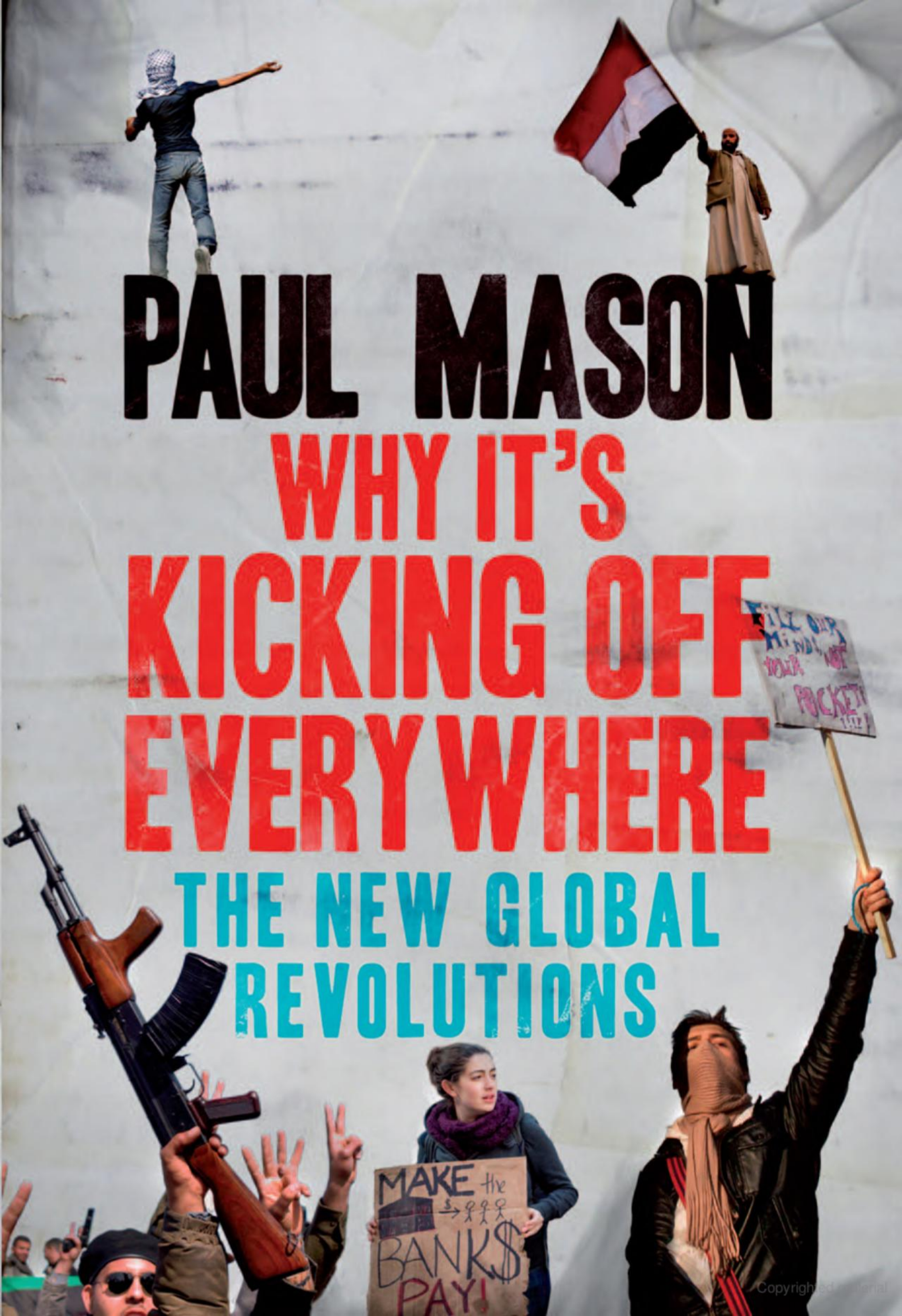
PAUL MASON

WHY IT'S KICKING OFF EVERYWHERE

THE NEW GLOBAL REVOLUTIONS



Copyrighted material

This edition first published by Verso 2012
© Paul Mason 2012

All rights reserved

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Verso
UK: 6 Meard Street, London W1F 0EG
US: 20 Jay Street, Suite 1010, Brooklyn, NY 11201
www.versobooks.com

Verso is the imprint of New Left Books

eISBN: 978-1-84467-889-1

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

Typeset in Fournier by MJ Gavan, Truro, Cornwall
Printed by ScandBook AB, Sweden

Contents

Introduction 1

1. 'Now There Is Freedom': Why Egypt's Revolution Is Not Over 5
2. Nobody Saw It Coming: How the World's Collective Imagination Failed 25
3. 'Trust Is Explosive': Britain's Youth Rebel Against Austerity 41
4. So, Why Did It Kick Off? The Social Roots of the New Unrest 65
5. Greece: The Anomic State? From Austerity to Social Breakdown 87
6. 'Error de Sistema': Economic Causes of the Present Unrest 105
7. 'I Tweet in My Dreams': The Rise of the Networked Individual 127
8. In the Tracks of Tom Joad: A Journey through Jobless America 153
9. 1848 Redux: What We Can Learn from the Last Global Wave 171
10. 'We Will Barricade': Slum Dwellers versus the Super-rich 193

Notes 213

Index 223

Copyrighted material

Introduction

It was a cold Friday night in early 2011, sometime between the fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia and the fall of the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. I got a call: would I do a lecture on the history of the Paris Commune for something called 'The Really Free School' in Bloomsbury? I turned up to the venue to find it was a squat. They'd formed an ad hoc university, occupied an eighteenth-century townhouse in the heart of London and stuck a sign on the door saying 'Journalists Fuck Off'.

Here was the hard core of the student protest movement: dedicated eco-warriors, veterans of suicidal sit-downs in front of tanks in Gaza, the demobbed Clown Army and, as my host put it, 'the Situationist Taliban'.

Did they know this had all been done before? They had a vague idea. I watched their eyes widen—sixty of them, cross-legged on the Jane Austen–era floorboards—as I explained the debates between Proudhon, Blanqui, Marx and Garibaldi in the years before 1871, scarcely needing to draw out the parallels with Climate Camp, the Black Bloc, Naomi Klein and the Zapatistas.

Afterwards, a few of us wedged ourselves into the nearby Museum Tavern, where Marx had been a regular. There was @spitzenprodukte and @benvickers_, both art activists; @dougald—the inventor of the term 'collapsonomics'; @digitalmaverick, a schoolteacher and 'moodle

evangelist'; and Tim, who'd dedicated his life to fighting for human rights in the Niger Delta.

The discussion buzzed: is it the technology, the economics, the mass psychology or just the zeitgeist that's caused this global explosion of revolt? I inclined to a technological-determinist explanation: 'Look how your eyes shine when we talk about the network. It's the network!' Glancing at my iPhone, I realized why they seemed occasionally distracted: they were tweeting the entire conversation, live, to their friends.

The next morning I wrote a blog post based on the conversation: 'Twenty Reasons Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere' (see page 63). It went viral.

Within a month I met a hacker from Boston, Massachusetts, who told me that 'there are discussion groups in the USA studying your blog'. Later, I found out that a global collective of protesters were working on a book critiquing the blog[1]; later still I met some of them, as they tried to avoid having their heads bashed in by Greek riot police. This has created a degree of circularity between the reporter, the reported-on and the events which I am still struggling to get my own head around.

In this book I explore the reasons why numerous protest movements, revolutions, civil wars and internet-based revolts 'kicked off' in 2009–11. I've travelled from Cairo to Manila to Athens and beyond to write it. It's not a comprehensive history, and of course the events are not over.

The book makes no claim to be a 'theory of everything', linking LulzSec to global warming and key dates in the Mayan calendar. And don't file it under 'social science': it's journalism.

Some ideas in the original blog have been expanded, others ditched. Some theatres of the conflict have been ignored, simply because I couldn't get there. The original post—written on 5 February 2011 when Mubarak was still in power and Greece was still scheduled to pay its debts (and with my head throbbing thanks to the Museum

Tavern)—was just a snapshot and so is this, albeit with more pixels and depth of field. Though events have moved on fast, the essence of my argument remains unchanged. We're in the middle of a revolution caused by the near collapse of free-market capitalism combined with an upswing in technical innovation, a surge in desire for individual freedom and a change in human consciousness about what freedom means. An economic crisis is making the powerful look powerless, while the powerless are forced to adopt tactics that were once the preserve of niche protest groups.

If you're skilled at chaining yourself to fighter planes, or know how to launch a 'denial of service attack', there will be parts of this book that make you think, 'Yeah, right, of course, I knew all that.' The aim, as with the original blog, is to capture the moments of crisis and revolution, to give them context and to explain what links these apparently disparate, worldwide upheavals.

Many of the activists I've interviewed are hostile to the very idea of a unifying theory, a set of bullet-point demands, a guru or a teleology. I'm not trying to provide any of these. For the youth, increasingly, knowledge is drawn, on demand and free, from online articles and commentaries and—often breathless—tweets. And for many, politics has become gestural: it is about refusing to engage with power on power's own terms; about action, not ideas; about the symbolic control of territory to create islands of utopia.

The format of the book reflects the zeitgeist: it brings together reportage, essay, tweet, anecdote and cyber-psychology; plus some economic insights gathered amid clouds of tear gas.

And the role of 'the book' itself is changing. Writers of my generation stood in awe of the New Journalism of the 1960s, when the sudden swing to truthful reportage could end presidencies and terminate wars. But the equivalent in this era will not be like the grand reportage of the Sixties at all. Rather, it is the combined input of thousands of people into the freely accessible public record of social media: the thoughts they tweeted, the jokes they cracked as their friends panicked in

the crush of crowds, the football shirts they wore as they toted Kalashnikovs through liberated Tripoli. There is a great river of human hope flowing, and all I am trying to do is dip my fingers in it.

The essence of why it's kicking off was put into words by a student protester in the USA. Federal police had tried to arrest somebody on a university campus, so a group of students sat down around the police car. A twenty-one-year-old with curly blond hair took off his shoes and stood on the car's roof, to begin a mass meeting that would last several days. Later, he said:

> The act of sitting around the police car, of getting up on the car and starting to speak, of physically structuring the possibility of a community … all of a sudden there is a self-justifying factor to it. In a way, once it's been established, there might be other reasons for sitting around the car than keeping it from moving—namely participating in the community. I have never experienced that anywhere nearly so strongly as around the police car.[2]

But that was not in 2011. Those words were spoken in 1964 by Mario Savio, a student leader in Berkeley, California, in a protest that kicked off a decade of campus revolts throughout the USA.

You may have thought such days were gone—such idealism, such eloquence, such creativity and hope. Well, they're back.

London, 26 October 2011

1

'Now There Is Freedom': Why Egypt's Revolution Is Not Over

Cairo, May 2011

The ground floor of Musa Zekry's house is head-high with garbage and thick with flies. The floor above is home to the widow of his brother, shot dead during the revolution. Musa will live in the top floor, above her, when it is finished—but for now it's a shell, choked with rubble, dust, more garbage and more flies.

A dead brother, several fear-filled days in Tahrir Square, weeks of danger and distrust: that's the balance sheet of Musa Zekry's revolution. All he's got to show for it is a banner slung across the street outside, hailing his brother as a martyr, alongside a portrait of Jesus Christ. Plus freedom.

And it is this freedom, so unexpected and so viscerally felt, that lights his face and energizes his five-foot frame as he steers me through streets filled with *shisha* smoke, donkey crap and a blizzard of flies:

> The Central Security forces now are non-existent—because we have freedom! Now everybody has a voice and wants to speak. Before, under Mubarak, if you raised your voice they would kill you in the street. Now there is freedom.

Cairo's Moqattam slum, in the south-east of this vast metropolis, is home to 65,000 *zabbaleen* or 'garbage people'. The young men and children collect the garbage in the twilit streets of downtown Cairo. The women sort it into separate sacks: bone, metal, cloth and plastic in all their subsets: water bottles, oil containers. A whole family just down the street from Musa specializes in smashing plastic knives and forks into a crisp white rubble. The *zabbaleen*'s world is one of rank alleyways, face-stinging heat, cheap bread eaten fresh out of grubby fingers.

The *zabbaleen* are mainly Coptic Christians: the face of Jesus gazes down on every workshop and rubbish pile. But in the street, as Musa leads me to a makeshift factory where they are using vats and blowers to turn plastic bottle shreds into translucent snow, two men embrace each other, gesturing at the religious symbols tattooed on their wrists: 'I Christian, I Muslim,' they chime. 'We together.'

The Egyptian revolution may have begun on Facebook, but when it reached these alleyways, mobilizing men whose whole lives are stratified by religion, family and caste—well, that was the point that things got serious for Hosni Mubarak.

'Two men came to us and said, let's go down to Tahrir, to ask for change,' says Musa. He's reluctant to name them even now, but he clasps his palms together above his head to demonstrate what they did. 'They told us: let's make a demonstration with the people in Tahrir Square. One was Muslim, one Christian. One hand! We went by car: ten or twenty cars. When we got there I realized that our goal was right: to make a revolution and get freedom.'

Some of the bottle shredders did not go: 'We have our own square here,' laughs one, pointing to a patch of dust and dog-dirt. 'We waited for Tahrir to come to the *zabbaleen*!'

It did, but not in the way they had expected. On 7 March 2011, less than a month after Mubarak had fallen, and the garbage people had symbolically cleansed Tahrir, thugs from the old regime organized a Muslim mob to attack the slum. These hired gangs are known as the *baltagiya*:

> My brother ran to tell my Dad—he works in a garage in the place the *baltagiya* were marching to. But my Dad had already run away. Then we got a phone call: your brother is in the hospital, he is dead. He was shot but nobody knows who did it.

Relations between the Copts and the Muslim slums nearby were always fraught, but, despite his brother's death, Musa is not scared to go there. It's the city centre, where law and order has been minimal since the revolution, that frightens him: 'I can walk through the Muslim slum, no problem. The problem is, now, if I go downtown I am worried somebody's gonna shoot me; somebody is gonna wave a pass—I don't know whether it's fake or real—and tell me to give money, or kill me.'

For Musa, as for millions of others from the slums and tenements of Cairo, this has been no 'social media revolution'. It's been a chaotic, frightening implosion of order. Policing, he says, is lax; security is 'just decorative':

> Economically nothing has changed. We went to Tahrir to make a change, but so far, nothing's improved. What we need is for Egypt to be like America—so that if you have an idea, if you want to start a business, you can do it freely. We need social justice. That was what we chanted for.

To see how far from social justice Mubarak's Egypt was before 25 January 2011, the Moqattam slum is a good place to start. It's crammed into a sloping gully beneath a sandstone cliff. If you stand at the top, near one of the caves they use for churches, you're confronted by a landscape of wooden shacks, twisted metal rods, crumbling concrete and hundreds of rusted satellite dishes. But this is just the unfinished roofscape, the top layer of misery. Plunge down into the alleyways and it becomes dark. The *zabbaleen* build their shanty-dwellings five or six floors high; each new son or marriage adds another layer of brick and concrete to create a warren of urban canyons—like a miniature New York, with donkeys for traffic.

And there is intense noise: machines shredding and crushing plastic; blacksmiths hammering old metal into something new. Coptic ballads of death and resurrection wailing out of tinny radios mingle with the braying of donkeys and goats. When the garbage arrives—in 1970s-model Datsun trucks whose windshields and brakes are long gone—they tip it into the alleyways, right next to where people live. The women come out, accompanied by any children old enough to walk, squat down in the middle of the garbage and start picking through it. They rummage deftly, looking for valuable stuff amid the refuse. The women's hands and faces are grey with grime, but they're swathed in acid-coloured scarves and headbands, while their ears are weighed down with yellow gold.

And then there are the flies. If you painted the Moqattam slum you would have to fill the canvas with small dots of brown light, like *pointillisme* done with flying dirt. But no picture, not even a video, could capture the intensity of the insect life which swarms across your gaze, inhibiting your inward breath.

Like all modern slums, Moqattam is really a giant informal factory: its micro-economy is both essential to global capitalism and in the process of being destroyed by it.

For sixty years, the *zabbaleen* had run Cairo's trash collection system. They picked up the waste door to door, fed their pigs with the rotting organic matter and recycled the rest for cash, trading with a traditional caste of middlemen. But in 2003, as part of a privatization programme overseen by Mubarak's son Gamal, three sanitation companies—two Spanish and one Italian—were brought in to 'modernize' the city's waste collection.

These outside firms were given cleaning contracts valued at US$50 million a year. Instead of door-to-door collection, they placed big plastic bins on street corners. Instead of recycling 80 per cent of solid waste—as the *zabbaleen* had managed to do—their contracts required that only 20 per cent be recycled, with the rest tipped into landfill. The transformation of Cairo's refuse system was to be crowned by the

eviction of the *zabbaleen*, whose slum was adjacent to a new residential property development planned by friends of Gamal Mubarak.

'The old system worked. The recycling process was one of the most efficient in the world,' says Ezzat Guindi, born and raised in the slum, where he now runs an NGO. 'And', he goes on, 'people could live. There was no sub-dollar-a-day poverty among the *zabbaleen* until the multinationals came. Now, about 30 per cent are destitute; and it's those who've been displaced and made redundant by the sanitation companies who are the poorest.'

But the new system wasn't working. Cairo's residents refused to use the bins; in fact, many of the high-grade plastic containers were stolen and, with poetic justice, ended up being shredded and recycled by the *zabbaleen*. People began to dump their rubbish onto the streets or into the disused and abandoned buildings that scar Cairo's streetscape.

So, the new system needed an extra push. When the global swine flu epidemic broke, in 2009, the Mubaraks spotted an opportunity. The Egyptian parliament, circumventing its own health ministry and in defiance of UN advice, ordered all the *zabbaleen*'s pigs to be slaughtered. There had been no recorded transmission of swine flu from pigs to humans. No other country in the world had ordered the mass eradication of domestic pigs. But that did not deter Hosni Mubarak.

Across Egypt, an estimated 300,000 swine belonging to *zabbaleen* households were slaughtered; the government paid between $15 and $50 per pig in compensation, compared to the $80 to $300 they'd been selling for on the market. Soon, two things happened. With no pigs to eat the rotting food, the *zabbaleen* stopped collecting it, leaving it to pile up on the streets. Then malnutrition appeared among their children. For, says Guindi, though the multinational companies were getting $10 a tonne for waste, and the middlemen $2 out of that, the *zabbaleen* received nothing from the contract—only what they could make from the sale of recycled waste, and their pigs.

Now something else happened, equally novel: the *zabbaleen* rioted. They hurled rocks, bottles and manure (there was plenty of that to

hand) at the pig-slaughtering teams. In response, Mubarak deployed riot squads into the slums—followed, as always, by Central Security and its torturers.

That is how a mixture of repression, greed, corruption and neo-liberal economic doctrine managed to turn the *zabbaleen* into latent revolutionaries. All it needed was a spark, and that came on 25 January 2011.

Cairo, 25 January 2011

'Something's going to happen in Egypt,' Hossam el-Hamalawy had told me when we talked in a Bloomsbury café two years before. 'Mubarak will try to hand over to his son, Gamal, but Gamal might lose the next election.'

Hamalawy spoke softly. He'd been detained and tortured by Mubarak's secret police for selling socialist literature and was active around the uprising on 6 April 2008 in the Delta city of Mahalla. Then, like a tremor that should have warned of the earthquake to come, a city of 400,000 people rioted for three days in response to the suppression of a textile strike and the rocketing price of food.

It was around the Mahalla strike, too, that the April 6th Youth Movement was formed, by mostly young activists, liaising by Facebook, email and Flickr. They were drawn from Egypt's fragmented opposition: secularist youth from the left, the liberal opposition parties, the human rights community.

When I met Hamalawy in 2009, screwing up Gamal's election campaign was the limit of his ambition. But in January 2011, once the revolution in Tunisia was under way, the horizon for Egypt's opposition groups broadened rapidly. Hamalawy (who tweets as @3arabawy) was among those that initiated the call for a demonstration in Cairo's Tahrir Square on 25 January, again made through a Facebook page.

Meanwhile, the downtrodden and the desperate had begun to react to

Ben Ali's overthrow in more direct ways. On 17 January, three days after the Tunisian president's fall, a fifty-two-year-old lawyer in central Cairo shouted slogans about food price rises, then set himself on fire. A man in Alexandria did the same. A third man—a restaurant owner—immolated himself outside the Egyptian parliament after quarrelling with officials about the cost of bread. The next day, a twenty-five-year-old business graduate named Asmaa Mahfouz (@AsmaaMahfouz) posted a video blog on YouTube. 'Four Egyptians have set themselves on fire', she announced,

> to protest humiliation and hunger and poverty and the degradation they've had to live with for thirty years, thinking that we could have a revolution like in Tunisia. Today one of them has died … People, have some shame! I, a girl, posted that I will go down to Tahrir Square, to stand alone, and I'll hold a banner. All that came were three guys. Three guys, three armoured cars of riot police and tens of *baltagiya* … I'm making this video to give you a simple message: we're going to Tahrir on 25 January.[1]

During the following days, activists frantically refreshed the Facebook page advertising the 25 January demo, as news spread it was gaining thousands of followers per second. Many had also joined the 'We are all Khaled Said' page, dedicated to a youth beaten to death by police in Alexandria for posting evidence of police corruption on YouTube.

The veteran activists knew the stakes. They knew the Central Security would crack down hard on any attempts at demonstration. They had no idea whether the tens of thousands of names on Facebook would translate into anything more than the usual forlorn and harassed protests. That they did was thanks, in the first place, to a new generation of young people—many of whom had previously been active only in student politics, and who simply decided they'd had enough.

Sarah Abdelrahman (@sarrahsworld), a twenty-two-year-old drama student at the American University of Cairo, had never been on

a demonstration and had never been politically active beyond the student union. On the 25th itself, knowing that the advertised start-points on Facebook would be mere 'camouflage' to fool the police, she hooked up with a friend more experienced in political organization and headed for the slum settlement of Naheya, just outside downtown Cairo.

> We had to walk in twos at first—this was my first protest and I didn't know why, but they said it's because of the Emergency Law: more than two is illegal. Then someone gave me a paper with lawyers' numbers 'in case you get detained'—and I am going: 'Whoa, whoa, whoa!'

Her eyes whiten as she relives it. She speaks perfect American English, dresses like any student in London or New York, and has that confident tone of voice you hear in the Starbucks of the world:

> We were roaming around; people started hiding in alleys, walking in twos and you could look at another two people, the other side of the street and know they don't belong here. And I'm thinking, 'I know why you are here'—there's a moment of eye contact. Someone started chanting and then all of a sudden people came from the alleys and we were about 200 people, in this tiny street. And people came onto the balconies to see what was happening.

Among the crowd she spotted Abd El Rahman Hennawy (@Hennawy89). The twenty-five-year-old is hard to miss: he sports a large beard, a red Bedouin scarf and a t-shirt bearing the word 'socialism'. He seemed surprised to see her: 'Before then, whenever Hennawy called us out to protest, in the university, I'd be like, sorry, man, I can't. He saw me and said, what are you doing here? This is *my* stuff, it's what I do!' Hennawy was part of the core of protesters who knew what was going to happen. On the night before, 24 January, he had attended a packed meeting in a private flat. Then, like all the activists there, he'd

organized a cell of six people to sleep on the floor of his own apartment and to wait there for information.

They'd been working like this since Mahalla in 2008: misdirecting the police by planning spoof marches openly on their cellphones and then failing to turn up, or launching flash demos out of the radical coffee shops in the alleyways around Tahrir. Recently they'd switched from demonstrating in the centre to demonstrating in the slums and suburbs. 'On 25 January,' Hennawy recalls,

> we put three things together for the first time: the surprise demonstration, plus going to the slums instead of downtown, plus the chants. We chanted about economics, not politics. If you are shouting 'Down with Mubarak!' in the slums, nobody cares. They care about food and shelter. So we chanted: 'How expensive is bread; how expensive is sugar; why do we have to sell our furniture?' And people joined in. We had no idea it was going to be a revolution, though. I thought it would be just a demonstration.

Hennawy estimates that the 200 activists who went to Naheya were able to mobilize up to 20,000 people on the day. The urban poor responded to two issues in particular: police brutality and the price of bread.

As this crowd, and others, marched to Tahrir Square, a pattern developed: they would hit a wall of riot police, and the wall would break. The scenes would be posted on YouTube later, but if you track back through the Twitter feeds of the leading activists (in English, because the world was watching), you can see it happen:

> 13:21:56: @Sandmonkey: Huge demo going to Tahrir #jan25 shit just got real
> 13:42:45: @norashalaby: Fuck got kettled almost suffocated till they broke cordon
> 14:08:55: @Ghonim: Everyone come to Dar El Hekma security police allow people to join us and we are few hundreds[2]

When they got to Tahrir, the fighting started. Sarah says: 'I was getting hit with water cannons, tear gas and bricks, and getting very close to being detained, and that's the moment'—she snaps her fingers—'when it hit me.'

> Someone who knows nothing about history, the opposition, nothing about freedom in Egypt and how it's been suppressed—because I've been so disconnected—you see all these people around you chanting the same thing and it triggers something in your mind ... You see people running towards the police, hurling bricks at them—and wow: the normal scenario would be to run away. I went home and I told my mother—I am not myself. I am somebody new that was born today.

The demonstrators took Tahrir Square. They fought the police, held impromptu meetings, gave sound bites to the world's media and, by nightfall, the Egyptian Revolution had begun. Twitter was blocked by the Egyptian government around 5 p.m., but the main activists were back on via a proxy (hidemyass.com) around 9 p.m. It was—as some of the activists proclaimed—a revolution planned on Facebook, organized on Twitter and broadcast to the world via YouTube. The global news channels, above all Al-Jazeera, became a massive amplifier for the amateur reports and videos, spreading the revolution's impact across the world.

The farther away you stood, the more it looked like this was an uprising of secular youth with perfect teeth, speaking the kind of English you hear at Princeton or Berkeley. Even the Mubarak regime convinced itself that the revolt was something imposed from outside: tales of 'foreign agents with an agenda' were spread via the state-run rumour networks. On the night of 27 January, the government switched off the Internet. It was then that the world found out the revolution was neither digital nor alien.

Day of Rage, 28 May 2011

Next day, Friday the 28th, the Muslim day of prayer, tens of thousands streamed out of the mosques and headed for Tahrir Square. This was the 'Day of Rage': the day the Mubarak clique effectively lost control, though it would take two more weeks to oust the man from power. The moment was captured on mobile phones and posted on YouTube.

In one video, a crowd of around three thousand pushes the riot police back over the Qasr al-Nil bridge—the main route from Zamalek Island, in western Cairo, into Tahrir Square.[3] Arcing over their heads are white plumes of tear-gas canisters. Two water-cannon trucks speed forward and swerve into the crowd, doing U-turns and jerks to flatten as many demonstrators as possible, but the security forces are unable to stop the crowd, now so big it fills the bridge.

The water cannons fire. The crowd halts. An imam appears, clad in white. The men at the front form a row and now, soaked through and shielding their eyes, just yards from the police, they kneel and pray. Those behind them do the same. Everybody is clawing at their faces as the water concentrates the tear gas, spraying a burning cocktail onto their skin.

Now, police trucks drive directly into the crowd; the praying ends, the crowds scatter. Police shoot a man in the face with a tear-gas grenade, point-blank (later, video footage of him on the operating table shows up on YouTube, smashed teeth protruding from a hole where his mouth had been). The crowd panics, pursued by four trucks and the far end of the bridge is engulfed in smoke, and now flames, as somebody has torched a car.

It seems like game over, but it's not. Soon the police are in full retreat, back across the bridge: the crowd has armed itself with traffic barriers and a tube-shaped metal kiosk, which they roll before them on its side like a tank. A water-cannon truck has been captured and the rioters turn this, too, into a moving barricade. The police beat a

headlong, terrified retreat. If the crowd pursuing them look like football fans, that's because many of them are: the 'ultras' of Zamalek Sporting Club.

Mahmoud, who I met in Tahrir Square a few weeks later, draped in the flag of Zamalek SC, was among them. 'There was me and about four thousand others at Qasr al-Nil bridge,' he recalled. 'It was a beautiful feeling: to know that Egypt is finally free of all the corruption, the rule of the iron fist.'

The 'ultras'—named after the notorious Italian football hooligan gangs—had organized for years in the face of police repression, at all big soccer clubs. The police accused the ultras of fostering terrorism and organized crime, and they, in turn, found ways of getting their banners, flares and weapons into the stadiums. They would meet up at pre-arranged venues, ready to fight each other and the cops. On 28 January they were initially summoned to go and smash the demonstration, says Mahmoud, in response to rumours that it was organized by foreign agents:

> We came down to see what was the truth behind what the media had been telling us, and found it was all wrong. The club HQ kept telling us the protesters were traitors, foreigners, and urging the ultras to go down there and do something about it. But when we got there, to Tahrir, we formed our own opinion: we bonded with the protesters and became part of them.

Ultras from rival club al-Ahly also joined in the fighting. By the end of the day numerous police cars had been torched, the headquarters of Mubarak's National Democratic Party was on fire, and protesters controlled Tahrir Square.

He's thin, Mahmoud, with a cheeky smile poking out from beneath his red-and-white Zamalek scarf. He says: 'Why don't you ask me about football?' So I throw him some inane question about Zamalek's position in the league. He chuckles: 'Since the revolution I've been

neglecting football hooliganism for a bigger cause: the revolution. I can speak for both myself and every ultra. We all have.'

A soft coup

On 29 January, with several hundred protesters killed across Egypt, the demonstrators forced the riot cops of the Central Security to vacate the streets; the ordinary police force withdrew too, in a calculated tactic to promote lawlessness. Army units were positioned at strategic points, but having refused an order from the interior ministry to use live ammo on the demonstrators, they took no part in the maintenance of law and order. All across Cairo, neighbourhoods responded by creating vigilante squads armed with clubs and small firearms. The main aim of these groups was to fend off the *baltagiya*—essentially a network of civilian thugs paid and organized by the police to carry out such beatings, rapes and tortures as are necessary to pacify a city of 22 million people without rights or decent livelihoods.

The moment was essentially a soft coup by the army against the parts of the regime loyal to Mubarak, but at the same time it created 'fragmented power' on the streets: not so much the 'dual power' of Marxist theory, but the kind of deconstructed power we saw taking shape in the vacuum left by Hurricane Katrina and would see, at isolated moments, in Greece and London later in 2011.

Though the precise details of how the military then seized power remain shrouded, there can be few clearer examples of an economics-driven split within a ruling class. Gamal Mubarak's neoliberal programme of privatizations and corporate land grabs had been actively championed by the IMF and by leading European politicians: from Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson to French industry minister Eric Besson and, of course, Silvio Berlusconi, as well as many of the business leaders who gather annually at Davos.

Gamal and his brother Alaa had built a personal fortune for the family, estimated at around $70 billion, by extracting stakes in the

newly privatized enterprises. Like many of the morally dubious enterprises that have collapsed in chaos since 2008, it was run from a business address in London.

But decades before the Mubaraks created their neoliberal fiefdom, the army had created its own economic empire: factories, tourist resorts and service businesses, replete with a supply chain of privately held companies dependent on army patronage. The politicians and media types aligned with this section of Egyptian capital saw the state, not global capitalism, as their meal ticket. The generals, together with this 'national' faction of Egyptian capital, had material reasons to resent the Mubarak clique—above all the impending stitch-up of the presidential succession—and they saw their moment.

While the masses were on the streets, these two factions fought a Shakespearean death-tragedy behind closed doors, and the army won. First, they forced Mubarak to concede the appointment of a vice president; next, the sacking of his cabinet and its replacement with army-aligned politicians. On 1 February, with a million people in Tahrir, they forced Mubarak to announce he would no longer seek re-election. The next day, Mubarak-loyal politicians paid camel drivers to gallop into Tahrir Square to attack protesters: the aim was to present to the world the illusion of a mass backlash, an 'enough reform and lawlessness' movement.

When, after two days and nights of hand-to-hand fighting, the camel-backed counter-revolution failed, Tahrir began to fill with a much wider demographic of protesters who, day by day, rejected the various compromises and reshuffles offered by Mubarak. Who can forget the old man holding up a placard that read: 'Mubarak: Go! My arms are tired'?

Finally, on 10 February, at the demand of the first meeting in decades of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), Mubarak recorded a speech announcing he would step down. But Gamal stormed into the presidential palace and forced his father to scrap the recording and make a new one. This promised only elections by September.

It was to be the final straw for the masses, who were flooding into Tahrir in their hundreds of thousands, and for the army, which was now beginning to split openly under pressure of demands from Tahrir and because of its fraternization with the protesters. The generals forced Mubarak's departure—without further ado or speeches—on 11 February, to be replaced in power by General Tantawi and the SCAF itself.

But by now a new force was making itself heard: the working class.

The collapse of invisible walls

The Egyptian working class bears the birthmarks of its creation, first under British rule and then during the state capitalist regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser: it is concentrated in the public sector, in army-owned factories and in recently privatized enterprises. On the eve of the revolution, 28 per cent of the workforce was employed by the state and just 10 per cent in the 'modern' sector—that is, in textiles, construction, energy, transport and services. More than a third of workers were 'informal', and the rest worked on the land.[4]

Though shrunk by twenty years of privatization, and further diminished by job losses after 2008, the Egyptian working class had a clear demographic identity under Mubarak. You could see it on the picket lines that formed in early February.

At the gates of the Suez Canal Port Authority, it was middle-aged men and their sons in orange overalls. Big-chested guys who'd had to fight for these jobs—and defy the state-run union to go on strike and occupy the port. Among the Real Estate Tax Authority Workers in their blue baseball caps, who marched into Tahrir calling for Mubarak to go, there were more women: but that same confident, educated culture was evident. They'd been the first to break from Mubarak's state-run union federation in 2008.

This is a class with status: the men seem physically larger than the urban poor, and the demographic is discernibly centred on the age

group 35–55. And they have a culture of solidarity. For Mubarak, the price of maintaining the state-run union as an organ of control within the workplace had been to hold congresses, maintain the NDP's membership of the Socialist International, to keep the ILO onside, and to deliver material concessions. In 2008, 5.9 million government workers won a 30 per cent pay rise in 2008, while Mubarak was forced to double food, health and education subsidies, from LE64 billion to LE128 billion ($22 billion).[5]

By 9 February the pattern of action was clear: workers were beginning to form unions separate from the state-run union, often seizing the workplace and kicking out the boss. At a textile factory in Daqahliya they sacked the CEO and began self-management. At a printing house in Cairo, they did the same. In Suez, where there had been heavy repression, the steel mill and the fertilizer factory had declared all-out strikes until the fall of the regime.[6]

Egyptian activists are split over the significance of this late-stage strike wave: some think it was a second-order effect of the mass unrest, others believe it was decisive in beginning to split the army—and thus forcing the SCAF to depose Mubarak. What is not in doubt is that, after 11 February, worker unrest took off.

Mohammed Shafiq, a psychiatrist at the Manshiyet el Bakri hospital in Cairo, had been in Tahrir Square as a volunteer medic from day one, treating the injured in one of the makeshift clinics:

> I had been in Tahrir for about ten days. I'm tired, I'm hungry, so I decided to go to my own hospital as there was a standstill between the regime and the protesters. In the hospital there was a revolutionary mood. Even those who supported Mubarak knew the situation could not go on. I started a petition, with some of the demands I'd been hearing in Tahrir Square: all the doctors signed and then, amazingly, nurses started coming to me, saying: 'You are demanding a cut in hours and an increase in wages—what about us?'

Shafiq describes what happened next as 'the collapse of invisible walls': the nurses, the technicians, the porters added their demands.

Then he returned to Tahrir: the last days of Mubarak, followed by days of chaos and celebration, were frantic for the medics. But when he went back to the hospital in mid-February, the workers asked: 'What happened to our petition?' By now the entire workforce of 750 people, including managers, had signed it. They formed a cross-professional trade union. The nurses staged a sit-in over unpaid wages. The doctors also joined: junior doctors in a public hospital earned just LE300 a month basic, while hospital administrators could earn LE2,000. Shafiq says:

> The manager in every hospital is like a small dictator, they are a 'Mubarak in the workplace'. But we'd just decapitated Mubarak! After four weeks we decided to sack the manager. We told him not to come to work, and told the security guards to lock him out. He went to the ministry and complained—but the union ran the hospital for two weeks until we elected a new manager. It was the height of dual power except it was not dual power, it was only one power, and it was us.

When I meet Shafiq in April, he's hosting a delegation of British trade unionists, sweating into their souvenir Tahrir t-shirts in the garden of the Doctors' Union. The doctors are about to launch a national strike call, but the union is controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood, which doesn't want to strike. Another young doctor comes over.

'My colleague favours an immediate all-out strike,' Shafiq informs the British postmen and train drivers huddled under the palm trees. 'But I favour a warning strike to start with. What would you do?' A bloke from London Underground asks: 'What are your plans for picketing?' Both men look blank. There is further puzzlement among the hijab-clad young female medics who have joined us. After a few minutes back and forth in Arabic and cockney, the Brits explain the idea of blocking access to the workplace to prevent strike-breakers. 'This had not occurred to us,' say the Egyptians.

On May Day 2011, as Shafiq and the secular medics jostle with the Brotherhood for control of the stage at the Doctors' Union, workers begin filling Tahrir Square. It is, says Hossam el-Hamalawy, the first real May Day since 1951. The red flag does not predominate: instead people arrive with homemade banners, always with middle-aged men in the lead, chanting and singing. One banner says: 'Fight for social justice, not your own demands'. At the edge of the square, the top-selling items on the souvenir stands are A4 posters showing Mubarak and all his ministers in orange jumpsuits, with nooses around their necks.

A loud delegation from the Masry Shebin El-Kom textile factory surrounds me. Mahmoud el-Shaar, who's led a thirty-five-day occupation at the plant, says:

> We're striking to remove the imperialist presence of foreign elements. Mubarak privatized the company to Indonesian owners and they've shut four out of seven units. We want the prosecution of the corrupt officials who ran the cotton industry, and we want to terminate the contract with the Indonesians because it's destroying our lives. Our average wage is between LE360 and LE700 a month.

The company was the target of a classic Mubarak-era deal: the Indorama group paid LE174 million for 70 per cent of the assets, the state kept 18 per cent and the NDP-run trade union would own 12 per cent. 'The old, Mubarak union did nothing but corrupt the situation: we're finished with them,' el-Shaar says.[7] Rifat Abdul, in the t-shirt of the public transport union, grabs my arm. His banner demands a minimum wage of LE1200. What's changed?

> I feel free. We all feel we can say what we think without getting detained for it. At work, though, nothing has changed: wages, conditions, work hours, nothing. But there is a spirit of optimism between all workers, in every sector. During the revolution, we were here from

> day one. But now it's reached the point where we look around and we recognize these other delegations from the days in Tahrir Square, people from totally different sectors: we know each other's faces, we shake each other's hands, we slap each other on the back.

His mate, Wasim, rips the baseball cap off his bald head. 'Look,' he says. 'We're not going anywhere. I'm 100 per cent sure the whole world is behind us. We'll stay here in the sun and heat until it's done.' But it's not done yet.

The question for Musa Zekry

Back in the Moqattam slum, Musa Zekry's future revolves around a single type of shampoo, brand name Pert. To prevent counterfeits, Procter & Gamble pay the *zabbaleen* to shred every Pert bottle they collect, in return for cash. With the cash—supplemented by money from Bill Gates—they run a school. At the school the kids learn Arabic, English, computing and how to shred the Pert bottles. Zekry learned English at this school and now mentors the kids.

They are bright-eyed and cheerful, but decide to sing me a doleful Coptic song whose refrain asserts the inevitability of being poor and the certainty of salvation. One kid, aged thirteen, explains his daily routine: 'I go rubbish collecting from 2 a.m. to 8 a.m., and at 8 a.m. I go to school.' With free English lessons he's one of the lucky few, so what are his ambitions? 'To collect so much rubbish we can pay for another school.'

Will he leave the slum? He shakes his head. The combined efforts of Bill Gates, Procter & Gamble and thirty years of Mubarak's rule never managed to raise the aspirations of the Cairo poor beyond a better kind of poverty. By contrast, twenty-one days of revolution have brought freedom.

And freedom poses questions philanthropy does not bother with. Will Musa Zekry get healthcare, a living wage, free education for his

kids *as of right*, instead of through charity? Will the 'Mubaraks-in-every-enterprise' be toppled? Will Egyptian society be scarred by rampant corruption and inequality forever? Or will they get something better?

These are questions which, for twenty years, the policy elite believed were closed. The great surge of freedom that carried Musa Zekry into Tahrir Square has reopened them.

But I'm rushing ahead. We need to backtrack, to the old world, where everything was stable and imagination was dead …

2

Nobody Saw It Coming: How the World's Collective Imagination Failed

President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled Tunisia on 14 January 2011. By 11 February, Hosni Mubarak was gone, and protests were spreading across the region: to Yemen, where the first 'day of rage' took place on 27 January; to Bahrain, where protesters occupied the Pearl Roundabout on 14 February. Then, on 17 February, security forces started shooting marchers in Bahrain and the Libyan people rose up against Gaddafi. On 25 March the long, tortured battle for freedom in Syria began.

Nobody had seen this coming. Nobody with any influence, anyway. The stock image of Arabs in the Western media was of a passive but violent race, often filed under the categories of 'terrorism' and 'insoluble problems'. The Middle East specialists in the diplomatic and intelligence communities worked with a scarcely more sophisticated version of the same view. The *Economist* magazine's celebrated yearbook, published in December 2010, contained just four predictions for North Africa and the Middle East: Sudan would split; Iran's economy would suffer; Iraq would continue to be a headache; and there would be new peace talks over Palestine.[1] Mubarak, Ben Ali, Gaddafi, Saleh and Assad were deemed to be of no interest.

Even after the fall of Ben Ali, they failed to see it coming. In an article titled 'Why the Tunisian revolution won't spread', Stephen M. Walt,

Harvard professor of international relations, opined that: 'The history of world revolution suggests that this sort of revolutionary cascade is quite rare, and even when some sort of revolutionary contagion does take place, it happens pretty slowly and is often accompanied by overt foreign invasion.'[2]

Even when Tahrir Square was occupied, they could not see it coming. On the night of 25 January, Hillary Clinton told reporters: 'Our assessment is that the Egyptian government is stable.'[3] On the same day, Israel's military intelligence chief told the Knesset much the same thing. He predicted that Mubarak would 'be able to keep the demonstrations in check', and echoed Clinton's words: the regime was 'stable'.[4]

And even when the revolution was all but over, some could still not see it. Peter Mandelson, the former Labour minister, made an extraordinary plea to the global elite to save the Egyptian dauphin, Gamal Mubarak:

> Gamal Mubarak … has been the leading voice in favour of change within the government and the ruling party. Of course, it is easy to cast him as the putative beneficiary of a nepotistic transfer of family power, the continuation of 'tyranny' with a change of face at the top. This analysis, in my view, is too simplistic.

For a good six months, then, the Western political elite, media, academia and intelligence services were effectively driving with a shattered windscreen. But why?

The specific myopia over the Arab states is not hard to explain. Decades ago, Edward Said tried to warn the West about the self-deluding nature of its narrative on the Middle East:

> Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have instead is a

> series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.[5]

Said's words were written in 1980: long before 9/11, before two invasions of Iraq had laid the basis for sectarian civil war there, and before the West began to conflate the narrative of Islam with al-Qaeda's narrative of ruthless, nihilistic terror. For Carnegie scholar Tarek Masoud, the misapprehension goes deeper than the problem of cultural stereotypes:

> Those of us who study the region not only failed to predict the [Mubarak] regime's collapse, we actually saw it as an exemplar of something we called 'durable authoritarianism'—a new breed of modern dictatorship that had figured out how to tame the political, economic, and social forces that routinely did in autocracy's lesser variants.[6]

This gets closer to the root cause of disorientation, and holds lessons valid beyond the Middle East. A flaw in the West's political psyche had convinced people that dictatorships could be stable and sustainable, flying in the face of a 200-year-old doctrine equating capitalism and freedom. But none of this explains the depth of the disorientation: something in the intellectual Kool-Aid had atrophied our ability to think beyond the present.

Indifference to class, the one-dimensional mindset of the professional 'Arabists' and outright self-interest all played a part in misleading the political right. But the left, too, was disoriented. The key problem was spelled out by the theorist Fredric Jameson in 2003: 'It is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism.'[7]

Twenty years of capitalist realism

When a cheetah catches a gazelle there is always a moment where the prey gives up: it goes floppy, bares its neck, becomes resigned to its fate. You have got me, it seems to say, but now you have to kill me; in the meantime I will try to think about something else.

This has been the relationship between the right and the left since the early 1990s. The organized working class of the Fordist era was smashed, the Soviet Union—if no longer a role model, then at least a pole of opposition to US dominance—was gone. State capitalism and Keynesian economics had been supplanted. Modernism, the beloved republic that had begun with Picasso and Kandinsky, had been overthrown by such geniuses as Tracey Emin and Damien Hirst. Rock and roll was dead several times over; the airwaves now sizzled with litanies to rape and murder by black dudes with diamond earrings. What to do?

If we look at the main intellectual contributions from the left in this period, they are effectively rationalizations of defeat. Jameson's seminal 1991 account of postmodernism defines it as a 'condition', reliant on new technology, a new mass psychology of passivity and the fragmentation of meaning within culture. In this condition, he writes, there is

> an unparalleled rate of change on all the levels of social life and an unparalleled standardization of everything … What we now begin to feel … is henceforth, where everything now submits to the perpetual change of fashion and media image, that nothing can change any longer.[8]

On top of this there was the media: vast, powerful, impervious to criticism, corporate, and monopolized by the rich. Chomsky and Herman's celebrated book on the media, *Manufacturing Consent*, outlined the ways in which control over the media allowed capitalism to assert a new cultural dominance:

> The beauty of the system, however, is that such dissent and inconvenient information are kept within bounds and at the margins, so that while their presence shows the system is not monolithic, they are not large enough to interfere unduly with the domination of the official agenda.[9]

While that may have been correct when the book was first published, it is striking that the emergence of the Internet did not fundamentally change its authors' analysis. In their 2002 introduction to a revised edition of *Manufacturing Consent*, Chomsky and Herman concluded that the Internet, while a powerful tool for activists, would make no difference to the ability of corporate interests to control the media, or to its essential role as propagandist for big corporations. They judged that the rapid commercialization and concentration of the Internet 'threatens to limit any future prospects of the Internet as a democratic media vehicle'.

When it came to philosophy, leftists who had railed against 'bourgeois ideology' now abandoned the very concept. Slavoj Žižek rejected the idea that ideology was 'false consciousness', arguing, effectively, that ideology *is* consciousness: it is impossible to escape the mental trap created by capitalism, because one's life inside the system constantly recreates it. Instead of rebellion we are reduced to perpetual cynicism: we are trapped, like Neo in *The Matrix*, in a world we know to be half true. But we can't escape: 'Even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, we are still doing them.'[10]

Add it all up and you get the mindset of the left in an era of defeat. Nothing can change. Dissent is not strong enough to break the media's stranglehold; only irony or flight are possible.

By the late 1990s, Western mass culture was dominated by this zeitgeist of impotence. Future movie historians will look at the Hollywood catalogue and see this as the dominant theme of the 2000s: from *The Matrix* and *The Truman Show* to the Bourne movies, from *The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* to films as various as *Avatar* and *Inception*,

through all of them there flows the notion of 'manipulated consciousness': the suspicion that the hero is trapped within a malevolent system that controls his mind, but which he cannot defeat. This is no longer the external control of Orwell's *1984*, but a pre-programmed alternative reality against which the hero cannot deploy core human values like love and decency.

In an influential essay, cultural commentator Mark Fisher describes the impact of all this on a generation that has known nothing else. He calls the resulting phenomenon 'capitalist realism', defined as

> the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to *imagine* a coherent alternative to it … a pervasive atmosphere conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining action.[11]

Up to 2008, the left's inability to imagine any alternative to capitalism was like a mirror image of the right's triumphalism. The establishment's tramline thinking on Islam and its theories of 'durable authoritarianism' conformed, like the rest of its ideology, to Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis and the paeans of various commentators—Thomas Friedman foremost among them—to the triumph of globalization. Together, left and right created a shared fatalism about the future.

The right believed that with indomitable power it could create whatever truth it wanted to. In a famous phrase, Karl Rove, senior advisor to then US President George W. Bush, scorned those without power as the 'reality-based community'. Study reality, if you will, in search of solutions, Rove is said to have told a journalist, but

> That's not the way the world really works anymore. We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again,

> creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors … and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.[12]

But then Lehman Brothers went bust. Here was a reality the neocons had not created, and against which they were powerless. The date was 15 September 2008. Suddenly, it became possible to imagine the end of capitalism. Indeed, faced with a 50 per cent loss of global stock market value in six months, the scale of the disaster forced even some investors to contemplate it. But few, even now, were prepared to imagine an alternative.

If the rule of men like Mubarak, Gaddafi and Assad had been seen as somehow separate from the rule of free-market capitalism, maybe political science would not have become trapped in the same fatalism as economics. But support for these pro-Western dictators—or more especially for their sons—had always been sold on the basis that they were 'liberalizers': freeing up their home market for corporate penetration and, one day soon, reforming their constitutions. This was the theme of the famous essay by Anthony Giddens, which declared Gaddafi to be a follower of the Third Way and Libya on the road to becoming 'the Norway of North Africa'.[13]

Consequently, the failure of imagination leaked easily from economics into politics, diplomacy and social affairs. Few could conceive the fall of Mubarak or Gaddafi; the collapse of Rupert Murdoch's political leverage; the appearance of half a million young demonstrators on the streets of Tel Aviv, or Arab teenagers shouting 'Fuck Hamas' in the streets of Gaza City.

In my book *Meltdown*, in June 2010, I grappled with the reasons for this deep psychological complacency:

> It appears—because it has been the case for twenty years—that every problem is solvable … that no matter how badly the world economy slumps there is a pain-free way out of it. Once the realization dawns

> that there is not, and that the pain will be severe, the question is posed that has not really been posed for twenty years: who should feel it?[14]

Now, that question had become concrete. On 17 December 2010, a street vendor called Mohamed Bouazizi walked into the traffic in the Tunisian backwater of Sidi Bouzid, carrying a can of gasoline, and set himself on fire: he had, he claimed, been slapped by a corrupt local official, and his street goods had been confiscated. Within eight months, what began with Bouazizi had ripped away the fabric of autocratic rule across the Middle East.

And with hindsight we can now see that the fabric had already begun to fray elsewhere.

Athens and Gaza

From late 2008, events began to happen in which the new predominated over the old; in which the forces that would defy fatalism began to flex their limbs. Almost simultaneously the neocon faction of the US political elite lost the ability to 'create reality' as described by Karl Rove—starting with the loss of the White House.

The clearest precursor event for the new unrest was the December 2008 uprising in Athens. For three weeks after the police shooting of fifteen-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos in the student district of Exarcheia, students rioted, struck and occupied their universities, their actions eventually drawing in parts of the Greek labour movement.

The disturbances in Athens created a template of 'social explosion': an uncontrolled and randomly provoked reaction to economic crisis, in which students and uneducated urban youth come together to make mayhem. One second-generation Greek immigrant remembered:

> This was my first time ever to cast a stone, first time I covered my face … I had been before in demonstrations and protests but never before I had participated in riots. It was something like an initiation for me and

> I have to admit I felt liberated, you know. It made me feel like I regained control over myself.[15]

The next precursor moment is the Israeli invasion of Gaza, which began two days after the Greek riots ended, on 27 December 2009. Operation Cast Lead would radicalize many Egyptian youths and discredit sections of the mainstream media in the eyes of young people both in the West and in North Africa. Though in fact a military victory for Israel, it appeared as a moral defeat to the Arab youth, and to Muslim youth in Europe. In the West it would bring onto the streets the same core alliance of anti-capitalists, inner-city youth and the labour-orientated left as had staged mass protests over Iraq earlier in the decade. On 9 January 2009 a quarter of a million people took to the streets of Madrid; big demos occurred in every European capital, plus huge protests in Jakarta and Manila. The London demonstrations ended with violence and large-scale arrests: more than sixty Muslim men aged between seventeen and twenty were jailed.

One of the few commentators to predict the Arab Spring was the sometime adviser to Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, Alan Woods. As demonstrations flared across the Middle East during the Gaza war, Woods observed that 'all the pro-Western regimes there are hanging by a thread … Saudi Arabia … Egypt … Lebanon … So is Jordan, so is Morocco. These ruling elites were terrified by the demonstrations that took place during the Gaza war.'[16]

The invasion of Gaza even struck home among some sections of the Western political elites. 'Our policy is disgusting,' one Labour ministerial aide told me in January 2009. 'If I were not a government adviser I would be on the anti-war demonstrations myself.'

Iran: The 'Twitter Revolution'

Then came Iran. On 13 June 2009 the incumbent president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was re-elected with 62 per cent of the vote. Turnouts

above 100 per cent in two provinces, massive discrepancies between pre-election polls and the results, plus widespread ballot-rigging, sent supporters of the reformist candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi onto the streets within hours. 'If Iran sleeps tonight,' tweeted @mehri912, 'it will sleep forever.' It did not sleep.

The first of the iconic cellphone videos shows a crowd of protesters moving swiftly down Tehran's Valiasr Street, chanting: 'Mousavi, take back my vote!' These are office workers: men with briefcases, women wearing the minimum headgear required to avoid harassment from the religious authorities. Another YouTube video, fifty-eight seconds long and shot on a cellphone, shows what happened next.[17]

It starts with a crush of people against a shop façade, women screaming as they fight for space. Now the camera-holder, like the men in front of him, elbows his way forward as uniformed cops start batoning protesters, none of whom show any sign of belligerence. This is pure dictatorship: the collective punishment of a crowd for the act of being there. Riot police with shields run after them as they flee, beating their legs and backs, and on the soundtrack, again, we hear women screaming.

Next the cameraman spins round; the visored face of a policeman looms into shot as he hits the cameraman on the leg and tells him to get lost. Off-camera you hear the repeated thud of truncheons on flesh and more screaming. Then the shot becomes of running feet.

By nightfall, that video was zipping around the global Farsi networks via blogs, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. If it had been taken by a TV cameraman, that fifty-eight-second single shot would have won awards. It captures reality in a way you rarely see on TV news: terror, chaos, innocence, the sudden tremor in the policeman's face as he bottles out of hitting the cameraman again. But the point about the video is that it was not shot by a news crew, nor was it shown in full on any TV network.

Social media's power to present unmediated reality has never been better demonstrated. And the Iranian demonstrations produced

hundreds of similar videos, both of the protests and the crackdown that confronted them. Thanks to Twitter, these images exploded like a virus onto the screens of young people all over the world. The *Washington Times* called it 'Iran's Twitter Revolution':

> Hackers in particular were active in helping keep channels open as the regime blocked them, and they spread the word about functioning proxy portals. Eventually the regime started taking down these sources, and the e-dissidents shifted to e-mail. The only way to completely block the flow of Internet information would have been to take the entire country offline, a move the regime apparently has resisted thus far.[18]

Though the Ahmadinejad regime now took down Twitter, Facebook and SMS, it could not prevent the imagery circulating. No revolution in history had been recorded so comprehensively, and in such minute detail. In one video, police pick on a bystander at a bus stop; as they baton him a woman in a headscarf, about five feet tall, karate-kicks the police, two of whom then turn on her. One batons a car bonnet, randomly, in frustration. Then they stop and the woman merges again into the queue at the bus stop.[19]

Future social historians will gorge themselves on evidence like this, the micro-detail of social responses to unrest: but for now, its importance lies in the way it enables participants to judge what kind of history is being made in real time. Banned from reporting in Iran, the mainstream media quickly began to realize the value of this user-generated content, and to run it. The momentum of the protests fed off this cycle of guerrilla newsgathering, media amplification, censorship and renewed protest.

By the time the death of protester Neda Agha-Soltan was shown on YouTube, on 20 June 2009, the once-forlorn slogan of the anti-globalization movement had become a reality: the whole world actually *was* watching.

Bystanders posted three separate videos of Neda's shooting by a member of the regime's Basij militia: *Time* magazine called it 'probably the most widely witnessed death in human history'.[20] Blood trickles over her face. Her eyes roll sideways. She says, 'I'm burning.' Her grey-haired singing teacher vainly tries to staunch the flow of blood. Later, the crowd detains the alleged perpetrator and his security pass is photographed: this too gets uploaded to YouTube.

Another image resonated across the world that summer from Tehran: the so-called 'rooftop poems'. As demonstrations were repressed, student dorms invaded and young men handed over to the Basij rape-gangs and torture squads, protesters retreated to the rooftops by night to call out *Allah-o-Akbar*. On 16 June an anonymous young woman, whose YouTube username is Oldouz84, began improvising poems as she filmed the rooftop cries. In the last clip, taken the day after Neda's death, she whispers:

> *Allah-o-Akbar* is no longer about being a Muslim. It's become a call for unity, whether Muslim, Jew, Zoroastrian, faithless or faithful. The voices are coming from far away: they leave you shaken … Too many children will not hold their parents tonight. It could have been you or me.[21]

It's delivered in the style of an art-house movie narration: Wim Wenders in Farsi, with Tehran instead of West Berlin. But it is real—just as Neda's death, the karate-kicking woman, the surging crowds and baton charges are all real. The reality of protest, self-sacrifice and solidarity surged through the songlines of the Internet. Not everybody saw them: only the netizens sitting up late at night in Santa Cruz, in Marrakech, in Beijing, in Cairo, dipping beneath the barriers of Internet censorship in search of a better world. And it turned out there were more of these netizens than anybody thought.

The Iranian uprising was defeated: in part because the youth and the professional classes overestimated the break the poor were prepared

to make with the hardliners; in part because the workers—having created strong, semi-legal organizations in defiance of repression, and having staged a wave of strikes which would continue into 2011—were not prepared to stake everything on an alliance with Mousavi.

But all the ingredients were present of the uprisings that would, eighteen months later, galvanize the Middle East and beyond: radicalized, secular-leaning youth; a repressed workers' movement with considerable social power; uncontrollable social media; the restive urban poor. And there was an élan, a poetry about it, an absence of postmodern cynicism. If you had met Neda Soltan or Oldouz84 in a Starbucks in New York, they would be just like you.

But still the media and the politicians failed to see it coming. Most reports placed Gaza and Iran in the category 'Islam versus the rest of the world', and heard Greece as merely sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Communiqué from an absent future

> last night around midnight, there was an out of control electrocommunist dance party with maybe 300 people dancing to justice in quarry plaza with glow sticks chanting STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE! i'm not kidding. i don't drink but i think it's pretty awesome that we violated every single party regulation the university has for 4 or 5 hours and there was no police action.[22]

On 24 September 2009, students at University of California Santa Cruz occupied their own common rooms and held a dance party. By November, student occupations had spread to Los Angeles, California, Fresno, Davis, Irvine and Berkeley. While students have always sporadically protested over politics, this was an economic movement, and its targets were spelled out on the banners they had hung at the rave in Santa Cruz: 'Take over the city, Take over campus, End capital'. The occupation movement continued to gather momentum throughout the winter of

2009, culminating in a coordinated walk-out on campuses across America on 4 March 2010.

Something new was happening. Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, students had been told they were society's new archetype. Their knowledge work would ensure a prosperous future; their passion for personal electronics would keep China's factories in business; and their debt repayments would fuel Wall Street for half a century.

But by 2010, students all over the developed world were coming under economic attack, through a combination of fee increases, hikes in the cost of student credit and a jobs downturn that had seen casual work dry up. If the students who led the struggles at Berkeley in the 1960s had been a prosperous, nerdy elite fighting for the rights of African Americans, their successors were now themselves victims, on an economic front line. 'The arriving freshman', they complained, 'is treated as a mortgage, and the fees are climbing. She is a future revenue stream, and the bills are growing. She is security for a debt she never chose, and the cost is staggering.'[23]

Among students and graduates, this sudden loss of confidence in the future was tangible. One of its most eloquent expressions was penned by the Research and Destroy group of activists at UC Santa Cruz. Entitled *Communiqué from an Absent Future*, it became required reading among student radicals everywhere. It perfectly captures the impact of 'capitalist realism' on the youth of the 2000s: 'Safety … and comfort have been our watchwords. We slide through the flesh world without being touched or moved. We shepherd our emptiness from place to place.' But now the postmodernist dreamtime was at an end:

> 'Work hard, play hard' has been the over-eager motto of a generation in training for … what?—drawing hearts in cappuccino foam, or plugging names and numbers into databases. The gleaming techno-future of American capitalism was long ago packed up and sold to China for a few more years of borrowed junk. A university diploma is now worth no more than a share in General Motors.[24]

And General Motors, by this point, had gone bust. As the stimulus packages ran out, and the first waves of post-Lehman austerity began to hit public-sector pay and pension rights in 2010, those in power comforted themselves with one thought: that postmodern society had eradicated solidarity. The young would never go out onto the streets to fight for the rights of the old, established workforce; the feral youth of the inner cities would never combine with the educated elite. There might even be an 'age war' between the baby boomers and the iPod generation. There would be strife, but it would never be coherent.

On 19 October 2010, the Paris bureau of Associated Press issued the following newswire: 'Masked youths clad in black torched cars, smashed storefronts and threw up roadblocks Tuesday, clashing with riot police across France as protests over raising the retirement age to 62 took a radical turn.'

The age of capitalist realism was over. Things would now kick off in the most unlikely places, and involve people nobody ever expected to resist.

3

'Trust Is Explosive': Britain's Youth Rebel Against Austerity

London. She walks into Soho's Bar Italia looking like a postmodern Sally Bowles: black top, black skirt, black tights; bobbed black hair. Black cowl modelled on an outfit worn by Lady Gaga. Outsize black sunglasses. Blue glitter beneath the eyes. She says,

> I was at a dinner party the night before the occupation and they said to me if you don't come with us you will have to stay in the flat on your own and you won't like it. You can tweet as much as you want. They kind of tricked me because we were on this march, and I was tweeting, and then suddenly we were in a room and that was the occupation.

This was on 'Day X', 24 November 2010, and the venue was University College London: just the kind of place a privately educated, Lib-Dem-voting twenty-one-year-old might go to get an English degree, in between drinking large amounts of gin and attending Paris Fashion Week:

> The people who sat down at the media table turned out to be a working group: I knew most of them on Twitter but had never met them in person before. I think they recognized me from my Twitter picture because it's, er, quite distinctive. Then, once we started tweeting, we

> got loads of messages of support and I started replying with this hashtag: #solidarity. I had no idea of, like, its historical meaning. I just thought: that's a great word.

Had she heard of the Polish trade union Solidarity? Shakes her head. Nothing at all: only three weeks later somebody told her. Had she heard of the song 'Solidarity Forever'? Ditto, but she can sing it now.

> I had no politics. I still don't subscribe to any. I'd probably say I was quite far left now—although I am not radical. I don't read newspapers. I bought the *Guardian* once because there was a picture of me. I read blog posts. The books I read, apart from coursework, are mainly chick-lit.

Guy Debord? Toni Negri? Any of the books traditionally found strewn on the floors of student occupations? 'I haven't and I wouldn't,' says @littlemisswilde, whose real-life name is Jessica Riches.

> I would rather read new stuff: the old ideas are nice to know; they're context. But I would rather know what's happening now. I can't believe there are still people who read articles. If everybody had a Twitter feed you could just see the news as it happens. You don't need 100 words of background.

If the political elite had understood the power of the militantly unread socialite with a Twitter feed, they might have salvaged something out of the clash they provoked with Britain's youth. But they had no idea.

Millbank gets deconstructed

'Millbank' is journalistic shorthand for the unofficial nexus of power in British politics. The street, right by the River Thames, houses the political studios of the main TV networks, the party HQs, the offices of lobby firms and think tanks and, at the end of it, parliament.

But on the cold, clear afternoon of 10 November 2010, as around 200 students broke away from a student march to gather outside Conservative Party HQ at Millbank Tower, the word 'Millbank' was about to acquire another meaning. Because Millbank was where they lost control. The Coalition lost control of the political agenda; the NUS leadership lost control of the student movement; the police lost control of the streets.

Millbank was staffed by that narrow group of graduates who'd bought into the whole story of mainstream politics: the bad suit, the neat hair, the drug-free lifestyle led in hopes of one day becoming an MP. Now they found themselves besieged by their alter egos: girls dressed like Lady Gaga, boys wearing pixie boots and ironic medallions.

By 2 p.m. the cackle of circling media helicopters alerted the whole of central London that something was going on. Students had pushed their way into the forecourt of Millbank Tower. Police, in pitifully small numbers, found themselves squashed against its plate-glass windows. Now the protesters surged into the building using side entrances, fire-doors and eventually—after smashing the glass—the actual windows. Soon, a crowd of students were milling about on the roof. Others had already made it to the floor where the Conservative apparatchiks, locked inside, were watching it all on television.

Edward Woollard, an eighteen-year-old further education student, recklessly threw a fire extinguisher off the roof towards the police lines.[1] In the forecourt the chant went up: 'Stop throwing shit.' The police, outnumbered, looked helpless.

Then things petered out. The students hung around a bit, lit fires with placards, painted some graffiti and then went home. But on their flame-lit faces you saw the look of people who had discovered the power of mayhem.

Millbank was one of those unforeseeable events that catalyze everything. The Liberal Democrats under Nick Clegg had ridden a wave of centre-left support in the May 2010 general election. The party's MPs

had signed a pre-election pledge not to raise university tuition fees; after gaining power as part of the Conservative-led coalition, they promptly signed up to support the tripling of fees, to £9,000 a year, and to abolish a small weekly grant for low-income school students.

The reaction among working-class school students went beyond outrage: they panicked. It was an impossible sum to comprehend. One told me: 'My mum only earns £9,000 a year.'

Both the political and media classes anticipated that opposition to the fee increase would be led by the usual 'student leader' types, eager to join the Millbank set themselves. They thought Nick Clegg's residual popularity with students—who, like @littlemisswilde, had voted massively for the Lib Dems in May 2010—would hold things together. They assumed, above all, that the youth were too engrossed in their iPhones and their Twitter feeds, too in thrall to postmodernist insouciance, to notice the freight train of economic doom coming at them.

Millbank shattered all these certainties. The mainstream media decided that, even if this student movement came to nothing, they had better start covering it as if it were part of something bigger—though they did not yet know what that something would be.

Spontaneous horizontalists

29 November 2011. At the London School of Oriental and African Studies, they had occupied a room in the library, which they'd plastered in hand-crayoned manifestos. Their demands were modest, focused on the running of the school, the non-victimization of the protesters and, finally, a request for the college management to state its public opposition to the fee increase.

In the corner was a prayer area for Muslim students. On the floor lay those iconic books: Hardt and Negri's *Multitude*; a Foucault primer; Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, Fanon's collected works.

They'd called a mass meeting about 300 strong, a young guy with a beard officiating. To his right huddled a small group of hard leftists; at

the back were some of the college staff, including a few veterans of 1968 with long grey hair and beards. The question was whether to continue the occupation—they had been going for a week—but very few people spoke to the issue. One man, a young Syrian, stood up to say: 'What we're doing is having a global impact. This French journalist came up to me and said, this is amazing, this never happened before. What are the Brits doing? I said—what, you think the French are the only ones who can riot?'

The method, as people speak, is to waggle your hands: upwards if you agree, downwards if not, more vigorously if you agree more, etc. I first saw it used in the late 1990s by the anti-globalization movement. But in the space of ten years the whole menu of 'horizontalist' practice —forms of protest, decision-making, world view—has become the norm for a generation.

And the meeting we are attending is not the only meeting: there is another one going on, in the form of tweets and texts that people are sending to their friends in other colleges. This is normal in the student movement: 'virtual' meetings that will never be minuted or recorded. As @littlemisswilde describes it: 'We use Twitter to expand the room.'

It comes to the final vote. Shall they stay in occupation? One of the Sixty-Eighters pipes up with a last-minute call for a strike and occupation of the main admin block. He is applauded—almost as if it is okay to applaud somebody whose politics and hairstyle date from the epoch of applause instead of hand-waggling.

But this is a blip. Most of the meeting is conducted in an atmosphere of flat-faced calm. This is an obvious but unspoken cultural difference between modern youth protest movements and those of the past: anybody who sounds like a career politician, anybody who attempts rhetoric, espouses an ideology, or lets their emotions overtake them is greeted with a visceral distaste. The reasons are hard to fathom.

First, probably, it's because there is no ideology driving this movement and no coherent vision of an alternative society. Second, the

potential for damage arising from violence is larger than before: the demos, when they get violent, immediately expose the participants to getting jailed for serious offences, so they will go a long way to avoid getting angry. Third, and most important, it seems to me that this generation knows more than their predecessors about power. They have read (or read a Wikipedia summary of) political thinkers like Foucault, Deleuze, Dworkin. They realize, in a way previous generations of radicals did not, that emotion-fuelled action, loyalty, mesmeric oratory and hierarchy all come at an overhead cost.

At the end of the meeting, the consensus is to stay in occupation for another night. 'That's good,' smiles the bearded guy announcing the result, 'because my house is shit anyway.'

Day X: Kettled youth

After Millbank, in the occupations, squats and shared houses, the makeshift ideology of the students had veered rapidly towards a kind of makeshift anarchism. 'Don't underestimate this generation, Paul,' one chided me. 'Unlike you, they've had to do tests every month of their lives; some of them were working for the Lib Dems and Labour six months ago, but they are so angry now, some of them are heading in the direction of insurrectionary violence.' As the mood changed, students started to talk about a 'Day X'. The posters proclaiming this new demonstration, slated for 24 November, had begun to borrow the imagery of Paris 1968.

But since Marx is out of fashion, and Lenin and Mao have been branded left fascists, who else is there to study but the Frenchman whose musings have become required reading in the era of Lady Gaga: Guy Debord?

Many students were familiar with Debord and his Situationist movement, for the simple reason that he is taught on every art course, and the big London art schools—Slade and Goldsmiths—were centres of militancy. But also because, as we will see, some of the Situationist tactics

that failed in May 1968—basically, spreading out to create chaos—do not look so ludicrous if you own a Blackberry.

While the undergraduate occupation movement grew, the sixteen-to eighteen-year-olds at further education colleges (the British equivalent to high school) were facing a double hit. If they got to university, they would be the first to pay the fee increases. But in the interim the government had decided to cut the Education Maintenance Allowance, a payment of up to £30 a week Labour had introduced in 2004 to combat —or conceal, depending on your viewpoint—structural youth unemployment. At the time of its abolition, 647,000 under-eighteens were receiving EMA. Though conceived as a kind of paternalistic 'pocket money', most of those I talked to were so poor that they were spending the money on essential groceries for their family.

On 24 November at 11 a.m., school walkouts began in towns and cities all across the UK. 'They're taking away our future. They're rich, they don't care about us' was the theme of the vox pops as the twenty-four-hour news channels televised it all. Rough kids from Newham in London; polite kids from Dundee; Asian kids from Birmingham; white kids from Truro, Cornwall. In Morecambe, Lancashire, 200 students blocked the traffic and beat drums. In Liverpool they blockaded Lime Street station. 'The police are outnumbered, they don't know what to do,' one participant texted.

Instead of Guy Debord, the under-eighteens opted for Anglo-Saxon literalism. They swarmed into Trafalgar Square, off buses from London's poorest neighbourhoods, clambered over the lion statues and chanted: 'David Cameron, fuck off back to Eton!'

Then they surged down Whitehall, trashed an abandoned police van, covered it in graffiti, smoke-bombed it, attacked the police and danced. The iconic image of the day is the police van being protected by a cordon of schoolgirls who thought the violence had gone too far.

The police, in response, repeatedly 'kettled' the protesters, and at one point charged at them on horseback. The experience of getting kettled would be central to the process of radicalization. It was not a

new tactic: it had been deployed against protesters on various anti-globalization demos, and at the G20 Summit in April 2009. But for most of the students it was new and shocking: you can tell this from the vividness of the language, the way first-person accounts spark into life when they describe it. Taught throughout their lives that their rights were primarily individual, not collective, but at the same time inalienable, kettling seemed to many like an offence against the person. Sophie Burge, aged seventeen:

> We waited and waited. Kettling does work when you have no choice about where you move; you start to feel very desolate and very depressed. People were crying. It was horrible; it was freezing and there were no toilets … we all just had to wee in a specific corner.[2]

Activist Jonathan Moses spelled out the political conclusion many of them drew: 'that property comes before people; the rights of the former supersede those of the latter'.[3]

With the momentum and the radicalism increasing, the school students staged a Day X-2 on 30 November, again clashing with police and attacking property in central London. Now the stage was set for Day X-3: the demo to coincide with the final parliamentary vote on the fee increase.

The Dubstep Rebellion

9 December 2010. I start 'Day X-3' in the occupation at UCL, where young men are fashioning makeshift armour for their arms and shins out of cardboard. Sleeping on the floor I find Chris, a school student from Norwich who has 'just turned up' for the demonstration. He doesn't know anybody at UCL, but they have let him stay the night. 'I'm from the lower middle class, you could say. Not poor enough to get a grant under the new system so, though I was hoping to go to university, I really might not go.'

Lingering at the entrance to the occupation are four young boys from a nearby Camden estate: three black, one white. They are still wearing school uniform trousers, though they have swapped blazers for hoodies and face masks. They avoid my gaze. They smoke. When I catch the eye of one, he snickers wildly, staring into the distance. Though there are hours to go, they're twitching in anticipation of the violence to come.

At 2 p.m. about 40,000 people set out peacefully in the biting cold, marching from the University of London's Senate House to Parliament Square. At the Square they deviate from the agreed route, break through a line of cops who try half-heartedly to baton them, and tear down the six-foot metal fences protecting the grassy centre.

Then they dance. The hippy in charge of the sound system is from an eco-farm and has, he tells me, been trying to play 'politically right-on reggae'. However, a new crowd—in which the oldest person is maybe seventeen—takes over the crucial jack plug. A young black girl inserts this plug into her Blackberry (iPhones are out for this demographic) and pumps out the dubstep. Or what sounds to me like dubstep.

Young men, mainly black, grab each other around the head and form a circular dance to the digital beat—lit, as dusk gathers, by the distinctly analog glow of a bench they have set on fire.

While a good half of the marchers are undergraduates from the most militant college occupations—UCL, SOAS, Leeds, Sussex—the key phenomenon, politically, is the presence of youth: *banlieue*-style youth from places like Croydon and Peckham, or the council estates of Camden, Islington and Hackney.

Meanwhile, the pushing and shoving at the police line has turned into fighting. There are of course the anarchist, Black Bloc types, there are the socialist left groups—but the main offensive actions taken to break through police lines are by small groups of young men dressed in the hip-hop fashions of working-class estates.

Some of them will appear a few days later in the *News of the World*, their mugshots released by the Met: a black kid in a Russian fur

hat; other young black boys in hoodies. Exhilarated eyes, very few bothering to mask up.

As it gets dark, there are just two lines of riot police and about thirty yards between the students and the parliament building. The Met has adopted a first-ditch-equals-last-ditch defence: Britain's only full-time riot squad, the Territorial Support Group, is all that's preventing the youth from clambering over the medieval walls of Westminster.

Inside parliament, MPs are debating the fee increase. Outside, getting nowhere with the TSG, the students change direction. They swarm up Victoria Street, which leads away from parliament, pushing back a line of mounted police and breaking through police attempts to form a cordon. But then, in successive charges, both the mounted police and the riot squads fight back. There is now toe-to-toe confrontation.

Heavy objects land among the police, amid a much larger volume of paint, fireworks and flash-bangs. At one point the horses are unable to cope, and a policeman falls off his mount, getting dragged away on a stretcher by colleagues.

A girl steps through a break in the police line and gets batoned. She crumples to the ground, where the police continue beating her. Afterwards she stays there, inert for a long, long time, so that the press photographers in their crash helmets stop shooting and cluster around her. She doesn't speak. Her face is screwed up, disbelief mingled with terror.

At the point of the wedge, alongside the estate youth, are the self-styled 'Book Bloc'. They've gone into battle in green helmets with mattress-sized mockups of book covers: *Endgame*, by Samuel Beckett; *Negative Dialectics* by Theodore Adorno; Debord, of course; and—for levity—the tales of an unruly school-kid, *Just William* by Richmal Crompton. They've copied this tactic from a group of Italian students, who are at the same moment lobbing firebombs into the side-streets of Rome.

Soon the books-cum-shields are torn out of their hands, and it is metal and bone and Kevlar that is making that clunk-clunk sound.

Together with the constant strobe of camera flashes and the throb of the dubstep —or what sounds like dubstep—it's become like a macabre outdoor nightclub.

For the police this is an 'only just' moment: a couple of officers get knocked to the ground and the students break through. Reinforcements arrive: dismounted motorcycle cops, many without helmets but wielding long batons. One runs straight at me, face snarling. But he's aiming for someone else. Clunk.

I decide to get out. There's one of the Fleet Street photographers covered in green paint; his Nikon's covered in paint too: irreparable. He shows it off to the others. It's like shift work, because as we're pulling out others are going in. The journos are clad in black, like many of the protesters, and we smile at each other as if this is somehow funny.

On the east corner of Parliament Square, people climb up to smash the windows of the HM Revenue and Customs building. On the west side they scale the façade of the Supreme Court, smash the leaded windows and push lighted materials inside. On the wall, someone sprays Debord's aphorism: 'Be Realistic—Demand the Impossible'.

Outside a pub there is a line of injured protesters being triaged by ambulance crews. Everybody has a head wound and a white bandage. And now the kettling's started. Some will end up trapped for hours in the freezing cold. Those who can escape go back to the student occupations to discuss where the campaign goes next.

By nightfall a student called Alfie Meadows is undergoing brain surgery after allegedly being batoned by police. Television footage shows another student—Jody McIntyre, who has cerebral palsy—being dragged from his wheelchair by an irate policeman, who's being restrained by his own colleagues. Elsewhere, in the West End, a breakaway group has surrounded a vintage Rolls Royce carrying Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall to a function at the Palladium Theatre. As the protesters rock the car to and fro and throw paint bombs at it, somebody leans through the open window and prods

Camilla with a stick. The royal protection squad, it emerges later, were on the point of drawing their guns.

A few hours later, after I've blogged all this under the headline 'The Dubstep Rebellion', some protesters make vigorous representations to me via Twitter: they present a detailed playlist of the tracks blasted out in Parliament Square, which proves the music was not dubstep but grime.[4] It was the Grime Rebellion, doh.

Grime is music seen as so dangerous that it's effectively banned in the clubs teenagers frequent, and its performers shunned by all but pirate radio stations. Grime is hip-hop with a Cockney accent and a dirty bass-line; its most important instrument is the cracked-vowel voice of the London street kid. The same kind of voice that is now heard gabbling with rage on the evening news: 'We're from the slums of London, yeah, and how do they expect us to pay uni fees—of nine thousand pounds? And the maintenance allowance: that's what's keeping us in college. What's stopping us from doing drug deals on the streets anymore? Nothing.'[5]

This, it turns out, is the most prescient statement made that day.

At six o'clock the next evening, with the Met police chief, Paul Stephenson, facing calls for his resignation over the breakdown of law and order, I return to the scene of the battle. Whitehall and Parliament Square are still strewn with rubble and missiles; boarded-up windows line the route and the atmosphere is tense, the police on edge.

Suddenly, out of the dark comes the sound of drumming and wailing. Seven or eight figures emerge, dressed in black and wearing elaborate crows'-head masks. They do a dance across three lanes of stalled traffic into the middle of Parliament Square and approach the statue of Liberal Prime Minister David Lloyd George. And they lay a black wreath.

'We're here to mourn the death of the Liberal Party,' croaks the guy holding the drum, as he beats out a tocsin surrounded by the masked, mainly female, wailers. This goes on for about five minutes. At no point do they attempt to photograph, film or otherwise record the

performance. It is purely gestural, vanishing into obscurity the moment it's over. Though the area is swarming with police, none interferes.

'We're art students from Slade and Goldsmiths,' explains the drummer. Why are they doing this? 'We felt we had to.' Did they, I ask, know about the teach-in at the National Gallery, at the height of last night's riot?

'Yes, that was us: the *Hive Manifesto*.'

The Hive Manifesto

> A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of debt slaves refusing to pay. All the powers within Europe have entered into a holy alliance to regenerate a failing economy, to realise a lethal dream of returning to business as usual, and to level the education and culture, to transform the educational and cultural sectors into a consumer society success story.[6]

At 4:45 p.m. on Day X-3, while clashes raged around parliament, art students and their professors had invaded the National Gallery and staged a sit-in beneath Manet's *Execution of Maximilian*. Earlier they had held an impromptu rave on Ai Weiwei's pebble sculpture at the Tate Modern. After a couple of lecturers gave speeches about the meaning of modern art, the students began scribbling. They produced *The Nomadic Hive Manifesto*, a parody of Marx and Engels which quickly becomes a bullet-point list of exhortations for protesters to remain non-hierarchical and fluid, to communicate 'using dancing and pheromones'.

The point about the *Hive Manifesto* is not that it is in any way a special literary document but that it sums up the change that people were feeling globally by late 2010, especially youth:

> If you listen carefully, all that moaning, the sound that can be heard just behind the drone of everyday life, cars and the slurping of lattes,

> has become a little more urgent: a humming of dissatisfaction becomes dissent. The Holy Alliance fears that this noise has become a song on the lips of all?[7]

The art students had grasped that the fees protest would catalyze a far wider dissatisfaction with the effects of the economic crisis. The experience would show that refusal to cooperate with a system could be a more effective method of fighting it than an ordinary political campaign.

On the website Critical Legal Thinking, which published the Hive text, PhD student Rory Rowan surveyed the experience of kettling. Bearing in mind the tendency of kettling to provoke people into anger, and to provide a negative spectacle for the heliborne TV cameras, he suggested:

> A form of protest is needed that places dispersal over concentration, mobility over stasis and perhaps even disruption over symbolism. If multiple smaller mobile groups were to simultaneously occupy key strategic sites and disrupt vital processes, the momentum of symbolical opposition could be maintained without the police being able to herd opposition toward spectacle.[8]

Now, once the vote in parliament was over and the student movement had demobilized, sections of the discontented public seemed to sense that the moment for such protests had arrived.

Tactics of the powerless

The first UK Uncut action took place on Wednesday, 27 October 2010, when about forty protesters occupied and closed down a Vodafone store in London's Oxford Street. A mixture of old and young, they crime-taped the entrance, holding up banners claiming that Vodafone's unpaid tax bill—reported to be £6 billion—was just short of the £7

billion of public spending cuts now being made. Three days later, on Saturday, 30 October, there were similar actions in fifteen UK cities. By 18 December the movement reached a peak, with actions in over seventy UK towns and cities.

The core activists were committed horizontalists who had learned their methods in the Climate Camp movement. They would occupy a store, create a narrative there (for example, declaring it to be a 'library' and handing out books), and then get thrown out—displaying enough resistance to sabotage the business operation, but not usually enough to get arrested.

Though it coincided with the student unrest, the most remarkable thing about Uncut was its spontaneous replication by groups with no connection to the students nor to the anarchist protesters. The spectacle of grandmothers sitting down in the Boots pharmacy of quiet provincial towns, arm-in-arm with their teenage granddaughters, alarmed public-order specialists because there was little or no sanction they could bring against it.

The think tank Policy Exchange convened a panel of law-and-order specialists to ask: 'Do these actions portend a dangerous new trend towards the use of physical force? If so, what can and should be done to prevent this phenomenon becoming a regular feature of the national landscape?'[9]

Actually, the answer is: very little. Ewa Jasiewicz, a thirty-something veteran of the anti-globalization movement, has been involved with UK Uncut from the start. An organizer for the Unite Union, she's been jailed and deported twice from Israel, most recently during the Gaza Flotilla of May 2010, and helped to set up an oil workers' union in Iraq after 2003. She is therefore used to being part of an activist minority, and interprets the recent adoption of radical tactics by large numbers of people as the result of a new feeling of powerlessness:

> I feel like there is a lot of reaction to 'the future': there is a sense that the present is so bad, and conditions of austerity being imposed, pensions

> undermined, services undermined—that we can't have any more of this. And if this is what the present is, what's the future?

Social media, she believes, have been the key to turning what was once a niche, lifestyle form of protest into an accessible method for everybody else:

> The anti-road movement of the late 1990s didn't ask you to sign up to an ideology, just to put your body in the way of a JCB. The difference is that then, we didn't have a media strategy. UK Uncut is the best example of social media carrying ideas into maximum participation on a localized, decentralized scale.

Horizontalism, she argues, provides the most useful methods for people with no power. If trade-union activists and grandmothers alike were drawn to dressing up and committing civil disobedience in the high streets of small towns, it was because they saw the old ways of trying to influence politics as closed off. Jasiewicz describes succinctly what this kind of protest is designed to achieve: 'A lot of our resistance as unarmed and powerless people is based on creating moments where the state is forced to respond to a scenario we are putting forward that is problematic for them; that creates a crisis of legitimacy.'

UK Uncut actions were 'fun, good-natured', easy to join in with—but they also allowed people to 'see the repression in their lives', says Jasiewicz.

> Once you can take the struggle out of the corridors of power and distil it—so that you can see capitalism, personified, in your high street—it becomes more tangible. It becomes easier to respond to an oppression you could not name. Now you can. And social media says to people who are alienated and disparate: you are like me; these things are everywhere.

I ask Jasiewicz the same questions I asked Riches: what she reads, and what has influenced the way she thinks and acts. It turns out that, like many fellow activists, she has a deep hostility to theory. 'I don't like talking about what I think; it's bullshit. It's this action, this protest, Iraq, Palestine, Deptford'—where she organized a post-riot cleanup and solidarity demo in August 2011. 'And even social media is not the central thing. The things that are central are off the radar: social interaction, relationship building, trust. Talk to people. Trust is explosive.'

In the space of six months, the impact of austerity in Britain had created a mass constituency for these ideas, above all among school students and undergraduates. But the old, hierarchical forms of protest had not gone away. Slowly, the trade unions moved from lobbying to action. On 26 March 2011 they called what would become the biggest trade-union demo in post-war history.

However, just as the events in Tahrir Square had demonstrated the potential for synthesis between students, workers and urban poor, 26 March would be a case study in the lack of synthesis. It would throw the horizontalist movement in Britain into a crisis of direction that it is still struggling to recover from.

Three tribes go to war

London, 26 March 2011. It's clear early on it's going to be massive. The leaders of Unison—which represents local government and health workers—have massively mobilized their people, bringing in whole trains and hundreds of coachloads of workers, printing t-shirts and professional-looking banners. On the south bank of the Thames, a group called 'Croydon Filipino Nurses' is lining up for a photo call. Further on, under a banner saying 'Nurses Uncut', a group of women—long-time workmates from various hospitals—meet up, ready to march. They've organized it on Facebook: 450 have signed up, some not even in a union. They've spent the past few days reassuring each other

because of the lurid tabloid headlines about anarchists and violence. 'There won't be any trouble,' they tell each other.

Getting across the river is hard: some bridges are closed, others crammed with people. Shoulder to shoulder are teachers from Devon, firefighters in red t-shirts, balloon-holding binmen from Glasgow, Norwich, Gloucester; home helps from Renfrewshire. They shuffle their way across Waterloo Bridge. The demonstration is already massing along the Thames and you can hear whistles, drums and vuvuzelas.

By the time the march sets off, with a clear half million on the streets, it has turned into the biggest trade-union demo for more than thirty years.

Among the marchers, you can see what the new mood created by the student movement and UK Uncut has achieved. 'Where's Ed Miliband?' representatives from a special needs school—students and teachers linked arm-in-arm—ask me. 'We don't trust him! He needs to get his act together. It's the bankers, the profit system. The big companies should stop evading tax!' There's a festive atmosphere. The schoolkids are singing a re-scripted version of 'I Will Survive'.

But at Piccadilly Circus, the edges of the demo are swarming with youths dressed like members of the anarchist Black Bloc. Really young kids: buzzing with the newness of it all, some change from their normal clothes into black hoodies and scarves right there in front of the police. The police begin to talk urgently into their walkie-talkies.

A veteran riot photographer texts me with the time and place where it will kick off: Regent Street, a vast curve of nineteenth-century architecture and luxury retail. When I get there, it's deserted. In the distance I can make out a tight phalanx of black-clad protesters, about 400 strong, filling the width of the street. They tramp forward, masked, some carrying the red-and-black flags of anarcho-syndicalism. This, one of them tells me later, is the biggest Black Bloc ever assembled in the UK. And though there are certainly numerous anarchists from Europe here, it is the students and school students from December who have really swelled the numbers.

They veer off into a side-street and start lobbing paint, billiard balls and smoke flares at various boutique shops: Victorinox gets it, so does an art gallery. There are only about twenty police around, none in riot gear. In a futile gesture, they try to protect the Victorinox shop, receiving the full barrage of paint, bottles and—according to the Met's later report—an acid-filled light bulb.

It's mayhem. And it is clear the police tactic is not to deploy fully and fight the protesters. For the next few hours the Black Bloc will roam around the West End, attacking shops, breaking into groups, running away, re-forming—with a Genoa-style, 'fluffy' contingent of non-violent direct action people trailing along behind.

I stop some of the latter: the women are dressed in multicoloured wigs, faces painted, tinsel in their hair, bare midriffs; the men are long-haired, thin, and non-aggressive. Why are they doing this?

> Boy: 'Because Top Shop's owner hasn't paid billions of pounds of tax.'
>
> Girl (off her head): 'We're just dancing with flowers. We're protesting in favour of beauty, against all this fucking shit in the window. We don't want to spend all our money on clothes.'
>
> Boy: '… and because capitalism is a damn lie. That's why we're throwing stuff at these fucking shop fronts.'

I buttonhole a second group, students; two young men and a woman. One of the guys, wearing a hipster low-neck t-shirt and a plaid duffle coat:

> We're sick with the government in general. For decades nobody legitimately can tell the truth; the nature of the hierarchy means only the imbeciles, the suck-ups, only the scumbags ever get to the top. So to truly be free is for everyone to take our part and decide for our freedom.

This is weird English but that's exactly how he says it, and he is not drunk or foreign, just furious. 'We need to all get together and create a

community. All government is just an infrastructure, when we get government out of our vision we can start from the ground up, without corruption.'

At Oxford Circus a thirty-foot Trojan Horse made of wicker is wheeled in by protesters and goes up in flames. The police do nothing, because at this point there are none in attendance.

Along Oxford Street, all the stores targeted by UK Uncut in previous weeks—Topshop, Nike, HSBC—are closed in anticipation of the protests. In front of a branch of Boots, a peaceful picket of Uncutters (everybody dressed as doctors or patients) is busy sealing off the store with tape. Their symbolic message—the death of healthcare and Boots' non-payment of tax. Nearby, police video them and take notes.

A few hundred yards away is Hyde Park, where hundreds of thousands who have stayed to listen to the speeches hear civil service union leader Mark Serwotka call for a general strike. Ed Miliband makes a speech. He is not so well received, and by now the networks are split-screening him with something more televisual.

Anarchists have gathered outside the Ritz Hotel on Piccadilly, pelting and daubing the famous landmark. A few doors down, hundreds of UK Uncut activists invade the upmarket grocer's Fortnum & Mason. This moment—which unfolds across my Twitter feed, with people messaging from inside Fortnum's and from within Ed Miliband's press team—turns out to be the crest of the wave of protest that began at Millbank in November. After this climax comes the crisis.

The police kettled the Fortnum's protesters and, as night fell, 145 of them were arrested one by one. Many were held for the full twenty-four hours allowed by law and then released, in paper jumpsuits like terror suspects, their clothes impounded.

No serious act of violence had been committed at Fortnum's, though some protesters had chalked messages on the shop front. But there had been a mass outbreak of Black Bloc violence and destruction elsewhere. Virtually none of the Bloc had been arrested—but almost all of Fortnum's invaders had.

This posed, point-blank, two problems for the core of activists who had launched UK Uncut. Did they condone or condemn the actions of the Black Bloc, and how would they now function, since most of them were on bail? Of the total of 201 protesters arrested over the entire day, 145 were at Fortnum & Mason. At time of writing, all but thirty have seen all charges dropped.

Meanwhile, in Hyde Park, half a million trade unionists began drifting away to their coaches, oblivious to—but later horrified to learn—what the Black Bloc had done. Half a million low-paid public servants had been eclipsed by the actions of four hundred people: the news bulletins were dominated by images of masked kids, broken windows and a smouldering wicker horse in Oxford Circus.

Towards the English Summer

In the period between Millbank and the trade-union demonstration of 26 March 2011, three social forces had been on the streets that we will meet time and again in the new global unrest: enraged students, youth from the urban underclass, and the big battalions of organized labour. In each phase, social media had helped the movement grow with dizzying rapidity.

The police, still smarting from the condemnation of their tactics at the G20 Summit in 2009, were in crisis. First, they had failed to anticipate Millbank, and their repeated use of kettling had radicalized large numbers of young people. Soon, the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal would end the careers of London's two top policemen, and the Met would stumble into the 2011 summer of riots seemingly directionless.

But the protest movement was also in crisis. Students got wrapped up in their exams; the trade unions began negotiations over pensions; the small group of activists behind UK Uncut went into a defensive huddle; and the anarchists engaged in mutual recrimination, the Black Bloc openly declaring their 'right' to be violent. The momentum had gone.

Meanwhile, a third demographic group had gone missing. The urban youth crept back to their estates where, as spring turned into summer, they cranked up the Grime. They pondered the meaning of all the Situationist slogans they had heard, and watched as the Met Police leadership self-destructed during the Murdoch scandal. Then, in August, as a shaken political class retreated to the Tuscan hills, the urban poor staged an insurrection of their own.

After police shot alleged gang member Mark Duggan, on 6 August 2011, riots erupted in thirty English towns and cities. Despite the relatively small-scale participation in the uprisings, they were concentrated and devastating, leading to widespread looting and arson. In the first two days, in most places, police lost control of the streets. In some areas, where the rioting overlapped with ethnic tension between black youths and Asian or Turkish small businessmen, the latter formed protection squads, which found themselves also in tension with law enforcement.

It became clear the rioters across Britain had organized through social media; above all the Blackberry instant messaging service.

Though occasionally led by organized crime, and often by the disorganized petty criminals who form the youth gang fraternity, the overwhelming social characteristic of those arrested was poverty. The events, whose precise significance is still being disputed by criminologists and social theorists, formed a coda to the British winter of discontent.

Because—from Millbank to the summer riots—the scale of British discontent looks small beside the Arab Spring, it's been possible to ignore its significance. But it was significant, both sociologically and politically. Not only did it demonstrate the almost total disconnect between official politics and large sections of young people; it was also the moment that protest methods once known to a committed few were adopted by the uncommitted mass. But it also showed how, in developed societies, organized labour is still capable of channelling and overwhelming the more chaotic, spontaneous protests.

And it was an advance preview of the problem which youthful, socially networked, horizontalist movements would have everywhere once things got serious: the absence of strategy, the absence of a line of communication through which to speak to the union-organized workers. The limits, in short, of 'propaganda of the deed'.

Despite all this, what was obvious by late 2010 is that we were dealing with something new: something produced by bigger changes in society. But what?

4

So, Why Did It Kick Off?

The Social Roots of the New Unrest

If the Arab Spring had happened in isolation, it might have been categorized as a belated aftershock of 1989; if the student unrest had been part of the normal cycle of youth revolt, it could have been quickly forgotten. But as the momentum gathered, from Iran to Santa Cruz, to London, Athens and Cairo, the events carried too much that was new in them to ignore.

The media began a frantic search for parallels. Nigel Inkster, former director of operations for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, told me: 'It's a revolutionary wave, like 1848.' Others found analogies with 1968 or the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In late January 2011 I sat with veteran reporters in the newsroom of a major TV network and discussed whether this was Egypt's 1905 or its 1917.

As I will argue, there are strong parallels—above all with 1848, and with the wave of discontent that preceded 1914. But there is something in the air that defies historical parallels: something new to do with technology, behaviour and popular culture. As well as a flowering of collective action in defence of democracy, and a resurgence of the struggles of the poor and oppressed, what's going on is also about the expanded power of the individual.

For the first time in decades, people are using methods of protest that do not seem archaic or at odds with the modern contemporary world;

the protesters seem more in tune with modernity than the methods of their rulers. Sociologist Keith Kahn-Harris calls what we're seeing the 'movement without a name':

> A trend, a direction, an idea-virus, a meme, a source of energy that can be traced through a large number of spaces and projects. It is also a way of thinking and acting: an agility, an adaptability, a refusal to accept the world as it is, a refusal to get stuck into fixed patterns of thought.[1]

Why is it happening now? Ultimately, the explanation lies in three big social changes: in the demographics of revolt, in technology and in human behaviour itself. And without ignoring the specifics of Europe, North Africa or the global south, I will attempt here to summarize (as in the original 'Twenty Reasons' blog) what is common to these situations.

The graduate with no future

At the centre of all the protest movements is a new sociological type: the graduate with no future.

In North Africa there is a demographic bulge of young people, including graduates and students, who are unable to get a decent job—or indeed any job. By 2011 there was 20 per cent youth unemployment across the region, where two-thirds of the population is under the age of thirty. In Libya, despite high GDP growth, youth unemployment stood at 30 per cent.

But youth unemployment is not a factor confined to North Africa. In Spain, in 2011 youth unemployment was running at 46 per cent, a figure partially ameliorated by the tendency for young Spaniards to live off their extended families. In Britain, on the eve of the student riots of 2010, youth unemployment stood at 20 per cent.

The financial crisis of 2008—which would bankrupt states as well as

banks—created a generation of twenty-somethings whose projected life-arc had switched, quite suddenly, from an upward curve to a downward one. The promise was: 'Get a degree, get a job in the corporate system and eventually you'll achieve a better living standard than your parents.' This abruptly turned into: 'Tough, you'll be poorer than your parents.'

All across the developed world, the generation that leaves university in the 2010s will have to work longer because the guarantee of a comfortable income in retirement can no longer be met, either by private investment or the welfare state. Their disposable income will fall, because the financialization of public services demands a clutch of new debt repayments that eat into salaries: student loan repayments will be higher, private health insurance costs will rise, pension top-up payments will be demanded. They will face higher interest rates on home loans for decades, due to the financial crash. They will be burdened with the social costs of looking after the ageing baby boomers, plus the economic costs of energy depletion and climate change.

For the older generation it's easy to misunderstand the word 'student' or 'graduate': to my contemporaries, at college in the 1980s, it meant somebody engaged in a liberal, academic education, often with hours of free time to dream, protest, play in a rock band or do research. Today's undergraduates have been tested every month of their lives, from kindergarten to high school. They are the measured inputs and outputs of a commercialized global higher education market worth $1.2 trillion a year—excluding the USA. Their free time is minimal: precarious part-time jobs are essential to their existence, so that they are a key part of the modern workforce. Plus they have become a vital asset for the financial system. In 2006, Citigroup alone made $220 million clear profit from its student loan book.[2]

When in 2010 I attended Warwick University's prestigious Economics Conference, it was populated by young men and women dressed in box-fresh versions of 'business attire'—hypersexual retakes on the cocktail dress, Mormon-sharp suits, neutral ties—worn amid the

routine squalor of a university campus. They were trying to live the dream—but a glance at their Facebook pages told you it was just for show. This was the lifestyle they'd been sold.

These students were aspiring to be the 'ideal workers' of the global age. The sociologist Richard Sennett describes how, starting in high-tech industries, a particular type of employee has become valued by corporations: 'Only a certain kind of human being can prosper in unstable, fragmentary social conditions … a self oriented to the short term, focused on potential ability [rather than actual skill], willing to abandon past experience.'[3]

For employers, Sennett writes, the ideal product of school and university is a person with weak institutional loyalty, low levels of informal trust and high levels of anxiety about their own competence, leading to a constant willingness to reinvent themselves in a changing labour market. To survive in this world of zero loyalty, people need high self-reliance, which comes with a considerable sense of individual entitlement and little aptitude for permanent bonding. Flexibility being more important than knowledge, they are valued for the ability to discard acquired skills and learn new ones.

However, Sennett observes, such workers also need 'a thick network of social contacts': their ideal habitat is the global city, at whose bars, coffee shops, Apple stores, dance clubs and speed-dating events they can meet lots of equally rootless people.

The revolts of 2010–11 have shown, quite simply, what this workforce looks like when it becomes collectively disillusioned, when it realizes that the whole offer of self-betterment has been withdrawn. In revolts sparked or led by educated youth—whether in Cairo or Madrid—a number of common traits can be observed.

First, that the quintessential venue for unrest is the global city, a megatropolis in which reside the three tribes of discontent—the youth, the slum-dwellers and the working class. The estates, the gated communities, the informal meeting spaces, the dead spaces between tower blocks just big enough to be blocked by a burning car, the pheromone-

laden nightclubs—all combine to form a theatrical backdrop for the kind of revolts we've seen.

Second, members of this generation of 'graduates with no future' recognize one another as part of an international sub-class, with behaviours and aspirations that easily cross borders.

I saw the Egyptian rap artist Gigi Ibrahim (@GSquare86), an iconic figure in the 25 January revolution, speak to London students a few weeks after Mubarak fell. There was no noticeable difference between her clothes, language and culture and theirs. She didn't mind that the meeting was small, that people came and went at random, depending on their other social commitments; she was not put off by their texting and tweeting during her speech.

The boom years of globalization created a mass, transnational culture of being young and educated; now there is a mass transnational culture of disillusionment. And it transmits easily. When activists like Ibrahim began to appear on TV in vox pops from Tahrir Square, youth all over the world—above all in America, where the 'image' of the Arab world has been about Islam, terrorism and the veil—simply said to themselves: 'Heck, that kid is just like me.'

Soon the activists were making physical links across borders. I had interviewed British student protester Simon Hardy during the wave of college occupations in London and had seen him carrying a red flag emblazoned with the word 'Revolution' on the 9 December demo; I was astonished to find him tweeting from Tahrir Square on 2 February. He reported:

> We're quite near the front line where the pro-Mubarak forces are throwing sticks and stones at us. Around us people are breaking up paving stones with metal sticks to get ammunition. This is wrapped in carpet and taken to the front line to defend the square against the pro-Mubarak militias. Everyone here comes up to us as we walk past. They say how much they love freedom and hate Mubarak.[4]

In the twentieth century, revolutionaries would ride hanging from the undersides of railway carriages to make cross-border links like this. Today, information technology and cheap air travel makes them routine; shared global culture makes the message easy to convey.

But there is a third social impact of the 'graduate with no future': the sheer size of the student population means that it is a transmitter of unrest to a much wider section of the population than before. This applies both in the developed world and in the global south. Since 2000, the global participation rate in higher education has grown from 19 per cent to 26 per cent; in Europe and North America, a staggering 70 per cent now complete post-secondary education.[5]

In Britain, the Blair government's policy of getting half of all school-leavers into higher education meant that, when it broke out, student discontent would penetrate into hundreds of thousands of family homes. While the middle-class student activists of 1968 thought of themselves as external 'detonators' of the working class, the students of 2010 were thoroughly embedded both in the workforce and in low-income communities.

At the same time, in the developed world at least, the 'graduates with no future' often live in close proximity to the urban poor. Many dwell in the hidden modern slum—a.k.a. the 'student house'—where every room contains a bed, or in flats rented in the terraced streets and inner-city neighbourhoods where the unemployed and the ethnic minorities live. Once the housing and jobs markets collapsed, the student house became the young accountant house, the young lawyer, teacher and other struggling professional's house.

At the dance clubs students frequent there's always some urban poor youth: this is true even in smart American college towns. But in the mega-cities of youth culture—London, Paris, Los Angeles, New York—the cultural proximity is more organic. And in no-hope towns where the college is the only modern thing in the landscape, everyone rubs shoulders in the laundromat, the fast-food joint, the cramped carriages of late-night trains.

In North Africa, though many of the college students who led the revolutions were drawn from the elite, you find this same blurring of the edges between the educated youth and the poor.

The story of Mohamed Bouazizi, the street trader whose self-immolation on the morning of 17 January 2011 sparked the revolution in Tunisia, illustrates this well. He can't get a job because, in a corrupt dictatorship, he lacks the right connections. He's a street vendor earning $140 a month, but he's using the money to put his sister through college.[6]

The 2008 uprising in Mahalla, Egypt, saw this same overlap of worker, student and urban poor. Although a strike initially caused the rising, when the strike was banned the revolt was led by the urban poor: jobless youths, street traders and women. As the blogger and activist Hossam el-Hamalawy told me:

> In the poor neighbourhoods of Egypt you will usually find one son unemployed, another working in a factory, another at university. The issues of poverty and repression overlap; in each poor neighbourhood the police station is basically a torture centre.

The organized labour movement itself is wedged between the discontented middle class and the urban poor. In the developed world, organized labour has been weakened by anti-union legislation and is in numerical decline; in the developing world, labour organization is increasing, but the size of the formal workforce can be, as in Egypt, small compared to the other plebeian classes. For all these reasons, we've seen, in a variety of locations, a growing tendency for workers to take action outside the workplace and against targets that are not their direct employers.

Indeed, in the developed world the whole concept of 'working class' has come to describe two distinct sets of people. There is the skilled workforce, which is no longer dominated by blue-collar male workers with manufacturing skills, but by a different demographic: more

ethnically diverse, more clerical and admin, sometimes predominantly female. And then there are those that in British popular culture have come to be labelled 'chavs' (much like those President Obama inadvisedly called 'rednecks'): the lowest-skilled, poorest-educated white workers, whose lifestyle has been dissolved by globalization and inward migration. This second group is often prey to right-wing ideologies dressed up with 'class' rhetoric, which repulse the more educated salariat. Among such workers, levels of resentment were already high, even during the boom of the mid-2000s.

Though it differs from country to country, this division within the developed-world workforce—which is largely a function of someone's exposure or otherwise to modern, globalized work—poses a strategic problem for the left. It makes it hard for social-democratic and left-liberal parties to create a unified narrative or programme around 'class' or 'class interest'. And it poses an acute challenge for any resistance movement trying to base itself on a common 'working-class' culture.

In Egypt and Tunisia—where the organized workforce still maintained elements of a 'pre-globalized' lifestyle such as state-owned factories, or communist traditions in the case of Tunisia—the problems were posed differently. Here the organized workforce is small in relation to other classes: socially powerful, but culturally distinct both from the urban poor and from the frappé-sipping graduates in the city-centre cafés.

Both the urban poor and the organized working class have—as we will see—crucial parts to play in shaping the course of the global unrest. But it was to the 'graduates without a future' that it fell to kick things off. From the rich world to the poor world, it is educated young people whose life chances and illusions are now being shattered. Though their general conditions are still better than those of slum-dwellers and some workers, they have experienced far greater disappointment.

This new sociology of revolt calls to mind conditions prior to the Paris Commune of 1871: a large and radicalized intelligentsia, a slum-dwelling class finding its voice through popular culture, and a

weakened proletariat, still wedded to the organizations and traditions of twenty years before. This has major implications for the kind of revolution people make, once they take to the streets. And it makes the social order of the modern city highly fragile under economic stress.

The Athens uprising of December 2008 was a case study in how the three parts of the plebeian mass interact. A group of participants wrote that the rioters

> ranged from high school students and university students to young, mostly precarious, workers from sectors like education, construction, tourism and entertainment, transport and even media. [Older workers] were a minority … very sympathetic towards the burning down of banks and state buildings, but were mostly passive.[7]

The French historian Hippolyte Taine understood the essential danger of this social mix. When it comes to revolution, he warned, forget the poor and worry about poor lawyers:

> Now, as formerly, students live in garrets, bohemians in lodgings, physicians without patients and lawyers without clients in lonely offices … so many Brissots, Marats, Dantons, Robespierres, and St Justs in embryo. Only for lack of air and sunshine they never come to maturity.[8]

Taine put his finger on what, in 1789, had turned the normal rebelliousness of impoverished graduates into a force that would reshape the world. He saw that the 'worm-eaten barriers [had] cracked all at once'. Technology, social change, institutional decay had unleashed something bigger than teenage angst.

If this sounds like an eighteenth-century version of the 'death of deference' complaint, well, it was. A deep social crisis was under way, then as now. But with one big difference: today, in every garret there is a laptop.

The Jacobin with a laptop

There has been high prominence given to technology and social media in explanations of the global unrest—and for good reason. Social media and new technology were crucial in shaping the revolutions of 2011, just as they shaped industry, finance and mass culture in the preceding decade. What's important is not that the Egyptian youth used Facebook, or that the British students used Twitter and the Greek rioters organized via Indymedia, but what they used these media for—and what such technology does to hierarchies, ideas and actions.

Here, the crucial concept is the network—whose impact on politics has been a long time coming. The network's basic law was explained by Bell Telephone boss Theodore Vail as early as 1908: the more people who use the network, the more useful it becomes to each user. This is known as the 'network effect': what it describes is the creation, out of two people's interaction, of a 'third thing' which comes for free. Because network theory originated in the boardroom, this 'third thing' has tended to be identified in terms of economic value. But, in recent years, it has become clear it can provide much more than that.

There's another difference: when it was first theorized by Vail's technologists, the 'network effect' seemed like a by-product, a happy accident. Today we are conscious users and promoters of the network effect. Everyone who uses information technology understands that they are—whether at work, on Facebook, on eBay or in a multiplayer game—a 'node' on a network: not a foot-soldier, not a bystander, not a leader, but a multitasking version of all three.

Vail's customers probably had no idea that, by buying and using telephones, they were enhancing the technology's value for others and creating spin-off effects for Bell's other businesses (what are now termed 'network externalities'). Nowadays, many of us have a very clear understanding of all this. The result is that, in the past ten years, the 'network effect' has blasted its way out of corporate economics and into sociology.

The most obvious impact has been on the media and ideology. Long before people started using Twitter to foment social unrest, mainstream journalists noticed—to their dismay—that the size of one's public persona or pay cheque carried no guarantee of popularity online. People's status rises and falls with the reliability and truthfulness of what they contribute. This is a classic network effect—but it is not measurable as profit and loss.

If you look at the full suite of information tools that were employed to spread the revolutions of 2009–11, it goes like this: Facebook is used to form groups, covert and overt—in order to establish those strong but flexible connections. Twitter is used for real-time organization and news dissemination, bypassing the cumbersome 'newsgathering' operations of the mainstream media. YouTube and the Twitter-linked photographic sites—Yfrog, Flickr and Twitpic—are used to provide instant evidence of the claims being made. Link-shorteners like bit.ly are used to disseminate key articles via Twitter.

And the democracy of retweeting (or sharing on Facebook) filters out the trash. In this way, key contributions to the dialogue that's going on around the action get promoted as if by acclaim, as happened to the original 'Twenty Reasons' blog post. Activists describe this process as 'memetic', drawing on Richard Dawkins' proposal of information 'memes': ideas that behave like genes, fighting for survival and mutating in the process.

Underpinning the social media is mobile telephony: in the crush of every crowd we see arms holding cellphones in the air, like small flocks of ostriches, snapping scenes of repression or revolt, offering instant and indelible image-capture to a global audience. Cellphones provide the basic white sliced bread of insurrectionary communications: SMS. SMS allows you to post to Twitter, or to microblogs, even if you don't have Internet access and can't read the results. Texting is traceable, of course. But as all fans of *The Wire* understand, you can thwart surveillance if you use a cheap, pay-as-you-go handset, which you can throw away if you're in a tight corner. What's more, for many of

the impoverished youth and slum dwellers, pay-as-you-go is all they can afford.

Finally, there is blogging. Though blogging was an early form of social media and has been heavily colonized by the mainstream press, 2011 saw a revival of what was essential about the format: the ability to express your own agenda through montaging stills, movies, words and links to create indelible statements of attitude and contempt. In some countries, residually, bulletin boards have played a role: the Athenian revolt of December 2008 was initially organized through newsflashes on the Indymedia bulletin board.

Blogs have been most influential in the Arab world, where the mainstream press has been subject to various degrees of censorship and self-censorship. But in all the theatres of revolution, blogs have offered that vital resource: somewhere to link to. They have become, like the newspapers of the nineteenth century, journals of record. Their impact can be measured by the fact that, in 2011, 7 per cent of Middle Eastern bloggers surveyed reported they'd been arrested by their respective security forces.[9]

The ability to deploy, without expert knowledge, a whole suite of information tools has allowed protesters across the world to outwit the police, to beam their message into the newsrooms of global media, and above all to assert a cool, cutting-edge identity in the face of what Auden once called 'the elderly rubbish dictators talk'. It has given today's protest movements a massive psychological advantage, one that no revolt has enjoyed since 1968.

Suddenly, the form of today's protests seems entirely congruent with the way people live their lives. It is modern; it is immune to charges of 'resisting progress'. Indeed, it utilizes technology that is so essential to modern work and leisure, governments cannot turn it off without harming their national economies. And, as Mubarak, Gaddafi and the Bahraini royals discovered, even turning it off does not work.

Because—and here is the technological fact that underpins the social

and political aspects of what's happened—a network can usually defeat a hierarchy.

The pioneer of network theory, Walter Powell, summed up the reasons for this as follows: the network is better at adapting to a situation where the quality of information is crucial to success, but where information itself is fluid; a hierarchy is best if you are only transmitting orders and responses, and the surrounding situation is predictable. Above all, 'as information passes through a network, it is both freer and richer [than in a hierarchy]; new connections, new meanings are generated, debated and evaluated.'[10]

However, the early network theorists were only studying the advantages of, say, collaborative workshops in the textile industry versus big factories. Now we are studying networks with many millions of individual nodes, and they are in conflict with states. Once information networks become 'social', the implications are massive: truth can now travel faster than lies, and all propaganda becomes instantly flammable.

Sure, you can try and insert spin or propaganda, but the instantly networked consciousness of millions of people will set it right: they act like white blood cells against infection so that ultimately the truth, or something close to it, persists much longer than disinformation.

In fact, this quality of Twitter means, according to the South Korean authors of the first data-based study of it, that it is not really a 'social network' but more like a news service. Services like Flickr, MSN and Yahoo involve a high level of 'reciprocity', since about 70 per cent of relationships are two-way. Facebook is constructed in such a way that this reciprocity is 100 per cent: I 'friend' you, you 'friend' me. On Twitter, by contrast, only about 22 per cent of relationships are two-way—there is a much higher ratio of 'followers' to those being followed.[11]

A second implication is that forms of protest can change rapidly. Whereas the basic form of, say, a Leninist party, a guerrilla army or even a ghetto riot has not changed in a century, once you use social networks the organizational format of revolt goes into constant flux. Even

in the period between the Iranian uprisings of July 2009 and the time of writing (autumn 2011), changes have taken place in the way protesters use social media, in the way rioting is directed (as with the 'Blackberry riots' in England in 2011), in the way people evade Internet shutdowns and in the tools used for 'denial of service' attacks by hackers.

Indeed, during the actual course of the Iranian uprising of 2009, the ways of using social media visibly evolved. Protesters called the process 'wave creation', using email, blogs and SMS to evolve the protests in real time. Looking at this phenomenon, Stanford scholar Saeid Golkar concludes:

> The Internet enables users to suggest new mechanisms to expand protests and gather feedback on these suggestions. On one hand, this makes the movement more flat and democratic, and on the other hand, it makes its activities more rational, with lower costs of action.[12]

As the real-world revolt was suppressed, activists took to the digital rooftops: launching 'Googlebombs' against Ahmadinejad and cyber-attacks on government websites, while putting psychological pressure on members of the repressive forces by naming them and disseminating their details. In response—in what remains the best-documented example outside China of cyber-repression—the regime trawled Facebook for the identities of activists, unleashed cyber-attacks against their networks and instructed 10,000 members of the Basij militia to set up their own, rival, blogosphere.[13]

The new technology, then, makes possible a new relationship among protesters themselves and between protesters and the mainstream media, and gives protest movements increased leverage over NGOs, multilateral bodies and guarantors of international law. It provides instant evidence of truth and can facilitate swift neutralization of lies, including those of state propaganda. All this, however, is only a side-

effect of the much bigger change this technology has brought about: the change in human behaviour.

The iconic image of this decade is a young person sitting in Starbucks, her face blue from the screenlight of a MacBook. She could be hanging out, composing chart-busting electro-pop, creating more value than the whole Starbucks branch with some high-tech research project; or planning a revolution.

To an older generation, steeped in the culture of collectivism, these Starbucks Kids were the epitome of egotistic isolation. But it turns out these young people were not wasting their time: they were pioneering a major expansion in the power of the individual human being.

The networked revolution

In the middle of the biggest upsurge in labour protests for a decade, it seems impolite to mention the name of André Gorz. Gorz was a French Marxist who for twenty years was spat on by left commentators for writing a book entitled *Farewell to the Working Class* (1980).

Gorz asserted that the old proletariat had been dissolved by modern technology and that the class struggle would be replaced by individual personal politics. He was wrong: the world economy has created 1.5 billion extra workers since his book was written. He was also wrong to claim that capitalism was destroying skilled work. And yet parts of the book now bear rereading, in particular Gorz's definition of revolution:

> Taking power implies taking it away from its holders, not by occupying their posts but by making it permanently impossible for them to keep their machinery of domination running. Revolution is first and foremost the irreversible destruction of this machinery. It implies a form of collective practice capable of bypassing and superseding it through the development of an alternative network of relations.[14]

By this definition we are in the middle of a revolution: something wider than a pure political overthrow and narrower than the classic social revolutions of the twentieth century. Out of the very values and practices of free-market capitalism—individualism, choice, respect for human rights, the network, the flattened hierarchy—the masses have developed a new collective practice. They can bypass and supersede the machinery of power via, as Gorz predicted, an 'alternative network of relations'.

In the space of ten years a whole new form of behaviour, consumption, culture and even human consciousness has sprung up which has changed our attitudes to hierarchies and to property. It is already possible to find, on any demonstration, self-described 'communists' for whom the idea of a Leninist party is alien. Every nightclub contains people—maybe even a majority of people—who are happy to pay the entrance fee, and for their drugs, but who find the idea of paying to own the music itself as, again, incomprehensible.

The network, in short, has begun to erode power relationships we had come to believe were permanent features of capitalism: the helplessness of the consumer, the military-style hierarchy of boss and underlings at work, the power of mainstream media empires to shape ideology, the repressive capabilities of the state and the inevitability of monopolization by large corporations.

Richard Sennett, writing in 2004, believed the destruction of hierarchical work and its replacement by consumption as the main source of self-esteem had been wholly negative:

> The insurgents of my youth believed that by dismantling institutions they could produce communities: face-to-face relations of truth and solidarity … This certainly has not happened. The fragmenting of big institutions has left many people's lives in a fragmented state. Taking institutions apart has not produced more community.[15]

But what we've seen since then, above all in the events of 2009–11, are revolts led by fragmented and precarious people. They have used the very technologies that produced the atomized lifestyle in the first place to produce communities of resistance.

And here's where it becomes essential to understand what that 'third thing' is, that gift arising from network relationships. To the business gurus, it was only ever profit: but to individuals it is something else. It's been described as a 'free dose of personal well-being'.

Technically, when we participate in e-commerce, we're just nodes in a consumer network—bidding for bargains on eBay, buying stuff on iTunes or Amazon. In return we are contributing not only money but our own intellectual property for free, in the form of reviews or star ratings (or even just our behaviour, surreptitiously logged by the company's CRM systems). The raw trade-off is that if I contribute a truthful review of an item I have bought, I might find an equally truthful one of something I would like to buy. But, as everyone involved intuitively understands, you are not just in it for the raw trade-off. There is a third 'party' in the transaction and that is the network, or community, itself. The transaction leaves a residue of collaboration.

Now, this understanding of the intangible, hidden value inside the network relationship has begun to permeate not just commerce and work, but protest. When doomed graduates, precarious workers and the poor use social networks to coordinate protests, they are waging a human fight-back against the atomizing effects of the modern marketplace.

However, there is a problem. Networked protests—as Malcolm Gladwell pointed out in his famous *New Yorker* diatribe against them—have the same downside as modern work and culture: they promote only 'weak ties'.[16]

That is, they reduce the level of commitment needed to be involved in anything. They allow users to adopt multiple identities, a pick-and-mix attitude to commitment, a kind of learned mercuriality. They allow instant concentration upon a target (as with Tahrir Square, or the

Manet painting at London's National Gallery), but equally instant fragmentation and dispersal. They make every action the subject of negotiation between the participants: unlike with an infantry battalion or a trade union, you cannot assume the support of the same group of people who acted together before.

Gladwell's attack on social networks is an attempt to defend the old, hierarchical forms of organizing in the face of this new reality. He writes:

> The drawbacks of networks scarcely matter if the network isn't interested in systemic change—if it just wants to frighten or humiliate or make a splash—or if it doesn't need to think strategically. But if you're taking on a powerful and organized establishment you have to be a hierarchy.[17]

However, some military theorists have concluded the opposite. They have noticed that even where ties are weak, individuals can come together in ways more effective than the old hierarchical models allowed. They have noted that 'swarm' tactics often defeat hierarchical structures—even where the hierarchy has greater strength and a better information system.

In Millennium Challenge 2002, a military exercise conducted by the USA, an opposing force modelled on Iran's Revolutionary Guard controversially 'defeated' the US Navy by using swarm tactics. It 'sank' an aircraft carrier and half of the American fleet by concentrating every single cruise missile onto a single target. It broadcast commands verbally from minarets, instead of using radios; it dispatched motorcycle couriers; it mounted Silkworm missiles on pleasure boats and launched suicide attacks with propeller planes. Defeat prompted the US general staff to halt the exercise, 'refloat' the fleet and change the rules. The elderly genius who'd designed the swarm attack—Lieutenant General Paul Van Riper—resigned, warning the Bush administration that it had no clue about how to deal with the modern world.[18]

If you want to defeat one hierarchy and replace it with another, Gladwell is probably right; but the revolts under discussion did not aim to do that. The 25 January revolt in Egypt used networks to paralyze the authorities and create a fluid, unstable situation; at the same time they used networks to place pressure on unreliable potential allies like the US State Department and the SCAF.

Besides networks, they used informal hierarchies. Ahmed Maher, one of the founders of the April 6th Youth Movement, describes their way of working:

> I established this 'operations room' around fifteen days before the beginning of the protests, and we would meet daily to discuss routine details. … Two days prior to the demonstrations we implemented a new mode of operation which saw activists being split into separate groups, with each group being made up of between thirty and fifty activists who would be posted to central areas and public squares to incite protests, whilst only the leader of each group would be informed of the precise location of where the protests were scheduled to begin.[19]

And their strategy evolved on contact with the enemy. Much has been made of the reliance of Egyptian revolutionaries on Gene Sharp's *Strategy Guide* for non-violent revolutions. While certainly some had read it, many leftists believe its relevance has been overstated. What happened is that social media allowed loose coalitions of activists to make collective decisions that looked to their opponents like they were strategic: for example, understanding the precise nature of the crowd in Tahrir Square on certain days, or gauging the precise level of incredulity among the masses at the rubbish being shown on state TV.

The network is stronger than its critics think. It has proved it can, at the very least, achieve the first phase of a democratic revolution by getting inside the decision cycle of those in power. It is altering the balance between worker, student and urban poor groups within protest movements. And it is changing the balance of power between the leaders and the led.

Whatever the limitations of networked action, and however it will be forced to morph as the revolts run up against tanks, torture, cyber-repression, etc., by 2011 it had already changed the face of protest. For Gladwell's critique overlooks a third dimension: the dimension of control.

The network's usefulness is not limited to half-hearted reform struggles that aim only to shock or disturb. It can achieve those elements of instant community, solidarity, shared space and control that were at the heart of social revolutions in the early industrial age. It can be, as cooperatives were for the workers who launched the Paris Commune of 1871, a space to form the bonds that would take them through an insurrection. It can be, as German socialist Ferdinand Lassalle described co-operatives in the 1860s, 'a means absolutely imbued with the nature of the ends'.

Time and again the impulse to create areas of self-control has led, in the past two years, to an almost mystical determination by protesters to occupy a symbolic physical space and create within it an experimental, shared community. From Tahrir and Syntagma to the student 'kissing protest' in Santiago's central plaza and Occupy Wall Street, these attempts at creating instant 'liberated spaces' have become the single most important theme in the global revolt.

The reasons for this are not palatable for many trained in the structured politics of the late twentieth century. It demonstrates that, as I observed in the British student occupations, this generation has a better understanding of power. The hardcore activists have read their Chomsky, Guy Debord, Hardt-Negri and Gene Sharp, and understood the principles; but more importantly the ideas therein have become 'common-sense' to a much wider layer of people who have never read any of it. They see the various 'revolutions' in their own personal lives as central to the change they're trying to make; not—as their liberal and social-democratic parents did—as some kind of 'retreat into personal politics'.

In a famous conversation in 1972, Michel Foucault could tell the

psychologist Gilles Deleuze: 'We had to wait until the nineteenth century before we began to understand the nature of exploitation, and to this day we have yet to fully comprehend the nature of power.'[20]

But Foucault and Deleuze have been on the mainstream social science curriculum for twenty years now; we comprehend power more fully as a result.

The crunch

The revolts, then, are the result of a technological revolution driven by the deployment of digital communications at work, in social life, and now in the forms of protest. It is not necessary to be a techno-determinist to see this.

The new technology underpins our ability to be at the same time more individualistic and more collective; it shapes our consciousness and magnifies the crucial driver of all revolutions—the perceived difference between what could be and what is.

In turn, the networked protest has a better chance of achieving its basic goals because it is congruent with the economic and technological conditions of modern society—it mirrors social life, financial structures and production patterns. It speaks to the mental conceptions that flow from the networked life we live. And to an extent, as we will see, it is satisfied with the conquest of space *within* the system rather than seeking to smash the system.

But here's the next problem: the system is not in stasis, it is in crisis. After the economic meltdown of 2008 it is highly capable of smashing itself.

5

Greece: The Anomic State?
From Austerity to Social Breakdown

Athens, 14 June 2011, 9 p.m. You can't miss the green dancing dots: laser pens playing across the façade of the Hotel Grande Bretagne as dusk falls. The crowd surging towards the hotel's shuttered doors is chanting: 'Underneath! Underneath!'

The chant refers to an escape tunnel they believe runs beneath Syntagma Square, connecting the hotel and the Greek parliament: the protesters want the government to use it right away. The laser pens are being shone to try to blind the TV cameras positioned on the hotel roof since 25 May, when thousands of Greek youth occupied the square. Every time some hated figure from the mainstream media is spotted peering through the hotel blinds, the green dots cluster on that window.

Antonis Vradis, an activist and blogger who's been camped here since the start of the protest, explains:

> All the media in Greece is corporately owned: people here believe it's aligned to the very same forces that have ripped off the country, so there is total hostility to them. We've even had the anchormen of mainstream networks calling for a military coup—so there is zero sympathy for the media.

In one corner of the square there is a 'pre-meet' of the politics sub-group—about a hundred people standing in a quiet circle to discuss, as

Vradis puts it, 'the fifty answers you will get if you ask fifty people here what they want'. Above, by the perimeter railings of parliament, are clustered the right-wing nationalists with their blue-and-white flags. Next to them some anti-capitalists have draped an orange banner depicting a helicopter: another invitation for Prime Minister George Papandreou to leave office. Within twenty-four hours he will, in his own way, give it a try.

In the centre of the square, under the ornamental trees, there is a campsite where around 400 people have pitched tents, including Vradis. Various stalls have sprouted among the tents, some organizing a petition, some selling literature or food. At one, people are logging the meeting times and contact numbers for the local assemblies that have formed across Athens.

Once you're inside the encampment, the sky becomes stars and banners; makeshift sheets and posters are everywhere. 'We're building real democracy'; 'One solution, revolution'; 'The dictatorship never died in '73 but we will finish it off in this square' …

These are the *indignados*—the 'indignant ones', a name borrowed from the Spanish youth who occupied their squares in May 2011—and what's new about this protest is that most of those involved were never politically active before. The Greek Communist Party, the KKE, has boycotted the camp; the far-left parliamentary alliance SYRIZA has people here, as do the anarchists, but they are not the majority. Mainly the protesters are just ordinary people. And it's the same elsewhere, in Iraklio, Thessaloniki, Patras and many smaller towns.

'It's regime change,' says Vradis. Whatever happens in parliament, whatever happens with the new austerity budget due to be introduced tomorrow, whatever happens on the streets, he thinks the rash of protest camps in town squares across Greece signals a big switch-off from traditional politics: 'In the people's minds the regime is already gone—not just Papandreou, but the whole corrupt mainstream party system.'

Vradis is one of those activists I keep bumping into who've been central to the global upsurge. He started his blog, OccupiedLondon,

during the UK student riots in November 2010; now he is back in his homeland, following the trail of mayhem. He also turns out to be one of the horizontalists who are critiquing my 'Twenty Reasons' blog. 'I am working on number thirteen,' he warns me: 'your claim that this generation is picking and choosing its causes.'

As we talk outside the gates of parliament, the government is struggling to survive. Vradis gets an SMS telling him that two more MPs have just resigned from the ruling PASOK parliamentary group. A cheer goes up. Noticing my camera, people shine green lasers into it.

Now three thousand people sit down cross-legged on the stones of Syntagma—which at this point have not yet been broken up for missiles—and begin a polite mass meeting. There is little rhetoric from the platform; they're beyond the rhetoric stage. It's about the precise tactics and problems of being an unled mass movement in the post-ideological age.

Sitting among the protesters, I am struck by the meeting's atmosphere—similar to that of a music festival, and completely unlike that of, say, a big trade union march or even the UK Uncut groups. One of the Cairo tweeters said Tahrir was 'like Glastonbury without Bono', and so, in its own way, is Syntagma in June. Rena Dourou, an activist from SYRIZA who, like Vradis, has been camped here since the first night, confirms that for the vast majority of the demonstrators, it's their first protest:

> It's attracted young people, and especially young single mothers, who realize that this crisis is going to hit them very hard; also elderly people whose pensions are shrinking. I don't say they're apolitical, though. They're all well aware that only their presence in this symbolic place can change things.

It's not just Greece, either. By the summer of 2011, youth all across Europe were rapidly disengaging from the political mainstream. Maybe it's just a phase—or maybe this is what democracy is going to look like in an age in which politicians have come to be seen as corrupt,

technocratic, characterless and inept: repeated standoffs between the masses and the policymakers, with very little left in the way of 'grassroots' or party command structures.

In Brussels, as the Syntagma meeting begins, Europe's finance ministers have assembled to thrash out their differences over the near-inevitable Greek debt default. But nobody in Syntagma cares. They are busy drawing lots for places on the podium—a practice copied from the *agora* of classical Greek democracy, designed to avoid, or dissolve, fixed power relationships.

Despite the calm, there is a simmering anger across Greece. Many people have lost a third of their income due to tax rises and wage cuts; many young adults have no job and no prospect of one. The green dots of laser light convey a chilling message to the rulers of Europe: we don't want to be on your TV news bulletins; we would rather bust your cameras than accept your austerity.

On the brink of mayhem

15 June 2011, 8 a.m. The following morning, on a wide, deserted thoroughfare, taxi drivers have parked their cabs in a phalanx and are taping Communist posters to the hoods. Bank workers are standing around in groups, chatting, fingers wrapped around the traditional iced Nescafé that is all you can stomach in this heat. Hospital workers begin to assemble around the banners of the Communist-led trade union PAME. This is one of many assemblies in a city that's rapidly shutting down. Though they stay away from the camp, and later the rioting, the KKE are a massive force. And there is a new urgency for the workers who adhere to the party and its allied unions: they are fighting for their lives. The whole system they've worked within is falling apart.

'I'm a cardiologist,' Dr. Ilias Sioras tells me. 'I see every day, in the public hospitals, more and more poor people needing treatment. And they are asking for money, under the counter, to admit people. I believe people will die because of the austerity.'

After the hospital workers, the hotel porters and domestics form up in ranks, wearing their uniforms and name badges. They chant the deep, throaty slogan that has become the song of Greece's revolt: 'Don't bow your heads, resist!' What they're here to resist is the so-called Medium Term Fiscal Strategy, about to be imposed by Pasok—which began as a left-wing social-democratic party but is now trying to impose one of the harshest austerity programmes ever conceived.

Pasok's misfortune was to win the Greek general election of October 2009. On entering government, they discovered that the outgoing right-wing administration had lied systematically about the state of the country's public finances—despite regular visits from the EU monitoring body, Eurostat, which did not seem to notice. Instead of 4 per cent of GDP, as had been reported, the country's budget deficit turned out to be 12 per cent. Its debt was on course to spiral to 150 per cent of GDP.

In a country with a viable tax system, this would be a major problem, but it would be solvable through tax rises, spending cuts and a swift devaluation of the currency to boost its export industry. But Greece could not devalue: it was trapped within the eurozone. Nor did it have an export industry, let alone a viable tax system. The previous year Pasok's finance minister, George Papaconstantinou, had told me: 'the country is essentially corrupt. We went to the upmarket district of Kolonaki and found doctors and dentists with a claimed annual income of €30,000, driving cars worth €30,000 alone.'

Papaconstantinou, educated at the LSE and NYU, seemed like the right man to implement the solution: accepting a bailout from the European Union on harsh terms, forcing through tax reforms and cuts to public sector pay, but protecting services for the needy and protecting the jobs of state employees, most of whom traditionally vote Pasok. The problem was the EU's politicians: trapped in a time warp of their own creation, they would spend an astonishing eighteen months struggling to comprehend the scale of the crisis.

By 4 May 2010, the eurozone was on the brink of chaos. It took French President Nicolas Sarkozy's threat to quit the euro, and urgent

calls both from the White House and the International Monetary Fund, to convince Europe's leaders to launch the first Greek bailout, of €110 billion. A few days later, together with the IMF, the EU created the European Financial Stability Facility, armed with €700 billion—more than enough to prevent crisis in Greece and to revive Portugal and Ireland, whose fiscal lungs had been punctured in the post-Lehman decompression.

But things spiraled out of control. By May 2011, Portugal was bust, Ireland bust several times over, with its banking system on life support—and Greece was in need of a second bailout. The reason for failure was obvious to all except the pallid bureaucrats who run the European Union and the European Central Bank: the medicine was killing the patient.

Free-market economics, written into the constitution of the European Central Bank and hard-wired into the brain of every mainstream politician, demanded that countries embark on a programme of self-imposed austerity in return for financial bailouts. It prescribed what neoliberalism always prescribes: privatization, wage cuts, pension cuts; cuts in benefits, the minimum wage and social services.

The problem is, if you impose austerity on a country already in the grip of recession and which cannot devalue its currency, that recession merely gets worse. The country's tax revenues do not rise and soon it needs another bailout—on even harsher terms.

That's what had brought such huge numbers of Greeks onto the streets in June 2011. The terms of the proposed second bailout, as dictated by the EU, would reduce the size of the state from 53 per cent of GDP to 44 per cent in just six years. The austerity programme would take one euro in eight out of Greek spending power, in the form of tax rises and public-spending cuts. It would cut the public wage bill by a third. And it would sell off every state-owned national asset that it could: airports, ports, the motorways built with EU subsidy, even some of the smaller Greek islands were mooted for sale—all at knockdown prices, at the bottom of the market.

The potential consequences were clear to anybody who has studied the 1930s: the austerity programme would suppress growth for half a decade, sink the prospects of an entire generation of young people—already facing youth unemployment of 26 per cent—and in the end could only lead to a third bailout. Except there could be no third bailout: the country would default on its debts—the only question being, in the end, by how much and how chaotically.

On the streets of Athens, in the hot dawn of 15 June 2011, they had decided not to wait. If Greece was to be forced into self-imposed recession as a prelude to default, better to default now: better to reject austerity and impose another solution, from below.

'I am sixty-seven years old and have sailed the world,' said a man with white stubble, clutching a plastic bottle full of home-made hooch. 'Once I was poor and broke: I would rather be poor and broke again than take another bailout from the EU.' His spindly arms were shaking, his body tense inside his shabby t-shirt. He sounded like a man trying to warn of imminent disaster: 'You must let me make these points: if Greece dies, Europe dies, America dies, we all die.'

At that, another old man leaned over and blocked my camera lens. 'Don't you want the world to hear your story?' I asked. 'No,' he said quite calmly as he waved his hand in my face. 'It's too late for that.'

A taste of tear gas

Not long after, the tear gas started. There was no warning—though standing close to a bunch of protesters who were throwing bottles at the riot police should, I guess, have been warning enough.

When a tear-gas canister explodes in mid-air it spews a thick cloud the colour of 1970s furniture. Those nearest to it run; everybody clutches their t-shirt to their face. Then, like a football crowd leaving a game in the days of terracing, we crush together, shoulder to shoulder, everyone in their little bubble—fighting that little bit of panic that starts inside when you cannot breathe.

Then you daub Maalox on your face, a milky balm that staunches the burning, which as it dries gives the whole crowd the air of a troupe of clowns who have been disturbed while putting on whiteface.

After the first tear-gas canister is launched, another tribe emerges from the side-streets: hundreds—later swelling to maybe thousands—of Black Bloc youth. Their body language, dress and demeanour are completely different from those of the communists. As in London, they go in for bare midriffs, black fabric, dreadlocks and jerky movements. They make a simultaneous surge towards parliament from three assembly points, coordinated by SMS. Riot police—clad in plastic and Kevlar armour from shin to collar-bone, wearing gas masks and armed with tear gas projectors, stun grenades and metre-long batons—go into action.

Around 1 p.m. the whole of Syntagma Square becomes a battle zone. The protesters—not just the Bloc now, but also the socialist youth from the leftist groups, the horizontalists, the nationalists and the *indignados*—make repeated charges up the steps of parliament towards the phalanx of visored riot police, to be repulsed by stun grenades and thick gobbets of gas.

In the lulls there are mini-confrontations between trade unions and the Black Bloc; the Communists shout that the anarchists are provocateurs. At no point do the Communists and trade union stewards join in the fighting: eventually they form up and march away. As in London, there are rivers of antagonism flowing between the anarchists and the organized labour movement. The difference here is that this forbearance, and the organization imposed by the workers' movement, is all that stands between order and chaos.

Now, in mid-afternoon, things become eerily quiet. With the famous riot-dog Loukanikos leaping around joyfully at their head, the youth form up behind anarchist banners and try, once again, to march on parliament. The streets are littered with the debris of missiles. By now everyone is masked against the tear gas—the journos, the rioters, the police—and there is a weird silence, except for the occasional pop of tear gas or smashing of glass.

In the side-streets—abandoned by police, shops shuttered—you see isolated individuals, masked, texting; some people are hammering at a piece of marble, breaking it up to make rocks. A few yards away, couples who have been protesting walk hand in hand, everybody shambling wearily in different directions. It's like a scene from a Lowry painting, but imbued with menace.

I decide to walk back to my hotel, down the wide thoroughfare that links Syntagma with Omonia Square. Usually clogged with cars, it's completely clear. Crossing a side-street, I pass a group of youth protesters occupying the street corner; it's the same on the next corner, and the one after that. Central Athens is under the control of the protesters—not that they are trying to exert control, but, nevertheless, they are in charge. Every shop is shuttered; some proprietors have closed out of fear, others because the shopkeepers' association declared a three-hour shutdown as part of the general strike. There are no bystanders.

Two young lads take their shirts off, wrap them around their heads and dance in front of a fire they've lit across one of the side-streets, just out of projectile range—they hope—from a platoon of police. The police tactic is to make regular incursions into this eerie mayhem. They are gradually breaking it up, restoring uncertainty and danger for the rioters but not exactly 'order'.

Glued to my iPhone, I wander into a Henry Miller novel. I'm in a neighbourhood with transvestite prostitutes on the street corners; a barefoot drunk is slumped on the ground, his face deathly white; a woman hops mechanically from foot to foot, hair matted, eyes flickering; a junkie couple argue in the doorway of a shop; migrant beggars sit on the sidewalk, one holding a cardboard placard scrawled with the words: 'I am hungry.' A group of African street-sellers wanders along, smiling; there's nobody to buy their wares, but nobody to hassle them either. There are no police, no ordinary people, no traffic. Just silence.

For a few hours the protesters more or less control central Athens. They don't smash many banks—but they do break the resolve of

German Chancellor Angela Merkel. And, technically, they bring down Papandreou's government.

At 9 p.m., just as the last Molotovs are being thrown, Merkel abandons the idea that banks should lose money as a result of giving Greece leeway on its debt repayments. Shortly afterwards, the EU and IMF agree to waive conditions on the €12 billion tranche of bailout money that will tide Greece over until September 2011.

Papandreou, meanwhile, is in a panic. First, he attempts to create a government of national unity. He invites the centre-right opposition party, New Democracy, into a coalition and even offers to stand down as prime minister. But who would want to govern Greece? New Democracy spurns Papandreou's offer, so he declares the formation of a 'new government', reshuffling the cabinet. For hours, one insider tells me, he fails to achieve even this: 'nobody will pick up the phone'. The politicians are safely shuttered away with their bodyguards in their private offices, unable to communicate face-to-face.

As Papandreou goes on TV to announce the reshuffle, car horns begin blaring across Athens. In Syntagma, where their camp has been razed and trampled by the police, the *indignados* move slowly back, knocking tent pegs in and dressing head wounds. Loukanikos the riot dog has become world-famous thanks to a YouTube montage of his exploits, and somebody has created a Twitter account for him (@rebeldog_ath). He lolls exhausted on the pavement, with a look that seems to say, like Arnie, 'I'll be back.'

The tax collectors

The next morning, just around the corner from the Greek finance ministry, I spot a group of fashionable young women sitting around a trestle table in the middle of the street, beside the tents where they spent the night. They are fresh-faced, devoid of the tattoos and nose-studs you see among the *indignados*. They could pass as young civil servants, accountants or lawyers—and that's exactly what they are.

They are part of a group of 100 graduates who, eighteen months before, had passed the exams to become tax collectors and customs officials in the finance ministry. But there is no money to employ them. Most are now living with their parents, eking out a living on benefits.

Once the *indignados* had taken Syntagma, these quietly angry young women decided to set up camp right on the doorstep of the ministry they'd hoped to work in. Anna Palamiotou, in her early twenties, has the composure and perfect English of a ballet tutor or an upmarket ski coach:

> The whole problem is: our future is unpredictable. Even our short-term future. In three to six months' time we don't know what will happen. We hope, of course: that's the best we can do. We try to keep hoping, personally, as a nation, as a community.

The irony is that more tax collectors and customs officers are exactly what Greece needs. It was the culture of 'respectable'—and therefore acceptable—tax evasion that helped sink the country's finances in the first place. Now, all parties claim to want it fixed. But with the deficit so high, the Greek state has been ordered to shrink, not grow: so, despite their educational qualifications, Anna and her friends are stuck here on the street.

During the riots, they were shocked to see masked anarchists and Kevlar-clad riot police rampaging down the street they are camped in. 'They crushed our chairs,' Anna says, arching her eyebrows at a pile of plastic shards, like a schoolteacher might tut-tut about an untidy classroom. But they've found some new chairs, where they sit texting, iPodding, chatting and sipping coffee. What would it take to make them leave? 'We have no plans to,' she says.

Following the cabinet reshuffle, Papaconstantinou is out of the finance ministry. He has been replaced by Evangelos Venizelos, a big-bellied party operator who has never run a finance ministry in his life. Anna's message to Venizelos is stark: 'He has to take some measures, of

course. But he has also to know the people have made many sacrifices and we have a limit beneath which we can't live. He has to respect us.'

It was against this deep, calm intransigence that the strategy of both the EU and Pasok would begin to founder.

Who pays?

Since their summit at Deauville in October 2010, Merkel and Sarkozy had been haggling over a crucial detail of their euro-wide bailout scheme: when and how to impose losses on the banks and pension funds exposed to Greek bad debt. Sarkozy, backed by the ECB, insisted that the private sector should not be forced to take losses; Merkel, under electoral pressure, favoured imposing losses on the banks, but only after 2013. Now, though, 2013 was looming, as was the need to design a permanent European bailout mechanism to replace the one improvised in 2010.

As the riots raged, extensive briefings were quietly given to the press, warning that any private-sector losses arising from a Greek default would trigger a Lehman-style event that could start a second global recession.

Bank analysts frantically began trying to calculate the impact of a Greek default—but it was impossible. Even now, three years after Lehman, the opacity and complexity of the financial system stood in the way. Greece, by this time, had debts of €340 billion. One half of these debts were held by Greek banks and pension funds, which meant that if the country defaulted, the entire Greek (and Greek Cypriot) banking system would go bust. Because the Greek state, too, would be bust, it would be unable to bail out its own banks. In case of an uncontrolled default, there was a high likelihood that ATMs would close and people would lose their savings.

The other half of Greece's debts were held by northern European banks and states, and by the ECB; they, too, would be dragged into fiscal crisis by a Greek default. But there was even more to worry about.

On top of the actual debt, the global derivatives market had facilitated the erection of default insurance positions worth an estimated $1 trillion. These 'credit default swaps' would act like an accumulator bet, and significant losses on Greek debt would explode like an anti-tank missile, straight through the armour of the entire global system.

It would, said one bond market contact, be a 'Credit-Anstalt moment': he was referring to the Austrian banking collapse in 1931 that turned the Wall Street Crash into a global slump. Syntagma Square had become the front line of the global financial system.

Merkel told journalists: 'We wouldn't be able to control an insolvency. We all lived through Lehman Brothers. I don't want another such threat to emanate from Europe.'[1]

So for the second time in three years, banks and hedge funds who had lent money speculatively to a basket-case entity would be indemnified by the state, in this case the EU. But the EU—it turned out—would not be strong enough to cope. And meanwhile the problems of social order and legitimacy—in Greece and across the eurozone—were only just beginning. Two weeks later they would erupt, spectacularly, in Syntagma.

One thousand rounds of tear gas

29 June 2011. The Greek parliament is due to vote on the EU's austerity plan at 4 p.m. A general strike is under way, causing energy brownouts and paralyzing Greece's airports and ports. The union marches are, as always, uncoordinated. In central Athens, the Communists are blocking one entire four-lane avenue, headed by stewarding groups toting chunky banner poles and crash helmets; the Pasok unions are doing the same a few streets down. The nationalists are still clustered around the iron fences and makeshift barricades in front of parliament. The mood is gloomy.

'We're facing two routes to bankruptcy,' one leftist protester tells me. 'There is no positive outcome. I shouldn't be saying this, because I am supposed to be against it—but we need a Chirac, a de Gaulle.

Where is Chirac? Where is the leadership going to come from to sort this out?'

Like many on the left, she fears a nationalist or authoritarian outcome to the crisis. But the Greek left—pitifully weakened by its divisions—seems unable to go beyond oppositional slogans. Faced with this, many horizontalists have undergone a kind of 'regime change of the mind'—switching off from mainstream politics, living haunted lifestyles among the oil paint stores and graffiti-encrusted walls of Exarcheia. 'Our generation,' she continues, 'that's spent their whole lives since Genoa fighting for change, feels exhausted.' A burst of explosions in Syntagma Square cuts the conversation short.

It is 2 p.m. I head for the square, but it is hard to get there. A tide of people is streaming backwards, away from the fighting: earth mothers, grandmothers, old men with their shoulders hunched to their ears, gasping for breath, fleeing the violence and the tear gas.

Suddenly there are only thirty metres of empty street between me and a melee of anarchists and riot cops. A man grabs me, his face white-caked, finger stabbing towards the parliament building: 'These cops,' he says,

> paid for by the Greek people, defending the Greek parliament so it can sell the country to the international banks! I'm a salesman in a furniture company: we lost 80 per cent of our turnover in a single year. What am I supposed to do?

The *indignados* regroup inside the square. At the back are those who are prepared to resist, but not attack. Young women run up to you and squirt you in the face with Maalox as a kind of gesture of solidarity. Some people are singing. We're all under the trees, densely packed, tense: everybody's eyes are glued to the few hundred protestors who are slugging it out toe-to-toe at the top of the square, near the Parliament. Tear gas and stun grenades rain down. Now, to the beat of alter-mondialiste bongo music, a few hundred *indignados* surge up the

steps towards the parliament. I go with them, filming on a tiny stills camera to avoid the attentions of the police and some protesters, both of whom have taken to attacking mainstream TV crews.

All over the square there is the incessant clatter of people breaking up the marble balustrades and steps to make missiles. A tear-gas canister spirals down and lands at my feet; a guy in a hoodie tries to boot it, but he slips on something and does a parkour-style backflip. Another guy kicks it but it spins into another group of rioters, who kick it back, and it becomes—for one of those fleeting moments that lasts a flickering hour amid the violence—an extreme-sports version of five-a-side football.

I reach the top of the steps just in time to see a group of twenty policemen converging on one guy. As he disappears beneath the steel-tipped batons a man beside me, his friend, lets out a howl of fear and despair. As we retreat, I realize the liquid we're slipping around on is blood.

On the shuttered frontage of the Hotel Grande Bretagne somebody has spray-painted: 'Fuck May 68, Fight Now'.

Now a very dense crowd, maybe 10,000 people, gets crushed into a side-street. Alongside me is a man sweating in a gas mask. 'I'm a classical pianist and I run an NGO documenting the oral history of the Cyclades,' he tells me. 'This is not a democracy, man, it's a dictatorship. There is no way Greece can take the austerity: just look!'

This crowd is the salariat: not the fifty-something manual workers, and not the Black Bloc. A model-thin woman with carrot-blonde highlights tells me she's a bank worker on strike. 'They just keep trying to do this every time we protest: hospitalize us. Always the same: violence. But we will stop them. We will strike, protest, occupy.'

A Maalox-caked man interrupts her, yelling manically: 'There's a group of riot cops spraying us with chemicals when all we came here to do is protest and tell this fascist government to go!' Then, realizing my nationality, he adds: 'You British? I lived in your country for ten years. I am an interior designer.'

Later, it will be reported that the police fired one thousand rounds of tear gas during the Syntagma protests. I am lifted off my feet in the

crush. A crowd numbering tens of thousands is being collectively punished for the actions of a few hundred—and, if you think about it, for a decade of venality among the bankers and political elite.

The scene in Syntagma degenerates into the familiar choreography: running battles between cops and anarchists. In the side-streets, though, there is a different kind of resistance. People are lighting fires, dragging wheelie bins across the road, breaking pavements to make projectiles. Again, it is apparent that the vast majority are not anarchists: most are not masked, most are not even young. This is the Greek middle class: the bank clerk, the designer, the concert pianist, the shop owner, the woman with the Gucci sunglasses and Radley handbag.

And what's really burning is consent. The side-streets of Syntagma are where the Plaka district begins, the age-old urban playground of the Greek petite-bourgeoisie, with its quaint family-owned shops: one selling only maps, another only books on coin collecting, another only vegan food. They proclaim the Greek model of capitalism: civilized, small-scale, old-fashioned and now—as parliament votes to destroy what's left of economic growth—doomed.

As the vote goes through, people cluster around TV screens in the cafés around Syntagma, which do not stop serving even while rocks and grenades are being hurled twenty yards away. One TV shows the vote in parliament split-screened with the riot itself; if you look in the other direction, you can see the same riot in real life just behind you.

As the socialist MPs vote one by one for the austerity programme, people thrust their open palms at the TV screen, a traditional Greek gesture of disgust. Many are zoned out from so much tear gas and anger. As they watch the vote unfold, you can see in their eyes that intensity of people watching penalty shootouts at football finals. To see those arms and hands outstretched, those contorted faces, is like seeing legitimacy drain away from Greek democracy.

The danger of 'anomic' breakdown

By the summer of 2011, there was a social crisis under way in Greece —one very different from those found in history books. It was not the smashing of the state, nor even a political revolution. Rather, the Greek state—which had never reached very far into civil society—had simply begun to lose its grip on the actual functions a state should perform.

It could not determine its own economic policy. It could not convince its own people it was acting with good intent. The rule of law was being imposed with draconian force in one place only to break down somewhere else, as consumers pledged non-payment of bills for their privatized utilities, drivers flouted road tolls, restaurants voted to defy tax increases and youth disappeared into the grey economy.

Borrowing a term from the early twentieth-century sociologist Emile Durkheim, commentators started to speak of 'anomie' and 'anomic breakdown'—a situation where instead of anarchy (lack of government), you find mass refusals to cooperate with the system, amid the collapse of social norms. As veteran journalist Takis Michas put it, pleading with the political class to get a grip: 'Greece is slowly becoming a society where "low-intensity conflict" dominates, the legal order is breaking down and appeals to universal values become meaningless.'[2]

Political commentator Antonis Papayiannidis told me why it was becoming impossible for the politicians to save the situation:

> The Greek political class was always floating above the people, for decades. And the people didn't care. It was win-win. They floated above us and got rich; and we got rich. Now they have lost all connection to the Greek people. They have no legitimacy.

To the youth, amid this real-life movie trailer of fire, adrenaline and blood, it had begun to feel like war. 'The social war encompasses the totality of everyday life,' one wrote; 'to be alive today is to be at war, to

never sleep properly, to awaken at odd hours to work, to be constantly surrounded by surveillance and police …'[3]

On 21 July 2011, faced with runs on the sovereign debt of Italy and Spain, the EU would soften the financial terms imposed on Greece. Further austerity was called for; the result was faster economic collapse and—as the EU leaders found out in late October—imminent bankruptcy. Faced with new evidence showing that austerity had no hope of saving Greece, and the first outbreak of open violence between communists and anarchists in Syntagma, the big powers of Europe climbed down. On 25 October they forced the banks to accept the 'voluntary' writedown of Greek debt—a controlled default—in return for the installation of permanent foreign control over Greek economic policy. To prevent a second Lehman event, they pumped €100 billion into the banking system and a trillion into the EFSF, the mega-bailout fund designed to end the crisis. But the crisis did not end.

Meanwhile the legitimacy of the Greek state was fatally eroded in the eyes of its people. And it is in this that Greece—though an outlier economically, representing just 6 per cent of the eurozone—becomes a signifier in the year it all kicked off.

Greece is the modern case study of what happens when the political elite of a developed country allows its legitimacy to go up in flames. Democracy and globalization itself are challenged. The minds of a whole generation begin to switch off from the dreams that had sustained them. And there is reason to fear that Greece might not be unique.

6

'Error de Sistema': Economic Causes of the Present Unrest

The youths who swarmed into squares all over Spain on 15 May 2011 were an unlikely bunch. Journalists mocked them for their naivety; the socialists, communists and seasoned anarchos, meanwhile, were politely amazed. Was this not the generation that had smooched its way through a thousand mornings of *café con leche* and cigarettes, seemingly unconcerned about the serious business of politics?

What mystified both pundits and hardened activists most of all was the vehemence of the protesters' anti-capitalism. 'Error de Sistema', said one placard, brandished by three girls straight off the fashion pages of some upmarket magazine—adding, for instant Twitter relevance, '#spanishrevolution'. 'La Crisis Es El Capitalismo' said the banner in Madrid's Puerta del Sol, big as a tennis court, held up by similarly good-looking youths.

But once you see Spain's unemployment figures, there is no mystery to the anger: by mid-2011 youth unemployment was running at 46 per cent. As in Cairo, Athens and beyond, it's economic disruption— joblessness, price rises, austerity—that has driven the unrest. To most people it may feel as though this period of disruption started with the collapse of Lehman Brothers. But the real disruption began much earlier, with the onset of globalization, and in particular after 2001. Once you grasp this, you can grasp the scale of the challenge facing those in power.

How we came to the crisis

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw an uncontrolled expansion of credit, during which the major financial actors' understanding of the risks involved in lending became—and was encouraged by governments to become—detached from reality. The credit boom, in turn, was caused by a mismatch between the savings generated in the export-oriented countries—China, Japan and Germany—and the debt-fuelled consumption of the Anglo-Saxon world.

The excess credit fuelled asset price inflation in technology stocks, housing, commodities and finally financial assets themselves. On top of this a new market in complex debt vehicles was created, and on the back of that a credit derivatives system whose notional value, at the time of the crash, was about the same as global GDP: $68 trillion.

As the housing bubble began to deflate, the increasingly toxic debts were found stored inside a system of off-balance-sheet financial entities, which became known—only after it collapsed—as the 'shadow banking system'. Very few mainstream financial journalists had noticed its existence.

Once the first phase of the crisis was over, parts of the business elite began to breathe easy and tell themselves they'd seen it all before. 'No one has yet dis-invented the business cycle,' Rupert Murdoch chuckled, quoting Margaret Thatcher to an invited audience in London in 2010, including numerous beaming members of the Coalition Cabinet. 'The "gales of creative destruction" still roar mightily from time to time.'[1]

But this is no mere business cycle, and no ordinary cycle of boom and bust. As the data clearly illustrate, the seeds of the crisis were sown by structural changes.

Exhibit One: the average US house price at the peak, in 2006, was double what the historic trend line said it should be, even when compared to every other boom–bust cycle since the war. This was no ordinary housing bubble.

Exhibit Two: the value of mortgage-backed securities issued (that is, of complex debt products designed to mask the risks involved in riding the house-price bubble) increased fivefold between 2000 and 2003, to $3.2 trillion. Credit default swaps, where unknown actors in the market can bet on the future failure of another's investment, had grown from zero to $68 trillion in eight years. This was no ordinary credit cycle.

Exhibit Three: there was a massive rise in so-called global imbalances. China's foreign currency reserves grew from $150 billion in 1999 to $2.85 trillion in 2010. The US current-account deficit (the difference between goods, services and capital flowing in and out) grew from $99 billion in 1989 to $800 billion by 2007. Before the crisis, these imbalances had been conceptualized as a kind of yin–yang pictogram of perfect harmony: China exports, America imports; China lends, America borrows; Chinese consumers save, American consumers borrow—it's just a new form of the division of labour. But in the ten years after 1999, the imbalances unleashed chaos. This was no ordinary division of labour.

Exhibit Four, probably the most signal disruption of them all: the trend for global capital flows. In 1980, the economists Feldstein and Horioka observed that since the dawn of industrial capitalism, there had been a high correlation between saving and investment within countries, at a ratio hovering just below 1:1.[2] This was the famous Feldstein–Horioka paradox: why, given that capitalism had become so global, did we continue to invest our savings in our own 'home' markets?

But after the year 2000 the paradox collapses: the ratio inverts. In a reversal unparalleled in the history of capitalism, the ratio of domestic savings to domestic investment fell to zero: capital had begun washing around the globe at speed, as savings in the west dried up and, in the east, piled high.[3] This was no ordinary decade.

The scale of the property bubble, the scale of global capital flows, the scale of speculation and of the mismatch between consuming and

producing countries was unprecedented—all of it. Right now, mainstream economics remains confused about the ultimate source of the disruption. Is it our greed? Are these the growing pains of the Chinese century? Was it all down to testosterone on the trading floors of major banks?

Actually, the answer is staring us in the face, but it's unpalatable. The root cause, simply put, is globalization, and the resulting monopolization of wealth by a global elite.

In the two decades after 1989 the world's labour force grew from 1.5 billion people to 3 billion and, through migration and outsourcing, the labour market itself became global. Harvard economist Richard Freeman has called this phenomenon 'The Great Doubling'. The move from farm to factory in China and the developing world, combined with the entry of the former Soviet bloc into the global economy, effectively doubled the amount of labour available to capital, and halved the ratio of capital to labour.[4]

The impact on wages was startling. In the USA, real hourly wages for men were, by 2005, the same as they had been in 1973.[5] In Japan, the real wage index fell by 11.2% in the decade to 2007, and fell a further 2% in each of the following years.[6] In the former West Germany, gross wages per employee have slipped by about 6 per cent from their post-unification high of 1991. For former East German employees, the same measure leapt by 25 per cent after unification—only to stagnate after 1999, and fall back by around 2.5 per cent between 2003 and today.[7]

Of course, there are places where real wages are rising—notably, peripheral Europe and the emerging markets. But the figures show real wages falling in the 2000s across many of the West's heartland countries and in a variety of different economies: in deflationary Japan; in the highly socialized economy of Germany; in the free-market USA. And the shortfall between stagnating wages and consumption growth is met by credit.

The results of all this look benign—until, that is, they turn bad. There is a 'heroic' period of globalization, beginning in 1989 and

ending around 1999, during which China's entry into the world market helps suppress inflation; where falling wages are offset by a seemingly sustainable expansion of credit; where house prices rise, allowing the credit to be paid off and a whole bunch of innovations are suddenly deployed—above all mobile telephony and broadband Internet.

Then there is a second phase in which the disruption overwhelms the innovations: China's increased consumption of raw materials creates world-wide inflationary pressure; the house-price boom ends, because the banks run out of poverty-stricken workers to lend to; mass migration begins to exert a downward pressure on the wages of unskilled workers in Europe and the USA; the financial dynamic overtakes, dominates and ultimately chokes off the dynamics of production, trade and innovation.

The rise of finance, wage stagnation, the capture of regulation and politics by a financial elite, consumption fuelled by credit rather than wages: it all blew up spectacularly. If this process had been accompanied by dire warnings from economists and politicians; if Madonna and Fifty Cent had wagged their diamond-encrusted fingers at us and rapped, 'Hey kids, be careful, it won't last'—then maybe the ideological shock would have been smaller. But the 2000s boom was accompanied only by yelps of glee. In Britain, the then chancellor in the Labour government, Gordon Brown, told us he'd achieved 'an end to boom and bust', adding that the era would be seen as 'the beginning of a new golden age for the City of London'.[8]

Even the diehard opponents of the system seemed cowed. Some of those who had organized the anti-capitalist revolts in Genoa and Prague moved to the West Bank to stand in front of Israeli bulldozers, others moved into concept art; the gritty eco-protesters who had mobilized against Shell and Japanese whaling fleets became sustainability experts for the newly greenwashed corporations. Aid charities that had flayed Bill Gates now gratefully received billions of dollars from Bill Gates, and toned down their criticisms accordingly.

But then it all exploded. The system, the conceits, the ideology. In fact, you need something better than the word 'explosion' to do it justice.

The alien and its toxic blood

There is a scene from the movie *Alien* (1986) that offers a perfect metaphor for what's happened since the Lehman crisis.

In the spaceship's medical bay, the alien is sitting on John Hurt's face, breathing on his behalf: a perfect parasite. The surgeon tries to cut it off with a laser scalpel. But the alien's blood turns out to be acid. The blood splashes on the floor of the operating theatre and burns through. The crew rush down to the next level of the spaceship, but it's already dripping through the ceiling and fizzing through the floor. On the next level down it's the same. Horror-struck, they realize that if it burns through to the hull, the spaceship will explode. Luckily, after burning through several decks, it stops.

In this metaphor, the banks are the alien; the acid blood is the toxic debt; the scalpel incision is made by US Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson on 15 September 2008, as he attempts to amputate Lehman Brothers. And the unleashed toxic debt then burns through layer after layer of the global economic system.

The first layer it burned through was the credit system. The next layer was the real economy, whose output, trade and stock market valuations collapsed at a rate completely in line with post-1929: there was a 20 per cent fall in trade, a 50 per cent fall in global stock market valuations and an annualized 40 per cent fall in merchandise exports.[9]

But then it hit a deck that did not burn. In the spring of 2009, a slump on the scale of the 1930s was halted by the intervention of the state.

By spending taxpayers' money and reducing taxes; slashing interest rates and then printing money; quarantining trillions of dollars of bad loans inside the balance sheets of governments—the state became the barrier that contained the acid blood of toxic debt.

The ideological implications of the state's intervention are always avoided in conversations at Davos or Jackson Hole, or on the yachts of the super-rich. Because among the wealthy, the default theory of our age still rules: that the state is dysfunctional to capitalism; that (as free-market economic guru Milton Friedman taught) the regulator can never know more than the two parties in the deal and therefore should not, ideally, exist.

The dominant economic theory states that individual self-interest is the great driver of progress. According to this dogma, any attempt to impose rationality on economic life leads not just to inefficiency but—as another free-market economist, Friedrich Hayek, put it—to 'serfdom'.

But even while mainstream economics struggled to understand the new effectiveness of the state, another problem arose. The state could not hold. That is to say, not all states, or state formations, were strong enough to absorb the acid bath of bad debt they were being asked to take.

It has now become obvious that four globally strategic institutions were corroded to the point of failure by the attempt to contain the crisis. These are: the eurozone, British social democracy, bipartisanship in American politics, and the network of Western-backed dictatorships that ran the Middle East.

That is nice work for one small alien over the space of three years, and its mission is not over yet.

The euro crisis

Ireland was bankrupted by its banks, which had become the conduit for hot money operations out of London during the boom. As they went bust, progressively, so did the Irish state, bailed out to the tune of €85 billion after a month of protesting there was no need to, on 29 November 2010.

Greece was bankrupted by ten years of co-existence with Germany inside a single currency. Southern Europe became a market for German

loans and German cars: already boosted by the low Deutschmark exchange rate fixed on entry into the single currency, the German economy simply reaped the rewards of its institutional dominance. Meanwhile stagnant wages in Germany, alongside galloping unit labour costs in the periphery meant, as economist Costas Lapavistas put it: 'Monetary union is a "beggar-thy-neighbour" policy for Germany, on condition that it beggars its own workers first.'[10] Allowing Greece to join the euro with a detrimental real exchange rate, a dysfunctional tax system and rising labour costs practically guaranteed its future penury.

Portugal, meanwhile, was bankrupted by its failure to compete—not just with Germany but with China and developing Asia, as offshoring quickly sucked the life out of the country's traditional timber and leather industries. In a factory outside Porto early in 2011, I saw first-hand a whole shed full of equipment for making softwood Venetian blinds. It was deserted, the machinery laced with fine cobwebs; two years before, thirty people had worked there. Next door, an unbuilt speculative property development—no more than a deserted sales office and some tattered corporate flags—completed the narrative of broken dreams.

Greece, Portugal and Ireland could have been saved by early intervention. In the end they were saved too late, and therefore not saved at all. In May 2010 and again in July and September 2011, the entire euro currency was taken to the brink of breakup and collapse by the indecision of the eurozone's leaders, above all Merkel and ECB boss Jean-Claude Trichet. The three bailed-out countries are now destined to remain on life support for several years. But by August 2011 inaction had dragged Italy and Spain into the danger zone, so that the European Central Bank was forced to break its own rules and start buying up the debt of these two massive, un-bailable economies.

The dilemma throughout the euro crisis has been clear: whether to impose losses from south European bad debts onto north European taxpayers, or onto the bankers who had actually lent the money to these bankrupt countries in the first place. The outcome was always a

function of the level of class struggle. By hitting the streets, Greek people were able to force Europe to impose losses on the bankers; where opposition remained within its traditional boundaries—the one-day strike, the passive demo—it was the workers, youth and pensioners who took the pain. Meanwhile Europe itself was plunged into institutional crisis. At summit after summit, the fiction at the heart of the Maastricht Treaty was exposed. Monetary union without fiscal union had failed; not as in a 'failed aspiration', but as in a concrete girder tested to failure.

There are only two logical outcomes to the euro crisis. Either northern Europe, whose taxpayers will bail out the south, takes control of eurozone economic policy, issuing 'Eurobonds' or some proxy vehicle to cement an effective fiscal union; or, the eurozone breaks up. Whichever happens, north–south solidarity in the eurozone is corroded beyond repair. From Helsinki to Milan, the far right is gaining ground on opposition to bailouts for the 'feckless south'. This means that, even if the eurozone's leaders summon up the courage to attempt fiscal union, they can hardly sell it to their electorates. Logically—though in practice its demise may take some time—the eurozone in its present form is doomed.

British Labour's 'third way' collapses

For the thirteen years Labour ruled Britain it relied on an implicit deal: taxes from the bloated financial services sector were placed at the disposal of a welfare system that allowed 9 million people to become dependent on state handouts. Benefits and tax credits, together with neighbourhood policing and CCTV systems, made life tolerable in towns where there would never be high-paid work again.

For those who had bought their homes, including council-estate dwelling workers, the Blair years would see 'equity withdrawal'—borrowing against rising house prices—equivalent to a stunning 103 per cent of GDP growth.[11]

Crime fell, and the feel-good factor increased with credit-fuelled spending power, especially for the poor; analysts noted that the main drivers of equity withdrawal were people 'with low credit scores and high credit card utilisation rates, who are most likely to have been credit-constrained in the past'[12]. But the fundamental lack of productive industry—indeed, in great swathes of the country the lack of any vibrant private sector beyond aerospace and military hardware—was never addressed.

Labour's then Business Secretary Peter Mandelson had summed up the party's strategy when he announced it was 'intensely relaxed about people becoming filthy rich as long as they pay their taxes'; his Cabinet colleague Geoff Hoon is said to have told Labour MPs worried about the decline of shipbuilding that: 'metal bashing is no longer a vital national asset'. Under Labour, Britain lost 1.3 million manufacturing jobs.

But this was social democracy. There had to be a palliative. The scale and persistence of poverty in Britain prompted Labour to extend the benefit system into the lives of those at work, in the form of tax credits. As a result, by 2010, 9.2 million adults out of a working-age population of 37 million were receiving state tax credits, while 5.4 million people were dependent on out-of-work benefits.[13] By the end of the Labour government, former Labour minister Alan Milburn would admit: 'We still live in a country where, invariably, if you're born poor, you die poor, just as if you go to a low-achieving school, you tend to end up in a low-achieving job.'[14]

Redistribution through welfare was never overtly sold as compensation for the destruction of the 'old' working-class lifestyle, but that's how it was widely understood. When I interviewed ex-miners in Leigh, my home town, in September 2009, in a pub at lunchtime, it was the Conservative threat to their benefits that worried them most. 'They closed the mines, but at least they allowed you to draw your "sick",' one told me, meaning the Incapacity Benefit that large numbers of former manual workers were entitled to. 'Now they're going to take away the sick.'

But by then, whatever deal Labour thought it had with this older, male, manual demographic had begun to erode. In 2003 Labour enthusiastically opened its labour market to workers from Eastern Europe; by 2010, the Office for National Statistics released figures that showed 81 per cent of all jobs created under Labour had been filled by non-UK-born workers.[15] The influx placed a downward pressure, not so much on unskilled wages (which were pegged at the national minimum), but on the layers just above. Anecdotally, time and again, it was this that proved the deal-breaker for many of Labour's traditional supporters. In that same Leigh pub, numerous old miners quietly told me, off-camera, that though they were lifelong Labour voters, they had voted for the British National Party in the European elections of 2009. They were not alone.

In May 2009, 2.5 million people in Britain voted for the right-wing-conservative, anti-Europe party UKIP, and just under a million for the fascist BNP. A year later, in the British general election the BNP still gained nearly 600,000 votes, largely from among the traditionally Labour-voting 'C2DE' social groups—which is sociological double-speak for manual workers.

Once again, the financial crisis had been the crucial deal-breaker between the politicians and the electorate. As long as their homes gained value and their credit-card limits were raised, people on low incomes could tolerate the 'filthy rich' character of Labour's friends and donors, and Labour's encouragement for the influx of cheap, unorganized labour. Now, with the economy grinding to a halt, many could not.

Today, whatever its electoral fortunes may hold, Labour's thirteen-year strategy of a high-welfare, low-industry economy paid for by a finance and housing bubble, is finished—and agreed to be so by the party's leadership. What the future may hold for its relationship with its traditional base is less clear.

The collapse of bipartisan politics in America

Indiana, October 2010. The university gym at Angola, Indiana, is not quite packed, but at $20 a ticket and $10 for the t-shirt, a couple of thousand people is a decent payday for Glenn Beck, the Fox News presenter who's to be the star attraction.

But Beck comes later. The day starts with a very fat man in a very tight polo-neck sweater singing 'God Bless the USA' in an excruciating tenor voice. Everyone except me stands erect, many with fists clenched against their chests. Some put their hands in the air and close their eyes in an expression of quasi-religious rapture.

The crowd is 99 per cent white and 100 per cent Christian. Of those I speak to at the interval, many believe President Obama is neither American nor Christian. One is offering for sale a set of playing cards modeled on the famous Saddam Hussein deck, with Obama's picture captioned as a 'Kenyan born, lying, arrogant Muslim communist that hates America'. 'We had to print 'em abroad because no American printing house would handle 'em,' he tells me proudly.

Now Jackie Walorski takes the stage, as the warm-up act for Beck. The forty-seven-year-old Congressional candidate points to the American flag and yells at the audience that they have just days 'to fight for who we are as Americans':

> If we don't fight for freedom, liberty, individual destiny *they* are redefining this country out from underneath us. The battle we're facing is to defend this flag on *our* turf, *our* soil. When our soldiers came out of the boats in Normandy they literally walked over bodies to fight for our freedom. The battle we face today, the ideological war that we're fighting, is for standing up for a constitution. The land of the free and the home of the brave is under assault today.

Walorski's speech is preceded by videos that splice footage of Omaha Beach in 1944 with scenes from 9/11 and the Iraq war: the 'they' she's referring to are Obama and the Democrat-voting Congress. America's

airwaves, though, are alive with the angry voices of enraged white Christians, for whom 'they' means something else. No one on the stage in Indiana needs to assert that Obama is 'a racist' with 'a deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture'—because Glenn Beck has already said so on TV, back in July 2009. To the American right, 'they'—subtextually—means the migrants, the black and Hispanic Americans, the newly married gay couples and, inevitably, the Muslims.

This is the Tea Party in full flow, injecting into traditional fiscal conservatism the belief that state intervention into economic life is immoral, un-Christian and unconstitutional. Walorski (who will narrowly miss getting elected in November 2010) explains the thinking to me:

> We are watching a freight-train of spending in this country. Americans don't live that way. We're the land of capitalism, we're not the land of taking people's public tax money and throwing it into a concept that isn't proven, that has not produced jobs. That's not what the key is in this country. You can continue to write checks but recovery comes from private-sector jobs and holding a line on spending.

By the autumn of 2010, what's sapping the energy of Democratic Party supporters is that Walorski's words—stripped of their rhetoric—ring true for many Americans who are worried sick about the economy.

According to his advisers Jared Bernstein and Christina Romer, Obama's fiscal stimulus—$787 billion of discretionary spending—would 'create or save' three million jobs.[16] They even produced a graph to show the before and after: fiscal stimulus, concentrated as extra government spending rather than tax cuts, would have an amplified 'bang-for-bucks' effect. Without stimulus, they predicted, unemployment might peak at 9 per cent. It was a gross under-estimate. In the end it peaked at 10 per cent, even with the stimulus.

In March 2009 a further bout of stimulus, this time monetary, was unleashed. Ben Bernanke, boss of the Federal Reserve—who just two

months previously had delivered a lecture in London arguing against the classic policy of printing money to stimulate demand—decided to print $1.75 trillion.

This was Keynesianism as practiced by an elite that did not believe in it. The real Keynesians—Paul Krugman in the *New York Times*, Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz in numerous books and articles—warned that the stimulus would not be enough. It was, however, enough to erode the last vestiges of bipartisan politics in America.

For during the neoliberal years the super-rich had spared no effort or expense to create a plebeian backlash against the Federal state. From the platform of Fox News, Rupert Murdoch's employees had railed against big government and high taxes. Across the Bible Belt, the holy book had been brandished by preachers warning against the combined evils of abortion, gay marriage, 'positive discrimination' for black people, illegal immigration, big government and high taxes.

By February 2009, the religious right in America had an enemy it had always dreamed of: a black president, committed to liberal social policy, big spending and a bailout of Wall Street at the expense of everyone else. In November 2010 they found the means to humiliate him, when the Republicans won a majority in the House of Representatives, including eighty-seven signed-up members of the Tea Party. And in the summer of 2011 they found the issue—America's $14 trillion national debt.

If Obama's stimulus had worked, or if Bernanke's $1.75 trillion had ever filtered through to homeowners as a supply of new credit, then the power of the conservative argument would have been blunted. It would have remained what it always was, an ideological trend; a frustrated faith in small government, co-existing with the actuality of a giant state.

But in July 2011, with the impact of the stimulus running out and unemployment once again rising, the Tea Party would take America to the brink of technical bankruptcy, forcing the end of fiscal stimulus and the beginning of a decade of austerity. President Obama, who had

come to power pledging to restore bipartisan politics in Washington, would preside helplessly over its destruction—and with it the destruction of the certainties at the heart of American politics for decades.

With the approach of the next phase of the crisis, the atmosphere is defined not just by this paralysis at the level of Federal economics, but by the fractiousness, verging on outright defiance, that prevails between conservative state governors and the presidency. As we will see, this has massive implications for the rest of the world.

The economics of the Arab Spring

The social and political roots of the Arab Spring, and the Western myopia towards them, have been well documented. But the economic roots were, at first sight, a mystery. The experts were blindsided, in part, because the economics of the region looked positive. In 2009, growth in Tunisia bottomed out at 3 per cent; in Libya it was 6 per cent and in Egypt, 4.7 per cent. Thereafter, the economies of all three countries bounced back strongly.

On top of this, lots of other indicators looked good. Egypt had managed to pull 9 per cent of its population out of absolute poverty in the 2000s; in terms of corruption, according to Transparency International, Mubarak's regime was on a par with Berlusconi and Hu Jin Tao's—and certainly nowhere near the top of the global league of crookedness. On the Gini Index, which measures levels of inequality, Egypt stood level with France, Tunisia with the USA.[17]

But the positives masked severe structural imbalances, the most obvious symptom of which was youth unemployment. In Egypt, even before the crisis hit, 92 per cent of the unemployed were first-time job-seekers. As growth slackened, unemployment in the twenty-to-twenty-five age range rose to 28 per cent. In Tunisia it stood at 30 per cent; in Yemen, estimates put the figure at 50 per cent.[18]

As Arab dictators have now learned to their cost, youth unemployment is not just any old statistic to be offset by high growth, high oil

As the experts bicker over the precise role of poverty and food inflation in the Arab Spring, they do so to the sound of unrest across the developing world. Fragile dictatorships that have not yet fallen wonder how long they would survive in any second financial crisis, or any third commodity spike.

The economic fault lines

Watching Obama fail, the UK's Labour government crash and burn, the eurozone's technocrats stagger from one catastrophe to the next and Arab dictators wilt in the glare of revolt has not been pretty. This bonfire of ideologies has left a trail of broken-hearted believers: diehard Mubarak supporters clustered outside the great man's trial; the German Green Party pleading for the EU's leaders to ignore the anti-euro sentiments of their own voters; Obama himself, wearing his trademark puzzled frown as his ratings lurch from bad to worse.

But this is not the end of the process. Returning to the *Alien* metaphor, if the 'floor' represented by the state burns through, then it is clear where the acid will start corroding next: the hull of the spaceship itself, that is, globalization. For if the state can't contain the crisis, the crisis will move on to relationships between states and classes.

Brazil's finance minister has already fired the warning shots. At the World Trade Organization in January 2011, exasperated by the impact of QEII, he threatened to sanction the USA for currency manipulation: 'This', he affirmed, 'is a currency war that is turning into a trade war.'[22]

As monetary stimulus becomes currency manipulation and G20 summit agreements give way to summits that end inconclusively (as in Seoul in 2010), the possibility looms of trade wars, outright competitive devaluations and the nuclear option of debt default. As one bond market participant put it to me, we are no longer dealing with market forces: 'all market risk is now political risk'.

Now, throughout the world, there will be austerity on an

unprecedented scale. From California to Cairo, it is certain that the rising generation will be materially poorer than those that came before. Even if we do not have a deflationary slump, 1930s-style, countries like Greece will experience 1930s levels of austerity.

But the mainstream political and economic decision-makers seem unable to rethink. Their mental framework was shaped in a world in which Lehman Brothers was on Seventh Avenue and house values always rose. And this, in turn, creates a crisis of legitimacy: non-centrist parties of the right and left are advancing electorally across Europe, while the Muslim Brotherhood is making steady gains in Egypt; and these are just the tip of a deeper disaffection.

Domestic discontent and inter-state rivalry feed off each other. It was Ben Bernanke's book on the Great Depression that taught us the monetarist truism: 'To an overwhelming degree the evidence shows that countries that left the Gold Standard recovered from the Depression more quickly than countries that remained on gold.'[23]

The lesson is this: he who devalues his currency first escapes the crisis first. In the 1930s, tight monetary policy, driven by adherence to gold, exacerbated the depression.

This time there is no Gold Standard, but a system of free-floating exchange rates. Britain was first out of the blocks to devalue—the governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, told colleagues privately that he was proud of his contribution to the 20 per cent slide of sterling after 2008. America launched an effective devaluation strategy with QEII, despite simultaneously claiming to be for 'a strong dollar'. Then, during the desperate flight to safety in August 2011, when both America and the eurozone toyed with default, others piled into the currency game: Switzerland and Japan sold mountains of money to try and depreciate their own currencies. China's policy is, of course, permanent undervaluation of the renminbi.

So we are already into a new phase, in which one country offloads the costs of crisis onto another, the rich offload the costs onto the poor and the old onto the young. As the pain increases, ideologies of resistance

will get stronger, and there is a danger that they will become magnetized towards nationalism and protectionism. The blue-and-white flags on the steps of the Greek parliament, the Gadsden flags waved by the US Tea Party (a 1776-era rattlesnake logo and the motto 'Don't Tread On Me'), and the anti-migrant sentiment flaring from Arizona to Athens, all attest to this.

But these are just advance warnings. If the acid eats through the hull of the spaceship and globalization is replaced by competing economic blocs, as it was in the 1930s, then all bets are off in terms of the diplomatic and military certainties that have prevailed since 1989.

So much of the fabric of our lives is woven into the system based on globalization that there is, in many respects, more at stake than there was in the collapse of 1929. Because we in the West have experienced real and rising personal freedom during the last twenty years, the end of it might feel rather more like the end of the belle époque in 1914.

The most dangerous thing is that, even now, it becomes rational for politicians, strategists, global corporations and military planners to prepare for a fragmented world. It becomes rational for policymakers of both left and right to ask: what shall we do if the currency war turns into a trade war? How would we rebalance our economy unilaterally if world conditions turn against us? It becomes absolutely logical—as the UK's Strategic Security and Defence Review did—to ask: how many aircraft carriers would we need if globalization breaks down?

That is the real problem with the 'error de sistema'. It poses, for all shades of old-school political opinion, a very stark alternative: either fight for a new, more equitable and sustainable form of globalization—with new treaties, new transnational organizations, a new deal on global currencies; or retreat behind national barriers and stage the battle between the classes over social justice and redistribution there.

Sources of support for the latter course of action are strong, albeit screened out of the mainstream. When I met steelworkers in Gary, Indiana—skilled and educated left-wing Democrats, determined to

7

'I Tweet in My Dreams': The Rise of the Networked Individual

In 1910 the composer Frederick Delius wrote an opera so revolutionary that nobody noticed. The plot was thin: a few static scenes from an obscure Danish novel—'pictures', Delius called them. The premiere, four years later, was cancelled because the First World War broke out. On its first performance, in 1919, it flopped.

Nobody liked *Fennimore and Gerda*. Even Delius's biggest fan, the conductor Thomas Beecham, described it as a story about 'three rather dreary people who have nothing to sing'. But if you listen to the music you can hear what was revolutionary. *Fennimore and Gerda* is the first opera written directly about modern, liberated sexual relationships, dispensing with the pretexts of historical or exotic settings. It is, above all, about being free.

And it is a product of an age very much like ours. The decade before 1914 saw an unprecedented surge in human freedom, a freedom that found expression in all kinds of literature and art: the early D. H. Lawrence, André Gide, Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze* with its lesbian orgy, painted in 1902 and immediately covered up. There's C. P. Cavafy in Alexandria daring to write, by 1904, his ultra-sensuous gay love lyrics, and of course Picasso, whose *Demoiselles d'Avignon* changed everything.

John Maynard Keynes would eulogize that age as an 'extraordinary episode in the economic progress of man'.[1] In his memoir *The World of*

Yesterday, published in 1943, the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig summed up the zeitgeist of globalized trade, technological progress and sexual liberation:

> There was progress everywhere… There was more freedom as well as more beauty in the world… I feel sorry for all those who did not live through these last years of European confidence when they were still young themselves. For the air around us is not a dead and empty void, it has in it the rhythm and vibration of the time.[2]

But the decade before 1914 turned out to be a giant false start as far as freedom was concerned. It was followed by a century scarred by economic crisis, militarism, genocide and totalitarian rule.

After the First World War, of course, the cultural elevation of the self took off in earnest. Controversial stories of sexual adventure, psychological rebirth and revolt became ten-a-penny. But by now these artists and writers were out of sync with the 'rhythm and vibration of the time'. With eighteen million war dead and the world in the grip of revolutions, the zeitgeist had become collectivist, not individualist. Individual human freedom was on hold—except for the rich, or those prepared to flout accepted social norms.

It's hard to remember, given the status we now accord writers like Joyce, Fitzgerald, Miller, the Lawrence of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and artists like Klimt and Picasso, that such status eluded them in the collectivist decades. Henry Miller's work was banned in the USA as late as 1964; *Lady Chatterley* in the UK, famously, until 1960; Klimt's frieze was not publicly exhibited again until 1986; even Picasso himself did not dare exhibit the *Demoiselles* until 1916. *Fennimore and Gerda*, by no means challenging compared to the atonal music of the 1910s, would not be revived until—you guessed it—1968, and then only by a group of amateurs.

In the depths of the twentieth century, even the rebels began to accept the impossibility of breaking free. Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*,

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Sartre's *Roads to Freedom*, Vasily Grossman's *Life and Fate* all speak to the same problem: that in a time where the great forces of progress and reaction are totalitarian, only the dedicated 'party soldier' is really free.

In the 1960s, however, individual freedom attempts to make a comeback. It begins in late 1950s America, with the Beat Generation, as personal wealth rises, education becomes liberal and disillusion sets in at the apartheid and militarism of the USA during the Cold War. It's not just the ker-rang of the electric guitar that fragments the old order but an outburst of reportage journalism, which tears apart the long-peddled illusions about policing, race and, above all, the Vietnam War.

The students who wrote the iconic Port Huron Statement, in 1962, summed up the nature of the break which young radicals of the day were attempting with the collectivist past:

> We regard men as infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom, and love. In affirming these principles we are aware of countering perhaps the dominant conceptions of man in the twentieth century: that he is a thing to be manipulated, and that he is inherently incapable of directing his own affairs.[3]

It's become fashionable now to interpret those liberation movements of the 1960s as the doomed precursors to neoliberalism. Thus the Port Huron Statement becomes the founding text of Thatcherism, and the Hell's Angels gang-bangs a rehearsal for the financial Big Bang of the 1980s. In free-market capitalism, says this interpretation of the Sixties, the children of '68 got what they wanted, and indeed deserved: individualism, the collapse of institutions, and profound disillusion.

I propose a different reading. The Port Huron generation failed to achieve the humanist revolution they desired because: a) the level of technology was not then adequate to make personal freedom possible for the majority; and b) the forces of collectivism, nationalism and corporate power were, at that point, stronger than the forces fighting

against them. Nevertheless, the 1960s laid the basis for a new model of individual freedom, which, though never fully realized, was at least clearly conceived: it's been labelled 'networked individualism'.

The networked individual

If you've ever seen somebody transfixed by their BlackBerry in the middle of a riot, you've seen a networked individual. If, in a multiplayer computer game, you've ever led a squad of Russian *spetsnaz* to storm a nuclear power station, then you are a networked individual. If you cannot understand how somebody can simultaneously watch TV and tweet about it on their iPad, you are struggling with the concept—but hurry up: 60 per cent of all young people use a 'second screen' while watching TV.

Social theorists observed the beginnings of 'networked individualism' very early in the development of information technology. Sociologist Barry Wellman identified birth control, divorce laws, women's participation in the workforce, and the zoning of cities into suburbs and business parks as preconditions to the Internet way of life. Long before Facebook came along, Wellman noticed that people preferred to live with multiple networks, flat hierarchies and weak commitments:

> Rather than relating to one group, [people] cycle through interactions with a variety of others, at work or in the community. Their work and community networks are diffuse, sparsely knit, with vague, overlapping, social and spatial boundaries.[4]

But the theory of 'networked individualism', pioneered primarily within sociology in the 1990s, was at first focused on patterns of interaction within groups. Fifteen years into the communications revolution, it's possible to see equally profound impacts on individual behaviour and even consciousness.

in a factory you barely had time to sleep, let alone socialize or create art. Your only hope was in solidarity and structure. In fact, attacks on the self-organized world of the nineteenth-century labour movement were often condemned as promoting 'egoism'.

It was only during revolutions—1830, 1848 and above all 1871—that the poor got an accidental glimpse of human freedom. In the Paris Commune, working-class women rushed to the pulpits of churches converted into 'revolution clubs' to proclaim marriage illegal, confession immoral, freedom to love essential. A sixteen-year-old gay youth hiked 150 miles from Alsace to see it all. It blew his mind: he declared himself a new type of human being, and wrote some of the greatest poetry of the century. But the world was not ready for Arthur Rimbaud's idea of freedom. After a few chaotic 'seasons in hell', he moved to Ethiopia to become a coffee trader and wrote nothing more until death.[6]

Not till the Edwardian period—known in France as the belle époque, in America as the 'Progressive Era'—did experiments with individual freedom become widespread among the middle and lower classes. Women's liberation and even gay rights came onto the agenda of mainstream politics; and the general health, education and leisure time of the workers began to rise to the level where they could participate in mass consumption and sport.

This is the atmosphere that Zweig describes, that Picasso and Klimt luxuriated in, that Delius brings to life in the score of *Fennimore*: and it's no accident that this surge of individualism coincided with the high point of the first era of globalization. The pre-1914 era was, like our own, one in which the most innovative technologies were those that produced greater freedom of action and thought: the motor car, the cinema, the phonogram and the telephone.

Zweig summed up how it felt to be young before 1914, and what was lost when war, revolution and the swing towards totalitarianism ended it all: 'Before those wars,' he recalled, 'I saw individual freedom at its zenith and after them I saw liberty at its lowest point in hundreds of years.'[7]

Looked at this way, the real precedent for the past twenty years of ecstasy-fuelled, iPod-engrossed, latte-sipping individualism is not the 1960s but the years before 1914. The radicals of the Sixties were able to conceive the possibility of a new mode of human existence, but technology and the balance of global forces—class, race, inter-state rivalry—militated against achieving it. In the pre-1914 period, the freedom zeitgeist, technological progress and globalization were aligned. Now they are aligned again.

The past ten years have seen disruptions in the pattern of social life that mirror what happened in that era. But this time, it's happening at high velocity and across the canvas of all humanity.

What the new zeitgeist clashes with are the power relations of the old hierarchical world. And this is the materialist explanation for 2011: it is as much about individuals versus hierarchies as it is about rich against poor.

The Masai with a mobile

The driver of behavioural change has been technology. There's been a revolution in the recording, storing and searchability of information; in the networked availability of information; in the digitization and globalization of commercial transactions; and finally, through social networking, in the ability to form connections away from the old hierarchical channels of the past. In each technology, the 'node'—or individual—has been empowered at the expense of the hierarchical central core, which is the state or corporation—or even the tribe.

When I travelled across Kenya in 2007, following the cellphone signal from Mombasa into the Rift Valley, it was clear that mobile telephony was causing a micro-level social upheaval. I met minibus drivers suddenly able to contact their bosses when pulled over by corrupt police in search of bribes; hairdressers who, by simply collecting the cellphone numbers of their clients, had freed themselves from the decades-old tyranny of the 'madam' who owns the parlour; slum

and move around it frighteningly unconscious that it's new: 'For me it's second nature—I tweet in my dreams. I can't imagine where it's going next, but it's completely inseparable from my personality. In the future, when a child is born it will just be given a Twitter account.'

A social laboratory of the self

The power of social networks to alter consciousness was noticed first among those who took part in, and studied, computer games in the 1980s. Gamers, together with hackers, were the first cohort of people who used information technology to form 'affinity groups'. And the most perceptive among them were able to capture early on the changes in behaviour and thought-patterns that we now see as mass phenomena. Psychoanalyst Sherry Turkle used the metaphor of 'windows' and the experience of Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs—the early text-based online games) to propose that the Internet had become a 'social laboratory of the self', allowing users to live parallel and multiple lives:

> The self is no longer simply playing different roles in different settings at different times … [There is] a de-centred self that exists in many worlds and plays many roles at the same time … The experience of this parallelism encourages treating on-screen and off-screen lives with a surprising degree of equality.[12]

Science writer Margaret Wertheim proposed that this parallel self could be just as 'real' as the physical self, arguing that in the creation of online communities, humanity has begun to create 'a collective mental arena':

> We are witnessing here the birth of a new domain, a space that simply did not exist before … If the self 'continues' into cyberspace … it becomes almost like a fluid, leaking out around us all the time and joining each of us into a vast ocean, or web, of relationships with other leaky selves.[13]

In the 1990s, these early sociologists of Internet consciousness documented nearly every behaviour pattern we now see in social networks: multiple personalities, masquerading, stalking, community formation, intense personal relationships, seeing the online world as real, or hyperreal, and the prevalence of utopian schemes. But theirs was a niche world inhabited by the techno-elite; it seems prehistoric now.

For social media has moved the 'collective mental arena', with its intense interpersonal bonds, from the realm of gaming and fantasy into the world of everyday interaction.

The woman tweeting at work or from the front line of a demonstration is experiencing the same shared consciousness, role-play, multifaceted personality and intense bonding that you get in *World of Warcraft*—only now it's from within real life. Though the old multiuser games still hold their attraction for millions of geeky people, the newest, most satisfying and most immersive user experience is reality.

As I write this, for example, at 23:00 BST on 20 August 2011, my own Twitter feed is exploding with accounts, from people on the ground, of the final offensive of the insurgents against Gaddafi in Tripoli:

> 'Never forget Mohamed Bouazizi'
> 'Do you guys realize #Libya is right on the verge of being the FIRST, REAL DEMOCRACY in the MiddleEast!!!'
> 'Its about time #Eygpt recognizes the NTC as a representative of the Libyan people ! #Libya …'
> 'Late night celebrations in #zawiya at the news of uprisings in #tripoli. huge booms from poss. NATO strikes audible from the east …'
> '#AlJazeera and #PressTV report #Gaddafi en route to Italy by air. #NATO "lying" about Tripoli fall to gain extension to military attacks'
> 'Dear world: This is REAL for us, no war game, our families/neighbors r getting shot while we tweet their stories!'
> 'AJA reporter: Nato is bombing some areas in #Tripoli …'
> 'BREAKING: Israeli gunboats shooting at Al Sudaniya area to the north of #Gaza'

> 'I have to take a short break, and a cup of coffee. God bless #Libya and the Freedom Fighters.'

I would say that the above—pinging onto TweetDeck in the space of ten minutes, and about twelve hours in advance of the mainstream media reporting of any of it—beats any ten minutes of Counter-Strike ever played.

The power of social networks, then, is not only that they alter consciousness. They bring this altered and networked consciousness into real life in a way that the old hacker/gamer, stuck to their PCs, never experienced. As London student @littlemisswilde describes it: 'I can be hanging out in the same room as another activist, tweeting, and other people will see us and say: you're being antisocial. But in fact we're being ultra-social.'

The impact on activism

The rise of online social networks has happened so fast that there is almost no quantitative research into their impact on politics and political campaigns. However, two social theorists—Clay Shirky and Manuel Castells—have helped to predict what the impact could be.

Shirky's seminal 2009 book, *Here Comes Everybody*, describes the basic dynamic of activism in socially networked societies. It becomes, Shirky says, 'ridiculously easy' to form groups with shared beliefs who can coordinate action and choose targets much faster than hierarchical states or corporations can react: 'Most of the barriers to group action have collapsed, and without those barriers we are free to explore new ways of gathering together and getting things done.'

USC professor Manuel Castells foresaw that the combined impact of the social network and the individualistic self would facilitate a clear break with the old forms of organization, including parties, unions and permanent campaigns: 'The emergence of mass self-communication offers an extraordinary medium for social movements and rebellious

individuals to build their autonomy and confront the institutions of society in their own terms and around their own projects.'[14]

Castells realized that the new technology has changed the relationship between the collective and the individual within protest movements. It allows activists to assemble fast and zap the enemy, without any greater commitment to each other than doing this.

But it also propels people into long-term occupations of physical spaces—from Bahrain's Pearl Roundabout to Tahrir, Syntagma and the Occupy Wall Street protests. And it focuses their struggle on the creation of new meanings and narratives, beyond the head-to-head confrontations with the old order on its own terrain.

However, changing the method of struggle is only one impact of network technology. Equally important are the new modes of economic activity it has thrown up—methods that were born amid the altruistic hacking and eco-communities that grew out of the 1960s, but which have now become deployed into the mainstream economy.

The key concept here, says Shirky, is 'collaborative production': people working together on a shared project, with no managers, and sometimes no direct intent to produce profit. It was pioneered in the Open Source software and hacking movements.

At one level, this is just the same as what keeps a Sunday league soccer team going—the voluntary contribution of skill and time to something bigger than the participants. But what open-source programmers did was to move this kind of collaboration into space formerly occupied by profit-seeking corporations. In 1994, when version 1.0 of Linux was released, the most successful company on earth was Microsoft. Microsoft's business model was based on providing—at an eye-watering markup—what the Linux community was to provide for free: an operating system to run your computer. Now, Linux runs every computer in the Google empire and half of all Internet servers. And although people make money out of it, they do not do so in the same way as Microsoft did.

Linux, and other open-source software projects such as the Perl

programming language, were created using 'distributed collaboration' —hundreds of people correcting, improving and documenting other people's work, voluntarily, for the greater good of mankind (and, of course, to annoy Bill Gates). Linux's only condition was that nobody was allowed to commercialize the product.

Out of the Open Source movement came the 'wiki': a user-editable website which leaves an audit trail of changes, designed to facilitate collaborative work among groups without any prior role-designation or command hierarchy. As a tool it looks like nothing special. But its first two global uses were to prove revolutionary: Wikipedia and WikiLeaks. Wikipedia was not only a commercial challenge to the encyclopaedia business: it expanded the supply of in-depth and dependable knowledge, and reduced the price to zero.

And not just knowledge of stable and finished episodes. Shirky points out—and I have personal experience of this—that the Wikipedia page devoted to the London bombings of 7 July 2005 was at all times during the first twenty-four hours more reliable and comprehensive than reports from the mainstream media. I can attest to the fact that the mainstream media noticed this immediately: it was a talking point among my colleagues in press and broadcasting that the "new" version of news was the dispassionate assembly of the facts, easily eclipsing confused rewrites of online "articles" as the detailed events filtered out.

The second big wiki—WikiLeaks—has yet to finish exploding in the faces of dictators, spies, torturers, crooks and politicians. But leaving aside its political impact, what's important here is the creation process itself: what Shirky calls the 'unmanaged division of labour'.

This process did not appear out of the blue; it can trace a direct lineage to the liberation movements of the hippy Sixties. In her brilliant cyber-memoir, technology writer Becky Hogge describes how survivors of the LSD fraternity in California 'quit drugs for software', seeding a techno-revolution that would create the mouse, the pixel, the Apple Mac, the Internet, hacking and free software.[15] Their goals were made explicit in two famous statements by Stewart Brand, the visionary

founder of the Whole Earth Catalog: 'Like it or not, computers are coming to the masses'; and 'Information wants to be free'. This would open up a forty-year battle, still ongoing, between those trying to monopolize, censor and commercialize information technology and those who want it to be open, uncensored and free.

And it's a battle over fundamentals. The rise of the profitless enterprise, of unmanaged collective labour, of free information and the massive scalability of collaborative work: each of these issues challenges a core belief in management theory. Likewise the rise of the networked individual, the multiple self, the 'leaky self' and the collective consciousness may challenge some basic assumptions of liberalism, which has assumed the self to be singular and self-contained.

However—and this is the crucial point—none of this should be challenging for those who dream of creating a more equal and just society.

But it seems that it is. First, because networked activism challenges the old methods—parties, trade unions, leaders, hierarchies. Second, because open-source technologies and collaborative production raise an even more fundamental question: what *type* of economy is to be the starting point for the transition to sustainable and equitable growth, and on what timetable?

Marx, technology and freedom

Karl Marx dominated the radical agenda of the late nineteenth century for good reason: he was the most modern and most pro-capitalist of the revolutionaries of the age.

His polemics with rival nineteenth-century leftists don't get so much attention these days—but they have become relevant. Both on the issue of networked individualism, and the role of stored knowledge might play in human freedom, Marx had already asked the pertinent questions.

On individual freedom, Marx's argument amounts to this: any project to deliver a classless society, with wealth distributed according

to need, must be based on the most advanced technologies and organizational forms created by capitalism itself. It can't be based on schemes originating in the heads of philanthropic bosses or philosophers. And you can't return to the past.

So in the 1840s, as the workers' movement became obsessed with model factory settlements set up by utopian visionaries like Robert Owen, Marx laid into the utopians. In the 1860s, when workers all over the world tried to set up cooperative shops and factories, Marx became a robust critic of cooperation. And he never ceased to pour scorn on the back-to-the-land socialists who wanted to return to rural communes and low growth.

Capitalism, Marx argued, was headed in the direction of big enterprises, which the capitalists would own collectively via the stock markets. Co-ops and utopian villages were a distraction. You had to find a way to take control of this big stuff—finance, industry and agribusiness—and create enough wealth so that, when you redistributed it, it would eliminate human need. Only then, said Marx, could you begin to address the alienation and unfreedom at the heart of human existence.

Capitalism itself, he believed, had created a social group whose material interests would force them to seize the means of production: the proletariat, owning nothing but their own capacity to work. However, there was nothing in the lifestyle of the workers themselves that could foreshadow the freedom they would create.

It is often forgotten that Marx's goal was not 'class solidarity' or 'proletarian power' but the liberation of individual human beings. In 1843 he wrote a passage that has become newly relevant in the context of social networks:

> Every emancipation is a *restoration* of the human world and of human relationships to man himself. Human emancipation will only be complete when the real individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a species-being.[16]

Marx believed this truly social life—'species-being'—could not be attained without abolishing capitalism. Indeed, the whole thrust of the book this passage comes from (*On the Jewish Question*, 1843) was that the nineteenth-century goal of political and civil rights was really a form of self-enslavement: the individual with his 'human rights' alone against the world.[17]

Because Marx believed capitalism could only atomize, only alienate, he concluded that this ultimate 'human emancipation', in which people would express their freedom through communal interaction, could only happen after it was gone.

The actual history of organized labour was to be one long refutation of this theory. First, from the late nineteenth century, workers did develop highly sophisticated subcultures in which they attempted to develop civilized and communal lifestyles. Second, the most skilled gained possessions and a material stake in the survival of the system itself. On top of this Marx himself moved away from this initial, humanistic version of communism, settling on a theory that stressed the clash of technology against social relations, rather than humanity versus alienation, as the dynamo of the coming revolution. Finally, after the 1960s, the old manual workforce began to decline and fragment, leading theorists like André Gorz to propose its disappearance as any kind of revolutionary force.

What none of the critics dared suggest, however, was that it might be possible to achieve this 'species-being' under capitalism.

The technological and inter-personal revolutions of the early twenty-first century pose precisely this question. Namely, is it now possible to conceive of living this 'emancipated' life as a fully connected 'species-being' on the terrain of capitalism itself—indeed on the terrain of a highly marketized form of capitalism, albeit in conflict with it?

I don't know the answer, but merely to pose the question is exhilarating.

Strangely, it turns out, Marx himself posed the very same question. In a notebook known as the 'Fragment on Machines' (1858), he

One fact is clear: *people know more than they used to*. That's to say, they have greater and more instant access to knowledge, and reliable ways of counteracting disinformation.

Though academia has become obsessed with firewalling and commercializing the products of research, the info-revolution has massively expanded the primary sources of knowledge. Since 1665, when the first two scientific journals were started, researchers estimate that about 50 million scholarly papers have been published. Of these, 10 million were published in the last ten years, and 20 million in the last twenty-five years.[21] But even here, the open-access revolution is corroding commerce: a 2006 study found that useable copies of 11 per cent of all papers published that year could be found for free, through self-archiving on academics' personal websites.[22]

It's now possible to conceive of a situation where the great bulk of academic research will be free, open to all, and transparently cross-referenced. This will destroy the business models of media empires like Reed Elsevier but, arguably, they have already been destroyed.

Meanwhile the nature of learning has been transformed. There are huge numbers of facts available to me now about the subjects I studied at university which were not known when I was there in the 1980s. Back then, whole academic terms would be spent disputing basic facts, or trying to research them. Today the plane of reasoning can be more complex, because people have an instant reference source for the undisputed premises of arguments. I am not referring here to Wikipedia, which can be unreliable, but to sources like instantly searchable documents, scanned books, census data and digitized historic photographs and manuscripts. It's as if physics had been replaced by quantum physics, but in every discipline. Or, as Clay Shirky has argued, it's as if the impact of the calculator on school mathematics were now being replicated in every field.

And as the nature of learning changes, the nature of the individuals produced by it evolves. We are prepared to consult secondary sources less, primary sources more, and each other always. We are prepared to

follow our search results across academic boundaries; we are prepared to 'load' complex information into our minds—just as a computer loads software—and then 'unload' it, once the task is complete, making room for a new upload of expertise to do something else. High-level knowledge work becomes less about 'information conquest' than 'information management', and the latter is the valued corporate skill.

It is as if, in response to the creation of digital networks, we are changing our behaviour to become not just networked individuals but 'network animals'.

This should come as no surprise: observers of the early factory system described how, within a generation, it had wrought a total change in the behaviour, thinking, body shape and life expectancy of those imprisoned within it. People grew smaller, their limbs became bent; physical movements became more regimented. Family units broke down.

Why should a revolution in knowledge and technology not be producing an equally dramatic—albeit diametrically opposite—change in human behaviour?

The challenge to info-hierarchies

The impact of social networks on knowledge, community and individuals constitutes a challenge to three kinds of hierarchies that stood at the heart of twentieth-century reality: repressive states, corporations and hermetically sealed ideologies.

Repressive states rely not just on the manipulation of news, but on the suppression of truth and the control of narratives. Today, in the face of totalitarianism, more or less everything you need to know to make sense of the world—and explode a false narrative—is available as freely downloadable content on the Internet; and this content has not been pre-digested by teachers, parents, priests, imams or commissars.

For example, if there was a narrative that really finished off Mubarak's regime, it was not the April 6th movement but the 'We are all

Khalid Said' Facebook page: again and again you find that those who became detonators of the 25 January uprising acted through the links made over Said's murder. Though Mubarak shut down Twitter on 27 January 2011, to stop the revolution he would have had to close down the Khalid Said page, hunt down its members and round up the protest networks that sent people like @sarrahsworld, @Hennawy89 and @3arabawy into the slums of Cairo on 25 January.

But you cannot run a modern economy that way. The only defence against information-driven revolt is to de-network your society and institute Nazi or East German Communist levels of surveillance and control.

Likewise, info-capitalism makes it increasingly difficult for corporations to control their own narratives. Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation empire was plunged into crisis not just because *Guardian* journalist Nick Davies discovered it had hacked the phone of a teenage murder victim. It was also because, by day three of the furore, one in every four tweets mentioning the *News of the World* hashtag (#notw) also mentioned the brand name of a company advertising in the paper. The marketing agency We Are Social, which produced these metrics, reported:

> Every brand involved was dealing with its own social-media crisis last week. The sheer volume of this protest will have been a shock for many brands and drowned out any normal marketing activity. This cannot have failed to influence their decisions about whether to pull advertising from the *News of the World*. It was a mass outpouring of public opinion which hit at the right time and had its desired effect.[23]

Manuel Castells had put his finger on the source of Rupert Murdoch's power: News Corp acted as a 'switch' within the political elite systems of the world. It created valuable niche groups of right-wing voters around particular media outlets, and then traded influence over those voters for political influence pursuant to the growth of News Corp.

Backing up this unspoken deal was always the hidden sanction of scandal or opprobrium, ready to be unleashed on anyone who did not cooperate.[24]

But News Corp's position as a 'switch' within the system was overwhelmed by these decentralized attacks. Faced with a massive pull-out of brand advertising, and in an attempt to stop the crisis spreading through the whole corporation, Murdoch pulled the plug on the *News of the World*, a massively profitable Sunday newspaper. In other words, social media killed it, once more demonstrating the truism that the network defeats the hierarchy.

As for hermetically sealed ideologies—Christian fundamentalism, fascism, clunking Leninist orthodoxy—the info-revolution simply reinforces the choice globalization had already forced on them: isolate yourself from reality inside a closed community, or unseal the ideology, exposing it to critical dialogue and difference.

For the traditional left, the info-revolution presents an additional problem: it loses its monopoly on critical narratives about capitalism. From the 1960s, the left and progressive liberalism were jointly engaged in a struggle against the censorship of news and the suppression of information about the past. It was from radical journalists that we learned the truth about Vietnam, or the miscarriages of justice in Northern Ireland, or the hidden secrets of the Cold War 'Gladio' network that ran Italian politics. And it was the left that dug through history to discover the hidden and forgotten struggles of workers, women, racial minorities, lesbians and gays.

For activists, the moment of political commitment often coincided with a moment of revelation. Anybody, in theory, could have rediscovered the story of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the slave who led the Haitian revolution in 1789; but in practice, only the Trinidadian Marxist historian C. L. R. James took the trouble to do so. James's book *The Black Jacobins*, produced in 1938, shaped the outlook of black activists in the 1960s and 1980s because—even forty years after publication—it was the definitive account, influencing two generations of anti-racists.

Today the left is no longer the gatekeeper to subversive knowledge (although it can aspire to remain a 'preferred provider'). Those seeking a narrative critical of the world order, and evidence of corporate or state wrongdoing, are free to cut out the middleman.

It is worth here exploring the role played by 'memes'. Richard Dawkins invented the concept in 1976, speculating the existence of core ideas within human societies that had survived, and mutated, like genes:

> Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation. If a scientist hears, or reads about, a good idea, he passes it on to his colleagues and students. He mentions it in his articles and his lectures. If the idea catches on, it can be said to propagate itself, spreading from brain to brain.[25]

Before the Internet, the 'meme' idea would have been useful as a speculative tool for understanding the prevalence of certain themes and patterns in human culture. Dawkins himself was quite negative about memes, tending to see them as autonomous entities, as selfish as genes, replicating themselves in their own interest. Meanwhile the study of memes got sidetracked into an academic debate between anthropologists and neuroscientists who purported to describe their laws of motion.

With the Internet, however, and above all with the advent of social media, it's become possible to observe the development of memes at an accelerated pace (much as fruit flies, with their short life cycles, help geneticists study mutation).

What happens is that ideas arise, are immediately 'market tested', and then are seen to either take off, bubble under, insinuate themselves

into the mainstream, or, if they are deemed no good, disappear. While this process is observable in mass culture generally, activists in the horizontalist and hacker movements believe memes are tools for creating direct democracy. Ideas replicate, or do not replicate, through social media according to whether they hit the right buttons within the collective consciousness.

Examples are legion: the 'Uninstalling dictator: 99% complete' tweets that spun across the world as Ben Ali and Mubarak fell; the decision by thousands of activists worldwide to change their Twitter location to 'Tehran' in June 2009, in a bid to mask the location of the real Iranian activists. Above all, the occupation of physical space with tents: begun in Tahrir, spreading to Madrid and then Athens, and bursting out again in the autumn of 2011 in the Occupy Wall Street movement, which on 15 October inspired space-occupations in 962 cities, in 85 countries.

For activists, memes create a kind of rough alternative to representative democracy. Methods of protests, slogans, beliefs—like the repeated insistence that 'Black Bloc is a tactic, not a lifestyle' among British students after the debacle of 26 March 2011—spread in a seemingly autonomous way.

I am not certain whether memes are anything more than small cultural portions of the zeitgeist. That they move and replicate faster than they used to seems pretty obvious. Yet it is important to understand that, for the activists themselves, memes are seen as facilitating decentralized action. One of those critiquing my original 'Twenty Reasons Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere' blog post, an activist aligned with the hacker group LulzSec, wrote:

> We don't see this decentralisation of power and authority in determining the direction of actions to be a negative impact of technology. Memetics offer an opportunity for the instigation of autonomous actions, delivering death by a thousand cuts to our enemy.[26]

8

In the Tracks of Tom Joad: A Journey through Jobless America

'To the red country and part of the gray country of Oklahoma, the last rains came gently, and they did not cut the scarred earth.' So begins John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, in which a poor Oklahoma family journeys to California in search of work.[1] The events it describes happened eighty years ago, when America was in the grip of recession and Oklahoma in the grip of drought.

In July 2011, as Congress took America to the brink of a debt default, I decided to drive from Oklahoma to Los Angeles following the route described in Steinbeck's book, in order to take a snapshot of Recession America. It was a snapshot alright—but it turned out to be of something else.

Farmers don't quit

Kiowa County, Oklahoma. It's a wide, flat country with only the Wichita Mountains to give the skyline any kind of edge. The sky is cloudless, the grass is white and crunches under your feet as if covered in deep frost. If you look closely at the redbud, the state tree of Oklahoma, the leaves are brown and curled, as if they too are about to drop with frostbite. But it's 110 degrees Fahrenheit. Oklahoma, like much of the American south, is in the middle of its deepest drought for sixty years.

In the field where what's left of his herd of cows huddles beneath the skeleton of a mesquite tree, Brett Porter slashes the netting on a bale of hay; it too is on the white side of green, but moist enough for the cows, who jostle into a feeding line. They are sleek, muscular, prime Angus beef. Brett has spent twelve years working on the DNA.

But this DNA is doomed. The Porter ranch is down to just eighteen bales of hay, which will last a week. He has already sold twenty out of 100 cows for hamburger meat. Once the hay runs out, it will cost $200 a bale, or $3,600 a week, to feed the herd. And he doesn't have that kind of money.

> I can't control it. You can't control a drought. There's a lot of nights I don't sleep—I stay awake thinking how I'm going to make this out, and that out.

That July, across western Oklahoma, they are starting to scuff the grass under their feet, look at the sky, look at the temperature gauge—which hovers way above 100°F even at dusk—and talk in their cracked, gravelly voices about the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s.

'It's the worst it's been in sixty years, and we're actually drier today than in the 1930s,' says Terry Detrick, who runs the American Farmers and Ranchers union here:

> Right now, though the farms are bigger than the 1930s, 90 per cent are still family owned. Our winter wheat failed; we tried to put in a summer crop and now the summer crop's not going to make it. Double the input costs and zero income. They have crop insurance—but they can only afford to insure 65 per cent of the value. We owe retailers, can't pay our bills; so they're going to go as well.

We remember the Dust Bowl primarily through two stark sets of imagery: Dorothea Lange's photographs of displaced Oklahoma farmers, staring vacantly as their hopes and children die; and

Steinbeck's novel, made into a haunting movie by John Ford in 1940. *The Grapes of Wrath* begins with the Joad family losing their land to drought and debt; it follows their journey southwest to California, where, like 350,000 others, they end up as exploited farm labourers living in squatter camps.

Today's situation looks different. The Porter ranch is not small—Brett farms 3,500 acres. And the problems of land misuse that caused the Dust Bowl have been solved by sixty years of applied agronomy: Brett's generation no longer tills the land, but uses crop rotation—cattle, wheat, alfalfa, barley and cotton—to keep the soil nourished. For there is no river water here, only rainfall. And now the rain has stopped.

As for debt, though Brett borrows half a million dollars a year to run the farm, the Federal government underwrites his loans, so instead of 5 per cent interest he's paying 2 per cent. On top of that there are direct state loans. In good years he breaks even; in bad years he relies on disaster payments and crop insurance—again from Federal money.

But as the relentless summer of 2011 hammers the earth solid, the strain is beginning to show. Brett and his fellow-farmers are worried that Steinbeck's 'red country' might again be the stage for another one-sided fight between nature and a broken economic model.

For the Joads' penury was partly the product of the economic model small farmers had fought for during the Civil War: the right to claim and farm 'homesteads' no bigger than 160 acres. They had wrested these rights from the cattle drivers and the southern cotton barons. But, sinking deeper into debt as the rains dried up, they could not defeat the banks. It's a cycle as old as capitalism: finance capital screws the farmer.

Now, right here on these vast lands, the cycle is being played out again. Detrick, in a low voice, tells me:

> We don't quit. What the banker managers say to me is, the first people to come to them asking to be foreclosed are the wives. She says: 'There's no way we're gonna make it and he won't quit, you gotta

staff. The routine is to do a religious version of the twelve-step programme, some literacy and some praying. But now, Reynalds says, there's a new kind of clientele, the American middle class: folks whose problem is not drink or drugs, but debt.

Sandra and Tim live in one of the barracks at Joy Junction, which means they get a single room and a shared bathroom. She worked in Subway, but they cut her shifts; he managed a branch of McDonald's, but it closed. They lost their house and downsized to a small apartment, and then the unemployment benefit ran out and they lost the apartment. 'We slept in our car for four weeks. It was scary,' says Sandra. 'We'd buy fast food. Take a wash in a gas station.'

On the floor of the reception centre, a gym strewn with about eighty mattresses, I meet Larry Antista and his daughter Michelle, aged fourteen: 'We're here because of the economic times: my spouse split on us and that halved our income so we lost our place.'

With a grey ponytail, grey moustache and dreamy eyes, Larry, maybe in his fifties, looks like a character out of Pynchon rather than Steinbeck. He's been a driver and worked in adult care, but has lately been trying to write a screenplay. They stayed on the floors and sofas of friends—'sofa surfing', Reynalds calls it—until their friends got sick of it. Now they sleep, dad and daughter, side by side with eighty people they do not know.

'It's not bad,' says Michelle. 'It's safe; I stay at school till six o'clock to get my homework done.' Do they know she's homeless? 'I didn't tell them.' Why not? 'They didn't ask.' This means she does not show up on New Mexico's register of homeless children, which already numbers 5,500.

She's trying to keep her Latin dance class going; Larry is still working on his screenplay 'about a biker who gets accused of doing something he didn't do'. His eyes drift towards some inner memory, and Michelle smiles. Larry says:

The job market was supposed to make progress a little in May, but it levelled off and now it's dropped back. The government needs to stimulate this somehow: they're not very imaginative—they need to look at how Franklin Delano Roosevelt did it. It's a lack of vision. We managed to keep our apartment for an extra twelve months because of the stimulus money, so I don't know what they are talking about when they say cut the Federal budget!

It's from Larry that I hear the beginnings of what Steinbeck heard sixty years ago: the simmering wrath of Americans who regard themselves as 'middle-class' but have been thrown into penury. They express thoughts you never hear on the holy-rolling radio stations. Larry says:

> How much does it cost for one fighter plane or one bomb? And we're not doing anything to stop terrorism—just blowing people up and pissing off the rest of the world. They're getting stronger and we're getting tired of it: and there's some money that could be cut loose instead of wasting it on that. One multi-million aircraft could sure feed and house a lot of people.

A few mattresses away are Maurice Henderson, Roseangel Ortiz and their three children, including Maurice Jr, four months old. Maurice Sr, who's African American and built like a football player, begins the answer to every question with a three-second silence, during which he takes a deep breath, stares intently and eventually manages to stem his inner rage:

> I was an auto fleet maintenance mechanic; I've been unemployed about eight months. I was living in a motel. Nice motel with a full kitchen. And my unemployment ran out: I couldn't certify Sunday, so Monday I had to be out by 12 a.m. We called everybody, but …

He does an awkward grimace to indicate the end of the story. He's just managed to sign on again for benefits, and expects $200 in the next few days. But this will barely cover nappies and juice for the kids, certainly not re-entry into the 'nice motel' sector. How come somebody like him ended up here?

'I could go get a job, but the kind of jobs I could get right away are not going to pay me as much as I get on welfare: eight dollars an hour.'

Where would you start to put things right? He stares over my shoulder, searching for a way to put this nicely. 'Needs to start with President Obama.' What does he need to do? 'Help! Start helping, and he *is* helping—but people gotta help too—stop playing games.' He is bitter about the war spending:

'They say they're spending too much Federal money, but on what? Too much money on that war they got over there. Sure, they created jobs, but …'—and Maurice heaves another deep sigh—'if you're not the first layer to get there, you're not getting the job.'

Hostility to war spending and bitter disillusion with President Obama run through this dormitory like a grassfire, and there is more. A man crawls over to me across two mattresses crowded with his own large contingent of children:

> I'm a Native American, we're Navajo. What I want you to report is: where is all the money going from the casinos? Our nation has a casino but they keep all the money. It's the same everywhere. Why don't they use the money to help their own people?

In the morning Reynalds takes me to a street corner, right by the Interstate, where the poorest motels are clustered. Outside one stands a drunken woman in tears: her sister is about to be evicted, together with her sister's boyfriend, who's in a wheelchair. 'He's disabled, but they don' even have a shower.' Reynalds and his co-worker go into the Evangelical spiel that will soon bring three more people to sit around

hanging out for work on the corners of the car parks at big hardware stores; their hands wash the linen at hotels and make the burritos and the tacos in fast-food joints.

Migrant children already had poverty, dislocation and the language issue to contend with (Arizona declared itself an English-language-only state in 1986). Now they have something else: the skin-crawling fear that if your mother goes to the corner store she will not come back. Leticia Ramírez, mother of three and an activist in the migrant group Puente, tells me:

> We are living in a state of fear. We can't even go to the store—can't even go out to the park, the zoo, the mall—because the kids fear the police might stop their parents. So we just stay home. They say: 'If you go out, you may not come back.' One family bought three months of groceries so they don't have to leave the home.

To enforce SB1070 and the other laws that criminalize Hispanic migrants, Phoenix has Sheriff Joe Arpaio. And Sheriff Joe has Tent City, and boy, is Joe keen for the media to see Tent City.

My guide, John, a prison guard, is dressed in Iraq-style combat gear and carries a Taser on his belt. As we pass the row of blue telephones, positioned in full sunshine on an outside wall, John tells me proudly:

'The phone calls are at a premium price; we make 'em pay over, to help fund the cost of their own detention.'

In fact, much of Sheriff Joe's operation here is designed to keep costs down. The tents themselves are sixty years old; there are only two meals a day, 'to minimize catering costs'; the guards drink out-of-date Gatorade. There are no heating expenses in winter (on the coldest desert nights the inmates steal plastic refuse sacks to stuff between the sheets); and the a/c in the prisoners' mess room comes cheap—as one prisoner says, sotto voce: 'They only turned the a/c on for you.'

The average sentence they're serving is twenty-six days, the

maximum a year. After that they'll be processed by ICE, the Federal deportation service.

Fernando López's mistake was to drive without a licence: he couldn't get one because he has no documents to prove he is a legal migrant, and that's because—though he does not say the words to me himself—he did not come here legally. In June 2011 he got stopped for speeding.

> They took me to Fourth Avenue Jail, Arpaio's jail. They questioned me for four days. I won't lie to you—in the first twelve hours they must have had me in eight to ten different cells. It's a psychological game, the way they talk to you, even look at you. You don't see the sun; you don't know what time it is. And they're always telling you: sign this and you'll be deported immediately. But it's not true. I refused to answer questions and didn't sign, so they made my process even longer. They took me to the ICE department—eight hours; then Florence, a Federal clearing jail, for three days; then detention. I was there for a month—for a traffic violation. When you're there you don't have a name: you're just a number—and they call you Alien, like you're from another planet.

López is slight and soft spoken: he leans forward to explain in a semi-whisper the effect of Arizona's 'attrition' law: 'They cannot deport eleven million people, so they play this game. They are trying to scare them, so they don't have any other option than to leave—they are going to make us self-deport.'

When I ask if the strategy is working, he answers with a question: 'I don't know if you've heard about NAFTA?' He says the trade deal between the USA and Mexico, together with other bilateral deals, is making poverty south of the border worse:

> When I was in jail I met guys from El Salvador, Ecuador, Honduras—conditions are really hard—they cannot live there; they got no option but to go to other countries. It's not that they want to be here, but they just don't have any other option. SB1070 won't stop them coming.

> Arpaio made videos of prisoners in the chain gang under the sun: people see this, but they still come.

Latino migrants work, but for precious little: it is a certainty that the impact of illegal immigration is to reduce wages for people like Maurice and Larry in New Mexico, who are US citizens. Fernando tells me that some of his friends are working a 100-hour week, for below the minimum wage: housekeeping, landscaping, kitchen work.

'They should be creating jobs instead of jails, building schools instead of jails.'

But as Fernando and I sit there in the sweltering heat of the migrant centre, beneath posters with the slogan 'We Are Human' and a grimly humorous bumper sticker saying 'I'm Mexican, Pull Me Over'—President Obama is getting ready to sign away two trillion dollars' worth of money for building schools and creating jobs. His only beef with the majority in the House is whether it should go to $2.5 trillion.

'I don't trust him,' López says, pointing out that Obama also promised a law to offer illegal migrants 'earned amnesty'. But that did not happen.

In fact, by the summer of 2011 Obama was in trouble: healthcare reform got whittled down to a minimum and was now gridlocked at state level; a law to lift obstacles to trade union organization never got to first base; the promised pullout from Afghanistan turned into a surge of troops; and the Dodd–Frank Act, aimed at curtailing the power of Wall Street, had become a toothless object of derision on Wall Street.

But Obama was so determined to stick at two trillion dollars' worth of cuts for the needy—instead of $2.5 trillion—that, at one point, he walked out of negotiations with the Republicans. 'I'd rather see my presidency destroyed than give in on this,' he's reported to have said. And this rancour, this left–right stand-off, is now buzzing and twanging on every radio station as I head out of Phoenix, west, for California.

A museum of the twentieth century

As I leave Phoenix the radio sings out adverts for repossessed ranches in the desert: 'You can hunt there, ride—anything you want: it's your ranch!' urges the disc jockey. It's a reminder of the basic problem: America had a house-price boom that is now bust—and twenty years of credit-fuelled growth are over, so even the mild recovery in 2010–11 is failing to create jobs. Meanwhile, the money that fuelled the recovery has pushed America into deep and unsustainable debt.

The gas stations are far apart and the Mojave desert is wide, so I've timed my refills rigorously against the distances on the GPS. But the GPS does not agree with the Grand Marquis's fuel gauge, so I glide into the desert truck-stop at Cedar Hills, in neutral gear, having coasted eight miles downhill on empty.

The store in the gas station is full of stuff that's by now emblematic of the Interstate's economy: the stimulant drinks in yellow bottles that keep truck drivers going all night, the Confederate-flag-themed bandannas to wear, defiantly, instead of a helmet as you cruise along on your Harley. Plus those Route 66 stickers, baseball caps and t-shirts. As with so much of today's American culture, the subtext—if you dare admit it—is 'We were great once'.

I cross the Mojave Desert in the dark and get to Bakersfield, California at midnight: this is the town where the Joads planned to find work in the orange groves. The bar at the hotel is full of oilmen and military guys: the economy of Kern County is no longer dominated by agriculture. The main employers are the Air Force, a naval weaponry base, big oil and private healthcare. Despite that there is still 15 per cent unemployment here—17 per cent at the height of the crisis.

The town is, like so many in the southern USA, a boomtown suburb that's been busted. Its population grew 25 per cent in the 2000s decade, but since the bust, one in seventy homes is in repossession.

But, like I say, the bar is heaving with clean-shaven, loud young guys with lantern jaws: their ladies are kitted out in that regulation designer

bling you see wherever easy money flows. This is Obama's fiscal and monetary stimulus in action: it has engorged the military and—by boosting the global price of everything—made the oilman's life sweet too.

But the parking valet, a Mexican who casts a disgusted eye over the Red Bull cans and trail mix strewn all over the car, tells the other side of the story:

'You can't get work here anymore: $8 an hour for picking fruit. Why bother? A lot of the farmers sold their fields to build homes on. My family, my Mom picked fruit here for thirty years but, well …' He lets his hands drop to his sides and looks shamefacedly at his uniform.

In the morning I go in search of the spot where Steinbeck must have seen this: 'They drove through Tehachapi in the morning glow, and the sun came up behind them and then suddenly they saw the great valley below them …'

In the John Ford film there's a great top shot of the San Joaquin valley, but the Interstate highway obliterates the old road now. I drive into a vineyard to find the view that must have greeted the real-life Okies as they crossed the mountains. It's still beautiful. But like the rest of America, hidden from your gaze by the mainstream media, it's a story of poverty for some, work for others; and widespread denial of where much of the work comes from, and what averted the disaster back in 2008: the state.

Steinbeck, who had lived most of his life in California, was among the first to publicize conditions for the Dust Bowl migrants, and to pillory the near-racist attitudes of those who hounded them. Though he faced resistance from the cheap-labour bosses and the police, by the time he wrote the novel Steinbeck was cutting with the grain in terms of Federal policy. For the book is not just about a journey: it is about the search for a new economic model based on state intervention to guarantee full employment, and about a new social model based on solidarity and tolerance.

This was Roosevelt's New Deal, which would, between 1933 and

1937, create twelve million jobs, power America out of double-dip recession and—in the teeth of opposition from corporations—redistribute wealth. Roosevelt would, within days of taking office, abolish speculation in the finance system. Within two years he would pass pro-union legislation, which led to the biggest one-time uplift in wages and conditions in US history. He would raise taxes on the rich and spend Federal money, unashamedly, not just on social programmes but in creating art and theatre for the people: 40,000 actors and directors and scene painters were employed in the first year.

The Joads, then, had Roosevelt. People like Larry Antista and Fernando López have Barack Obama. And on Sunday night, 31 July 2011, those tuning into the radio on Interstate 40 would hear the news: President Obama had agreed to make $2.5 trillion in spending cuts, mostly on infrastructure and welfare payments to the poor. 'An about-face', as the *New York Times* described it, 'in the federal government's role from outsize spending in the immediate aftermath of recession to outsize cuts in the future.'

The boss of Pimco, one of America's biggest investment firms, summarized the impact of the debt-ceiling deal: 'Unemployment will be higher than it would have been otherwise. Growth will be lower than it would be otherwise. And inequality will be worse than it would be otherwise.'[2]

That summer, key indicators of US economic growth began to flatten off. The Federal Reserve responded with a third tweak to its money-printing operation, and Obama published a job creation plan. But the US recovery was, by now, intertwined with the fate of the global economy, and this—because of the euro crisis—was looking grim.

My trip from Oklahoma to LA was conceived as a snapshot of America struggling with the depths of its jobs and housing drought. If we are very unlucky, the depths may lie ahead of us.

9

1848 Redux: What We Can Learn from the Last Global Wave

Paris, December 1847. One winter morning Frédéric Moreau, the archetypal 'graduate with no future', left his student hovel on the Parisian Left Bank, his mind, as always, on his forlorn romance. But history intervened:

> Youths in groups of anything from five to twelve were strolling around arm in arm, occasionally going up to larger groups which were standing here and there; at the far end of the square, against the iron railings, men in smocks were holding forth ... policemen were walking up and down ... Everybody wore a mysterious, anxious expression; clearly there was something in the air, and on each person's lips there was an unspoken question.[1]

This is how Moreau, the hero of Flaubert's novel *Sentimental Education*, collided with the revolution of 1848, and like his romance it did not end well.

On 22 February 1848 the 'men in smocks'—the Parisian workers—overthrew the monarchy and forced the middle class to declare a republic. It was a shock because, like Saif Gaddafi and Gamal Mubarak long afterwards, King Louis-Philippe had counted himself something of a democrat.

In 1848 a wave of revolutions swept Europe: by March, Austria, Hungary, Poland and many states of the future Germany were facing insurrections, often led by students and the radicalized middle class, with the small, mainly craft-based, working class in support. Elsewhere —as in Jordan and Morocco in 2011—riots and demonstrations forced beleaguered monarchs into constitutional reform.

Within months, however, class conflict tore the revolutionary alliance apart. In Paris, the newly elected assembly was dominated not by the radicals who'd made the revolution, but by social conservatives. They hired a general to crack down on unrest; that June, he crushed the working class in four days of intense barricade fighting. The first newspaper photograph in history captures the moment: three forlorn barricades, made of cobblestones and carts, stand deserted on the rue Saint-Maur: four thousand people have just been killed. The scene's eerie modernity is reinforced by an advertisement on the wall for a chocolate factory.[2]

Elsewhere in Europe, there was open warfare. Revolutionary armies manoeuvred through Hungary, Poland, Italy, Austria and along the Rhine. Fourteen years later many of the defeated insurgents would turn up on the battlefields of the American Civil War, from Shiloh to Chattanooga, led by the same radical officers and singing the same socialist songs.

But by 1851 the revolutionary wave in Europe was over, its leaders exiled or dead. A military coup ended the French revolution, the president rebranding himself as Emperor Napoleon III. The Prussian army crushed the German states that had voted for radical democracy. Austria defeated the Hungarian uprising, put down its own and enlisted Napoleon III to suppress the republic that had sprung up in Rome.

In each case, the survivors observed a similar pattern of events. Once the workers began to fight for social justice, the businessmen and radical journalists who had led the fight for democracy turned against them, rebuilding the old, dictatorial forms of repression to put them down. Conversely, where the working class was weak or non-existent,

some libertarian millionaires and Fox News. This laid the basis for a state-level offensive against organized labour, employment conditions, migration and abortion rights.

The defeat of the right over healthcare was accompanied by a rise in violent imagery in political speech. Sarah Palin's website famously 'targeted' Democrat election candidates, using rifle cross hairs superimposed on a map. When Democrats condemned this as incitement to violence, the right laughed off their response as over-sensitive political correctness.

The Tea Party movement itself then went through something of an internal split. Sensing its grassroots power, mainstream conservative politicians scrambled to realign themselves, seeking Tea Party endorsement in the 2010 midterm elections. While this would pull the GOP in Congress significantly to the right, its impact on the Tea Party was to force the most committed libertarians to split or form parallel organizations.

After the healthcare bill, former Alabama militiaman Mike Vanderboegh posted on his blog: 'To all modern Sons of Liberty: THIS is your time. Break their windows. Break them NOW.' Democratic Party office windows were broken in several states. Ten House Democrats were offered police protection.[7]

Now Glenn Beck weighed in. In a tone more in sorrowful than angry, Beck speculated:

> Why are the Tea Parties always being labeled as terrorist? Why is it? 'They're extremists, they're terrorists, they're hatemongers, they're dangerous!' What is it that these evolutionaries want? You'd pick up a gun? You ever thought of that? These people have. Because possibly, maybe, the question should be asked: maybe they're tired of evolution, and they are waiting for revolution.[8]

At the end of the broadcast Beck called for a return to civilized discourse. But he had just accused the liberal wing of US politics of contemplating armed struggle.

The problem is, as Chekhov once said, if a gun appears in Act One, then before the end of the play somebody is going to get shot. On 8 January 2011, a gunman in Tucson, Arizona, maimed the Democratic senator Gabrielle Giffords and killed six bystanders. Giffords had been targeted in one of Palin's cross hairs.

The event, though essentially the action of a lunatic, was a wake-up call.

Because, in America, the gun has appeared before. Every serious history of the American Civil War (1861–65) reminds us that it was preceded by a long and complex political breakdown in the 1850s, the result of demographic change and economic modernization. The war was not just 'about slavery'. It was about the emergence of a new political model of industrial capitalism and the rise of a political party which, though it represented that new system, had no support whatever in the slave-owning south. That, at the time, was the Republican Party.

As the situation degenerated in the late 1850s, the habitually rowdy electoral process gave rise to sporadic violent acts, from the outbreak of political violence in Kansas, to John Brown's guerrilla raid on Harper's Ferry, to a fight on the floor of the Senate that left the anti-slavery senator Charles Sumner maimed for life.

The historian Allan Nevins argued that by the late 1850s America contained no longer just two political factions, or parallel economic systems, but 'two peoples' who were culturally, socially and ethnically different (by this time 90 per cent of all European migrants were headed for the north). Another historian, James McPherson, explained why, to the white slave-ocracy and its plebeian supporters, the rise of industrial capitalism and its liberal values did look like a revolution:

> The ascension to power of the Republican Party, with its ideology of competitive, egalitarian, free-labor capitalism, was a signal to the South that the Northern majority had turned irrevocably towards this frightening, revolutionary future.[9]

While it would be wrong to force an analogy, there are worrying echoes of 1850s America in today's USA.

First is the combination of violent political rhetoric with the prevalence of weapons, something that led one despairing critic to tell me: 'America is the Weimar Republic with 250 million guns.' Secondly, there is the transformation of TV news and talk radio into a zone of culture war: thanks to Fox and MSNBC, the conservative and liberal halves of America can now live in completely separate media bubbles, never hearing ideas they don't like or seeing news that contradicts them.

Third, all this is building up into an argument about the assertion of 'states' rights' in the face of Federal government, with individual states attempting to impose, for example, Arizona-style anti-migrant laws or to resist the healthcare legislation. Following Obama's healthcare bill, indeed, seventeen states passed legislation attempting to nullify it; twenty-nine states have mounted a constitutional legal challenge.

Finally, the culture war has spilled over into the fiscal management of the biggest economy on earth. In August 2011 the Republican majority in Congress took the USA to the brink of technical bankruptcy in order to impose on President Obama their desired mixture of tax cuts and lower spending. Though essentially a piece of political theatre, the debt-ceiling crisis of 2011 sent a strategic signal to global markets, to the effect that the USA lacks a solid institutional framework to deal with economic crisis.

If this were just a case of ideological warfare over the same old issues—abortion, gay marriage, race and so on—it would remain pretty much what it's been since the 1970s: something for the political strategists to manoeuvre around as they fight for control of essentially stable institutions.

But America is facing a big new issue—economic decline. This is not a temporary blip. Before 2050, it will have to deal with an energy crisis and numerous resource rivalries, as well as the impacts of an ageing population and climate change. The danger is not that civil conflict

Miliband's Labour Party has spent its first year out of office casting around for an ideological alternative to Blairism; French socialism's expected saviour, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, spent his first night out of jail at a $600-a-head dinner in Manhattan. In Portugal, Spain and Greece, the politicians leading the socialist party were the ones who initiated the austerity. In Ireland, fearing it might win the election and find itself presiding over an economically crippled country, Labour was accused of sabotaging its own campaign.

If you were to summarize the problem for the mainstream left in the present crisis, it comes down to three points: free-market capitalism has failed; there's a wave of resistance to wage cuts and austerity; the political leaders of social democracy cannot accept points one and two.

These, then, are the sources of incoherence for the left. But its weakness impacts on the dynamics of unrest in a paradoxical way. By removing the danger of social revolution—or even systematic social reform—it undermines the rationale for a 'democratic counter-revolution' of the June 1848 type.

The incoherence of the left has emboldened the liberals, the Facebook youth, the urban poor, and so on, to speak of social justice and to fight for it, secure in the knowledge that they cannot be accused of being communists (except on the Glenn Beck show). In this sense, across much of the Arab world but also in parts of Europe, the situation resembles Germany in 1849, not France in 1848. The weakness of the left has allowed the radical middle classes to retain their radicalism—for now.

What is the spectre?

Marx and Engels wrote their *Communist Manifesto* at around the same time as Frédéric Moreau ran into the student demo at the Panthéon. The authors sent their manuscript to London for publication, in German, on 21 February 1848, one day before the uprising in Paris. It therefore had no impact whatsoever in France that year, and no mass circulation in Germany.

By contrast, the modern equivalent of *The Communist Manifesto* has enjoyed widespread circulation—and been widely vilified. It is titled *The Coming Insurrection*, published in French, in 2007, by a collective called 'The Invisible Committee'. Later, nine French anarchists—the Tarnac Nine—were arrested for allegedly trying to sabotage France's TGV railway network; they were also accused of being the authors of the tract.

The Coming Insurrection is a remarkable document. Couched in the language of contempt for capitalism, alienation, advertising and the modern city, it seemed to me—on reading it in the middle of the Lehman crisis—designed to remain esoteric, gestural and largely unread.

It captures vividly the frustrations of the youth and urban poor:

> We can no longer even see how an insurrection might begin. Sixty years of pacification and containment of historical upheavals, sixty years of democratic anesthesia and the management of events, have dulled our perception of the real, our sense of the war in progress. We need to start by recovering this perception.[14]

The authors' solution is spelled out in a series of exhortations to act: alone, clandestinely or in small groups, with fluidity, through symbolic gestures. 'Get going … find each other … start from what's political in friendship'. Expect nothing from established organizations. Above all, 'form communes'—that is, form autonomous groups to do sporadic things: 'Becoming autonomous could just as easily mean learning to fight in the street, to occupy empty houses, to cease working, to love each other madly, and to shoplift.'

In 2007, this was indeed the height of activity for most anti-globalization activists: a series of fluid gestures, an alternative lifestyle in close-knit small groups, the occasional 'day out' outside a conference or nuclear power site.

But the authors of *The Coming Insurrection* were thinking much

bigger than the milieu from which they came. Two years in advance of the first networked insurrection, they described how it might come about. The disconnected youth of the urban wasteland, they predicted, would play the role of the new revolutionary subject:

> The pioneers of the workers' movement were able to find each other in the workshop, then in the factory. They had the strike to show their numbers and unmask the scabs. They had the wage relation, pitting the party of capital against the party of labor, on which they could draw the lines of solidarity and of battle on a global scale. We have the whole of social space in which to find each other. We have everyday insubordination for showing our numbers and unmasking cowards. We have our hostility to this civilization for drawing lines of solidarity and of battle on a global scale.

In Athens, Tehran and then spectacularly across North Africa and the Middle East, people who had never heard of *The Coming Insurrection* 'found each other' and acted in ways that conformed to its imperatives. They formed 'communes' of a type many anarchists might find difficult to imagine: 'communes' of Google executives, rebel army officers, off-duty cops, Obama campaign staffers; communes of the non-political and the unschooled. Strangest of all, communes of people who had no intention of fighting for communism.

It is something of a paradox that the only mainstream media figure in the US to notice the book—and to understand the importance of its message—was Glenn Beck. In July 2009, Beck warned viewers of Fox News:

> The Invisible Committee … want to bring down capitalism and the Western way of life. This started in France and started to spread to countries like Greece and Iceland, where people are out of work, out of money and out of patience. Now, it's about to come here to America.

That is the spectre: that the insurrectionary wave becomes linked to mass disillusion with the economic system and leads to an inchoate struggle for something different. As with Marx and Engels, the bohemian desperadoes who first imagined it stand way to the left of what the mass of people actually want; but they have still captured what's in the air.

The endgame is dictated by economics

The revolutionary wave of 1848 ended in defeat: all the monarchies under threat survived, except the French, which upgraded to Empire status. But it nevertheless ushered in modernity. Napoleon III industrialized France; Prussia unified Germany. In Italy the republican radicals of 1848 would go on to refight the war of independence, unifying Italy as a kingdom by 1861. The age of Balzac gave way to the age of Zola, the age of secret societies to the age of trade unions.

But it is not clear what, even if defeated, 2011 will leave behind. The masses in Tahrir chanted: 'Bread, Freedom, Social Justice'—and the 'social justice agenda' seems pervasive. So too does democracy: it will be difficult in future for any Western policymaker to argue that a certain race, culture or religion makes authoritarianism 'durable'.

Everything depends on the outcome of the economic crisis. Before 2008, globalization 'delivered' in a rough-and-ready way to the poor of the developing world. It dragged one billion people out of rural poverty and into urban slums, and created an extra 1.5 billion waged workers. It provided access to life-changing technology. And it offset the decline in prosperity and status for the manual workers of the rich world with unlimited access to credit. At the same time it made the rich of every country richer, and inequality greater—even in the developing world, where real incomes rose.

If the West's economy now flatlines—suffering a decade of stagnation, as Japan did in the 1990s—the whole deal is off. As HSBC economist Stephen King put it:

> With the West now in economic permafrost, paper wealth is vulnerable to loss … Any plausible resolution to the current financial crisis must involve burden-sharing on a scale not seen since the 1930s. Unemployment, defaults, inflation, currency crises, stock-market collapses, austerity: all these are consistent with the new, lower, level of economic activity and are not unique to any one country or part of the world.[15]

All of which means that the aspiration for social justice will depend on the economy's ability deliver it.

Because 1848 delivered economic progress—almost independently of the actions of the main players—republican socialism died out, to be replaced by respectable trade unionism and social democracy. Marx went back to the library and stayed there for decades. Flaubert's Frédéric Moreau fled the barricades, travelled the world and, like many of the youth of 1848, 'resigned himself to the stagnation of his mind and the apathy of his heart'.

Industrialization delivered a rising standard of life to the masses, and, if not the democracy they had fought for, at least an element of democratization from above. And it civilized the city, replacing slums with boulevards.

What becomes of the present wave of revolts—political, social, intellectual and moral—now depends completely on what the global economy delivers. If it is nothing but heartache and penury, we are in the middle of a perfect storm.

In these postmodern times we have Glenn Beck to warn us of the dangers of contagion; in 1848 they had Alexis de Tocqueville. The speech he made to the French Assembly, just days before the insurrection, has an eerie resonance today:

> I believe right now that we are sleeping on a volcano. Can you not sense by a sort of instinctive intuition … that the earth is trembling again in Europe? Can you not feel the wind of revolution in the air?[16]

10

'We Will Barricade': Slum Dwellers versus the Super-Rich

Gapan City, Philippines, 2011. The bridge stretches a couple of hundred metres across a river and some rice fields. Water buffalo nuzzle the vegetation. The air hangs, stifling, somewhere between humidity and rain. Occasionally, from one of the battered jeeps crossing the bridge, somebody heaves a plastic rubbish sack over the rails without changing gear.

I stand on that bridge for half an hour, watching fishermen cast their nets and bee-eaters dipping between the reeds, before I notice the squatter camp below.

I can count more than fifty homes: some are shacks, some made of breeze blocks. They are wedged beneath the bridge, forming an unofficial street. Though the shacks are topped with corrugated iron, the most effective roof is the bridge, which provides shelter during the monsoon. What doesn't help them is the river, which, says Len-len, flash-floods twice a year. She points to a mark on her porch where the water reached last time. It is three metres high.

'We bought this place for 50,000 pesos [$1,100],' Len-len tells me. 'The family that sold it to us moved on to Manila.'

Len-len is thirty-one years old, gap-toothed and striking, in a moth-eaten pink t-shirt, faded grey track-pants and ancient flip-flops. In another world—if the gap tooth issue could be solved—Len-len would

be one of those women they pick to be PA to the chief exec. The reason she's talking to me—while the others hide their faces behind their hands—is that she's gutsy:

> My husband works as a farm hand. I don't have a job. We have four children. He earns 150 pesos [$3] a day, but that's on the days he gets work. We moved here because we had an argument with our relatives: my family has always worked the land but we never owned any. If we knew anybody in Manila, we would go there and look for work—but we don't.

These are the Philippines' rural poor. The kids are thin, their legs dotted with sores; the crowd that's formed around me has too many nut-brown oldsters with smiles crazed by whatever hooch they're on. And too many people snigger when Len-len tells me she has no job:

'It's hard here, sir. The local government keeps threatening to move us on. But they do nothing for us. There's no work on the land, not regular work. We can only afford rice and, if we've anything left, a bit of meat.'

Her home is clean, but with few possessions. In the kitchen there is a five-litre water container, empty, on a stand: it costs 60 pesos ($1.35) for five litres, which last three days. Fresh water alone costs Len-len's family one-seventh of their daily income—but that still gives them less than two litres per day between six people. In this heat, an adult can sweat two litres in an hour.

Despite the temporary and ramshackle nature of the camp, someone has run bare electrical wires into the shack and Len-len pays a monthly bill for it: 700 pesos, or more than four days' wages. But not all days bring wages.

Beneath the cleanliness and the proud attitude, what lingers just under the surface is shame. This camp, a couple of miles outside a bustling rural town, has a biblical bleakness. Its inhabitants are surrounded by fields which, twice a year, produce the staple rice crop. But they

don't own the fields. They own their bodies, a few tattered clothes and some irrational inner hope that maybe their kids can escape this life. It is like Steinbeck without heroes—unless you count Len-len: 'I wanted to become a security guard, sir. Lady security guard. I went for one day's training. But then my money ran out so I can't complete the course.'

Do the kids eat every day? 'It's no problem, sir,' she says with an awkward smile.

What's driving them from the land is a mixture of rural poverty plus climate change. Typhoons smash trees down with increasing frequency; the rice harvest—the crop needs 110 days of sunshine—is becoming volatile.

The farmers nearby tell me they could solve the problem by planting rain-resistant GM rice. But that costs money; and, says farming folklore, once you're borrowing from a bank you're a slave. At least with the traditional seed next year's crop comes free: they scrunch the seed, dry, a desiccated handful of hope for the next harvest.

But for financial whizz-kids in the global commodity markets, failing rice crops are good: they drive the world price higher. Hedge funds have built entire strategies on the wager that food and land prices will rise inexorably. And as investors piled into commodity indexes at the height of the credit bubble, say Princeton economists Tang and Xiong, wholesale prices started to fluctuate—in response not to the supply and demand of food itself, but to the supply and demand of speculative money.[1]

Right now the supply of speculative money is high, and so is the price of rice. The wholesale price is now 32 pesos per kilo—approaching once again its 2008 high of 35 pesos. Ten years ago it was half that. So, without a government subsidy to fix the retail price, Len-len would go hungry.

Soon, she will do what tens of millions of the rural poor have done already: leave the land and move to a mega-city to live in a slum and look for work. She will live in a shack just like this, but it will be more cramped, wedged in by others like it. Instead of the viridian and lime of

into a Prada-clad drill routine: 'River Warriors, atten ... shun!' We are treated to some Filipino slogans about honour and playing for the team. Then comes some more drill, before they all fall about laughing: 'I ordered them to dive into the water,' Gina giggles.

But the idea behind the River Warriors is deadly serious. The Estero de Paco clearance was, says Gina, 'non-negotiable'. She set up the charity to train selected slum dwellers to form unofficial security groups, both of men and women. The River Warriors' job is to make sure those who've been cleared don't come back. Gina says: 'They will poo here! They will throw garbage. They would come back if we didn't guard the place. So we work with the ones who are compliant. To make a change like this you have to work with a chosen few, with vanguards.'

The clearance programme works like a giant scalpel. All the engineers need is four metres' width of riverbank to create the easement for the waste pipe, so a second, deeper layer of slums remains: you can see where the demolition crews have sheared through walls, windows, dirt, alleyways. This is social engineering on a vast scale—but it's what the government has decided must happen to half a million people in Manila.

Gina says that she had the idea for the River Warriors

> while I was at a meditation retreat in California. You know how things come to you? You will love this! I thought: I will create something like King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. They can kneel down and I will knight them, but with an *arnis*, which is a Filipino weapon.

She is telling me all this without a trace of embarrassment or irony.

The Lopez family is one of ten mega-powerful business families that run the country. If your vision of capitalism is one in which a genetically predestined elite runs everything, where democracy is a vibrant sham, where the minds of the poor are controlled by religion, TV and lotteries, and where patronage and graft is rife, then the Philippines is the ideal embodiment of it.

But the longer I spend with Gina, the more I realize she does have a point. Manila can't be a modern city if its waterways are clogged with excrement. Like the slum-clearers of nineteenth-century London and New York, she has a missionary zeal:

> You can't live well if you are faced with the constant smell of faeces, right? You can't live a decent life on top of a sewer. And even if those people want to stay there, it has a wider impact on the city, the environment: we can't clean the water and bring the river back to life if they are there; and the crime and sickness has a big impact on the overall environment.

But twenty-first-century capitalism has made the ideals of the nineteenth century almost impossible to deliver on. With Gina out of earshot, two River Warrior women tell me that they themselves are returnees from a place called Calauan, where they were moved to when Estero de Paco was cleared. I want to see Calauan, but it's too far to get there and back by road in a single day.

'Oh, but you have to see Calauan,' Gina says. And she flips open her BlackBerry: 'Get me aviation.'

At the treeline

Calauan, Laguna Province. The chopper skims low across Manila Bay; it's fringed with slums and out in the bay itself there are homes on stilts. 'Even the sea is squatted,' Monchet Olives, Gina's chief of staff, tells me.

Soon the skyscrapers of downtown Manila disappear completely and the slums give way to rice paddies; in the distance are mountains. Now Calauan comes into view: neat rows of single-storey housing, the tin roofs glinting. The whole complex houses maybe 6,000 families, and there is room for many more. On the streets of Calauan, density is not a problem. The public space is deserted. There's a playground and a school with the name Oscar Lopez painted on the roof. The problem

is—as Monchet admits—there is no electricity or running water, and no prospect of ever getting any:

> When it comes to electricity we're between a rock and a hard place. Many of the new residents have never been used to paying bills—and the electricity company, to make the investment, needs an income stream they just can't provide.

And there are no jobs.

As we walk we're being shadowed by two soldiers in full camouflage and with assault rifles, on a motorbike. Monchet explains that the soldiers' presence is due to the New People's Army, a Maoist guerrilla group going back to the 1950s with currently about 6,000 members nationwide: 'Guerrilla activity is what made the authorities abandon this place for ten years.'

Deep in the jungle? 'No, just up there on the hill.' Monchet waves his finger in the general direction of the landscape, which suddenly looks a lot like that treeline in the opening credits of 'Apocalypse Now'.

Ruben Petrache was one of those relocated to Calauan from the Estero de Paco. He's in his fifties and has been seriously ill. His home now is a spacious terraced hut. It has a tin roof, with tinfoil insulation to keep the heat down, a pretty garden, and a 'mezzanine' arrangement to create two bedrooms, such as you would see in a loft. Ruben's English is not so good, so Monchet translates:

> What he's saying is that although the community [in Estero de Paco] is disrupted, he thinks it's better here. At least for him. Once you get here, after a while, you realize you've become accustomed to conditions that are insanitary; you learn to move on, live in a new way.

Ruben points to the solar panel that provides his electricity; to the barrel for collecting rainwater by the porch that supplements the water they pump from wells. Are there any downsides?

'It would be better if there was a factory here, because we need more jobs,' Monchet summarizes. Later, with a professional translator, I replay the tape and work out what Ruben—handpicked by the camp's authorities—actually said:

> What the people need here is a job. We need a company nearby so that we don't have to go to Manila. Also we need electricity. Many residents here know how to fix electric fans, radios. But the problem is that even if they have the skills, they can't do it because there is no electricity here, so they are forced to go to Manila to find work and earn money to buy food. We are hard workers: and if we don't do anything, we might die of hunger here. That's why many go back to Manila: to look for work and earn money.

In Calauan's covered market the stalls are plentifully stocked with meat, rice and vegetables, but there are more stallholders than shoppers. Gloria Cruz, thirty-eight years old, is performing on the karaoke machine to three toddlers, two other mums, the Armalite-toting soldiers and me. After a couple of verses she hits the pause button and says:

'My husband commutes to Manila to work. He comes back at weekends. It's the same for everybody. There's nothing here.'

The tolerated slum

Makati, Manila. I have an appointment to interview Jejomar Binay, the country's vice president, who is responsible for slum clearance. But when I arrive in the vestibule of his office, he turns out to have a throat infection, which prevents his attendance.

Felino Palafox is more accessible. Palafox is an architect who specializes in vast, space-age projects in the Middle East and Asia: mosques, Buddhist temples, futuristic towers on the Persian Gulf, always for people with money to burn. But now he's come up with a private

scheme to save the Estero de San Miguel: to rebuild it, *in situ*, with new materials.

The plan is to clear it bit by bit and put in modular housing. Each plot will measure 10 m^2, the ground floor reserved for retail, the floors above extending out over the walkway, just as slum dwellers build their homes—'stealing the air from the planning authorities,' Palafox calls it. 'The slum-dwellers are experts at live-work space design, they spontaneously do mixed use. We just have to learn from them.'

From the roof of the office block in Makati, Manila's central business district, where his practice is headquartered, Palafox gives me a primer in what's gone wrong. He indicates the nearby skyscrapers: 'monuments to graft'. He points out the gated compounds where the rich live, downtown. To the government, which complains that his design is too expensive, he says:

'Okay, if the total cost of rehousing slum dwellers in situ is 30 per cent of GDP, well, I calculate we lose about 30 per cent of the country's wealth through corruption: if we didn't have corruption, we wouldn't need to tolerate slums.'

He sees the Estero de San Miguel as a test case. If he can make his plans work there, the approach could be applied to every one of the city's riverine slums. So the stakes are huge.

Father Norberto Carcellar, who has worked his whole life with Manila's poor, thinks the elites are engaged in a monumental exercise of self-deception over slum clearance:

> We have to recognize the value slum dwellers deliver to the city. These are the ones who drive your car, clean your house, run your store. If these people are cleared from the city, the city will die. The slum dwellers add social, political and economic value to the city.

That sentiment would have seemed alien to our grandparents' generation. I can still hear mine, brought up Edwardian poverty in a coal and cotton town in northern England, spitting out the word 'slum' with

disgust. For them, slums meant dog-eat-dog: the dirty world where solidarity could not flourish, where people lived like animals and brutalized their kids.

But thirty years of globalization have produced something in the slums of the global south that defies that stereotype. And with Mena Cinco at my side I'm about to witness it.

Facebook in the passageways

Estero de San Miguel, dusk. As it is Saturday night, there is a full complement of beefy guys with sticks, rice-flails and flashlights: the volunteer police force of the Estero de San Miguel. With Mena—her t-shirt I now realize identifies her as the 'captain' of the slum—I re-enter the Estero down an alleyway opposite a McDonald's. From this entry point you would hardly know the slum was there. As the alley narrows and jinks around, suddenly I am in a novel by Charles Dickens.

On a narrow bridge, a man squats over a barbecue. Because of the smoke I don't see it is a bridge until I'm on it, or that below is a canal, about two metres wide. The dwellings are built so close that the mothers peering out of upstairs bedrooms, made of wooden boxes, could shake their neighbours' hands. If you decided to remake *Oliver Twist* as an expressionist movie, and this was the set design, you would sack the designer for making it too grotesque.

We head down into the tunnel, stooping now: it's less than five feet high here. After passing a few guys playing poker, and a stray chicken, I come to a store run by Agnes Cabagauan. It sells the same things as every slum store in the world: sachets of Silvikrin and Head & Shoulders, the Filipino version of Marlboros, lighters; tiny plastic bags of oil, fish and salt—enough for one meal only.

'My parents helped me set up the store to pay for my education,' Agnes tells me. What is she studying? 'Business Admin. I have a degree. Actually I also have a day job in a large corporation, coding in a sales department.'

But you live here? 'Yes. I was born here.' She is twenty-two years old.

Then we run into Mena's son: he's an engineering student. And as we cross over another bridge, the unmistakable whizz and pop of something digital comes blasting across the stagnant water: it's an Internet café.

Nine computers are crammed into a harshly lit plywood room. A dog yaps around, some kids are on Facebook, others are playing online poker. One young woman is doing her CV; another is engrossed in a multiplayer dancing game called 'Audition'. She too is at college, she tells me, flipping nonchalantly between her BlackBerry and the game. 'Business Admin?' Yup.

In the space of a hundred yards I've met three graduates, a DIY police force and the social media revolution. And as I become used to the smoke, the wailing and chatter of children, the chickens, the confined space, I've learned what one billion people around the world have had to learn: it is not so bad.

'Other places have prostitution: we don't,' says Mena. 'We get drunks and a bit of drug-taking, but it's under control. We look out for each other; we can see everything that happens; it's one big family. The main job for the volunteer police is to look out for arsonists.'

Settlements under threat of clearance have a habit of getting burned down, on the orders—the slum dwellers believe—of the authorities or the landlords.

In the five-foot high niche that is her living room and kitchen, Mena discourses on the finer details of social policy until at last I ask the question I should have asked when I first met her: how did she become so politically literate? 'I majored in political science at the University of Manila.'

What slum dwellers have produced—not just here but in Cairo, Nairobi, Rio and La Paz—is something the slum-clearance Tsars of yesteryear would not recognize: the orderly, solidaristic slum. And the debate, at the global level, is no longer about how fast to tear these places down, but how to meet the rapidly developing aspirations of highly educated people living in shacks.

To those who dream that as capitalism develops it will eradicate slums, Cameron Sinclair says dream on:

> You can't fight something that has a stronger model than yourself. It's never going to happen again. The fact of it is that if you tried to do it in some of these informal settlements they could take out the city. They could march on the central business district and it's game over.

Nevertheless it seems, amid the gloom and trash of the San Miguel slum, that to leave these places as they are is a gigantic cop-out. What the global authorities are really saying is not that they're impossible to clear but that they've become essential to a certain form of capitalism.

The cheap labour of the slum dweller undercuts the organized labour of the core workforce and—given two or three decades—shrinks it to a barely organizable minority. In the process the slum dwellers become the core workforce. Meanwhile, the functions of the state change: in the Keynesian era the state was supposed to care for all, but now, across much of the developing world, it leaves large parts of the urban community to their own devices.

Consequently, the city evolves into a nightmare organism of economic apartheid zones that can coexist quite easily, being economically co-dependent, but which you cannot move between. All you can do is educate yourself and wait for one life-changing bit of good luck. But the global system you are part of is out of your control.

In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell describes a coal miner as 'a sort of grimy caryatid upon whose shoulders nearly everything that is not grimy is supported'. Neoliberal capitalism has turned the slum dwellers into something similar. It is on their shoulders that the rich-world economy of 'mass luxury' consumption is balanced; it is from the bottle shredders of Cairo that the Chinese sportswear sweatshops get their recycled raw materials; in Nairobi, it's the slum dwellers who troop in at 5 a.m. to pack green beans in factories right next to the airport, so that you'll be able to serve them up for dinner the next day.

And Mena Cinco is not kidding when she insists there is solidarity in the slum. Unlike the 'dangerous classes' romanticized by the anarchists of the nineteenth century, slum dwellers are part of the modern workforce—albeit semi-submerged, hidden, operating off the books. They are a kind of shadow banking system for the mainstream working class, which nobody cares about until it blows up.

The crystal spirit

It was Friedrich Hayek who said social justice was unachievable and that the inequality and misery produced by capitalism were both moral and logical. What humanity should do, he said, is to 'suppress the feeling that certain differences of reward are unjust. And we have to recognize that only a system where we tolerate grossly unjust differences of reward is capable of keeping the present population of the world in existence.'[3]

What transpired in 2011 was, in this sense, a revolt against Hayek and the principles of selfishness and greed he espoused.

The present system cannot guarantee the existence of 7 billion people on this planet. It cannot even recognize their basic humanity. It can offer the poorest a brutal route out of poverty, but it is paid for by impoverishing the workforce of the west. And it is always conditional, always contingent on growth, which has faltered after 2008 and may not return for years.

Of all the people I met while writing this book, it was Len-len, the woman in the rural shanty town, whose situation seemed most hopeless. The disjunction between her temperament and her circumstance was so extreme that for me she personifies the overwhelming question facing the human race.

It's the same question Orwell asked in 1943, pondering his time in Spain during the Civil War. In the barracks of an anti-fascist militia in Barcelona, he had met a confused Italian volunteer, fascinated by the ability of his superior officers to read a map, and doggedly devoted to

Notes

Introduction

1. *Occupy Everywhere: Reflections on Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere*, London 2012 (forthcoming).
2. Robert Cohen, *Freedom's Orator: Mario Savio and the Radical Legacy of the 1960s*, New York 2009, p. 100.

Chapter 1

1. 'Meet Asmaa Mahfouz and the vlog that helped spark the revolution', youtube.com/watch?v=SgjIgMdsEuk (last accessed 18 October 2011).
2. Nadia Idle and Alex Nunns, *Tweets from Tahrir*, New York 2011.
3. 'Amazing courage of Egyptian Protesters! Must see!', youtube.com/watch?v=6VXP0FnTwZE&feature=related (last accessed 18 October 2011).
4. S. Radwan, 'Economic and social impact of the financial and economic Crisis on Egypt', International Labour Organization paper, April 2009.
5. Ibid.
6. Kara N. Tina, 'We're Not Leaving Until Mubarak Leaves', occupiedlondon.org/cairo/?p=300, 5 February 2011.
7. The Masry Shebin El-Kom workers would force the renationalization of their factory through legal action on 21 September 2011.

Chapter 2

1. 'The World in 2011', *Economist*, December 2010.
2. Stephen M. Walt, 'Why the Tunisian revolution won't spread', ForeignPolicy.com, 16 January 2011.
3. Reuters, 25 January 2011, 18:25 GMT.
4. Jonathan Lis, 'New IDF intelligence chief failed to predict Egypt uprising', *Haaretz*, 30 January 2011.
5. Edward Said, 'Islam through Western eyes', *Nation*, 26 April 1980.
6. Tarek Masoud, 'The road to (and from) Liberation Square', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 22, no. 3, July 2011.
7. Fredric Jameson, 'Future City', *New Left Review* 21, May–June 2003.
8. Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998*, London 1998, p. 59.
9. N. Chomsky and E. Herman, 'Preface to the 2002 Edition', *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, London 2002, p. xii.
10. Quoted in Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Ropley 2009.
11. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, pp. 3–16.
12. Ron Suskind, 'Faith, certainty and the presidency of George W. Bush', *New York Times Magazine*, 17 October 2004.
13. Anthony Giddens, 'My chat with the colonel', *Guardian*, 9 March 2007.
14. Paul Mason, *Meltdown: The End of the Age of Greed*, London 2010, p. 233.
15. Quoted in Y. Kallianos, 'December as an event in Greek radical politics', in Antonis Vradis and Dimitris Dalakoglou, *Revolt and Crisis in Greece: Between a Present Yet to Pass and a Future Still to Come*, London 2011.
16. Alan Woods, 'The crisis of capitalism and the tasks of Marxists, Part III', 29 September 2009, ireland.marxist.com.
17. youtube.com/watch?v=gC2YCgDaL10&feature
18. 'Iran's Twitter Revolution', *Washington Times* editorial, 16 June 2009.
19. youtube.com/watch?v=xlu-qx8ohL8&feature
20. Krista Mahr, 'Neda Agha-Soltan', *Time*, 8 December 2009.
21. The poems and other rooftop videos were collected at mightierthan.com/2009/07/rooftop.
22. 'UCSC Occupation—Friday Night', indybay.org/newsitems/2009/09/25/18623281.php#18623394 (last accessed 18 October 2011).

7. Ta Paidia Tis Galarias (TPTG), 'The rebellious passage of a proletarian minority through a brief period of time', in Vradis and Dalakoglou, *Revolt and Crisis in Greece*, p. 116.
8. Hippolyte Taine, *The French Revolution* (1896), vol. 2, trans. J. Durand, Indianapolis 2002, p. 419.
9. Robert Faris et al., 'Online Security in the Middle East and North Africa: A Survey of Perceptions, Knowledge, and Practice', cyber.law.harvard.edu, Harvard, August 2011.
10. Walter Powell, 'Neither Market nor Hierarchy: Network Forms of Organization', *Research on Organizational Behavior*, vol. 12, 1990, pp. 295–336.
11. an.kaist.ac.kr
12. Saeid Golkar, 'Liberation or Suppression Technologies? The Internet, the Green Movement and the Regime in Iran', *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2011, pp. 50–70.
13. Ibid.
14. André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class*, London 1982, p. 64.
15. Sennett, *Culture of the New Capitalism*, p. 2.
16. Malcolm Gladwell, 'Small change: why the revolution will not be tweeted', *New Yorker*, 4 October 2010.
17. Ibid.
18. Sean Naylor, 'War games rigged?' *Army Times*, 16 August 2002.
19. Essam Fadl, 'Asharq al-Awsat talks to Egypt's April 6 Youth Movement founder', asharq-e.com/news, 10 February 2011.
20. libcom.org/library (undated). First transcribed in Donald Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, New York 1980.

Chapter 5

1. Ian Traynor, 'Greek debt crisis: eurozone ministers delay decision on €12bn lifeline', *Guardian*, 20 June 2011.
2. Takis Michas, 'Athens descends into anarchy', *Wall Street Journal*, 13 April 2011.
3. Alexander Trocchi, 'For the insurrection to succeed we must first destroy ourselves', quoted in Vradis and Dalakoglou, *Revolt and Crisis in Greece*, p. 303.

Chapter 8

1. All references from John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, Harmondsworth 2000.
2. Binyamin Appelbaum, 'From spending to cuts', *New York Times*, 1 August 2011.

Chapter 9

1. Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, trans. Robert Baldick, London 2004, p. 38.
2. Thibault, 'The Barricade in rue Saint-Maur-Popincourt after the attack by General Lamoricière's troops, Monday 26 June 1848', Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
3. Leo A. Loubere, 'The Emergence of the Extreme Left in Lower Languedoc, 1848–51: Social and Economic Factors in Politics', *American Historical Review*, vol. 73, no. 4 (April 1968), p. 1019–51.
4. Quoted in James Boyle, 'The Minimum Wage and Syndicalism: An Independent Survey', Cincinnati 1913.
5. Dimi Reider, 'J14 may challenge something even deeper than the occupation', 972mag.com, 7 August 2011.
6. Naftali Kaminski, 'How Israel's democracy might be revitalized from the Arab Spring', *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 15 August 2011.
7. Philip Rucker, 'Former militiaman unapologetic for calls to vandalize offices over health care', *Washington Post*, 25 March 2010.
8. Glenn Beck, Fox News, 23 March 2010.
9. James McPherson, 'Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism: A New Look at an Old Question', *Civil War History* 29 (September 1983).
10. Erica Sagrans (ed.), *We Are Wisconsin*, Minneapolis 2011, p. 35.
11. Ben Brandzel, 'The unbreakable culture of the occupied Capitol', *Huffington Post*, 1 March 2011.
12. Ibid.
13. Glennbeck.com, 'Anarchists, socialists and communists party in Wisconsin', 21 February 2011, glennbeck.com/2011/02/21/anarchists-socialists-and-communists-party-in-wisconsin/.
14. All quotes from *The Coming Insurrection*, web version, tarnac9.wordpress.com.

15. Stephen King and Karen Ward, 'The New Economic Permafrost: How Ben Bernanke's Analysis of Japan Has Returned to Haunt the West', HSBC research paper, 23 August 2011.
16. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Souvenirs*, Paris 1893, pp. 15–18. Translated in Mike Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution*, London 2008.

Chapter 10

1. Ke Tang and Wei Xiong, 'Index Investment and the Financialization of Commodities', Princeton, September 2009.
2. UN-Habitat, *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements*, 2003.
3. 'F A Hayek—Social Justice', youtube.com/watch?v=K1MC4ag9wOc (last accessed 20 October 2011).
4. George Orwell, *Looking Back on the Spanish War*, London 1943.

Bahan dengan hak cipta

Index

Abdelrahman, Sarah, @sarrahsworld 11–12, 14, 135
Abdul, Rifat 22
academic research 146
activism: dynamic of 138; social networks impact on 138–41
affinity groups 136
age war 39
Agha-Soltan, Neda 35–36, 37
Ahmadinejad, Mahmoud 33–34
Al-Ahly, ultras 16–17
Alba, Celia 198
Ali, Ben 11
Alien (film) 110
Al-Jazeera 14
American Civil War 172, 182
analogies 65
anomic breakdown 103–4
anti-capitalist demonstrations 33, 109
anti-globalization movement 45, 48, 189
anti-road movement 56
Antista, Larry 160–61, 170
Antista, Michelle 160–61
anti-war demonstrations 33
April 6th Youth Movement 10, 83, 147–48
Aquino, Benigno 198
Arabists, failure of 25–27
Arabs: image of 25; youth radicalization 33
Arab Spring, economics of 119–22
Architecture for Humanity 199
Arizona 164–67, 183
Arpaio, Sheriff Joe 165, 167
@AsmaaMahfouz 11, 177
asset price inflation 106–8
Associated Press 39
Athens 94; austerity protest, 15 June 2011 90; December 2008 uprising 32–33, 73, 76; general strike 99; Hotel Grande Bretagne 87, 101; the *indignados* 88, 100–1, 104; police tactics 95; protesters control 94–95; Syntagma Square 96; Syntagma Square protest, 14 June 2011 87–90; Syntagma Square protest, 29 June 2011 99–102; tax collectors protest 96–97; tear gas attacks 93–94, 100–1

Материал, защитен с авторско право

Austria 172
automation, Marx on 143–44
autonomism 144
autonomy, personal 131, 139
Avatar (film) 29

Bahrain 25, 139
Baldera, Oliver 197
Barings Asset Management 121–22
Beck, Glenn 116, 117, 157, 158, 163, 181, 184, 186–87, 190, 192
Ben Ali, Zine El Abidine 25–26
@benvickers_ (art activist) 1
Berardi, Franco 144
Berlin Wall, fall of 65
Berlusconi, Silvio 17
Bernanke, Ben 118, 120–21, 123
Bernstein, Jared 117
Besson, Eric 17
Binay, Jejomar 204
Black Bloc, the 1, 58–59, 60–61, 94, 151
Black Jacobins, The (James) 149
Blair, Tony 17, 114, 178
Blanc, Louis 187
bloggers: American radical 184; Middle East arrests 76
Bouazizi, Mohamed 32, 71
bourgeois ideology 29
Brand, Stewart 140–41
Brandzel, Ben 184, 186
Brazil 120, 122
Brown, Gordon 109
Brussels 90
Busch, Ernst 152

Cabagauan, Agnes 206–7
Cairo: balance sheet 5; *baltagiya* 6–7, 17; Coptic Christians 6; Copt/Muslim relations 7; Day of Rage, 28 May 15–17; freedom 5; garbage processing 6, 7–8; military coup 17; Moqattam slum 6–10; Naheya 12, 13; policing 7; poverty 9; Qasr al-Nil bridge 15–16; recycling 8–9; security 7; swine flu epidemic 9; Tahrir Square 6, 10–14, 69, 89, 139, 191, 211; waste collection privatization 8–9; *zabbaleen* 6–10
California 168–70
Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall 51–52
capitalism 27, 30, 80, 188; Greek model 102; Marx on 142–43, 145
capitalist realism 28–32, 39
Carcellar, Father Norberto 205
Castells, Manuel 131, 138–39, 148–49
Cavafy, C. P. 127
cellphones 75–76, 133–34
Central Security (Egypt) 9, 11, 17
Challenge of Slums, The (UN) 198–99
Charles, Prince 51–52
Chávez, Hugo 33
China 38, 78, 108, 112, 121, 125; consumption 109; foreign currency reserves 107; monetary policy 123
Chomsky, N. 28–29
Chris (student demonstrator) 48
Cinco, Mena 196–98, 206, 206–9
Citigroup 67
civil disobedience 56
class struggles 131

Материал, защитен с авторско право

Clegg, Nick 44
Climate Camp movement 1, 55
Clinton, Hillary 26
collaborative production 139–41
Coming Insurrection, The 189–91
commodity price inflation 120–22, 195
communes 189, 190
Communiqué from an Absent Future 38–39
Communist Manifesto, The (Marx and Engels) 174, 188–89
communists 80
computer gamers 136
Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition 44
consumption, and self-esteem 80–81
control 148
co-operatives 84
corruption, threat of 177–78, 205
creative destruction 106
credit crisis 106, 109
credit default swaps 99, 107
Critical Legal Thinking website 54
cross-border links 69–70
Cruz, Gloria 204
cultural stereotypes 27
culture: mass 29–30; popular 65, 176; transnational 69; working-class 72; youth 70
culture wars 178–84
currency manipulation 121–22
currency war 122–24
cyber-repression 78
Czechoslovakia 173

Darkness at Noon (Koestler) 128–29
Davies, Nick 148
Davos 17, 111
Dawkins, Richard 75, 150
Day X, 24 November 2010, London 41–42, 46–48
Debord, Guy 42, 46–47, 51
debt, toxic 110–11
default theory 111
deflationary slump 123
Deleuze, Gilles 46, 85
Delius, Frederick 127, 132, 152, 176
democratic counter-revolution 177, 188
demographics of revolt 66, 66–73; Athens, December 2008 uprising 73; students 66–71; the urban poor 70–72
Deptford 57
Detrick, Terry 154, 155–56, 156
devaluation 91, 122–23
@digitalmaverick 1–2
discontent, three tribes 68–69
disillusionment 68–69
disinformation, counteracting 146
disposable income 67
Dodd–Frank Act (USA) 167
@dougald 1
Dubstep Rebellion 48–52; blog 52; the Book Bloc 50–51; casualties 51; Fleet Street photographers 51; graffiti 51; marchers 49; police–student confrontation 50–51
durable authoritarianism 27, 30, 191
Durkheim, Emile 103–4
Dworkin, Ronald 46

eBay 74
e-commerce 81

Материал, защитен с авторско право

economic crisis 3; revolutions, 1848 173
economic stagnation 191–92
economic theory 111
Economist, the 25
egoism 132
Egypt: bread prices 11; democratic counter-revolution 177; economic growth 119; economic indicators 119–20; elections, November 2011 177; Gini Index 119; inflation 120–21; opposition movement 10; organized workforce 72; police corruption 11; privatizations 17–18; unemployment 119–120; urban poor 71; working class 19–20
Egyptian revolution, the: the Army and 178; balance sheet 5; bread prices 11; casualties 17; chants 191, 211; counter-revolution 18; Day of Rage, 28 May 15–17; and Facebook 6, 10, 11, 12, 14; freedom 5; immolations 11, 71; Internet switched off 14; medical professions 20–22; military coup 17–19; numbers involved 13; outbreak, 25 January 10–14, 83; police violence 15; questions facing 23–24; Twitter blocked 14; Twitter feeds 13, 14; ultras 16–17; working class 20; on YouTube 11, 14, 15–16; *zabbaleen* riots 6–10
email 10
emancipated life 143–44
Engels, Friedrich 174, 188–89, 190
@eponymousthing 184
equity withdrawal 114
Estero de San Miguel, Manila 196–99, 205–6, 206–9
Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, The (film) 29
Eurobonds 113
Eurocrisis, the 111–13
European Central Bank 92, 98, 104, 112
European Financial Stability Facility 92, 104
European Financial Stabilization Facility 113
European monetary union 112, 113
European Union: response to Greek debt crisis 91–92, 96, 98–99, 104; sovereign debt crisis 104
Europe, revolutions, 1848 172
Eurozone 104; debt crisis 91–92, 99, 111–13
Execution of Maximilian (Manet) 53
exploitation 85

Facebook 74; Arab world growth of 135; and the Egyptian revolution 6, 10, 11, 12, 14; establishing connections with 75; 'We are all Khaled Said' page 11; and the Iranian revolution 34; and London trade-union demonstration, March 2011 57–58; Middle East usage 135; reciprocity 77; user numbers 135
Farewell to the Working Class (Gorz) 79–80

Материал, защитен с авторско право

fatalism 30, 31
feedback loops 187
Feldstein–Horioka paradox 107
Feldstein, Martin 107
Fennimore and Gerda (Delius) 127, 132
First World War 128
Fisher, Mark 30
Flaubert, Gustave 171, 192
Flickr 10, 75
Food Price Index 121
Fordist era 28
Foucault, Michel 46, 84–85
fragmentation 80–81, 82
fragmented power 17
'Fragment on Machines' (Marx) 143–44
France 173; Languedoc, 1848 174, 187; socialism 188; *see also* Paris
freedom 27, 124; of expression 127; individual 127–30; Marx on 141–42; suppression of 131–33
Freeman, Richard 108
free-market economics 92, 188
Friedman, Milton 111
Fukuyama, Francis 30

G20 Summit, 2009 48, 122
Gaddafi, Muammar 25, 31
Gapan City, Philippines 193–96
Gates, Bill 23, 110
gay rights 132
Gaza 37; Israeli invasion of 33
Gaza City 31
Gaza Flotilla, May 2010 55
general intellect, the 144, 145–47
General Motors 39
Germany 113, 191; revolution of 1848 172; wages 108, 112
@Ghonim 13
Giddens, Anthony 31
Gide, André 127
Giffords, Gabrielle 182
Gini Index 119
Gladwell, Malcolm 81–82, 83
global capital flows 107–8
global financial crisis 31, 39, 66–67, 85, 110–11, 115, 191
globalization 69, 72, 105, 108, 109, 122, 124, 149, 191
Golkar, Saeid 78
Googlebombs 78
Gorz, André 79–80, 143
graduate with no future, the 66–73, 96–97; disposable income 67; as international sub-class 69; life-arc 67; numbers 70; revolutionary role 72–73; and the urban poor 70–71
Grapes of Wrath, The (Steinbeck) 153, 155, 159, 163, 164
Great Britain: anti-road movement 56; benefit system 113–14; changing forms of protest 54–57; collapse of Labour 113–15; devaluation 123; Education Maintenance Allowance 47; end of winter of discontent 61–62; equity withdrawal 114; European elections, 2009 115; general election, 2010 43; the graduate with no future 96–97; Millbank riot 42–44; non-UK born

Материал, защитен с авторско право

workers 115; police failures 61; public spending cuts 54–55; radical tactics 54–57; spontaneous horizontalists 44–46; Strategic Security and Defence Review 124; student population 70; UK Uncut actions 54–55; university fees 44, 47, 50, 54; youth 41–42, 44, 53–54; youth unemployment 66
Great Depression, lessons of 123–25
Great Doubling 108
Great Unrest, 1914 175–76
Greece 37, 188; anomic breakdown 103–4; austerity programme 92–93, 102; bailouts 92, 96, 98, 113; cabinet reshuffle 96, 97–98; debt crisis 90, 91–92, 98–99, 112; GDP 91; general election, 2009 91; general strike 99; the left 100; media ownership 87; Medium Term Fiscal Strategy 91; model of capitalism 102; MP resignations 89; Papandreou government falls 96; political legitimacy lost 104; the salariat 101; tax evasion 97; tax revenues 92; tax system 91; *see also* Athens
Greek Communist Party (KKE) 88, 90
Grigoropoulos, Alexandros 32
grime (music) 52
Grossman, Vasily 129
@GSquare86 69
Guindi, Ezzat 9

hackers 35
el-Hamalawy, Hossam, @3arabawy 10, 22, 71
Hardy, Simon 69
Hayek, Friedrich 111, 209
Henderson, Maurice 161–62
Hennawy, Abd El Rahman, @Hennawy89 12–13
Here Comes Everybody (Shirky) 138
Herman, Edward S. 28–29
hidemyass.com 14
hierarchy: erosion of 80–81; informal 83; predictability of 77
higher education market 67
Hill, Joe 176
historical materialism 131
Hogge, Becky 140
homelessness 159–63
Hoon, Geoff 114
Horioka, Charles 107
horizontalism 45, 55, 56, 62, 100
Huffington Post blog 184
human rights 143
Hungary 172

Ian's Pizza, Madison, Wisconsin 184
Ibrahim, Gigi, @GSquare86 69
ideology 29, 149
immolations 11, 32, 71
impotence, zeitgeist of 29–30
impoverishment 209
Inception (film) 29
India 120–21
Indiana 116–17, 125
indignados, the 88, 100–1, 104
individual: freedom of 127–30; power of the 65, 79; rise of the 127–30
Indorama group 22

Copyrighted material

industrialization 192
Indymedia 74
inequality 209
inflation 109, 120–21
info-capitalism 148, 211
info-hierarchies 147–52
info-revolution, the 146, 149–50
informal hierarchies 83
information capitalism 145
information management 147
information networks 77
information tools 75
Inkster, Nigel 65
institutional loyalty 68
interest rates 67
International Labour Organization 19–20, 120
International Monetary Fund 92
Internet consciousness 136–38
Internet, the: access in slums 207; Arab world growth 135; and behaviour changes 131; and the Iranian revolution 35; out of reach for some 152; power of 29; shutdowns 14, 78; and the spread of ideas 150–51
investment, and savings 107
Invisible Committee, the 189–91
Iran 25; causes of failure of revolution 36–37; election, 2009 33–34; and the Internet 35; and the Middle East balance of power 178; rooftop poems 36; Twitter Revolution 33–37, 78, 178; on YouTube 34, 35
Iraq 25, 55
Ireland 92, 111, 112, 188
Islam 30, 37
Israel 26, 33, 179–80
Italy 104

Jakarta 33
James, C. L. R. 149
Jameson, Fredric 25–27, 28
Japan 123
Jasiewicz, Ewa 55–57
John (Tent City prison guard) 165
Jordan 121
Joy Junction homeless camp, Albuquerque 159–63
July 14, protest movement, Israel 179–80

Kahn-Harris, Keith 66
Kenya 133–34
kettling 47–48, 54, 60, 61
Keynesianism 118
Keynes, John Maynard 127
Khadim, Mohammed 199
Kindleberger, Charles 125
King, Stephen 191–92
KKE (Greek Communist Party) 88, 90
Klein, Naomi 1
Klimt, Gustav 127, 128, 132
knowledge 3, 145–47
knowledge work 147
Koestler, Arthur 128
Krugman, Paul 118

labour force, growth 108
Labourism 187
Labour Party (British) 46, 188
Lady Chatterley's Lover (Lawrence) 128
Lange, Dorothea 154

Copyrighted material

Lapavistas, Costas 112
Lassalle, Ferdinand 84
Lawrence, D. H. 127, 128
leadership 176
learning, changing nature of 146–47
Lebanon 121
left, the: absence of 187–88; failure of 28–30; and the info-revolution 149–50
Lehman Brothers 31, 99, 105, 110, 123
Leninism 187
Lenin, V. I. 46
Len-len 193–96, 209
Liberal Democrats 43–44, 46
liberalizers 31
Libya 25, 31, 119; National Transitional Council 178
Life and Fate (Grossman) 129
Lilico, Andrew 121
link-shorteners 75
Linux 139–40
@littlemisswilde 41–42, 44, 45, 135–36, 138
living conditions, urban slums 196–99
London: anti-capitalist demonstrations 33; arrests 61–62; Day X, 24 November 2010 41–42, 46–48; the Dubstep Rebellion 48–52; Fortnum & Mason 60–61; HM Revenue and Customs building 51; Hyde Park 60; Millbank riot 42–44; Millbank Tower 43; Museum Tavern 1; National Gallery teach-in 53, 53–54; Oxford Circus 60; Palladium Theatre 51; Parliament Square 49, 51, 52–53; Piccadilly Circus 58; police–student confrontation 50–51; Regent Street 58; Ritz Hotel 60; Tate Modern 53; trade-union demonstration, March 2011 57–61; Trafalgar Square 47; Victoria Street 50; Victorinox 59
London School of Oriental and African Studies, occupation of 44–46
López, Fernando 166–67, 170
Lopez, Gina 200–2
Lopez Inc. 200–2
Loubere, Leo 174
Loukanikos (riot dog) 94, 96
L'Ouverture, Toussaint 149
LulzSec 151

McIntyre, Jody 51
McPherson, James 182
Madison, Wisconsin revolt 184–87
Madrid 33
Mahalla uprising, 2008 10, 71
Maher, Ahmed 83
Mahfouz, Asmaa, @AsmaaMahfouz 11, 177
Mahmoud (Zamalek Sporting Club ultra) 16–17
Makati, Manila 204–6
malnutrition 9
Mandelson, Peter 17, 26, 114
Manila 33; Estero de Paco 200–2; Estero de San Miguel 196–99; Makati 204–6; waterways 200–2
manipulated consciousness 29–30

Copyrighted material

Manufacturing Consent (Chomsky and Herman) 28–29
Mao Tse Tung 46
Marxism 141–45
Marx, Karl 46, 141–45, 174, 187, 188–89, 190, 192
Masai with a mobile, the 133–34
Masoud, Tarek 27
Masry Shebin El-Kom textile factory 22–23
mass culture 29–30
Matrix, The (film) 29
Meadows, Alfie 51
media, the 28–29
@mehri912 34
Meltdown (Mason) 31–32
memes 75, 150–52, 152
Merkel, Angela 96, 98, 99, 112
Michas, Takis 103
Middle East: balance of power 178; Facebook usage 135; failure of specialist to understand 25–27
Milburn, Alan 114
Miliband, Ed 58, 60, 188
Millbank riot 42–44
Millennium Challenge 2002 82–83
Miller, Henry 128
misery 209
mobile telephony 75–76, 133–34
modernism 28
mortgage-backed securities 106–8
Moses, Jonathan 48
Mousavi, Mir-Hossein 33–34
movement without a name 66
Mubarak, Alaa 17–18
Mubarak, Gamal 8, 10, 17–18, 26
Mubarak, Hosni 9, 10, 14, 15, 18–19, 19–20, 26, 31
Murdoch, Rupert 31, 106, 148–49
Muslim Brotherhood 21, 177

NAFTA 166–67
Napoleon III 172, 191
Nasser, Gamal Abdel 19
National Gallery teach-in 53, 53–54
nationalism 124
Native Americans 162, 163
Negri, Toni 42
Netanyahu, Binyamin 180
network animals 147
networked individualism 130, 130–33, 141
networked protests 81–82, 85
networked revolution, the 79–85; erosion of power relations 80–81; informal hierarchies 83; networked protests 81–82; network relationships 81; swarm tactics 82–83
network effect, the 2, 74–75, 77; erosion of power relations 80–81; strength 83; usefulness 84
network relationships 81
Nevins, Allan 182
New Journalism 3
News Corporation 148–49
News of the World 49; phone hacking scandal 61, 148–49
New Unrest, social roots of 65–66, 85; demographics of revolt 66–73; information tools 75–76; the networked revolution 79–85; organizational format 77–78; technology and 74–79; the urban poor 70–72

Copyrighted material

New York Times 170
1984 (Orwell) 30, 129
Nomadic Hive Manifesto, The 53–54
@norashalaby 13
North Africa: demographics of revolt 66; students and the urban poor 71

Obama, Barack 72, 116–18, 120, 122, 162, 167, 170, 180, 183, 187
OccupiedLondon blog 88–89
Occupy Wall Street movement, the 139, 144, 187, 210
Office for National Statistics 115
Ogden-Nussbaum, Anna, @eponymousthing 184
Oklahoma 153, 153–56
Oldouz84 36, 37
Olives, Monchet 202–4
online popularity 75
On the Jewish Question (Marx) 143
Open Source software 139–40
Operation Cast Lead 33
organizational format, changing forms of 77–78
Organization of Labour, The (Blanc) 187
organized labour 71–72, 143
Ortiz, Roseangel 161
Orwell, George 30, 129, 208, 210
Owen, Robert 142

Palafox, Felino 204–5
Palamiotou, Anna 97
Palestine 25, 121, 179, 180
Palin, Sarah 181, 182
PAME (Greek trade union) 90
Papaconstantinou, George 91, 97
Papandreou, George 88, 96
Papayiannidis, Antonis 103
Paris 39; 1968 riots 46; revolution of 1848 171, 172
Paris Commune, the 1, 72–73, 84, 132
PASOK 89, 91, 98, 99
Paulson, Hank 110
Petrache, Ruben 203–4
Philippines: Calauan, Laguna Province 202–4; Estero de Paco, Manila 200–2; Estero de San Miguel, Manila 196–99, 205–6, 206–9; Gapan City 193–96; Makati, Manila 204–6; New People's Army 203
Philippines Housing Development Corporation 198
philosophy 29
phone hacking scandal 61, 148–49
Picasso, Pablo 127, 128, 132
Pimco 170
Poland 172
police car protester (USA) 4
Policy Exchange think tank 55
political mainstream, youth disengagement from 89–90
popular culture 65, 176
Porter, Brett 154, 155, 156
Port Huron Statement, the 129–30, 145
Portugal 92, 112, 188
postmodernism 28
poverty 121–22, 210, 211
Powell, Walter 77
power, refusal to engage with 3
power relations, erosion of 80–81
Procter & Gamble 23
propaganda of the deed 62

Copyrighted material

property 48
property bubble collapse 106–8
protectionism 124
protest, changing forms of 54–57
pro-Western dictators, support for 31
Prussia 191
Puente 165
Putnam, Robert 134

Quantitative Easing II 120–23

radicalization 33, 37, 47–48
radical journalists 149
Ramírez, Leticia 165
Real Estate Tax Authority Workers (Egypt) 19
Really Free School, the 1–2
@rebeldog_ath 96
reciprocity 77
Reed Elsevier 146
Reider, Dimi 179
Research and Destroy group 38–39
revolt, demographics of 66, 66–73
revolutionary wave 65
revolution, definition 79–80
revolutions: 1848 171–73, 173–75, 191, 192; 1917 173; 1968 173; 1989 173
Reynalds, Jeremy 159–60, 162–63
rice crops 195
Riches, Jessica, @littlemisswilde 41–42, 44, 45, 135–36, 138
Rimbaud, Arthur 132
River Warriors 201
Roads to Freedom (Sartre) 129
Road to Wigan Pier, The (Orwell) 208
Romer, Christina 117
Roosevelt, Franklin D. 169–70
Rove, Karl 30–31, 32
Rowan, Rory 54

Said, Edward 26–27
Said, Khaled 11, 148
@Sandmonkey 13
Sandra (Joy Junction resident) 160
Santa Cruz, University of California 37–39
Sarkozy, Nicolas 91–92, 98
@sarrahsworld 11–12, 14, 135
Sartre, Jean-Paul 129
Saudi Arabia 121
savings, and investment 107
Savio, Mario 4
SB1070 (USA) 164, 165–66, 166–67
self-esteem, and consumption 80–81
self-interest 111
self-reliance 68
self, the, social networks impact on 136–38
Sennett, Richard 68, 80–81, 131
Sentimental Education (Flaubert) 171
el-Shaar, Mahmoud 22
Shafiq, Mohammed 20–22
Shalit, Gilad 179
shared community 84
Sharp, Gene 83
Sharpton, Al 184
Shirky, Clay 138, 139, 140, 146
Sinclair, Cameron 199, 208
Sioras, Dr Ilias 90–91
Situationist movement 46–47
Situationist Taliban 1
slum-dwellers 68; numbers 198
social capital 134

Copyrighted material

social democracy 145
social housing 199
Socialist International 19–20
social justice 177, 191, 192, 209, 210
social media 7, 74–75, 77; collective mental arena 137; lack of control 37; power of 34–35; role of 56; and the spread of ideas 151
social micro-history 173
social networks 77, 82; impact of 147; impact on activism 138–41; and the self 136–38
social-republicanism 187
solidaristic slum, the 207
Solidarity 42
'Solidarity Forever' (song) 42
Soviet Union 28
Spain 66, 104, 105, 188
Spanish Civil War 209–10
species-being 143
@spitzenprodukte (art activist) 1
spontaneous horizontalists 44–46
spontaneous replication 55
Starbucks Kids 79
Steinbeck, John 153, 155, 159, 163, 164, 169
Stephenson, Paul 52
Stiglitz, Joseph 118
Strategy Guide (Sharp) 83
Strauss-Kahn, Dominique 188
strongman threat, the 177–78
student occupations 37–39, 44–46, 53, 53–54
students: economic attack on 38; expectations 67–68; population 70
Sudan 25
Suez Canal Port Authority 19
Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) (Egypt) 18, 20
surveillance 148
swarm tactics 82–83
swine flu epidemic 9
Switzerland 123
syndicalism 175–76
synthesis, lack of 57
Syria 25

tactics 54–57
Tahrir Square, Cairo 6, 69, 89, 139; chants 191, 211; Day of Rage, 28 May 15–17; demonstration, 25 January 10–14; numbers 13; Twitter feeds 13; volunteer medics 20–22
Taine, Hippolyte 73
Tantawi, General 19
Tarnac Nine, the 189
Tea Party, the 117–18, 124–25, 180–81
tear gas 93–94, 100–1
technology 65, 66, 74–79, 85, 133–36, 138–39; and the 1848 revolutions 173–74
Tehran, Twitter Revolution 34–37
teleology 131, 152
Tent City jail, Arizona 164–67
Territorial Support Group 50
Thatcher, Margaret 106
@3arabawy 10, 22, 71
Third Way, the 31
Time magazine 36
Tim (human rights activist) 1–2
Tim (Joy Junction resident) 160
Tocqueville, Alexis de 192

Copyrighted material

totalitarianism 147–48
toxic debt 110–11
trade wars 122, 124–25
transnational culture 69
Transparency International 119
Trichet, Jean-Claude 112
Truman Show, The (film) 29
trust 57
Tunisia: Army 178; economic growth 119; inflation 121; organized workforce 72; revolution 10, 11, 25–26; unemployment 119
Turkle, Sherry 136
Twitpic 75
Twitter and tweets 3, 74, 137–38; #wiunion 184, 185; @Ghonim 13; @mehri912 34; @norashalaby 13; @rebeldog_ath 96; @Sandmonkey 13; Egyptian revolution 13, 14; importance of 135–36; Iranian revolution and 33–37; Madison, Wisconsin revolt 184; news dissemination 75; real-time organization 75; reciprocity 77; user numbers 135; virtual meetings 45
Twitter Revolution, Iran 33–37, 78, 178

Ukraine 177–78
UK Uncut 54–57, 58, 61
ultra-social relations 138
unemployment: America 159–63; Egypt 119; Spain 105; Tunisia 119; youth 66, 105, 119–20
UN-Habitat 199
Unison 57
United Nations, *The Challenge of Slums* 198–99
United States of America: agriculture 154–56; Albuquerque 159, 159–63; Arizona 164–67, 183; armed struggle 181–83; Bakersfield, California 168–70; budget cuts 156, 161, 167, 170; California 168–70; campus revolts, 1964 4; Canadian River 159; cattle prices 156; collapse of bipartisan politics 116–19; culture wars 179, 180–84; current-account deficit 107; debt 118; deportations 166; devaluation 123; Dodd–Frank Act 167; the Dust Bowl 154–55; economic decline 183–84; economic growth 170; Federal budget 156, 161; fiscal management 183; fiscal stimulus 117–18; fruit pickers 169; hamburger trade 156; healthcare bill 180, 183; homeless children 160; homelessness 159–63; Indiana 116–17, 125; Interstate 40 157, 170; job market 161; Joy Junction, Albuquerque 159–63; Madison, Wisconsin revolt 184–87; minimum wage workers 158; the Mogollon Rim 163; motels 157–58, 162–63; the New Deal 169–70; Oklahoma 153, 153–56; Phoenix, Arizona 164–67; police car protester 4; political breakdown, 1850s 182–83; property bubble 106–8; Quantitative Easing II 120–23;

Copyrighted material

radical blogosphere 184; the religious right 118; repossessions 168; Route 66 157–59; San Joaquin valley 169; SB1070 164, 165–66, 166–67; State Department 178; states' rights 183; student occupation movement 37–39; the Tea Party 117–18, 124–25, 180–81, 186; Tent City jail, Arizona 164–67; Tucson, Arizona 182; undocumented migrants 164–67; unemployment 159–63; wages 108; war spending 162; welfare benefits 162, 170
Unite Union 55
university fees 44, 47, 50, 54
urban poor 70–72
urban slums 191; Calauan, Laguna Province 202–4; clearance policies 198–99; education levels 207; Estero de Paco, Manila 200–2; Estero de San Miguel, Manila 196–99, 205–6, 206–9; Gapan City, Philippines 193–96; improvement policies 199, 205–6; internet access 207; labour force 208; living conditions 196–99; Moqattam, Cairo 6–10; population numbers 198

Vail, Theodore 74
Vanderboegh, Mike 181
Van Riper, Lieutenant General Paul 82
Venizelos, Evangelos 97–98
Vietnam War 129
virtual meetings 45
virtual societies 134
Vodafone 54–55
Vradis, Antonis 87–89

wages 108, 112
Walker, Scott 184
Walorski, Jackie 116–17
Walt, Stephen M. 26
war, threat of 178
Warwick University, Economics Conference 67–68
Washington Times 35
Wasim (Masry Shebin El-Kom delegate) 23
water supplies 194
wave creation 78
wealth, monopolization of 108
We Are Social 148
Weeks, Lin, @weeks89 184
Wellman, Barry 130
Wertheim, Margaret 136
White House, the 92
'Why the Tunisian revolution won't spread' (Walt) 26
WikiLeaks 140
Wikipedia 46, 140
wikis 140–41
#wiunion 184, 185
Wobblies 176
Women's liberation 132
Woods, Alan 33
Woollard, Edward 43
working class 68, 71–72, 79–80, 145; culture 72; revolutions, 1848 172–73
World of Yesterday, The (Zweig) 128

Bahan dengan hak cipta

World Trade Organization 122

Yemen 25, 119, 121
youth 68; alienation 62; British 41–42, 44, 53–54; culture 70; disconnected 190; disengagement from political mainstream 89–90; radicalization 33, 37, 47–48; unemployment 66, 119–20

YouTube 75; Egyptian revolution on 11, 14, 15; Iranian revolution on 34, 35

Zamalek Sporting Club, ultras 16–17
Zapatistas 1
Zekry, Musa 5–6, 7, 23–24
Zola, Emil 191
Zweig, Stefan 128, 132–33, 152, 176