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Marlies Glasius, Geoffrey Pleyers

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Debate

The Global Moment of 2011: Democracy, Social Justice and Dignity

Marlies Glasius and Geoffrey Pleyers

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ABSTRACT

In this contribution, we argue that post-2010 activisms, ranging from the Arab revolts to the Occupy movement, the Indignados and anti-austerity protests in Europe, and the pro-democracy protests in Russia and Mexico, exhibit three kinds of commonalities. These are a common infrastructure of networks and meetings that facilitate rapid diffusion; a generational background shaped both by the precarity of paid work and by exposure to and participation in global information streams; and, most fundamentally, a shared articulation of demands and practices. We argue that three interconnected concepts have been at the core of both demands and the identity of these movements: democracy, social justice and dignity. Flowing from these three shared values and practices, post-2010 activisms also share a mistrust of institutional politics and a determination not to become corrupted by power, which run deeper than in previous generations of activists and which pose an ongoing challenge to their involvement with formal politics.

INTRODUCTION

'Egyptian air is healthy for your lungs/Turn Red Square into Tahrir'
(from Pussy Riot's first song, 'Release the Cobblestones', November 2011)

The diffusion of slogans, repertoires of action and meanings from Sidi Bouzid (Tunisia) and Cairo to Athens, Madrid, New York and Moscow has been a major feature of the global wave of movements that started in 2011. Most journalist and academic accounts to date have focused on diffusion within the Arab world on the one hand, and between the Occupy and Indignant movements on the other hand. We will focus in this article on the evolution of networks and meeting places, shared context and, most importantly, the development of a shared articulation of claims across North–South or East–West divides.

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An obvious example of the rapid and unintended diffusion of a symbol is the Guy Fawkes mask, worn by the main character 'V' in the comic book series and film of the same name about a revolutionary bringing down a totalitarian regime, which has been adopted globally by recent social movements. It was first seen at protests against the Scientology church in various British and North American cities in February 2008, organized by the global cyber-activist group Anonymous, and inspired cartoons and short video clips on 'We Are All Khaled Said' and other Egyptian activist sites on Facebook (Herrera, 2011). It has since been worn at demonstrations and Occupy camps in New York, Mexico City and Moscow. ~~Nevertheless, we~~ might question how meaningful this adoption really is: V is an overtly violent activist and a loner, whereas the vast majority of 2011 activists emphasize non-violent collective action.

~~T~~he resonance of such a symbol triggers questions about the commonalities of these movements across contexts as different as Cairo, Madrid, Manhattan and Moscow. If this symbol resonates in different contexts, is it just because the same movies are watched across the globe, or is it because the movements share some elements of their 'diagnostic' framing, as well as some of their subjective and symbolic reference points? This is not to say that they constitute a unified and homogeneous actor across a diversity of local and national contexts, but that to some extent, their claims, actions, ~~subjectivities~~ and values resonate with each other. Understanding these movements requires attention to affective, cultural and expressive dimensions of activism and citizenship (McDonald, 2006; Melucci, 1996). Current movements are 'better understood in terms of cultural pragmatics and personal experience than organization building and collective identity' (McDonald, 2006: 4).

In this contribution, we focus on the central question posed by Biekart and Fowler in their Introduction to this Debate: 'What is the nature of the post-2010 activism and who are its key actors?'. The actor question will be answered not through a list of groups and networks, or even a discussion of organizational forms, but by focusing on who the participants understand themselves to be, in terms of what they want and what they practise. The contribution also tries to give a partial answer to the 'why now?' question posed by Biekart and Fowler, discussing both the prior networks that facilitated diffusion to some extent (although we are ~~emphatically~~ not making a causal claim), and commonalities in the circumstances in which different activists now find themselves. We argue that post-2010 activisms exhibit three kinds of commonalities, which will be explored in the sections that follow.

The first is common 'infrastructural resources' of networks, meetings and exchanges built up over the last decade. This has facilitated a recognition, celebration and imitation of mobilizations in 2011 across superficially very different social, cultural and political contexts. It is this common element, and their highly visible and often sustained presence in public outdoor spaces

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— streets, squares and camps — in 2011 which causes us to refer to 'the moment of 2011' as the point at which these previously more submerged movements gained global visibility.

The second commonality shared by the current generation of activists relates to the impact that processes of globalization have had on them. This impact is not uniform; it affects each region, each country and each locality in a particular way. Yet this impact appears to be increasing, as the globalization of economics (and its crisis), policies, consumption and aspirations deepens. This gives rise to a 'global generation' which is shaped by precarious working conditions on the one hand, and constant exposure to and participation in global information streams on the other hand.

However, the most fundamental and least noticed commonality, and the one to which we will devote most attention in this article, lies in the substance of what moves these movements, in their meanings, demands and attributes. We argue that three interconnected concepts have been at the core of the demands and identity of these movements: *democracy, social justice* and *dignity*. While each has a much longer history, in combination the three concepts resonate within the ~~upheaval~~ across the world and may constitute an emancipatory horizon. We further argue that this set of values, shared by some of the participants in street protests on both sides of the Mediterranean and from Mexico to Moscow, transcends older understandings of Western social movements as 'post-materialist' (i.e. concerned with values like freedom, self-expression and quality of life) and non-Western ones as solely materialist (i.e. concerned with economic and physical security).[1]

These commonalities must not lead us to underestimate the specificities of each movement, each country and each city, and indeed the diversity within movements. The national context, we will argue, is actually more important than a decade ago as more demands are made on local and national authorities. Moreover, within their own context, each of these movements — be it the Egyptian revolution, Spanish Indignados or Occupy Wall Street — is broad and heterogeneous, bringing together a wide range of activists, both in terms of generations and of activist cultures. Our claim is emphatically not, for instance, that all street protestors in Cairo were inserted in prior global networks, or articulated the three values of democracy, social justice and dignity as both demands and practices~~, as we will elaborate below~~. Rather (as detailed for the case of Cairo by Abdelrahman in this Debate section), we find that important strands of activism in Cairo, as elsewhere, do fit this description, whilst other strands that have played an important role in post-revolutionary Egypt refer to different concepts of social change and different sets of meanings.

Our observations are primarily based on forty interviews with activists mobilized in protest camps across Europe (especially Paris and Belgium,

1. See Abramson and Inglehart (1995) for more on this distinction.

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with additional interviews in Barcelona, Poland, Finland and Germany[2]) and in New York; further e-mail communications with activists at different sites; analysis of Internet-based materials including manifestos and interviews; and an analysis of the spring 2012 mobilizations in Mexico which relies on interviews, newspapers articles, minutes of meetings and an analysis of social networks and activists groups. Secondarily, they are based on our previous work on the alter-globalization movement (Pleyers, 2010), on social forums (Glasius and Timms, 2006; Pleyers, 2004), and on dissident thought in authoritarian regimes (Glasius, 2012). Apart from the verbal materials most commonly used as sources in the social sciences, we also draw on some visual materials such as photographs and video clips to illustrate our arguments.

INFRASTRUCTURE: NETWORKS, MEETINGS AND FORUMS

The story of contacts between Egypt's April 6 Youth Movement and former Serbian Otpor activists (Rosenberg, 2011) is well-rehearsed: after the combined protests of factory workers and educated urban youths in April 2008 ended in repression, a member of the movement went to Belgrade to be 'trained' in non-violent action. It is credible that this training, and ongoing e-mail contact, had some influence on the tactics of the Egyptian uprising, although to draw a straight line from American veteran activist Gene Sharp via Otpor to the Egyptian protests (see Jacobs, 2011) seems rather more fanciful. But the web of connections between the post-2010 activisms extends far beyond this one node and, more importantly, beyond 'anti-dictatorship' activism. In this section we will illustrate some of these nodes and self-conscious cross-references, without suggesting that we are dealing with one single network that connects all post-2010 activism.

According to Kinninmont (2012), 'some members of April 6th have shared experiences with UK Uncut, a British anti-austerity movement'. Between 2002 and 2005, the Anti-Globalization Egyptian Group (AGEG) sought inspiration from the alter-globalization movement, attending World Social Forums and seeking contacts in particular with other South-based alter-globalization actors such as Focus on the Global South and Third World Network (Abdelrahman, 2011: 412–14; Khalil, 2004). As early as 2004, one of AGEG's founders, Wael Khalil, wrote that '[d]espite the stagnation of formal political democratisation, there is much going on beneath the surface, emerging in various forms and networking with global civil society' (Khalil, 2004: 53).

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2. Some of these interviews were conducted as part of a research project on 'Subterranean politics' coordinated by Mary Kaldor, Sabine Selchow and Tamsin Murray-Leach, at the London School of Economics.

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Alter-globalization Social Forums and counter-summits have been particularly efficient tools allowing progressive activists to network across their differences, thanks to a model of 'open space' and a respect for diversity (Glasius and Timms, 2006; Pleyers, 2004). They fostered collaborative dynamism among activists and widened spaces of protest. After 2006, the Social Forum process has been particularly dynamic in the Maghreb-Mashreq region. The 2008 Maghreb Social Forum gathered some 2,300 activists from twenty-eight countries in El Jadida, Morocco, which had a long-term impact in fostering civil society networks (Massiah, 2012; Sidi Hida, 2011). In October and November 2010 alone, six international meetings connected to alter-globalization social forum processes took place in the Maghreb-Mashreq region,[3] fostering networking and exchanges of experience and hope across the region as well as within national borders (Caruso, 2012b), as illustrated by the Tunisian Social Forum dynamic. Of special interest were the massive and very dynamic delegations from the Arab world at the July 2010 European Social Forum in Istanbul and particularly at the February 2011 World Social Forum in Dakar (Caruso, 2012a). The 2013 World Social Forum is being held in Tunis.

While the 2006 alter-globalization counter-summit against the G8 meeting in St Petersburg attracted only a limited number of Russian activists, it turns out to have played a key role in networking and unifying them:

> International activists considered it [the anti-G8 summit] as little successful because of the limited number of participants (about 1500) and the absence of international impact. For Russian activists, it was however a success because it managed to gather, for the first time, progressive activists from very different backgrounds. It was a unifier meeting. And now we see that many of the leaders of the mobilizations against Putin attended the 2006 summit. (Peter, Moscow, Skype interview June 2012.)

The resonance and mutual inspiration taken from struggles beyond the borders has been explicitly referred to by activists. The Indignados we interviewed in Barcelona, Paris and Brussels reported being inspired by the example of what was happening in Tahrir Square, including the symbolic value of 'square' politics. In turn, Occupy Wall Street was inspired by both Tahrir and the Indignados. The Muscovite punk band Pussy Riot was formed after its members 'understood that after the Arab Spring Russia lacks political and sexual liberation, boldness, a feminist whip and a woman president' (Pussy Riot blog, quoted by Mirovalev, 2012). Russian protestors initiated an 'Occupy' camp in Moscow in May 2012 (Belton, 2012). The camp was forcibly dispersed within a week, but protests continue. Mexican students

3. The Environment and Health Forum (Egypt, 8–11 October); Thematic Forum on Environment, Migration and Food Security (Niamey, 15–19 October); Forum for Health, Environment and Land towards a Collective Action (Cairo, 23–25 October); World Education Forum (Palestine, 28–31 October); Human Rights Forum (Mauritania, 5–7 November); African Forum on 'Cultural rights' (Casablanca, 28 November). Several Social Forums were held earlier that year, including the first North African Unions Forum in Algeria (14–15 May).

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who protested against the hold of the mainstream media over the 2012 elections produced a video clip connecting the claims and values of Occupy, the Spanish Indignados, Egyptian activists and the Mexican movement.[4] Recognition has flowed in all directions: amid many waving Egyptian flags, one Tahrir Square protestor in February 2011 was photographed holding a placard 'Egypt Supports Wisconsin Workers'.[5]

CONTEXT: A GLOBAL AND PRECARIOUS GENERATION

We argue that the post-2010 activisms are, in part, the revolt of a 'global generation'. Unlike their parents, the mobilized youths of today belong to a 'precarious generation' (Mabrouki and Lebègue, 2004; Rosenhek and Shalev, 2013), having grown up in a neoliberal environment of income insecurity with diminished state-sponsored safety nets, where neither work nor public services could be taken for granted — a situation that has now worsened because of the global financial crisis. Precarious working conditions along with the use of new ICTs have deeply shaped the repertoire of actions, forms of involvement and concept of the world of these activists (Juris and Pleyers, 2009).

Even before the economic crisis, the situation of many of these young people was already very difficult: 'our generation has experienced in its daily life what it means to live in a neoliberal world. For us, the crisis is nothing new' (Mike, Occupy London Stock Exchange, interview June 2012). Movements of precarious workers such as the EuroMayDay network (Mattoni, 2012), have been active in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Poland in the last ten years. In Morocco, Tunisia and other Arab countries, the *diplômés chômeurs* (unemployed graduates) have held weekly demonstrations for over a decade (Bogaert and Emperador, 2011). The activists network Youth without Future played a major role in starting the Indignados movements in Spain and Portugal.

The economic crisis has different faces and different impacts in different regions of the world. Rising and volatile food prices have affected many citizens in the Arab world (Breisinger et al., 2011; Ianchovichina et al., 2012). The explosion of youth unemployment has left many Spanish, Portuguese and Greek youth with little hope of a quick integration in the formal job market and provided a part of the Indignant contingent. In these three countries, it has also drastically closed the gap between the policies and proposals of

4. See 'YoSoy132, 15M, Occupy, Arab Spring, Anonymous 2012' on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_A6LKR0h08
5. 'One World, One Pain: From Egypt to Wisconsin' — anonymous photograph, Tahrir Square, posted on Commondreams.org on 19 February 2011: see http://www.commondreams.org/further/2011/02/19-0

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mainstream right-wing and left-wing parties, as they all decided to focus on debt and austerity.

The shared experience of a difficult insertion into the job market and a denial of civil and political rights has had a deep impact on the subjectivities of a whole generation, which was particularly salient among young people in the Arab world:

> As individuals, they feel that they have no place in society, that it gives no meaning to their life, nor the promise of a better future. They feel caught in a vice, with no possibility of self-expression in the political arena that is controlled by the oligarchies, nor of self-fulfilment through any economic project in a society where economic entrepreneurship requires capital and 'political' relations that are out of reach. (Khosrokhavar, 2011: 219; translated from French.)

In this sense, 'youth' or 'generation' refers not to an age cohort, but rather to an experience of their entry into 'adulthood' as a stage of achievement being blocked.

Moreover, it is not just a precarious, but also a 'global' generation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2007), whose commonalities are not limited to familiarity with online social media, or the consuming of global brands. This generation is also using the tools of globalization to build a global movement of rebellion: networking, distributing news through social networks, uploading videos on YouTube, participating in chats, sharing common cultural references, following the events and talks of demonstrations and occupations worldwide, sharing their experiences, claims and hopes in squares and protest camps and developing similar protest styles and tactics. This generation disturbs preconceived notions about what is solidarity and what is consumerism, what is North and what is South, with actions such as the orders for free pizza delivery to the workers of Wisconsin, taken on Facebook, coming in not just from a host of Western countries, but also from Egypt, Haiti, Morocco, Turkey and Uganda (Shiner, 2011; *Yes Magazine*, 2012).

The Indignados camps and assemblies mostly gathered people that had no significant previous experience of activism. In Paris and in Brussels, our interviews show that more experienced activists quickly became frustrated with the Indignados camps and assemblies, leaving the experience after a few days. This resulted in strengthened creativity and innovation, but also in some lack of awareness of the experiences of previous movements. 'For the first time, a social movement organized a global demonstration, with actions in dozens of cities across the world' (David, Barcelona, interview January 2012), was the claim of one young activist, as if the alter-globalization movement's 'global days of action', the global demonstration against the war in Iraq or even the First of May had never existed.

While students did not have a key role in the departure of Ben Ali from Tunisia (Mabrouk, 2011), they became major actors in the mobilization in Cairo and particularly in Tahrir Square (Khosrokhavar, 2012:

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35). The Egyptian demonstrations were originally organized by youth groups, although quickly joined by people of all ages and classes, with usually a-political football fans teaching the daintier middle-class activists how to protect themselves from the security forces (Shahin, 2012: 63). The latter tweeted, Facebooked and posted videos on YouTube, but anchored their movement to a real, and highly symbolic, space: Tahrir Square.

These youths were simultaneously part of the precarious generation, and 'the most educated, modern and globalized youth populations the Middle East has encountered' (Austin, 2011: 82). In the Arab world, they have been called the 'middle class poor' (Bayat, 2011) or the 'would-be middle classes' (Khosrokhavar, 2012): those who are middle class in their culture and education but are mostly excluded from the middle class economically. Bayat pointedly insists that 'this phenomenon is not peculiar to the Middle East. We see . . . similar processes these days in Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Britain', and speculates about the longevity of this politically explosive 'class' (Gökmen, 2011).

MEANINGS: SUBJECTIVITIES, DEMANDS AND VALUES

The main outcome of these movements may lie in the deep transformation of the individual's subjectivity, understood as affects, emotions and thoughts, lived and imaginary experience of the subject awakened both by the resistance to power and expected norms and by the will to think and to act for oneself, to develop and express one's own creativity, to construct one's own existence (Touraine, 2002; see also Khosrokhavar, 2012). This transformation appeared to be highly contagious across fences and borders. The fact that Tunisians and then Egyptians lost their fear of repression and experienced freedom not only had an irreversible impact in those countries, but contributed to opening the horizon of the possible in other authoritarian regimes, and fostered the idea that 'it is possible to do something', that citizen mobilization may have an impact. It has found its strongest expression in the courage of non-violent Syrian activists who have kept demonstrating in spite of the repression and subsequent civil war that has already killed tens of thousands of citizens.

The transformation of people's subjectivities, notably by the overcoming of their fear and by the joy of experiencing freedom and expressing their ideas, has represented a major stake for these movements. It has given a particular impetus to poems, jokes, songs and creativity in the demonstrations and the camps around the world, from Tahrir Square to Zuccotti Park. Khaled Mattawa's 2011 poem, 'Now That We Have Tasted Hope' expresses both the importance of this subjective transformation and its irreversibility:

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Now that we have tasted hope,
Now that we have lived on this hard-earned crust,
We would sooner die than seek any other taste to life,
Any other way of being human.[6]

The poem converges with the analysis by Khosrokhavar (2012) who argues that, independently of the setbacks in terms of political regimes, this change in people's subjectivity is the irreversible legacy of the Arab revolutions. It will deeply transform the region over the next years and decades. In a multidimensional view of power, as explored by Pearce in this Debate section, the revolutions have primarily demonstrated a 'co-active' rather than a coercive power.

On this basis, and like earlier social movements and historical moments, the post-2010 activisms have managed to expand the horizons of the possible. Throughout the world and in spite of the great diversity between and within the post-2010 activisms, activists have articulated these new horizons around three fundamental values: democracy, social justice and dignity. Developed in different ways in different contexts, these three values were not only at the core of the movements' claims but also became guiding principles of their activist practices.

Demands, Values and Practices: Democracy

On the surface, the Arab revolutions and Russian protests, which demand democracy, contrast with Western protests pointing to the structural limits of representative democracy. We posit, however, that both demand democratization: they do not conceive of democracy as an actually existing form of government, but as an aspiration that can be approximated and needs to be continually worked at. Like the East European and South American democracy movements of the 1980s before them (Glasius, 2012), the Arab revolutions are not about achieving liberal democracy as in the West. The 'Arab street' has demanded bread, liberty, dignity, justice and — in most countries — the fall of the regime, but democracy as such has not been one of the main slogans. Kneisel (2011: 8) plausibly argues that 'interventions in the name of regime change, like in Iraq and Afghanistan had contributed to a negative connotation of the word democracy in the Arab world'. But the relative absence of democracy as a demand may also point to the demonstrators' awareness of the limitations of representative democracy in the West. The two may even be connected: earlier Western mobilizations have made it clear to many Arabs that the invasion of Iraq took place despite popular

6. Extract from 'Now That We Have Tasted Hope' by Khaled Mattawa. For the full text, see for instance: http://mideastposts.com/middle-east-society/middle-east-art/middle-east-literature/now-that-we-have-tasted-hope-a-poem/

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resistance, hence 'bringing democracy' to the region without democratic legitimation at home (Said, 2005).

Both the Arab states and Russia may be called 'illiberal democracies', where the form of democracy is mimicked but with limited civil rights and no real chance of alternation in power. But in the West, too, protesters have denounced alternation in power as part of the democratic routine; while formally consolidated, democracy had lost much of its substance. The M15 movement in Spain started as a denunciation of a 'democracy without choice'; many citizens felt that the 2011 general elections did not offer a choice between real alternatives, as the two main parties had no significant differences: 'Democracy belongs to the people (demos = people, krátos = government) which means that government is made of every one of us. However, in Spain most of the political class does not even listen to us'.[7] US-based Occupy activists denounce a similar situation, pointing to the absence of alternatives in the bi-partisan political system.

Post-2010 activists around the world, however, consider democratization not only as a demand. It is also a practice. Research on the alter-globalization movement has shown that activist cultures closely connect a concept of social change with two main requisites for activists: the need to become active citizens sufficiently informed about ongoing political and economic debates; and prefigurative activism, the implementation of horizontal democratic values in the internal organization of the movement (Pleyers, 2010). Occupy activists see democracy not just as something to demand from politicians, but also as a task for themselves: 'to be a democratic person you have to inform yourself, form yourself an opinion, tell that opinion to the public and try to change things the way you want them to be. That costs much time and is a quite exhausting task. In a representative democracy you have to take care what the representatives do in your name' (Erik, Occupy Frankfurt, e-mail communication May 2012).

Indignados articulate these global claims into concrete local practices and actions with prefigurative activism, seeking to implement direct democracy in local public spaces. Movement assemblies, camps and neighbourhood meetings become 'spaces of experience', understood as 'places sufficiently autonomous and distanced from capitalist society which permit actors to live according to their own principles, to knit different social relations and to express their subjectivity' (Pleyers, 2010: 37, 40). 'We build spaces where you find freedom of imagination . . . When St Paul [Occupy London camp at St Paul's Cathedral] was there, I was able to avoid money, universities . . . and all the things that people tell me I have to do to have a happy life' (an activist from Occupy London Stock Exchange, interview June 2012). With different degrees of success, activists attempted to 'do democracy in the

7. Manifesto of Democracia Real Ya, available at http://www.democraciarealya.es/manifiesto-comun/manifesto-english/

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square' in Tahrir (Shahin, 2012), Syntagma (Tambakaki, 2011[8]), Plaza del Sol and Plaza de Catalunya (Feixa, 2012) as well as Zuccotti Park (Graeber, 2012) and Occupy camps.

The Occupy camps diffused decision-making techniques which use a participatory and horizontal democracy. Occupy activists have developed techniques of group management as well as a culture of respect for divergent opinions. In the first few weeks of the camps, the daily general assemblies of Occupy London Stock Exchange became efficient enough to disseminate information, discuss and adopt practical decisions during the first part of the meeting, by then attended by over 200 people (see also Occupy Wall Street, 2011), while the second part of the meeting was dedicated to broader political or strategic issues, e.g. how to reach out to other sectors of the population.

Reflection on the movements' own practices and the development of techniques to increase the open, horizontal and democratic features of the assemblies are a major focus for activists: 'I'm now working on a great project, looking at developing alternatives to the traditional methodology of assemblies. We try to move from "general assemblies" to "open spaces", a methodology that allows an optimal management of diversity and that has no limits in terms of the number of participants. I'm really excited about this project!' (activist acting as a 'mediator' at the M15/Indignados assemblies, Barcelona, interview August 2012).

This simultaneous demand for and practice of a deeper, participatory democracy goes well beyond traditional demands for the civil and political rights associated with liberal democracy. It encompasses a rejection of overbearing leadership. The deliberately leaderless character of these movements also translates to the Arab world: 'these movements bring the idea of a society ruled by law as an expression of the people's solidarity rather than the sovereignty of any upright or righteous person or group (a charismatic leader). That is why these movements lack exclusive, unique charismatic leaders' (Khosrokhavar, 2012; 8; see also Shahin, 2012). Abdelrahman relates how, in Egypt, this is contrasted by younger activists to the 'rigid hierarchical structures and the authoritarian style of . . . leadership' of 'political parties, professional syndicates and NGOs' (Abdelrahman, 2011: 412). At the same time, the fluid structure made it harder for the Egyptian government to employ its dual tactics of co-optation and repression of leaders (ibid.: 415).

8. See also the wording of the 'Vote of the People's Assembly of Syntagma Square', Athens, 27 May 2011; available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vote_of_the_People%27s_Assembly_of_Syntagma_Square.svg

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Demands, Values and Practices: Social Justice

One thing that marks out the post-2010 activisms as different from their alter-globalization predecessors is their emphasis on demanding social justice from their national governments. Whereas previous movements tended to target the international financial institutions or global corporations, the more recent protests have accompanied this with an insistence that governments should re-take responsibility over the hold of financial markets and big corporations. They denounce rising inequalities and the collusion between big corporations and policy makers at the national level.

In Israel, the protest was embedded in a generational shift in the life chances of the middle class, shaped by the consequences of Israel's transition to a neoliberal political-economic regime (Rosenhek and Shalev, 2013). When activists from Occupy Wall Street point out the power of the '1%' over the US representatives and policies, they are referring to the national economic elite and their national representatives. They denounce a structural limit of representative democracy as it exists in the US, claiming that 'The two parties are pro big corporations' (Monica, Occupy Wall Street, interview February 2012). In Europe, Indignados and Occupiers claim 'We must break the vicious link between capital and the representatives of democracy, who defend the interests of capital more than those of the voting population' (David, Barcelona, interview January 2012). In Mexico, the citizens' movement #yosoy132 denounces the collusion between the two major and very influential TV groups, the economic elite and one of the presidential candidates.

In this way, their demand for social justice is connected to their demand for democracy. In Tunisia, where the Ben-Ali family controlled the most profitable companies and used its political power to expand their businesses, puncturing the myths of 'economic miracle' and 'gradual democratization' (Cavatorta and Haugbolle, 2012), this was one of the main points of the revolution. In Egypt too, it was not authoritarianism as such, but the perceived unfairness of privatization schemes from which the crony capitalists close to the president reaped all the benefits, that sparked most indignation (Kandil, 2012).

This demand, while perhaps still not very precisely articulated, is different from old demands for greater redistribution or old socialist 'equality'. It turns directly against the nature of capitalism, and has both transnational and ecological elements. At the same time, there is a new consciousness of the global resonance of the demand for justice, beyond the North–South dichotomy. Ahmad Harara, an Egyptian activist who lost the sight in both eyes after being shot with rubber bullets on different occasions in Tahrir Square, answered in response to a journalist's question what had been his most memorable moment in the protests:

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> Actually, there are two days: the 28th of January here in Egypt and the day when the Americans occupied Wall Street. Because here in Egypt we raised the slogan of social justice, and I see that Americans need it and did that too because there has to be social justice. As I told you before, absolute capitalism has to be removed. (Hauslohner, 2011)

Like democracy, social justice is not only a demand; activists also seek to implement it in concrete practices. As 'spaces of experience', protest camps and squares have constituted spaces to experiment with alternative practices. Food was distributed to everyone, whether activists or homeless people; camp libraries relied on free exchange; written and video productions are copyleft, to ensure that they are freely available to all. As a symbol of the will to 'go off the grid', Occupy London's 'Tent City University' was powered solely via solar panels. At Zuccotti Park, activists hooked up an exercise bike so that cycling on it powered up the camp's generator.

More significant are the connections between protest movements and solidarity economy projects (Hart et al., 2010). These include new projects which bubbled up from camps or general assemblies, as well as existing projects that got a boost when the movements decided to prioritize neighbourhood levels and daily life over city-wide general assemblies (Sánchez, 2012). Interviews and focus groups in Belgium and in France asserted a strong connection between activists of the Indignados camps and assemblies and the rising sector of the transition movement, local food networks and 'voluntary simplicity'. Patterns of alternative currencies or 'time banking' (Hess, 2009; also Castells 2012) and networks of non-monetary reciprocal service have multiplied and developed in Spain and Greece, as well as in some US cities. Activists in Barcelona have been particularly dynamic and innovative in developing local solidarity economic projects, moving from criticism to the construction of alternatives. After eighteen months in existence, the Cooperativa Integral Catalana numbered over 1,000 members and its model had spread to various other cities.[9] These alternative projects and practices aim at overcoming some effects of the economic crisis on the population, addressing requirements outside of the market sphere, and enhancing the political dimension of solidarity economy projects (Hart et al., 2010).

Most of these actions and projects combine dimensions of resistance to the crisis and prefigurative activism. In the USA and Spain, activists organize to resist evictions and occupy empty buildings for social housing or cultural activities. The food sector is of particular significance, whether for its symbolic dimension and political significance (Pleyers, 2011) or because the crisis has made it a major issue for part of the population. The Greek 'potato movement', for instance, was started in 2011 to directly connect consumers and local food producers, succeeding both in lowering food prices and supporting local farmers (Lowen, 2012).

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9. See the website of Cooperativa Integral Catalana: https://cooperativa.ecoxarxes.cat/.

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Demands, Values and Practices: Dignity

Dignity (*karamah*) has been placed explicitly at the heart of the post-2010 activisms in the Arab world (Béchir Ayari, 2011; Khosrokhavar, 2012). Dignity has not been part of the vocabulary of traditional movements of the West, either old or new, but it was already an important element in the movements of the excluded in the alter-globalization movement, particularly Dalit movements in India and indigenous movements in Latin America. Dignity, understood as the assertion of shared humanity, was at the heart of the Zapatista movement. It is, in the first place, a demand: 'What we are demanding and what we, the indigenous peoples, need is not a big or small place, but a place with dignity within our nation; to be taken into account and treated with respect' (Comandante David, quoted by Ceceña, 2001: 162). But it is also an attribute, and the assertion of dignity is connected both to democracy-as-participation and to social justice: the primary reason the Zapatistas revolted was to oppose the negation of their dignity, of their specificity as indigenous communities and of their capacity to control their own destinies. The Zapatistas asserted their dignity by demanding control over their lives and over decisions which affected them and which were made by governments and transnational corporations (see EZLN, 1994: 51–4).

Dignity as attribute also relates in turn to practices within the movements. Respect for each person's individuality and specificity appears to be central to post-2010 activisms, and helps to bridge differences between different elements. The respect for difference across a wide range of opinions that characterizes the Indignados assemblies has seldom been observed in previous movements. The assertion of one's dignity by the movement was as central as the experience of dignity within the movement meetings, which represented a transformative experience for many Arab citizens. For Wameedh, a thirty-one-year-old mother and Yemeni protester, 'Coming into the square was like going to a paradise of respect and compassion' (quoted in Hendawi, 2011; see also Pinto, 2012).

Dignity as an attribute, or resource to draw on, may also be the message behind the somewhat mysterious Athenian graffiti: 'Let's organize the implacability of human dignity' (Occupied London, 2012). Dignity and its counterpart, indignation, are central to the subjective experience of both deprivation and lack of respect. Arguably, the ongoing assault on his dignity best sums up the reasons for Mohamed Bouazizi to set himself on fire. However, while the 2011 protests are routinely associated with the aspirations and mobilization of the young, the need for dignity is also explicitly connected to the needs of the elderly. In Athens in April 2012, former pharmacist Dimitris Christoulas shot himself in Syntagma Square, leaving a note saying 'I see no other option for a dignified end before having to scavenge through the garbage for my food', and sparking further demonstrations (Apostolou, 2012). One of the Occupy statements echoes this; its self-proclaimed 'May Manifesto', demands 'Retirement/pension so we may have dignity at all

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ages' (Occupy Global, 2012). This self-proclaimed 'Occupy Global May Manifesto' also echoes the Zapatistas in connecting the failure to give citizens dignity to neoliberal ideology: 'We are living in a world controlled by forces incapable of giving freedom and dignity to the world's population' (ibid.). Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that the call for dignity has not been ubiquitous. An Occupy London member reports that she has not been aware of the term being used, 'Not really, not in relation to Occupy' (Melanie, Occupy Law Group, e-mail communication May 2012), although she does believe it to be an important concept that 'means living up to our potential as human beings'.

Like social justice and democracy, dignity can be formulated as something personal and something universal, and yet also as a demand from one's own state, as formulated by two activists in very different contexts:

> Since day one, since the very first post calling for protests in Bahrain, people spoke about dignity, because people in Bahrain felt that the regime had deprived them of their dignity . . . People broke the barrier of fear and risked everything because they were angered by the undignified way the regime dealt with them in their everyday lives . . . Dignity means respect of the human being, their rights, their existence. It is the opposite of being subjects. (Maryam, Bahrain, e-mail communication May 2012).

> To question what 'Dignity' means, how important it should be in a society and how we can take that concept and put it into laws and rules, is one major point we discuss. . . . We are all social beings and so everyone needs a kind of 'decision guidance' to know what is good and what is bad. It could be based on moral aspects or economic ones or something different from that . . . And therefore I like the first article in the German basic law (the constitution): Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority. (Erik, Occupy Frankfurt, e-mail communication May 2012)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

According to Droz-Vincent (2011: 5), the different actors in the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings 'have been moved by an essential call for dignity that might have different meanings for different actors, from economic dignity (the direct economic causes of the revolts) to moral political dignity (a desperate plea from the middle classes for some "voice" in their destiny)'. However, we find, with Kinninmont (2012: 5), that this is a false dichotomy, and that protestors clearly expressed their sense of the connection between these values with slogans like 'Bread, Freedom and Dignity'.

After 1968, the concept of the 'new social movement' (Touraine, 1978) was employed to distinguish actors mobilized on more cultural claims from the 'old' workers' movement. Inglehart's seminal work connected these 'new social movements' to post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1977). We argue that, regardless of the value of the distinction at the time, it is no longer relevant when applied to the post-2010 activisms: they belong to a new generation of movements that combine and connect socio-economic and cultural claims, materialist and post-materialist demands. Each of the three

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core values (democracy, social justice and dignity) has to be understood both in its material and personal and cultural dimensions.

These movements fundamentally question the opposition between materialist and post-materialist claims, as social and cultural demands, recognition and redistribution. As Honneth (2003) states, materialist demands are often strongly associated with claims for recognition, especially when the social esteem of a person or a group is so clearly linked with the right to necessary goods and services. The encounter between the theme of social justice and the defence of cultural differences was already at the core of the alter-globalization movement (Della Porta et al., 2006: 244). However, while alter-globalization activists were seeking both redistribution and recognition, material and post-material claims are deeply intertwined in the definition and implementation of the three core values of post-2010 activists.

The post-2010 activisms do stand in the tradition of 'new social movements' in that they prioritize the articulation of long-term utopian visions over the attainment of immediate, concrete and limited goals. In this contribution, we have followed their lead, discussing, comparing and co-articulating the aspirations of the movements rather than focusing on an analysis of strategic success. However, the issue of achievements ought not to be entirely avoided. In the West, there have not been concrete material victories, but arguably the protests have helped to foster a paradigm shift in thinking. An alternative meaning was given to the crisis. The recent mobilizations have not necessarily been larger or stronger than those of the last decade; what is different is their reception. Part of the distinctiveness of these movements may lie in the amount of attention they are receiving from journalists and academics, and the degree of resonance they have with non-mobilized populations and mainstream media. At its inception, Occupy Wall Street was supported by 30 per cent of Americans and 58 per cent of New Yorkers; even six months later it still garnered a respectable 16 per cent and 48 per cent support from the two groups, respectively (Enten, 2012). The *Financial Times*, the most authoritative daily newspaper specializing in economic news, published a column entitled: 'Inequality can no longer be held at bay by the usual ideas' ~~in November 2011~~ (*Financial Times*, 2011; see also *The Economist*, 2011).

In the Arab world, long-standing dictators were unexpectedly toppled and — regardless of the prospects for democracy in the region — that clock cannot be turned back. But the leaders of the revolution did not become the new leaders of the country. Indeed, the ideas of formal leadership and of engagement with formal politics have been widely rejected. Both in post-authoritarian and in formally democratic contexts, one of the key strengths of the movements is also its weakness. Rooted in the ethos of the alter-globalization movement, these movements share a strong preoccupation with internal democracy. Most of them have refused to put forward or accept leaders, or to engage with politics as usual (see Abdelrahman, this issue, for the Egyptian case). Hence in most contexts, any connection or

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collaboration with formal politics has, for better or worse, failed to materialize. The post-2010 activisms are thus confronted with one of the limits inherent in loosely structured movements (Mathieu, 2011: 40): they can certainly initiate and orchestrate citizens' mobilizations as a substitute for established organizations of civil society, but they are unable to close the struggle because they are not used to negotiating and signing agreements emerging from conflict, and will not claim to represent a political body.

Another limitation of this form of activism lies in over-investment in the internal dynamic of the movement. Much energy has been focused on the movements' own organization, to the demobilization of some activists. For instance, committees and sub-committees have multiplied in many Indignados camps. The work and meetings of the twenty-one committees and sixty-two sub-committees took most of the activists' energy at Plaza Catalunya camp in Barcelona. Furthermore, horizontal networks and autonomous spaces ought not to be idealized; lack of formal hierarchy should not be confused with a total absence of hierarchy. In the vacuum of explicit rules about decision making and formalized power, prominent individuals may acquire considerable influence (cf. Pleyers, 2010: 97–8).

Yet we are not proclaiming that the 'global moment of 2011' is over. It remains to be seen whether its movements will simply disappear, or whether more institutionalized — and, inevitably, tamed (Kaldor, 2003: 86) — political actors, will emerge from them. Other analyses of the Arab revolutions, in particular, have speculated whether they should be seen as '1848', as '1968' or as '1989', depending on the chances of success in overthrowing or reforming undemocratic regimes (Dreano, 2012; Katz, 2011; Kneisel, 2011; Roth, 2012). We propose that the moment of 2011 is best compared to that of 1968, constituting a harbinger of deep societal changes rather than having an immediate impact in formal governmental arenas. The mobilizations of 1968 were driven by very different local concerns, on the one hand, but on the other hand they had certain elements in common which marked the beginning of deep social changes over the subsequent decades. In the political arena, the post-2010 activisms may give rise to 'a more diverse set of movements aside and partly against the dominant institutions (parties, parliaments or governments)' (Roth, 2012:69).

More importantly, if the 1968 analogy holds, we should not think of the recent movements as one-off ephemeral events, but rather as the onset of deeper changes in societal attitudes over the next decade. These activisms may have a long-lasting and substantial impact on the concepts of everyday politics and citizenship of its participants. They may carry with them — far beyond the street protests — the ideals of a deeper and more participatory democracy, a claim for social justice, a sense that different economic relations can be implemented at the local level, and a strong assertion of dignity. However, to go beyond these changes at the personal and local level, post-2010 activisms may struggle to find a way to combine their loyalty to the core values of their movements with a willingness to become involved

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in the arena of institutional politics. After 1968, and even more after 1989, activists that had previously focused on grassroots and cultural activism nevertheless seized the opportunity of the moment to jump into institutional politics, perhaps sacrificing some of their purity but at the same time having a lasting impact on formal politics.

Mistrust towards institutional politics and the determination not to become corrupted by power seem to be much stronger among the post-2010 activists. Faced with the trade-off between maintaining the purity of grassroots movements rooted in inter-personal relations with strong countercultural dimensions, and seizing the opportunity of the moment to jump into important formal political battles, activists of the Arab revolts, Occupy and the Indignados have, so far, overwhelmingly preferred the former option. It remains an open question whether the legacy of the 'moment of 2011' will be primarily a lifestyle impact on a culturally influential minority, or whether it will also fundamentally affect the conduct of formal politics.

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Marlies Glasius is a Professor in International Relations at the Department of Politics, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands (e-mail: M.E.Glasius@uva.nl). She also holds the IKV Special Chair in Citizen Involvement in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations, Free University, Amsterdam. She is a founding editor of the *Global Civil Society* yearbook series, and the author of *The International Criminal Court: A Global Civil Society Achievement* (2006) as well as various articles about social forums.

Geoffrey Pleyers is the author of *Alter-Globalization: Becoming Actors in the Global Age* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010). He is a FNRS tenured researcher at the Université Catholique de Louvain and a Visiting Senior Fellow at the Civil Society and Human Security Research Unit, London School of Economics and Political Science. He can be contacted at: Geoffrey.Pleyers@uclouvain.be

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