

EDITORIAL

People Power: removing consent to governments whenever this is required

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Tahrir Square. El Cairo
Photo: Maria Fanlo

This edition of *Peace in Progress* is devoted entirely to an issue associated with non-violence and civil disobedience. This year, the choice was a foregone conclusion: the slogans and voices from public squares and their relationship with non-violent practices.

2011 was, as adequately summarized by the cover of *Time* magazine, the year of the marchers, of those who protested, the year in which all across the globe (Arab countries, Russia, India, Spain, Europe, the United States...) public squares filled to demand, with a variety of voices and in different ways, democracy, liberty, dignity, an end to corruption, transparency, and participation in decision making. The specific demands concerning democracy, liberty, dignity, varied depending on the context, country and those involved, however, a study of social movements (Sidney Tarrow, for example) and media coverage, reveal some common aspects. Many news articles commenting on the first protests made mention of spring, (remembering the Prague of 1968), others, with greater accuracy, spoke of popular uprisings, alluding to the almost spontaneous movements which arose across Europe in 1848 demanding regime changes. In the specific case of the Arab world, Jean Pierre Filiu's proposal which speaks of the "Arab revolution" is gaining momentum; given that what began in Tunisia in 2010 is a long process of social change that will turn societies and political systems in the Maghreb and the Mashriq on their heads. And, naturally, there will be ebbs and flows, setbacks, defeats, contradictions and unforeseen surprises.

In any event, some things have been made clear: the Arab world is not the exception and they are, like everybody else, demanding liberty and democracy; they are not just those who practise the Muslim faith; they must be considered, as they have demonstrated themselves to be, persons who rebel in defence of their rights. And if we extend our horizons and look to the rest of the voices that can be heard in the forums around the world, we can see the power of people, the strength of people. In any case, the truly important issue is that powerful voices in every public square are calling for change, demonstrating the power of the people, the power that people possess. A power which, as can be seen in the articles included in this edition, is structured around revoking consent to governments and saying enough is enough (the celebrated *kifaya* of the Egyptians shouting since 2004). Centuries ago, Étienne de la Boétie, who was at the time no more than an adolescent, had set off on a path when, in his *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, stated, "I should like merely to understand how it happens that so many men, so many villages, so many cities, so many nations, sometimes suffer under a single tyrant who has no other power than the power they give him ...". From here on in, we know that dominant and servile relationships are not based solely on the coercion and the abuse of power; it also depends on our consent. In other words, at least in part, the servile condition of the people is voluntary. And, if it is voluntary, collective action can also put an end to this and provoke the downfall of the tyrant by making their voice heard, showcasing the contradictions, ridiculing the government and eroding the basis for legitimizing its power. Because of this, the book by Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy* is such a useful tool (please see "To find out more"), which explains, based on a classical interpretation of the sixties, the methods of non-violent political action throughout history.

We have spoken of common traits. Here I will limit my description to just five of these. Firstly, the vast majority of revolts were peaceful, in other words, without violence, non-violent in the literal sense of the word. Secondly, protesters opted for tactics and strategies of civil disobedience, revocation of consent, peacefully and with two mutually supporting elements which had a multiplying effect: and which were scalable (a similar effect to that of the snowball that starts rolling and gets bigger and bigger; the more people that support a proposal, a slogan, the bigger the protest gets and the more followers it gets); they were imaginative and corrosive, using the delegitimizing power of humour and sarcasm¹. Thirdly, it demonstrated the power of the youth, the greatest losers in the economic crises and tyrannies, a power which multiplied the outrage stemming from the lack of opportunities despite their education and training. Fourthly, it highlighted the fact that social networks and the new communication tools, which in English is referred to as the "social media" function, fulfil the task, by having a multiplying and amplifying effect for the voices. And finally, that, contrary to what some theoreticians had said, social movements and revolts without clear leadership and without the backing of major political parties, can sometimes become successful, at least in part.

Therefore, beyond the specific results, in the short-term achieved by the revolts in the public squares, one thing has become clear: the power of people, the capacity to manage conflict without resorting to violence. It is not always easy, it is not always successful, and the voices and slogans from the public squares clearly demonstrate to us once again, that the classics were right. The strength of unarmed resistance and of non-violent action depends on combining the power of refusal, revoking consent and on the new power (empowerment) which is attained by the use of joint action.

¹ The role of humour in the Arab revolution should be studied, as seen in the press, on walls, in the social media, in the pamphlets and fanzines.

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IN DEPTH

INTRODUCTION

The message from the squares

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Some episodes in history call for an explanation. They are moments of great intensity which shake our foundations and raise questions. A year ago on the Southern and Northern shores of the Mediterranean and, little by little throughout the world, diverse and spontaneous movements were born and exploded, transforming city squares into places of debate, dialogue, protest against a present which is unjust, violent, uncertain and fragile, and of discussion about a possible and desirable future.

During the preparation of this edition of *Peace in Progress*, we were moved by the need to understand the message coming from these squares. This edition of the magazine is the result of the process of reflection and the collaborative work of Oriol Leira, Stefano Puddu and Elena Grau. In order to begin to understand this process we have asked two people involved in this movement of the squares, Ahmed Eid in Tahrir and Ignacio Castro Rey in Sol, to share their first-hand experience with us. But it was also necessary to try to make a deeper and more general

diagnosis of the events and understand what lies beneath the movements which are only symptoms. This latter issue is addressed by Stefano Puddu. In particular, we have pondered over one of the most surprising and encouraging aspects of the Arab spring and of the movements of the 15-m: the adoption of nonviolence as the predominant reference in the expression of discontent and protest. The article by Oriol Leira aims to outline the specific and distinguishing features of this version of nonviolence. The final text presents the views of people involved in nonviolent pacifism, which, from the contexts of different countries, assesses what the new features of this movement are, and their expectations for the future.

An understanding of the movements that have occupied the squares can help us to outline a way forward at a time of critical instability such as the present. It is a question of comprehending the situation, and not just to become observers, but rather to decide where to shift the onus of our action. For what happens in the future will also depend on what we do now.

CENTRAL ARTICLES

The secret to ousting Mubarak

Ahmed Eid

Activist, member of the Revolution Youth Coalition in Egypt



The peaceful nature of our activities was the secret in defeating Mubarak. In reality the word *pacifism* was not merely the term we applied to our activities, but rather it was what we used often to create and think up ways and means of demonstrating the scope of the “pacifism” we were engaged in. This was the case, basically, not because we were afraid of the law, but because, in any case, the dictatorial regime considered the simple publication of an article criticizing it as an illegal act. In reality, the main reason was our perception that, day after day, the pacifism of our activities drew a wide sector of the community to our cause. However, this did not all suddenly begin on February 25, but many years before. The straw that broke the camel’s back came in December 2004 when the first ever movement demanding Mubarak’s retirement appeared in Egyptian political life. This was the “Egyptian Movement for Change”, best known for its slogan *Kifaya* – ‘enough’-. It was this movement that put forward the slogan “No to the extension, *no* to inheritance”, that is: *no* to extending Mubarak’s (the former president) term of office, just prior to the Presidential elections at the end of 2005, and *no* to the planned move of

a hereditary transfer of power from Mubarak to his son. The movement caused significant political upheaval in Egyptian society and several peaceful protests and protest strikes were organized in different areas around the country. Despite the fact that the movement diminished in effectiveness slightly, the political upheaval increased and expanded with the appearance of other protest movements, some of which were of a legislative nature, focusing on human rights and worker’s rights, among which were the April 6 Youth Movement, which was founded in 2008, when the workers at a textile factory in the city of El Mahalla El-Kubra, in the Gharbia region, announced their intention to strike in protest at the precarious working and living conditions. In this context, a young woman and a young man began a call for support for the workers and this was soon to result in the strike going far beyond the factory and becoming a country-wide general strike. They set up a page on Facebook to spread their ideas and soon had around 70,000 members. On April 6th, the city of El Mahalla, where the Factory was located, suffered savage repression by the police forces after the demonstrations which sprang up all over the city. On this same day, several political activists were arrested in Cairo, among which were Ahmed Mahir and Israa Abdelfattah. After being released, both activists founded the April 6 Youth Movement.

In 2010, when a young man by the name of Khaled Saeed died in the city of Alexandria at the hands of Egyptian police and purely because he was under suspicion, Wael Ghonim and Abderrahman Mansour set up a Facebook page called “We are all Khaled Saeed”. The page made its own the case of the young man and demanded the reopening of the case to clarify the circumstances surrounding his death, proposing numerous protests in support of the family of Khaled Saeed. A large number of non-politicised youth joined the page and from this point on, Ghonim and Mansour became aware of the need to organize protest strikes and marches aimed at attracting this sector of the young non-politicised Egyptians. These activities had to be “pacific” and should not imply danger for any of those taking part in the protests. For example, the first protest strike announced by the page called for participants to dress in black and to stand in orderly files (Silent Stand) along street pavements and the Nile Corniche, with the condition that they were to maintain a certain distance between each other. The security forces were stunned: they had no idea how to deal with this string of silently standing citizens stretched out along a length of 6 km. Ghonim claimed responsibility for these actions without revealing his identity. When he realized that some political organisations were provoking the security forces by chanting slogans, he wanted to coordinate the April 6 Youth Movement in order to preserve the peaceful nature of its activities and to maintain the maximum control possible over these so that the security forces would not be given any reason for intervening and so that youth and students alike would not be afraid and thereby distance themselves completely from these movements.

During the last Parliamentary elections organised by the previous regime – and rigged –, the page “We are all Khaled Saeed” called for voters to cast their votes by writing the name of Khaled Saeed on the ballot. I remember one particular situation which happened on several occasions: more than once there was a power blackout across the country and the authorities accused the citizens claiming that misuse of energy in houses was the cause of the repeated blackouts. The page called for its members to photograph and publish cases in which the Government was guilty of wasting energy, indicating the time and place of the energy blackouts.

In 2010, members of a student’s group from the University of Cairo managed to acquire a court ruling ordering the expulsion of the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior’s university guards from the University campus and called for them to be replaced by civil security units under the control of the University’s Rector. When the Interior Ministry refused to obey the ruling, we decided to organise activities to demand the execution of the sentence. We called on people to protest within the University, but nobody answered the call, so I arranged a meeting with a group of students and told them: we have to invent, we must create a way of demonstrating the peaceful nature of our protest in order to attract students and get them to join us. We considered printing thousands of red cards such as those used by referees in football matches for the students to use, as if they were referees, to be used on Interior Ministry officials who were present in the University. The idea was an unprecedented success. The students

were to use the red card every time they came into contact with a policeman, without engaging in conversation with them. The following morning, headlines in Egyptian newspapers stated how Egyptian universities give the red card to the university guards. We decided to use the same cards again on 25 January and we addressed the people saying that, everybody who wished to get rid of Mubarak should red card him.

These are just some examples of the many actions that were organised and that, given their peaceful nature, encouraged the participation of young people from all walks of life. In Egypt, since 1951, January 25 is a national holiday, National Police Day given that on this day the police officers from a police station in the city of Ismailia responded to efforts by the occupying British forces to take over the station. In 2009, the relationship between the Interior Ministry and the people had reached the same point and a significant majority of the political and judicial elite were calling for the need to once again review Interior Ministry policies and the need to respect human rights. Nevertheless, President Mubarak, in a gesture that surprised everybody, declared the Police Day to be an official national holiday for the entire country. Many considered this to be a reward from Mubarak to the police and as such, an act of support in the face of widespread and legitimate criticism of their actions. The April 6 Youth Movement then decided to transform the celebration by monitoring the illegal actions of the police throughout the year and as such began distributing photographs of the police involved in illicit activities and torturing citizens. In mid-December we began preparing for the 2011 National Police Day on January 25 and we decided to organise a protest march in the popular areas away from the capital centre and organize marches to the headquarters of the Interior Ministry to demand the resignation of the minister. The success of the revolution in Tunisia was a beacon of hope for the people in Egypt. All political groups agreed to refrain from making any partisan demands and to strive to ensure that popular protest marches would call for social issues affecting the people. As we marched through the streets we shouted to those who remained indoors to, "Leave your homes, we march to claim your rights". Our intention was not to block the streets and to leave room for traffic to flow so that nobody would suffer and turn against us, or at least, so that they would not oppose our aims and would respect our right to protest peacefully. This was what we had agreed and this was what we did. Some people were against the action but within the limits of our strength and capacity, we wanted to respect them and even when we were confronted by trucks and military transport vehicles, under the control of the Interior Ministry but which didn't clash with us, we applauded them.

At the heart of Tahrir Square, art played an important role in getting our message across, because a group of men formed a corner dedicated to caricatures, announcing that they were accepting all kinds of artistic work. Much of the work on show there mocked the instructions and slogans hurled at us by the security forces and this made people laugh. A group of musicians sang revolutionary songs and others poked fun at the regime. This went on until we managed to topple Mubarak.

Stalking the wait

Ignacio Castro Rey

Philosopher, lecturer, essayist and art critic. From the *Círculo de Bellas Artes* he organizes seminars focused on new movements of political and social thinking of an innovative and non-conformist nature



Marching towards the centre, shouting at the top of our voices that they don't represent us. Joining together and occupying a space, sharing face-to-face the boredom and possible solutions. Completely recovering that vibrant community and authentic presence, free from the *connected dispersion* of the information culture and its technical mythology. Crossing the complexity of urban technologies in order to land on the other side of a square and experience the bodily expressions.

For months now, the 15M movement appeared to be taking its leave of many things. It transformed the nomadic precariousness the ruling order has forced us into, transformed it into a habitable dwelling, *acampada*, the weariness of being ignored and deceived day after day. And also the anxiety of having no job, nor house, nor any means whatsoever of independence. It will take a long time before we can forget the emotion of feeling the birth of *another city* at our feet, at kilometre zero of the usual defeatism.

Last May also represented an unprecedented break from the "culture of Transition", from its unending administration and the prohibition of breaking with consensus, from the comfortable alternation between conservative and progressive excuses. Many of us then shared this enthusiasm. Afterwards, on the threshold of this turning point, we began to tire of so much activism, the meetings and commissions, which soon threatened to raise a caricature of power. Suddenly, we once again feel the need for discontinuity, and a return to the secret.

We should not forget that the current "crisis" has been made possible by the oversaturation of all that is social, an intrinsically predatory global mass, (remember the birds-eye view of the Big Apple in *Inside job?*), the technological complexity, and constant interaction. Part of the crisis consists in spending the entire day speaking about the crisis. Is the crisis not a ruse of historical reason to perpetuate this perpetual connection required by a capitalism that hates the outside, the earth and humanity and ignores

the grandiose achievements of history?

In any event, is being tired of a movement *political* enough? To say it in other words, a key question today would be: Where *does one eat* in the 15M? More difficult still, where *does one live*, nothing more, without enemies? What type of real wealth, real independence, and fundamental difference has it generated?

Maybe the time has come, as the Arab precedents of our movement have done to a certain degree, to invest this amazing youthful and collective energy in generating new ways of real production, real survival and real coexistence, and individuality. Cooperatives, workshops, shops, food-halls, schools? Naturally, and of course, new companies. And new ways of living, of escaping... But when will these real initiatives arrive, without waiting for the powers to take the familiar late, superstructural measures? Will this not become the movement's next step, side by side with the political slogans it appropriates? Or even, leaving to one side our obsession with criticism and politics. New forms of love, violence, and relationship. Other types of music, new ways to liberate ourselves from the nightmare that is history. When will this happen?

Without a doubt, there are many things that can still be shared in the wake of the *acampadas*. Among others, that idea of changing the world is no longer something we are after, but rather to defend it, in all its immenseness, against those who would see it transformed into a transparent plot of land. If the wonderful conservatism of the system is perpetual rehabilitation, an ongoing change of scenery which prevents the experience of anguish and local life, today there is a need to provide some decisions with stability. It is urgent to *conserve* areas free from the storms of precariousness to which we are subjected by a "crisis" that liquidates work and affections, mental stability and the nature of food in equal proportion.

Therefore, the idea that only a *single* world should be defended, does not easily couple us with the "nostalgic" against the momentum of new times. No, because it is only about preserving the *openness* to the existing world, with the infinity of its life forms, under threat from the *pruning* which is articulated from the existing social order. The insistence that the world to be preserved is the only real and possible world, against whose heartbeat capitalism would represent a furious "anti-system" mechanism, still remains a significant achievement of the May 15 movement. Mainly thanks to its hybrid temperament, that initial non-partisan vocation of the movement is exactly what could make it lasting, beyond electoral vicissitudes.

The words of that activist are truly beautiful: they are the abstract ones. We are down to earth, fighting for our lives without a programme, and turning our fears into resolutions. Together and sharing the equality of anyone who approaches us with an almost infinite generosity. Off to a good start. In itself, did the 15M become a little *abstract* early on, too ideological? It was not like this in any of its declarations of outrage but later on when different spokespersons explained the outline of a programme... It sounded like the same old partisanship as ever!

Is it not sufficiently political to live one's own life, to be able to eat and have a home in which to receive your friends? It seems that we sometimes forget the daily importance of the *unpolitical* and to resist the inevitable infamy of any power. The unpolitical is understood here, neither as apolitical nor anti-political, but rather as a critical review of the ideas and assumptions which have accompanied political thinking, as a realistic way of observing politics from its limitations and on the basis of the diagnosis, according to which, political categories of modernism are exhausted. The importance of humour, the violence of dreams, the love and hate which are never made public. Now the question is: Does the 15M begin to die as soon as it attempts to establish itself as a political structure? *Democracia real ya* (Real Democracy Now) is a cry expressing a just feeling and acts as a catalytic slogan for new, bold strengths. Nevertheless, it has to be said that as a programme it is an impracticable concept. By definition, *the real* falls outside every political movement. The "natural liberty" (Thoreau) is beyond "civil liberty" -the pre-eminent condition of original human freedom against whatsoever political regime, although this had that an energetic purity that so many of us wished to see in the 15M. To believe the opposite is the west's metaphysical disease, which has replaced God with Society and History. And at the same time, the May movement chose this path too early on, forgetting the joy of its initial effrontery.

Consensual culture and the culture of mobilisation can be part of the same normative culture when both sides become "correct" and attempt to save us from the helplessness of living without historical coverage. It is the world itself that resists globalisation. We have absolutely no idea to what extent we, even with 15M and Occupy Wall Street, are a minute sect in the pandemonium of peoples on this earth.

Anonymous is a word almost always uttered by those bearing a name of their own, therein attempting to bestow universality on something quite localised. It sometimes appears that the zeal of 15M for visibility after the first months of charming ambiguity, turned out to be something quite akin to information efficiency. It should also be stressed here that "anonymity" is often defended by those with an assignment, who have developed their careers in close proximity to traditional critical thinking. Badiou, Rancière, Tiqqun? Some of us adore those names, but the fact is that the grass roots leaders of the movement, those charmingly unknown faces from the early months have disappeared and are now respectable intellectual spokespersons belonging to the critical traditions of previous years. This is another fact that renews the uncertainty of the future of May.

It is not good when the atmosphere of Sol can be caricatured in advertisements. If the PSOE and the unions, both of whom are so shady, use a nod and a wink and attempt to build bridges -even the PP took full account of some demands- it is because, despite everything, the 15M has undergone a gradual transformation into an easily recognizable movement. This however is not a bad thing, but it does strip it of the freshness we tried to bestow upon it. The day will come when that initial heroic *uncertainty* that so worried politicians and journalists alike, will come to a definitive end.

The movement in fact, was soon tempted by a possible political identity that could claim its part of the administrative pie. What is the solution to this dilemma? If the movement turns its back on politicisation, the protest will dissolve into something cheerfully provocative and alternative. If it accepts this fate, the movement will end up becoming predictable, another part in the consensual circle. When the time comes, is it not preferable to choose the first option? Moreover, insecurity was the main weapon of the 15M. So, why not therefore extend this to its current organisational structure, to the point of surprise at its disappearance? Others will follow to pick up the torch, to occupy the vacuum. Nature abhors a vacuum, that is true, but it is necessary to get close to it, brush up against it, and feel its vertigo. After the fire, the earth continues to burn below the surface. This mental climate change marked by the month of May seems irreversible. While we continue to exercise our intermittent activism in this daily tragicomedy, we lurk in waiting for the next collective outburst.

This kind of stance could be accused of being "individualistic", that is true. But, community itself is *individual*, necessarily contingent, and sporadic. Prior to the distinction between the private and the public, there is a life that is common and individual at the same time, which is much more *political* than the entire visible field of representation and mobilisation. The historical will never be capable of absorbing this first political instance of primitive, anonymous life. One of the ideas that the 15M have bequeathed to us is that peoples can only be accommodated within history for a brief moment, a flurry. Everyday life is much too bloody to be channelled. To a certain extent, there is a chance that the masses know more about this perpetual escape, beneath the patio of History, than the parties constantly submerged in their sectarian activism. The voters who cast their ballots every four years devote but a small portion of their energies and time to political activity and discussion. Before and after, they melt away into a *pre or post* ideological shared existence. Only active militancy in an emerging movement enables them to forget this. Herein lies their capital and also their mortgage.

As is the case with the economy, resistance can also be *under the table*, informal. It is precisely in the name of May, that it is necessary to remember that the "struggle" can come in a thousand forms, not all of which are openly collective and programmatic, not even in the form of this register of *anonymity* which we generously grant the new movement. People fight in a thousand ways, some inconceivable. Resistance can take the form of remaining silent, defending oneself with cynicism or with apparent indifference, disappearing or seeking out new forms for living. Sometimes it appears that some solitary activists of this period, whether they are called Moore or Guerin, are more aware of the limits to the political than the factional leaders, submerged in salvational activism.

Sitting on the faultline

Stefano Puddu

Received his Degree in Education from Cagliari, Stefano has taken part in both the Green and peace movements in Sardinia; currently he is one of the driving forces in Catalonia behind the movement in favour of degrowth



The arrival of an earthquake generally tends to be a difficult event to comprehend for those who ignore the existence of plate tectonics. The tremors on the surface don't always provide us with a clear indication of the profound energies from which they originate. Thus, the social demonstrations which arose in 2011 at different locations around the globe hint at a complex reasoning behind the symptoms –the grievances, the "discourse", the occupation of public squares—and the general metabolism, the state of the system's health, with its premises and rules of order. You have to be bold to venture a diagnosis without being a doctor, but disease is a fact of life and, human beings that we are, it is in our interest to make an effort to comprehend it.

In general, we have before our eyes the first samples of the potential destabilisation of a model that was capable of generating some highly coveted promises –democracy, economic wellbeing, social protection...– but which, nevertheless, is demonstrating that it is incapable of fulfilling. The "end of the story" today takes on unforeseen meanings and reveals to us the powerlessness of a system that can no longer maintain its goals nor meet the expectations it created, due to the lack of awareness of the conditions that make it possible.

As we are aware, over the past fifty-sixty years, a minority of the inhabitants of this planet have seen themselves implicated in the legitimization process of a lifestyle based on excesses, on the illusion of abundance carried to unimaginable extremes. The primary basis for this occurrence came from an extraordinary availability of energy, linked to an ever-increasing use of fossil fuels, a non-renewable and finite capital. This injection of abundant and cheap energy powered the famous growth that, in a little over two generations, transformed in a startling and irreversible manner, our social structure, values, customs and knowledge on which life as we know it is based; we have been catapulted into a liquid, globalized, service based, hypercomplex, hyperconnected, hyperconsumer postmodernity; the same wave of abundance fuelled a hypertrophic democracy with privileges and complicities which took root everywhere and spread to all parts. The feeling of titanic power associated with this growth generated the sensation of absolute freedom, a lack of any limits which has become the mantra of our culture; without bearing in mind nevertheless the dependence arising from this energetic contribution, the obligation and even slavery generated by constant growth, and less still the ecological nightmare that all of this would trigger, from climate change onwards.

Globalisation came into being as a result of the transport revolution, thanks to cheap oil but the decisive factor was the digital revolution, capable of transforming production and communication technologies alike in the space of a few decades. At the

same time, the triumph of number coding was to determine, on the one hand a dynamic of overproduction and, on the other hand, dematerialisation. We have been inundated with an avalanche of mass produced goods at ridiculous prices, with an ever-decreasing contribution of human work, meanwhile unreal elements and immaterial factors become ever-more decisive elements of our lives.

However, the change in the last half century that has brought about the greatest impact was that of the financial revolution, the sector that took the greatest advantage of the potential of the ICT. Once the gold standard was abandoned, the dematerialisation of money and the potential of network technologies multiplied the power of capital to stunning extremes. In a world of computer screens, the difference between reality and simulation is, in the first place a question of belief. Adminstrating money means managing confidence and, aided by the media –incredibly powerful tools of persuasion—, the financial powers have been very adept at doing this.

Oil and screens change, the geography of power, which no longer corresponds to the map of nations and therefore transcends the institutions which govern them, in other words, politics. That is why we are where we are. For several decades the economy has dominated the world and, within this economy, finance. However, this fact has brought about a terrible and three-fold subversion: 1) of the democratic compact; 2) of economic rationality; 3) of ecological compatibility. In other words, of the pillars our world is founded upon.

Let's take it one step at a time.

1) We find ourselves faced with the de facto marginalisation of politics. The transfer of sovereignty to economic-financial spheres is constant and can no longer be concealed. Political decisions respond with ever-increasing frequency to the necessity of reimbursing capital to which they are in debt: legislation governing budgetary balancing includes a clause of compulsory compliance concerning the restitution of the debt, together with the corresponding interest, and public welfare is administered with what's left over. The connection between political leaders and financial oligarchies is so close that we are now accustomed to seeing them cross over from one sector to the other with the utmost of indifference. The great financial fortunes still remain tax exempt, while the tax system widens its tax revenue nets over the person in the street. Public authorities lack the resources necessary to provide the services taxpayers and voters demand, and the agreement that forms the basis for representativeness is no longer worth the paper it is written on. Under these circumstances, democracy has become a form of televised entertainment, still dominant today. Luckily, some years ago the window that is the Internet appeared.

2) The greatest threat to our global society today is the metastasis of financial capital. This is the poisoned fruit of neoliberal deregulation which has been undertaken with the absolute political complicity of governments and parliaments the world over, without any discernible difference between the left and right. As a consequence of this, accounting entries have increased in volume and speed at which they circulate in a scandalous manner, outweighing up to ten times (or more) the overall value of the world's real wealth. Speculative hyperactivity has established a situation of monetary unreality of biblical proportions, a gigantic debt bubble which is now entering a phase of implosion that is impossible to avert. The world does not possess the resources required to cover up this black hole. "Creative finance" has fuelled terrible confusion between savings and debt, they have asserted the primacy of the interest rate of money on the creation of value through work, to such a point as to degrade the principle of economic rationality to its lowest level yet, that being rapacity: to earn the most money with the least effort in the shortest time possible.

3) The most serious consequence of this state of affairs is the extreme alienation which has become part of our civilisation. We have lost all real and specific notion of our degree of dependence on the planet's major trophic cycles. Ecological overburdening and overexploitation, from the viewpoint of the survival of the species, is much more serious and defining than the financial debt, nevertheless it is almost irrelevant when it comes to the decision making process. In nature, all excess is toxic and a civilization founded on excess can hope for no fate other than overdose, its collapse from intoxication.

To sum up, the current state of the world is the result of abuse of trust of historic proportions. Billions of people have come to believe in the promises of happiness, comfort, wealth, health, beauty, culture and democracy that the system offered everyone. Just like in the tale of Pinocchio, we were bewitched by the fantastic idea of money that multiplied by itself and they have made us slaves to this pipe-dream. The result is a sum of economic insolvency, political discrediting and ecological unsustainability, which are, in short, diverse manifestations of the same discredit which we can say is *systemic*; in 2011, this "technical bankruptcy" became patent for large masses of citizens in different countries who wished to express their outrage and will to change. The entire world is beginning to see it: not only are the giant's feet of clay, but it intends to continue raising the building by taking the materials from the foundations. This bodes for a spectacular fall, but those on the upper floors already have the chopper fuelled and ready for the evacuation. Therein lies the difference between the 1% who have created catastrophe for civilisation and the remaining 99% who are trapped inside and who will pay the consequences.

People have more than enough to do just keeping their personal and family lives going in these grim times. The figures for debt levels, unemployment and economic suffering each month are those of a post-war period. The weapons of mass destruction this time were financial, speculative. We weren't even aware that we were under attack, that they were dynamiting democratic life, bombing our lives and the lives of those that today are children and young people, or have yet to be born. Capitalism is right at the epicentre of a seismic fault that has just begun to tremble. If the outrage fails to generate ideas for real and substantial change that are valid for the vast majority, we are looking at a very rough future indeed.

Nonviolence 2.0

Oriol Leira

Graduate in philosophy, he has combined lecturing with social activism in anti-military and ecological movements alike. He has collaborated in alternative publications and is the cofounder of the magazine *Illacrua*



Who can say how Mohandas Gandhi would have viewed this year of 2012, the demonstrations of the so called “Arab Spring” (especially in Tunisia and Egypt) and those closer to home, the 15-M. Undoubtedly, Gandhi would have viewed it with avid interest given that one of the most outstanding features openly displayed and put into practice in these initiatives, otherwise sufficiently differentiated, was nonviolence.

Few expected that such a spontaneous and diverse mix of people, without backing from any stable organization and without any declared strategies, would adopt non-violence as a common slogan for conveying their street protest. Obviously we cannot lump the human cluster which filled the squares of Tahrir and Sol, just to mention two examples, into the same bundle given that the social situation and conditions on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean continue to be notably different; however there is absolutely no doubt about the fact that the massive presence of youth making their debut in social activism in the streets was the most outstanding common strand to both, just as the Tunisian lecturer in Law and Political Sciences Hamadi Redissi highlighted by considering the youth as the *deus ex machina* of the Tunisian revolution. However, the most surprising fact has been that these inexperienced young people, without any prior preparation in this area, adopted non-violence with such a high degree of personal implication and physical risk. It is as if non-violence had entered the shared psyche of a new generation of activists, until it has become part of what we could refer to as their “common sense”. And all this without denigrating the active role played by members from other generations more accustomed to social activism and who made this strategy their own for the first time.

Without professing to unravel the social, economic and political context that sparked the uprisings, what we are interested in here is analysing this phenomenon. We wish to ask ourselves where it originated, whether its emergence would be unthinkable without some kind of basis, a breeding ground prepared by previous generations, or if there are new cultural and/or spiritual currents, more or less explicit, which have facilitated it. Finally, if there are contextual elements related to new technologies, with new ways of relating to one another or new consumer habits that have fostered, or even if there have been specific commitments of a political nature, with a medium-term effort to promote non-violence –from its understanding and practice- under the supervision of organised social groups or political lobbies, on the basis of works such as that of Gene Sharp, one of the principal US theoreticians, which in recent years has enjoyed growing circulation, especially on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, as more than one observer noted. The end goal of these questions was to attempt to understand whether there are specific and differential traits to this version of non-violence, which still lacks a clear adjective to define it and which we have taken the liberty or even the recklessness of naming it “non-violence 2.0”.

The theorists for this discipline make a distinction, not without its controversies, between ethical non-violence and pragmatic non-violence. The former has positive conception of conflict (the oppressing party must should realize the error of their ways) and emphasizes the combination of the means and the ends in the struggle and the importance of moral values, while the latter makes a more traditional analysis of conflict, insofar as this type of nonviolence understands a more antagonistic relationship between the parties with incompatible interests; in this way, non-violence is only a strategy, a means for advancing towards one’s own objectives as much as possible. When we say that the nonviolent strategy we have witnessed in the squares has specific features, this is because we are unable to categorize it into either of the aforementioned types, even though it may have features similar to the pragmatic version. In fact, they were “uprisings without violence”, in which foregoing violence played a more important role than its use. If we had to fall back on a category that better suits this phenomenon, perhaps we could make use of that which Robert Burrowes refers to as a “minimalist” conception of non-violence, in other words, a method of struggle where diverse expressions share the common denominator that is the refusal to resort to violence. In this sense, an action shall be considered nonviolent regardless of whether it is inspired by ethical or moral principles or whether it is motivated by eminently practical considerations.

In order to expand slightly the profile of these variations of non-violence, we should take a closer look at some of the highlighted elements that have accompanied the mobilisations. Firstly, we should highlight the fact that the phenomenon of the squares represented a move towards “breaking the silence”. Central, emblematic spaces were occupied to raise their voices in protest against an unsustainable situation in which the majority of the population, and particularly youth, were seeing themselves being pushed into an ever-increasing precariousness in their living conditions, where corruption and the abuse of power was the trademark of democracies in decline –the north American political philosopher Sheldon S. Wolin labelled these harshly using the term “inverted totalitarianisms”. But this could not have been brought about in any way whatever, because arguments for discrediting or repression should never be facilitated. The recent experiences were still felt too strongly (severe repression of the strikes in Egypt and the anti-globalisation movement in Europe) and risks were to be avoided. Sharp also identified three general methods of

nonviolent action: persuasion and nonviolent protest, noncooperation and direct action, generally in the form of civil disobedience. The mobilisations in question should basically be placed within the first group and to a lesser extent in the second. Nonviolent protest is based on symbolic actions such as petitions, proclamations, demonstrations, vigils... to express disagreement, opposition or support of specific issues, while non-cooperation is an initial form of deliberate defiance of the regime or institutions with which one is in conflict, adopting measures such as suspending public activity, economic noncooperation, political noncooperation, etc. We cannot speak of direct action because the situation did not reach forms of organised civil disobedience aimed at blocking or sabotaging behaviour patterns, policies, regulations, relations or institutions deemed unacceptable, nor were any new patterns established. While in the undercurrent of all the mobilisations there was dissatisfaction faced with a lack of real democracy, in the squares of south the objective was very clear: to topple the government, while in the squares of the north, the goal became more unclear, less defined.

Another important aspect which strengthens this distinction is the fact that the first people to break this silence unexpectedly were a people who appeared either to not count at all, or counted for very little. The Franco-Tunisian writer Abdelwahab Meddeb referred to the Tunisian uprising as the inaugural event in the acceleration of the decentering of History, in which the periphery has been raised to the centre –calls this uprising, “decentering revolution”, given that it was the people of a small north African country who have brought about an immense storm in the Arab-Muslim world in North Africa and the northern shores of the Mediterranean. It even appears that the wind of protest and change in Europe will progress from the periphery to the centre. The decisive factor that has made it possible for the uprisings in the south have been more successful than those in the north, was the adverse reaction of the media and independent observers, from the region and the north alike, to the repression of nonviolence (or nonviolent protesters), by the police and the army as well as by supporters of the regime. In the squares of the north, it has been possible to minimize this, because in general, the authorities have been more permissive and have waited for the moment and the necessary excuses before intervening.

In this sense, Burrowes makes a distinction between reformist and revolutionary nonviolence. Those who engage in the former identify specific policies as the principal causes of social problems and take action accordingly; those who practise the latter question the global model, given that these are guided by structural analysis of political and economic relations. In the first case, people are driven by the accomplishment of limited goals, and therefore the effectiveness of the action is more easily recognisable, while in the second case, the pretence of structural changes generates a more decisive reaction from the defenders of the established order and increases the likelihood of violent repression. In the squares of the south we can identify reformist nonviolence whereas in the north they have signed up to the second type, although without much conviction.

The overriding instrument in the success of these mobilisations was the Internet. Thanks to the Internet, we have been able to set the pace of the events, with a power of mobilisation previously unimaginable, and have prevented the initial attempts from being prematurely aborted. In fact, if people have given life to the squares and the assemblies have given it a voice, the Internet is responsible for acting as its loudspeaker. So, the blogosphere has been a decisive player in promoting and catalysing the activity of the *acampadas* (tent camps), as it has encouraged a greater rotation of those in attendance and has enabled those who could not be present in the squares to participate all the same in their actions and their objectives. Support from *Anonymous* nebula with the entrance into play of thousands of hackers (8,000 alone in Tunisia) was successful in halting the efforts of police and governments to close down the web. Therefore, the confrontation largely shifted to cyberspace, from where logistical support was given to the mobilisations and a new domain was opened in relations and collaboration, thereby enabling the exchange and sharing of information and encouraging the use of nonviolence.

The relevance of the blogosphere is unquestionable given that the generation of young people who took to the streets is better informed academically and professionally than their predecessors. This preparation also facilitated other external references coming into play, such as that of Gene Sharp, as mentioned above, at least in the squares of the south. Nevertheless, the presence of the internet, even the habit of thinking and communicating via a network has made another process possible: it has gone from the great assembly in one single square to many assemblies in the different towns and neighbourhoods. If the concentrations gave the movement visibility, fragmentation brings it to move along almost invisible paths, not always easy to follow. Perhaps spontaneous aggregation is better able to cope with the ups and downs, because people, even though they may not meet, continue to make their own inroads; they read, they acquire information, they participate in their micro networks.

Meanwhile, out there reality presses on and those who are in charge continue to turn things to their own advantage, remaining loyal to the idea that no other world is possible. In this context, it remains unclear as to which path these mobilisations may take and whether this new form of nonviolence can stand up to onslaughts of situations of ever-increasing tension where the loss of confidence and hope could lead to division and loss of patience. We must never forget that, regardless of how spontaneous the social movements are, they also require a minimum of success to spur them on. It remains to be seen whether this new direction nonviolence has taken is capable of allowing new forms of action to flourish, with a significant measure of creativity that can allow them to become effective to any extent.

Voices and Visions

Stefano Puddu, Oriol Leira i Elena Grau

Issue Coordinators



In this article we have collected the words of two women and two men who have had first-hand experience of the events which took place in several cities where the squares were converted temporarily into places of protest, of meetings and of dialogue in order to send out a message that needed to be heard. In Barcelona, Marti Olivella, who objected to compulsory military service during the seventies, has a long-term commitment to nonviolence and who is currently Director of the Institute of Social Innovation; in Milan (and Rome, Barbara di Tommaso, linked to social movements since the early eighties and active in the social field as an educator and trainer. In Brussels and in various cities in California, Elisabetta Cangelosi, a young activist of the “alter-globalisation” movement. In favour of disarmament, nonviolence, alternative economy, etc. and investigator in the field of the right to water as a universal entitlement; in Cagliari, Enrico Euli, philosopher and nonviolent activist, organiser of the first nonviolent action in

Comiso (Sicily) in the early eighties and one of the most incisive representatives in the area of reflection and nonviolent training.

What would you highlight about the movements that occupied the squares throughout 2011? What role do you think the practice of nonviolence played?

Marti Olivella: 15M is a spontaneous movement which expresses the outrage of a great part of the population against the fact that the political system in Spain has been subjected to the global financial system. Governments can no longer represent the people and are losing legitimacy because they no longer have power over key areas. One of the strengths of this from the very outset is the fact that it has opted for peaceful methods and rejected violence as being a provocation. For a month it managed to avoid any act of violence whatsoever, more by intuition than training or experience, thereby earning the admiration of the whole world. It even avoided violence in the face of the extreme and gratuitous violence by the police instigated by councillor Puig on May 27th in Barcelona.

Barbara di Tommaso: Once again, I am captivated by the beauty of diversity (gender, generational, ethnic groups, styles, musical tastes, backgrounds, slogans...). Those who take to the streets are tens of thousands of people who are not resigned to the current situation and who walk together to state that we cannot continue like this. It is true to say that the movement is not well organised and in a way, it is better like this, because the social capital it represents must be made up of retired people, women, young children, the disabled in wheelchairs and women with shopping trolleys. Each person carrying their own poster, banner or slogan, in a single self-representing group.

This active and widespread citizenry, organised on a case by case basis around specific objectives and which does not disappear, even though it appears to do so on account of returning to work in the neighbourhoods, schools, in areas of involvement... But they do so this time with the realization that they are representing 90 per cent of humanity. It is an opportunity and, at the same time, an enormous responsibility of being the majority on the planet!

Elisabetta Cangelosi: In Europe and the United State alike, regardless of the level of awareness and practical knowledge, it is a fact that “nonviolence” or at least “no violence” has been a common feature, propagated and shared, both at the time of establishing and maintaining a presence in the squares and streets, as well as in the methodology applied in assemblies and decision-making processes. It was the first time I had the opportunity to take part in “facilitated” assemblies in the strictest sense of the word, outside an openly declared “nonviolent” environment. In the case of facilitation, it is a question of a conscious choice; in other cases it is difficult to say up to what point the generically nonviolent orientation can be considered deliberate, either way, the results are worthy of note and attention, especially from the practice of the social movements.

Enrico Euli: To me all this appeared like a third window of opportunity. After the first one in spring of 1989 with *Perestroika*, the fall of the Berlin wall and the events of Tiananmen square and the second in 2001 with the G8 in Geneva and then September 11, both of which were missed opportunities. Maybe it is the last for my generation: The Arab and North African spring, the economic financial catastrophe in the west, the resurgence of the conflict between rich and poor, the excluded and the integrated, youth and adults/seniors... I believe that the system has never been as weak, so beyond our control, nor the risk of a catastrophic implosion so near. For this reason, the use of violence has become more explicit. Obviously, renouncing violence can have some deterrent effect (although this is not always the case, as can be seen in Syria and Israel); nevertheless, the point is that their power to change the situation is minimal.

What direction do you think things are taking? What do the present times demand from us?

Elisabetta Cangelosi: In Brussels, as well as in the San Francisco Bay Area, next to people who have been active in the political and social field for many years, we can see a high percentage of men and women who simply feel the need to express their disagreement with the current conditions in the world. This is an important difference with respect to previous movements and at the same time a pressure point in this new re-action to the injustices and dysfunctions of the system. To come to the

realisation that, with an ocean dividing us, comparable realities do exist and are being managed in very similar ways, makes you feel "at home" and leaves you with the feeling that some kind of seed is spreading by its own momentum, almost without any explicit awareness of "how".

Marti Olivella: A new citizen's political culture is being created, that speaks up without political intermediaries, connected directly without the filter of the manipulative mass media, and that not only talks but thinks, and decides, that not only demonstrates against, but also elaborates and puts proposals in practise, that occupies the public space to make it into the people's space and not just to put on a show. The passage of time can make us more mature or lead to decay. Perhaps what is needed is to define some achievable goal and to persevere until it is reached. Perhaps it is necessary to fine tune the tools of the network which would enable us to provide continuity and connect assemblies and citizens beyond the limits of space and time.

Barbara di Tommaso: "Capitalism has capitulated" was a banner I saw during the demonstrations in Rome. Yes, the system has entered an irreversible crisis due to excessive voracity. But now the question is what we can imagine, and what we can create for the future. We could start again with community ownership of goods as suggested by Zizek and the committees for the defence of water (and other similar experiences in many social and political micro-realities on a local, national and global level); It is a prospect that excites me and one that I would like to explore further and put into practice, but, who is with me? It would be necessary to invent, to think, to propose, to try it out. We have to imagine what it will be like. For this reason, we have to ask ourselves how we would like it to be. From that point, we talk to other citizens and movements and discover areas of agreement on targets that should be pursued with consistency and stubbornness.

Enrico Euli: In the light of what is happening, I think the time has come to engage in noncooperation and disobedience on a massive scale. It even comes down to staying still, to actively engage in passivity, to leave the nest. If we do not make this leap, we will necessarily remain subject to the threats and blackmail of the "system", which in spite of our protests and demands, does not consider us credible- and in my opinion, rightly so- they will not reduce themselves to negotiate with us and within a short time, they won't even pretend to listen to us. That is why we have to ask ourselves if we are capable of going after our adversaries' true interests (money and consensus/power) and above all, if we are willing to lose something, if we are genuine and come up to scratch with the conflict in play. Either nonviolence is "a moral equivalent of war" or it isn't.

FINDING OUT MORE

This section provides, on the one hand, a collection of resources relating to the Arab spring, the 15-M protests and links to a series of websites and centres focusing on nonviolence. And secondly, a short biographical text on Gene Sharp in which Rafael Grasa, under the heading "**The key practices for nonviolent action**", highlights the most significant features of the man and his work.

Materials developed by Jone Lauzurika

The Arab spring

News about the Arab spring (<http://periodismohumano.com/?s=primavera+%C3%A1rabe>), from the alternative journalistic perspective of *Periodismohumano*.

Chronicles from Syria (<http://periodismohumano.com/temas/cronicas-de-siria>). *Periodismohumano* reports the bloodiest episodes and those that received the least media attention from the Arab spring.

Amnesty International report, "Year of Rebellion" (http://www.es.amnesty.org/uploads/tx_useraitypdb/Ano_de_rebelion.pdf), analyses the state of human rights in the Middle East and North Africa on the first anniversary of the beginning of the revolts.

The Occupy and 15-M protest movements on a global scale

Interactive map (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/interactive/2011/oct/18/occupy-protests-map-world>) designed by the British newspaper *The Guardian*, detailing areas and places around the world where protests related to the Occupy and 15-M movements have taken place.

The maps from 15-M to 15-O (<http://tomalaplalabra.periodismohumano.com/2011/10/15/los-mapas-del-15m-al-15o/>), analysed by Pablo de Soto, architect and founding member of *hackitectura.net*

The 15-M movement and nonviolence

Document (<http://madrid.tomalaplaza.net/2011/08/04/apuntes-sobre-la-noviencia-del-15-m/>) circulated by groups connected to the 15-M to prepare a debate on nonviolence.

Comunicado (http://madrid.tomalaplaza.net/2011/08/08/comunicado-oficial-de-politica-a-largo-plazo-sobre-la-violencia-no-violencia/) from the web page #Acampadasol dealing with violence and nonviolence in the long term.

Article, "The 15-M movement, an opportunity for demilitarisation" (http://www.centredelas.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=803%3Ael-15-m-una-oportunidad-para-la-desmilitarizacion&catid=41%3Acultura-de-pau&Itemid=62&lang=ca), by Jordi Calvo Rufanges published by the centre for peace studies, *Centre d'Estudis per a la Pau JM Delàs* (October 28, 2011), analysing the relationship between the 15-M movement and nonviolent practices.

Web sites for centres focusing on nonviolence

Programme for the Active Construction of Peace and Nonviolence (http://noviolencia.nova.cat/), part of the Centre for Social Innovation (NoVA): association that fosters international interventions in favour of peace. The association has a significant document resource centre and publishes its own quarterly magazine, *Quaderns NoVA*.

Nonviolence Network in the Arab Countries (http://www.arabnonviolence.org/) (NNAC): is a platform composed by 70 nonviolent organisations from the Arab Region which share the values of nonviolence and popular struggle in order to transform conflict and unfair situations in their countries.

Middle East Nonviolence & Democracy (http://www.mendonline.org/) (MEND): promotes active nonviolence and encourages alternatives to violence among youth and adults throughout Palestine.

The Albert Einstein Institution (http://www.aeinstein.org/): The Albert Einstein Institution is a non-profit organisation advancing the study and use of strategic nonviolent action in conflicts throughout the world. The site offers many publications on nonviolence.

Irish Network for Nonviolent Action Training & Education (http://www.innatenonviolence.org/) (INNATE): organisation that publishes a large number of nonviolence resources and provides information about courses and activities concerning the practice of nonviolence.

The Class of Nonviolence (http://www.salsa.net/peace/conv/index.html): web page is an eight session class using 48 essays from the classics in nonviolence.

Gene Sharp, the key practices for nonviolent action

Rafael Grasa

Gene Sharp studied Social Sciences and Sociology and was jailed for nine months for objecting to the draft during the Korean War. Sharp received his Doctor of Philosophy in Political Theory in 1968 and his PhD thesis on the politics covering nonviolent action later served as the basis for his principal work, *The Politics on Nonviolent Action* (3 volumes, with an interesting prologue by Thomas Schelling). From then on, he wrote many other works, always dedicated to nonviolent civilian-based defence. From 1983, with the setting up of the Albert Einstein Institution, a non-profit organisation, he devoted his knowledge and convictions to the service of study and promotion of the use of nonviolence in conflicts around the world. The majority of his works are available from the web site mentioned in this section, the Albert Einstein Institution.

The most significant outcome of his commitment was his book, *From Dictatorship to Democracy* (1993), translated into more than 35 languages. The book can be downloaded for free from the Internet, and served as the manual, together with workshops and different videos, for many of the nonviolent revolts of the past two decades throughout the world. http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations6a1a.html.

We also recommend his famous list of the 198 Methods of Nonviolent Action which he himself compiled after studying centuries of nonviolent practices. These 198 methods can be read as successive stages or steps for programming pacific action for toppling dictatorships and tyrannies. http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations892f.html

Not quite as well-known is the primordial role which Sharp's writings on Civilian Based Defence played in 1991 in the strategy adopted by governments in the Baltic Republics (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) during their separation from the Soviet Union/Community of Independent States. The Scottish director, Ruaridh Arrow made a documentary about the subject, "How to Start a Revolution".

INTERVIEW

Jonan Fernandez, director of Baketik

Eugènia Riera

Institut Català Internacional per la Pau



Jonan Fernandez has worked actively for human rights and peace in the Basque Country. For 14 years he headed up Elkarrri and is currently the director of Baketik, a research centre focusing on ethical conflict resolution based on the sum of two concepts: peace (*bak*) and ethics (*etik*). In this interview, Fernandez reflects on the challenges facing the Basque peace process after the end to violence and on the importance of reconciliation in overcoming the conflict.

After the announcement by ETA of a definitive end to violence, nobody doubts that we are at the beginning of the end of the Basque conflict. Now the political conflict has to be resolved and the foundations put into place for social coexistence and reconciliation... Which should take priority?

The two processes are a priority and the most important thing is that they are not confused. We have to differentiate between resolution processes of the political conflict—see how to provide solutions to respond to the political differences which exist in Basque society— and the process of reconciliation of the coexistence— what needs to be done to address the fabric which has been broken over the past decades - . To begin with the latter I believe would be easier and progress made in either of the two will benefit the entire process.

What steps should be taken in the agenda for reconciliation?

Reconciliation takes place in three time frames, the past, the present and the future. And this consists of no more than finding a shared answer to three questions: what happened in the past and why, what we have to do now and what we need to do to ensure this doesn't happen again. As a society, we need to find answers to these three questions looking into the eyes of a 15 year old. We need to provide a rigorous, honest response that does not incite hatred but rather integration and peaceful coexistence.

Reviewing the past implies remembering, talking about the victims and forgiveness. Is it imperative to forgive in order to face the future?

Forgiveness is extremely important, we would almost say that it is fundamental, but it cannot be imposed on anyone, it is voluntary. This is the crux of the issue. It is dealt with as if it were an obligation or a condition, even a starting point for any process, and this is a mistake. There is no law stating that a person has to ask for forgiveness obligatorily because this is a contradiction: asking for forgiveness or being forgiven is part of the human liberty of amendment and thus can only spring from the free will of the person in question; it cannot be imposed on anyone or forced upon anyone, it can be recommended and encouraged. What is compulsory in a reconciliation process is the recognition of the damage inflicted (acknowledgement of the victims), a commitment to not repeating this damage and the assumption of each party's responsibility.

What role should the victims play in the process of reconciliation?

The victim has the right to be heard, to be redressed, to be acknowledged and the right for others not to build the future as if the past had never happened. In terms of political decisions, the victims must be equal to all other citizens; they cannot have additional consideration.

What do you think of the creation of a Remembrance Centre in the Basque Country? Do you see this as a step in the right direction?

We think it's a good step; however there is one nuance that should be highlighted. The critical review of the past must include a non-negotiable condition: that it is capable of integrating all cases of human rights' violations that have been committed without exception. This is the case, because a reconciliation process is destined to fail if there are exclusions when it comes to acknowledging the suffering that has been inflicted. A remembrance centre cannot just take into account part of the memory but must include all. In the same way that it must remember the 839 victims killed by ETA, it must also speak of the 200 additional fatalities produced by parapolic groups or extreme right wing groups, or as a result of police activities in violation of human rights. Or it would have to address the torture... You have to design a memory without exclusion or dilution: you cannot use one human rights' violation to dilute others. This is the major challenge.

Are you going to cooperate with the Basque government?

If the criteria I have just mentioned are met then Baketik will certainly collaborate. However, if there is any inclination towards a selective memory, then no. Not only because this does not contribute to the process of reconciliation and coexistence, but because it actually hampers it.

Another issue which is on the table is that of the prisoners. Do you consider it an urgent matter to reform penitentiary policy?

In terms of penitentiary policy the first thing that should be done is to comply with the legal standards and, from this point on, to begin dialogue. Although it appears to be paradoxical, the current policy of dispersing prisoners outside of the Basque Country does not correspond to the rule of law and this has historically been denounced by groups such as Gesto por la Paz, Elkarrri, Lokarri... Firstly, penitentiary policy should be aligned with the rule of law and then, all political parties and institutions should reach a consensus on a series of measures (legislative, political or pardons) which contribute to a move towards humanizing the penitentiary situation and to consolidate the climate of peace. This kind of measure has been a feature in every peace process.

Do you think that the recently elected PP government is prepared for this?

In the short-term, the answer is no, and acting alone probably not so either. Because of this, I believe it should be a decision that has the consent of the entire political spectrum. In the Basque Country, there would be a significant majority of people who would support this and I suppose that with the passage of time, this will also be the case in the rest of Spain.

Will Rajoy's government be able to rise to the occasion?

I would like to think that they will. After the first few months, there will be sufficient intelligence to decide on the measures required for the definitive and irreversible consolidation of this state of affairs. From the point of view of the international community, nothing else would be understood.

The end to the violence by ETA also requires peaceful organisations to reposition themselves. Baketik has undergone reforms after 5 years in operation and will work in conjunction with Lokarri in the process of reconciliation. What is the aim of this collaboration agreement?

It is very important at this moment in time to join forces and push in the same direction so that the social power of the idea of reconciliation is bolstered. Lokarri and Baketik, despite the fact that we operate in different environments, agree almost 100% on the direction the work must take. From the social movements, we can collaborate with other representatives from the academic world, or the local councils, to design new educational methods for ways of dealing with conflicts, to foster a fresh culture of coexistence. We have to ensure that learning to live together becomes part of peoples' day-to-day life.

Can Catalonia also play any part in the peace process?

The Catalan social and political movements can help the peace process to gain strength from different areas at a national level. When the time comes to offer a critical perspective of the past and to defend a critical memory, we will need the most open points of views and opinions possible.

PLATFORM

Libya after Gaddafi

Bichara Khader

Professor in the University of Louvain, Director of the Center for Study and Research of the Modern Arab World (CERMAC) in Louvain



After the flight of Ben Ali from Tunisia and the forced resignation of the Egyptian President, Mubarak, the fall of the Libyan regime took a turn for the worse with the wounding and execution of Gaddafi. The Libyans welcomed the tragic end of a mad, megalomaniac and capricious tyrant. Personally, I would have preferred to see him arrested and brought before the courts of his country in order to account for his disastrous handling of a country so rich in both men and resources and to lift the veil of secrecy covering Libyan capital deposited abroad and finally to reveal numerous secrets which would be compromising for some Western leaders especially for those who had been presented as models of legality and military justice.

The National Council for transition has inherited a country torn apart by air attacks and savage bombing, an economy weakened by cronyism and pillage and a society destabilized by tribal and regional divisions. Above all, it has received a legacy of a shattered state with no effective institutions, no independent judiciary, no political parties, no trade unions and no professional organizations.

Gaddafi in his delusions of grandeur created a Libya in his own image which became the "Jamahiriya" with popular committees dedicated to the cult of the leader and whose *Green Book* became obligatory reading in all schools and the Bible of the entire country.

Worse still, the country became a family fiefdom where resources were held by the chief and the family members trained to succeed him.

Unlike the Tunisians and Egyptians who have to change the regime, the Libyan Provisional Government has to rebuild a devastated, spoiled and impoverished country. In the final analysis, it is an advantage: it is better to build a new building than to restore an old one. Nevertheless, the task ahead is colossal.

The provisional government has set up institutions capable of overcoming regional and tribal differences and ensuring certain required balances in an impartial setting. National reconciliation must not limit transitional justice. To rebuild a

country on new foundations, forgiving and forgetting are essential. The militias must be disarmed. The new army and the new police force should be composed largely of young people. The setting up of public services requires experience to which the international community can contribute. Nevertheless, the fundamental task in hand is to rebuild civic culture.

To create a country with functioning institutions will take time. However, one must avoid disenchantment among the Libyans and respond to the impatience of youth. That is why it is of the utmost importance to hold elections to decide a National Assembly as soon as possible. The provisional government must hold office for as short a time as possible: it would be a bad sign.

There are many dangers facing the Libya of tomorrow: the return of the demons of regionalism and tribalism, the inability of the new army and new police force to secure the external borders and guarantee internal security, competition between militias, the return to cronyism, the unequal sharing of oil wealth, differences regarding the very nature of the state (centralised, decentralised) or the parliamentary model (Presidential, parliamentarian or mixed?)

Libya is a conservative Sunni country and there are no divisions between Sunnis and Shiites. In the upcoming elections, the pragmatic Islamists will do well, as has been the case in neighbouring countries. On the other hand, radical Islamists will be a very small minority. The country has no major conflicts with its neighbours but its southern borders are porous. Libya must provide itself with sophisticated means of surveillance but not necessarily with an army equipped with heavy weaponry. There are many problems facing Libya but the country is vast (three times bigger than France) and contains important oil reserves. The country has the advantage of having 1,200 kilometres of coastline and an abundance of remains of ancient civilizations that can quickly transform it into a first class tourist destination. In short, the country is lacking neither determination nor resources. What is still missing is a solid democracy. On this depends the future of Libya.

An inclusive memory in the Basque case

Carlos Martín Beristain

Physician and Doctor of Psychology, he works in aid programmes for victims of political violence and has written several books on the subject



In the case of the Basque Country, the debates and experiences regarding the building of a memory to victims overlaps political debate and cultural spaces. In recent years, a process of acknowledging the victims of ETA's violence has gotten underway as this particular group did not have the social support of the institutions and certain sectors of the community up to now. Recognition of other victims of extreme right-wing groups or government agents nevertheless, has always been postponed until now, with the excuse that the time wasn't right or that any initiative might be used by some to compare the State to ETA or to manipulate the suffering of victims or disrespect them. Moreover, several acts of local recognition have been organised by institutions and town councils, especially between 2005 up to the present day, which demonstrates an encouraging development in the social climate.

In such contexts, the difficulties of overcoming conflicts have also been evidenced in the representation and memory of victims of different groups (ETA, GAL, State agents), and the risk of making political use of these memories. Nevertheless, in recent times there is ever-growing interest in inaugurating a space dedicated to an inclusive memory, by way of several reports commissioned by the

Basque Parliament as well as parliamentary initiatives as yet in the development phase.

An inclusive memory would be one in which all the different human rights' violations and moral criticism thereof are brought together and recognised, thereby demonstrating respect for the suffering and dignity of the victims of different perpetrators. For this to take root, firstly we must separate the recognition of victims from the debate concerning processes of victimisation. In other words, all victims must avail of the same rights to truth, justice or redress, regardless of who the authors of this violence are and without entering into political assessment as to the justification of this suffering or those responsible.

Inclusive memory is grounded in a common basis of respect for human rights that transcends political differences. In order to achieve this, what is required is empathy and to cross the boundaries of solidarity. To overcome defensive memories of one's own

identity, of those who have witnessed or recognized the suffering of the victims with whom they feel closeness, while they have denied the pain of others or justified this pain using political arguments or derogatory assessments. All this is of concern to the Basque society and Spanish society in general. Nevertheless, in addition to conflict concerning memory, there have also been encouraging experiences of meetings between victims from all sides. This demonstrates the feeling of empathy between persons who have suffered similar events and situations, including pain and marginalisation, assaults on their dignity, or witnessing impunity, but also a capacity for solidarity far and above political differences.

From the perspective of redressing the social divide caused by violence, an inclusive memory can act as an important instrument, even though it may have varying manifestations and/or degrees of commitment. It may receive broad approval from the different victims and their right to recognition and memory, or as acts of mutual recognition between victims from different "sides" or political sensitivities. In other cases, it can serve as part of a shared symbolic expression. All of these are potential manifestations of a process that has yet to be set in motion. These processes cannot be coerced, although the spaces which facilitate these steps and people who are capable of taking them are required. For many years, the predominant response to these initiatives and prospects for meetings has been that, the time is not yet right. But like the wisdom in the words of Casaldàliga: *it is late, but it is all the time we have in hand to build the future, it is late but if we insist a little, the dawn will come*¹. The time for this memory has come. A memory not only focused on settling a debt, but also on its contribution to rebuilding coexistence.

1. Pere Casaldàliga, *El tiempo y la espera*, Santander, Editorial Sal Terrae, 1986.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Democracy Lab: is a unique journalistic effort to cover the transition from authoritarianism to democracy the world over

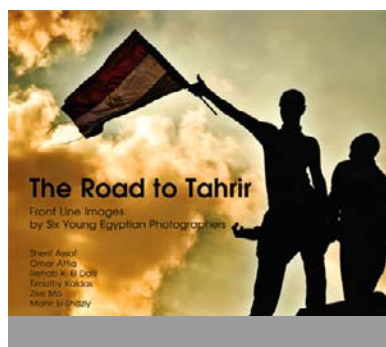
<http://democracylab.foreignpolicy.com>

The current wave of revolution sweeping through the Arab world shows us, once again, that the transition from authoritarianism to democracy faces many political and economic challenges. In view of this, the award-winning magazine *Foreign Policy* together with the Legatum Institute, an independent, public-policy group based in London, have come together to foster a project to study the complexities involved in transitions from authoritarianism to democracy in an online "laboratory".

From a multi-viewpoint which tackles the issue from a myriad of angles and includes diverse aspects that do not always make it into the headlines, Democracy Lab publishes a wide variety of materials including blogs, columns, expert interviews, case studies, profiles of key political and economic decision-makers, a weekly feature examining the numbers behind social change and a weekly news bulletin.

The project, launched in January, includes contributions from reporters around the world, incorporating the voices from many nations and already boasts many remarkable contributions such as the first article published on the website, "The Drive for Dignity", in which philosopher Francis Fukuyama points out the following: *"The desire for recognition is thus a two-edged sword. It underlies the anger that powers social mobilization and revolt against abusive government, but it often becomes attached to ascriptive identities that undermine the universality of rights. Now that three dictatorships have fallen in the Arab world, with a fourth and fifth possibly on their way, this is the struggle that will play itself out"*.

L.v.T.



The Road to Tahrir

Assaf, Sherif (et al.). *The Road to Tahrir. Front Line Images by Six Young Egyptian Photographers*. El Cairo; New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2011

There have been many media sources, artists and people in the Street who have wished to immortalise the Arab Spring so that it remains registered in our collective memory. This is the case of six young Egyptian photographers whose cameras were placed at the service of the revolution, which they accompanied around the clock to capture every possible detail of the events which transformed the lives of the Egyptian people.

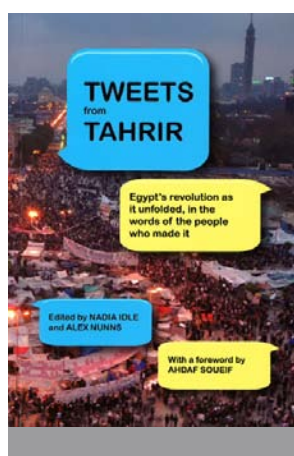
The Road to Tahrir is the result of this intense pursuit. The book is a spectacular visual record documenting the places where the revolution took place –Tahrir Square, evidently, but also the surrounding streets and areas-, their symbols and slogans and portraits

of some of the revolutions key players, on occasion bearing the shocking reminders of violence on their faces.

The book covers the period from January 25, 2011, the official date on which the Egyptian revolution began, through to the holding of the constitutional referendum on March 19. This visual record illustrates the fact that the Egyptian Arab Spring featured men, women and children, Muslims and Christians, young and old who came together to take control of their future.

In short, using images, *The Road to Tahrir* narrates a historic moment that cannot be easily summarised in words, a moment that, for the book’s authors promises the rise of “a different Egypt, brilliant, democratic and free – the Egypt that was and will be present in Tahrir Square” (p. 147).

J.L.



Tweets from Tahrir

Nadia Idle y Alex Nunns. *Tweets from Tahrir: Egypt’s revolution as it unfolded, in the words of the people who made it*. Doha: Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing, 2011

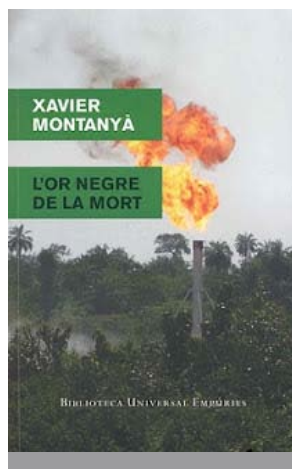
The transforming character of the new virtual social networks such as Twitter or Facebook acquires greater prominence in those countries where the mass media is controlled by the State. Such was the case in Egypt when the Arab Spring sneaked into the country by way of the messages or tweets of thousands of Egyptians frustrated with the lack of freedom and opportunities under the regime of Hosni Mubarak.

The work of Nadie Idle and Alex Nunns brings together an important sample of these tweets reproduced verbatim and in chronological order. In this way, *Tweets from Tahrir* becomes a diary of the revolution which began on January 25, 2011 based on the eye-witness accounts of some of key players. The work reflects therefore the crucial role played by social networks and new technologies alike in mobilising the population and the spread of the Arab Spring in Egypt.

Nevertheless, there is a certain degree of arrogance in the vague description by the West of the Egyptian revolution as the “Twitter Revolution”. This label disregards the real causes of the uprising, the dramatic economic reality of the majority, the lack of opportunities for a young and educated population, the fossilization of authoritarian power structures and it also ignores the role played by sectors of the community without access to new technologies.

In short, *Tweets from Tahrir* vindicates the important role played by the social media in spreading and broadcasting the revolution in Egypt without forgetting that it would never have taken place without the thousands of people who put their lives at risk to build a decent future.

J.L.



The Black Gold of Death

Xavier Montanya. *L'or negre de la mort*. Barcelona: Empúries, 2011

A delicate piece of work. A travel log through Africa, the real Africa. A first hand investigation, beyond the images that reach us through the media. A profound tale of meticulous prose that touches and moves the reader.

The Niger Delta serves as an example. A time bomb. The most densely populated delta on the planet. An extreme and pragmatic case for understanding the problems of African countries, decolonised and seriously affected by human and ecological devastation caused (and which continues to be caused) by indiscriminate extraction of its natural resources.

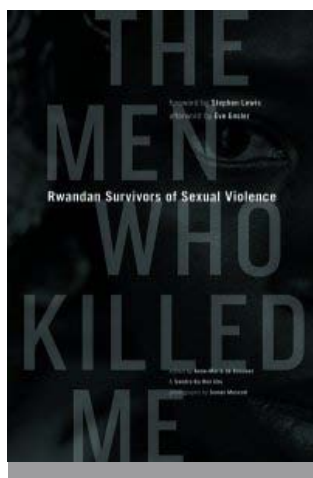
Destruction of the environment means the destruction of people's way of life, but also their souls, their philosophical understanding of the world and life itself. Water is associated with womankind, fertility, health, trade. Men identify with the warrior spirits of the forest. And then there is oil. The fuel that drives our industries. The blood of these people. Shed through new forms of global, private and public repression, in connection with the impunity of security forces, traffic of weapons and the influence of multinationals in the government. Shell. DynCopr Internacional. Halli Burton.

Many sections of the book read like the script for a documentary. There is a narrator who allows the different characters to tell their story, intellectuals, politicians, and soldiers, through a series of carefully chosen snippets from interviews. A reading of these reveals to us that the former ports used for the slave trade are today used as oil ports. That for the vast majority of the inhabitants of these countries, having oil is a curse.

As you incessantly flip page after page you begin to wonder how it will all end... how will the author manage to prevent the reader from ending up with a feeling of absolute desolation? The initiatives undertaken by civil society allow you to catch your breath. Communities organize themselves, there are local and international campaigns underway, environmental, human rights, solidarity... Wole Soyinka. Fela Kuti. Ogoniland. And, above all, Ken Saro-Wiwa, the martyred activist, philosopher, apostle of nonviolence who continues to inspire the struggle and who, in the West, lacks the attention and recognition he deserves.

In short, a collection of interwoven portraits of the reality of the Delta, Nigerian, African. Adorned with scathing accounts. The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against oblivion. There is no post Auschwitz period, we are still in Auschwitz – in an Auschwitz that covers the entire world today. "In his cold, piercing, but warm eyes, there is neither pity nor rage, but instead dignity and conviction"

X.A.



The men who killed me

Anne-Marie de Brouwer & Sandra Ka Hon Chu (ed.). *The men who killed me: Rwandan survivors of sexual violence*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009

The book gathers the testimonials of sixteen women and one man who were victims of sexual violence during the Rwandan genocide, between April and July 1994. There are no exact data as regards the total amount of victims of the genocide, but about a million people were killed and an estimated 250.000 to 500.000 women and girls were raped and abused. 70% of the survivors were infected with HIV and they continue struggling for their lives in extreme poverty within communities who reject and stigmatize them because of the atrocities they endured. Furthermore, many of them have to live among the murderers of their relatives and friends.

Their stories are so hard that makes it difficult to continue reading. The only way to get to the end of the book is to detach yourself from the stories, read them as if it was a distant fiction, a mere compilation of facts, because, if you read carefully and look at the faces of the protagonists, the brutality of the scenes will get etched in your memory forever.

You can not avoid feeling great rage and impotence when reading this book. This is just another example of how, throughout the history of humanity, sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war. The book must be read. These women have survived hell and they have proved to be very brave telling their stories. Their testimonials must be heard. They deserve our attention.

M.L.



The NGDO Coordinator and other humanitarian movements in Lleida: combining synergies for social justice

The NGDO Coordinator has its origins in the movement to promote the allocation of 0.7% of GDP to development aid organisations, which was of significant prominence in the city of Lleida in the nineties. This movement is an example of participative democracy for social movements that pave a new path, unlike the existing ones, and is the seed of elements for social transformation such as the NGDO Coordinator and other Humanitarian Movements in Lleida.

The Coordinator brings together 37 organisations working in cooperation and providing humanitarian assistance for the poorest people and regions on the planet, and gives support to a further 20 organisations, thereby making this an umbrella organization working towards pooling synergies. The aim of the organization is to promote joint action based on the indissoluble elements of Peace, Human Rights and Cooperation aimed at affecting a change towards social justice.

The Coordinator is organised in four different areas designed to tackle the task in a cross manner: Raise of Awareness and Education for Development, Communication and Coordination, and Support for organisations. With regard to the latter area, the Coordinator offers member organisations and stakeholders from the cooperation and development sector, a support framework in several different areas, including orientation, training, consultancy, dissemination, facilities, the Sac Solidari [Solidarity Trunk] (collection of materials and resources designed to target awareness raising and education for development).

In short, the Coordinator promotes the joint work of NGOs and Humanitarian Movements in Lleida, fostering the participation of other sectors of society organised to strengthen the social fabric of civic life in the city. In addition, it strives to secure guarantees of a more efficient, transparent and game-changing solidarity from public bodies and other organisations. With campaigns such as, **“Som un ingredient més per cuinar un món diferent”** [We are another ingredient for cooking up a different world] (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/coordongdlleida/sets/72157627299387454/show/>), or **“I qui rescata a la societat?”** [And who's going to bailout our society?] (http://www.coordinadora-ongd-lleida.cat/ca/noticies/Hem_enviat_a_ZP_2_136_signatures_pel_rescat_social.asp?tipoForm=ampli&id=%7B508D21C8-E3C5-4391-9212-984FA4D15552%7D), they have managed to reach most of the province of Lleida, raising community awareness about the reality facing economically and socially impoverished people and communities. Therefore, the existence of this organisation is an indispensable element in ensuring that our society continues its efforts to fight poverty and promote peace and human rights. We take this opportunity to invite you to take a closer look and get to know the work of the Lleida NGDO Coordinator.

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NEWS

ICIP NEWS

ICIP recognizes the struggle of conscientious objectors and *insumisos* with the ICIP Peace in Progress Award

On February 29th the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP) awarded the First ICIP Peace in Progress Award to the group of conscientious objectors and *insumisos* (Spanish term for a person who refuses to do military service or any substitute social work) who opposed compulsory military service. The Award was presented on behalf of the group to Pepe Beunza, the first conscientious objector for ideological reasons in Spain, who was accompanied by four other representatives of the movement: Jordi Agulló, Jaume Llansó, Ramon Panyella, and Martí Olivella. In his acceptance speech, Beunza called for a culture of peace to build a more just and peaceful society and committed to continue fighting against the current “international financial dictatorship”

The award recognizes the work of conscientious objectors and *insumisos* “in representing a long and diverse struggle against compulsory military service, which contributed to the entrenchment of democracy and to spreading the values of a culture of peace”. Through its rejection of the use of arms, the group also spread the values of “conscientious objection, civil disobedience and the non-violent resolution of conflicts.”

The ICIP Peace in Progress Award is conferred annually and consists of an honorary distinction, public recognition and a sculpture created by the Nobel Peace Prize winner, activist and artist, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, titled, *Porta del Sol*.

Resolution of applications for research grants and subsidies made available in 2011

ICIP has published the resolution on its website concerning the two applications made available in 2011 for grants and subsidies: research grants for work in the area of peace (RI-ICIP) and subsidies allocated to universities and research centres for the hiring of new research teams (FI-ICIP). Both resolutions are dated, December 22, 2011.

Both applications for grants and subsidies are managed by the Agency for Management of University and Research Grants (AGAUR as per the Catalan acronym). The awarding of these grants falls within the framework of the Plan for Research and Innovation in Catalonia and the ICIP Strategic Plan.

ICIP sets up a reading group on peace issues

The ICIP Area of Training and Dissemination set up a reflection group which through collective reading and analysis, aims to establish dialogue regarding our conceptual frameworks related to peace, peace research and conflict transformation.

The group coordinator is Vicent Martínez Guzmán, Doctor of Philosophy and Honorary Director of the UNESCO Chair of Philosophy for Peace, and a promoter of Peace and Development Studies at several universities. The first session was focused around a reading of works by Johan Galtung and Martínez Guzmán himself and took place on Tuesday, March 13, from 6 to 8 PM, at the ICIP registered office (Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 658 baixos, Barcelona). After this first session, the group will meet on a regular basis, on April 3, May 8 and June 5.

Those interested in signing up can contact ICIP by sending an email to activitats.icip@gencat.cat or phoning 93 554 42 75.

Opening of the exhibition “Libya, Year Zero”

ICIP opens the exhibition “Libya, Year Zero”, by photographer Alfonso Moral, at the Institute’s headquarters in Barcelona (Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 658 baixos) and it is open to the public until September 21. The exhibit relives the recent conflict in Libya – after the revolts of the Arab Spring and the war declared by NATO – and it does so by moving away from images of violence and focusing on the effects the conflict has had on the civilian population, with images of children, men and women in their day-to-day coexistence with the war.

Over forty people attended the opening, including ICIP president, Rafael Grasa, and the author of the exhibit, Alfonso Moral. Grasa explained that the staging of the exhibition Libya, Year Zero was part of ICIP’s commitment to work on what has happened during the past year, what is happening now, and what will happen in the future in the Arab country. Alfonso Moral explained that the exhibit was the result of a personal endeavour carried out during two trips to Libya, one at the beginning, and the other at the end of the revolution, with a focus on the civilian population. Moral thanked ICIP for placing their trust in his project and their collaboration that made it possible.

The ICIP holds seminar to analyse the future of International Criminal Court

On January 9th and 10th at the Palau Centelles, Barcelona, ICIP held a seminar of experts in *Reflections on the Future of the International Criminal Court. Tenth Anniversary of the Entry into Force of the Rome Statute*. Organized by ICIP as part of the research program “Armed Conflicts: Law and Justice,” the seminar brought together over twenty experts in international law, mostly from Spain.

The presentations and discussions in the seminar focused on appraising the work the International Court of Justice has accomplished during its ten years of existence – the Rome Statute, its founding treaty, entered into force on July 1, 2002 – and the future challenges facing the institution. The experts discussed the support the Court receives from states and international organizations, the current state of ratifications and the prospects of expansion, the human and material resources of the institution, complementarity with respect to national jurisdictions, and the advisability of expanding its competences – war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and aggression.

New publications

ICIP has added to its library collection “Nonviolence and the struggle for Peace”, jointly edited by Pagès Editors, with two additional titles: the new issue of *Els anomenats pacifistes. La noviolència a l'estat espanyol* by John Paul Lederach, which includes the author’s interviews with Lluís Maria Xirinacs and Gonzalo Arias; and *La força de la gent. Resistència no armada i solidaritat global*, where editor Howard Clark compiles a series of texts dealing with nonviolent struggles around the world.

In addition, the Institute has published a new issue in the ICIP Policy Papers Collection: *Construir la paz y el desarrollo en Costa de Marfil: decisiones nacionales, responsabilidades y deberes compartidos*, by Albert Caramés and Rafael Grasa; and the ICIP Bibliographic dossier number 4 with one section wholly given over to the ten years since the opening of Guantanamo.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

No end to violence in Syria

The brutal repression carried out by the Syrian regime of Bashar el Asad since the civil society protests almost a year ago, have caused the death of more than 7,500 people according to the latest figures published by the UN. In previous weeks, the army siege has focused its attention on the city of Homs where the humanitarian crisis grows more serious by the day. One of the worst affected neighbourhoods by the systematic bombings has been Bab Amro, and the Red Cross is reporting that soldiers are blocking access to distribute aid. European and North American leaders have condemned the violations of human rights committed by the Syrian regime and several countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and France have closed their embassies in Damascus. However, Russia and China continue to block a UN Security Council resolution against the Syrian regime and the international community demonstrates its incapability of putting an end to the violence.

Guatemala's ex-dictator accused of genocide

Efraín Ríos Montt, the former army general who between 1982 and 1983 subjected Guatemala to a military dictatorship, has stood trial on charges of genocide against indigenous Indian communities and around a hundred massacres against the leftist opposition. The trial got underway once Ríos Montt was stripped of the parliamentary immunity he enjoyed and which shielded him from any similar charges. The decision to make the ex-dictator stand trial means that Guatemala follows in the footsteps of other countries in the region in prosecuting former dictators responsible for committing crimes against humanity in the context of civil war. The civil war in Guatemala lasted 36 years, until 1996, and caused the death of 200,000 civilians, the majority of whom were from indigenous communities. It is now being demanded that these ex-dictators officially apologise for committing these atrocities.

Four Kenyan leaders accused of crimes against humanity

The International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague has confirmed the charges against four prominent Kenyan political leaders, accused of organising violence and committing crimes against humanity in the wake of the disputed 2007 elections. On hearing of the announcement, President Mwai Kibaki ordered the State Prosecutor to establish a commission of legal experts to challenge the ICC's jurisdiction in this matter. The leader's attitude is in stark contrast with that of members of parliament who support the decision of the ICC and consider that leaving local authorities to decide the outcome of these crimes could be detrimental. Violence broke out following the 2007 elections causing the deaths of some 1,300 people and around 600,000 displaced.

The French Senate passes Armenian genocide law

The French Senate has approved a bill that makes it an offence to deny that genocide was committed against Armenians by Ottoman Turks at the end of 1910s. It is expected that this controversial bill's passage re-opens old wounds between France and Turkey. Tensions between the two countries, which had begun to ease in recent times with both countries becoming leading supporters of the Syrian uprising, can be traced back to the French government's opposition to Turkey joining the EU.

Violent clashes break out in South Sudan

South Sudan, officially recognised by the United Nations as country number 193 after declaring its independence, has for several weeks been suffering violent clashes between rival ethnic groups. At least 6,000 members of the Lou Nuer ethnic group attacked Pibor, home of the Murle, who launched violent reprisals. The UN has reported that ethnic violence has already caused the displacement of around 120,000 people. The organisation deployed an enormous emergency operation to get food to those affected. The exact death toll is still unclear, and unverified estimates talk of more than 3,000 dead. The government of South Sudan has promised to open an investigation and bring those responsible to justice. It has already deployed a contingent of 3,000 troops in the area to act as a "buffer zone" between the rival ethnic groups.

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Design/Layout: ComCom

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Xavier Alcalde, Ignacio Castro Rey, Ahmed Eid, Maria Fanlo, Rafael Grasa, Elena Grau, Bichara Khader, Jone Lauzurika, Oriol Leira, Marta López, Carlos Martín Beristain, Guifré Miquel, Stefano Puddu, Eugènia Riera, Léonie van Tongeren.