

Why does the Street inspire Revolt?

Riot Skills and Social Transformation Plan in the Worldwide Occupation Movement (Spain, Israel, USA)¹

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The 99%, the *Indignados*, Take the square, Occupy Wall Street, May 15, J14. These various revolt movements that crossed every continent in 2011 are highly urban in nature. Like the Arab revolts that inspired them, the 99, Occupy and the movements for justice are distinct because they take place in the public space. This public space is more or less domesticated starting with the occupation of the streets and squares, if not the establishment of actual camps. Public space even finds itself being highly "engaged" through revolts in previously unheard-of formats. The vast occupation of space movement is accompanied by a renewal of democracy's means of expression and is carried out outside institutions but also outside political routines. It uses new communication skills and forms of expression that push the boundaries of creativity. Why do the street and the city inspire revolt and what sets the world transformation plan of the "anger" movements apart?

How the city appears - simultaneously as a political and public problem as well as an event - is what should be studied here in particular. The city shows two sides: it has a social nature like the expression of injustices, but it is also a place for action and where protest is made visible. Rather than contemplating a sociological and political analysis full of protest movements, which moreover are very diverse², we will limit ourselves here to addressing the critical "uses" these movements make of the city and the space, raising the stakes of spatial and social justice³. They shed light on the pragmatics of indignation.

What is the reason for radical mobilization?

The Western revolts are events but so are the Arab, Russian and Chinese revolts. With their sudden strikes and lightening-fast spread, they have surprised the political parties, and caught military and security institutions unawares. They suspend the regular course of life and politics in the broader sense [le politique]⁴, they introduce a democratic breach into social movements that have become humdrum, like demonstrations or union promises. They give rise to a radical uncertainty about the world that the institutions seek to conceal.

What are the movements denouncing? Occupy Wall Street (OWS), the 99% movements, the Spanish *Indignados*, the May 15th movement (Greece) and that of July 14, also called the movement for justice (Israel), express the same radical criticism of economic liberalism or the liberalization of the States, the same rejection of traditional political forms, i.e. representative democracy, the same desire for restoration of popular democracy. "Système dégage" (Egypt, Israel, USA, Spain), "Social justice" (Israel, Greece), "Occupy Wall Street", "Occupy the Earth", "Take the Square": These slogans affirm a radical criticism of States, which have become inseparable from neoliberal economic thinking⁵ and clearly establish the link

¹ Article received in December 2011.

² Political and sociological in the sense for example of the sociology of public problems or commitments.

³ This article is based on the findings of a direct observation of the encampments and gatherings carried out over the summer and fall 2011 in Israel and Spain. It is also based on the plotting and tracking of the movements starting from their social networks (OWS, Occupy London).

⁴ On the difference between "le politique" and "la politique", see Rancière (1998).

⁵ See Dardot and Laval (2009). According to the authors, neoliberalism is a rationality that tends to direct the action of the governments and the governed.

between capitalism and the sovereignty crisis. Neoliberal sovereignty is expressed in government apparatus' alliance with or submission to financial oligarchies, their downward spiral into corruption and the plundering of resources, particularly in the real estate sector.

The notion of justice appears very clearly at the heart of the protest. It is first and foremost a matter of social inequalities and the everyday experience of the growing impoverishment of citizens, particularly those of the middle class. The protests concern firstly the safeguarding of private property (USA, Spain, Israel), threatened by the subprime mortgage crisis. They can be about living together and attributive or redistributive justice, but also about the role of religion in the city's affairs and the place of national or urban minorities (Israel). But the stakeholders exhibit motives capable of broadening the revolt and the criticism, which now have to do with the economic policy of nations, the institutions and world social order. By demanding the abolition of privileges, the end of the predatory economy, the principle of citizen equality, and the control and use of resources, the revolt puts the States to the test. They are challenged for having abandoned the civic sphere and the national grammars of solidarity, for having segmented the social and cultural components (like in Israel and Spain), or broken the social contract between the State and its citizens. In the case of OWS and Occupy London, the ethical missions of capitalism are at stake (Pabst, 2011).

By forcing the institutions and the "system" to say "what they are", insurgency and all the forms of action related to it open the way to a new type of critical capacities, which emerge outside the social order (Boltanski, 2009) and which approach "metacriticism". They examine the "hermeneutic contradictions" of the world/social system from all angles. At the revolt stage, they seem to keep themselves removed from all political plans contained in the institutions or representative democracy. In the majority of cases, the criticism seems in fact little conducive to reformist negotiation. The criticism pertains to the economic model of the cities, States or territories (Sassen, 2011), and less often that of the political city, understood as favouring the exercise of co-citizenship and where city dwellers are led to participate in the discussion on common resources⁶. In all situations, it is a watershed between direct and representative democracy, government and political emancipation, State management and the self-transformation of society. It foregoes the role of institutions and the representation of parliamentary regimes. For instance, in Spain the *Indignados* called upon people to spoil their ballots during the 2012 legislative elections. In Israel, it is highly likely that the wave of protests from the summer and fall of 2011, which had brought together over 1,000,000 individuals, had an affect on the recent election outcome (January 2013) with a decline in the traditional parties on the right and left to the advantage of the centre-right party (Yesh Atid). This big winner at the polls had based his campaign on the impoverishment of the middle class.

By focusing on exposing the political institutions dealing with public action, the approach used by Occupy and other movements thus seems more profound than simply repairing the social systems. The movements introduce a revolutionary-type requirement that does not exclude violence and challenges the political forms, symbolic order, and the semantic and legal tools like constitutional treaties, when not demanding their complete revision (like Israel). The Israeli movement named itself after a revolt, *July 14*, in reference to the French Revolution. And the Spanish *Indignados* call themselves "citizen fellow-revolutionaries".

It can be difficult to tell the difference between the utopian and the revolutionary within these radical criticisms. By claiming to be outside or independent of political and moral corpuses, and by refusing to claim a form or an ultimate purpose, the protest can call to mind certain utopias (Walzer, 1998). These utopias would have no identifiable plan other than that of the expression of all subjectivities, of the Multitudes (Hardt and Negri, 2004)⁷, also bringing together artists, those living at the poverty line of globalism and the connectionist world, victims of States' (like Egypt's) liberalisation policies who hope to gain their independence from the principles of reality. Politics would thus become the art of transforming life by accepting a break with the recent past. On the other hand, by making the collective (like the people's

⁶ From an Habermasian perspective based on discussion. See in particular Habermas (1987).

⁷ For Hardt and Negri (2004), the multitudes are globally the social forces made up by intangible work.

assemblies) the place of political emancipation, the revolt can introduce a revolutionary aspect. In every case, the existence of political nuances and different forms of revolt can be accepted, from the affirmation of a common world around the social contract, to revolution. But, from Spain to the USA, one fact is certain. Uprisings simultaneously place the city and the individual at the centre of social criticism.

Making the city appear to be a political problem. Publicizing injustices.

Revolt especially takes the form of stylized operations: "Parliaments" and occupations are made of space. We can thus point out the existence of a practical meaning of protest, where criticism is simultaneously both corporal and spatial. One of the ways in which politics is reframed is through publicizing the narratives of individual suffering, which appear as attempts to make the injustices well-known. With Occupy, M15 (Spain), the Movement for Justice (Israel), it is protest, not mobilization, that is spoken of now. These persistent and lasting movements are "voices" or demonstrations by the voiceless, the peripheralized citizens. A voice and speaking up, like the corporality of the revolt, are a response in this case to the critic's dereliction of duty, the apathy of social life or postmodern resignation⁸. For the occupying collectives and the assemblies, the challenge of the protest must be to make the injustices visible in a way that ties them to national and international political economies and the definitions of social living, and their effects as they are felt on an individual scale.

On critique, Luc Boltanski's treatise on the sociology of critical capacity, provides important conceptual enlightenment making it possible to grasp the new grammars of protest. Protesting against reality, and as a result the socio-economics of institutions and their veridical statements (like justice, equality, solidarity), must result in anxiety emerging. It must express itself in radical critical forms like collective action or publicizing existential hardship (Boltanski, 2009) that allow the world buried under the official, established reality to be revealed. The expressive range of suffering belongs to existential hardship and considerably expands the spectrum of criticism. On the one hand, suffering is not part of a process of institutionalization (or of a definition of social beings within established formats like the law, or the categories and authorities charged with determining a certain social order) because it appears, to the contrary, connected to institutional dysfunctions (like the growing inequalities) or the occupation of "the social by the capital" (Hardt and Negri, 2004)⁹. On the other hand, when humiliation is de-individualized, worn in public, it has a descriptive and argumentative potential, capable of changing the reality and toppling into a collective cause.

The exposure of existential hardships and the social reality constructed by the institutions emerge clearly in the occupation movements. Events or accidents like the loss of housing or eviction, "recounted" in public like an investigation conducted by the citizens on their own lives¹⁰, shatter the institutions' social stabilization efforts and expose their contradictions. Thus, the financialization of an area like housing has revealed the profound interdependence of public and private activities affecting city dwellers or citizens first. Oppression caused by public policy and the market – which values tradable goods, wealth, tertiary goods, security and property – has consequences on private resources and private life. These consequences are the neglect of isolated, poor neighbourhoods in the periphery but also skyrocketing prices, housing shortages and bank control over family budgets. The housing question is inevitably linked to that of property and the policies driven mainly by the private sector and investment companies. In Spain, the financial crisis and subsequent economic crisis, has led to a great many personal bankruptcies, losses of housing and individual tragedies. Similarly, rapid increases in the real estate sector have resulted in investor-driven mortgage policies without the State correcting the inequalities in access to housing. In the cases of both Spain and Israel, the States have little concern for the significant number of evictions or the

⁸ See Hirschman's (2011) analyses of the apathy of so-called capitalist societies.

⁹ A less biopolitical analysis like that carried out by David Harvey (1995) can also be referred to.

¹⁰ See the status of the ordinary investigation as a method of exploration and creative transformation of the subjects of an experience in John Dewey (2011).

difficulties encountered by the middle class. In Israel, there are assumed to be 80,000 homeless families. In Spain an estimated 300 families are evicted daily due to the economic crisis and the over-indebtedness of owners¹¹.

In concrete terms, in the camps in Israel and Spain, but also in those in London and the US, the matter is that of sharing the narratives of hardships being expressed in the personal, close space; narratives of eviction, loss of employment, loss of neighbourhood, close ties or in broader terms, social ties as the result of a drop in social standing. These narratives come from all segments of society: from single parents to the homeless, from down-graded managers to the elderly. The publicizing of emotions is rooted in experiences that are physical, if not phenomenological; this prevents the movements from toppling into the area of utopias. In every case, from Greece to Spain and the United States, the protesters are not seeking liberation from reality but to proclaim it. Even when transcribed in art, private suffering brought into public articulates exposure and emotion¹². Suffering transcribes uncertainty on the world but strives for reflexivity and the desire for political emancipation, or at the very least, citizens taking back control of their fates. The publicizing of impacts and emotion is moreover a part of the political learning process through the linking of subjectivity, reflexivity and the social transformation of reality.

Thus, spatial or social hardship - which reveals fundamental injustices and inequalities connected to a certain social and economic order - can be considered the cause and the effect of the movement. Unquestionably, the tangible link between these lived experiences and the way in which they are publicized and argued in public - in other words, the link between emotions and criticism - has contributed to the emergence of the movement occupying public space and similarly, the establishment of the people's assemblies (USA, Israel, Spain). Politics is expressed within these people's assemblies, starting with the presentation of individual existences; individuals' diversity is not covered over by any dominant perspective other than that of social transformation and expression on the part of the voiceless who are the foundation of politics¹³. This interpretation of the role played by urban space - from the street to the camp - must be expanded, giving visibility to the various forms of criticism, and frames and reframes the social experience.

The public space of revolt

It could be remarked that revolt or democratic collectives like O, 99, M15 and Occupy seem to neglect traditional collective mobilizations such as demonstrations. The abandonment of protests that have become routine, which occupied the public for many years, is making way for new riot skills framed by the urban space. This configuration of a space of revolt was a catalyst in the emotional and political dynamics in Egypt, the US, Israel and Spain. This is a dual movement of phenomenalization of the city that is brought about starting with occupation. The urban space emerges as the place where injustices are intelligible and as the medium for the pragmatics of indignation.

On the first aspect, the camps and people's assemblies "bring together" people who are excluded from public space or are victims of the State crises (those without documents, the evicted, citizens of the peripheries, the elderly or the poor, but the middle classes, too). The city considered as a situational or placement-related frame appears in material phenomena, an extensive symptomology of the States' globalization of neoliberalism. This is not only a matter of the real estate market, already mentioned, but also of the conflict for access to social goods (like healthcare or schooling, which is for example at the core

¹¹ Estimates of the J14 assembly's national coordinating committee (Israel) and M-15 (Spain) in October 2011.

¹² In the Israeli assemblies, the narratives of evictions and financial difficulties are, for example, particularly intense and moving when they pertain to isolated mothers.

¹³ "La politique n'a pas de lieu propre ni de sujets naturels... Un sujet politique n'est pas un groupe d'intérêts ou d'idées. C'est l'opérateur d'un dispositif particulier de subjectivation du litige par lequel il y a de la politique. La manifestation politique est toujours ainsi ponctuelle et ses sujets toujours précaires" [translation: Politics has neither a specific place nor natural subjects... A political subject is not a group of interests or ideas. It is the operator of a particular device of subjectivation of the dispute through which politics happens"] J. Rancière (1998, p. 245).

of the Israeli revolt), various forms of social and spatial injustice in the distribution of public resources (like education and transportation), or the emergence of invisible/unofficial migrant workers. It can also be a question of public spaces where democracy is abused. On this point, Tahrir Square in Egypt is an example.

Space can also be considered as an entire domain of critical action. An entire set of physical and cognitive orders allow revolt and criticism of the world to take place there and then be brought into public view. Protest democracy can therefore appear anywhere in the territory because it corresponds to the void or the non-place of politics, i.e. in the withdrawal from institutional national politics or traditional positions (Lefort, 1986). It reframes earlier struggles for the right to the city in favour of the citizen's political rights¹⁴. Similarly, it strongly stands out from participatory democracy, when not denouncing it, and from all forms of empowerment encouraged in the last 10 years through which citizens find themselves associated with the various public and urban governance decisions.

It is not by chance that the spaces chosen are in many cases central places - squares, boulevards - that are open to communication. They can be chosen for their potential for gatherings or for their symbolic aspects. As a matter of fact, the occupation of public space occurs in places like the luxurious Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv, where Ben Gurion gave his speech on the creation of the State of Israel and which is currently undergoing major gentrification. The stock exchanges of London and Wall Street, and la Défense in Paris reflect the financial system. The square "Puerta del Sol" in Madrid evokes national history: the end of Francoism and the birth of democracy in Spain. In other cases ("Occupy the train", "Occupy the square", "Occupy the cities", "Occupy the streets", etc.), places of polite behaviour and everyday humanity are chosen, where gatherings take into consideration the polysemic nature of the place: their festive and popular nature, but at the same time the threat that weighs on them due to their privatization or the dominance of tradable goods over resources of proximity¹⁵.

The engaged environment and the stylistics of protest

One of the characteristics of the movements stems from the riot skills¹⁶ that have emerged, that public space allows. As Naomi Klein notes (2001) in her work *No logo* on the branding of the world, the public space presents an "explosive" and libertarian potential. "Taking back" the street means the rejection of security institutions and government institutions in favour of personal expression. It also calls to mind the individual's potential to re-take control of his fate and subjectivity over the course of events.

In the current protests, protest democracy appears in particularly expressive aesthetic, emotional and relational forms. Use of the street provides possibilities for physical action (like performance and occupation) and mental actions echoing reflexivity and criticism. We can turn toward the concepts of configuration, and then regimes of engagement to clarify the scope of the riot experience in public. Both include the relationships between materiality, perception and action. Both stress an emotional dynamic (specific to gatherings) and an intentional dynamic (specific to pragmatics and criticism)¹⁷. One of the first sets of actions of the Occupy movements and Spain's May 15 movements, or the Israeli movement, was that of setting up camps. Physical and cognitive communications resources are put in place in these camps, enabling each of the occupants to express the injustice that is at the heart of his hardships: humiliation, destitution, the loss of stability resulting from being robbed of the right to housing or pauperization.

¹⁴ We recall that *Le droit à la ville* [Right to the City], Lefebvre's seminal work (1968), was based on a Marxist interpretation of the production of space and a set of arguments on the reconquest of the useful value of the city (the city as a collective work of the city dwellers), in the context of the 1970s. Here urban planning emerges as the "field" for the production of space.

¹⁵ For Sassen (2011), this readability of urban spaces in these protests is tied to the major role of cities in world economies (place where capital is concentrated, financial flow, but also economic precariousness).

¹⁶ According to Goffman (1973), the distinctive feature of skills is to make cognitive or normative actions intelligible.

¹⁷ On the relationship between emotion and politics and for a pragmatics of spaces, see for example: Quéré (1995); Joseph (1998); Ogien and Paperman (1995).

The camp does not only reflect its phenomenological aspect. It can be compared to a configuring device (Quéré (1995), supported by forms favourable to takeovers (Gibson, 1979): like appropriations, hijacking and occupation. By the same token, targeted discussions, gatherings that are heterogeneous but focussed on criticism, and the pooling of resources are part of the grammars of revolt. In a way, each occupant is first a passerby, often evicted and threatened, who occupies, gets settled, gets settled again. This seizing of the opportunities offered by the public space appears clearly in the case of the Spanish and Israeli movements, which imply the establishment of a more or less permanent camp¹⁸. More generally, the places chosen for the occupation offer infinite, flexible and inventive communication options. They range from simple occupation (the pavement at la Défense in Paris) to the transformation of abandoned spaces (as in the case of a hotel in Madrid) and the establishment of assemblies in community groups: i.e., in Tel Aviv and London, where the churches and clergy participate in the movement.

A camp is a constructed appropriation. This creation of a perceptible configuration of an environment is present in all the movements, first with the delineation of a collective space available for action, then the occupation of vacant spaces by the rows of tents, then the construction of a common property of the activists around meeting rooms, if not collective facilities like kitchens, libraries or community gardens. Within each movement, the physical environment is readied for meetings and the power to act: performances, making public statements and general meetings.

In each of the movements, the environment is an element that structures the political discussion. The topics offered for thought and discussion make the occupation and related events visible, and can be posted and tracked on the social networks. Similarly, the reconstitution of familiar reference points through language and communication activities forms community groups made up of passersby and residents. In the course of the actions, the occupied space becomes the place of coming together, with experiential and civil density. One only need note the extent to which the rules of civility, courtesy and organization are obeyed during gatherings and assemblies: cleaning the squares to ensure the diversity of the gatherings (Egypt), or cultural heterogeneity (Israel, USA, London). By the same token, in the Spanish and Israeli popular assemblies, mutual confidence and conversation took hold among youth, retirees, managers and the evicted.

In this logic, the occupations, the people's assemblies and other forms of gathering display a common world and forms of exchange between individuals who are culturally distant or socially separated from each other. The cognitive and communicational arrangements make it possible to accelerate the aggregation of heterogeneous forces that usually have little inclination to get close to or engage with one another. In many cases, they have avoided violence in favour of the common good and sensitivity. The Rothschild camp in Tel Aviv was an example of this. Its configuration enabled Jewish and Arab citizens to settle, demanding shared sovereignty and egalitarian political citizenship, without discrimination. The Israeli Arabs' tent – called Tent 48 – faced that of the radical ultra-Zionists. Arabs and Bedouins from the south of the country lived together with orthodox clergy and Jewish laypeople throughout the revolt, although they were quite unaccustomed to being near to one another.

Tying together the social and the aesthetic. Creative utopias

The environment is engaged to the extent that it is equipped for the coordination of expression, emotions and opinions¹⁹. A final major creative characteristic of the movements would certainly be their *aesthesis* directly linked to criticism, in other words, an expressive regime connected to a regime of political and social reasoning. The fact that forms of artistic expression appear along side other forms of action reflects the concepts of experience and democracy that Dewey (2010), like Rancière (2008), clearly pointed out. In

¹⁸ Although the Puerta del Sol and Tell Aviv camps were evacuated in late 2011, permanent occupation occurs through the assemblies.

¹⁹ On regimes of engagement, see Thévenot (2006).

particular, art – like all forms of aesthetic experience – is for Dewey²⁰ a public activity that he as a philosopher places at the level of politics and democracy due to the imaginary forms and the experiences that are expressed in a break with the world's course, which has become humdrum. Considering their moral and political requirements, these forms and experiences are capable of changing the world. Similarly, for Rancière, devices that are made visible and favour the pooling of subjectivities always further democracy “as the reigning environment”.

From this perspective, the Parliaments and other assemblies, and micro-events – in other words, the physical spaces of the protest – encourage the flow of speech and emotions, and social de-homogenisation, just like the manifesto of social transformation. Present in the creative physical devices relating to the practice of everyday life, this manifesto of social transformation is the “[translation] ultimate hallmark of democracy” (De Certeau (1990): like the libraries (in Israel, the *yeshivas* recreated in the street by the clergy), the culinary arts, gardening, etc. these facilities express or experience a political plan around anti-utilitarianism and social ecology, to the extent of planning utopian cities (Israel). Groups of corporal expression, mediation or therapy and other schools of thought and “awareness” can even be mentioned. This lack of distinction between social and political art, artistic criticism and social criticism, not only echoes the libertarian lifestyles of the 1970s, but the utopian and situationist movements as well.

It is completely possible in fact for social criticism to contain utopian and libertarian aspects. Social criticism (of the “neoliberal forms”) can be expressed alongside artistic criticism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999) in a renewed genre. This celebrates the authenticity of personal life, autonomy and creativity or the rejection of profit while also being highly connected to the tertiary world and the new spirit of capitalism. Thus, certain forms of protest echo a blend of messages that are sound and visual processes falling under political incantation, artistic performance, utopian (surrealist, situationist) vocabulary, and liberal and individual technologies like the web. This artistic criticism, borrowing simultaneously from market technologies and poetic leeway, is also part of the first lessons in politics and emancipation. Forming a relationship between politics and aesthetics is found, for example, in the exploration of new forms of street art, graphic design, and films which manipulate various symbols (like religion²¹), different languages, and the linguistic and semantic registers specific to art/poetry movements, drifting into the situationist or libertarian. Thus, experimentation can be spoken of (Dewey 2010) in the sense that it intermingles various human activities intended to strengthen democracy. *Gérila*, the art movement participating in the Israeli protest, is a case in point. Cultural activists, poets and writers in particular, accompany the various social (economic, gender, multicultural, etc.) struggles. Each action is a sung musical performance (songs for workers or revolutionaries) aimed at passersby and the media, regardless of the audience. Similarly, in the case of OWS, a “vibrant” creative movement is talked about, poetic manifestos incubated in the street, challenging all preconceived ideas about a militant public made up of intellectuals (Alcoff (2011)).

Thus, the movements break the boundaries between the organized jurisdictions of the political and the aesthetic, the latter becoming a form of skills and resources. The sociologist (or philosopher) no longer has a monopoly on political thought. By the same token, the social networks are stakeholders of a public space made up of connected individuals. The individual tents, the places of temporary refuge of the *Indignados* when they were evacuated, the habitat of the evicted, but also the Parliaments and people's assemblies are equipped with tremendous means of communication. The worldwide social network, coupled with very expressive, visual forms, increases criticism and the opportunities to form communities of revolt.

Radical democracy, utopia or birth of a civil sphere? Who is the transformation plan aimed at?

²⁰ The concept of experimentation is understood in Dewey's pragmatistic term as the various forms of transactions and interactions between the living organism and its environment.

²¹ In Israel, linguistic and political exploration is highly present starting with the polysemic terms of Tycoons and Tikouna (Hebrew root from the word for “reparation”).

From its physical configuration to the regimes of engagement and the presence of an artistic component, the environment thus contributes to an indignation pragmatics. But if we simply look at their physical sizes and publicizing, the problem posed by the movements concerns their very nature. Each of these movements (in Spain and Israel, for example) brings a demand for social and spatial justice. But is this a demand for institutional re-democratization? Social struggles bringing to light new expansion of the public and civil sphere? Or a radical emancipation plan in which space would only be the people's medium for expression?

All the uprisings briefly mentioned are characterized by their non-predetermination, if not by the absence of goals, and there is no unequivocal interpretation of these movements or their undefined trajectories and temporalities. The profusion of (often contradictory) analyses of the "Arab spring" or the Occupy movements attests to this heterogeneity. Similarly, the mixed outcome of the Arab revolutions, the constant re-launching of the protest in Spain (and in Greece as well) in sporadic demonstrations (against austerity), the metamorphosis of the movement in Israel (into a people's assembly) or again, the current unobtrusiveness of the OWS activists, keep us from all intellectualism and all theoretical speculation. However, one fact is certain: we are currently witnessing the re-launch of social criticism by various collectives, agglomerated city dwellers, who oppose the tyranny of the market, or the institutions, or a complex, controlling system of domination that in many cases prevents the citizens from exercising their sovereignty, from Cairo to Tel Aviv, from Athens to Madrid. Starting from there and considering the diversity of situations, there seem to be two or three common views.

The first hypothesis amounts to considering the vitality of the externalized criticism, which is often radical. This criticism, which has dwindled over the last decade, consists of forcing the system to say what it is, to challenge a certain state of affairs. It could undergo metamorphosis, move toward new sporadic, contagious movements with creative forms of revolt, drawing their arguments from life (Boltanski, 2009). In this case, the public space will undoubtedly be enduringly besieged in order to set the stage for and accompany an emotional political gesture, to denounce the corridors of power and the tycoons' headquarters, but also to reveal all the forms of ordinary injustice, and get the people to rise up beyond the reality. But this model obviously cannot exclude all forms of violence²².

Another view examines the struggle in the squares, if not the class struggles, expressed by protesters who have lost their social status, are pauperized or have been evicted. By making the economy and housing public problems, and social and spatial justice a common good, the citizens expressing themselves in various settings (Spain, Greece, Israel, USA) hope to open a new space as an intermediary between "the people" and the State, to demand re-democratization of representational, participatory and governance institutions. Continually renewed protests of oppositional publics (Butler, 2012) already seem to be re-besieging a civil space left vacant by the governments and political parties or sweetened by representative democracy through the creation of new parties and collectives or pressure groups influencing upcoming elections. The protests and various "soapboxes" would lean toward reformist critique. Reformist critique consists of speaking to the visible and expressible economic disparities between social groups, on the determinants of pauperization and influencing decisions (as political parties or associations would do). In some cases, the debate could pertain to various forms of spatial and social injustice tied to culture. In this regard, the question of religion and minorities is a symbolic component that comes into the public space. In Israel and England, religious leaders – ultra-orthodox in Israel, Lutherans in London – have taken a seat in the assemblies. For clergy, these democratic places emerge as a method for the radical reform of the public sphere focussed on the issues of social and spatial justice (Israel), or the ethics of capitalism (Spain, England, USA), in which religion participates. In various ways, criticism through protest and its different

²² One can wonder, for example, about the various immolations of poor citizens in France and elsewhere that take place in public space.

communities could seek to inspire a more, if not completely, equalitarian democracy, where citizens are not just spectators²³.

In every case, what seems to be at stake is the emergence of new political capacities and a new meaning given to democracy, in breaking with the political, and that the sharing of hardships in the public square and the stylistic metamorphosis of space will have ultimately helped to reveal. Riot stylistics, an entire set of political and aesthetic gestures, and critical devices that these movements have caused to emerge, show us that the public space cannot be (can no longer be) disconnected from politics.

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To quote this article: Sylvaine BULLE, « Pourquoi la rue inspire-t-elle la révolte ? Compétences émeutières et projet de transformation sociale dans le mouvement d'occupation mondial (Espagne, Israël, USA) » ("Why does the street inspire revolt: Riot skills and social transformation plan in the worldwide occupation movement (Spain, Israel, USA)" [translation: Sharon Winkler Moren]), *justice spatiale | spatial justice*, n° 05 déc. 2012-juil. 2013 | dec. 2012-jul. 2013, <http://www.jssj.org>

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²³ In the sense of a complete democracy where justice is part of republican institutions, as proposed by Pierre Rosanvallon (2011). The design of a public sphere (or spheres of justice) taking into account both the re-balancing of inequalities in the area of basic necessities and the ethical, social and cultural aspects of inequalities, has been examined by Walzer (1997) and Fraser (2011).

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