GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL

Volume 11 June 2015

Connecting the Struggles

www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu

GREEN EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

Contents

Connecting the struggles: Editorial board introduction

Beyond their specific scope and demands, these campaigns lay claim to the right to a decent standard of living in a society that takes their voice into account.

The struggles of our times

"We are the 99 percent."
~ slogan of the Occupy movement and quote of the year 2011 (*Yale Book of Quotations*).

From the *Indignados* in Spain to the anti-fracking protests in the UK and Romania, from the anti-austerity movement in Greece to the Occupy protests in 951 cities worldwide, citizens around the globe are on the march.

Many popular movements have been gathering momentum, often in response to government corruption, massive construction projects imposed without consultation, or damaging social and economic policies. These struggles, generally played out between people and authorities have varied origins, contexts and results; they also come in various shapes and sizes, from demonstrations to sit-ins, creative flash-mobs, festive rallies or long-term installations on the contested area.

Moreover, the social mobilisations which form part of the most recent wave analysed here, are often faceless in that they are reluctant to let a well-defined leadership emerge from their ranks; they are politically aware with an evident taste for symbols andspectacular actions; they're (social) media-savvy and conscious of the nature of the current cultural hegemony; and they aim for non-violent resistance – even though this can often be a real challenge and even a problem. But above all, they're not limited to the mediated sparks of outrage: they're concrete and physical.

Theirs is the politics of the anti-politics. Though they may reject all political affiliation, they're nevertheless fighting political battles, in the name of justice and democracy, or in favour of a clean, well-preserved environment. Beyond their specific scope and demands, these campaigns lay claim to the right to a decent standard of living in a society that takes their voice into account. This is what leads to the stunning mobilisation of disenfranchised middle classes (**Gagyi**).

Reclaim the space

Natural or urban, the environment has become a major battlefield for these movements. From oil-drilling in the Adriatic Sea to the overexploitation of forests in the north of Sweden, from contested highways in the Balkans to the disruptive high-speed rail-track in Italy's Alps, there are too many examples of local communities witnessing their environment coming under imminent threat.

In this edition of the Journal, we present other, yet very similar examples of mobilisations triggered by ever greedier extractive industries and reckless infrastructure projects. Massive toxic gold mines in Romania (**Craciun**), and in Greece (**Blionis**), the potentially devastating threat of shale-gas fracking in the UK (**Young** and **Lander**) – which also looms in Poland, Germany, France or Romania – and the illegitimate seizure of agricultural land to make room for an outdated, useless and disproportionate airport project in France (**Jadot**) have given rise to determined and enduring opposition movements.

In Turkey, it's the fate of the trees of Northern Forests (**White**), being destroyed to make way for massive bridge and airport projects, driven by the megalomania of an increasingly authoritarian government that prompted the Gezi movement – whose political legacy was still strongly felt in the outcome of the latest Turkish elections. And in some cases resistance has gone one step further from protest, to the search for an alternative, like urban gardening in crisis-hit Greece (**Kolokouris**), or efforts to reclaim the street in the name and by the means of art (**De Cauter**).

Reclaiming power: the politics of anti-politics

In a radicalised political climate dominated by regressive and unsustainable solutions, alternative aspirations are viewed with suspicion and fundamental rights seem to be increasingly under attack. In the face of these threats, the conflict transcends the political arena. Citizens stand up to defend the common interest, whatever the risks might be – and these can be extreme: death for Remi Fraisse while protesting a contested dam in Southern France, police violence in Istanbul, and prison for Italian writer and journalist Erri de Luca on the Val de Susa protest, just to name a few cases of sometimes violent state-sanctioned repression. Yet the tenacity of those leading these movements has proven to be willing to face up to these risks, and often such disproportionate responses have only served to inflame popular anger and rally more people to the cause.

So why do they trigger such brutal reactions from the authorities, even in democratic countries (**Burballa**) and how do these reactions end up reinforcing the very struggles they seek to put down (**Bové**)?

Environmental mobilisation and social struggles (**Duarte, Baumgartner**) share a common defining feature: reclaiming power and sovereignty over your own life. The messages may be diffuse and might vary according to the national political context, but there is one global message emerging from the crowd: democracy and justice for the masses! For the 99% that the system has failed – and not just for the few who happen to be in control of the major political and economic leverage (**Schick**).

Find the connection

For a political party, it's highly difficult to connect with movements that view the present political system as a whole with suspicion and see it as the "prime mover" of most contemporary evils, such as corruption, financial irresponsibility, economic warfare, growing inequalities, environmental disasters, and so on...

Feeling powerless in the face of these ills, a "democratic fatigue" has set in, out of which has emerged the demand for an overhaul at the highest level, from the fringes of the system. A system of which Green parties around Europe are judged to have now become part.

The Greens have always pledged to transform the system, including from within when possible, blowing the winds of change inside the often distant and impenetrable democratic institutions, up to the government. But walking the tight rope of political responsibility, and sometimes overstretching from crucial and constructive realism into plain conformism, they might sometimes lose sight of this.

In their preoccupations and methods, these movements share the very political DNA and history of green activism: pacifism, self-management, cooperatives, a search for alternatives to capitalism, etc. In spite of a generational change, slogans, goals and even some structures remain (**Fraser**). Thus, social movements must serve as a reminder for the Greens of their specific radical and militant roots, to help them reconnect with these roots, and thereby reconnect with themselves (**Reintke**).

Finally, connecting these struggles (**Mouffe**) is the next challenge for the Greens in Europe. Linking the local fights at European level, is crucial not only for the morale of the activists, but also in order to make the stakes politically visible. Reaching a critical mass is essential for allowing a comprehensive alternative to emerge.

The Green parties of Europe may have a historical opportunity to replenish the exhausted legitimacy of political movements and offer these fighters what they need most: a positive outcome as a path towards the alternative, fair and sustainable world they aspire to live in.

There is no general moral to building a movement

Agnes Gagyi

We tend to think that those who do not belong to politically identifiable movements are not capable of shaping public discourse. That's one of the characteristics of the inequality of political life – argues Hungarian sociologist Agnes Gagyi. In the interview she also explains why struggles differ from East to West, and why the educated middle class has become so prominent in today's movements.

The "transmissions" – the circle of those directly concerned by an issue, the readiness of the concerned to mobilise themselves, the political lines of force, etc. – are the reason that one issue drew a lot of people to the streets, and another drew less.

Which topics have the capacity to mobilise people these days?

To answer this we need to ask three things: Who are the ones concerned? What mobilises them? And what topics can work as a mobilising force at the symbolic level of mobilisation? Let's just think of the Eastern European middle class movements: a structural feature of their mobilisations is the fact that when members of the educated middle class find themselves among the "losers", of post-socialist transformation, they have more hope to achieve something through political mobilisation. This situation gives them a better start to mobilisation.

The specific topics and forms of organisation depend more on the given constellations: Is something going to focus the accumulated offences and injuries to a single point? Are there political groups that dare to step up and manage to keep the injuries on the agenda? How does all this align with the already existing power relations of the ruling political-economic blocs, with the symbolic fields they had constructed, and with the historically constructed political vocabularies?

It is characteristic of today's new movements that they keep the topics of inequality, oligarchy, nepotism on the agenda. This mirrors a real structural polarisation, yet, you cannot say that "this or that topic has a mobilising force". It makes a difference who talks about the issues; with what means, when, in relation to whom and to what audience the issues are thematised.

To look at a specific Hungarian topic, why did a lot more people demonstrate, for instance, against the proposed internet tax than against the land seizure in the Hungarian city Kishantos?

Offences transform into mobilising topics through a series of transmissions – and most of them do not transform into such at all. In this concrete case: neither the internet tax nor the Kishantos case cover the basis of the more general, long-term dissatisfaction of the Hungarian society, which may be caused by the steadily declining quality of life (ever since the end of the 70s) and the unfulfilled hopes attached to the regime change. The "transmissions" – the circle of those directly concerned by an issue, the readiness of the concerned to mobilise, the political lines of force surrounding the issue, etc. – are the reason that one issue drew a lot of people to the streets, and another drew less.


Tanbácsi

Part of the inequality of political life is that we think that those who do not launch politically sensible movements do not deserve to take part in the public discourse.

No empirical examination was conducted for this comparison, so I would only name a few aspects: The internet is one of the last strongholds of the middle class' cultural consumptions. It symbolises the experience of personal freedom. Therefore, the internet tax means a direct intrusion into the daily routine of people who normally do not belong among the most deprived, and who may be willing to mobilise themselves. Whereas, the Kishantos case concerns less people directly. The campaign made reference to the general depletion of the countryside, for which the system of large estates dominated by political networks is to be blamed – yet, this process had run its course much earlier for the great majority of the people concerned. As a consequence, these people may have identified less with the Kishantos case and the campaign around it – as it really dealt with one specific issue: saving Kishantos. Generally speaking, it is worth taking into consideration that the movements are no direct reflections of a social problem. This indirectness is greatly affected by the question: who possesses the right resources and the right *amount* of resources to build a political movement which can potentially become significant at the level of formal politics.

Also, there are countless other ways to express personal or massive dissatisfaction, from slipping into alcoholism to joining sects to committing suicide. Part of the inequality of political life is that we think that those who do not launch politically sensible movements do not deserve to take part in the public discourse. At the same time, it is the existing unequal distribution of social resources that defines who is in the position to launch movements at the first place.

What are the methods to rally a large number of people for a cause?

It is impossible to a give a general answer to this question. The techniques of building a movement have a huge bibliography, but no general moral, because the relevance of different organisational repertoires always depends on the context. Through the mobilisation events, though, new and old public figures are able to secure part-advantages or suffer disadvantages. The proportion of these two is what matters, of course, to every public figure. The question of "rallying" is, from their point of view, a strategic question which depends on the context.

Is it possible to link the movements that we see today in Europe, even though they are spatially sporadic and are sometimes very different in their topics (eg anti-austerity, anti-fracking, Kishantos, etc.)?

It is possible, obviously, and there have been many attempts to do exactly that. To better understand the situation, it is worth keeping in mind that in most cases the causes of the various movements come to surface in different points of similar structural procedures. The keywords are similar, and the political coalitions arch over the varying economic and political contexts. A lot of organisational work is needed to link the different movements, and

they often only succeed temporarily. It is difficult to identify a general idea which grasps every injury as an element of the same problem.

The anti-austerity demonstrations in Europe are partly international. In Eastern Europe they are hardly international. The Eastern European societies which experienced the crises of the 90s and the 2000s, don't feel compassion when it comes to the crises in the countries of the West. "What the Western countries now perceive as an intolerable downfall, is not that much different from the unemployment rate or the minimum wage we have experienced for many years" they say.

But there is even more that adds to the problems of connecting the struggles of the East and the West. On the one hand, Western movements tend to support environmental protection, on the other hand, the treatment of these causes might run into the trouble that the environmental problems of Eastern Europe frequently serve the interests of Western companies, or they are part of a geopolitical game where the country in question has to prove its commitment to the right side, by accepting an environmentally damaging technology.

In other words, further interconnections and differences lie behind the statements that a political cause, like environmental protection or the fight against austerity is one and the same everywhere.

In this issue of the journal, we deal with the demonstrations against mining in Roşia Montană. Why do these demonstrations deserve our attention?

Looking at the themes of the environmental protection movements after the regime changes in Eastern Europe, the case of the Roşia Montană gold mine stands out because of the longer time span of the fights that surrounded it. This has given a special environment in terms of the political connections of the specific case, and in terms of the creation of a local activist sphere as well.

From a different perspective the issue is not peculiar at all: there is an investor who, relying on the available corrupt practices strives to make an investment which damages the environment.

The key to the similarities and to the differences is the same: we are talking about different points of the global economy. In other words: the same crisis sets in motion different movements at different points of the structure of the global economy.

This is met by the opposition of an alliance of locals and local environmentalists. I would not call it very peculiar, either, that this specific case of environmental protection became the topic of a larger political movement – in Romania and Bulgaria, you had similar demonstrations against forest exploitations, Chevron's shale drilling plans, or a construction project in a protected area on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast (the so called "Dyuni-gate").

According to the German sociologist, Wolfgang Kraushaar "from Cairo to New York, from Madrid to Santiago and from Lisbon to Tel-Aviv", we see that the demonstrations which had started in 2011 must be regarded as a revolt of the educated, insofar as "the educated" stand at the core of these movements. Do you agree with this statement?

The participation of the middle class and of those holding a degree is strong, this is a fact. An extra effect is that these participants have at their disposal a set of social connections, political and cultural assets which enable them to shape the events of the movement in the wider public sphere according to their own priorities. Therefore, although not all of the participants in the "Occupy", in the Iberian movements or in the Arabic or Eastern European movements are "educated", the educated are the most visible ones.

However, if we would like to understand the dynamics of the new wave of movements which are commonly called the "2011 movements" (although they have been wider both in time and in space) the point is not whether the participants hold degrees but how today's global course of events transforms people's life conditions in various positions of the global economy, and what it means within this transformation that some people begin to launch such movements.

If we look at it this way, the first thing that strikes the eye is that although their slogans and mobilisation repertoires are often similar, the various movements are embedded in different local political and mobilisation projects. Since 2011, an array of empirical studies have been written on why the Brazilian, Arabic, Southern European and North American movements of the time could not be considered one and the same phenomenon. The key to the similarities and to the differences is the same: we are talking about different points of the global economy. In other words: the same crisis sets in motion different movements at different points of the structure of the global economy. A good

example is that of the North American and Western European movements. Their tale of the decline from "democratic capitalism" to neo-liberalism to brutal austerity, can only be understood in the context of the Western welfare state after the Second World War. The same story could hardly apply to any of the Latin American, Arabic or Eastern European countries. To stay at our own, Eastern European example: in this region, a stable welfare democracy, similar to the ones in the Western world, has never emerged after the Second World War. Following 1989 the process of democratisation went hand in hand with the austerity measures, which are conceived as new phenomena by the Western movements. When the Eastern European movements demand welfare and democracy, repeating the slogans of the Western movements, it is about a never achieved promise of modernisation – this is then being translated to the problems of the regime change or the problems of the current political constellations.

What does such a strong participation of the middle class mean?

If we look at the position of the middle class participants, we can detect a systemic effect. The crisis of the global economy and the financialisation that comes with it erases the earlier positions in production, where the so-called middle classes had been embedded, and it also polarises social assets more strongly than before. The loss of positions and the polarisation is perceived and it brings along some sort of a moral crisis, that is, a breakup of earlier moral systems based on earlier positions. The coalitions between the middle classes and the former hegemonic groups loosen up and various mobilisations are called to life to recover those positions. Part of the reorientation process is that the new elites are perceived as traitors, and the middle class seeks alliances with various other groups, even with more disadvantaged ones. This process can be detected in the leftist populist turn of the new Western and Eastern European movements.

At the same time, from the point of view of the organisation, dynamics and functions of the movements it makes a huge difference what kind of middle class positions at which point of the global economy we talk about. From this perspective, I would only mention one historic feature of the Eastern European middle classes: here, the attraction to the Western middle class' life quality has always bumped into a wall, as the local economies could not offer sufficient middle class positions. Therefore, following a historically repeating pattern, the local middle classes are prone to translate their ambitions for mobility into a political project, through which they hope to reshape the conditions which hinder their own ambitions.

This phenomenon, which carries various labels in the literature, such as the "politics of backwardness", "teleological elites", etc. is given a further twist by the fact that these political projects never react to local conditions only; they also mediate between the local society and various external allies, typically global and regional hegemonic partners. This is how local intellectual political projects which are not necessarily motivated by the local social conditions

The earlier forms of the anti-nuclear and green movements had been founded on post-material, value-based politics. One of the starting points of this politics was that – contrary to the situation today – their own base did not suffer from bread-and-butter worries.

may keep coming to existence. Such projects may be inferior in the local power-relations, but their external connections bring about political assets which come from real global resources.

Why can't the parties get on well with these movements?

In general, it is not true that movements do not have strong relations with parties. Parties typically make use of the existence of movements in their own campaigns, they devote their own resources to recycle the energies of the movements for their own uses. Many careers that start in movements continue in party politics, and so on. In relation to the parties of the European left, an argument is often emphasised: that the support which social democratic parties gave to neo-liberal policies alienated the voters who were struck by the economic restrictions. The new leftist demands cannot find their way for political expression within the old "left" which slid to the centre, so they either distance themselves from party politics, or they channel in to left-wing parties born in the new mobilisations (Syriza, Podemos). In the latter case it is the tight connection between the parties and the movement which is the most spectacular, but the relation is burdened with conflicts, here, too. If we would like to picture the relation between parties and movements according to the – in my view false – narrative that a good movement always becomes a party or that, if everything goes smoothly, the parties and the movements "get on well" with each other, then not even Syriza fulfils these criteria. The systemic conflicts,which, in today's European crisis, on the one hand regulate the parties' scope for action and, on the other, stir up movements, are present in their case as well.

If we talk about the voters struck by austerity measures, why is it no alternative for them to turn to the green parties which, too, have their roots in movements, and are more critical of globalisation than other mainstream parties? Or, viewed from a different angle: why were the green parties not able to profit from the fact that the voters became alienated from the "third way" social democrats?

If we talk about the Western European Green parties, I would answer, in a slightly generalised way: it was because their gestures were not strong enough as they reacted to the new social tensions brought about by austerity measures. So, in the political field, where the new populist right and left managed to present itself as a viable alternative, the Greens got stuck in the category of "the parties of the system".

Also, the Western green parties are rooted in the spirit of 1968 and not in the criticism of globalisation. Their slow and inflexible reaction to the massive uproar against neo-liberalism is partly due to this fact. The earlier forms of the anti-nuclear and green movements had been founded on post-material, value-based politics. One of the starting points of this politics was that – contrary to the situation today – their own base did not suffer from bread-and-butter worries. ■

Agnes Gagyi is a social movements researcher, focusing on Eastern European politics and social movements in long-term global historical context. She is member of the Budapest-based Working Group for Public Sociology "Helyzet".

Claudiu Crăciun

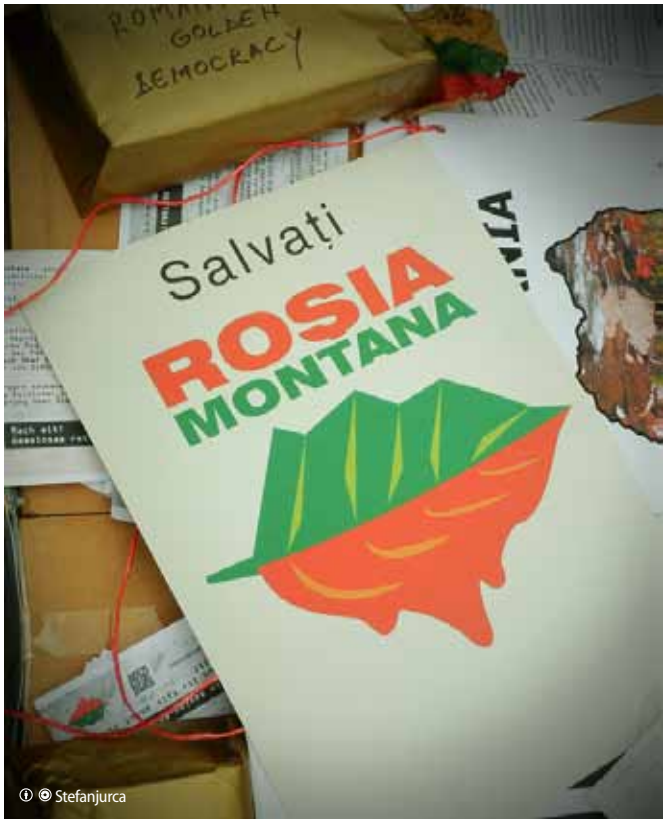
Saving Roşia Montană: Romania's new face

Much to the surprise of everyone, the strongest protests in Romania's late transition were related to environmental destruction. In 2013, tens of thousands of people took to the streets in Romania and abroad, mobilised exclusively by NGOs and informal networks to protest against a law which meant turning an idyllic place into the largest cyanide-based mining project in Europe. A small village in Transylvania became the battle ground of opposing narratives and forces.

Its very long history of gold-mining turned Roşia Montană into an equally vibrant and tense community, reflecting the changes in political and economic regimes. Its latest transformation, driven by global and local corporate interests, serves as a revealing case of abuse and resistance. Its origin is to be found in the turbulent transitional politics and economy. Equally important, it signals the end of transition as quest for development at any cost and the surge of new political and social cleavages.

Roşia Montană, the age long curse of gold

Roşia Montană, a medium-sized village in the heart of Transylvania, in northwest Romania is one the oldest continuously inhabited gold mining communities in Europe. It sits on vast networks of Roman and medieval galleries, many of them having important cultural and heritage value. In the early 20th century it was a very rich and multicultural place, relying economically on the work of independent miners owning their own quarries. After the end of the Second World War, when Romania became a communist state, there were still significant reserves of gold and other precious materials in the mine. The nationalisation of the economy meant that the resources would be intensively exploited by state owned enterprises.



The industrial development brought to the place new technologies, inhabitants, modes of organization and a subsequent destruction of the natural environment. At the end of the communist regime in 1989, Roşia Montană was still a diverse community but wholly dependent on the mining of gold. As in many other cases, the transition was very tough. The state owned company, lacking financing and technology, declined, leaving many people out of work and a partially devastated landscape. The scenario was

Roşia Montană became the perfect opportunity to express the increasing dissatisfaction of citizens with the party system, government, mainstream media and corporate practices.

very common in transitional Romania, the most affected being the communities relying on extractive industries (e.g. coal) and mono-industrial activities (chemical, metallurgy). But Roşia Montană still had a lot of gold left and that brought it to the attention of foreign investors of global scale.

Roşia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC) was stocklisted in Canada and built its local operations in Bucharest, the capital, Alba Iulia and Roşia Montană. Their plan was to relocate the village, and turn the area into a gold mining exploitation of huge proportions using a cyanide-based mining technology. The four mountains surrounding the village, many of them having tens of kilometres of Roman galleries, were supposed to be destroyed as a result of the processing a cyanide lake of approximately 600 hectares. The mining project as it was planned should have been the largest in Europe.

From local to (inter)national, from campaign to street protest

How did the Roşia Montană protest evolve from a local struggle to an international one and how did it become a turning point in the transition?

First, a local focal point of resistance managed to attract a wide network of support and solidarity. Second, the politics of the country forced the resurrection of political protest. Roşia Montană became the perfect opportunity to express the increasing dissatisfaction of citizens with the party system, government, mainstream media and corporate practices.

The first critical factor was the creation of the local opposition group. Formed by ex-miners now turned farmers and entrepreneurs, the group successfully resisted the massive pressure coming from the authorities and the company. Their opposition became notorious and was quickly taken on-board by progressive and environmental groups from Cluj, a large university town not far from the village. Due to these groups, the local resistance turned into a proper campaign – Save Roşia Montană (*Salvați Roşia Montană*), with legal actions, support for cultural events and professional communication. A strategic move from these campaigners and the local opposition was to start FânFest, an alternative musical and cultural festival.

Thousands of people came every year, meeting the community, seeing the places and leaving with some commitment to the preservation of the place. Equally important, it created an economic and symbolical lifeline with the local community. It also provided an alternative model of development opposed to the one envisioned by the mining company and the government. With Fânfest and other information and mobilisation tools, the case became well-known in the civic and cultural circles in the country and abroad. The technological, economic, and legal details of the project became familiar to various mass-media organisations, environmental networks, research institutes and even churches. It also became a European issue as the campaigners asked the EU to ban cyanide-based mining. The campaign resulted in a European Parliament resolution which failed to produce legislation due to the reluctance of the European Commission and some member states.

The constant expansion of the opposition networks went in parallel with specific political dynamics in the country. The project was supported since its inception by all major parties in Romania.

A separated community

Not all the local community opposed the mining project. In fact the majority supported it mired by the prospect of having well paid jobs even though it meant the abandonment of their houses, lands and community building as the church and cemetery. It was a tragic choice that many people made. The recent history of the place can help understand the local support and opposition. As Roşia Montană became a major mining site after 1945, the community significantly grew in numbers. People came from all over Romania to work there, most of them more or less coerced by the regime. The existing community was absorbed in the new industry. After 1989, the de-structuring of the mining sector left the majority of miners, many of them young and not owning property with little means to survive. They had to choose between emigrating or holding on to the few jobs around. The project of the company was seen by them as a rescue.

Against this background, the company engineered the social destruction of the community first. It employed a large number of people and used them to pressure their families, friends and neighbours into selling their property. It offered to those willing to sell and move new houses in the nearby town of Alba Iulia, 40 km away. The split of the community was visible and very painful. Young people turned against the older ones, who wanted to keep the family houses and lands, neighbours against neighbours on the same grounds. Only a few families stayed in Roşia Montană while many other moved to Alba Iulia. The results of the relocation were tragic. Some villagers deeply regretted the move and committed suicide. At the time of writing the article the situation has not changed much. The community is physically and psychologically separated into two camps, waging a war in which already they have lost a lot, on both sides.

Political dynamics

The constant expansion of the opposition networks went in parallel with specific political dynamics in the country. The project was supported since its inception by all major parties in Romania. The mining company spent almost 500 million dollars preparing the project, a large amount of money going into communication and lobbying. The generous spending was over-shadowed by the amounts of money envisaged as total spending and profit, in the order of billion of dollars. The intense lobby by RMGC paid off. There were a constant stream of MPs, ministers, prime-ministers and presidents stating their support. The latest high-ranking supporters of the project were the former president Traian Basescu,

de facto leader of the center right government until 2012 and the current prime-minister Victor Ponta, leader of the Social Democratic Party.

The 10 year tenure of president Basescu was a good period for the company. The president himself visited the village trying to convince the core of the opposition to give up. During the economic crisis he promoted an aggressive austerity policy, with severe cuts in spending and salaries and increases in taxes. These policies and his quasi-authoritarian style of leadership resulted in violent street protests in early 2012.

The protests were anti-austerity, anti-poverty and corruption and surprisingly or not, were also against the Roşia Montană mining project. It was at this time that the campaign made a definitive step in bringing the issue at the top of the public agenda. The active people in the Save Roşia Montană campaign were involved in the street protests in Bucharest and Cluj, an experience that proved essential to the success of the 2013 protests.

In all this period the leader of the social-democrats, Victor Ponta was very vocal against the mining project, considering it part of the corrupt and irresponsible agenda of the centre-right president. His stances were convincing enough and more or less everyone involved believed that a change in government would also stop the project. Victor Ponta became the prime-minister of Romania in April 2012. Later that year, he was confirmed as prime-minister, leading a large parliamentary majority formed by the Social Democrats and the Liberals. Rather unexpectedly in early fall 2013, there was a complete turn in policies and his government sent to the Parliament a special law concerning the Roşia Montană mining project. The law, an absolute novelty in constitutional terms, effectively suspended current legislation on urban planning, environment and other areas, allowing the company to bypass the legal and institutional obstacles they had encountered. The conditions were perfect for a new wave of civic mobilisation to come.

The "Romanian Autumn": Mobilisation and competing narratives

The special law brought a sense of danger and urgency to the situation and people felt that the fate of Roşia Montană would be decided within weeks.

Immediately people took to the streets in Bucharest and Cluj, reaching a peak of 30,000 participants in the first and around 10,000 in Cluj. All the networks created by the campaign in previous years were quickly mobilised. Along with them came the people who were active in the street protests in 2012. The protest in 2012, still fresh in the minds of the public, had an empowering effect and prepared the people for what was to come, a significantly larger and better-structured wave of protests.

These groups soon joined forces with those unhappy with the general performance of the new government. The success of the mobilisation and the protest was due to the fact that it gathered diverse and, up to a point, complementary interests, agendas and ideas. Roşia Montană became the

umbrella cause under which various groups came together – the most popular slogan being "United, we save Roşia Montană" (*Uniți salvăm Roşia Montană*!). You would find in the same place progressives, environmentalists, conservatives and even nationalists. This variety was a strength of the protests, reaching the wider society but was also the main obstacle in becoming a more institutionalised social movement. After the end of the protests, the Save Roşia Montană continued its work while other militant groups stayed active under the umbrella of United, We Save (*Uniți Salvăm*), an environmental and civil community. Despite the diversity, there was a core of ideas accepted by everyone: maintaining the community and recognition as a UNESCO protected site, an alternative model of development for the area and banning cyanide in mining. These issues were taken on-board by the existing Green parties but their weakness, organisation and style made them unpopular with the civic and environmental groups. The Green parties tried to use this agenda, together with some larger parties. But there was an overall feeling that their positions were contextual and not part of a wider and more serious commitment toward fighting for Roşia Montană and against the political and economic model it came to represent.

The protests were long, lasting for almost three months. They were also unusually spread. From the large Romanian cities they have spilled abroad, marking the debut as a civic actor of the large Romanian diaspora. Mobilised through social media, the protests were largely peaceful and took the form

of marches reaching not only public sites but also typical neighbourhoods. Due to the unexpected and massive public pressure, the special law on Roşia Montană submitted by the government was rejected by the Parliament, bringing the project to a halt. In the end it helped break the governing coalition and probably played a role in Victor Ponta losing his presidential bid in 2014.

At some point the protests took on other issues like the exploitation of shale gas, a relatively new environmental challenge. The expansion of the agenda was possible due to the rather similar structuring of the conflict. On one side, a large corporation assisted by the local and central government and on the other, besieged local communities protecting their property, lifestyle and safety. The fact that the major political leaders and mainstream media were, to say the least, dismissive of the protests added a layer of indignation and increased the fracture between the corporate, political and media elites and civil society.

The impact of the protests was not only relevant in the politics of the day, it also marked a turning point in recent Romanian history.

Post-transition Romania: Rediscovering solidarity

The impact of the protests was not only relevant in the politics of the day, it also marked a turning point in recent Romanian history. After 25 years of difficult transition the society was no longer talking about being communist or anti-communist or pro- or anti-European, two major issues of the transition. They were talking about government corruption, corporate power, protection of local communities and fundamental rights. About models of economic development and responsibility in order to safeguard the environment and the local heritage. It was not just a new political syntax but a reflection of the new structural issues the society had to face. The same issues were at stake in the protests that followed, against shale gas and recently illegal logging, taken on board by more or less the same people active in the Roșia Montană campaign.

Thanks to the Roşia Montană protests Romanian society re-discovered the principle of solidarity which was lost in a brutal and competitive transition. There was almost no cost the political elites were unwilling to impose on society on the way to economic development. Privatisation, destruction of industries, communities and natural habitats, economic migration – these were all legitimate means to depart from communism and reach some ideal yet imprecise state of development. Not anymore. A significant part of the population was empathetic to the struggle of locals in Roşia Montană and a significant number of people actually took to the streets in solidarity with them. The transition is now over, at least if its understood as development at any cost and as the sacrifice of the few for the pretended greater good of everyone.

Claudiu Crăciun, PhD, is Lecturer in European Politics at the Faculty of Political Science, National School of Political Studies and Administration in Bucharest. Since 2009 he has been an expert of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and he is involved in various civic and environmental campaigns.

Stopping Eldorado Gold – Mining struggle in Greece

George Blionis

Eldorado Gold now owns all gold-mining projects in Greece. The company is harming the environment and avoiding taxes, and the way Greece deals with this problem can determine some important developments in Europe.

With its acquisition of the Canadian European Goldfields in 2012 and the Australian Glory Resources in 2013, Eldorado Gold now owns all gold-mining projects in Greece. The corporation operates in Greece in a context of a severe debt crisis and ensuing subjection to a shock therapy by its European creditors and the IMF since 2010. Although the Greek economy would badly need the money, their operations don't contribute to the resolution of Greece's problems. According to a recent report by the Dutch NGO SOMO (Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations), Eldorado Gold has a well-developed tax avoidance structure using 12 Dutch mailbox companies and various subsidiaries in Barbados as well as the British Virgin and Cayman Islands.

Naomi Klein has also written about this mining project[1] in her recent book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate:* "In the Skouries forest near Ierissos, the Canadian mining company Eldorado Gold is planning to clear-cut a large swath of old-growth forest and reengineer the local water system in order to build a massive open-pit gold and copper mine, along with a processing plant, and a large underground mine. Despite its remote location, the fate of the Skouries forest is a matter of intense preoccupation for the entire country. It is debated in the national parliament and on evening talk shows. For Greece's huge progressive movement, it is something of a cause célèbre: urban activists in Thessaloniki and Athens organise mass demonstrations and travel to the woods for action days and fundraising concerts".

No mention of cyanide

The project has serious risks. In a recent report by the Hellenic Mining Watch, strong evidence is given about the inadequacy of the environmental impact assessment study submitted by Eldorado Gold, which has lead to misguided decision of environmental permission by the Ministry of Environment in 2011. HMW's main argument is that the method of "flash smelting", which is proposed for use by the metallurgy unit (currently under construction on site of an old-growth forest), is inadequate to process condensates rich in arsenic. This can lead to the abandoning of this method and to the application of the most common cyanide leaching method.[2] The former Minister of Environment, G. Papakonstantinou, entirely overlooked this aspect, giving the green light for this controversial investment. However, the use of cyanide is not mentioned in the EIA and if used it would be a clear breach of the signed agreement with the government.

The EIA reportedly has several other flaws, like the severe underestimation of the impacts of Eldorado Gold's activity on the Wildlife Refuge of Skouries (K129), *Tilio-Acerion* habitat (Habitats Directive code 9180) and the Natura 2000 site of Mt Stratonikon (GR1270005).

A long history of struggles

For many decades governments and activists have been thinking differently of this issue. Since the 1980s, every government has wanted to encourage gold mining at Olympias and Skouries, but the

1 Klein N., 2014, This changes everything, Penguin Group, page 297.
2 See also Blionis G., 2012, The new Gold Rush in Greece, Green Balkan Newsletter 2, p. 11.

Since late March 2012, Eldorado Gold has fenced off large parts of the mountain with barbed wire, placed security guards and traffic control systems and started razing the forest in order to construct the open pit, processing plant, roads and tailings dams.

local people and the ecological movement resisted. The state-owned METBA was followed by the Canadian TVX, which was stopped by the Council of State, because the method of cyanide leaching that it was planning to use, was considered to be environmentally unacceptable.

ⓘ PIAZZA del POPOLO

In December 2003, the assets of Cassandra Mines in Halkidiki that were previously owned by TVX were transferred to the Greek State for 11 million euros. On the same day, they were sold to HELLAS GOLD S.A. for the same price without prior economic assessment of the assets and without an open competition. This transaction has been found by the European Commission to be in violation of EU competition rules and Greece was ordered to reclaim 15.3 million euros from Hellas Gold. This sum has still not been reclaimed. In July 2011, the Greek State approved the Environmental Impact Assessment after a shockingly ostensible public consultation. This triggered a wide movement of resistance, including local residents, environmentalists, leftist protesters, and even anarchists.

Since late March 2012, Eldorado Gold has fenced off large parts of the mountain with barbed wire, placed security guards and traffic control systems and started razing the forest in order to construct the open pit, processing plant, roads and tailings dams.

The turning point came on Oct. 21 when about 2,500 protesters, most of them locals, but also activists from other parts of Northern Greece where there are plans for gold-mining projects, fought a pitched battle with more than 200 police along the forest road leading to Eldorado's Skouries gold-and-copper deposit, the centrepiece of its Greek strategy. 14 people were arrested. Retribution came on the night of Feb. 16, when about 40 masked men invaded a Skouries work site in the forest, set fire to machinery and vehicles, and doused three security guards with fuel, threatening to burn them alive. Eldorado put the damage of the firebomb attack at $1 million.

Criminalising protesters

Although local groups and ecological organisations condemned the use of violence, this didn't stop the supporters of the project from criminalising the protesters. Two men were arrested and another 18 were put under investigation. Many more arrests were to follow, but no conviction. The perpetrators remain unknown. Police forces imposed a regime of occupation in Ierissos, conducting continuous house searches, interrogations, arrests to take DNA and detentions.

Who controls the police? The government or Eldorado Gold? The people here are disappointed.

Today, more than 300 residents of the area are facing criminal charges related to their efforts to preserve the mountain, the environment and the health of their communities.

In early April 2015, local residents protesting on site of the Skouries mine clashed with employees of Eldorado Gold who had called a last minute counter-demonstration. One might expect the counter protest to have been forbidden by police, but unfortunately it was allowed to go ahead uncontested. When the miners did arrive, from behind the lines of riot police, and in plain sight, they threw stones at the protesters. Riot police resorted to tear gas in attempts to subdue the clashes. SYRIZA MP, Katerina Inglezi, condemned the actions of the police, "What happened is unprecedented! (...) The police attacked the residents along with Eldorado Gold's miners. (...) This unacceptable situation doesn't only concern the inhabitants of Halkidiki and the movement against mining. It exposes the government itself. Who controls the police? The government or Eldorado Gold? The people here are disappointed".

Will Syriza help?

Syriza is now in government, since January, thus the protesters have found an ally in tackling business interests and reversing decisions made by former governments. Syriza, had pledged that, if elected, it will cancel the mine as one of its first acts in power.

The Deputy Minister for Environment is Yiannis Tsironis, a member of the Ecologists Greens (the Greek Green Party), which supported Syriza in the last elections. But even though an ecologically responsible force is in power now, the issue of Skouries is a "hot potato", since the government of George Papandreou's PASOK bound very well together all the legal permissions necessary for the corporation to proceed, without major worries about the environment.

ⓘ PIAZZA del POPOLO

The government of ND that followed continued on the same lines. As Klein also reported in her book, ex-PM Antonis Samaras *"announced that the Eldorado mine will go ahead at all costs, such is the importance of protecting foreign investment in the country."*

Tsironis, the Green deputy-MP initiated a re-evaluation procedure about the logging and building permissions of Eldorado Gold. However, the main decision will have to be about the adequacy of the EIA study. It should be taken by the Minister, Panagiotis Lafazanis, and be supported by the whole government. And it should be a "yes or no" decision, leading to the cancellation or the continuation of the "investment".

A Balkan and European problem

Apart from the evolution of the talks about Greece's debt in the EuroGroup, the developments about Skouries are also of great significance in Greece, and very relevant for the development of the Balkans and the whole of Europe. Countries like Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey[3] have several problems with gold mining projects, most of which are using or plan to use the cyanide leaching method.[4] Even in countries like Finland, gold, copper or nickel mining corporations are presenting serious problems when it comes to sticking to the regulations, and awful accidents like the one at Talvivaara show the need for a stricter regulation of the industry, especially concerning the management of toxic wastes in tailing ponds.

And as the case of Eldorado Gold has shown, these serious threats need people who are ready to protest against harmful developments, as well as allies in progressive political forces, otherwise an issue like this would be quickly off the agenda.

George Blionis is a Biologist/Ecologist PhD and member of the Greek Green Party (Ecologists Greens). He served as a scientific advisor to Michalis Tremopoulos (2009-2011) and Nikos Chrysogelos (2012-2014), the Greek MEPs of The Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament, during the period 2009-2014.

3 Asici A.A., 2012, Gold Mining at Kazdaglari, Green Balkan Newsletter 2, p. 10.

4 See Resolution adopted by the EGP, at Athens Council, November 2012, "The Balkan Gold Rush in the year 2012: a tradegy in the making".

Ellen Young

Ric Lander

Going on the offensive – A picture of Scotland's anti-fracking movement

Community groups have led the way on the path to the moratorium on unconventional fossil-fuels in Scotland, and continue to do so in the ongoing struggle for a full ban. The effective grassroots campaigning of these communities, who have fought the Scottish government and unconventional gas companies, is an inspiring story for those across the UK and the rest of Europe.

They almost brought down a 300-year-old union of nations – surely they could do away with fracking. The fight of a few plucky campaigners was turning into a true social movement.

Policy shift: independence and persistence

It is not in the nature of national governments to give much thought to the views of communities when planning energy infrastructure. Little of Scotland's current renewables bounty goes to communities and in the energy boom before that, Scotland's 20th century North Sea oil bonanza, communities looked on as local councils vied with each to host incoming oil multinationals.

Scotland's anti-fracking movement has changed all that. People are demanding not just to be consulted, but to take decisions themselves. How did this happen?

Concerted campaigning by communities has been gradually ramping up the formal political debate on unconventional gas for some years. The ground was laid by groups such as Concerned Communities of Falkirk and Friends of the Earth Scotland who developed considerable technical knowledge and local support focused not around fracking, but a ruling over coal-bed methane drilling. The Falkirk community secured thousands of objections to the proposals and when the local government dithered on the case, a public inquiry was called: a tense and costly legal battle which pitched big industry against local people. Unconventional gas stayed in the news as new shale drilling licences were issued, raising the spectre of fracking in central Scotland.

Throughout 2014 Scotland was getting wise to the clever tricks of industry barons and politicians who would say one thing to business and another to the voters. The story of what was going on in Falkirk was passed around from doorsteps to public meetings to TV debates and back. In Scotland's independence referendum debate, people were angry about having policies imposed upon them from London, but they were also getting angry about having policies imposed upon them from anywhere. Scotland's independence debate created new local political spaces, and fracking and Falkirk's fight were just the kind of injustices that people wanted to talk about.

A true social movement

Scotland's flourishing town hall democratic spirit did not end with the "No" vote on Scottish independence. Instead newly created groups like the Radical Independence were chomping at the bit for a new way to exert their power. *They almost brought down a 300-year-old union of nations* – surely they could do away with fracking. The fight of a few plucky campaigners was turning into a true social movement.

At the same time, immediately after the referendum, political parties negotiated new powers for the Scottish Parliament to approve on-shore oil and gas licences. No longer could any excuse be made that fracking was being "imposed" on Scotland by the UK Government. There was no ambiguity: fracking could now be stopped at home.

Initially fighting the industry planning application by planning application, the movement has grown until it has been able to go on the offensive.

Ric Lander

Into this fray Scotland's two biggest political parties installed new populist leaders: Jim Murphy for Labour and Nicola Sturgeon for the SNP, Sturgeon with a new focus on inequality and Murphy seemingly hell-bent on supporting any policy that sounded popular (his first policy announcement was to remove the ban on alcohol at football matches). More than ever both parties were keen to put as much distance between themselves and that of the Conservative-led, pro-fracking, UK Government.

Thousands of letters were signed to SNP and Labour leaders. Local MPs and MSPs were lobbied. Events and conferences were organised. Demonstrations were held at oil refineries. Communities were being very noisy, and their voices were being amplified by a newly attentive Scottish media.

The pieces moved at the end of January.

Scottish Labour announced a new policy to give local referendums on fracking proposals, the SNP immediately moved to support a UK-wide moratorium, and three days later the Energy Minister Fergus Ewing told the Scottish Parliament: "from today there will be a moratorium on all unconventional oil and gas extraction."

Two years ago the message local communities heard was "don't worry about fracking, the government is taking care of it." Now Scottish politicians are outdoing each other to see who can claim to respond best to the community's views.

Falkirk: a large-scale mobilisation

The campaign in Scotland has been built around local groups of people coming together to protect where they live. Initially fighting the industry planning application by planning application, the movement has grown until it has been able to go on the offensive.

Leading the way have been the Concerned Communities of Falkirk. In 2012 they co-created an objection letter to a coal-bed methane drilling proposal through large democratically-run public meetings. The letter was signed by over 2,500 residents and contributed to the largest response to a planning application the local council had ever seen. The resulting escalation led to a public inquiry: when the Government Minister told them "communities are capable of representing themselves" they raised £70,000 for a lawyer to oppose the gas company's top legal team. They also co-created a community charter setting out

"all the things in our local area which residents have agreed are fundamental to the present and future health of our communities" and are working on creating a community chartering network, where the "cultural heritage" they define can be defended under European law to help ensure sustainable development in other communities.

Falkirk's lead has been taken up by communities at risk from across the country. The mobilisation of large numbers of people is now a clear characteristic of the movement in Scotland.

Anti-fracking community

As stated, the referendum on Scottish independence was critical: with awareness spread through new media and public debate, and new groups and spaces for debate and action born. Frack Off UK, a resource and contact point for activists across the UK, reported "in the weeks following the referendum there were new anti-fracking community groups forming daily in Scotland."

There are now over 50 community groups across the central belt of Scotland, some formed proactively over shale gas fields, others as issue-based campaign groups in cities and elsewhere. As well as helping achieve huge national policy shifts, new groups and activists have taken forward local fights from longer-active campaigners to tackle the industry on individual planning applications.

Although highly decentralised, community groups have also come together to collectively articulate their shared concerns at crucial points in the campaign. The Broad Alliance, which is a coalition of 30 community groups, published a number of influential open letters in the national press demanding a moratorium. They have also successfully demanded to be part of the stakeholder consultation process of the moratorium, originally reserved for industry and established NGOs. Right now communities are making their impact on the "engagement" efforts of the companies.

Ineos, the biggest player in the Scottish unconventional gas industry, is carrying out a "community engagement" tour meeting residents in libraries and at one-to-one meetings, and promising to share £ 2.5 billion of its profits with communities who accept drilling in their vicinity. As well as previously dismissing concerns about fracking, Ineos are deeply

The new narrative of engagement is nothing more than a thinly disguised PR exercise, and offers nothing in the way of meaningful engagement with communities.

unpopular following a recent union battle in which billionaire company-owner Jim Ratcliffe threatened to shut Scotland's largest oil refinery.

The new narrative of engagement is nothing more than a thinly disguised PR exercise, and offers nothing in the way of meaningful engagement with communities. The result: it has been followed at every stop by activists and residents asking detailed technical questions, holding protests, and staging walk-outs.

The road ahead: inquiries, consultations and social change?

Engagement from companies and weak promises of a regulated fracking industry have been rejected in Scotland. People now expect communities to have their say. How does the Government see this happening?

When announcing the moratorium, the Scottish Government also all announced an inquiry on potential public health impacts and a public consultation. There are initial concerns that the health inquiry may be seriously rushed, and there are troubling questions over how long-term impacts like cancer rates can be honestly assessed. Public consultations are often tokenistic affairs, and communities will need to mobilise strong support to make an irrefutable case. In an aborted consultative effort in 2013 the Scottish Government tried to placate initial concerns about drilling by proposing loose "buffer zones", but opted not to engage community groups on their size, instead delegating the decision the drilling companies themselves.

Ric Lander

Much of this campaign has been bitterly hard-fought, and communities are well aware that the moratorium could disappear very quickly if it the debate cools down.

There is much to be done to achieve a complete ban on all forms of unconventional fossil-fuels in Scotland. The moratorium is a huge achievement, and so is the level of mobilisation on this issue. The people have become powerful, but the industry, and their government insiders, have not yet been beaten.

Resistance beyond the border

If Scotland completes its journey to a ban on fracking and unconventional oil and gas, will the rest of the UK follow?

There has already been a significant spillover effect to the debate in Wales, with restrictions on fracking promised shortly after Scotland's policy shift.

Experience in England is more sobering. A local moratorium in Blackpool, which followed earthquakes caused by fracking, lasted less than a year. Opposition is widespread and angry, but is largely focused on local fights. The UK's biggest political parties were broadly pro-fracking going into May's General Election, and bolstered by an unexpectedly strong election victory, the Conservatives are likely to run one of the most pro-fracking governments in Europe. The SNP's landslide victory in the General Election, winning all but three seats in Scotland, provides hope for some, yet despite imposing the moratorium in Scotland their stance on fracking still remains ambiguous and the impact they could have on a Conservative majority government remains uncertain. Scottish communities can, and will, inspire battles in the rest of the UK, but they cannot lead them.

In Europe, despite moratoriums in France and Germany, the level of mobilisation in Scotland is still seen as something to aspire to. This hard working and highly effective Scottish community movement can clearly be a leading light to many others globally.

Activists who began fighting drilling proposals were shocked into action by stories of acute health and environmental impacts in America and Australia. The movement those campaigners build is now as much about sovereignty and democracy. What other victories can this inspire?

Ellen Young is an activist and citizen journalist interested in the politics of science, technology and the environment. She co-ordinates the Scottish democratic media project 'Post'.

Ric Lander is a fossil fuels researcher and activist based in Edinburgh. As well as co-editing the blog Bright Green he campaigns on sustainable finance with Friends of the Earth Scotland.

Yannick Jadot

Once upon a time… Notre Dame Des Landes

The proposed airport project at Notre-Dame-des-Landes has become a landmark in the fight against useless mega projects. The so called "zadists", who are fighting to defend the territory, became a symbol of those in search of another, fairer and humane world. Utopians with their feet on the ground.

The imagination of engineers, urban planners and industrials was boundless. The overriding feeling was that the sky was the limit, or maybe not even.

It was the 1960s in the throes of the *Trentes Glorieuses* ("The Glorious Thirty" refers to the thirty years from the end of World War II to 1975 in France). The economies, industries and technology of the OECD countries were booming. Development seemed limitless in those happy times; full employment, infinite resources and raw materials by virtue of a little pillaging of poor, full-fledged or de facto, colonies.

The imagination of engineers, urban planners and industrials was boundless. The overriding feeling was that the sky was the limit, or maybe not even. From 1947 to 1973 the annual production index in France was close to + 6%.

The aeronautical industry in France was flourishing. In 1958, Sud-Aviation's Caravelle hit the market, it was the first of its kind, and would go on to be a global success. The mid-range aircraft was a great triumph, but the engineers in Toulouse did not stop there. They saw farther, bigger, mightier, faster.

In fact, in the 1950s, the idea of developing a supersonic long-haul aircraft was already firmly in the minds of people in France and England. The project was mammoth and so the governments of both countries forced their corporations to cooperate. Concorde was born and took its maiden flight in 1969 in Toulouse. The aircraft could reach Mach 2.2 at an altitude of 18,000 meters. It was very exciting.

Simultaneously, France was buzzing after the cultural upheaval of May 68. It was the time of major landuse projects, of the *Nouvelle Société* (the new approach of erstwhile French Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas that created a network of collective bargaining whereby workers and employers would negotiate collective contracts), and the *métropoles d'équilibre* (the hypercentralisation of metropolitan areas). Olivier Guichard was Minister of Planning and Land Management at the time. He was elected to represent Loire Atlantique from 1967 to 1997, and was President of the Pays de la Loire Region from 1970 to 1990. He had big ideas for his constituency. He felt that Concorde was a huge asset for Nantes and his region. In fact, the thinking was that it would be feasible to travel from Nantes to New York in the same amount of time as from Nantes to Paris by train.

Unfortunately, the already existing Nantes Airport could not handle the supersonic beast. So, a project for an international airport up to the task was put in the pipeline in 1963.

Concorde to oil crises

By 1968 the list of potential sites was whittled down to one: 20km northeast of Nantes, on the Nantes/ Rennes connection, near the commune of Notre-Dame-des-Landes. In 1974, the public authorities declared a differed land development area or ZAD (for the French acronym: Zone d'Aménagement Différé), which served to purchase 1250 hectares of land for construction of the future airport. But as this was happening the project started experiencing its first setbacks. In 1972 ADÉCA – an association for farmers affected by the construction of the airport – was established and they refused to sell their land.

However, the biggest blow dealt to the project was to be the War of Yom Kippur and the fall of the Shah in Iran, which from 1973 – 1979, sparked two major oil crises leading to increases in unemployment, budget deficit, austerity... As a result the Concorde was put on ice.

Suddenly there were more limits than just the sky… The project was put on hold and would remain so for 20 years.

The rape of Grenelle

In October 2002, Lionel Jospin pulled the plans out again as part of a greater agenda to "enhance the international and European dimension of West Atlantic exchanges". This led to the establishment of a second association, called ACIPA that joined forces with ADÉCA; and gradually several environmental associations and political parties (including the Greens and subsequently Europe Écologie – Les Verts) would unite in a common fight under the umbrella of "No to the airport".

In 2002, under the watchful eye of this collective, a feasibility study was carried out by a mixed Syndicat (Regions of Brittany and Pays de la Loire). The study phase, which did not decide against the project, came to a close in 2007. The project was declared of public utility despite the "Grenelle Environment" meetings, which had concluded in its final resolution that there should be no further airport infrastructure built. The Decree of Public Utility (DUP) a big step in the process was published February 10th, 2008.

La Corbotte - NON à l'aéroport NDDL

Time and good will worked their magic. It showed that another world was possible, and they would try to build it together.

The collective was very active throughout the entire feasibility study phase, but there was one major turning point that had a great influence on the fate of the struggle: the project started gaining greater attention once several young people – up to hundreds at times – decided to set up camp on the site. When in July 2009 they organised a Climate Camp Action, thousands attended.

This was not an obvious match: it brought together the idealist, anarchist urban youth seeking another possible alternative to the world, with the farmers working the land on the projected site. Yet, through open lines of communication and a dash of genuine effort to actually listen to one another, it worked. Time and good will worked their magic. It showed that another world was possible; and they would try to build it together.

Hunger strike, political accord

The group of opponents opened another front at the heart of the French presidential campaign in 2012: three people began a nearly month-long hunger strike. To slip free of this, candidate François Hollande promised, if he were elected on May 5th, to drop any plans for work on the site in order to give the courts the time to clarify all of the pending cases. The opposition, in fact, with support from environmental lawyers had already begun a process of multiplying attack tactics: a bill on water, anotheron biodiversity, etc. The legal battle even went to Brussels and the Petitions Committee at the European Parliament.

Then, wham, on October 16th, 2012 Operation César was launched to clear all of the squatters from the site. The Loire Atlantique Prosecutors office organised the sting, at the time Jean-Marc Ayrault, a former mayor of Nantes, was Prime Minister. It was then that national media attention really began for the protest movement. More than 1200 gendarmes and police officers were sent to the site. Much to the government's surprise, the resistance was fierce and prevailing.

Some farmers, mainly members of Confédération Paysanne, showed their support for the young squatters and turned out with their tractors. The makeshift forts in the heart of the countryside, including La Châtaigne, became the epicentre of an anti-productivist left that was beginning to doubt the Hollande/Ayrault socialist power in place.

A feeling of national solidarity

On November 17th, 2012, a popular demonstration was held on the site and more than 20,000 people arrived from all over France. They did not show up empty handed. They came with prefabricated


Moyan_Brenn

houses, clothing, boots, drills, tools, boxes of nails, hammers… and of course olidarity with the Zadists! They took the acronym ZAD (for "Zone d'Aménagement différé") and turned it into Zone to Defend (Zone À defendre). The zadist is not a specific individual so much as a concept , which would re-emerge in the months and years to come from Sivens to the Lyon-Turin High speed train, from Échillais to Roybon, from the nuclear waste site in Bure to Nonant-le-Pin.

Notre-Dame-des-Landes was the reference in the fight against big useless mega-projects and the zadists became a symbol of those in search of another, fairer, humane world. Utopians with their feet on the ground.

On site, for weeks there were violent clashes between the zadists and law enforcement. Televised reports full of striking images showed scenes of guerrilla warfare in the fields and forests. In February 2013, discouraged, the Prosecutor began withdrawing law enforcement.

50,000 take to the streets of Nantes

Another stunning event occurred on on February 22nd, 2014, when more than 50,000 protesters took to the streets in Nantes. They came with their families even though the city was buzzing with hundreds of mobile gendarmes. A polite parade followed the path established by the Prosecutor. Meanwhile a few dozen radicals decided that they wanted to take on the law enforcement. Two hours of violent clashes ensued. There was major vandalism of public and private property.

Organisers and residents alike felt shocked and dismayed that this was sensationalised by the media. Nonetheless, opponents were able to score a point: they showed that their struggle was not just the work of a few *firebrands* but rather a subject affecting a much broader public, unable to understand the obstinacy of the Socialist government.

'Ayraulport' is not dead, but seriously wounded.

Yannick Jadot is a French MEP and member of the French green party Europe Écologie – Les Verts. Previously he has worked for environmental NGOs in Burkina Faso and Bangladesh; and has been campaign director of Greenpeace France.

The children of Gezi: Defending the Northern Forests in Istanbul

Beatrice White

What happened after the Gezi protests ended? Ever since the barricades were dismantled, the burnt out buses removed, and the world's attention moved on to protests and unrest elsewhere, Istanbul seems to have become quiet.

After the euphoria of its occupation faded, a park which had come to symbolise solidarity and peaceful resistance appeared to turn back into just a park like any other. Those who had taken to the streets, to collectively express the idea that another world was possible and to assert that they would not merely be passive and docile consumers, appeared to simply go back to work, and back to life as usual. Upon closer inspection, this couldn't be further from the truth.

In the bustling neighbourhood of Beyoğlu, just a short walk from Taksim Square and Gezi Park, high up in one of the old buildings, which seems like every other from the outside, something is happening. These are the headquarters – a grand term for such a modest space – of the Northern Forests Defence (NFD). A small but buzzing hive of activity, this is where the activists gather each week to plan, strategise, discuss and socialise. In these unassuming but welcoming rooms, full of laughter, energy and optimism, the 'spirit of Gezi' is alive and well.

"Mega-projects": A third bridge and third airport for Istanbul

Efe Baysal and Onur Akgül are two of the activists behind the movement, that was formed after the Gezi protests. Describing how the movement came about, Akgül explains that Gezi was about much more than simply preventing a small park in the heart of Istanbul from being concreted over. "The Gezi movement involved several demands towards the government and decision-makers – including the cancellation of mega-projects. This was a key point in the protests."

These demands were the basis for the foundation of NFD, which has as its key aim the prevention of the destruction of the remaining forest areas and ecosystem to the north of the city. The Northern Forests cover a vast area, stretching between the Sea of Marmara and the black sea coast. The expanse provides a much needed lung for a megacity with a population estimated at over 15 million, yet it has been dwindling at an alarming rate in recent years, due to rampant construction fuelled primarily by the city's growing population and the accompanying demand for housing. An estimated 30,000 hectares of forest have been razed since the 1970s.


© Kuzey Ormanları Savunması

Now, two massive projects – dubbed "pharaonic mega-projects" by ecologists – are further eating into this green land. The construction of a third airport for the city, and a third bridge across the Bosphorus, entail a drastic reduction in the forested area.

Construction of the third airport has been driving forwards, despite a suspension order being issued by an Istanbul administrative court in February 2014, after the Environmental Impact Assessment that was carried out for the project was deemed to be invalid. Several of the executives of the companies which won the bid to build the airport, were among those implicated in a large-scale corruption investigation.

After its initial formation, the movement began to gain support through the park forums which were set up in the wake of the Gezi protests.

The third bridge, now almost completed, is also a project which concerns environmentalists, for example as it threatens surrounding wildlife, particularly migrating birds. Hundreds of people in the surrounding area are also threatened by eviction. Yet despite these grave concerns, ecological risks and court decisions for the projects to be halted, construction has continued apace, and with it the destruction of the forests.

How it all started

After its initial formation, the movement began to gain support through the park forums which were set up in the wake of the Gezi protests. These forums provided citizens with a platform to gather, debate and share their ideas out in the open. It was a way to sustain the momentum built up in Gezi, and also a much needed outlet for expressing the strong feelings, both positive and negative, that had built up during those turbulent weeks.

The forums took place regularly, in parks across the city, pervaded by a spirit of community and direct democracy. Although they eventually ceased as interest and attendance waned with the onset of winter, they gave rise to a number of new movements infused with the Gezi ideals of environmental and social justice, and the determination to drive the movement forward. "Gezi was an important turning point for the environmentalist movement in Turkey," explains Baysal. "NFD was established through the park forums so it was somehow our mission to carry the Gezi spirit through it."

Building bridges of another kind

Now, NFD has become a forum in itself. "We started by holding protests and demonstrations against the third bridge," says Akgül. These protests took various forms – "We wrote press releases, organised marches on Istiklal Street in the heart of the city, and some protestors went to the areas where trees were being cut for the building of the bridge." They have recently launched a renewed campaign to raise awareness about the mega-projects, based around a detailed report on the third airport building processes.


© Kuzey Ormanları Savunması

The NFD activists are far from being alone in their struggle. "Through our protests we have made some alliances with groups with similar demands, and we're fighting together to make our struggle bigger and our voices louder," says Akgül. Other movements focused on ecological struggles have reached out to them, and this has helped NFD activists to make links with local activists in the areas directly affected by the mega-projects.

One of the characteristics of the Gezi protests which NFD has inherited is the casting aside of any explicit affiliation with a particular political party or organisation.

As for the links with movements outside of Turkey, this is something which the activists regard as important. "We are in contact with friends in Germany who are protecting forests by occupying them and also in France with some of the ZAD movements, who are facing some police brutality. We are also in contact with GAMM (Global Anti-Aerotropolis Movement)," says Akgül, "It is mostly symbolic – we keep in contact and send each other messages of support and share reports and developments with them."

NFD employ a variety of tools to sensitise the population and stimulate opposition to the mega-projects. These include taking to the streets and the forests to protest, issuing statements to the press, posting on social media, reporting to inform people... yet it has resisted becoming institutionalised or politicised. "NFD is a street movement," stresses Akgül, "but as it expanded there was a need for more tools, so we began to produce our own media, through our website and social media."

Keeping politics at arm's length

One of the characteristics of the Gezi protests which NFD has inherited is the casting aside of any explicit affiliation with a particular political party or organisation. "In the NFD there are people from all different political movements, but they are not present with this political identity or as representatives of it, they are just here as activists, as volunteers – as themselves." explains Akgül. "Whether you are or aren't in a political party you have a place here – we don't have a hierarchy, we don't even have a board – just a coordination team who take some responsibilities when it's necessary."


© Beatrice White

Asked to shed some insight on why it is so important for the movement to remain impartial and non-partisan, Akgül explains that the importance of uniting opposition forces in Turkey became clear after Gezi: "At the time, you could see people from different political movements in the same squares, the same photos, when normally you couldn't imagine them coming together – this was what we called the 'Gezi spirit' and this is what we started from... We saw that this independence is what makes people come to our protests and meetings and makes them able to identify with it."

Although NFD easily managed to recruit members among the ecologically-sensitive citizens who supported the Gezi protests, expanding their support base further remains a challenge in Turkey, where those who criticise the government and it's mantra of growth through construction are often viewed with suspicion, even if their opposition is rooted in concerns for welfare and social justice. "Because of the

"Gezi taught us that we had lots of anger but we had also hope. But it also taught us that you have to channel your anger and hope and that was the resistance."

tense political atmosphere in Turkey, there is a strong polarisation in the society which makes it difficult to recruit new members. Because when you begin to criticise the "economic growth" of Turkey the other side quickly labels you as someone who is trying to prevent the development of Turkey," says Baysal, "So this can make it difficult to gain public support."

Between visibility and fabrication

Although they initially struggled to gain domestic media coverage, the Gezi park protests rapidly attracted attention from media around the world, in light of the dramatic scenes of confrontations occurring in the very heart of the city. NFD's protests, however, have largely taken place far from the urban centre, in the construction zones on the outskirts


© Kuzey Ormanları Savunması

of the city. It was only after releasing the report on the third airport, announced through public press conferences, that NFD began to receive recognition in the mainstream media beyond their own networks, thanks to the hard evidence and credibility which the report provided.

Yet this increased attention comes with some disadvantages, with NFD also becoming the subject of wild rumours and fabrications, as Baysal explains, "Some pro-government newspapers and media started saying that we had gone to the forests and set up a camp to make war plans. It seems funny to us now but some people believed this."

Where anger meets hope

Looking back now, two years on, how do the activists regard the legacy and impact of Gezi? For Baysal, the answer is categorical: "We are the legacy of Gezi. In fact we call ourselves the children of Gezi." Akgül is more nuanced, in his estimation, "It lit a torch across all of turkey. It gave hope to people, both at the local level and countrywide, that when people resist, when people get together and stand up, they can change. That is the most important legacy.

For Baysal, the roots of the uprising can be traced back to Turkey's tumultuous political history, "Especially after the 1980 military coup, the idea was really to pacify the society. The regime strongly discouraged any type of organisation and directly targeted leftist movements. Gezi taught us that we had lots of anger but we had also hope. But it also taught us that you have to channel your anger and hope and that was the resistance."

Another important consequence was that it showed protesters that their actions could result in tangible effects, adds Akgül, "Not just in Gezi but also in the Aegean region, and in the black sea region, there is resistance that we can observe is growing and gaining more strength and confidence, and

beginning to exert more pressure for laws to be respected and implemented. And we're beginning to see the results." Indeed, there have been a number of successful campaigns to block environmentally damaging projects, in which local communities and activists have played a key role, such as a coal plant in Yirca and hydroelectrical power plants on the Black Sea coast.

"I don't think we will stop talking about Gezi anytime soon," reflects one of the activists present as they prepare to begin their weekly meeting, "We still don't really know what it was – it remains a big unknown, in that everyone has different memories of it. It's like when you fall in love – when it happens, you don't wonder what it will lead to..."

Beatrice White works for the Green European Foundation on communications and the Green European Journal. Previously, she worked in Istanbul as a sub-editor for an English-language newspaper in Turkey.

Urban gardening in Greece – A new form of protest

Orestes Kolokouris

Guerrilla gardening and local consumer-producer networks are redefining life in today's Greek cities. While the crisis has shifted politicians' attention away from the climate, "transition and recovery movements" work hard to keep the environment on the agenda.

Environmental politics were never well developed in Greece, but in the last years before the economic crisis the Greek environmental movement has had a short "renaissance".

The Greek crisis has radically changed Greek society, politics and the economy. In just a few years the "Greek Dream" of the beginning of the 21st century, when Greece had experienced some years of rapid GDP growth (about 4% for the first 4 years of the new millennium) mainly due to construction and consumption, has turned into a nightmare.

The Greek society is a society in great depression. In this article we will focus on the development of new forms of social movements, social conflicts and solidarity initiatives that we consider to be part of the green ideals and could help the Greek society get out of depression.

Greek crisis and environmental protection

Environmental politics were never well developed in Greece, but in the last years before the economic crisis the Greek environmental movement has had a short "renaissance". First, there was the movement against the Olympic Games, which helped reinforce other local urban movements fighting to reclaim public spaces for societal use. Secondly, the massive series of forest fires in 2007 led to an increased public awareness about the causes and effects of global warming, which then led to the creation of new environmental grassroots movements (e.g. Green Attack, Bloggers, Guerrilla Gardeners etc.), and the reinforcement of the Greek Green Party that gained an MEP in the 2009 European elections. This in turn has led to the "greening" of the public discourse of other political parties (mainly Pasok and Syriza). Finally, the Greek riots of December 2008 and the participating youth movements have led to the creation of new social experiments around the social and solidarity economy, this involves the so called "transition and recovery movements" (movements aiming to transform economical activities and everyday life rather than to protest and reclaim changes from the authorities) or the theory of degrowth.

The Greek crisis, however, negatively influenced Greek environmental politics; and apart from austerity measures, a series of socially and environmentally destructive measures were taken by the governments. Here are some examples:

- The policy of privatisation of the majority of public sector companies – for example utility companies.
- The legalisation of all illegally constructed buildings outside city planning areas (i.e. coastal areas, even Natura 2000 areas).
- In 2012 a law, the so called 'fast-track', had been passed, limiting public consultation and giving almost no chance for citizens and associations, public agencies and local authorities to raise

Fortunately, the crisis also gave rise to new forms of environmental movements that not only oppose some of these anti-environmental policies but also aim to create their own alternative structures of society.

objections to the permission given to private companies in order to conduct their projects (ranging from tourist investments to heavy industrial activities).
- A fund has been created with the aim of selling thousands of hectares of public land (as examples we can mention the old airport of Athens, taking up about 600he, but also many coastal areas, islands etc.)
- And finally, with a series of amendments in 2014 (e.g. Law about Forests, Law about Urban Planning in Attica Region, Law about Streams) the installation of some polluting activities has become easier.

Fortunately, the crisis also gave rise to new forms of environmental movements that not only oppose some of these anti-environmental policies but also aim to create their own alternative structures of society.

Concepts like the transition movement, social economy, degrowth and urban agriculture start taking new meanings thanks to these groups. One significant example of this change is the development of urban agriculture by civil society initiatives. By this we mean the spontaneous creation of vegetable gardens on private or collective basis.

Redefining social life in the cities

The development of mass production and consumerism gradually created new concerns about the quality of life; together with the development of new social movements (many of them focusing on environmental sustainability) this led to the rise of Urban Agriculture in western countries during the 1970s.

The main motivation behind this "new" urban agriculture was not the need for consumption and subsistence, but mainly the redefinition of social life in the city as well as the food security question. Hence this urban agricultural movement aims to create environmental awareness and a new relationship between culture and nature.

It also promotes new topics like the appropriation of public space by its residents, the socialisation of urban populations, new forms of collective action, the life in the neighbourhood, self-management and the sense of responsibility of the urban resident and the quality of the environment. It takes several different expressions (local producer-consumer networks, self-managed fields, guerilla gardening); and its rapid development in recent years is largely

due to the activities of civil society actors (NGOs, citizens initiatives, etc.).

A new phenomenon

Urban agriculture essentially did not exist until very recently in Greece. Its rapid development coincides with the rapid deterioration of living standards in Greek society in recent years due to the deep crisis. But it roots can be traced back to a few years earlier: to the first years of the 21st century, when small libertarian and alternative and ecological circles decided to experiment with this way of life. The projects first managed to raise attention following the fires of 2007. This was the period when guerrilla gardeners became active and the first more permanent activities of urban agricultural activities (eg. the creation of a Botanical Garden in Petroupoli, West-Athens) were reported on.

The crisis accelerated the diffusion of urban agriculture in Greek cities. The most well known cases of civil society's urban agricultural exploitations appeared in 2011: the self-managed field of Ellinikon Airport in the south of Athens and PER.KA (suburban cultures) in Thessaloniki (ex-military camps). Both are part of the movement that reclaims the free andpublic spaces. From 2012, urban agriculture has been spread either by civil society or with the help of local authorities (municipalities).

Profile and perspectives

The self-managed urban exploitations are generally small in size and operate with collective management. Almost always these exploitations have many other political or cultural activities (seminars, public debates, festivals, theatrical groups, etc.) apart from production. In terms of internal organisation they operate by the principles of grass-roots democracy. Their activists are generally middle class, young educated people in socially, politically and culturally active areas but the audience gradually widens to other groups of people.

The people involved in the citizens' initiatives for urban agriculture movement are still related to social movements, mainly on the left; and they regularly participate in other forms of social action, such as protests, occupations, etc. But the urban agricultural movement has often evolved separately from those, and experiences a rapid spatial and social spread from an ecological and anarchist avant-garde in some dynamic parts of the city (eg. Exarchia, an anarchist neighborhood in the centre of Athens) to larger populations and neighborhoods.

In fact the urban agriculture movement – similarly to most alternative movements – is directly linked to the 'Real Democracy' movement of 2011. Most of those movements that were active after the massive demonstrations in May-July 2011 were oriented towards urban agriculture, solidarity and other

"applied" forms of social transformation. That's why in 2011 and 2012, urban agriculture saw a rapid development. If we look at the map of the sites of the self-managed urban agriculture exploitations they match more or less the sites of either the local initiatives to reclaim (a specific) free space or the local groups of Real Democracy or other libertarian or radical urban movements that already existed before the crisis.

Furthermore, the urban agriculture movement – as well as other forms of transition movement (from cooperative coffee shops to occupations) – has a loose way of coordinating itselfr, in a decentralised manner, mainly by organising regular conferences and festivals to discuss the aims, the strategy and the current situation. The most important is the "Festival of Solidarity and Cooperative Economy" that takes place every autumn in Hellinikon, since November 2012. At these Festivals hundreds of people meet to exchange ideas in various specific practical subjects as well as to exchange products.

While traditional green movement and civil society actors are receding due to depression and uncertainty, the urban agricultural movement as well as initiatives of solidary economy, de-growth, real democracy, transition movement, guerilla gardening etc. progress due to the crisis. We describe those social movements as "transition and recovery movements" and we believe that those new forms of space appropriation and decision-making can lead to great progress in Greek civil society and in environmental politics in general.

Orestes Kolokouris is a PhD candidate in Social Geography at the Panteion University of Athens; and assistant to the Green Member of Greek Parliament, Giorgos Dimaras.

Lieven De Cauter

“It’s about time to start acting” – Art, protest and the public space

“The optimism of Green parties has ultimately failed” – says philosopher, writer and activist Lieven De Cauter. Activists and politicians have to remind people of the imminent catastrophe; this is the only way to find solutions to today’s problems.

We see that ecology is today off the agenda. No one wants to deal with it, because pessimism has bad press. But this denialism cannot go on forever.

What is wrong with the world today?
There is a hegemony of optimism in today's world. It's everywhere. And I feel this is quite problematic, as in my view optimism has failed: neoliberalism is optimistic, the industry is optimistic, politicians are optimistic, the entrepreneurial spirit is optimistic. Today we are all supposed to become entrepreneurs: one of the goals of Flemish education, for example, is supposed to be fostering entrepreneurial spirit in young people. I think this is insane. What we need is solidarity, the civic spirit; entrepreneurs don't make the world a fairer place, they don't solve issues like climate change; entrepreneurs are very much after their own profits.

And the optimism that has dominated our societies, the optimism of the press, the NGOs and the Green parties, has ultimately failed. We see that ecology is today off the agenda. No one wants to deal with it, because pessimism has bad press. But this denialism cannot go on forever. We need to convince people that we are in danger, and our children are in danger, and our grandchildren... well, they are in even deeper shit.

If we could do to that, then there would be more political will, I am sure. We need to start looking reality in the eye, and inform people about the imminent catastrophe, without falling into political melancholy.

Do you think Green Parties have failed somehow? And if so, why?
There needs to be a consensus that capitalism as it functions today is not the way to go forward.
I believe that today there is no alternative to finding an alternative to the system we live in. We know with scientific certainty that our world is heading to a major disaster on all sorts of levels, and I do feel that the Greens have failed bitterly in their task to wake up Europe and the world, and to convince them to act. Now they behave like most other parties, they stopped being apocalyptical.


ⓘ Mikael Miettinen

The only way forward is to remind people how great the current problems are: if the public started caring, mainstream politicians and governments would start caring as well. Public opinion is still very important for politicians here in Belgium, and most of Europe.

We can't let the post-historical attitude dominate: we should not believe that that it's too late for activism, and too late to change the way things are going. We

The only way forward is to remind people how great the current problems are: if the public started caring, mainstream politicians and governments would start caring as well.

should not give up on our goals; and I believe that the feeling of urgency could convince people that it's about time to start acting. If you are convinced that the roof of your house will fall on your head, you will act. Everybody, every single person on this planet, needs to wake up and start acting.

That means that, in order to stir people up, we need to make global warming an issue in the public sphere. About this you write: "The public sphere is today, more than ever, the virtual space of the media. Street protests turn open space into truly public (political) space, only if they are reported in the media."
If you think of Kant's essay "Answering the question: What is enlightenment?" he argues in favour of "the public use of one's reason", and he specifies that by this he means publishing in newspapers.
I believe that the idea of the public sphere was always connected to the media, and all sorts of media are important for protesters, including television, newspapers, internet and social media.

This is not just true for Europe, but also for countries like Iran, Egypt or Turkey. You can see how important the media are, by looking at the different attempts of states and multinationals to control or silence the media.

You're referring to authoritarian states, but do you think the Western countries have sometimes a similar stance towards the media? Meaning, do you think they want to silence the media, by using different, and more sophisticated, means to achieve this goal?
For the time being there is no attempt to put down the media as the governing elites do in Turkey or Iran. But the suppression and criminalisation of activism is still a well-known phenomenon in Europe. Here in Belgium for example, Bart De Wever, the Mayor of Antwerp, who I see as the most powerful man in Belgium at the moment, has forbidden several demonstrations, and has been very repressive when it came to expressions of the freedom of speech.

But that's only one example, there are many others as well: the Belgian energy corporation Electrabel, for example, has sued Greenpeace Belgium for being a criminal organisation, and a group of activists has been persecuted because they have protested against GMO potatoes in Wetteren by symbolically destroying a field.

Are symbolical acts that important?
Symbolical acts, like trespassing, often have a bigger impact than demonstrations or opinion pieces in newspapers. Civil disobedience can ignite huge debates, and therefore it is no wonder that many activists are accused of being members of criminal gangs. This happened to the activists of Wetteren too. The charges of being "a criminal gang", of "organised crime" against the Field Liberation Movement have been dropped, of course, because the law is clear on this: political activism and organised crime are two

different things. Nevertheless, the abuse of law to criminalise activism is happening again and again, even in this calm and peaceful small country, called Belgium. This is how governments try to stop people from expressing their opinions.

Also, in the last few years the situation has become somewhat worse than before. We have witnessed recently, that the army has been very present in the streets of Belgium, following the attack on Charlie Hebdo. This idea of the state of exception is now a very popular policy amongst representatives of the neoconservative right in Belgium, and it's also part of a global trend, and the criminalisation of activism has been one of the most worrying developments of the post-9/11-era.

But does an activist has to be ready to break the law when it comes to achieving their goals?
Not everyone; so far I have not been breaking the law. But I think everyone has his or her own task and preferred role in the struggles, and I do believe that in some cases it's necessary to break the law. My role, for example, is to write, rather than to sleep in the camps – even if I wouldn't be against it sometimes.

In a struggle you need not only activists, but you also need lots of public intellectuals and academics, writers, artists, and even architects, in order to follow up on the issues and to support these heroes who fight on the frontlines of the struggle.

And breaking the law can have quite some impact. There is for example a group of activists in Belgium, who are fighting against the development of a new prison in Haren, near Brussels, and the fact that they are occupying the space there, for almost a year now, is very effective.

They are occupying space that is not theirs, that's civil disobedience. This is a form of protest that is necessary, and very effective, as the occupations at Tahrir square, Puerta del Sol and Zucotti Park have proven. But they are only effective because of the media. Without the media, the police could take the protesters away, and no one would know about it, so it would have no effect at all. That is why I am now organising a taskforce to give them academic back-up and media attention. Therefore, I always tell activists: they need to be ready to use the media, even if they are sometimes not too sympathetic towards the press.

Femen has been very present in the media due to their use of provocative forms of protest, such as nudity and religious symbols. Do we need these kinds of provocations in our struggles?
I don't think I would morally condemn them, I might even say, I sympathise with these actions, but I also think that provocations are often not more than just gestures in the wild. Activist who only provoke don't have a follow-up on their actions and they don't have a clear programme. Femen has a dodgy side…

For me the future of activism is the transdisciplinary organisation of civil society: this would allow activists to form a coalition where they have a public space

to share and exchange their ideas, and they would have a number of specialists on their side to help them out in the field they need. This would enable them to confront and even beat their opponent.
A good example is stRaten Generaal, an organisation in Antwerp that has managed to stop the construction of the so called "Lange Wapper bridge" a huge viaduct that was supposed to extend the city's ringroad over the North part of the city. In this case everything was in place from the side of the local government: there was a political consensus, the whole architecture was planned, there were permits, big capital was ready, and so on. The whole project seemed to be unstoppable, and through yet civic activism, with a good counterplan and by forcing a referendum on the issue, they managed to stop the project. The participants had a large civic base, they had people who were devoted to the matter and they developed a plan, and a counterplan, so that they could say to the city government: "We have better plans than you."

That's what I call paradigmatic activism. This is the kind of success that should be studied with a microscope, so that we can learn how they achieved it.

So you say activists have to identify the problem, and experts need to come up with a way to solve it?
Yes, you need all kinds of experts. You need people who understand the political, you need lawyers so that you know the law better than your opponent, you even need to know the media better than the mainstream media knows itself. That's lots of different experts.

And what's the role of the artist in a struggle?
I think it's very hard to generalise. We can't speak of "the artist" and "the struggle", we have to look at concrete examples first. This year, for example, we put on a performance with an artist, Anna Rispoli, that re-enacted the protests that happened in the last 40 years on the steps of the Stock Exchange in Brussels. It was a big event, the opening of the world famous 'Kunstenfestivaldesarts'. So it was art indeed, but then it was most of all a social political ritual, implicating many people and the public (both were actors, if you want, I wanted to be on both sides: on the steps and seeing the spectacle. But in the end I was acting out my speech against the visit of George W. Bush to Brussels in 2005 on the steps).

This is an important act in order to protest the "Disneyfication" of the city. Recently we have also "picniced the streets": we have organised two grand public picnics in front of the Stock Exchange to demand to make the square (Beursplein) finally car free. This was an act of civil disobedience that overpowered the mayor, so he gave swift permission to avoid confrontation. But now the government wants to use this car-free zone to build 5 new parking lots around the "hyper centre" and to turn the centre into a gentrified theme park or shopping mall. Thus the "mallification" and Disneyfication of Brussels seems unavoidable. And in this newly created area, of course, beggars, homeless people and political protests are absolutely unwanted, like in a shopping mall or a theme park.

With the above mentioned performance we were reclaiming the steps of the Bourse, and we protested the ongoing neoliberal transformation of the city.

This way the artist became a mediator in a complex social issue. Suddenly you have a new role for the artist and a new paradigm of art: this has nothing to do with the old narratives, or the discussion with art history anymore; all the normal parameters of art are gone. The activist use of art is a new counter-expression. And here the artist can have a really new role, in which the old measures don't count anymore. About the performance at the Stock Exchange, I said: "I am not sure if it's great art, or not; but I don't really care." And Anna Rispoli, the artist fully agreed. Of course, the event was great and the video might be turning in the next Documenta, or in Art Biennale, let's hope...

You have also mentioned architecture earlier. Is the role of architects different from that of artists?
Architecture is since ages a political and social art form. It has never been autonomous, because architecture needs sponsors, people who pay for the buildings and monuments. Therefore the work of the architect is always a reflection on the social and political situation of the time; architects – who are more likely than artists to work in teams – are much more involved in the happenings of the actual world, and therefore it is no wonder that they regularly show up in social actions and experiments, particularly in urban activism.
A good example is the group called Collective Disaster, who have set up a public toilet, to promote the idea of sustainability and have called it "The Temple of Holy Shit", which later became "The Factory of the Black Gold" in Parckfarm, a collective community garden experiment in Brussels. This was a humorous, dadaist intervention in the service of ecological issues.

Rasande Tyskar

What makes places of protest, like Zuccotti Park or Gezi Park, special?

I would call Gezi Park and other emblematic spaces of protests Heterotopias,– using the term of Michel Foucault: "actually realised utopias"(his words). They are utopian in the sense that they are trying to make direct democracy happen, "here and now". A witness of the happenings on Tahrir square told me: whether the girls there have left their headscarves on or not, their relation to public space, to gender and to men has changed overnight. These places develop a new form of agency, and that's very political. But on the other hand, some of these parks also create microcosms, heterotopias (other spaces, spaces of otherness), where local food production can be practiced (like at Parckfarm), where people can share what they have, and where they can look for solutions to tackle today's huge ecological problem and respond to the problems of globalisation that today's cities are facing. These "utopian heterotopias" – at the same time political spaces and cultural spaces, if you want – and the activities people practice there can become potential laboratories of the future, hetero-topias in the sense that they are space of otherness and for otherness…. We will need these spaces badly in order to mix the very different communities of our cities.

Lieven De Cauter is a Belgian philosopher, art historian, writer and activist. He teaches philosophy of culture in the Department and Faculty of Architecture of KU Leuven and RITS, school of arts. He has published some dozen books on contemporary art, experience and modernity, on Walter Benjamin and more recently on architecture, the city and politics.

Criminalising resistance: The European network against mega-projects

Alfred Burballa

Every opportunity that comes up is used by megaproject promoters and their allies to stigmatise resistance movements . But a network of European groups is fighting back against mega-projects, building bridges between different local and national movements, despite facing sometimes severe repression and criminalisation of activism.

As many authors who analyse urbanisation and urban conflicts have identified, one of the main limitations encountered by local resistance groups is to take their struggle beyond the local scale. However, the network against "Useless and Imposed Mega-Projects" (UIMP) is one of the current movements attempting to build bridges across national boundaries in a quest to transcend the local dimension.

UIMP was established in 2010 after a meeting of several platforms from different European countries opposing high speed railway projects, which resulted in a joint declaration – the Charter of Hendaye – which could be referred to as the foundational act of this alliance. In 2011, the network started organising annual forums gathering groups and organisations from across Europe and beyond, starting to build a transnational network aiming at supporting each group's struggles against mega-projects.

So far, four forums have been held:

- 2011 Susa Valley (Italy), organised by the No TAV (Treno ad Alta Velocità, High Speed Train in Italian) Movement. They have been organising the resistance against the high speed railway line between Turin and Lyon.
- 2012 Notre-Dame-des-Landes (Brittany, France) organised by the groups taking a stand against the construction of a new airport for the city of Nantes.
- 2013 Stuttgart (Germany) organised by the platform against the construction of a new railway station in the city.
- 2014 Roşia Montană (Romania) organised by the movement in opposition to a massive mining project in the area.

Each forum was accompanied by a final declaration, which, adding up to the aforementioned Charter of Hendaye and the Charter of Tunis (2013), constitute the basis of the network principles, shared by all the groups and platforms involved. These documents basically denounce the social and environmental harm that could potentially be caused by the opposed mega-projects, the lack of transparency and public participation in the decision-making processes and the repression and criminalisation suffered by the social movements which oppose mega-projects.

This year, the forum is back in Italy, this time in Bagnaria Arsa (north-east), where the local committee against high speed rail will be in charge of the organisation.

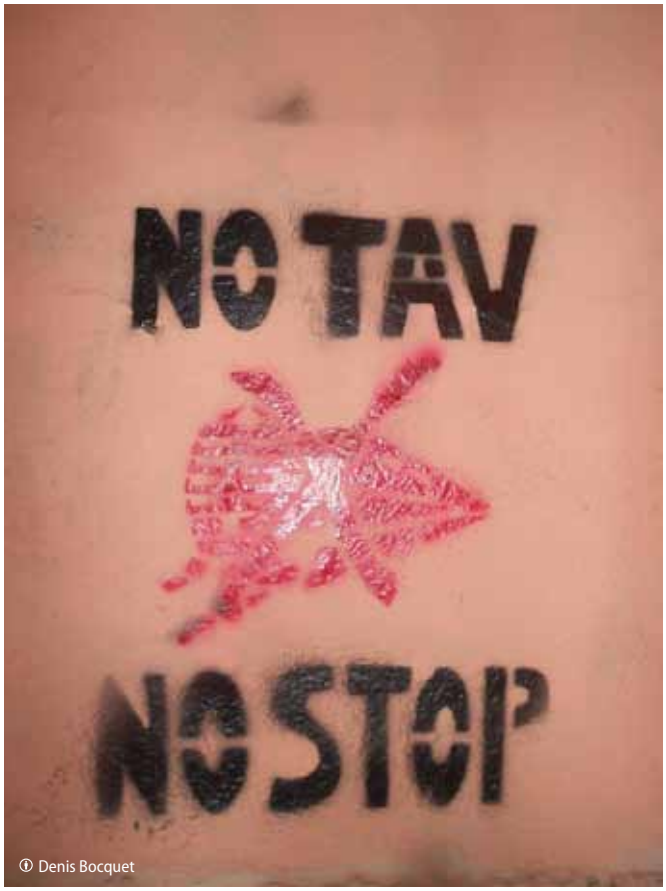
This article will focus on one of the major issues related to the history of the movement: the criminalisation and repression of activism, specifically highlighted in the Charter of Tunis (2013) "criminalisation of the opposition."

Prison sentences

The state's repression has been most severe when activists were demonstrating against high speed rail in the Basque Country and the Susa Valley. The two situations I go on to describe illustrate how the state apparatus in Spain and Italy is committed to ensure that their planned mega-projects are developed, regardless of community resistance and the dubious social interest of these large infrastructures.

One of the most original actions against high speed rail in the Basque Country was the pie thrown at the president of the Navarre region (historically part of the Basque Country) Yolanda Barcina while she was participating in a public meeting in Tolouse in 2011. While it may appear as a "funny" action of protest, the Spanish Court "Audiencia Nacional" (a special court that has its roots in Franco's regime) didn't feel like laughing against the activists: out of the four individuals involved, three were given a two-year jail sentence while the fourth was sentenced to one year, as the court considered that the activists committed a "violent corporal action". According to the activists' opinion such sentence reflects the fact that the Spanish authorities saw such a humiliation as intolerable and did not want to let it go without an exemplary punishment. The only consolation for the activists is that they did not have to serve any time since they had no criminal record.

In the case of the long battle – nearly 25 years – against high speed rail in the Susa Valley, accusations of terrorism were already issued in the late nineties when three activists were jailed; two of them did not even get to know the sentence because they took their lives while in preventive detention; the third activist was sentenced to three years even though the accusations of terrorism against him were dismissed.



© Denis Bocquet

Every opportunity that comes up is used by mega-project promoters and their allies to stigmatise the resistance movements.

More than a decade later, a macro trial against No TAV activists has had the outcome of a total of 140 years of prison sentence for 47 activists and a payment of over €100,000 in compensation claims in connection with clashes with the police in 2011.

Criminalisation of street protest

Every opportunity that comes up is used by mega-project promoters and their allies to stigmatise the resistance movements. This was the case, for instance, of the protest carried out in February 2014 in Nantes (Brittany, France) against the new airport after some clashes between the police and a group of protestors.

Immediately, the focus was put on the violent character of the protestors; diverting attention form the question whether a new airport for this French city is appropriate in terms of economic, social and environmental costs. For a few days, the so called "eco-terrorists" became public enemy number one. Government authorities and mass media also ignored the fact that six people were injured as a result of police intervention – three of them were hit in the eyes by rubber bullets – and peaceful protestors also suffered the effects of tear gas thrown at them by the security forces.

Furthermore, the remarks of the media and authorities made it seem like violence from the authorities was something unthinkable, even though in fact all the violence was initiated by the state, similarly to the ZAD (*Zone À Défendre*, "Zone to Defend") eviction in 2012, named "Operation Caesar".

No room for civil disobedience

Civil disobedience and non-violent actions constitute one of the main types of protest action endorsed by the resisting groups. Despite its non-violent character, state forces are not always keen on permitting this type of protest. This was true in the case of the opposition to the high speed rail in the Basque Country.

In 2009, after a rally, some activists tried to symbolically squat on an area of the building site where no harm could be done to people or material. The response from the police was a violent eviction with dozens of activists injured and the arrest of eight activists under accusations of terrorism. In 2012 a court sentenced one activist to a year in prison, four other activists to seven months because of public disorders, three of the latter and another activist were also fined for disobeying the authorities.

One of the crucial aspects in the ideological battle being waged against mega-projects is probably that of the sacredness of growth.

Similarly, in 2010, when intending to stop the cutting of trees in an urban park of Stuttgart, where a new train station was planned to be built, the police, despite the presence of children and elderly people, violently evicted about 400 protestors. The outcome of the operation was that 50 activists suffered bruises, bloody noses, or scrapes and about 300 ended up with irritated eyes after the police used tear gas, water cannons, pepper spray and batons. Protestors refer to this day as "Black Thursday". Police violence was to be condemned by the state with minor fines for two police officers and a somewhat bigger fine of €15,600 to the former police chief who was accused of negligence causing bodily harm.

Constraining freedom of expression

Repression is also aimed at restricting freedom of expression. As an example, the renowned Neapolitan writer Erri de Luca was recently prosecuted for commenting that sabotaging the works of the Lyon-Turin high speed rail, in his view, was "legitimate". After this comment the firm building the railway line pressed charges against him and prosecutors followed suit, the acclaimed writer is now facing up to five years in prison for "incitement to violence" after he called for the sabotage.

I have conveyed here some of the most relevant cases of repression and criminalisation of grass-roots groups opposing mega-projects in Europe. Nonetheless, there are many other cases where activists have suffered the intolerance of the state, for instance, in struggles against "extractivism" be it fracking, mining projects or dams.

From an historical perspective, as outlined by the academic expert Bent Flyvbjerg, mega-projects' results are, overall, rather poor: cost overruns and underestimation of costs, delays in the delivery, underutilisation, exclusive decision-making processes and similar pitfalls are common features within the mega-project landscape. Nevertheless, mega-projects not only remain on the public agenda but also are being conceived in a more complex and larger scale, e.g. the new interoceanic canal planned for Nicaragua.

One of the crucial aspects in the ideological battle being waged against mega-projects is probably that of the sacredness of growth. Hence, as long as the view that prosperity is achievable without growth is not endorsed by significant sectors of society and that another socioeconomic model is possible, mega-project development will always be one of the first options.

However, in certain cases mega-projects had to be cancelled or, worse, stopped after they had been constructed due to overwhelming evidence of lack of profitability or simply because they were undoubtedly ruinous. That is the case of Lisbon, where high speed rail has been discarded or the bridge on the Messina strait, a project cancelled twice in the last decade; the high speed line between Toledo and Albacete (Spain), which closed with a registered average of 9 passengers a day; and the airport of Ciudad Real (Spain) which ceased operating after subsidies for low-cost airlines ended and they all stopped operating from that city.

It is not an exaggeration to affirm that enough evidence exists to technically and ideologically back popular struggles against these new "white elephants". The challenge is to demonstrate and convince that alternatives are feasible and applicable. In any case, the enormous work carried out by the groups compounding the network against UIMP goes in that direction. As a consequence, they must be supported against the repression and criminalisation induced by mass media and carried out by the states.

Alfred Burballa is a PhD-candidate at Ulster University. He has contributed to the EJOLT research project and the work of the Spanish magazine Ecología Política.

Further Reading

Flyvbjerg, B., Bruzelius, N. & Rothengatter, W., 2003. *Megaprojects and risk: An anatomy of ambition*. Cambridge University Press.

Robert, D., 2014. Social movements opposing megaprojects. *A rhizome of resistance to the neoliberal hydra?* Degree Project in Urban and Regional Planning. Royal Institute of Technology Stockholm – available online.

Greens need to be radical in actions and in words

José Bové

For a politician, being close to the people means constantly being present in their struggles – argues José Bové in an interview with the Green European Journal. In his opinion, going institutional can only work if the members of the Green movement don't forget to "persevere radically".

You have stood beside activists and participated in numerous demonstrations throughout Europe, in Hungary, the United Kingdom, Poland, and France. What are the major issues and challenges facing the world today?

There are currently a number of important demonstrations taking place around Europe. First, there is a lot of mobilisation related to territorial issues, for instance, protection of rural areas and nature... There has been an increase in this type of activism around Europe and this is clearly a very important course of action in the quest to fend off industrial, infrastructure and commercial projects.

Perhaps the most emblematic example of this is the plan to build an airport near Nantes at Notre Dame des Landes (dairy farmers, locals and environmental activists are protesting for years now, as the €556m airport would lead to a loss of homes and a precious woodland). The Lyon-Turin high-speed train connection (a 270 km-long railway line in; the Italian No TAV Movement is protesting against its environmental and health risks since 1995), is also an excellent example of the fight to defend a territory against a specific project. There have also been instances of small-scale demonstrations against the construction of supermarkets. The mobilisation to fight open-pit coalmines in Germany is apparently gaining impetus.

Destruction of a territory is something that mobilises categorical rejection and opposition. This has taken the form of opposition to airports, coal mining, or shale gas (in Great Britain)... The reason for the increase in this type of activism is simple. There are differing reasons motivating each fight but they all have one thing in common. In each case, there is an affront to something essential like water, land, or natural resources. Moreover, resistance grows stronger as people come to realise: "We could actually win this one!" Each fight is local but the sum of all of these local fights equates to the rejection of a given model.

Are these just simply cases of NIMBY (Not in my Backyard)? Or is it more than that?

Promoters often claim that the protest is just a case of NIMBY. Obviously, awareness is piqued when the land to be destroyed is "your" land. And people

The vitality and diversity of activism across Europe is tied to the fight to defend a land, a territory.

have every right to take part in decisions affecting the economic future of their territory – big or small. Resistance of this type is legitimate. Frequently, it is the only right that people have left: they no longer have any control over their wages, jobs, etc. When it comes to their land, however, people can still act: they can stand up and say "you will never destroy the water and land on which I stand." These are the things that mobilise people; and this expands the mobilisation beyond traditional activists or political groups. We are dealing with concrete issues here and that creates a community dynamic, which in turn, creates alternatives. That is what is interesting. The fight for land and territory often brings about concrete thinking on what type of alternatives exist: alternatives for energy, transport, and consumer habits... These communities, through debate, find the right thought process to shake free of the NIMBY mentality. At times, as was the case in France recently, the people who spearheaded the fight have gone on to be elected to local government.

The vitality and diversity of activism across Europe is tied to the fight to defend a land, a territory. For example, initially the demonstrations in Bulgaria, Romania, and Poland – aimed to fend off a land grab by the extractive industries (shale gas, gold mining, etc.). Sometimes it seems as if these movements are piecemeal. Yet, when we take them all together we realise that there are solid networks out there. These are not examples of just short-term election campaign politics.

In addition to environment-related mobilisation there has also been a lot of activism related to social issues, specifically in Southern Europe.

There is a difference. Of course there is some overlap, i.e., the rejection of a model, but the end result is the setting up of an alternative – cooperatives for example. And there is a lot of social turmoil surrounding these movements. From time to time we get good news: the election in Catalonia of Ada Colau, a member of the *Indignados* from the Barcelona anti-eviction campaign, for example. When the time comes to get involved in politics everything gets much harder because you immediately come face to face with a nearly insurmountable challenge: it is very difficult to offer alternatives to the European construction process in its current conception based on the mainstream liberal economic model. For instance, Greece has been gradually forced to make concessions and the Greek government made to adapt. In Spain, Podemos had to dial back its anti-hegemonic-system designs in favour of realpolitik and entering coalitions. Inevitably this will be a source of frustration.

Therein lies the challenge and complexity of a movement like the Greens in the broadest sense of the term: striking the balance between leading radical struggle and being pragmatic as to the alternatives – with – why not – attempts at forging compromise – without of course caving in on value of fundamental importance. I believe that there currently exist two major global struggles that are not linked to a given territory: TAFTA/TTIP and climate change.

I believe that there currently exist two major global struggles that are not linked to a given territory: TAFTA/TTIP and climate change.

La Corbotte - NON à l'aéroport NDDL

The fight against free trade has always been one of your major causes. The idea behind destroying the Millau McDonald's in 1999 was to attack a symbol. The mobilising symbolism of water and land is easy to see: they both affect us directly. What sort of symbol exists for the climate, which can seem overly abstract?

That is precisely what is challenging about the climate. When it comes to TAFTA, the concrete harmful effects are easily discernible: GMOs and food, for example. How can we establish a strong resolve on something the effects of which are very slow (except of course in moments of acute crises, like drought or severe storms) and delayed? It is very difficult to organise the mobilisation. That is why I believe that the climate movement can and must join forces with the anti-free trade movement. The role of multinationals in destroying the climate is overwhelming, in terms of energy, industrial farming, transport, etc. What's more, all of the economic structures in place are designed to expand the space and the power of multinationals. Therefore, the fight against climate change must inevitably challenge the dominant economic model; failing to see the link between the two would be tantamount to greenwashing. We will need targeted actions to put pressure on all the stakeholders. A good recent example of this was the Anglican Church's decision to divest in gas and oil. This is not a street protest, of course, but had there not been all of the protests in the lead up to this decision, the pressure on the church would not have been there. We have to continually make the connection between the two.

You were arrested after the incident at McDonald's. Activists are arrested every day for their actions in the field. Are you under the impression that there is a crackdown on protests and activism? If we take the examples of Notre Dame des Lands and Sivens, do you believe that the French government is an example of stringency in its approach?

That is a question of strategy essentially. In general, nations and economic powers are not very fond of dissent – it makes sense really – because it runs counter to their interests. So, when you contest a model – the first thing – and the most important to me – is to win over the general public, otherwise it will be impossible to create a power struggle. Therefore, the strategy must aim to convince the widest public possible; that is the only way to flip the logic of repression, vis-à-vis the State. That also means that some forms of action are counterproductive: radicalisation, violent clashes,

The fact that I was arrested and then the power game I played turned out to be very effective – I refused to post bail and in doing so flipped the logic around: I decide when I get out of jail and not the authorities.

Molotov cocktails are not conducive to winning over public opinion. Back at the time of Larzac (a movement protesting the expansion of a military camp, which would have led to the displacement of farmers), if we'd have tried violence against the army we would have lost. With the army on the other side it was clear that we had to convince people that "armed" resistance made no sense. I am convinced that a strategy of non-violence is essential in all of these battles.

That is not to say that we are doing nothing. It just means that we are trying to come up with the best approach to resistance. For example, in Notre Dame des Landes, the blockade was maintained non-violently, i.e., through the establishment of a demarcated area to defend known as a ZAD (for the French Zone À Defendre), areas that were occupied (essentially the same thing: occupy an area to prevent construction, to block the process). A small minority in Notre Dame des Landes became radicalised, which brought on an exaggerated deployment of law enforcement. The out of proportion reaction prevailed despite all of the solidarity and reinforcement of people. It could have gone the other way.

All of these actions are symbolic and aim to grab the attention of the greater public, very often they get run through the media, which serves as a conveyor belt of information. The problem is, we never know ahead of time, precisely what is going to serve as a trigger.

Often, like with McDonalds, the arrest and jail time were what resonated with the general public. The actual dismantling and rally cry of "The WTO is taking over our plates" could have been completely lost had it not been for the subsequent reaction of law enforcement. The fact that I was arrested and then the power game I played turned out to be very effective – I refused to post bail and in doing so flipped the logic around: I decide when I get out of jail and not the authorities. Ultimately, American farmers from a Via Campesina union posted bail for me stating that they supported the effort. In doing so they added breadth to the story. In a case of non-violent civil disobedience, repression is part of the action. Jail time strengthens action and builds the movement, things happen because we force the state into the trap of a repressor.

With the issue of the relationship to power comes the question of political parties. Political ecology has its roots in activism. However, recently, activist movements seem to have side-lined or even rebuffed the Greens. Was this inevitable?

The problem goes back to the setting up of political parties. The pan-European anti-nuclear movement of the late 1970s – protest through concrete action – served as the foundation for the European Greens. The battles on the ground and the demonstrations built the idea that there needed to be a way to fight politically too and therefore a need to establish a political wing as emissary of these ideas.

In my opinion the long term future of political ecology will only be ensured if it is able to persevere radically – in discourse (that is of course necessary) but not only. It will also have to be radical in its actions.

Any movement that decides to establish a political entity is immediately forced to grapple with the following question: do you go institutional or do you dissolve? If the decision is made to go institutional as a political party in the public space, two options are available: go forward in compliance with all of the codes that be or persevere radically, by taking a slight step to the side.

In my opinion the long term future of political ecology will only be ensured if it is able to persevere radically –in discourse (that is of course necessary) but not only. It will also have to be radical in its actions. The problem is that the Green parties that exist today are essentially parties of elected officials, and not parties of activists. Therefore, the political wing revolves around those who are sitting members of assemblies – local and national – and not around those who are working in activism daily. Perhaps that is why those actively fighting every day do not necessarily relate to the Greens and do not necessarily expect them to come up with the solutions or to support them in their fight. Because those who embody the political movement, are not considered, rightly or wrongly, those who embody the protest or those who are able to stand up to the powers that be.

Therefore, the elected officials and political leaders of the movement must always be able to shake things up and be "just a step off to the side." They must remain tuned in to social movements and to what people are really thinking in society. Movements of political ecology run the risk of shifting too far into

the institutional side of things and then forget to stay tuned into the rest.

To wrestle back and to own this ideal again will mean being able to be active in the field, to be a reliable conduit for the major societal concerns and to be able to transform those concerns into acts. Being close to the people means constantly being present in the struggles that they embody, in the area of energy, farming... We cannot expect to win every time, but we must be able to give body to the fundamental stories and subjects when the expectation is there and when we are able to move the lines. The Greens must show constant indignation and ire when a subject means something to the people; not to strike compromise, but to lead a true battle.

Considering all the weaknesses of the European political system – insufficient democratic accountability and overly powerful lobbies, such as you have written about in your book *Hold up à Bruxelles*, how do you envisage the future of activism? Are you more optimistic or pessimistic?
I always strive to be an "active pessimist". When you look at how the world works and you see that the forces have coalesced around a project that is diametrically opposed to ours, the obvious conclusion is that you are never going to prevail. And yet, we are making progress; we are winning battles. Even in the area of climate change – the fact that it is even an item on the agenda is an amazing accomplishment. It has become one of the major planetary political issues, thanks to the 40-year process of re-evaluating our models for growth, energy, and consumption. Political ecology's major victory is to have forced fundamental issues onto the political agenda. Over the last 40 years, we have clearly shown our ability to get our issues addressed.

The message is clear: we must continue unrelenting in our combats on the ground and in our efforts to make sure that all of those endeavours coalesce.

José Bové is a French farmer and a Member of the European Parliament. He was one of the twelve official candidates in the 2007 French presidential election, and one of the Green leading candidates for the European Elections in May 2014.

Mariana
Carmo Duarte

Britta Baumgarten

Portugal: The crisis and new actors against austerity

A strong anti-austerity civil society started to be a reality in Portugal in 2011. However, even though these new projects or networks succeeded in mobilising civil society between 2011 and 2013; about one year after the Troika has left the country, only some of them remain.
The Portuguese social movement-based protest returned to silence, and mobilisation has almost exclusively become the resort of trade unions.

2011: The take-off of social movement activism

In an interdependent world, Portugal was one of the biggest sufferers of the global financial crisis. The socio-economic crisis hit Portugal mainly in 2011, which was a year of great political and social changes.

In March, due to the disapproval of the socialist government proposal of a fourth stability and economic pack by the parliament and due to a large demonstration against the government, named *Geração à Rasca* (the desperate generation), the Portuguese Prime-Minister resigned. In April, the socialist government required external economic assistance, and soon after the Troika, experts from the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) arrived in Portugal.

The Troika negotiated a programme with the Portuguese government based on structural reforms of the financial sector and on improving economic competitiveness. In order to fulfil these aims, a wide range of welfare cuts were imposed on the country: there were cuts in the healthcare and educational systems, the unemployment benefits and incomes in public employment were reduced, etc. Apart from this, there was also a large increase in taxes.

In June, the conservative party, PSD – *Partido Social Democrata* (Social Democratic Party), won the elections. Since then, by increasing the austerity measures, the government has gone even further than what was stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the EC, ECB and IMF.

Within such a political and social context, social movements flourished in Portugal. There was a growth in alternative non-governmental projects, like self-organised centers, forums, platforms, movements and solidarity-based networks, whose general objectives were to fight against austerity measures, precarious work, unemployment and the increase in taxes. They furthermore demanded sustainable economic growth, better life conditions and participatory democracy.

Following these features, we aim to give an answer to the following questions: what are the main social projects or movements in Portugal? What are their targets? What were their action forms? What has been their political and social impact?

Geração à Rasca and the rebirth of social movement activism

In Portugal, strong civil society groups and high levels of political participation are not common.

After years of repression, there was a spreading of popular mobilisation and various attempts were made by political parties, trade unions and citizen groups to organise civil society.

The highest moment of political activism was in 1974-1975, during the revolutionary period that followed the end of the dictatorial regime (*Estado Novo*). After years of repression, there was a spread of popular mobilisation and various attempts were made by political parties, trade unions and citizen groups to organise civil society.

However, these high levels of political mobilisation and activism were followed by a long period of low participation that ended in 2011, on March 12th, with the protest of *Geração à Rasca*. With the participation of over 200,000 people, it was the biggest demonstration in Portugal since the Carnation Revolution of 1974. The organisers of the *Geração à Rasca* protest emphasised its non-partisan, neither right nor left position and later created the *Movimento 12 de Março* – M12 M (12th March Movement) with the target of having an active and dynamic presence in supporting democracy in all spheres of life, calling for transparency in political decisions and fighting against precarious work.

Inês Delgado

The *Geração à Rasca* demonstration was a turning point for structural changes in Portuguese mobilisation: if until this date trade unions had had the monopoly of social mobilisation, for the first time civil society activists managed to organise large public protests independently.

After the success of the demonstration *Geração à Rasca*, and inspired by Spanish demonstrations, a new group appeared in Lisbon in May 2011, during the occupation of one of the main squares – Rossio Square: *Plataforma 15 de Outubro – 15O* (15th October Platform). This group, whose objective was to organise the Portuguese protests on a transnational day of action and uniting efforts with other groups around the world, was supported, amongst others, by the *Indignados de Lisboa, Acampada Lisboa – Democracia Verdadeira Já, Portugal Uncut, ATTAC Portugal*. They organised a demonstration, on 15th October 2011, which mobilised many thousands of people. After some more protest events, 15O lost its importance and some activists created a kind of platform with some similar objectives - *the Que se Lixe a Troika!* – QSLT (F*** the Troika!). In 2011 and 2012, new activist groups were created, like the *Indignados de Lisboa, Movimento Gerações, Movimento Sem Emprego.*

Que se Lixe a Troika… and the government!

15th September 2012 is the date of the biggest demonstration in Portugal so far: more than 500,000 people took to the streets of Lisbon and other cities of Portugal. This mass protest, as well as the one on March 2nd 2013, was organised by a group whose slogan was *Que se Lixe a Troika! Queremos as nossas vidas!* (F*** the Troika! We want our lives!) – known

simply as *Que se Lixe a Troika!* (QSLT) – a set of people who already knew each other from other social platforms and decided to get together to organise this demonstration.

Based on the same internationalist principles, such as gender equality, sustainable growth, environmental policies and homosexual rights, this group used some national historic symbols of protest, such as the symbolic song of the Carnation Revolution, *Grândola, Vila Morena*, to create a real sense of belonging to these struggles.

Similarly to M12 M and 15O, the QSLT has defined itself as a non-partisan group. The terms right or left were not mentioned and there were many expressions of political autonomy and independence. However, its ideological position was evident given the personal overlap of many QSLT activists being also active in the trade union Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses – CGTP (General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers) and in two left Portuguese political parties: *Partido Comunista Português* – PCP (Communist Portuguese Party) and *Bloco de Esquerda* – BE (Left Bloc).

Precários Inflexíveis: **Continuity of political activism beyond the wave of large protest**

If the great majority of the social groups mentioned above have been losing strength and some have even ended, *Precários Inflexíveis* (PI) has been a force on social activism in Portugal since its foundation during the activities of May Day 2007. This group was already concerned with precariousness in the labour market, a multilevel phenomenon that has been a reality in employment in recent decades, mostly in Southern European countries, and decided to use this event to raise awareness. In 2012, PI changed its organisational nature from an informal group into a formal association, Association against Precariousness/Inflexible Precarious, but without changing its aims and principles. Besides fighting against precariousness, it also supports other struggles, e.g. against xenophobia and LGBT discrimination and supports animal rights and ecological policies and leads a cultural centre with public debates around political issues.

© IsmailKupeli

The political targets, the way PI operates and a large number of members of BE leave no doubt that this movement can be classified as a left-wing association. This location in the political spectrum makes it easier for PI to build bridges with other left-wing social networks, trade unions and political parties, in order to cooperate in the denunciation of precariousness or to march together in larger manifestations against austerity, the Troika and the government. In this sense, PI has had an important role in organising the protests in Lisbon and all over

Portuguese society is resistant to new forms of mobilisation. Traditional actors, such as labour unions and left-wing parties have always had the key roles in helping and sustaining mobilisation, which shaped activism during the entire democratic period.

Portugal. Regarding the 12th March 2011, PI helped to organise it, but was not directly involved in the call; instead, four young people initiated it, via Facebook. Nevertheless, in the other demonstrations – 15th October 2011, 15th September 2012, 2nd March 2013 and 1st June 2013 – the strategy was different. The calls were either launched in the name of a platform of various groups, putting just the name of the platform or they were launched in the name of individuals – well-known names from political parties, trade unions, academia, culture or activist groups.

Leaving the field to the trade unions

The levels of social movement activism and the number of social groups spread in 2011, when the Troika entered Portugal and the austerity measures began to gain importance in Portuguese politics. The Troika has already left the country, but the austerity measures remain. However, the number of demonstrations and protests led by social platforms has been declining since 2013.

How can this be explained? Portuguese society is resistant to new forms of mobilisation. Traditional actors, such as labour unions and left-wing parties have always had the key roles in helping and sustaining mobilisation, which shaped activism during the entire democratic period. After the short period of experimenting with new forms of social movement activism inspired by protests abroad, a high level of contention in the country and the hopes to change politics, many of the people who participated in the protests in 2011-2013 lost interest in this form of political activism or refrained because of the lack of political consequences.

The trade unions remained more successful in organising protests because they have different organising principles based on membership and professional or job-related interests that are more specific and easier to organize. In 2014, for example, we observed a lot of profession-specific protests organised by trade unions, like the protest of the teachers, the policemen or the strikes of the public transport workers, while the broad issues of 2011-2012 – e.g. real democracy, or general claims against unemployment or precarious lives – disappeared from the street protests.

Mariana Carmo Duarte has graduated in Political Science and International Relations at FCSH-NOVA, Lisbon and is now a Political Science master's student at ISCTE – IUL, Lisbon. Her master's research field is on nationalism in Eastern European countries.

Dr. Britta Baumgarten is a contracted post-doc researcher at CIES-IUL, Lisbon and a lecturer on protest politics and collective action at ISCTE, Lisbon. She works on civil society and social movements in Portugal and in Brasil in a transnational perspective and is author of the blog http://portuguesemovements.hypotheses.org/. Her recent publications include the book: Conceptualizing Culture in Social Movement Research, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology Series, 2014 (with Priska Daphi and Peter Ullrich).

Further Readings

Accornero, Guya and Pedro Ramos Pinto (2014): "Mild Mannered"? Protest and Mobilisation in Portugal under Austerity, 2010-2013, in West European Politics, Vol. 38, 3, 491-515;

Baumgarten, Britta (2013): *Geração à Rasca* and beyond: Mobilizations in Portugal after 12 March 2011, in The Sociological Review, Vol. 61, 4, 457-473;

Diani, Mario (1992): The concept of social movement, in: The Sociological Review, Vol. 40, 1, 1-25;

da Paz Campos, Maria and Lima and Antonio Martín Artiles (2013): Youth voice(s) in EU countries and social movements in southern Europe, in Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research, Vol. 19, 3, 345-363.

Gerhard Schick

The crisis is an opportunity to reform the economy

A corporatist economy doesn't leave businesses much room for ecological and social concerns – says Member of the Bundestag Gerhard Schick. In our interview we discussed his book "Corporatist Economy– no thanks!"

What, in your view, are the most visible symptoms of the fact that something is wrong with today's economic system?
For one thing, there is the crisis, which continues to result in high unemployment. But there has also been a structural change: the market economy is no longer functioning in the way it was intended to. On the one hand, this has something to do with the fact that some companies have acquired a great deal of power and can use this to dictate the terms, but also with the fact that financial markets continue to play much too big a role and to influence market conditions strongly. And the third reason, which is bound up with the first two, is that corporate interests very often dominate politics. Often, the state no longer sets the rules, as it is supposed to do in a market economy, but instead it is companies which are trying to set the rules themselves. These three phenomena are what I collectively refer to as the "Corporatist Economy", because our economy is not dominated by fair markets but by big private companies.

You mention in your book that you had the opportunity in Hong Kong to talk to small investors who had suffered losses and who demonstrated in front of the offices of the banking supervisory authority. What did you learn from this meeting?
What was interesting was to see that the problem of protection for [small] investors was the same there as it is in Europe: the big banks had transferred the risks on to inexperienced clients. This took place in Hong Kong just as it did in Germany. And you can see that big companies are able to strategically exploit the weaknesses of different production locations, and consumers become the pawns in this game. This is not a good thing: markets should be organised for the benefit of consumers.

That's an issue that ought to be familiar to everyone since the Lehman Brothers crash. So it also raises the question of why the economy seems to continue to operate almost exactly as it did before the crisis happened?
Many things have changed in the last few years. A huge number of laws have been passed, at the national level as well as the European. But the crucial change has not happened because the power relations are still wrong. Financial markets are still growing, the imbalances are still there. It is still often the case that the state is not capable of properly grasping what is happening on the markets. And the legal regulations often can't be enforced, either

I think it is very important that people try to buy fair trade products when shopping. But we can only achieve what is really important politically by changing the regulations.

because the public authorities are far too weak or because the political will to enforce those regulations simply isn't there. In my personal experience, in many cases, although the laws exist, the authorities simply have no chance of understanding what the banks are doing without information from the companies, and as a result many problems are not noticed in time.

But you also write that the big banks still receive subsidies from the taxpayer amounting to billions. That doesn't suggest that the state has the will to actually use its powers of enforcement.
There has already been a tightening of the regulations on capital requirement, so it would be wrong to say that nothing has happened. But big companies often continue to enjoy special advantages, just as they always did, not just the big banks. In the area of taxation, for example, where big companies in the EU play the states off against each other. At the end of the day, small businesses and employees have to pay their taxes, but big companies only pay a small amount of tax on their earnings. That's an advantage which small businesses can never make up, no matter how good they are. And of course that has an influence on competition.

In recent years, or decades, the state has lost considerable legitimacy as a regulator because it failed to solve the problems. What could or should the state be doing in this situation?
It is very important to address the deficiencies in the state too. The big parties are often only interested in keeping them hidden. We've seen that in very many countries. Germany is a good example too, because there, too, hardly any politicians have had to bear the consequences of the mistakes that led to the bank crisis. And as a result of course people are simply unwilling to trust the state, which has got so much wrong. I believe that the Greens, with their predominantly sceptical attitude to state power, are actually well placed to provide a good answer here by saying, "We need firm and simple rules," instead of leaving the whole issue to be sorted out by state bureaucracy. Public sector banks also need very good management control systems, because otherwise they are just as capable of making a mess of things as private banks. There were a great many shocking examples in Europe showing that public sector institutions were no better than those in the private sector.

We can also see that the customers often play along with the big companies' game. We know that lots of products are harmful for us but we still buy them. Why?
Often we don't have enough information. Sometimes we know but find it difficult to switch. I think it is very important that people try to buy fair trade products when shopping. But we can only achieve what is really important politically by changing the regulations. We have to make sure that the consumers are on a level playing field with the companies so that they can fight back. We have to have rules that mean that financial products that are too obscure to understand can simply be taken off the market, and that there is greater liability for harmful products, so that companies are scared of putting bad products on the market in the first place. I don't think the responsibility should be dumped on the individual consumer alone.

You also write about CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) in the big firms and suggest that this kind of activity usually only serves the firm's own public relations and marketing purposes.
Of course there are positive examples in some sectors, but the goal of private companies overall is to increase the wealth of their shareholders. All ecological and social aspects are subservient to that goal. That's why I say that we have to change the DNA, the underlying structure of companies if we don't want our economy to be only about finances and money. Otherwise the economy will fail to meet our needs, because human beings are not interested only in money. That's why it is important to require companies to include social and ecological issues in their public reporting.

But how can we change the DNA of these firms?
In addition to the public reporting requirements we should change the laws on corporate ownership and governance so that it becomes possible for social and ecological targets to be integrated into the corporate goals and mission of a firm. And here I would like to come back to the issue of the corporatist economy: we have to prevent companies growing too big for us. Owner-managed companies can recognise their responsibility to their community and their bosses can sometimes allow themselves not to pursue profit at any cost in order to treat their employees fairly and avoid damage to the environment. But managers of corporations have to maximise profits. A corporatist economy therefore doesn't leave them much room for ecological and social concerns. That's another reason why I as a Green politician am involved in economic policy issues: if we want to protect the climate, if we really want to protect biodiversity, if we want to make sure that ethical issues are not entirely ignored, then we have to take on the powerful, big organisations who are only interested in profits. If we don't do that, then there is no chance of achieving green goals like climate change.

Do you feel that, as a result of the crisis, the climate issue has been completely pushed off the agenda? It seems that everyone is now focused only on finding financial and economic solutions to the problems of our economy.
Up until now, neither we Greens nor the wider environmental movement have succeeded in getting the economic, ecological and social crises dealt with in Europe together and at the same time. It's not just

I believe all countries benefit when citizens are socially engaged and political issues are not just left to the career politicians. And *vice versa*: the political system must not exclude civil society.

the silly, financially catastrophic construction projects that have been started; many, many people have also lost their houses and their incomes because of the high indebtedness. And besides that, vast resources have been squandered on business projects that nobody needs, even though we do have real problems that need to be addressed. That's exactly what we mean by the Green New Deal: we must try to use this crisis to reform the economy, because the way it has operated in recent years has been the cause not only of economic damage but of social and ecological damage too.

But the Greens do not hold the balance of power in Europe. So how can you get other parties to take up the aims of the Green New Deal?

I think that in the last few years we Greens have made a mistake in failing to think through rigorously enough how the three dimensions are linked, and we have engaged too strongly with the economic argument in isolation. Of course, in the crisis, that has been very much at the forefront; but if on the other hand we focus solely on ecological issues then we are not close enough to people's current everyday concerns. So we have to address all three dimensions together, and then to win over other partners who also want to change our way of running the economy.

At the end of your book you make a plea for a different style of politics. What would such a "politics of being heard" look like?

It is the conclusion I reach from seeing that in many cases the state and the political system cannot solve our problems – in fact, they were and remain a part of the problem. Politicians need to be very wary of promising that "we can do it all better!" Without support from the people it will not really be possible for us to achieve a new alignment of economic policy in the face of the dominant power structures. TTIP and the financial transactions tax are both good examples, where Green members of parliament have done good work, but it then required the signatures of many thousands of citizens to create the pressure that was needed to change the political debate.
I believe all countries benefit when citizens are socially engaged and political issues are not just left to the career politicians. And *vice versa*: the political system must not exclude civil society.

Libertinus

Unlike in other EU member states, where cuts are being made, here the state has been able to spend more money. So most Germans are not aware of the dramatic impacts of the European crisis and they do not feel the need to protest against the mistaken political response to the crisis.

Many people feel that this economic system is not there for them, and I believe that the fundamental answers cannot come only from the top down. People need to get actively involved.

The critique of the economic system that comes from the Blockupy demonstrators is on many points similar to your own demands. What do you think of those – sometimes violent – protests?
Although many of the demands being made were correct, I reject the kind of violent protest that took place in Frankfurt, and we in the party are completely unanimous about that. I also think it was not a good idea to target the criticism at the European Central Bank. I think that was the wrong target, because at the moment the ECB is doing quite a lot to combat the crisis. It is true that it has also made a lot of mistakes, for example in the negotiations with the crisis countries, as a part of the Troika. Nevertheless the real problems lie in Berlin and the other European seats of government, where the politics of austerity were adopted and where the necessary reorientation of European economic policy towards investment and reducing unemployment is being blocked. That is what we should be protesting against.

My impression of Blockupy is also that it is a relatively narrow grouping that has failed to engage and mobilise the wider population. I think if we really want to achieve something we have to get many more people involved, and to exclude those who resort to violence.

Why are there no mass protests in northern Europe as big as those of the Indignados in Spain or Occupy Wall Street in New York?
At the moment, Germany and a couple of other northern countries profit from the crisis. Unemployment is falling here and wages are rising because the Euro exchange rate is too low given the current state of the German economy, and interests rates too. So since the start of the crisis, the Federal German budget has benefited from 94 billion Euros in debt service reductions. Unlike in other EU member states, where cuts are being made, here the state has been able to spend more money. So most Germans are not aware of the dramatic impacts of the European crisis and they do not feel the need to protest against the mistaken political response to the crisis. But the policies being pursued are very short-term and will be harmful to Germany too in the longer term, because we can only do well when our European partners are also doing well.

Dr. Gerhard Schick has been a member of the German Parliament since 2005, and has been the Alliance '90/The Greens parliamentary group's spokesman on financial policy since 2007. In 2013 he was elected deputy chairman of the Finance Committee.

Terry Reintke

Joining forces: Fighting side by side for a different world

Have the Greens lost their connections to political movements? Did they become just another political party like all the others? German member of the European Parliament, Terry Reintke is looking for the answers.

The roots of the German Green Party were founded in local networks, citizen initiatives and formed around environmental, societal and social issues.

Have the Greens lost their connections to political movements?

This year the German Green Party is part of nine regional government coalitions. This in fact means that the Green Party is in power in more regional governments than the governing Christian Democrats in Germany. Very often this has been taken as one of the major indicators that now the Green Party has become part of the establishment. And would this success also mean that we – after a "long walk through the institutions" – become just another political party like all the others?

This brings about a number of additional questions that need to be answered: What would differentiate us from the way other political parties are doing politics? Are we still (part of) the driving force for change? Or are we just filling the small niche of an "eco-friendly option" within the existing system?

The way politics are conducted, discussions are framed and party decisions are negotiated has changed. The German Greens have become a player in the field of mainstream politics: We are sitting at the table during negotiations, we hold responsibility at the local, regional and national level, and many times in the last few years we had to swallow compromises threatening our credibility.

At the same time, we have been successful in our struggle to shape politics. The nuclear phase-out in Germany, the rejection of ACTA in the European Parliament, the 13 European countries that have legalised same sex marriage or the fact that there are now more women in political and economic decision-making positions than ever before (still too little, but we are moving in the right direction): All these are examples for change that the Greens have pushed forward. As Greens we have shaped the way Europe looks today and we have to have the aspiration to continue to fight for a different Europe.

Green DNA

The roots of the German Green Party were founded in local networks, citizen initiatives and formed around environmental, societal and social issues. During the 1970s and 1980s, young people especially protested against the existing system. They populated the streets fighting against nuclear power, opposing wars, the activities of NATO and the destruction of the environment. Citizens demanded to have a say in the political arena, standing up for a world of solidarity, peace and diversity. New participatory structures, different forms of political activism and a new set of values developed distinctively differing from the established political landscape. It is this DNA which formed the Greens and it remains our basis to develop our political agenda from this set of values.

Social, ecological, peace and civil rights movements define the core of what it means to be Green. Thus, Green projects should combine the progressive movements on our streets and institutionalised politics.

This is why we want to change the world we live in; a world which produces enough food for 9 billion people, but that still condemns one billion people to live in hunger. We fight against the exploitation of resources that destroys the very basis of our existence. We want to close the growing gap between rich and poor. We fight for a sustainable economy and energy from renewable sources. We want to build a more equal society, in which everybody can live the life they choose for themselves.

So what's the problem?

There are, however, situations where there seems to be a contradiction between our self-declared values and the way we act. And we have to ask ourselves: how can we live up to our visions and values in times when we are participating in negotiations about budgets, in technical discussions about regulations or in difficult coalition talks?

Is something wrong at the moment? Maybe it is exactly the tension between "the streets" and "the parliament" that is necessary to continue being the driving force for change. Social, ecological, peace and civil rights movements define the core of what it means to be Green. Thus, Green projects should combine the progressive movements on our streets and institutionalised politics. We want to be the voice that brings the movements into the political institutions. Linking institutionalised politics and social, ecological and feminist movements is not a cherry on the cake for the Greens. It is at the basis of what we believe politics should be about.

The political instruments, political arenas as well as the main political actors have changed over time – and so has the way we as Greens are putting our vision of politics in practice. It has to be our ambition to define once again our role as a party within the area of tension between the movements and the political institutions. Politics cannot be simplified to saying change has to come from the streets or from the parliaments. It has to be understood that only together – using all political tools – can we support progressive politics.

This also means that if we want to keep this credibility and to remain a link between the movements in the streets and the civil society and on the other side the parliamentary decision-making, there will be crucial struggles coming up when we have to deliver. Especially on the European level.

Before and during the COP negotiations we thus have to link the fight against climate change with our struggle against gender inequality and questions of social justice, democratic representation and non-discrimination.

Two of these struggles for the next months are the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership/ Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (TTIP/CETA) and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) in Paris.

TTIP/CETA

During the negotiations for the free trade agreements with the US as well as Canada, we as Greens have to show again that we are the citizens' and civil societies' voice in the political discussions. We have already done this by providing the relevant information to the public when TTIP and CETA were negotiated in opaque, anti-democratic ways behind closed doors.

In the discussions around TTIP and CETA we will have to show that we can change the ways in which political deals are being struck in the EU and demonstrate that we can make sure that they do not undermine existing standards for workers' rights, consumer protection, the environment and data protection.

This year we have to be in the streets with the people from environmental and consumer rights organisations, with the trade unions and civil rights activists while fighting against TTIP and CETA in the parliaments. We can use our access to information in order to stop the negotiations and to prevent the EU from signing these harmful agreements.

COP in Paris

2015 is the year for the fight against climate change. The leaders of this world must take action NOW. Greens are the most vocal political force putting climate change on the agendas at all levels – from the local, regional, national and European level to the debates of the COP summit.

We have a responsibility to mobilise a critical mass during the upcoming months. The only chance to reach a binding and ambitious agreement will be if committed parliamentarians, civil society and activists work closely together to increase the pressure upon world leaders. The climate negotiations have to be crucial topic in all parts of society.

Before and during the COP negotiations we thus have to link the fight against climate change with our struggle against gender inequality and questions of social justice, democratic representation and non-discrimination. We will have to show that the fight against climate change is an inclusive fight and that we as Greens are at the forefront.

A different world is possible!

The past of green activism has shown that green change is possible and it is happening at this very moment, too. But the challenge of how to get there will only be resolved with both colourful and strong movements in the streets, as well as functioning, democratic and accountable structures of decision-making in the political institutions.

Terry Reintke is a Member of the European Parliament, elected in 2014 at the age of 27. She belongs to the Greens/EFA Group and is a member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, as well as the Committee on Regional Development.

An extraordinary protest just disappeared

Nancy Fraser

Occupy Wall Street seemed to be a promising form of critical activism, until it ended abruptly. Philosopher Nancy Fraser attributes this to the activists' unwillingness to form a political party. An interview on the role of marginalised groups in protests, the problems of Zuccotti Park and neoliberalism's impact on environmentalism.

Can we see thinkers as part of a process of social struggles? Can this be something that begins with the critical theorists who identify the problem, and continues with the students and activists who go to Zuccotti Park, Puerta del Sol, etc, to raise awareness of the issue, and look for a solution?

I don't believe that individual thinkers and philosophers create solutions out of their heads. We are the beginning point, we are groping together in a conversation that includes a significant number of critical thinkers and activists, and the intermediaries in between. I am an armchair activist, I am not a real activist, but a philosophy professor, and spend most of my time reading and writing. There are moments when I join demonstrations, but I am essentially a public intellectual. There are however other people who understand themselves primarily as activists, and there are people who do both, who work in left-wing publishing or the arts, work for non-profits or NGOs who are trying within their own frameworks to work on an agenda. So there is a wide range of people, who are contributing to this project of trying to understand what the hell is happening and what could constitute a "solution".

But this talk about solution sounds to me too much like policy talk. I have respect for the people who do policy thinking, but that's not what I do, I do diagnosis.

I think we are dealing with some really big questions that are not yet at the level of having anything you could call a solution. One big question is whether or not there is a solution that we can envision. There are two possibilities: it is either a transition to a different post-neoliberal form of capitalism, or it is a transition to something you would call post-capitalist. But with the history of an existing communism I think we really have a lot of difficulty saying what a desirable form of capitalism would be. And at the same time there might be very good arguments that you really cannot fight global warming within a capitalist framework. That should come up at least as a question.

Michael Fleshman

And if it's true, how do we envision a post-capitalism that is not marked by all the obvious deficiencies of the forms of communism and socialism that have historically developed? These are the kinds of questions that interest me.

Now, almost four years after the start of the protests in Zuccotti park, what do you think of Occupy Wall Street? What have they achieved?

We see a movement, that emerged with such a creativity, and that was capable of – in a very short time – attracting very broad support, including in a country like the United States, which is otherwise saturated with neoliberal common sense.

And there is a big mystery here that I have a hard time understanding, namely: How did a movement that started out so well, leave so little behind? Once the encampments were demolished and the occupiers were evicted from the spaces that they held, very quickly all the air went out of the balloon. For a time politicians like Obama tried to use a rhetoric that in some ways was a pale echo of some occupy rhetoric, and that showed that inequality was a problem, and thematised things that were otherwise rarely talked about in the United States. But this was just talk.

The occupiers themselves – for a transitional period at least – did relief work after Hurricane Sandy caused serious hardships for the people living in coastal Brooklyn. So in a sense that segment of the former occupiers were kind of doing grassroots social welfare work, work that was quite depoliticised. But in the meantime, I think, a very charismatic, promising and extraordinary outburst of protest and critical activism sort of just disappeared.

I would make a contrast to the formation of Podemos in Spain: it comes out of similar protest movements, but has taken another step in forming a political party, in developing an organisation, in trying to offer some institutional thinking. US Occupy was dominated, at least in terms of the core activists, by committed anarchists with a kind of suspicion of organisation, of programmatic thinking. The last thing these people would want to do is form a political party. And I think this partly explains why there is nothing left of it now. I don't want to idealise Podemos, who knows what is going to happen to them in the future, but their activity does indicate a greater level of seriousness in thinking about how you can unite rather broad masses of people who are opposing the present system and the way that it operates, and want to change it. Podemos shows how you can take those energies and consolidate them and make them accumulate and go somewhere instead of just an explosive outburst that then collapses and is gone.

You said Occupy was dominated by committed anarchists, but many political symbols – such as Obama posters – were also present in Zuccotti Park which implies that some people were expecting the solution to come from a political organisation.

You need to distinguish between the hardcore backbone of the protest, which was a group of rather young students, recent dropouts and recent graduates; and all the people, myself included, whose imagination was captured by this, and who felt an affinity with it. This latter group may have spent some time in the park itself and joined the marches; it included some significant fractions of New York City trade unions, teachers, nurses and elements with links to the Democratic Party. But the core of the organisers didn't want anything to do with the party. This is something very typical for the successor movements of the New Left: they rightly rejected the idea of a Leninist party, and now largely operate in the terrain of social movements. They are quite uncomfortable in thinking about how movements relate to parties.

Whatever the struggle is, it has to be waged simultaneously against an external enemy and against internal lines of dominance and subordination.

I am sympathetic to this attitude. To me Obama at this point is just a celebrity facade, by and large his rhetoric of hope was just rhetoric to win office.

david_shankbone

The politics of Europe is again somewhat different from that of the US. You have a landscape of political parties and we have a two-party-system where the Democratic Party is as much owned by Wall Street as the Republicans. It has a somewhat more progressive face on the so called "value issues", like marriage equality, but it's very much the party of finance and corporate capital. It is very hard to form a third party here, and there is always this issue of whether you can function on the left-wing of the Democratic Party or if you need to be on the outside, and that complicates the situation. Nevertheless, if you are serious about deep, structural change, you need to think about questions of organisation.

You have worked a lot on the question of how women, members of the LGBTQ community, migrants, and other marginalised members of society can participate in society. Do you think the current protest movements like Occupy, Indignados, etc. were inclusive enough to involve them and to let their voices be heard?

I can't say too much about the Indignados, not having been directly involved, but I would say that in general this is always an uphill battle. Every social movement is going to tend to privilege certain voices and marginalise, or even silence, others. Some people have more voice and more access to resources. That's, I think, just built in. Therefore it's always necessary for marginalised groups to make special efforts to organise within broader movements in which they are participating. So I would say, as a feminist that every single movement, whatever it's doing, must have a feminist caucus within it, to make sure that gender concerns don't get shoved off to the margin, but get the centrality they deserve. I think the same is true for LGBTQ constituencies, migrant constituencies, and so on. Whatever the struggle is, it has to be raged simultaneously against an external enemy and against internal lines of dominance and subordination.
I can't tell you how successfully or not that has been negotiated within European protest movements, and I am not even sure what to say about Occupy in the United States, but there certainly were such caucuses who were trying to push these issues.

I think there is at least some improvement in the awareness that there are internal hierarchies in oppositional movements, nowadays there is an understanding of the issue of intersectionality.

Hillary Clinton can crack the glass ceiling, but only because there are going to be low waged, racialised women who are there sweeping up the shards of glass she has broken.

In a 2013 article in the Guardian you've argued that the second wave critique of sexism was "supplying the justification for new forms of inequality and exploitation" and feminism's ambivalence has been resolved in favour of "(neo)liberal individualism". How can movements avoid being captured by a destructive ideology, as in the case of feminism and neoliberalism?

I've been very influenced by a fascinating book by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello "The New Spirit of Capitalism" which makes an argument which at first may sound very counterintuitive: they argue that the success of "flexible project capitalism" or what I call neoliberal financialised capitalism has actually succeeded in its ideological struggle in part by recuperating or co-opting strands of the new left emancipatory thought. They didn't really talk in the book about feminism that's my addition to this line of thinking, but you can identify the same idea when you look at the discourses of hegemonic feminism, or liberal feminism in our days.

An example is the metaphor of cracking the glass ceiling: Hillary Clinton can crack the glass ceiling, but only because there are going to be low waged, racialised women who are there sweeping up the shards of glass she has broken. This is the sort of thing I have in mind when talking about the dominant, neoliberal feminism, which is focused on meritocratic advancement, career open to talent. This feminism is really part and parcel of the new form capitalism, and is used to legitimate it, and to give it a veneer of emancipation. Another example of it would be the global bruhaha around microcredit in the global south that is empowering women.

I have tried to develop a theory of provocation that tries to show the ways in which liberal feminism has become wrapped up in legitimating this new form of capitalism, rather than being genuinely critical of it.

david_shankbone

And you ask whether the same is true for other movements that we think of as emancipatory movements, and I would say, absolutely, yes. I give you two examples: one is LGBTQ movements that have focused a huge amount of their energies in recent times on military service and marriage equality. The refusal to let gays and lesbians serve in the military is certainly a form of discrimination and heteronormativity, as is the limitation of marriage to a man and a women. Those are legitimate issues, but that they become the centre of a whole struggle is truly problematic. It suggests again a certain normalisation and corporatisation of a movement, rather than any structural critique of a society.

The other example is related to the Green movement and has to do with the emergence of Green

finance, "greenwashing" and marketised forms of environmentalism. There are important sections of the Green movement that are co-opted into this, that you can do business through the creation of carbon-trading and believe that marketised forms of environmentalism can solve the problem. That's also a form of neoliberalisation of a movement that, in my view, should be an anti-capitalist movement.

Nancy Fraser is Henry A. and Louise Loeb Professor of Political and Social Science at the New School in New York. Her most recent book is Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis (Verso, 2013).

Transforming political consciousness

Chantal Mouffe

Today voters can only choose between Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola. This in turn leads to the depoliticisation of people and a lack of interest in what is going on in our societies. If a Green party cannot present an alternative to the current neoliberal system it won't be able to connect the struggles, argues philosopher Chantal Mouffe in an interview with the Green European Journal.

The struggles we witness all over the world are democratic struggles, in the sense that they are struggles against a form of subordination. But it's a mistake to believe that they necessarily converge.

Is it possible to connect the many different struggles we see now in the world?

The first question is not whether it is possible to connect the struggles, it is "what's the objective?" For a political project, the aim should be the radicalisation of democracy (creating the kind of democracy that not only accepts difference, but depends on it). This can only be done if one puts into question the currently dominant neoliberal model.

Our societies are sometimes called post-democratic societies: we still have all the institutions, but they have lost their meanings. In a representative democracy people need to have a chance to vote and to choose between different alternatives. Today, there is no fundamental difference between centre-right and centre-left: they are managing the same neoliberal globalisation, even if one might do it more humanely than the other.

I think that this is not a situation in which I would say democracy has a meaning. For me democracy only has meaning when you have an agonistic struggle in which you have alternatives, and I think that Green parties would also need to situate themselves in respect to that. There are, for example, some Green parties who are not offering anything that could be seen as an alternative to neoliberal globalisation, some of them are even willing to make alliances with the centre-right and the centre-left. Thus, it is not always very clear where the Green parties stand, whether they are left or right.

I think, if a Green party cannot present an alternative to the current neoliberal system, I'm not sure it will be able to connect the struggles or create what we call a "chain of equivalence" between all the democratic struggles. A common adversary makes a lot of sense when creating convergence, and in this situation the common adversary would be neoliberalism, and the actual form of financial capitalism.

The struggles we witness all over the world are democratic struggles, in the sense that they are struggles against a form of subordination. But it's a mistake to believe that they necessarily converge. The unity is something that needs to be constructed politically. For me this is something that is central for the radicalisation of democracy. But this can only happen once we know what the objective of the movements is. Do they simply want to contribute to the humanisation of financial capitalism and neoliberalism or are they movements that want to offer an alternative to the current hegemony?

But if the enemy is neoliberalism that means that you can only unite groups with a social or economic agenda, but not groups that seek recognition, like LGBT groups, for example.
Today there is a big discussion about what is more important: the struggle for recognition or the struggle for redistribution. My position is that a project of radicalisation of democracy needs to link both. I find it very disturbing that some left-wing and Green parties only advocate LGBT rights and liberties, and they don't care at all about the questions that concern the working class.

This is why we see the emergence of right-wing populist movements in so many countries of Europe. Look at the example of France: the majority of the working class votes for Marine Le Pen's Front National. And they vote for that party because that's the only party that pretends to take care of their interests. This is extremely dangerous.

The left-wing parties can't abandon the working class and act as if those people were already lost for progressive policies. The really important struggle for me is to find a way to link those struggles, to link the struggles for equality in the economy and equality in terms of gender and in terms of race. This is not something that is already given; you need to construct this link if you want to establish some kind of alliance between LGBT movements and the working class. And for that you need to transform the political consciousness, so that the demands of the LGBT people can be articulated together with the demands of immigrants, the working class, and so on.

This of course means that a new adversary needs to be constructed. And for that we also need to be aware that many of the new demands that exist today are based on problems that are in fact caused by inequalities. And I am not only thinking in terms of inequalities in salaries: capitalism is destroying the environment and with it the livelihoods of many people; and in this situation even middle class people – who are not particularly affected by economic issues – tend to suffer under the effects of neoliberalism.

We have seen in recent years that movements don't really trust political parties. What do you think a Green party can do if it wants to approach movements and become part of the struggles?
That of course is a problem for all left-wing parties who want to look for an alternative to neoliberal globalisation. The creation of the collective popular will cannot be done strictly through the vertical order inside the party. You need to have some kind of

I think it is very important to participate in elections and to try to come to power. I think a good example of linking social movements to more traditional parties is the example of Syriza in Greece.

association between the horizontal forms (everything that has to do with the social movements) and the party itself.

At the moment, what I find really worrying is for example the issue of the Occupy movement and some other groups who were able to organise socially but did not want to have anything to do with the more traditional forms of politics. This attitude is not going to lead to any serious transformation. Those movements are important, because they transform the common sense, they bring to the fore a serious issue, but on their own they are not going to be able to transform the relation of power that structures society, nor to get rid of the neoliberal hegemony. I think it is very important to participate in elections and to try to come to power.

I think a good example of linking social movements to more traditional parties is the example of Syriza in Greece. But this is also what Podemos are doing in Spain, and I think this is how real progressive politics should work. Green parties used to insist on this kind of alliance before, they didn't want to be like the traditional parties, but unfortunately they have become too institutionalised. That's the big problem in politics: a lack of institutionalisation leads to impotence, too much of it cuts the parties from their base. Therefore I think it is important for Green parties to recover this relationship with social movements.

There is also a very interesting debate now in France, inside Europe Écologie – Les Verts. There are some people who want to go back to government with the socialists, and there is another group, led by Cécile Duflot, the former Minister of Territorial Equality and Housing, which is trying to establish links with the Left Front and left-wing populist movements. I think the future of left-wing politics in Europe should be on the basis of what I call left-wing populism. This means creating a transversal alliance between different groups by defining their common adversary: neoliberal globalisation. I think the Greens should be part of this alliance.

You advocate left-wing populism. But people on the left like to think of themselves as intellectuals, as critical thinkers. How is their rather complex worldview compatible with left-wing populism?
If you want to be critical about everything, you shouldn't do politics. For me politics means choosing a side. Of course, many of us expect the intellectuals

to look at things from the outside, but I tend to disagree with this view. I am on the side of Antonio Gramsci who advocates for the role of the organic intellectual, the kind of intellectual who is active in politics: in Gramsci's view all of us can be intellectuals, not only the academics in their ivory towers, but also teachers or syndicalists, all the people who are involved in organising social relations. I would go even further and say, in my view these people are the real intellectuals, and not the ones who sit in their ivory towers without taking a stance, so that they remain pure and their hands don't get dirty. Left-wing populism means that intellectuals are going to act as organic intellectuals in those movements.

And what about those whose voices are marginalised? As sociologist Agnes Gagyi puts it in this issue of the journal: "There are countless other ways to express personal or massive dissatisfaction, from slipping into alcoholism to joining sects to committing suicide (...) it is the existing unequal distribution of social resources that defines who is in the position to launch movements in the first place."
I think that many of the people who remain outside of the movements, do so because they can't identify with any of the projects. One of the specifics of the neoliberal hegemony is that it makes people believe that there is no alternative to the existing neoliberal order. Today, if you go to vote you basically have to choose between Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola. Also, nowadays all political issues are considered technical, and of course technical issues are better dealt with by experts. So in fact the citizens don't have a role to play anymore, they don't have a say, and this in turn leads to the depolitisation of people and a lack of interest in what is going on in our societies. This is manifested in the fact that there are more and more abstentions. People get completely disillusioned, instead of getting involved they stay at home and drink. This is something that is very worrisome for democracy, because it leads to the earlier mentioned development of right-wing populism.

The only way to fight against this is to reestablish an agonistic debate. We shouldn't let it look like there is no alternative to neoliberalism. In fact, there are always alternatives.

Chantal Mouffe is a political theorist and Professor of Political Theory at the University of Westminster. She has held research positions at Harvard, Cornell, the University of California, the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris. She is best known for the book "Hegemony and Socialist Strategy" (co-authored with Ernesto Laclau, 1985).

The Green European Foundation is a European-level political foundation whose mission is to contribute to a lively European sphere of debate and to foster greater involvement by citizens in European politics. GEF strives to mainstream discussions on European policies and politics both within and beyond the Green political family. The foundation acts as a laboratory for new ideas, offers cross-border political education and a platform for cooperation and exchange at the European level.

Published by the Green European Foundation
Published in July 2015

Project coordinators: Edouard Gaudot, Krisztian Simon, and Beatrice White

Cover picture : Thomas Koch@shutterstock

Production: Micheline Gutman

This publication has been realised with the financial support of the European Parliament.
The European Parliament is not responsible for the content of this project.

3, rue du Fossé – L-1536 Luxembourg

Brussels office:
15, rue d'Arlon – B-1050 Brussels
T +32 (2) 234 65 70 F +32 (2) 234 65 79
info@gef.eu www.gef.eu

www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu