elites' actions on the political stage.⁵ What are the main qualities of the stage and the audience? According to Green (2010: 126), the political stage is marked by "plebiscitarian conditions"⁶; five facets characterize it:

1. Political experience is today mainly mediated by mass media, which intensifies the importance of "appearance and the cultivation of images" (Green 2010: 123). Moreover, mass media provides ways for leaders to interact independently of political parties and more directly with audiences in order to win support.
2. In connection with the previous facet, the "*personalization of politics*" increases (Green 2010: 123, emphasis in original). In spite of spatial and temporal differences, personalization suggests an unmediated relation to political leaders. Growing personalization is also dependent on the changing context of political decisions. Nowadays it has become increasingly challenging to anticipate certain decisions that, in addition, need to be taken swiftly and without complex deliberation.
3. This need to arrive at decisions on unpredictable matters at short notice calls for greater "*discretionary power*" (Green 2010: 124, emphasis in original) for leaders, which is the third facet of the plebiscitarian conditions of today's politics. Further, expanded discretionary power refers to a declining clarity or visibility of main cleavages as another shift of representative democracy. This allows political elites more leeway in setting the agenda.

4. The fourth facet extends this point as a reversal of the relation between leaders' decisions and voter preferences. Turning the standard notion on its head, leaders try to adapt voters' preferences to future decisions as well as to decisions already taken.
5. In consequence, both informal public opinion and the majority's formal will and, *a fortiori*, their potential influence on laws and policies are "rendered superficial and to a large degree fictive" (Green 2010: 125).

However, this is not surprising given the prerequisites of the audience. The average citizen in contemporary democracies is a "*citizen-being-ruled*" who does not take political decisions in everyday life. Neither is she an active, self-ruling republican citizen nor is her role reduced to a legal status or fulfilled by periodical voting. Rather, the average citizen is a "*citizen-spectator*" who is not entirely apolitical but characterized by "meaningful psychological involvement with politics" (Green 2010: 33, emphases in original), that is, "awareness of politics, interest in politics, information, attention to the media, and so forth" (Green 2010: 49, quoting from Verba et al. 1978: 71). This passive form of "involvement without participation" (Green 2010: 50), however, does not lead to clear, stable, and consistent preferences on current issues (Green 2010: 44–47). It is therefore impossible to find guidelines for political action in public opinion or voter choices, because the latter are better regarded as blurred and manufactured snapshots of evolving and inarticulate political views. From the perspective of citizen-spectators, politics is mainly passive watching and listening to politicians in talk shows, interviews, and so on (Green 2010: 40, 213n2).

Why do citizen-spectators follow the actions of political leaders? Due to non-attitudes and inconsistent preferences, control of an electoral mandate must be ruled out. Green's answer is that citizen-spectators seek to observe leaders in situations that the leaders themselves do not control, situations that are, for this reason, risky and uncertain for them. The expectation is that this increases the potential of leaders being "candid." Ocular democracy in its normative and transformative aspirations tries to foster this by "the institutional requirement that leaders not be in control of the conditions of their publicity" (Green 2010: 13). This form of "institutional candor" shall bring about non-manufactured, spontaneous appearances, thus cultivating "psychological candor" and "generating genuine moments of self-disclosure from political leaders" (Green 2010: 137). On the normative level, institutional candor as a clear-cut criterion is the precondition for psychological candor in order to prevent that ocular democracy's critical ideal is undermined by ambiguous impressions of authenticity that are always open to interpretation (Green 2015: 96–97).

However, an empirical view shows that political leaders commonly have far-reaching control of their public appearances (Green 2010: 14). To take Green's realist approach seriously also requires analyzing the various ways in which leaders try to enact authenticity and to ask whether such performances possibly undermine candor as ocular democracy's critical ideal. In the short run, citizens' confusion of institutional and psychological candor may be a common risk in democratic practice. In the long run, erosion of institutional candor as a critical ideal in representative democracies may be the corresponding consequence. Yet, when using ocular democracy as an *analytical* tool, it is for the same set of reasons unsuitable to presuppose a normative hierarchy of institutional over psychological candor. From this perspective, there are two "ocular" mechanisms of leader legitimation. Candor in its institutional sense is an asymmetrical burden of popular observation for political leaders that addresses the asymmetry of their decision-making power. Understood in this way, institutional candor is a compensatory mechanism of leader legitimation. In its psychological sense, candor induces legitimacy by integrity, sincerity, or authenticity, as it conveys a bond of trust between leaders and citizen-spectators despite the plebiscitarian conditions of contemporary politics. Psychological candor is contingent on citizen-spectators' varied and shifting perceptions of political leaders as candid. Therefore, it is a precarious, albeit not necessarily unstable form of leader legitimation. Institutional and psychological candor share the impossibility to remedy the "disproportionate, never fully legitimate power" of political leaders completely (Green 2010: 23), although Green defends a normative precedence of institutional candor for the foregoing reasons. Political leaders may use both of these ocular mechanisms of legitimation in periodic or sporadic public appearances. On these occasions, leaders may or may not control the conditions of their publicity. If they do, the orchestrations of appearances should be analyzed as these may entail claims to legitimacy.

Vocal and Ocular Forms of Intra-Party Democracy

The perspective of the citizen-spectator is innovative and one of the major contributions of EOP. Green aims "to provide an ethical framework for ordinary citizens in their ordinary lives" (2010: 211). "[T]he People" (Green 2010: 209), conceived as a unitary collective of watching citizens, is the central point of reference for ocular democracy.⁷ For the analysis of political parties, however, it does not make sense to assume the "whole" people to be the observing collective. Rather, it is useful to start from different, yet sometimes overlapping audiences. Party leaders may

tailor their public appearances to certain audiences, and appearances in different contexts may be subject to diverging dynamics. To illustrate this point: to reach or maintain powerful positions in parties, leaders have to appeal to intra-party preferences. However, they also have to take into consideration the electorate's preferences in order to win votes in elections. Both sets of preferences may be in conflict with each other. Moreover, compared to Green's average citizens, party members as one specific audience are not necessarily or not always passive spectators. In general terms, for members of political parties, the roles of the spectator and the decider, the "ocular" and "vocal" roles, alternate. In recent years, not only green parties or new contenders but also parties of diverse ideological orientations have tried to strengthen the vocal role of the rank-and-file (Scarrow 2015: 179–184). Members are called not only to participate in selecting the party's leadership but also to discuss and decide on the election manifesto or to vote on specific issues. The vocal legitimization mechanism is that the party's decisions are not limited to the party elite but attributable to all party members. In this sense, these can be considered decisions collectively endorsed by the party. The expansion of direct ways of participation in political parties certainly has an ambivalent relation to the plebiscitarian conditions of today's politics. On the one hand, this could be a counterweight to personalization and discretionary power. On the other hand, the numerous and more direct ways of participating in intra-party democracy fuel plebiscitarian tendencies due to the decline of intra-party intermediate structures such as the institutionalized participation of internal or external but ideologically associated groups (e.g., unions) or the weakening of informal coordination mechanisms (e.g., "invisible primaries") (Manow 2020).

Ocular legitimization mechanisms in political parties may then complement vocal mechanisms by establishing a bond of trust between leaders and the rank-and-file. In Green's view, the additional ocular legitimization mechanism is important for parties, because it "would expand the ethical perspective of the partisan to include a newfound appreciation for the leader-led relationship and, specifically, the democratization of leaders' appearances on the public stage" (2010: 203). This complementary function is, however, limited in scope. Since, for Green (2010: 203–204), parties' primary concern is (electoral) success, party members mainly have an instrumental relation to leaders' public appearances to promote the party's position.

With regard to party members' alternating vocal and ocular roles, it is important to note that these roles usually are not separate. Political elites in democracies and party elites expose themselves to observation in order to be elected or to buttress their position. In this sense, ocular

practices depend to some extent on vocal institutions (Green 2010: 11–13; 2014: 209). Yet, for the citizen-spectator as well as for the rank-and-file member the perspective of the elites' observer clearly prevails. It consequently is implausible to assume that citizen-spectators and the rank-and-file are detached from their ocular role in decisional acts such as voting. Conversely, vocal institutions are thus contingent on ocular practices. Consider as an example a party in search of a new leader. Several competitors emerge and present their candidacy to the rank-and-file, for example, during various local meetings, and to different intra-party groups. To make themselves and their plans known and to present themselves as the right or better leaders, the competitors thus appear on the party's stage – often quite literally, for example, when there is a final event before delegates or all members vote. Members watch and judge these presentations according to what they deem important for the party, but most certainly, the way the different candidates appear on the stage will also play a role. Would-be leaders and members may or may not share ocular democracy's focus on candor. Yet, ocular democracy's assumption with regard to current democratic politics is that candor, while maybe not be the only test, still will be a very important criterion for leader selection, which is also due to members' success-oriented relation to leaders and their appearances.

Studying intra-party democracy from the perspective of ocular democracy therefore entails considering both the vocal and the ocular aspects as well as their interplay. First, the institutionalization of intra-party decision-making is analyzed, which lays bare the “vocal” claims to legitimacy. Then, “ocular” legitimacy claims are identified by examining leaders' public appearances and, where applicable, the staging of these events. In a third step, it is considered in what ways vocal and ocular legitimacy claims depend on each other and in what ways they are compatible or contradictory. While the proposed research strategy is not a fully-fledged approach to the study of intra-party democracy, it adds a novel perspective by including the ocular dimension. As further elaborated in the following, this can be especially useful for analyzing ambivalent cases, such as parties with pronounced participatory claims and strong leadership figures.

The case I will use to illustrate this approach in the following is Podemos. To do so, I rely mostly on research of social movement and party scholars. On the ocular aspects, I will also refer to exploratory analyses of public appearances of Podemos' leaders during party conventions, on TV, or in the Spanish parliament. Appearances in 11 different situations were selected based on Green's (2010: 137) criterion of “eventfulness”, that is, situations in which it could be expected that institutional or

psychological candor plays a substantial role. My assumption is that this is especially the case in more controversial situations in which Podemos' leaders appear before the rank-and-file, settings where Podemos appears to be a new actor, in TV debates preceding elections, or the parliamentary debates on the investiture of the prime minister. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in view that Podemos is a dynamic and evolving political project on multiple territorial levels. This makes it necessary to limit the analysis to institutions that are relevant for the state level and to the period between the first presentation of Podemos in January 2014 and 2018, for which empirical studies are available. Where possible and sources are public, I will point to developments that are more recent. Regarding Podemos' development, my assumption is nonetheless that the ambivalence between vocal institutions and ocular practices is still relevant for the party.⁸

Podemos' Vocal Legitimacy Claims

In its self-description, Podemos strongly emphasizes the importance of member participation. This bottom-up perspective is inscribed in the party's development as well as its ideological position (della Porta et al. 2017: 78, 118). Podemos' founders situate the party in the context of the (ideologically heterogeneous) protests in more than 50 Spanish cities in 2011, some of them lasting several months (Iglesias 2015b: 32–35; Rivero 2015: 101–122). Podemos transformed the central slogan of the protesters against the ruling elite – “They don't represent us!” – into a demand for the renewal of Spain's democracy. Further, despite certain aspirations to be a “transversal” political party (Errejón and Mouffe 2016: 75), especially in the beginning, Podemos is usually regarded as leftist. However, Podemos sought to distinguish itself from the traditional leftist party alliance *Izquierda Unida* (United Left), criticizing it for being overly bureaucratic, rigid, and exclusive (Rivero 2014: 70–71).⁹ The claim to proffer avenues for democratic renewal is thus not only a claim against the conservative and socialist parties' hegemony up to 2014 but also a reformulation of a participatory and activist leftist agenda. Nevertheless, from the outset Podemos' elites also emphasized the necessity of representation, leadership, and the ability to make decisions despite being open for intra-party debate (Errejón and Mouffe 2016: 109, 112–113). Podemos' vocal institutions reflect this tension.

Vocal member participation in Podemos is organized around a factual gap between institutions of deliberation and decision, both offline and online. The smallest organizational units are the so-called *círculos* (circles),

local or thematic discussion groups open not only to party members. Although the exact development of the numbers of circles is unknown, there are clear tendencies. Podemos experienced a sharp increase from more than 400 circles in mid-2014 to up to 950 in 2016 (della Porta et al. 2017: 51, 79). Despite recent efforts to formalize their status, Podemos counted more than 800 active circles in 2020 (COPE 2020). The aim of the circles is to provide a local basis and to connect the party with civil society groups and “the reality of the street, the districts and the villages, and ultimately with the daily life of our neighbors” (Podemos 2017a: 44, author’s translation). In line with Podemos’ openness to non-members, the circles are meant to allow a low threshold form of participation and to foster activism (Chironi and Fittipaldi 2017: 293).¹⁰ Despite Podemos’ (2017a: 44, 62) statutory ambitions that circles shall facilitate articulation and formation of intra-party preferences and relevant policy proposals, research highlights their irrelevance to such aspirations (Lisi 2019: 254; Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016: 571).¹¹ As explanations, Lluís de Nadal (2020: 9–10) identifies the lack of organizational capacity as well as unclear ideological heterogeneity at the grassroots level and the party leadership’s efforts to keep certain radical currents from gaining more influence (see also Rendueles and Sola 2018: 38–39).

Online participation in Podemos demonstrates another possible, yet so far unsuccessful way to bridge the gap between deliberation and decision. Podemos has, as of March 2021, almost 530,000 registered members.¹² Until 2017, it was very easy to register a membership account online, because no official documents were necessary. Despite a more formalized process afterward, it is still possible to do all the registration steps online. Mandatory membership fees were introduced as late as autumn 2020 (three euros per month).¹³ Many of the half million members are inactive, and online participation varies depending on concrete issues, reaching top levels at 150,000 to 190,000 participants on three occasions up to the end of 2018 (Gerbaudo 2021: 734–735).

Online deliberation in Podemos has evolved from *Reddit* to “Consul, a discussion software . . . with threaded discussion and ranking features similar to those available on *Reddit*” (Gerbaudo 2021: 734). On this *Plaza Podemos*, all members can initiate policy proposals or statute changes. A threshold mechanism is implemented to select proposals that shall receive more attention and be considered by the other members, thus possibly leading to a binding decision. Paolo Gerbaudo (2019: 132) explains the procedure: Proposals

need to receive support from 0.2 per cent of the party members to move up to the homepage of the participation portal (participa.podemos.info).

Once there, they are supposed to gain further visibility, and if they receive a 2 per cent support, an email is sent to all members announcing that the proposal is being discussed. After this stage, the proposal has 3 months to obtain the backing of 10 per cent of the members or 20 per cent of territorial circles. If this threshold is achieved, the proposal undergoes a phase of development, involving the proponent and a dedicated working group, lasting for a maximum of one month, after which the citizens' initiative is eventually put to the referendum vote of all the members. If the proposal wins in the referendum, it becomes binding on the party.

However, the relatively low ratio of active members compared to the number of registered but inactive members has so far blighted the prospects of such initiatives. As of 2018, not a single proposal has been successful, let alone has any moved beyond the second threshold (Gerbaudo 2019: 132). Somewhat paradoxically, in 2015 there was a proposal to determine the thresholds according to the number of members who logged on to the participation portal in the past four months and could thus be considered as active (Borge and Santamarina 2016: 113).¹⁴ One may interpret the failure of this initiative as indication that the vast majority of Podemos members does not perceive the level of thresholds for proposals to be a pressing issue, or that online and offline activism face similar problems of unequal time resources between members (Gerbaudo 2019: 90–91). Additionally, lower activity in the proposals section from 2016 on may be explained by disillusion in face of the unattainable threshold (Deseriis and Vittori 2019: 5710). Fundamentally, the proposal's failure shows the problem's circularity, because it can hardly be solved by the rules and means that it wants to alter. According to one of Gerbaudo's interviewees, "who was part of the . . . group that contributed to setting up Podemos decision-making platform, 'The threshold was set too high [. . .] because of the leadership's fear of losing control over the decision-making process'" (2021: 736).

As already mentioned, much higher participation rates were achieved on other occasions such as referenda on specific issues (e.g., possible government pacts) or intra-party elections. Online and offline forms of participation intertwine in intra-party elections because Podemos' secretary-general and executive body, the citizen council, are elected during (offline) party conventions. Nonetheless, all members are entitled to vote as part of Podemos' central decision-making organ, the citizen assembly, and can do so online. Apart from electing the secretary-general and the citizen council, the citizen assembly decides on the party's political and ethical guidelines and its organizational structure. Podemos' leaders have a strong desire to ensure coherence between leading personnel, political

objectives and organizational matters. At the first convention in 2014, members could either express preferences for individual candidates or vote for a closed list. This voting system led to a winner-take-all victory of the former leader's list, that of Pablo Iglesias. After severe criticism, the option to vote for a closed list was abandoned for all votes on candidates in 2016 before the second party convention, leading to a more proportional division of citizen council seats in 2017 (Gerbaudo 2019: 136). Following the withdrawal of internal factions critical of Iglesias, the third party convention (2020) ironically has led again to a citizen council made up only by members of Iglesias' list.¹⁵ The statutes retain the idea of coherence establishing that documents on political, ethical, and organizational matters as well as secretary-general and citizen council should be voted in a related way and in the same process (Podemos 2017a: 19; 2020: 10). The results of the three conventions that Podemos held in 2014, 2017 and 2020 reinforce the impression of the leadership's de facto control over decisions on political and ethical guidelines and organizational structure. Except for one guideline on feminism where an agreement with another proposal was reached (Podemos 2017b), it was always those proposals put forth by Iglesias and his team that were adopted.¹⁶ Regarding member consultations on specific issues, Gerbaudo (2019: 136–140) points up the usually large majorities giving the impression of acclamations of the leaders' position rather than open-ended processes, buttressed by the finding that the leaders' position was defeated in these consultations in no instance (Gerbaudo 2021: 739; Nadal 2020: 13).

Concerning primaries, Podemos faced criticism similar to that for its intra-party elections, because here the previous option to vote for closed lists or individual candidates also tended to produce one-sided results. In the primaries prior to the 2015 general elections, the effects of this voting system were sustained by selecting the candidates for the Podemos list for the lower chamber of the Spanish parliament not according to the 52 constituencies of the electoral system but in a single process on the state level. Rather than mere endorsement by the party leadership, inclusion in the list headed by Iglesias was virtually determinant for gaining a promising candidacy (Lanzone and Rombi 2018: 109–110). Beyond that, the party leadership afterward made use of a disputed internal rule (Podemos 2015: 5–6) to place several publicly or locally known candidates in propitious list positions, thus overruling the results of the primaries (Clemente 2015).¹⁷ This makes comprehensible the “broad feeling among many citizens that Podemos' primaries are really non-competitive” (della Porta et al. 2017: 81).

Podemos' claims to vocal legitimacy, thus, are based on institutions offering extensive opportunities for direct member participation on

different levels and on all types of issues. Online procedures in particular enable these forms of participation and give the impression of ongoing non-intermediated intra-party communication. The process of formalization of party membership and the circles notwithstanding, Podemos also tries to keep thresholds to participation low. However, the seemingly insurmountable gap between institutions of deliberation and decision and the party leadership's effective control over agenda and outcomes clouds Podemos' strong participatory orientation. To answer the question why Podemos' leaders are able to exert control over the party, I will now turn to analyze Podemos' claims to legitimacy based on ocular practices and to the relation of vocal and ocular claims to legitimacy.

Podemos' Ocular Legitimacy Claims

Podemos' manifesto for the Spanish re-elections in June 2016 is a paradigmatic example for the party's ocular legitimacy claims. Since a manifesto is a paper or digital document and not a live event, this may seem counterintuitive due to ocular democracy's focus on public appearances. The 2016 manifesto retains most of the programmatic content of the manifesto for the elections in December 2015 but presents it in a very different way. It is specifically geared toward letting Podemos' leaders appear in public. The manifesto evidently follows the model of an IKEA catalog, introducing the programmatic aspects in numbered text boxes and Podemos' candidates in smaller portrait photos. These elements are arranged around almost full double page photos of various Podemos leaders and candidates, portrayed ostensibly at random in (presumably) their own homes performing everyday tasks, such as doing the laundry and dishes, working, reading, watering plants, or brushing their teeth. Most of the persons in the photos do not appear to know that a photo is being taken of them. Pages designed in this way make up more or less two thirds of the roughly two hundred pages of the manifesto. This part is followed by a section mostly consisting of text-only pages, listing all the programmatic aspects in their numbered order, a report on Spain's economic situation in relation to Podemos' proposals, and a fifty-step plan that summarizes the party's aims (Podemos 2016a).

Two central ocular legitimacy claims can be inferred from the 2016 manifesto. The first ocular legitimacy claim is based on a marked difference from the other parties and a similarity to the common people.¹⁸ The second ocular legitimacy claim concerns the idea of uncontrolled, spontaneous public appearances, however, as will become clear, in a sense implying a significant alteration of Green's normative concept of candor.

In line with Podemos' diffuse and low threshold distinction between members and non-members, it is important to note that both claims are relevant in front of different audiences, such as the members and the general electorate.

The psychological dimension of candor is helpful to make sense of the first claim. The rationale is that to demarcate Podemos' leaders from the leaders of the other parties, in Podemos' terms, a part of the ruling elite or *la casta* who is decried as corrupt, is making them seem to be politicians with integrity. In the same vein, to present Podemos' leaders as similar to the common people, *la gente*, is a plausible way to make them look authentic.¹⁹ Podemos connects difference and similarity as if they are the two sides of a coin: to differ from *la casta* it is necessary to be like *la gente* and vice versa. The 2016 manifesto illustrates similarity by presenting Podemos' party elite as people with regular homes and everyday lives that follow the patterns of common people. In this way, the party elite seems approachable and, thus, different from a supposedly aloof and self-contained political class.²⁰

Podemos' leaders also use visual means to demarcate themselves from the other parties' leaders. An example is the use of personal appearance (in the sense of dress or apparel). The most evident, although not the only case is Pablo Iglesias who does not conform to the formal suit and tie dress code of Spanish politics (for further examples, see Martínez 2018: 84). Apart from the characteristic ponytail hairstyle, Iglesias usually wears jeans, a plain (white) shirt with the sleeves rolled up, "to which is occasionally added a loosely-knotted tie" (Bickerton and Invernizzi 2018: 141; Gerbaudo 2019: 155). This may seem banal, but it must be understood as a compression of symbols referring to Podemos' challenge to the so-called *casta* and in terms of memorability it proved highly effective (Errejón 2014; Iglesias 2015a: 15–18).

The manner of Iglesias' appearances, especially in talk shows and parliament, is another interesting variation of the difference/similarity motif. On many occasions, Iglesias' choice of words is trenchant, sometimes even aggressive. The reason is to express political discourse in a comprehensible and sincere way, thus, similar to the "common (wo)man" talking about politics (Rivero 2014: 68, 92). Examples include Iglesias suggesting in parliament that "there are more potential delinquents in this chamber than out there" (Europa Press 2016: 20:28, author's translation). Iglesias tries to act candidly in such situations by defying the contextual norms dictating what an "appropriate" appearance would be. The counterpart to disregarding contextual norms in certain appearances is invoking them in other situations, where reiterating such norms allows Iglesias to appear candid by marking a difference to other political leaders (on

this mechanism, see Brodocz 2017: 110–111). Iglesias' sometimes offensive rhetoric is thus balanced by his insistence on "good manners" in political debate. In the tense atmosphere of talk shows where many people tend to speak at the same time, Iglesias insisted over and over: "do not interrupt me; I did not interrupt you" (Caravantes 2019: 483n11; Rivero 2015: 181). Thus, he played the role of a prudent politician while the other guests decried that he is an irresponsible populist. In parliament, Iglesias repeatedly invoked the parliamentary ethos of open debate and denounced the representatives of the "old parties" (Podemos 2016b: 0:56, author's translation) to not pay attention to each other's speeches and to read from ready-made replies. In contrast, he claimed to work through the points the previous speaker raised, framing this as a way of paying respect to the Spanish people (Podemos 2016b: 0:48–1:37; Videosdiarios 2016: 0:26–0:46).

The issue of open debate is also an interesting aspect to consider in relation to Podemos' second ocular legitimacy claim. In one of the speeches just referred to, Iglesias reminds the previous speaker, the leader of the socialist party: "You never dared to participate in a head-to-head debate with me [during the electoral campaign, M.K.], Mr. Sánchez" (Podemos 2016b: 0:37–0:41, author's translation). This choice of words is striking, because Iglesias insinuates that it demands courage to enter into a debate with him. Even more overtly, Iglesias stated in a book-long journalistic interview that other politicians fear to lose debates against him. According to Iglesias, this is why other politicians often decline talk show invitations when he is also invited (Rivero 2014: 83, 100, 105). Thus, he regards political debate as a competition, a duel with the inevitable result of leaving the stage as either the winner or the loser. This self-conception as someone who is willing to face up to the risk of losing debates, in Iglesias' view, is central to being Podemos' legitimate leader.²¹

This seemingly chimes with Green's concept of institutional candor, insofar as the sense of uncontrolled public appearance is evoked. As Green points out (2010: 182–183), however, most head-to-head debates during election campaigns do not conform to the standards of institutional candor. This is also true for several debates on Spanish TV before the general elections in 2015 and 2016, because the participants agreed on the topics and their order and the presenters mostly posed the questions (e.g., see El País 2015; PSOE 2016). This rarely allowed for the more confrontational "cross-examination" that, according to Green (2010: 183), would be a better institutionalization of candor. It is therefore not possible to conclude in a straightforward way that the ocular legitimacy claim made by Iglesias corresponds with the concept of institutional candor. Rather, Iglesias *enacts* institutional candor in the sense of risky, spontaneous head-to-head debates with other party leaders. Green's concept of

institutional candor helps to interpret these and other appearances, but its criterion “that leaders not be in control of the conditions of their publicity” (Green 2010: 13) needs to be adapted to such analytical purposes. In this modified sense, enacting institutional candor concerns the way political leaders try to evoke audiences’ perceptions of their public appearances as uncontrolled by themselves.²² Considering the 2016 manifesto again, it becomes clear that it is best understood in this sense of enacted institutional candor. The conditions of the spontaneity shown in the photos and of the opportunity to get a view into the homes and everyday lives of Podemos’ leaders are set by Podemos and not by the viewers. Institutional candor is here necessarily mediated by the party’s deliberate decisions preceding the manifesto’s production and publication.

With this concept of enacted institutional candor, it is possible to make sense of Iglesias’ actions at the first party convention. Concerning the discussions about coherence between party leadership, political and ethical guidelines and organization, Iglesias had announced beforehand that he would withdraw from the party if he is elected as secretary-general but his propositions for guidelines and organization are not adopted. In one of his speeches (Miguel Rahn 2018: 15:13–19:08; Rivero 2015: 160), Iglesias presents this condition as an additional risk for his success that he is eager to take. Paradoxically, he also makes no secret of the fact that his election as secretary-general is virtually guaranteed. This seemingly dramatic orchestration of a practically risk-free appearance serves Iglesias to illustrate his conception of leadership by claiming that he is not indispensable but only a party member and as such has to stand up for his convictions and convince the whole party. In this way, Iglesias argues, the party can be certain that he will not sacrifice his convictions, for example in return for government positions. This way of enacting institutional candor in combination with an appeal to integrity indicates a curious parallel to the causal link Green establishes between institutional and psychological candor: Iglesias puts himself to the test of justifying his position in front of Podemos’ members so that he appears to be a leader of integrity. Aware of the fact that he is able to get applause “just by raising the tone” (Miguel Rahn 2018: 16:22, author’s translation), it is noteworthy that Iglesias – this is the best way to put it – disallows the audience to applaud during this speech. The audience largely “obeys,” despite the use of silent applause throughout and applause at the end of the speech. In terms of the staging of institutional candor, it seems ironic that Iglesias’ request not to ease his appearance by applauding depends on his control of the audience. By a contrastive analogy to the normative model of ocular democracy, one could infer here that the audience also contributes to the enactment of institutional candor by a leader. It does not put the

leader to the test of a public appearance as in the normative model, but it plays the part the leader has intended for it, probably with varying degrees of leeway. Undoubtedly, this conception of the audience's role would require more theoretical groundwork in advance, thus suggesting an interesting starting point for further research on ocular democracy.

In the run-up to the second party convention, history seemed to repeat itself as Iglesias again linked his fate as Podemos' frontrunner to the adoption of his political proposals. He justified this on the grounds that he would not want to dwarf other Podemos leaders and their proposals in the event they are elected or adopted (Xeon Tv MAX 2017: 0:52–8:36). One of Podemos' co-founders branded this behavior as "emotional blackmail" (Europa Press 2017, author's translation).

The Relation of Podemos' Vocal and Ocular Legitimacy Claims

The previous examples already point to the way vocal member participation and watching the party's elites intertwine in Podemos' case, because the rank-and-file vote for secretary-general and political guidelines as well as the party's organizational structure under the conditions set by Iglesias. The tension between the strong bottom-up and participatory orientation and the importance of the party's leadership is already indicated here. This tension also affects Podemos' vocal and ocular legitimacy claims. However, to understand the full implications of the fraught relationship between vocal and ocular legitimacy claims, it is necessary to reconsider Podemos' initial conditions of formation.

Pablo Iglesias had already emerged as a public figure prior to the party's foundation. Since 2010, Iglesias has hosted television programs, initially with rather limited coverage and tailored to alternative audiences. But from 2013 on, he is often invited as a guest on various widely known talk shows (Casero-Ripollés et al. 2016: 383–385). In these talk shows, he is portrayed as a sympathizer of the 2011 protests or as a distinctly left-wing academic acquainted with the internal debates of the left (Rivero 2015: 137, 181). Iglesias insinuates that, in this role, he not only became a public figure but also already a not formally authorized representative (Rehfeld 2006) of discontent with politics in general (Rivero 2014: 98, 75).

Under these circumstances, Iglesias puts himself forward to head the Podemos list for the 2014 European elections at the first public presentation of the project, if at least 50,000 people register their approval on the Podemos website and confirm him as the leader of the candidate list in fully open primaries. At this event, Podemos is presented not as a political party but "as 'a participatory method open to all citizens'" (Rendueles

and Sola 2018: 26). The recordings of this event are very insightful (Podemos 2014; CCOO Orange 2014), yet rarely considered in research on Podemos. Particularly noteworthy is the question time toward the end of the presentation, which resembles an uncontrolled public appearance, as many or even all the questions, mostly from journalists, do not seem to have been coordinated with Iglesias. This appearance, thus, comes close to the conditions of institutional candor in Green's sense. Some of the questions put Iglesias on the spot: Why present Podemos from the beginning with Iglesias as its leader? Why not first discuss policies and then decide about the personnel? How is it possible to ensure equal opportunities considering that being male and publicly known is an advantage for Iglesias, particularly in open primaries? (CCOO Orange 2014: 15:06–16:02, 20:24–20:48, 25:01–25:36) In this situation, Iglesias frankly admits that the relatively leader-oriented approach and his role as a male public figure are in tension with Podemos' strong participatory claim. Yet, he points out, the various procedures to agree on a manifesto and on political leaders all are deficient in some way.²³ The weakness of civil society makes it a primary concern to propose a candidate who has an ability to move and excite as well as to develop an empathetic relation to the common people. Iglesias thinks that he has this ability, although he also concedes that the previous points are not to deny that there are certain contradictions in Podemos' proposal (CCOO Orange 2014: 16:19–18:21, 20:49–24:47, 26:02–27:37). Nevertheless, Iglesias considers it a sign of political skill to endure such contradictions: "Contradictions are inherent to politics. (S)he who does not want to ride out contradictions should not do politics" (CCOO Orange 2014: 27:04–27:09, author's translation). The first presentation is an especially interesting event to consider in order to understand Podemos, because it underlines that the tension between the participatory claim and a strong leadership is present and controversial since the party's foundation (Rendueles and Sola 2018: 37). There was nothing like a marked "'verticalist turn' of Podemos in November 2014" after the first party convention (*contra* Kioupkiolis 2016: 113), nor is the strained relation between participation and leadership a non-intended consequence of the organizational structure that Podemos adopted (Nadal 2021: 2–3, 15–16).

Podemos gained the 50,000 approvals in one day (Rivero 2015: 141), and in April 2014, Iglesias received more than 60 percent of the roughly 33,000 votes in open primaries to head the Podemos list for the European elections (Riveiro 2014). The ballot of the elections in May did not show Podemos' logo but Iglesias' face, which was a matter of recognizability: "The 'People of the Television' – *el pueblo de la televisión*, or the TV nation, so to speak – didn't know about a new political party called Podemos, but they knew about the guy with the pony-tail" (Iglesias 2015a: 17, emphasis

in original). Iglesias' popularity is both a condition for success and a burden for Podemos: Due to his presence, the party becomes visible as a political force. Without him, Podemos' political project possibly would have failed after or even before the European elections in 2014 (della Porta et al. 2017: 98). Against this background, it becomes very clear that Iglesias' popularity is hardly compatible with Podemos' vocal legitimacy claim of meaningful extensive member participation. At the party conventions in 2014 and 2017, it is inconceivable that Iglesias is not elected as secretary-general, and by connecting the vote on his person with the vote on his political proposals, he uses his position to raise the probabilities of the adoption of his proposals. It is telling that the discourse that defends this way of proceeding rhetorically emphasizes the rank-and-file's vote but renders it all the more insignificant.

A different question is how to evaluate this incompatibility. One way is to measure Podemos' internal functioning against the standards the party set for itself and reiterates in its self-description. Another way is to rely on the rank-and-file's judgment of Podemos' intra-party democracy. From the first perspective, it is certainly the case that Podemos' vocal legitimacy claim that the party collectively decides on all substantial issues tends to be undermined by a dominant leader whose prominent position is due to circumstances that lead back to well before the party's foundation. More importantly, Iglesias seizes and reasserts this status in the ocular legitimacy claims based on the enactment of psychological and institutional candor. In this sense, the ocular legitimacy claims cannot be reconciled with the vocal legitimacy claim. This is not to suggest that Podemos' internal functioning is simply undemocratic in a vocal sense, but it enables to understand why Podemos does not meet its own standards. Further, it is not inevitable that the ocular legitimacy claim undermines the vocal one. Rather, this is a contingent effect of the strong participatory claim combined with the lack of realistic alternatives regarding the election of Podemos' secretary-general – or to put it differently: the lack of a potentially alternative leader who could effectively dispute Iglesias' claims.²⁴ The recent development that Podemos could only agree on a new leader after Iglesias' resignation and that it was his own decision when and how to leave the political stage in May 2021 dovetails with these observations (Gil and Riveiro 2021).

From the party members' perspective, it is possible to reach a tentative diverging evaluation of the incompatibility between participatory claim and strong leadership. Based on non-representative interviews, Nadal (2020: 14–15) as well as Daniela Chironi and Raffaella Fittipaldi (2017: 294) suggest that party members acknowledge the incompatibility with the bottom-up claim but regard Iglesias' popularity and influential

position as something that was necessary for Podemos to be successful, although this phase may well have ended after Podemos' first electoral gains in general elections. This remotely echoes Green's (2010: 203–204) observation on party members' instrumental relation to leaders' public appearances, while it also indicates that these Podemos members do not attach a separate normative value to Iglesias' appearances in Green's sense.

Podemos and Beyond? Ocular Democracy as the Analysis of Leaders' Legitimacy Claims

My aim in this article was to show ocular democracy's analytical potential in the face of its theoretical marginalization and to illustrate this potential by means of an extreme example: Podemos' intra-party democracy. Ocular democracy opens an original perspective on practices in contemporary democracies under plebiscitarian conditions that otherwise do not seem meaningful or relevant. From a narrow "vocal" perspective, leaders' public appearances are easily relegated to a sphere of mere rhetoric and performance or, indeed, mere appearance. However, ocular democracy is most helpful not in order to interpret isolated events but to understand the interplay of vocal and ocular dynamics. Based on the case of Podemos, I demonstrated that ocular democracy constructively complements institutional analysis and offers useful categories that help to understand the tense and complicated relation between a pronounced emphasis on bottom-up participation and the importance of an assertive leader. Compared to the extant research and literature on Podemos, an approach based on ocular democracy is an advance as it enables theoretically guided, detailed, and precise descriptions and interpretations of leaders' behavior. In comparative research, it would certainly be interesting to see whether ocular democracy is a helpful perspective to better understand similar European cases, now discussed as movement parties (della Porta et al. 2017; Prentoulis and Thomassen 2020). It would be worthwhile to extend this research beyond the left side of the political spectrum to cases such as *La République En Marche* in France (Priester 2018) or the Austrian People's Party with Sebastian Kurz as its leader in order to find out whether ocular forms of democracy and their relation to vocal forms differ according to ideological orientation.

The illustrative analysis also confirmed scholars' conjectures that ocular democracy's analytical potential outweighs its normative aspirations as a model of democracy. Due to the possibility of effectively enacting candor, it is certainly too optimistic to rely substantially on institutional candor as

a critical ideal for contemporary democracies (Landemore 2014: 192–193; Urbinati 2014: 208). Yet, this does not amount to a general rejection of institutional candor. After all, the analysis of Podemos identified the question time following the first presentation of Podemos as a situation that fulfilled the conditions of institutional candor, which seemingly proved to bring about psychological candor in the way Green expects. It is worth discussing whether such rare events suffice for ocular democracy as a normative model to further promote institutional candor, although it cannot be taken for granted that this mechanism will work reliably in every case (see also endnote 22). In Podemos' case, instances of enacted psychological and institutional candor clearly prevailed. This again highlights ocular democracy's analytical credentials but confirms the fears of scholars that "leaders who have already learned to manage impromptu scrutiny will come to dominate, or aspiring leaders will undertake training to help them project sincerity, thereby undermining the test of candor" (Fitzgerald 2015b: 53–54; Fruhstorfer and Petersen 2017: 79). For these reasons and against the backdrop of the analysis in this article, I think that democratic theory should assume a limited scope of and confidence in institutional candor as a critical ideal for contemporary democracies. Notwithstanding these limitations, democratic theory should use ocular democracy as a fruitful analytical perspective on the way political leaders seek to legitimate and secure their positions and status and on the role of audiences in this.

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► NOTES

1. Despite certain terminological tensions, the primary work by Jeffrey Green (2010) in this context includes both visual *and* auditory as usually

related – audiovisual – modes of political spectatorship under the heading of “ocular” democracy (for a critique, see Abbey 2014: 203–204). Passiveness (though not impotence) is regarded as the common ground of visual and auditory modes of keeping track of politics in contrast to “active processes of voice, participation, and decision making” (Green 2010: 213n2). Tønder (2015) and Green (2015) as well as Fitzgerald (2015a: 309) and Bíba (2017: 82–88) discuss whether watching is necessarily passive in this sense.

2. In terms of contemporary theories of democracy broaching the role of citizens as spectators or as part of an audience, see Fitzgerald (2015a) for an instructive comparison of Manin (1997), Rosanvallon (2008), and Green (2010), to which Keane (2011) could be added. Further, it is noteworthy that, while Green (2010: ch. 5) is clear about what he considers the precursors of ocular democracy, such as Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter, he does not locate his theory with regard to broader shifts of interest toward vision and visibility in a wider range of academic disciplines. So far, this leaves questions unexplored such as to which “scopic regime” (Jay 1988) ocular democracy’s concept of the gaze corresponds.
3. For his understanding of political or “democratic realism” see Green (2016: 20–26).
4. University lecturers and activists founded the party in 2014 in order to run for the European elections. In 2015, Podemos contested in its first general elections and won the third largest number of seats from scratch. Despite electoral success declining in the elections of November 2019, Podemos remains the minor party to a leftist coalition government with the socialists since January 2020. See detailed election results at <http://www.juntaelectoral-central.es/cs/jec/elecciones/generales>.
5. On the merits and pitfalls of this politics-as-theater metaphor, see Fitzgerald (2015b).
6. In recent work, Green (2016: 26–28) employs the term “plebeianism” to describe his larger ideological framework. The “plebiscitarian” aspects worked out in EOP are one aspect of plebeianism and deal with politics in a narrow sense. They focus on the citizen as spectator of political life in institutions, formal political offices, etc., while in *The Shadow of Unfairness. A Plebeian Theory of Liberal Democracy*, Green (2016) aims to complement EOP by a focus on economic issues of “ordinary” citizenship.
7. The literature is highly critical of Green’s use of “the People” (Schwartzberg 2014). Abbey (2014) criticizes that Green’s conception of “the People” is unitary yet incomplete. First, it is implausible to assume that citizens will converge on their judgments of elites’ appearances. Second, those who neither actively participate nor are passively involved, albeit in a minimal way, are excluded. This category of the excluded may amount to “between 20 and 35 percent of the population” (Abbey 2014: 205).
8. Research for this article was completed before Iglesias announced leaving the party and refraining from politics in legislative and executive institutions after missing Podemos’ objectives in the Madrid regional elections in

May 2021. The consequences of Iglesias' departure for Podemos remain to be seen.

9. *Izquierda Unida* is an alliance of several groups, including as its most important member the Spanish communist party. Since 2016, Podemos participates in general elections in coalition with *Izquierda Unida* as “Unidos Podemos” (2016) or “Unidas Podemos” (2019).
10. Research on forms of party membership concludes that Podemos' open organizational model leads to three groups of members differing according to degrees of activity: very active “militants”, “traditional members” mainly participating in internal ballots, and a group of “audience/friends”. For Gomez and Ramiro, this result largely mirrors “the classical categories used to understand members' involvement in more traditional parties” (2019: 535).
11. The impacts of the requirements to pay fees and to actually participate in the circles in order to be admitted to vote for local party offices as well as of the territorial networks of circles established in 2020 on the circles' importance for Podemos in general remain to be seen (Podemos 2020: 30–34, 41–42). These changes cannot yet be interpreted as an empowerment of Podemos' “grassroots organization to the detriment of an unmediated leader-follower relationship” as Nadal argues (2021: 9).
12. See <https://participa.podemos.info/es> (accessed March 18, 2021).
13. Podemos avoids dependence on (commercial) credit financing. Before the introduction of mandatory member fees, the party's funding model was based on state- and crowd-funding, micro-credits, voluntary member contributions and apportionment of the salaries of Podemos' elected representatives (della Porta et al. 2017: 83–84). In Podemos' view (2017: 65; 2020: 51), this supports the vocal legitimacy claim that the registered members decide all relevant issues, because Podemos does not need to consider the interests of the financial sector.
14. Although the party's organs have sometimes referred to a census of active members (e.g., to calculate participation rates in votes), conceived as members who logged on to the participation portal during the previous year (Riveiro 2016), to the best of my knowledge, this census has never been formalized – in contrast to the paid membership introduced in 2020 (Podemos 2020: 42–43).
15. See <https://terceraasamblea.podemos.info/resultados/tercera-asamblea-ciudadana/> (accessed September 3, 2021).
16. See the results of the party conventions in 2014, 2017, and 2020 (in chronological order): https://asambleaciudadana.podemos.info/resultados_completos/; <https://vistalegre2.podemos.info/resultados/documentos/>; <https://terceraasamblea.podemos.info/resultados/> (all accessed September 3, 2021).
17. To be precise, among the top 65 candidates selected (the number of candidates on Iglesias' list proposal), merely three were from other list proposals than the one headed by Iglesias. Considering also the list adjustments undertaken by the party leadership, it is extremely unlikely that any candidate not approved by Iglesias and his team gained one of Podemos' 42 seats in the 2015 general elections. Apart from this, Podemos contested in coalition with

other parties or lists in three regions. This introduced further candidates not selected in Podemos' primaries and amounted to 27 additional seats won in Catalonia, Galicia, and Valencia. For the re-elections in 2016, Podemos did not repeat primaries but made changes to the list due to the coalition with *Izquierda Unida* (see endnote 9).

18. Although I am not concerned with Podemos' populism in this article, arguably, "populist" considerations feed into this legitimacy claim. It would be very interesting, yet beyond the limits of this article, to explore the relation between ocular democracy and populism.
19. On the meaning and usage of both Spanish terms, see the discussion in Errejón and Mouffe (2016: 132–138).
20. Whether this symbolic performance of difference and similarity coincides with an analysis of descriptive representation based on socio-economic characteristics is a different question. Tarditi and Vittori (2021) present mixed results but, on the whole, tend to reject both a qualitative difference between Podemos' leaders and the previously hegemonic socialist party's elite as well as a greater similarity between Podemos and its electorate in comparison to the socialist party.
21. On the gendered implications of this claim, see Caravantes (2019: 474–481). It would be worth discussing whether such feminist criticism of Iglesias' leadership style also concerns ocular democracy. Ocular democracy certainly envisions leaders who are willing to take the risk of not controlling their appearances, which to some amounts to "a form of cruelty" (Fitzgerald 2015a: 309) or even "a theory of popular sadistic voyeurism" (Bíba 2017: 86). It is debatable whether audiences witnessing such appearances apply gender-neutral criteria, thus possibly leading to gender-specific experiences for leaders and consequences well-known from other contexts such as anticipated, implicitly biased self-selection of would-be leaders.
22. This modification entails a shift from Green's (admittedly parsimonious and elegant) institutional criterion to contested perceptions of candor. For scholars informed by theater and performance studies, the modification highlights the problems of an implicit distinction of two kinds of public appearances in EOP: there are appearances that are worth watching for citizens because the criterion of institutional candor is fulfilled; and there are uninteresting appearances manufactured by elites (Bíba 2017: 77, 86). Against this distinction, it is argued that, regardless of the control of the conditions of an appearance, almost all appearances in politics include staging and enactment of certain principles or values. The corollary of this view is that ocular democracy tends to overestimate the effect of the control of the conditions of publicity on leaders' appearances. I would argue that neither are both positions mutually exclusive, nor are the same levels of analysis concerned. It is indeed important to analyze staging and enactment in public appearances, but this open-ended, empirical view does not exhaust appearances that conform to Green's criterion of institutional candor. While it may be interesting to see whether institutional candor functions in the way ocular democracy expects, from a normative point of view, it is simply important that political leaders do not

control the conditions of their appearances and that the chances of experiencing psychological candor generally increase, arguably, even if instances where this is successful may be relatively rare.

23. On a personal note, Iglesias says about deliberative procedures: “I confess . . . that I’m afraid of these procedures. I think that in these procedures, deliberation sometimes turns into the opposite of democracy. And the proof is perhaps in the difficulties of our left to select spokespersons who have a certain capacity to empathize with the people” (CCOO Orange 2014: 17:42–18:00, author’s translation).
24. This observation also holds for Íñigo Errejón, who became Iglesias’ most important competitor before the second party convention. However, Errejón did not run for secretary-general. He and his team only proposed a number of documents on political guidelines, ethics, and organization that achieved roughly 34 percent of the vote (see <https://vistalegre2.podemos.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/155015.results.pdf>; accessed September 3, 2021).

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