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Contentious Politics: Financial Crisis, Political-Economic Conflict, and Collective Struggles—A Commentary

Sue Mew*

EACH OF THE ARTICLES IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF *SOCIAL JUSTICE* OFFERS A rich, exciting, and timely focus on various collective struggles and conflicts within the global crisis. At the heart of the current global crisis is a *crisis of capitalism* and in particular neoliberal financial and economic policy. Within the crisis of capitalism, we are also witnessing a *political crisis*—of representation, of legitimation, of defunct or dysfunctional political processes and regimes—and a rejection of the “business as usual” status quo. This is as evident in Greece, Spain, Italy, and the UK as it is in Egypt—all countries featured in the articles here.

Above all, each article reveals that the global crisis in all its localized manifestations embraces a deepening *social crisis* that is wrought by loss of homes, falling incomes, unemployment, cuts to welfare provision, rising taxation, and increased food and energy costs. For many, these are the very basic needs for social reproduction—a point taken up by Brown et al. (2013) in this issue. They are the human costs of the economic and financial crisis, the living “collateral damage” of the global crisis.¹

A brief commentary precludes a detailed discussion of all the excellent insights provided in the different articles. Instead, I will select some common thematic issues, such as dimensions of global crisis and related conflicts, the attack on social welfare and democracy, and the contentious forms of politics associated with a “politics from below” and the various collective struggles that have occurred in response to the crisis since 2008. Although each author uniquely addresses the issues with a particular emphasis, each theme recurs in different ways throughout the articles.

As I write, the daily news is a reminder that events in many of the countries under discussion remain mercurial and there will likely be further

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widespread anger, protest, and instability in the future. Egypt and Greece are examples, as are Tunisia and Syria. The mercurial nature of current events is highlighted in some of the following examples.

A court in Egypt has ordered a retrial for ex-president Hosni Mubarak after accepting an appeal against his life sentence over failing to prevent the death of many hundreds of protestors during the 2011 uprising (*BBC Online* 2013).² And in the UK, the Conservative coalition government recently announced a 1 percent cap on welfare benefits over the next three years.³ This represents a real-terms cut in benefits for the unemployed and many working families over this period, since the 1 percent benefits cap is lower than the current rate of inflation (see Peachey 2013). In November 2012 the Greek Parliament agreed to a further round of austerity cuts, linked to the European “troika”⁴ and further bailout conditions. Only a day after the budget was approved, the troika demanded an additional 17.4 billion euros (\$22.6 billion) in cuts (Dreier 2012). In Italy, the technocratic president, Mario Monti, has stepped down and Silvio Berlusconi is shaping up for a return to office in the forthcoming election amid growing concerns that economic liberalization and austerity cuts in Italy have not achieved any real depth in relation to reducing the debt—e.g., relative to GNP, levels of unemployment, or industrial production (Pratley 2012). The situation is similar in Spain, where the recession is reportedly much deeper, the unemployment rate is more severe, and banks are more dysfunctional (*ibid.*).

All such developments suggest that during 2013 and beyond there will be a growing body of evidence of social inequalities and poverty, rising levels of unemployment, lower than expected economic growth, and a sharpening divide between the state and society more generally.

The Crisis of Capitalism and Financialization

At the heart of these developments stands the crisis of capitalism and neoliberalism. Financial and economic neoliberal policies are associated with the deregulation of banks, finance, and markets. Each factor is associated with the origins of the global financial crisis that followed the bankruptcy of the investment bank Lehman Brothers on September 15, 2008⁵ and the liquidity crisis suffered by AIG (American International Group, Inc.), the multinational insurance corporation, when its credit ratings were downgraded below AA levels in the same month.⁶

The subsequent conversion of privately generated debt into sovereign debt to keep a rogue global industry afloat severely undermined public trust

in the ability of economic and political elites and governments to regulate the unbridled interests of global financial capitalism or to effectively “manage” the crisis in a socially just and accountable way. This is hardly surprising, given that the history of capitalism is, as Kouvelakis (2012, *xiv*) acknowledges, the history of crises. When confronted with its own contradictions, the capitalist mode of production has no alternative but to reinvent itself, always at considerable cost, and thus new contradictions and reconfigurations occur within the same fundamental “structural coordinates,” thus leading to further crises (*ibid.*, *xiv*).

The sovereign debt crisis—the crisis of national public debt—is best understood as a crisis of the *financialization* of capitalism.⁷ Underway for at least the past three decades, this process has resulted in the growing weight of finance relative to production (see Lapavitsas et al. 2012, 1). However, the immediate roots of the current public debt crisis lie in the financial upheaval of 2007–2009, which was created by speculative mortgage lending by US financial organizations and the trading of derivative securities by international banks (*ibid.*). This produced a large “bubble” during the first decade of the new century, resulting in the global crisis and recession that many countries are now experiencing. As Lapavitsas et al. (2012, 2) explain, financialization has unfolded in different ways across countries, including those within the European Union.⁸

That is the context for all of the articles here, not least because the financial, economic, and social policies of the power elite—economic and political—have continued to disproportionately benefit these two groups since at least the 1970s. The top 1 percent is now wealthier than ever, while the real incomes of the middle and lower classes have stagnated or declined in recent decades (Davis 2012). Having undermined its own dynamism, capitalism is in crisis, yet many world business leaders argue that the wider economic malaise is an “abstraction” (Hutton 2013). Profits as a share of GDP in almost all Western countries have reportedly reached record highs, along with executive pay,⁹ while real wages for most people are stagnating, if not falling (*ibid.*).

As an indication of the magnitude of growing income inequalities, an IMF Working Paper released in January 2012 found that in the UK alone this could approximately explain the *entire* deterioration in the British current account deficit experienced between the early 1970s and 2007 (see Kumhof et al. 2012, 25).¹⁰ It also concluded that liberal financialization is empirically and theoretically associated with growing domestic and foreign indebtedness in most developed countries (*ibid.*). The message is clear:

there are inherent problems associated with neoliberal fiscal and economic policy and growing levels of income inequality and indebtedness—whether household, domestic, or foreign investment and consumption. Saez¹¹ (2012), one of the leading US economists, estimates that in the United States during 2010 the top 1 percent of incomes grew by 11.6 percent, while the bottom 99 percent grew by only 0.2 percent. Hence, “the top 1 percent captured 93 percent of the income” (ibid., 2).

A Crisis of Social Reproduction and Social Democracy

Financial crisis is but one aspect of the current global crisis. A second strong theme linking each of the articles is the crisis of social reproduction and social welfare. Brown et al. (2013) explore that issue in depth in their article “Careless Talk: Social Reproduction and Fault Lines of the Crisis in the UK.” This article makes an original contribution in the way it links the financial and economic crisis with the response of anti-austerity or anti-cuts social movements to a crisis of care. Although focusing on events in the UK, the concept of a crisis of care has a broader reach, particularly in connecting the impact of the global financial and economic crisis to a crisis in social democracy.

The “crisis of care” is precipitated by the erosion of basic welfare provision as various governments introduce “austerity measures.” In the UK, the coalition government’s decision to increase most benefits by less than inflation marks a new low in the postwar history of welfare in the UK (Lansley 2013). This measure is unprecedented since World War II and represents a more punitive approach to welfare for those of working age (ibid.). This is hardly surprising since welfare provision in the UK—as in many other countries—today must undertake a role for which it was not originally designed. Its role as a safety net has greatly expanded due to the growing inability of the economic system to provide a basic threshold of living beyond which people should not fall, and to ensure welfare for all against the “five giant evils”—squalor, ignorance, want, idleness, and disease (Beveridge Report 1942).¹²

In the UK, the draconian cutbacks imposed by the Conservative-Liberal coalition government on public-sector spending as a result of the financial and economic crisis suggest that the “welfare system” is fast losing its fundamental purpose—to protect those most in need (Lansley 2013). This is evident in many European countries outside the UK, as well as in other countries across the world. As Brown et al. (2013) aptly conclude, the political and economic crisis that has developed out of the financial crisis

is also a *crisis of social reproduction*—a crisis in the ability of individuals and communities to reproduce their livelihoods.

This situation also represents a crisis *in and of* social democracy. It is a crisis for many social democratic parties—in Europe and elsewhere—since their decade-long strategy of full accommodation to neoliberalism to skim off the surplus for ameliorative social spending has collapsed (Guinan 2013). More worrying, this crisis has not so far managed to unseat neoliberal orthodoxy as the dominant economic paradigm. This state of affairs has been exacerbated by a corresponding crisis *of* social democracy, namely low voter turnout at elections, political apathy, and evaporating trust in governments or traditional politics to address the questions that matter most to people (*ibid.*).

Political Crisis

Widespread protests and collective struggles, often organizationally diverse, diffuse, and confined to national boundaries, suggest a crisis of legitimation for (neo)liberal capitalism and its state apparatus (Habermas 1988, 36). Exacerbating this disenchantment and crisis of the state are widespread, angry perceptions by many people in Greece, Spain, Italy, the UK, Egypt, and beyond that their states are relatively weak, powerless, or reluctant to address the failures of the economic system or to correct a dysfunctional market mechanism (*ibid.*). Real political power, it seems, lies elsewhere and is not to be confused with the decision-making of the political or ruling elite.¹³ Indeed, the choices and actions of political elites these days are circumscribed by a combination of international and supranational institutions, financialization, and techno-managerial bureaucracies (see Davis 2012). This point is also raised and analyzed in greater depth in the article by Universidad Nomada (2013), “For a Democratic Revolution: Notes from the Universidad Nomada.”

Nowhere is this more obvious than in Portugal, which is experiencing the most severe upheaval since the 1974–1975 Revolution (Bergfeld 2012). The precarious position in Portugal is similar to that faced by the Greek populace, which became worse when in January 2013 the Greek parliament agreed to a further round of harsh spending cuts (see Malkoutzis 2013). Austerity measures such as these were conditions of the bailout imposed by the European troika. Over the past two years, the Portuguese, Italian, and Spanish governments experienced the same plight. These examples highlight the loss of national sovereignty and the way in which formal democratic processes within states are being undermined, if not completely eroded,

by intergovernmental and supranational institutions such as the European troika, which are not democratically accountable.

These aspects of political globalization have called into question theories of the “national public” as an imagined community that Anderson (2006) has associated with the development of the nation-state, as have the challenges posed by cultural globalization. Montagna’s (2013) article, “Labor, Citizenship, and Subjectivity: Migrant Struggles within the Italian Crisis,” provides a well-documented example of how in times of economic crisis and hardship a shared sense of the “national public” can take on its most insidious form: a growing nationalistic consciousness and politics. This article also provides an excellent analysis of how the recent financial and economic crisis has exacerbated the experience of migrant workers in Italy as a “reserve army of labor.” Closely associated with this is the nationalist view that casts migrant workers as “outsiders”—economically exploited, socially excluded, denied access to citizen rights and welfare, and subject to social racism and cultural discrimination.

Heightened nationalism, nationalistic politics, and socially exclusionary and racist government politics and policies are not unique to Italy or the Italian people. In Greece, the ultranationalist Golden Dawn party has come into prominence.¹⁴ Its members appear to be closely embedded within institutions of the Greek state, such as the police (Chatzistefanou 2012). Recent reports suggest close contact in Germany between German far-right groups and members of Golden Dawn in an attempt to strengthen their powerbase in Europe (Connolly and Smith 2013). Golden Dawn explains this on its website as the “answer of expat Greeks to the dirty hippies and the regime of democratic dictatorship in our homeland” (ibid.).

In his article “The Crisis before ‘The Crisis’: Violence and Neoliberalization in Athens,” Dalakoglou (2013) details how the targeting of particular social groups is not confined to a nationalistic sense of “otherness.” In Greece, it includes both the national “other” (namely, migrants) and those deemed politically “deviant”—e.g., anarchists and far leftists. Moreover, this is closely associated with aggressive policing and tactics that target materially deprived districts in Athens where such “outcasts” are known to live.

Contentious Politics, Conflict, and Change

Each article in this issue is a testament to “contentious politics,”¹⁵ an interpretive framework that brings together three important areas of social life: contention, collective action, and politics. Leading scholars

recognize this approach as similar to, but distinctive from, the study of social movements (see Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 4; Tilly 2008; Tarrow 2006). Conceptually, *contentious politics* acknowledges that popular struggles take various forms and express themselves in different ways—for example, in terms of organization and mobilization—and occur outside the realm of mainstream politics. These variegated dimensions of extra-parliamentary protests and collective actions best capture the struggles and conflicts that have emerged in response to the global financial crisis of recent years. The examples in Spain, Greece, Italy, Egypt, the UK—and beyond—that I have selected exhibit novel and common aspects and features. They pose pertinent questions and suggest further scholarly attention.

In his article “The Impermanent Revolution: The Egyptian Revolutionary Movement in the Troubled Transition,” Gerbaudo (2013) provides an in-depth analysis of Egypt’s protracted and troubled period of transition since the Egyptian Revolution of January 2011. That transition is far from over. This provides a fascinating and thought-provoking perspective on “revolution” and political regimes and, as Gerbaudo points out, on “constituent power” and “constituted power” (Negri 2009). Whereas “constituent power” can be understood to open up revolutionary processes and the doors of change, the “constituted power” of the state acts quickly to close it down and bring it to order (Hardt 2009). Negri (2009) asks how we can ever have a new constituent power that is not reined in by the forces of the state. How does democracy “constitute” itself? In many respects, these questions capture the complexities and challenges of Egypt today, more than two years after the revolution of January 2011. They are questions that all democratic movements for change must consider.

Gerbaudo (2013) also highlights organizational and tactical considerations that are important for activists beyond Egypt. In the long period of transition during Egypt’s struggle to constitute democracy, the revolutionary movement of 2011 has become socially and politically polarized between two main actors: secular and nonsecular. Former allies during the revolutionary period, the progressive elements found themselves increasingly marginalized during the transitional period. In part, they were outmaneuvered by the strategic alliance between the Muslim Brotherhood and the army (SCAF); in part, they neglected the demands of their own social base. Finally, the organizational model of “leaderless resistance” that had served the movement well during the revolutionary period did not equip it properly in the postrevolutionary period to fulfill the *constitutive* need of revolutions to construct new democratic organizations and institutions.

Leaderless resistance—also known as “horizontality” or “horizontalism”—is the organizational practice that appears to have predominated in many of the radical protests that have emerged since 2004.¹⁶ According to Reyes et al. (2004), horizontal practice aspires

to an open relationship between participants, whose deliberative encounters (rather than representative status) form the basis of any decisions ... [in contrast to “vertical” practices that] assume the existence and legitimacy of representative structures, in which bargaining power is accrued on the basis of an electoral mandate (or any other means of selection to which the members of an organization assent).

The power of horizontalism, it is argued, resides in its replicability for those who know nothing about theory and in its ability to break down hierarchies that seek to contain people (Mason 2012a). In other words, it rejects Weberian¹⁷ notions of vertical forms of power, authority, and decision-making—the *old organizing principles*. Castells (2012, 225) argues that these principles are rejected not because of the lack of would-be leaders, but because of the deep distrust of the idea of political delegation in any form, which has its roots in the rejection of political representatives by the represented. For other commentators, however, the origins of this practice are more complex.

Mason (2012b, 80), for example, examines various social transformations within the past decade or so that changed people’s behavior, consumption habits, and their consciousness in the form of attitudes toward hierarchies and property. Others like Sennett (2006) point to the “new culture of capitalism” in which the fragmentation of big institutions like health and education has left many people’s lives in a fragmented, precarious state. The goal is the same, since political and economic rulers and leaders now seek to dismantle rigid bureaucracies (*ibid.*, 2). Ironically, the horizontal practice of many contemporary activists reflects tendencies within Western societies toward dismantling or rejecting large bureaucratic apparatuses, in favor of a more flexible, horizontal way of working and organizing. However, the latter is not leaderless and this way of working may serve different purposes.

For radical activists, this relatively new practice of leaderless resistance is a mode of “*doing*,” although it can often appear as if it is a way of “*being*”; notably, it is a part of identity formation within particular *cultures of protest* (Reyes et al. 2004). During the past decade, social and cultural factors such as new technological and electronic networks of media and communication may or may not have influenced the emergent cultures of protest. The same

is true for the “rhizomatic” character of a “networked society,” on- and offline, for the changing structure of employment and work, and for a future in which many can expect no real economic prospects or even a promise of change in the near term.¹⁸

Leaderless resistance as a nonhierarchical form of acting and organizing is also tactical in the sense of making quick dissolution and change possible when needed or desirable. It is flexible and moveable in its organizational structure and form. Of the movements outlined in this special issue, horizontalist tactics appear to be an organizational feature for mobilizing different collective struggles, reflected in the use of new media technology as a resource in communicating with and mobilizing people and in the organizational form adopted when groups come together in urban spaces of action and deliberation. Horizontalism is thus a resource or tool used to mobilize people—e.g., various social media—and part of the structure of political opportunity that is able to bring people together from a virtual sphere to an urban space (see Castells 2012; Mason 2012a,b; Alexander 2011; Gerbaudo 2012; Gelvin, 2012).

The role of media, particularly new media, warrants attention since the world in which we live has become radically interconnected, interdependent, and is communicated through flows of information (Cottle 2011, *ix*). In this global age of information, crises of any nature are not confined to national boundaries; they can be communicated and understood across national territories and surrounding regions, and beyond. Transnational media communication also provides the political opportunity for global reporting on collective struggles, conflicts, and crises. As a result, collective protests and demonstrations have increasingly sought to highlight issues of global scope and transnational concern through the mass media (Cottle and Lester 2011).

Two well-known scholars of social movements remind us that collective protests and struggles often *instantiate* wider global forces of change, even when locally enacted or directed at national institutions and governments (see Della Porta and Tarrow 2004; Tarrow 2006). In other words, the transnational media may have rhizomatic potential as a tool for raising awareness of issues or gaining support for a cause, as well as a means of encouraging wider collective struggles throughout the world.

Another common feature of recent protests and struggles is that although they were often transnationally communicated through various media forms, they generally were *not* transnationally organized. That is true even of the Occupy movement, which was rhizomatic in the way it developed. Other

collective struggles such as the Egyptian revolutionary movement, Italian migrants' uprisings, UKUncut, and the Indignados were more nationally focused, although they may have spawned similar groups in other countries. In short, such collective struggles and conflicts were communicated and mediated transnationally, but were not necessarily transnationally coordinated in their organizational, tactical, or strategic aims and agendas.

Various social actors have been active within the global struggles and conflicts that emerged after the onset of the financial crisis. Mason (2012b, 66) suggests that at the center of *all* the protest movements is a new sociological type, the graduate with no future. Although not without substance, this is a vast overgeneralization. Neither the struggles of migrant workers in Italy of Greece nor the revolutionary movement in Egypt can be reduced to this new sociological type.

Young people, whether graduates or not, have played a key role in recent struggles. I suspect they were not at the center of *all* of them. The young are the essence of the "laptop generation" and have the technological and multimedia skills that have so often been central to communicating information and mobilizing people. In so doing, they connected the autonomous virtual sphere with autonomous urban spaces of action and deliberative practice.

It is difficult to discern a single sociological type for the actors in the recent social conflicts and struggles. They range from migrants to old-style labor activists, radicals, the elderly, the disaffected, the socially excluded, "outcasts," middle-class professionals, the working class, the unemployed, youth, and more. The global crisis is a manifestly social and humanitarian crisis and the diversity of the actors involved simply indicates the scale and global reach of the crisis and the enormous range of people affected.

The "repertoires of action" have been equally diverse. In most cases, the social media and the new media technology have been central to getting the message out. We also find a mix of classic and new modes, ranging from sit-ins, demonstrations, marches, and nonviolent protests to imaginative cultural and symbolic forms of protest such as urban graffiti, "performativity," art, slogans, and horizontalism.¹⁹

The policing of protest deserves comment because when the state is under threat and its legitimacy is at stake, the institutions and forces of control react with increasing brutality and violence. Gerbaudo (2013) and Dalakoglou (2013) capture well this phenomenon, which was apparent in the heavy policing tactics of the NYPD when evicting Occupy protestors from Zuccotti Park in New York in 2011 (CNN 2011), in the G20 protests in London in April 2009 (Meikle et al. 2009), and more recently in the police

violence reported during the first anniversary of the Spanish Indignados movement in Madrid (Tremlett 2012).

The policing of protest has become more violent and has embraced new tactics, including the use of “kettling,”²⁰ water cannons, teargas, rubber bullets, and the classic instruments of violence—batons, beatings, strippings, and brute physical force. Little has been written about the ways in which protest is being controlled or how this has changed in recent years.

Summary

In this issue, global crisis and conflict have been explored with reference to the 2008 financial crisis and to the nexus between the collective struggles that emerged in response to the crisis of capitalism and its human consequences. Framing each article is the wider political-economic context within which such conflict has occurred: the crisis of neoliberalism, the legitimation crisis of national states, the crisis of welfare provision and democracy, and the corresponding crisis of representative politics. Considering the interconnectedness of the global crisis and the conflicts of recent years, what hope is there for the future?

It is reassuring that at least one leading member of the Bank of England credits Occupy with having got it “right” in popularizing the problems of the financial system and in pointing to the growing inequities in the allocation of wealth and incomes globally (Haldane 2012; McCarthy 2012).²¹ Haldane (2012) is not speaking simply in moral terms; he believes that Occupy has influenced policy by seeking to close the “fault lines” in the global financial system. If this is more than rhetorical posturing, perhaps collective struggles and conflicts *can* and *do* offer the hope of change. As such, these struggles go beyond fighting for *power*—political power. Alternative forms of counterpower, whether symbolic, cultural, or political, facilitate change and represent *power in movement*—to paraphrase Tarrow (2011).

Social democracy may be at an impasse, but history and change seem to be in the air. As Stiglitz, Schiffrin, and Kircher-Allen (2012) note, from Cairo to Wall Street there has been a “global spring.” History is on the march. The social crisis that has unfolded alongside the economic and political crisis has enabled people to ask more pertinent and penetrating questions about the need for fundamental, systemic change. But what would this look like and what would it entail?

The myriad global protests and struggles since 2008 offer hope for the future in creating a public space for debate. There is the potential to challenge

and change established values, morality, and the politics associated with a corrupt and dying capitalist system and its neoliberal orthodoxy and fault lines. Creating such a public space is important for opening up a wider debate over viable alternatives. These opportunities also remind us that we are not witnessing “the end of ideology,” but rather its reawakening. Each article in this special issue is a testament to this.

NOTES

1. Bauman (2011) uses this term in reference to social inequalities and human suffering in a global age.
2. See the following at *BBC Online*: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-21002912.
3. Lansley (2013) argues that the decision by the coalition government to increase benefits by less than inflation is unprecedented for the post-1945 period in the UK and marks “an all-time low” and a more punitive approach to welfare for those of working age.
4. The European “troika” includes the European Union (EU), European Central Bank (ECB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
5. The film *Inside Job* (2008) offers a comprehensive analysis of the global financial crisis. Directed by Charles Ferguson, the film includes extensive interviews with key financial insiders, politicians, and academics.
6. AIG reportedly received a \$58 billion dollar credit facility from the US Federal Reserve Bank on September 16, 2008, to enable the company to meet increased collateral obligations consequent to the credit rating downgrade. This was in exchange for the issuance of a stock warrant to the Federal Reserve Bank for 79.9 percent of AIG’s equity. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AIG>.
7. Lapavistas et al. (2012, 1) note that political economists have extensively discussed financialization and cite van Treeck (2009), Lapavistas (2009), and Dos Santos (2009) as useful resources.
8. For a fuller discussion of institutional bias and malfunctions within the Eurozone, its peripheral economies, and the role of finance, see Lapavistas et al. (2012), Chapter 1.
9. Goldman Sachs, for example, has deferred paying bonuses to staff into the next financial year so that they can enjoy the lower tax rate (Hutton 2013).
10. The views expressed in the Working Paper are those of the authors and should not be reported or referred to as representing the views of the International Monetary Fund.
11. Saez is professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley.
12. Beveridge’s plans for the welfare state were premised on a commitment to full employment and decent wage levels to limit the role played by welfare.
13. The distinction here is between the formal political elite and actual political power.
14. Golden Dawn holds nearly 20 seats in the Greek parliament.
15. Tilly and Tarrow (2007, 4) first used this term to refer to “interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interest, in which governments appear either as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties.” See also Tilly (2008).
16. Notably, that began with the anti-globalization European Social Forum in London, 2004 (see Reyes et al. 2004).

17. This is a reference to the work of sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). Weber’s work on bureaucracy established hierarchical practice as the most efficient way of organizing and as a key process in the rationalization of Western society.

18. Rhizomatic is a concept coined by Deleuze and Guattari and used by Castells (2012, 147) to refer to networks of communication in the Internet age. The term derives from botany and refers to a plant that characteristically has subterranean roots, is horizontal in form, and is able to grow shoots and roots from its nodes. If a rhizome is broken into pieces, it is able to replace itself with a new plant.

19. For example, Occupy activists wore Guy Fawkes masks, flowers have been handed out, and public urban spaces have been occupied.

20. Also referred to as “containment” or “corralling,” police use this control tactic in large-scale protests.

21. Alan Haldane is the leading expert from the Bank of England on financial stability.

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