

## OPENING:

### NETWORKING MINDS, CREATING MEANING, CONTESTING POWER

No one expected it. In a world darkened by economic distress, political cynicism, cultural emptiness and personal hopelessness, it just happened. Suddenly dictatorships could be overthrown with the bare hands of the people, even if their hands had been bloodied by the sacrifice of the fallen. Financial magicians went from being the objects of public envy to the targets of universal contempt. Politicians became exposed as corrupt and as liars. Governments were denounced. Media were suspected. Trust vanished. And trust is what glues together society, the market, the institutions. Without trust, nothing works. Without trust, the social contract dissolves and people disappear as they transform into defensive individuals fighting for survival. Yet, at the fringe of a world that had come to the brink of its capacity for humans to live together and to share life with nature, individuals did come together again to find new forms of being us, the people. There were first a few, who were joined by hundreds, then networked by thousands, then supported by

millions with their voices and their internal quest for hope, as muddled as it was, that cut across ideology and hype, to connect with the real concerns of real people in the real human experience that had been reclaimed. It began on the Internet social networks, as these are spaces of autonomy, largely beyond the control of governments and corporations that had monopolized the channels of communication as the foundation of their power, throughout history. By sharing sorrow and hope in the free public space of the Internet, by connecting to each other, and by envisioning projects from multiple sources of being, individuals formed networks, regardless of their personal views or organizational attachments. They came together. And their togetherness helped them to overcome fear, this paralyzing emotion on which the powers that be rely in order to prosper and reproduce, by intimidation or discouragement, and when necessary by sheer violence, be it naked or institutionally enforced. From the safety of cyberspace, people from all ages and conditions moved towards occupying urban space, on a blind date with each other and with the destiny they wanted to forge, as they claimed their right to make history – their history – in a display of the self-awareness that has always characterized major social movements.<sup>1</sup>

The movements spread by contagion in a world networked by the wireless Internet and marked by fast, viral diffusion of images and ideas. They started in the South and in the North, in Tunisia and in Iceland, and from there the spark lit fire in a diverse social landscape devastated by greed and manipulation in all quarters of the blue planet. It was not just poverty, or the economic crisis, or the lack of democracy that caused the multifaceted rebellion. Of course, all these poignant manifestations of an unjust society and of an undemocratic polity were present in the protests. But it was primarily the humiliation provoked by the cynicism

and arrogance of those in power, be it financial, political or cultural, that brought together those who turned fear into outrage, and outrage into hope for a better humanity. A humanity that had to be reconstructed from scratch, escaping the multiple ideological and institutional traps that had led to dead ends again and again, forging a new path by treading it. It was the search for dignity amid the suffering of humiliation – recurrent themes in most of the movements.

Networked social movements first spread in the Arab world and were confronted with murderous violence by Arab dictatorships. They experienced diverse fates, from victory to concessions to repeated massacres to civil wars. Other movements arose against the mishandled management of the economic crisis in Europe and in the United States by governments who sided with the financial elites responsible for the crisis at the expense of their citizens: in Spain, in Greece, in Portugal, in Italy (where women's mobilizations contributed to finishing off the buffoon-esque *commedia dell'arte* of Berlusconi), in Britain (where occupations of squares and the defense of the public sector by trade unions and students joined hands) and with less intensity but similar symbolism in most other European countries. In Israel, a spontaneous movement with multiple demands became the largest grassroots mobilization in Israeli history, obtaining the satisfaction of many of its requests. In the United States, the Occupy Wall Street movement, as spontaneous as all the others, and as networked in cyberspace and urban space as the others, became the event of the year, and affected most of the country, so much so that *Time* magazine named "The Protester" the person of the year. And the motto of the 99 percent, whose well-being had been sacrificed to the interests of the 1 percent, who control 23 percent of the country's wealth, became a mainstream topic in American political life. On October 15, 2011, a global network of occupying

movements under the banner of "United for Global Change" mobilized hundreds of thousands in 951 cities in 82 countries around the world, claiming social justice and true democracy. In all cases the movements ignored political parties, distrusted the media, did not recognize any leadership and rejected all formal organization, relying on the Internet and local assemblies for collective debate and decision-making.

This book attempts to shed light on these movements: on their formation, their dynamics, their values and their prospects for social transformation. This is an inquiry into the social movements of the network society, the movements that will ultimately make societies in the twenty-first century by engaging in conflictive practices rooted in the fundamental contradictions of our world. The analysis presented here is based on observation of the movements, but it will not try to describe them, nor will it be able to provide definitive proof for the arguments conveyed in this text. There is already available a wealth of information, articles, books, media reports, and blog archives that can be easily consulted by browsing the Internet. And it is too early to construct a systematic, scholarly interpretation of the movements. Thus, my purpose is more limited: to suggest some hypotheses, grounded on observation, on the nature and perspectives of networked social movements, with the hope of identifying the new paths of social change in our time, and to stimulate a debate on the practical (and ultimately political) implications of these hypotheses.

This analysis is based on a grounded theory of power that I presented in my book *Communication Power* (2009), a theory that provides the background for the understanding of the movements studied here.

I start from the premise that power relationships are constitutive of society because those who have power construct the institutions of society according to their values and inter-

ests. Power is exercised by means of coercion (the monopoly of violence, legitimate or not, by the control of the state) and/or by the construction of meaning in people's minds, through mechanisms of symbolic manipulation. Power relations are embedded in the institutions of society, and particularly in the state. However, since societies are contradictory and conflictive, wherever there is power there is also counterpower, which I understand to be the capacity of social actors to challenge the power embedded in the institutions of society for the purpose of claiming representation for their own values and interests. All institutional systems reflect power relations, as well as the limits to these power relations as negotiated by an endless historical process of conflict and bargaining. The actual configuration of the state and other institutions that regulate people's lives depends on this constant interaction between power and counterpower.

Coercion and intimidation, based on the state's monopoly of the capacity to exercise violence, are essential mechanisms for imposing the will of those in control of the institutions of society. However, the construction of meaning in people's minds is a more decisive and more stable source of power. The way people think determines the fate of the institutions, norms and values on which societies are organized. Few institutional systems can last long if they are based just on coercion. Torturing bodies is less effective than shaping minds. If a majority of people think in ways that are contradictory to the values and norms institutionalized in the laws and regulations enforced by the state, the system will change, although not necessarily to fulfill the hopes of the agents of social change. This is why the fundamental power struggle is the battle for the construction of meaning in the minds of the people.

Humans create meaning by interacting with their natural and social environment, by networking their neural networks

with the networks of nature and with social networks. This networking is operated by the act of communication. Communication is the process of sharing meaning through the exchange of information. For society at large, the key source of the social production of meaning is the process of socialized communication. Socialized communication exists in the public realm beyond interpersonal communication. The ongoing transformation of communication technology in the digital age extends the reach of communication media to all domains of social life in a network that is at the same time global and local, generic and customized in an ever-changing pattern. The process of constructing meaning is characterized by a great deal of diversity. There is, however, one feature common to all processes of symbolic construction: they are largely dependent on the messages and frames created, formatted and diffused in multimedia communication networks. Although each individual human mind constructs its own meaning by interpreting the communicated materials on its own terms, this mental processing is conditioned by the communication environment. Thus, the transformation of the communication environment directly affects the forms of meaning construction, and therefore the production of power relationships. In recent years, the fundamental change in the realm of communication has been the rise of what I have called mass self-communication – the use of the Internet and wireless networks as platforms of digital communication. It is mass communication because it processes messages from many to many, with the potential of reaching a multiplicity of receivers, and of connecting to endless networks that transmit digitized information around the neighborhood or around the world. It is self-communication because the production of the message is autonomously decided by the sender, the designation of the receiver is self-directed and the retrieval of messages from

the networks of communication is self-selected. Mass self-communication is based on horizontal networks of interactive communication that, by and large, are difficult to control by governments or corporations. Furthermore, digital communication is multimodal and allows constant reference to a global hypertext of information whose components can be remixed by the communicative actor according to specific projects of communication. Mass self-communication provides the technological platform for the construction of the autonomy of the social actor, be it individual or collective, vis-à-vis the institutions of society. This is why governments are afraid of the Internet, and this is why corporations have a love-hate relationship with it and are trying to extract profits while limiting its potential for freedom (for instance, by controlling file sharing or open source networks).

In our society, which I have conceptualized as a network society, power is multidimensional and is organized around networks programmed in each domain of human activity according to the interests and values of empowered actors.<sup>2</sup> Networks of power exercise their power by influencing the human mind predominantly (but not solely) through multimedia networks of mass communication. Thus, communication networks are decisive sources of power-making.

Networks of power in various domains of human activity are networked among themselves. Global financial networks and global multimedia networks are intimately linked, and this particular meta-network holds extraordinary power. But not all power, because this meta-network of finance and media is itself dependent on other major networks, such as the political network, the cultural production network (which encompasses all kinds of cultural artefacts, not just communication products), the military/security network, the global criminal network and the decisive global network of production and application of science, technology

and knowledge management. These networks do not merge. Instead, they engage in strategies of partnership and competition by forming ad hoc networks around specific projects. But they all share a common interest: to control the capacity of defining the rules and norms of society through a political system that primarily responds to their interests and values. This is why the network of power constructed around the state and the political system does play a fundamental role in the overall networking of power. This is, first, because the stable operation of the system, and the reproduction of power relationships in every network, ultimately depend on the coordinating and regulatory functions of the state, as was witnessed in the collapse of financial markets in 2008 when governments were called to the rescue around the world. Furthermore, it is via the state that different forms of exercising power in distinct social spheres relate to the monopoly of violence as the capacity to enforce power in the last resort. So, while communication networks process the construction of meaning on which power relies, the state constitutes the default network for the proper functioning of all other power networks.

And so, how do power networks connect with one another while preserving their sphere of action? I propose that they do so through a fundamental mechanism of power-making in the network society: switching power. (This is the capacity to connect two or more different networks in the process of making power for each one of them in their respective fields.

Thus, who holds power in the network society? The pro-  
grammers with the capacity to program each one of the main  
networks on which people's lives depend (government, par-  
liament, the military and security establishment, finance,  
media, science and technology institutions, etc.). And the  
switchers who operate the connections between different  
networks (media moguls introduced in the political class,



financial elites bankrolling political elites, political elites bailing out financial institutions, media corporations intertwined with financial corporations, academic institutions financed by big business, etc.).

If power is exercised by programming and switching networks, then counterpower, the deliberate attempt to change power relationships, is enacted by reprogramming networks around alternative interests and values, and/or disrupting the dominant switches while switching networks of resistance and social change. Actors of social change are able to exert decisive influence by using mechanisms of power-making that correspond to the forms and processes of power in the network society. By engaging in the production of mass media messages, and by developing autonomous networks of horizontal communication, citizens of the Information Age become able to invent new programs for their lives with the materials of their suffering, fears, dreams and hopes. They build their projects by sharing their experience. They subvert the practice of communication as usual by occupying the medium and creating the message. They overcome the powerlessness of their solitary despair by networking their desire. They fight the powers that be by identifying the networks that are.

Social movements, throughout history, are the producers of new values and goals around which the institutions of society are transformed to represent these values by creating new norms to organize social life. Social movements exercise counterpower by constructing themselves in the first place through a process of autonomous communication, free from the control of those holding institutional power. Because mass media are largely controlled by governments and media corporations, in the network society communicative autonomy is primarily constructed in the Internet networks and in the platforms of wireless communication. Digital social

networks offer the possibility for largely unfettered deliberation and coordination of action. However, this is only one component of the communicative processes through which social movements relate to society at large. They also need to build public space by creating free communities in the urban space. Since the institutional public space, the constitutionally designated space for deliberation, is occupied by the interests of the dominant elites and their networks, social movements need to carve out a new public space that is not limited to the Internet, but makes itself visible in the places of social life. This is why they occupy urban space and symbolic buildings. Occupied spaces have played a major role in the history of social change, as well as in contemporary practice, for three basic reasons:

1. They create community, and community is based on togetherness. Togetherness is a fundamental psychological mechanism to overcome fear. And overcoming fear is the fundamental threshold for individuals to cross in order to engage in a social movement, since they are well aware that in the last resort, they will have to confront violence if they trespass the boundaries set up by the dominant elites to preserve their domination. In the history of social movements, the barricades erected in the streets had very little defensive value; in fact, they became easy targets either for the artillery or for the riot squads, depending on the context. But they always defined an "in and out," an "us versus them," so that by joining an occupied site, and defying the bureaucratic norms of the use of space, other citizens could be part of the movement without adhering to any ideology or organization, just by being there for their own reasons.
2. Occupied spaces are not meaningless: they are usually charged with the symbolic power of invading sites of state

power, or financial institutions. Or else, by relating to history, they evoke memories of popular uprisings that had expressed the will of citizens when other avenues of representation were closed. Often, buildings are occupied either for their symbolism or to affirm the right of public use of idle, speculative property. By taking and holding urban space, citizens reclaim their own city, a city from where they were evicted by real estate speculation and municipal bureaucracy. Some major social movements in history, such as the 1871 Paris commune or the Glasgow strikes of 1915 (at the origin of public housing in Britain), started as rent strikes against housing speculation.<sup>3</sup> The control of space symbolizes the control over people's lives.


3. By constructing a free community in a symbolic place, social movements create a public space, a space for deliberation, which ultimately becomes a political space, a space for sovereign assemblies to meet and to recover their rights of representation, which have been captured in political institutions predominantly tailored for the convenience of the dominant interests and values. In our society, the public space of the social movements is constructed as a hybrid space between the Internet social networks and the occupied urban space: connecting cyberspace and urban space in relentless interaction, constituting, technologically and culturally, instant communities of transformative practice.

The critical matter is that this new public space, the networked space between the digital space and the urban space, is a space of autonomous communication. The autonomy of communication is the essence of social movements because it is what allows the movement to be formed, and what enables the movement to relate to society at large beyond the control of the power holders over communication power.

Where do social movements come from? And how are they formed? Their roots are in the fundamental injustice of all societies, relentlessly confronted by human aspirations of justice. In each specific context, the usual horses of humanity's apocalypses ride together under a variety of their hideous shapes: economic exploitation, hopeless poverty, unfair inequality, undemocratic polity, repressive states, unjust judiciary, racism, xenophobia, cultural negation, censorship, police brutality, warmongering, religious fanaticism (often against others' religious beliefs), carelessness towards the blue planet (our only home), disregard of personal liberty, violation of privacy, gerontocracy, bigotry, sexism, homophobia and other atrocities in the long gallery of portraits featuring the monsters we are. And of course, always, in every instance and in every context, sheer domination of males over females and their children, as the primary foundation of a/n (unjust) social order. Thus, social movements always have an array of structural causes and individual reasons to rise up against one or many of the dimensions of social domination. Yet, to know their roots does not answer the question of their birth. And since, in my view, social movements are the sources of social change, and therefore of the constitution of society, the question is a fundamental one. So fundamental that entire libraries are dedicated to a tentative approach to the answer, and so, consequently, I will not deal with it here, since this book is not intended to be another treatise on social movements but a small window on a nascent world. But I will say this: social movements, certainly now, and probably in history (beyond the realm of my competence), are made of individuals. I say it in plural, because in most of what I have read of analyses of social movements in any time and society, I find few individuals, sometimes only the one hero, accompanied by an undifferentiated crowd, called social class, or ethnia, or gender, or

nation, or believers, or any of the other collective denominations of the subsets of human diversity. Yet, while grouping people's living experience in convenient analytical categories of social structure is a useful method, the actual practices that allow social movements to rise and change institutions and, ultimately, social structure, are enacted by individuals: persons in their material flesh and minds. And so the key question to understand is when and how and why one person or one thousand persons decide, individually, to do something that they are repeatedly warned not to do because they will be punished. There are usually a handful of persons, sometimes just one, at the start of a movement. Social theorists usually call these people agency. I call them individuals. And then we have to understand the motivation of each individual: how these individuals network by connecting mentally to other individuals, and why they are able to do so, in a process of communication that ultimately leads to collective action; how these networks negotiate the diversity of interests and values present in the network to focus on a common set of goals; how these networks relate to the society at large, and to many other individuals; and how and why this connection works in a large number of cases, activating individuals to broaden the networks formed in the resistance to domination, and to engage in a multimodal assault against an unjust order.

At the individual level, social movements are emotional movements. Insurgency does not start with a program or political strategy. This may come later, as leadership emerges, from inside or from outside the movement, to foster political, ideological and personal agendas that may or may not relate to the origins and motivations of participants in the movement. But the big bang of a social movement starts with the transformation of emotion into action. According to the theory of affective intelligence,<sup>4</sup> the emotions that



are most relevant to social mobilization and political behavior are fear (a negative affect) and enthusiasm (a positive affect).<sup>5</sup> Positive and negative affects are linked to two basic motivational systems that result from human evolution: approach and avoidance. The approach system is linked to goal-seeking behavior that directs the individual to rewarding experiences. Individuals are enthusiastic when they are mobilized towards a goal that they cherish. This is why enthusiasm is directly related to another positive emotion: hope. Hope projects behavior into the future. Since a distinctive feature of the human mind is the ability to imagine the future, hope is a fundamental ingredient in supporting goal-seeking action. However, for enthusiasm to emerge and for hope to rise, individuals have to overcome the negative emotion resulting from the avoidance motivational system: anxiety. Anxiety is a response to an external threat over which the threatened person has no control. Thus, anxiety leads to fear, and has a paralyzing effect on action. The overcoming of anxiety in socio-political behavior often results from another negative emotion: anger. Anger increases with the perception of an unjust action and with the identification of the agent responsible for the action. Neurological research shows that anger is associated with risk-taking behavior. Once the individual overcomes fear, positive emotions take over, as enthusiasm activates action and hope anticipates the rewards for the risky action. However, for a social movement to form, the emotional activation of individuals must connect to other individuals. This requires a communication process from one individual experience to others. For the communication process to operate, there are two requirements: cognitive consonance between senders and receivers of the message, and an effective communication channel. The empathy in the communication process is determined by experiences similar to those that motivated the original

emotional outburst. Concretely speaking: if many individuals feel humiliated, exploited, ignored or misrepresented, they are ready to transform their anger into action, as soon as they overcome their fear. And they overcome their fear by the extreme expression of anger, in the form of outrage, when learning of an unbearable event suffered by someone with whom they identify. This identification is better achieved by sharing feelings in some form of togetherness created in the process of communication. Thus, the second condition for individual experiences to link up and form a movement is the existence of a communication process that propagates the events and the emotions attached to it. The faster and more interactive the process of communication is, the more likely the formation of a process of collective action becomes, rooted in outrage, propelled by enthusiasm and motivated by hope.

Historically, social movements have been dependent on the existence of specific communication mechanisms: rumors, sermons, pamphlets and manifestos, spread from person to person, from the pulpit, from the press, or by whatever means of communication were available. In our time, multimodal, digital networks of horizontal communication are the fastest and most autonomous, interactive, reprogrammable and self-expanding means of communication in history. The characteristics of communication processes between individuals engaged in the social movement determine the organizational characteristics of the social movement itself: the more interactive and self-configurable communication is, the less hierarchical is the organization and the more participatory is the movement. This is why the networked social movements of the digital age represent a new species of social movement.<sup>6</sup>

If the origins of social movements are to be found in the emotions of individuals and in their networking on the

basis of cognitive empathy, what is the role of the ideas, ideologies and programmatic proposals traditionally considered to be the stuff of which social change is made? They are in fact the indispensable materials for the passage from emotion-driven action to deliberation and project construction. Their embedding in the practice of the movement is also a communication process, and how this process is constructed determines the role of these ideational materials in the meaning, evolution and impact of the social movement. The more the ideas are generated from within the movement, on the basis of the experience of their participants, the more representative, enthusiastic and hopeful the movement will be, and vice versa. It is too often the case that movements become raw materials for ideological experimentation or political instrumentation by defining goals and representations of the movement that have little to do with their reality. Sometimes even in its historical legacy, the human experience of the movement tends to be replaced by a reconstructed image for the legitimization of political leaders or for the vindication of the theories of organic intellectuals. A case in point is how the Commune of Paris came to be in its ideological reconstruction, in spite of the historians' efforts to restore its reality, a proto-proletarian revolution in a city that at the time counted few industrial workers among its dwellers. Why a municipal revolution, sparked by a rent strike and partly led by women, came to be misrepresented has to do with the inaccuracy of Karl Marx's sources in his writings about the Commune, mainly based on his correspondence with Elizabeth Dmitrieva, president of the Women's Union, a committed socialist Commune who saw just what she and her mentor wanted to see.<sup>7</sup> The misrepresentation of the movements by their leaders, ideologues or chroniclers does have considerable consequences, as it introduces an irreversible cleavage between the actors of



the movement and the projects constructed on their behalf, often without their knowledge and consent.

The next question for the understanding of social movements has to do with the evaluation of the actual impact of the joint action of these networks of individuals on the institutions of society, as well as on themselves. This will require a different set of data and analytical instruments, as the characteristics of institutions and of the networks of domination will have to be brought into confrontation with the characteristics of the networks of social change. In a nutshell, for the networks of counterpower to prevail over the networks of power embedded in the organization of society, they will have to reprogram the polity, the economy, the culture or whatever dimension they aim to change by introducing in the institutions' programs, as well as in their own lives, other instructions, including, in some utopian versions, the rule of not ruling anything. Furthermore, they will have to switch on the connection between different networks of social change, e.g. between pro-democracy networks and economic justice networks, women's rights networks, environmental conservation networks, peace networks, freedom networks, and so on. To understand under which conditions these processes take place and which are the social outcomes that result from each specific process cannot be a matter of formal theory. It requires one to ground the analysis on observation.

The theoretical tools I have proposed here are simply so, tools, whose usefulness or futility can only be evaluated by using them to examine the practices of networked social movements this book intends to analyze. However, I will not code the observation of these movements in abstract terms to fit into the conceptual approach presented here. Rather, my theory will be embedded in a selective observation of the movements, to bring together at the end of my intellectual journey the most salient findings of this study in an

analytical framework. This is what I intend to be my contribution to the understanding of networked social movements as harbingers of social change in the twenty-first century.

One last word about the origins and conditions of the reflections I am presenting here. I have been a marginal participant in the Barcelona *indignadas* movement, and a supporter and sympathizer of movements in other countries. But I have kept, as is usual in my case, as much distance as I could between my personal beliefs and my analysis. Without pretending to achieve objectivity, I have tried to present the movements in their own words and by their own actions, using some direct observation and a considerable amount of information: some from individual interviews and some from secondary sources that are detailed in the references to each chapter and in the appendices to this book. In fact, I am in full accordance with the basic principle of this leaderless movement of multiple faces: I only represent myself, and this is simply my reflection on what I have seen, heard or read. I am an individual, doing what I learned to do throughout my life: investigate processes of social transformation, with the hope that this investigation could be helpful to the endeavors of those fighting, at great risk, for a world we would like to live in.

#### NOTES

- 1 For an excellent, analytical and informed overview of the social movements that sprung up everywhere in 2011, see Paul Mason, *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions* (2012, Verso, London).
- 2 For my characterization of the network society, see my book, *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996; 2010, 2nd edn. Blackwell, Oxford). For a succinct presentation of my network theory of power, see my 2011 article, "A Network

Theory of Power," *International Journal of Communication* 5, 773-87.

- 3 For a presentation of a historical analysis of urban social movements, see my book, *The City and the Grassroots* (1983, University of California Press, Berkeley), pp. 15-48.
- 4 W. Russell Neuman, G. E. Marcus, A. N. Crigler and M. MacKuen (eds.), *The Affect Effect: Dynamics of emotions in political thinking and behavior* (2007, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL).
- 5 I have discussed the contributions of the theory of affective intelligence to the study of socio-political mobilization in my book, *Communication Power* (2009, Oxford University Press, Oxford), pp. 146-55.
- 6 A pioneer analysis of the rise of contemporary networked social movements is Jeff Juris's *Networked Futures* (2008, Duke University Press, Durham, NC).
- 7 I discuss the historical record of the Commune of Paris in my book, *The City and the Grassroots* (1983): 15-26.

## CHANGING THE WORLD IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY

*We have brought down the wall of fear  
U brought down the wall of our house  
We'll rebuild our homes  
But u will never build that wall of fear*

Tweet from @souriastrong (Rawia Alhoussaini)

Throughout history, social movements have been, and continue to be, the levers of social change.<sup>1</sup> They usually stem from a crisis of living conditions that makes everyday life unbearable for most people. They are prompted by a deep distrust of the political institutions managing society. The combination of a degradation of the material conditions of life and of a crisis of legitimacy of the rulers in charge with the conduct of public affairs induces people to take matters into their own hands, engaging in collective action outside the prescribed institutional channels, to defend their demands and, eventually, to change the rulers, and even the rules shaping their lives. Yet, this is risky behavior, because

the maintenance of social order and the stability of political institutions express power relationships that are enforced, if necessary, by intimidation and, in the last resort, by the use of force. Thus, in the historical experience, and in the observation of the movements analyzed in this book, social movements are most often triggered by emotions derived from some meaningful event that help the protesters to overcome fear and challenge the powers that be in spite of the danger inherent to their action. Indeed, social change involves an action, individual and/or collective that, at its root, is motivated emotionally, as is all human behavior, according to recent research in social neuroscience (Damasio 2009). In the context of the six basic emotions that have been identified by neuro-psychologists (fear, disgust, surprise, sadness, happiness, anger; Ekman 1973), the theory of affective intelligence in political communication (Neuman et al. 2007) argues that the trigger is anger, and the repressor is fear. Anger increases with the perception of an unjust action and with the identification of the agent responsible for the action. Fear triggers anxiety, which is associated with avoidance of danger. Fear is overcome by sharing and identifying with others in a process of communicative action. Then anger takes over: it leads to risk-taking behavior. When the process of communicative action induces collective action and change is enacted, the most potent positive emotion prevails: enthusiasm, which powers purposive social mobilization. Enthusiastic networked individuals, having overcome fear, are transformed into a conscious, collective actor. Thus social change results from communicative action that involves connection between networks of neural networks from human brains stimulated by signals from a communication environment through communication networks. The technology and morphology of these communication networks shape the process of mobilization, and thus of social change,

both as a process and as an outcome. In recent years, large scale communication has experienced a deep technological and organizational transformation, with the rise of what I have called mass self-communication, based on horizontal networks of interactive, multidirectional communication on the Internet and, even more so, in wireless communication networks, the now prevalent platform of communication everywhere (Castells 2009; Castells et al. 2006; Hussain and Howard 2012; Shirky 2008). This is the new context, at the core of the network society as a new social structure, in which the social movements of the twenty-first century are being formed.

The movements studied in this book, and similar social movements that have sprung up around the world, did originate from a structural economic crisis and from a deepening crisis of legitimacy (see Appendix to this chapter). The financial crisis that shook up the foundations of global informational capitalism from 2008 onwards called into question prosperity in Europe and in the United States; threatened governments, countries and major corporations with financial collapse; and led to a substantial shrinking of the welfare state on which social stability had been predicated for decades (Castells et al. 2012; Engelen et al. 2011). The global food crisis impacted the livelihood of most people in the Arab countries as the price of basic staples, and particularly of bread, reached unaffordable levels for a population that spends most of its meager income on food. Rampant social inequality everywhere became intolerable in the eyes of many suffering the crisis without hope and without trust. The cauldron of social and political indignation reached boiling point. Yet, social movements do not arise just from poverty or political despair. They require an emotional mobilization triggered by outrage against blatant injustice, and by hope of a possible change as a result of examples of

successful uprisings in other parts of the world, each revolt inspiring the next one by networking images and messages in the Internet. Moreover, in spite of the sharp differences between the contexts in which these movements arose, there are certain common features that constitute a common pattern: the shape of the social movements of the Internet Age.

#### NETWORKED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: AN EMERGING PATTERN?

The social movements studied in this book, as well as others taking place around the world in recent years,<sup>2</sup> present a number of common characteristics.

*They are networked in multiple forms.* The use of Internet and mobile communication networks is essential, but the networking form is multimodal. It includes social networks online and offline, as well as pre-existing social networks, and networks formed during the actions of the movement. Networks are within the movement, with other movements around the world, with the Internet blogosphere, with the media and with society at large. Networking technologies are meaningful because they provide the platform for this continuing, expansive networking practice that evolves with the changing shape of the movement. Although movements are usually rooted in urban space through occupations and street demonstrations, their ongoing existence takes place in the free space of the Internet. Because they are a network of networks, they can afford not to have an identifiable centre, and yet ensure coordination functions, as well as deliberation, by interaction between multiple nodes. Thus, they do not need a formal leadership, command and control centre, or a vertical organization to distribute information or instructions. This decentered structure maximizes chances of participation in the movement, given that these are open-ended networks

without defined boundaries, always reconfiguring themselves according to the level of involvement of the population at large. It also reduces the vulnerability of the movement to the threat of repression, since there are few specific targets to repress, except for the occupied sites, and the network can reform itself as long as there are enough participants in the movement, loosely connected by their common goals and shared values. Networking as the movement's way of life protects the movement both against its adversaries and against its own internal dangers of bureaucratization and manipulation.

While these movements usually start on the Internet social networks, *they become a movement by occupying the urban space*, be it the standing occupation of public squares or the persistence of street demonstrations. The space of the movement is always made of an interaction between the space of flows on the Internet and wireless communication networks, and the space of places of the occupied sites and of symbolic buildings targeted by protest actions. This hybrid of cyberspace and urban space constitutes a third space that I call the space of autonomy. This is because autonomy can only be insured by the capacity to organize in the free space of communication networks, but at the same time can only be exercised as a transformative force by challenging the disciplinary institutional order by reclaiming the space of the city for its citizens. Autonomy without defiance becomes withdrawal. Defiance without a permanent basis for autonomy in the space of flows is tantamount to discontinuous activism. *The space of autonomy is the new spatial form of networked social movements.*

*Movements are local and global at the same time.* They start in specific contexts, for their own reasons, build their own networks, and construct their public space by occupying urban space and connecting to the Internet networks. But



they are also global, because they are connected throughout the world, they learn from other experiences, and in fact they are often inspired by these experiences to engage in their own mobilization. Furthermore, they keep an ongoing, global debate on the Internet, and sometimes they call for joint, global demonstrations in a network of local spaces in simultaneous time. They express an acute consciousness of the intertwining of issues and problems for humanity at large, and they clearly display a cosmopolitan culture, while being rooted in their specific identity. They prefigure to some extent the supersession of the current split between local communal identity and global individual networking.

Like many other social movements in history, they have generated their own form of time: *timeless time*, a trans-historical form of time, by combining two different types of experience. On the one hand, in the occupied settlements, they live day by day, not knowing when the eviction will come, organizing their living as if this could be the alternative society of their dreams, limitless in their time horizon, and free of the chronological constraints of their previous, disciplined daily lives. On the other hand, in their debates and in their projects they refer to an unlimited horizon of possibilities of new forms of life and community emerging from the practice of the movement. They live in the moment in terms of their experience, and they project their time in the future of history-making in terms of their anticipation. In between these two temporal practices, they refuse the subservient clock time imposed by the chronometers of their existence. Since human time only exists in human practice, this dual timeless time is no less real than the measured time of the assembly line worker or the around the clock time of the financial executive. It is an emerging, alternative time, made of a hybrid between the now and the long now.

In terms of their genesis, these movements are largely

*spontaneous in their origin, usually triggered by a spark of indignation* either related to a specific event or to a peak of disgust with the actions of the rulers. In all cases they are originated by a call to action from the space of flows that aims to create an instant community of insurgent practice in the space of places. The source of the call is less relevant than the impact of the message on the multiple, unspecified receivers, whose emotions connect with the content and form of the message. The power of images is paramount. YouTube has been probably one of the most potent mobilizing tools in the early stages of the movement. Particularly meaningful are images of violent repression by police or thugs.

*Movements are viral*, following the logic of the Internet networks. This is not only because of the viral character of the diffusion of messages themselves, particularly of mobilizing images, but because of the demonstration effect of movements springing up everywhere. We have observed virality from one country to another, from one city to another, from one institution to another. Seeing and listening to protests somewhere else, even in distant contexts and different cultures, inspires mobilization because it triggers *hope* of the possibility of change.

*The transition from outrage to hope is accomplished by deliberation in the space of autonomy.* Decision-making usually happens in assemblies and committees designated in the assemblies. Indeed, these are usually *leaderless movements*. Not because of the lack of would-be leaders, but because of the deep, spontaneous distrust of most participants in the movement towards any form of power delegation. This essential feature of the observed movements results directly from one of the causes of the movements: rejection of political representatives by the represented, after feeling betrayed and manipulated in their experience of politics as usual. There are multiple instances in which some of the participants are more active or more

influential than others, just by committing themselves full-time to the movement. But these activists are only accepted in their role as long as they do not make major decisions by themselves. Thus, in spite of obvious tensions in the daily practice of the movement, the widely accepted, implicit rule is the self-government of the movement by the people in the movement. This is at the same time an organizational procedure and a political goal: it is setting the foundations of a future real democracy by practicing it in the movement.

Horizontal, multimodal networks, both on the Internet and in the urban space, create *togetherness*. This is a key issue for the movement because it is through togetherness that people overcome fear and discover hope. Togetherness is not community because community implies a set of common values, and this is a work in progress in the movement, since most people come to the movement with their own motivations and goals, setting out to discover potential commonality in the practice of the movement. Thus, community is a goal to achieve, but togetherness is a starting point and the source of empowerment: "*Juntas podemos*" ("Together we can"). *The horizontality of networks supports cooperation and solidarity while undermining the need for formal leadership.* Thus, what appears to be an ineffective form of deliberation and decision-making is in fact the foundation needed to generate trust, without which no common action could be undertaken against the backdrop of a political culture characterized by competition and cynicism. The movement builds its own antidotes against the pervasiveness of the social values that they wish to counter. This is the constant principle emerging from the debates in all movements: not only does the goal not justify the means; the means, in fact, embody the goals of transformation.

These are *highly self-reflective movements*. They constantly interrogate themselves as movements, and as individuals,

about who they are, what they want, what they want to achieve, which kind of democracy and society they wish for, and how to avoid the traps and pitfalls of so many movements that have failed by reproducing in themselves the mechanisms of the system they want to change, particularly in terms of political delegation of autonomy and sovereignty. This self-reflexivity is manifested in the process of assembly deliberations, but also in multiple forums on the Internet, in a myriad of blogs and group discussions on the social networks. One of the key themes in debate is the question of violence, which the movements, everywhere, encounter in their practice. In principle, *they are non-violent movements*, usually engaging, at their origin, in peaceful, civil disobedience. But they are bound to engage in occupation of public space and in disruptive tactics to put pressure on political authorities and business organizations, since they do not recognize the feasibility of fair participation in the institutional channels. Thus, repression, at different levels of violence depending on the institutional context and the intensity of the challenge by the movement, is a recurrent experience throughout the process of collective action. Since the goal of all movements is to speak out on behalf of society at large, it is critical to sustain their legitimacy by juxtaposing their peaceful character with the violence of the system. Indeed, in every instance, images of police violence have increased the sympathy for the movement among citizens, and have reactivated the movement itself. On the other hand, it is difficult, individually and collectively, to refrain from the basic instinct of self-defence. This was particularly important in the case of the Arab uprisings when, faced with repeated massacres by using utmost military violence, some democratic movements ultimately became contenders in bloody civil wars. The situation is obviously different in liberal democracies, but the arbitrariness and impunity of police violence

in many cases opens the way for the action of small, determined groups ready to confront the system with violence in order to expose its violent character. Violence provides spectacular, selective footage for the media, and plays into the hands of those politicians and opinion leaders whose aim is to suppress as swiftly as possible the criticism embodied in the movement. The thorny question of violence is not just a matter of tactics. It is the defining question in the life and death of the movements, since they only stand a chance of enacting social change if their practice and discourse generates consensus in society at large (the 99%) (Lawrence and Karim 2007).

*These movements are rarely programmatic movements*, except when they focus on a clear, single issue: down with the dictatorial regime. They do have multiple demands: most of the time, all possible demands from citizens avid about deciding the conditions of their own lives. But because demands are multiple and motivations unlimited, they cannot formalize any organization or leadership because their consensus, their togetherness, depends on ad hoc deliberation and protest, not on fulfilling a program built around specific goals: this is both their strength (wide open appeal), and their weakness (how can anything be achieved when the goals to be achieved are undefined?). Accordingly, they cannot focus on one task or project. On the other hand they cannot be channeled into a political action that is narrowly instrumental. Therefore, they can hardly be co-opted by political parties (which are universally distrusted), although political parties may profit from the change of mind provoked by the movement in the public opinion. Thus, they are social movements, *aimed at changing the values of society*, and they can also be public opinion movements, with electoral consequences. They aim to transform the state but not to seize the state. They express feelings and stir debate but do not create parties or

support governments, although they may become a target of choice for political marketing. However, *they are very political in a fundamental sense*. Particularly, when they propose and practice direct, deliberative democracy based on networked democracy. They project a new utopia of networked democracy based on local communities and virtual communities in interaction. But utopias are not mere fantasy. Most modern political ideologies at the roots of political systems (liberalism, socialism, communism) originated from utopias. Because utopias become material force by incarnating in people's minds, by inspiring their dreams, by guiding their actions and inducing their reactions. What these networked social movements are proposing in their practice is a new utopia at the heart of the culture of the network society: the utopia of the autonomy of the subject vis-à-vis the institutions of society. Indeed, when societies fail in managing their structural crises by the existing institutions, change can only take place out of the system by a transformation of power relations that starts in people's minds and develops in the form of the networks built by the projects of new actors constituting themselves as the subjects of the new history in the making. And the Internet that, like all technologies, embodies material culture, is a privileged platform for the social construction of autonomy.

#### INTERNET AND THE CULTURE OF AUTONOMY

The role of the Internet and wireless communication in the current networked social movements is crucial, as documented in this book. But their understanding has been obscured by a meaningless discussion in the media and in the academic circles denying that communication technologies are at the roots of social movements. This is obvious. Neither the Internet, nor any other technology for that matter, can

be a source of social causation. Social movements arise from the contradictions and conflicts of specific societies, and they express people's revolts and projects resulting from their multidimensional experience. Yet, at the same time, it is essential to emphasize the critical role of communication in the formation and practice of social movements, now and in history.<sup>3</sup> Because people can only challenge domination by connecting with each other, by sharing outrage, by feeling togetherness, and by constructing alternative projects for themselves and for society at large. Their connectivity depends on interactive networks of communication. And the fundamental form of large scale, horizontal communication in our society is based on the Internet and wireless networks. Furthermore, it is through these digital communication networks that the movements live and act, certainly in interaction with face-to-face communication and with the occupation of urban space. But digital communication networks are an indispensable component in the practice and organization of these movements as they exist. The networked social movements of our time are largely based on the Internet, a necessary though not sufficient component of their collective action. The digital social networks based on the Internet and on wireless platforms are decisive tools for mobilizing, for organizing, for deliberating, for coordinating and for deciding. Yet, the role of the Internet goes beyond instrumentality: it creates the conditions for a form of shared practice that allows a leaderless movement to survive, deliberate, coordinate and expand. It protects the movement against the repression of their liberated physical spaces by maintaining communication among the people within the movement and with society at large in the long march of social change that is required to overcome institutionalized domination (Juris 2008).

Furthermore, there is a deeper, fundamental connection

between the Internet and networked social movements: *they share a specific culture, the culture of autonomy, the fundamental cultural matrix of contemporary societies*. Social movements, while emerging from the suffering of people, are distinct from protest movements. They are essentially cultural movements, movements that connect the demands of today with the projects for tomorrow. And the movements we are observing embody the fundamental project of transforming people into subjects of their own lives by affirming their autonomy vis-à-vis the institutions of society. This is why, while still demanding remedial measures to the current miseries of a large segment of the population, the movements as collective actors do not trust the current institutions, and engage in the uncertain path of creating new forms of conviviality by searching for a new social contract.

In the background of this process of social change is the cultural transformation of our societies. I have tried to document in other writings that the critical features in this cultural transformation refer to the emergence of a new set of values defined as individuation and autonomy, rising from the social movements of the 1970s, and permeating throughout society in the following decades with increasing intensity (Castells 2009: 116–36). Individuation is the cultural trend that emphasizes the projects of the individual as the paramount principle orientating her/his behavior (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992). Individuation is not individualism, because the project of the individual may be geared towards collective action and shared ideals, such as preserving the environment or creating community, while individualism makes the well-being of the individual the ultimate goal of his/her individuated project. The concept of autonomy is broader, as it can refer both to individual or collective actors. Autonomy refers to the capacity of a social actor to become a subject by defining its action around projects constructed independ-

ently of the institutions of society, according to the values and interests of the social actor. The transition from individuation to autonomy is operated through networking, which allows individual actors to build their autonomy with likeminded people in the networks of their choice. I contend that the Internet provides the organizational communication platform to translate the culture of freedom into the practice of autonomy. This is because the technology of the Internet embodies the culture of freedom, as shown in the historical record of its development (Castells 2001). It was deliberately designed by scientists and hackers as a decentered, computer communication network able to withstand control from any command center. It emerged from the culture of freedom prevailing in the university campuses in the 1970s (Markoff 2006). It was based on open source protocols from its inception, the TCP/IP protocols developed by Vint Cerf and Robert Kahn. It became user friendly on a large scale thanks to the World Wide Web, another open source program created by Tim Berners-Lee.

In continuity with this emphasis on autonomy building, the deepest social transformation of the Internet came in the first decade of the twenty-first century, from the shift from individual and corporate interaction on the Internet (the use of email, for instance), to the autonomous construction of social networks controlled and guided by their users. It came from improvements in broadband, and in social software and from the rise of a wide range of distribution systems feeding the Internet networks. Furthermore, wireless communication connects devices, data, people, organizations, everything, with the cloud emerging as the repository of widespread social networking, as a web of communication laid over everything and everybody. Thus, the most important activity on the Internet nowadays goes through social networking sites (SNS), and SNS have become platforms for all kinds of



activities, not just for personal friendships or chatting but for marketing, e-commerce, education, cultural creativity, media and entertainment distribution, health applications, and, yes, socio-political activism. SNS are living spaces connecting all dimensions of people's lives (Naughton 2012). This is a significant trend for society at large. It transforms culture by inducing the culture of sharing. SNS users transcend time and space, yet they produce content, set up links and connect practices. There is now a constantly networked world in every dimension of human experience. People in their networks co-evolve in permanent, multiple interactions. But they choose the terms of their co-evolution. SNS are constructed by users themselves building both on specific criteria of grouping and on broader friendship networks, tailored by people, on the basis of platforms provided by the merchants of free communication, with different levels of profiling and privacy. The key to the success of an SNS is not anonymity, but on the contrary, self-presentation of a real person connecting to real persons. People build networks to be with others, and to be with others they want to be with, on the basis of criteria that include those people who they already know or those they would like to know (Castells 2010). So, it is a self-constructed network society based on perpetual connectivity. But this is not a purely virtual society. There is a close connection between virtual networks and networks in life at large. The real world in our time is a hybrid world, not a virtual world or a segregated world that would separate online from offline interaction (Wellman and Rainie 2012). And it is in this world that networked social movements came to life in a natural transition for many individuals, from sharing their sociability to sharing their outrage, their hope and their struggle.

Thus, the culture of freedom at the societal level, and the culture of individuation and autonomy at the level of social

actors, induced at the same time the Internet networks and the networked social movements. Indeed, there is a synergistic effect between these two developments. Let me illustrate this analysis with the results of the survey research I conducted in 2002–7 with Tubella and others on a representative sample of the population of Catalonia (Castells and Tubella et al. 2005; 2007). We defined empirically in the population at large six statistically independent projects of autonomy: personal, professional, entrepreneurial, communicative, bodily and socio-political. We found that the more people were autonomous in each one of the six dimensions of autonomy, the more frequently and intensely they would use the Internet. And, over a span of time, the more they would use the Internet, the more their degree of autonomy would enhance. There is indeed a virtuous circle between the technologies of freedom and the struggle to free the minds from the frames of domination.

These findings are in cognitive coherence with a 2010 study in Britain, conducted by sociologist Michael Willmott on the basis of the global data obtained from the World Values Survey of the University of Michigan. He analyzed 35,000 individual answers between 2005 and 2007. The study showed that Internet use empowers people by increasing their feelings of security, personal freedom and influence: all feelings that have a positive effect on personal well-being. The effect is particularly positive for people with lower income and less qualifications, for people in the developing world, and for women.<sup>4</sup> Empowerment, autonomy and enhanced sociability appear closely connected to the practice of frequent networking on the Internet.

Networked social movements, as all social movements in history, bear the mark of their society. They are largely made of individuals living at ease with digital technologies in the hybrid world of real virtuality. Their values, goals and

organizational style directly refer to the culture of autonomy that characterizes the young generations of a young century. They could not exist without the Internet. But their significance is much deeper. They are suited for their role as agents of change in the network society, in sharp contrast with the obsolete political institutions inherited from a historically superseded social structure.

#### NETWORKED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND REFORM POLITICS: AN IMPOSSIBLE LOVE?

The consensus seems to be that, at the end of the day, the dreams of social change will have to be watered down, and channeled through the political institutions, either by reform or revolution. Even in the latter case, the revolutionary ideals will be interpreted (betrayed?) by the new powers in place and their new constitutional order. This creates a major dilemma, both analytical and practical, when assessing the political productivity of movements that, in most cases, do not trust existing political institutions, and refuse to believe in the feasibility of their participation in the predetermined channels of political representation. It is true that the paradigmatic experience of Iceland shows the possibility of a new departure both in the institutions of governance and in the organization of the economy without a traumatic process of change. Yet, in most of the movements studied, and in similar movements around the world, the critical passage from hope to implementation of change depends on the permeability of political institutions to the demands of the movement, and on the willingness of the movement to engage in a process of negotiation. When both conditions are met in positive terms, a number of demands may be satisfied and political reform may happen, with different degrees of change. It did happen in the case of Israel (Nahon

2012). However, since the fundamental challenge from these movements concerns the denial of legitimacy of the political class, and the denunciation of their subservience to the financial elites, there is little room for a true acceptance of these values by most governments. Indeed, a comprehensive review of empirical studies on the political consequences of social movements, mainly focusing on the United States, shows that, on the one hand, the biggest social movements in the past have been politically influential in several ways, particularly in contributing to set policy agendas. On the other hand, "for a movement to be influential, state actors need to see it as potentially facilitating or disrupting their own goals – augmenting or cementing new electoral coalitions, gaining in public opinion, increasing the support for the missions of governmental bureaus" (Amenta et al. 2010: 298).

In other words, influence of social movements on politics and policies is largely dependent upon their potential contribution to the pre-set agendas of political actors. This is squarely at odds with the main critique of the networked social movements I studied, which concerns the lack of representativeness of the political class, as elections are conditioned by the power of money and media, and constrained by biased electoral laws designed by the political class for its own benefit. Yet, the usual answer to the protest movements from political elites is to refer to the will of the people as expressed in the previous election, and to the opportunity of changing politics according to the results of the next election. This is precisely what is objected to by most movements, in agreement with a substantial proportion of citizens everywhere in the world, as shown in the Appendix. Movements do not object to the principle of representative democracy, but denounce the practice of such democracy as it is today, and do not recognize its legitimacy. Under such conditions, there is little chance of a positive direct

interaction between movements and the political class to push for political reform, that is a reform of the institutions of governance that would broaden the channels of political participation, and limit the influence of lobbies and pressure groups in the political system, the fundamental claims of most social movements. The most positive influence of the movement on politics may happen indirectly through the assumption by some political parties or leaders of some of the themes and demands of the movement, particularly when they reach popularity among large sectors of citizens. This is for instance the case in the United States, where the reference to the social cleavage between the 99% and the 1% has come to symbolize the extent of inequality. Yet, cautious leaders, such as Obama, while claiming to represent the aspirations expressed in the movement, stop short of endorsing its activism out of fear of being seen as condoning radical practices.

Since the road to policy changes goes through political change, and political change is shaped by the interests of the politicians in charge, the influence of the movement on policy is usually limited, at least in the short term, in the absence of a major crisis that requires the overhaul of the entire system, as happened in Iceland. Nevertheless, there is a much deeper connection between social movements and political reform that could activate social change: it takes place in the minds of the people. The actual goal of these movements is to raise awareness among citizens at large, to empower them through their participation in the movement and in a wide deliberation about their lives and their country, and to trust their ability to make their own decisions in relation to the political class. The influence of the movement in the population at large proceeds through the most unsuspected avenues.<sup>5</sup> If the cultural and social influence of the movement expands, particularly in the younger, more active

generations, astute politicians will address their values and concerns, seeking electoral gain. They will do so within the limits of their own allegiance to their bank rollers. But the more the movement is able to convey its messages over the communication networks, the more citizen consciousness rises, and the more the public sphere of communication becomes a contested terrain, and the lesser will be the politicians' capacity to integrate demands and claims with mere cosmetic adjustments. The ultimate battle for social change is decided in the minds of the people, and in this sense networked social movements have made major progress at the international level. As shown in the Appendix to this chapter, in an international poll of 23 countries conducted in November 2011, with the exception of Japan, more people were favorable than unfavorable toward Occupy and similar movements in their context, and the majority of citizens agreed with their criticism of governments, politicians and financial institutions. This is particularly remarkable when referring to movements that place themselves outside the institutional system and engage in civil disobedience. True, when polled about the movement's tactics in the United States, only a minority supported the movement, but even in this regard the fact that about 25–30 percent approved of the disruptive actions of the movement indicates a groundswell of support to the challengers of the institutions that have lost the trust of citizens. The uncertainty of an uncharted process of political change seems to be the main barrier to overcome for movements that have already exposed the illegitimacy of the current powers that be. Nevertheless, love between social activism and political reformism does not appear to be impossible: it is simply hidden from the public view while citizens waver in their minds between desire and resignation.

## NOTES

- 1 My theoretical perspective on the analysis of social movements builds on Alain Touraine's theory, as presented in Touraine (1978). The most complete formulation of my own analytical perspective was published in Castells (1983), and applied in Castells (1983; 2003). See also Johnston (2011), Snow et al. (2004), Tilly (2004), Staggenborg (2008), Chesters and Welsh (2000), Diani and McAdam (2003), Hardt and Negri (2004).
- 2 In 2008–12 there were a number of powerful, networked social movements, beyond the cases presented in this book, that sprung up around the world, with different emphases, origins and orientations, particularly in Iran, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Israel, Chile and Russia. Symbolic occupations of public space that never reached the level of a full-fledged social movement took place in most European countries, and in some Latin American countries. See Shirky (2008), Scafuro (2011), Mason (2012), Cardoso and Jacobetti (2012).
- 3 On the role of communication in the development of social movements, both historically and in contemporary societies, see, besides my own work (2003; 2009), Thompson (2000), Downing (2000), Couldry and Curran (2003), Oberschall (1996), Neveu (1996), Curran (2011), Juris (2008), Cardoso and Jacobetti (2012).
- 4 Report by the BCS Institute, a UK-chartered institute on IT, in a study carried out by Trajectory Partnership, a UK-based think tank, as reported at: <[www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1989244,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1989244,00.html)>.
- 5 For instance, according to a post on March 23, 2012, by Kristen Gwynne from AlterNet:

Sex strike is being utilized as a form of activism against the banks. According to RT News, high-class escorts in Madrid, Spain are protesting the banking sector by refusing to sell bankers their highly sought-after commodity: Sex.

RT reports: The largest trade association for luxury escorts in the Spanish capital has gone on a general and indefinite strike on sexual services for bankers until they go back to providing credits to Spanish families, small- and medium-size enterprises and companies.

It all started with one of the ladies who forced one of her clients to grant a line credit and a loan simply by halting her sexual services until he "fulfills his responsibility to society." The trade association's spokeswoman praised their success by stressing how the government and the Bank of Spain have previously failed to adjust the credit flow.

"We are the only ones with a real ability to pressure the sector," she stated. "We have been on strike for three days now and we don't think they can withstand much more."

The woman quoted above says bankers are desperate for sex services, and have become so pitiful they are unsuccessfully pretending to have other careers, and have even asked the government for help.

The Minister of Economy and Competitiveness Luis de Guindos reportedly told the Mexican website SDPnoticias.com, which broke the story, that the escort industry's lack of regulations makes government intervention difficult.

"In fact, there has not even been a formal communication of the strike – the escorts are making use of their right of admission or denying entry to . . . well, you know. So no one can negotiate," he told SDPnoticias.



com, making it clear that sex is a valuable tool, and refusing it sends a very strong, direct message.

By Kristen Gwynne, AlterNet, posted on March 23, 2012; printed on March 23, 2012. <[http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/866354/sex\\_strike%21\\_madrid%5C%27s\\_escorts\\_launch\\_coordinated\\_attack\\_against\\_banks%2C\\_withhold\\_sex\\_services\\_from\\_desperate\\_bankers](http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/866354/sex_strike%21_madrid%5C%27s_escorts_launch_coordinated_attack_against_banks%2C_withhold_sex_services_from_desperate_bankers)>

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