

## Horizontal Democracy Now: From Alterglobalization to Occupation<sup>1</sup>

Marianne Maeckelbergh

### Abstract

*This article examines the 15 May movement in Barcelona to explore some continuities and discontinuities between social movement responses to the economic crisis and previous experiments with horizontal democracy within global social movement networks. Specifically, this article examines two meeting structures embodied in the occupied square in Barcelona to explore the mechanisms through which decision-making within the 15 May movement foster diversity and embrace conflict. Based on a decade of involvement in the alterglobalization movement, attendance at meetings in the acampada in Barcelona at the height of the 15 May uprising, as well as follow up interviews and discussions with long-time activists in Barcelona, this article shows how the decision-making practices used in the squares in Barcelona mimic, build on and expand on horizontal decision-making methods practiced within the alterglobalization movement. Some of the dilemmas created by the grounding of horizontal decision-making within local squares and the much larger scale of these meetings are explored.*

**Keywords:** social movements, economic crisis, horizontal democracy, 15 May movement, occupy, decision-making, Barcelona.

### Introduction

When the hundreds of thousands of people who marched in Madrid on 15 May 2011 began to occupy public squares across Spain, social movement networks well beyond Spain took notice. In no time I was receiving emails, text messages and facebook invites telling me that I should go to the Damrak in Amsterdam to "Take the Square!" in solidarity with the hundreds of thousands who had taken so many of their local squares across Spain. My email inbox was overflowing with emails about what was alternately being called the #spanishrevolution, the Real Democracy Now movement, the Indignant/Outraged movement, the take-the-square movement and the 15 May movement. Within days there were squares being (temporarily) occupied all over Europe, and within six months,

---

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to the blind reviewers, to guest editor Mayo Fuster Morell and to Laurence Cox for taking the time to offer their insightful feedback which greatly improved this article. Thanks especially to the people I met in Barcelona who took the time to talk with me and work with me even though I know they had very little time and energy left after putting so much into creating the acampada and working on their urgent campaigns.

there were occupations all over the world, culminating in 951 occupations in 82 different countries on 15 October 2011.<sup>2</sup>

Officially the protests were linked to the upcoming Spanish elections which were scheduled for 22 May 2011, but the 15 May movement continued under the slogan “we are not commodities in the hands of bankers and politicians.” Faced with governments that defended finance and banks at the literal expense of the people, many people stood up and demanded, “a real democracy, a democracy no longer tailored to the greed of the few, but to the needs of the people” (Rodríguez and Herreros 2011). For some participants these political statements are part of an anti-capitalist agenda, but for many, they are primarily an expression of outrage about the way contemporary political and economic structures make input into decision-making on the part of those most affected by economic and political decisions impossible.

In this context of heightened distrust for both economic and political institutions, the 15 May movement set about creating more inclusive models of political decision-making. This model of decision-making is based on a set of principles that pre-date the rise of the 15 May movement and in this article I argue that in order to understand the significance of these political practices, we have to place these practices not only within the historical context of each town, city or country where these practices have emerged, but also within the historical trajectory of experiments with participatory democracy and horizontal decision-making in social movement networks internationally. In what follows I therefore contextualize my findings not in relation to a deep insider knowledge of the ins and outs of the 15 May movement, but rather in relation to my deep knowledge of horizontal decision-making within social movements over the past ten years. It is my hope that this ‘insider’-perspective-from-elsewhere will nevertheless shed some light on the political importance of the 15 May movement for the history and evolution of horizontal decision-making.

This article therefore first sketches a brief, and necessarily partial, historical context for horizontal decision-making and then examines two different decision-making procedures enacted during the height of the 15 May movement in Barcelona to show how these procedures are remarkably similar to the procedures practiced by the alterglobalization movement over the past ten years. Many activists and several scholars have already demonstrated that there are important continuities and discontinuities between the alterglobalization movement and the 15 May movement or the Occupy movement more generally (see Anonyous 2012, Graeber 2011, Klein 2011, Razsa 2012, Reyes 2011, Wainwright 2012) with one important continuity being that activists perceive the 15 May and Occupy movements to be in part a response to a crisis of representative democracy (see Razsa 2012).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> More recent accounts estimate around 1,400 occupations worldwide (see Occupy Together, 2012)

<sup>3</sup> Even in countries where there may appear to be primarily a rejection of foreign powers (such as the IMF) intervention, the activist responses mimic for a large part those of the

In this article I focus on two characteristics of horizontal decision-making that figure centrally in both the alterglobalization movement and the 15 May movement: the pursuit of multiple and open movement goals through decentralization and diversity and the willingness to embrace conflict as a potential source of creativity. Although my intention is to demonstrate continuity, I also explore some of the important innovations introduced into these horizontal decision-making practices through the occupation of public space within the 15 May movement to show how the context in which decision-making is practiced can transform the enactment and the significance of these decision-making procedures. To this end I explore both the 'grounding' of these previously disembodied practices in geographical (urban) space and the increased scale of decision-making as circumstances that raise new questions and dilemmas for horizontal decision-making.

In order to make this comparison I draw on decades of social movement organizing and eight years of ethnographic research that focussed specifically on practices of horizontal decision-making in global social movement networks. In 2003 I began doing research into these decision-making practices in order to explore the broader implications of these decision-making mechanisms as a model for decentralized network forms of 'democracy' exploring the question of what happens to democracy when it is enacted through a network structure instead of the nation-state (see Maeckelbergh 2009). For years I participated in hundreds of planning meetings for the mobilizations against the G8 in Evian (2003), Sea Island, GA (2004), Gleneagles (2005), part of the planning process for the anti-G8 in Heiligendamm (2007), and Lake Toya (2008). I also helped organize parts of the European Social Forum in Paris (2003) and London (2004) as well as the World Social Forum in Mumbai (2004). The information about the 15 May movement presented here is drawn from meetings I attended in the Plaça Catalunya at the height of the uprisings, a follow up visit in November 2011 as well as interviews and informal discussions with long-time activists in Barcelona. These visits and conversations were buttressed with the many email discussions, statements issued, twitter feeds, facebook updates, blog entries, websites, and videos that were continuously appearing online.

From day one I was working with activists I have known for years from the alterglobalization movement who are now active in the 15 May movement. I instantly found myself in the middle of discussion after discussion about horizontal decision-making, life in the *acampada*, and politics in general with both people who had been in the square from the start and with other people, like myself, who had just turned up from abroad. In addition to the friends I had arranged to meet, I kept running into people I had known for years; people who

---

alterglobalization movement which rejected international intervention and multi-lateral organizations not in favour of a nationalist agenda, but in the pursuit of a 'globalization from below' that was grounded in the creation of new models for participatory democracy and international cooperation that rejected forms of fixed 'representation' all together (see Juris 2008, Graeber 2009, Maeckelbergh 2009).

I had met at mobilizations against the G8 or other actions in other countries, contexts and time-zones.

This article also draws somewhat more implicitly on research done as part of a film project on social movement responses to the economic crisis (see [www.globaluprisings.org](http://www.globaluprisings.org)). In 2011 this film project brought me to various cities including Athens (May 2011), New York (July-August 2011 and December 2011-January 2012), London (October and November 2011), Cairo (December 2011) and Oakland (January 2012). In most cases these trips included attendance at general assemblies and lengthy discussions with those attending the assemblies about how the assemblies are structured, why they are structured that way, what works well and what works less well, as part of a collaborative attempt to improve these decision-making processes.

Although there are many important differences between all these contexts that are beyond the scope of this article, the experiences and conversations I had in all of these places have shaped the way I think about which questions are of central importance in a discussion about horizontal forms of decision-making. This article, therefore draws on these other experiences when making choices about which elements of the meetings in Barcelona to emphasize, in the hope that the discussion here can become a constructive contribution not only to the study of the 15 May movement, but to our understanding of horizontal structures more generally.

The assumption underlying this article is that the more we know about the history of these processes of horizontal decision-making, the better equipped we will be to improve them. In this way we can, when appropriate, draw on lessons learned in the past and come to understand horizontal decision-making today not as an entirely new invention, but as part of a much longer political process that is continuously evolving. The current historical juncture has brought about unprecedented opportunities for experimentation with horizontal decision-making and decentralized forms of democratic governance, and as such it seems an apt moment to reflect on the politics of these procedures as part of an attempt to remain open to the new lessons as we learn them.

### **A very brief history of horizontal decision-making**

Although the alterglobalization is the immediate historical predecessor to the 15 May movement and the Occupy movements in terms of the organizational structure of horizontal decision-making, neither the alterglobalization movement nor the 15 May movement can be credited with 'inventing' horizontal decision-making. Although it is impossible to trace the exact way in which movement practices diffuse from one place and time to another, what we can say is that the thousands of people in the square in Madrid or in Barcelona who were waving their hands in the air, 'twinkling' in agreement, were not the first to use this hand signal within social movement praxis as a signifier for agreement, nor were they the first to attempt to create inclusive and participatory structures

and procedures for democratic decision-making on a large scale based on principles of 'horizontality'.

Two key practices that seem to be defining of the current historical moment actually have a long history: 1. the refusal of singular demands, ideologies, or programmes for social change (linked to the movement terms 'diversity' and 'horizontality'), and 2. the idea that the political practices the movement itself develops are part and parcel of the movement's aims (prefiguration). These two political assumptions became quite prevalent during the 1960s and have been growing more central to social movement praxis ever since. The New Left was characterised by a rejection of unitary programmes for revolutionary change and pursued instead notions of participatory democracy as a way to embody multiple movement goals (Gassert 2007, Horn 2007, Miller 2004, Polletta 2002, Klimke and Scharloth 2008). This merger of the pursuit of multiple goals with practices of participatory democracy has undergone many mutations over the past fifty years, as have the decision-making practices that grew out of these ideals: from the New Left in the 1960s to feminist movements, anti-nuclear and peace movements in the 1970s and 1980s, to environmental and Do-it-Yourself movements in the 1980s and 1990s all the way through to the alterglobalization movement at the turn of the century (see Maeckelbergh 2011a).<sup>4</sup>

Although horizontality only became a key movement concept in the first few years of the twenty-first century, the idea of non-hierarchical social and political organization far predates the use of the term horizontality.<sup>5</sup> In the case of the alterglobalization movement, horizontality refers to the active creation of nonhierarchical relations through decision-making processes. Horizontality is both a value and a practice. Rather than assuming that equality can be declared or created through a centralized authority that is legitimated to rule by 'the people', movement practices of horizontality rest on the assumption that inequality will always permeate every social interaction. This shift in assumptions results in an acknowledgement that these inequalities always exist and that each person is responsible for continuously challenging these inequalities at every step of a decision-making process.

The importance of horizontality, especially within the autonomous strands of the alterglobalization movement, is directly linked to movement actors' assumption of a prefigurative strategy for social change (see Maeckelbergh 2011b). Many alterglobalization movement actors rejected the notion that social change would be possible by seizing power at some future moment after which an egalitarian social structure would be instituted (see Nunes 2005). Instead,

---

<sup>4</sup> Anarchism as both a political philosophy and a set of political practices was crucial for the development and improvement of non-hierarchical decision-making practices within most of these movements (see Epstein 1991, McKay 1998 ; Franks 2003).

<sup>5</sup> I trace the use of the term horizontality within the context of US and European social movements here, but it cannot be separated from at least two essential historical developments outside of Europe and North America. First, the meeting structure of the *encuentro* popularized by the Zapatistas and secondly the Argentinian uprising in 2001 where *horizontalidad* was a key organizing concept (see Sitrin 2006)

social change was often spoken of as far more likely to stem from a process of setting up alternative democratic structures to take the place of the existing political structures of nation-state based representative democracy.

With the rise of the 15 May movement, many more people are involved in these decision-making practices than during the alterglobalization movement, and consequently many of these political values have become blurred and the political structures are entering into a new phase of transformation. The structures being used to run the meetings I witnessed in Barcelona, however, are the legacy of this long and winding history and in the sections that follow I explore the *acampadaBCN*, the inter-barrio meeting and the general assembly in detail with some of this history in mind.

### ***Acampada BCN: spatial continuities***

It was early morning when I first arrived at Plaça Catalunya in central Barcelona. I intentionally made the square my first stop, but when I arrived, the camp was still sleeping. Contrary to what I had seen on the internet and heard from friends, the square seemed pretty empty. There were a few people sleeping in the middle, but otherwise those sleeping in the camp were mostly off to the sides in the grassy areas and impressively, up in the trees. Despite the empty core, the square was extraordinary. All around the outsides of the inner square (which was more of a circle really), there were information stands – exactly the types of stands you find at an anti-G8 camp: a medical/first aid stand, a kitchen, legal support, a media centre, a women's space, a 'serenity' space for meditation, message, relaxation, etc. On the opposite side of the square there was a library with radical books and comfy chairs to sit in. All in all, then, the square mimicked almost exactly the infrastructure that is usually set up during the temporary camps that accompany large-scale mobilizations against the G8/G20.



In addition to these, for me, familiar sights, there was a stand that provided raw materials for people who wanted to build their own living structures or meeting spaces, there was a drop box for sleeping bags and mats so that anyone who wanted to could stay the night in the square and there was a community garden where the tomatoes that had been planted two weeks earlier appeared to be ripe and ready to eat. At the main entrance into the square there was a large wooden structure that was labelled "*acampadaBCN*" that served as the general information stand for outreach to the public. At the other end of the square was the little platform that served as a type of stage from which people could address the general assembly and the many other meetings that would be held in the square that night and every night.



These differences, although few, were significant. Since the square was meant as an occupation, the goal was to stay as long as possible. During anti-summit mobilizations, the goal is to stay only a few weeks at the most. The supplies for building lasting structures as well as gardens growing vegetables were a sign of the intent to stay, to cultivate a space for living. There were differences on the level of content as well that exposed this long-term vision. The incorporation of so many local concerns – most notably the problem of housing evictions in Spain for example – showed how the space was being used not just for living but also for the coordination of ongoing long-term campaigns.

Finally, probably the most striking and politically important difference was the openness of the space. This is an innovation that was introduced by the occupation of public squares and parks. In order to understand the significance of the introduction of the tactic of occupation of public space it is worthwhile comparing it with how the camps during the alterglobalization movement were organized. The occupation of public squares is different in at least three ways: first, the space is often being occupied (semi-)illegally; second, the space is in the middle of an urban centre; and third, the people within the space are welcoming to strangers, curious people, cameras, etc.

The camps during the alterglobalization movement, although they looked very similar in terms of infrastructure, were much less welcoming. They were often on a big piece of land outside of the city centre – with the result that mostly only people who intended to camp there ever came there (plus a few curious locals). Although technically anyone could come and stay there, the camp was meant



only for people who were in the area for the purposes of protesting the G8 (or whichever summit). This was not always said explicitly, but the whole point of the camp was to provide space for people to sleep and to plan actions. Especially the latter made it a much more 'closed' environment. Activists were often planning illegal activities, had often experienced repression in the past and were therefore wary of being 'seen' – of being recognizable. Cameras of any sort were considered dangerous by many and meetings would spend hours discussing the fact that no pictures could be taken of anyone anywhere in the camp without explicit permission.

In strong contrast, the Plaça Catalunya was always full of people filming and taking pictures, sometimes even with live streaming. There was no need for me to commit to taking action in order to participate in the camp, nor was there even any need for me to know what the square occupation was about; I could just walk in and ask. Also, the political topics that defined the occupation of the square were topics for which the target audience was perceived of as much larger, as all the people in the city, country, world and not just those that came to 'protest'. In the case of Barcelona these topics included Health, Education and Housing – three political issues that effect everyone in the city and part of the aim of the occupation was to have a place where anyone could come to learn about these issues and to take part in the general assembly decision-making process and the struggle to change the way these issues were decided upon.

For many of us who were veterans of the anti-summit camps, the *acampada* in Barcelona had a strikingly open atmosphere where people who wandered in off the street felt welcome. And for all its flaws, and of course it had flaws, I can confidently say that in over 20 years of political engagement I had never seen anything like it before. And if innovation is essential to social movement organizing, which I believe it is, then at least this was a clear example of innovation.

But the innovation was not only in the spatial organization of the square, although this was important; the real innovation came in the combination of occupation of public space with the meeting structures and assemblies. The meetings were the movement's way to embody their own demands and the physical geography of the public and open space meant that the meetings intended as an embodiment of a 'real' democratic process were open to far more people than similar meetings within the alterglobalization movement had ever been. This new-found openness was not without its exclusions and its problems (see Anonymous 2012 for an important critique), and the activists involved are the first to identify these limits, but if we can forgive these processes for not being perfect, we can perhaps identify some of the important innovations that are at the very least an improvement on representative democracy as it functions today.

## **The inter-barrio meeting: decentralized diversity**

The initial emptiness that I encountered in the early morning at the square was hard to imagine when I returned at noon. By then the square was swarming with people and there were activities going on in every corner and at every stand – it seemed every inch of the square was enthralled in activity. And this, everyone told me, was nothing compared to what it had been a week earlier. I couldn't imagine, it was already almost too much to wrap my head around. The Barcelona-based activists I was with laughed at me when they saw the look of surprise on my face at the sheer number of people. When I told them that the square was almost empty earlier, one replied with the humorous comment, “well, yes, the revolution will not be in the morning”.

We had come to the square to take part in the Catalonia-wide inter-barrio assembly that was planned for twelve noon. It was clear to me from the very start of this meeting that I was witnessing a democratic potential that I had imagined many times during my research into decision-making within global movement networks, but which I never really expected to see with my own eyes. It was a geographically-based, decentralized network of inclusive decision-making. I had seen this model of decentralized decision-making put into practice for years within the alterglobalization movement, but in those cases, the 'barrios' in the inter-barrio meetings, were artificial – they didn't exist – they were created within the geography of the temporary anti-summit campsite just for the purpose of decision-making. I'll explain the importance of this distinction below, but first I need to describe how this decentralized inter-barrio assembly was structured so that the significance of the similarities and differences will be evident.

### **The meeting structure**

The meeting began with a woman on the small podium at one end of the square who took the microphone and started calling for people to gather around. A few hundred people came and sat down on the ground in front of the podium and the rest (probably more than a thousand in total) stood behind them all in a semi-circle. Some people had come prepared, holding a small hand-made sign with the name of their town, province or region written on it. For those who had not come with their own sign, the facilitators (by now there were three people up on the podium) had prepared printed signs for many of the towns and regions within Catalonia. The facilitator on the podium would then call out the names of the different regions or cities and pass the paper to someone from that region or point out someone in the crowd who already had a sign for that city/region. As she did this, the crowd reorganized itself into the different regions and cities/towns. As people joined up with other people from their area, they would go off to the side, out of the centre of the square, to discuss. In this way, the larger meeting of over a thousand people, split into a series of smaller meetings of twenty to a hundred, or in the case of the “Barcelona” barrio, a couple hundred people.

My friends and I went to the Barcelona-barrio meeting. The agenda for this meeting consisted of report backs from each of the different barrios within the Barcelona "barrio", of which there were many. The report backs were about all of the assemblies and actions that had taken place in each barrio of Barcelona over the past week and any concerns they had or lessons they learned. The second half of the meeting was focussed on the future – on which actions they should coordinate with each other on a Barcelona-wide scale for the next week. Several action days had already been identified before hand, so the discussion was rather structured and involved mostly questions of when and where the actions should take place and fewer questions about which actions to take.<sup>6</sup>



This barrio-meeting had two facilitators, one man and one woman, who kept track of all the lessons learned, the concerns raised, and the actions planned for the next week. After all the groups had given their report back, the facilitators briefly summarized a compiled list of actions, past and future, and checked for consensus on action plans for the future. They checked for consensus by first summarizing what the plan was, then asking if anyone had any comments, suggestions or concerns, if someone did they let that person speak and then incorporated the concern or suggestion into the proposal, and checked for

---

<sup>6</sup> There were already some action days set – there was an action day for education/healthcare, and action day against Puig, and an action planned at the parliament.

consensus again. In the case of these actions, there was very little disagreement and the process went smoothly.

After about two hours of updates and action planning in the smaller barrio meetings, all the barrios regrouped in the centre of the square and began a feedback session between the barrio-level discussions. One or two people from each group summarized briefly for everyone else what had been done in their region/city/town over the last week and what they were planning for the next week. This meeting structure made it possible for people from other regions to know all the highlights of what was going on in each of the many barrios/regions of Catalonia without having to be present at each of the two-hour discussions. Consequently, everyone was able to focus on what needed to be done in their own area without becoming ignorant of what was going on elsewhere. This made it possible to exchange far more information and be much more effective in planning actions than it would have been if everyone in the group would have had to listen to every update and every action idea.

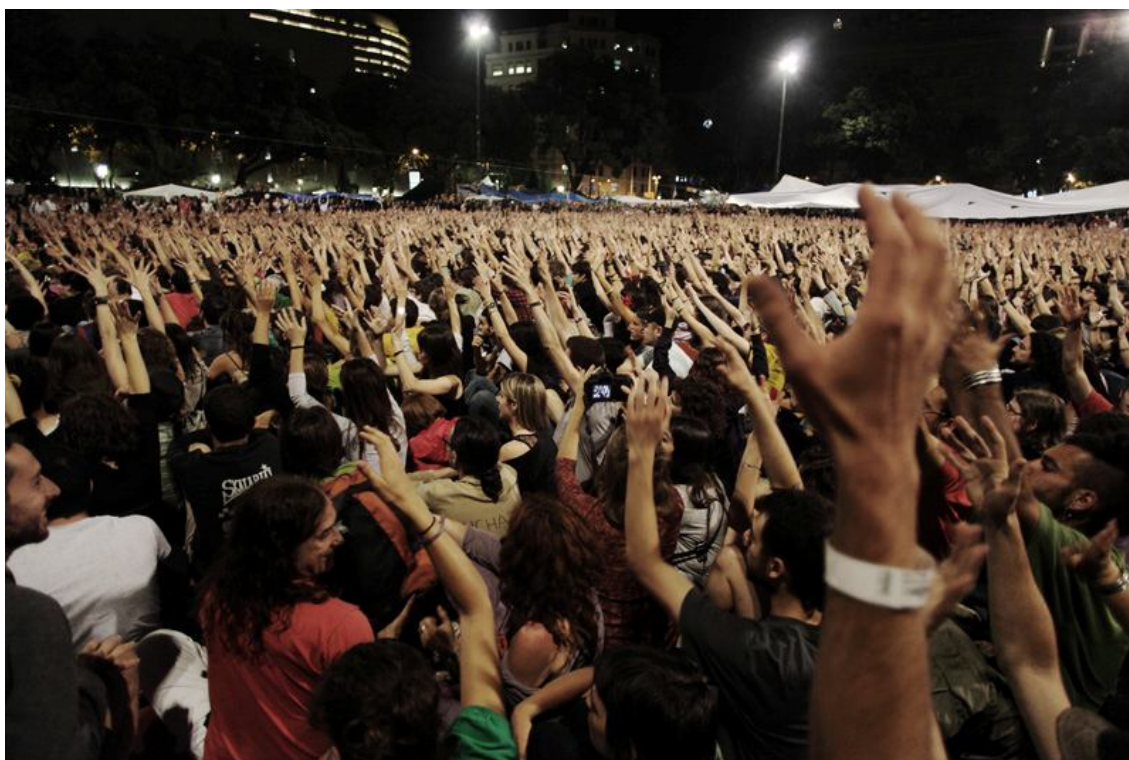
### **Inter-barrio meetings from alterglobalization to Plaça Catalunya**

This basic meeting structure from large group to small group to large group is *exactly* the idealized meeting format within the meetings for the anti-summit mobilization of the alterglobalization movement. For years, whenever activists within the alterglobalization movement would talk about how they envisioned their decision-making system should work and what made it a better alternative to systems of representative democracy, they would mention small-group-to-large-group, network-based decision-making as a way to allow everyone to be included at the local level in decisions being taken at the national or international level (see Maeckelbergh 2009).

The most obvious legacy of the alterglobalization movement, aside from the use of facilitators, the circular seating pattern, the report-back structure, reaching consensus through a process of taking proposals from different groups and the making amendments to proposals through collaborative discussion (see the next section for more on this), was the use of hand signals to facilitate discussion. This linguistic practice was developed during the 1970s within feminist, peace and anti-nuclear movements (especially in the Anglo-Saxon world) and carried on at a smaller scale during the 1980s within environmental and Do-it-Yourself movements, especially within the more autonomous or anarchist strands of these movements, but the movement that most recently brought these practices into the mainstream political practice of social movement networks across Europe was the alterglobalization movement. When I stood there at this meeting of thousands of people, together with fellow veterans of the alterglobalization movement, I couldn't help but remark to them, "remember when we thought these hand signals were what made us marginal freaks? Now everyone is using them and they don't seem to think it is alienating at all!"

The use of hand signals in the case of this meeting also signified something of how these decision-making practices were learned by participants. We were

three weeks into the 15 May movement and at this meeting; the hand signals were never explained. It wasn't until I attended the general assembly the next day that I saw the hand signals explained. At the inter-barrio meeting, the hand signals were just used, but they were not used by everyone. Instead there was a mixture of hand signal use and non-use that created a type of embodied learning. Rather than some veteran of the alterglobalization movement explaining to participants how and why these hand signals were used, the meaning and value of the hand signals became clear through practice. Whenever people would agree with a statement made, most people would raise their two hands in the air and 'twinkle' their fingers in agreement. While most people would twinkle, the rest of the people would clap. This partial clapping meant that as the meeting progressed, the meaning of finger twinkling as being synonymous with agreement (normally expressed through clapping) was obvious.



After ten years of ethnography into the alterglobalization movement, I had never before seen this decision-making method performed so perfectly. At most of the campsites set up to house people during an anti-summit mobilization, the campsite is artificially divided into separate 'barrios', and the inter-barrio meeting (which is what it was often called) would consist of people representing 'barrios' that they only moved into the day before. The barrios that made up the inter-barrio meeting were barrios that consisted of people who just happened to pitch their tent in that part of the campsite (or groups of people who travelled

together from elsewhere). Wherever you ended up pitching your tent, therefore, would become your most direct line of intervention into the political process of the camp. At the time, this meeting structure was certainly one of the most effective ways to ensure democratic participation for everyone living in the camp. Each person could attend their morning barrio meeting and have a direct line of influence into camp-wide decision-making without having to attend a whole days worth of meetings.

But after watching the meeting in Barcelona unfold in front of me, I was struck by how superficial these temporary anti-summit barrios had always been. The people who were at the Barcelona barrio meeting were people who live in Barcelona, who have long-standing relationships with the other people in their neighbourhood and who have jobs, networks, skills, resources at their fingertips. Everything did not have to be invented from scratch as it often needs to be during an anti-summit mobilization where people just turn up from all over the world with a backpack and a tent.

### **Grounded decentralization**

The fact that the meeting was taking place in the middle of the day in a city centre and that people had come to the square from their homes just for the meeting transformed the dynamic. Usually at anti-summit campsites, the only people in attendance are the ones who are capable of spending a week or more in a tent. The Barcelona-barrio meeting, on the other hand, was attended by people of all ages and physical conditions. Some of the older or less-able participants were given chairs to sit on while others stood around the outside and the more physically flexible sat on the ground so that the meeting was structured in concentric circles going outwards from those sitting on the ground, to those in chairs, to those standing. This concentric circle formation is also an important political statement that mimicked the alterglobalization movement practices (and several movements before it). People faced each other, listened to one another and did not privilege the role of facilitator or speaker above the role of participant.

This meeting structure made the inter-barrio meetings both inclusive and efficient. In just a few hours updates had been exchanged for the entire region so that people could gain inspiration and concrete lessons from each other and a whole week of “coordinated actions” had been planned. In the ten years that I have been following this type of decentralized decision-making, I had rarely seen it function so effectively. Part of this efficiency seemed to stem from the fact that people came to these meetings prepared. The inter-barrio meeting was not the site where people discussed all the details of political action and tactics, these discussions were held at the barrio-level. The basic meeting structure that the alterglobalization movement had been trying to achieve for over ten years was being enacted right in front of my eyes in this occupied square. In the context of anti-summit mobilizations the official plan often required that all the local groups should discuss the meeting agenda *before* the national or

international meeting and come to the meeting prepared with local updates and action proposals, but rarely had I seen this actually materialize.

This improvement on decision-making since the alterglobalization movement has everything to do with the fact that in Barcelona, the 'barrios' were not temporarily created arbitrary zones and the people coming from these barrios were not brought together by affiliation to some group that had to be actively held together through meeting coordination. The neighbourhoods were real, they had histories, pre-existing social relationships, infrastructures, common points of reference, a physical architecture that made it easy for people to find each other – most importantly the neighbourhood square where people could find each other. This was in effect a decentralization of the "occupation" tactic from the Plaça Catalunya to many neighbourhood squares and it was essential for grounding the 15 May movement in the everyday lives of people living in Barcelona. It was also explained to me as the source of sustainability for the movement in the hopes that if people could get involved in the movement in their own neighbourhood and collectively address the issues they face everyday, then the movement would have a stronger and long-lasting base.

The specific history of Spanish social movements and prefigurative politics in Spain and of neighbourhood organizing in Barcelona become important factors here. This inter-barrio structure would probably not have worked so smoothly in other cities or places in the world. Although I do not know how many of the people involved in this inter-barrio meeting were active before the 15 May movement, when I returned to Barcelona six months later, the barrios that were the most active were ones that had a history of political organizing or at least had inhabitants who were politically active prior to the 15 May movement. When I was in New York in December 2011 and January 2012 there were similar attempts by those involved in Occupy Wall Street to create neighbourhood assemblies, but at that time only a few of these were taking root.

### **From *encuentros* to decentralized horizontal decision-making**

For people who are familiar with the alterglobalization movement and its history, the description above might ring some bells for being incredibly similar to the *encuentro* structure of the Zapatistas that has functioned as an inspiration for movement organizing since the mid-1990s. *Encuentros* are large participatory meetings that are aimed not at making universally binding decisions, but at creating and facilitating networks of communication and resistance to help people organize against neoliberal globalization.

The People's Global Action (PGA) network was born out of the second *encuentro* held in Spain in 1997. PGA was one of the first international network-based movement structures to organize Global Action Days against, among others, the WTO in Seattle in 1999. For the more horizontally inclined activists within the alterglobalization movement, the PGA hallmarks and the PGS process played an important role in creating and expanding practices of horizontal decision-making. As one participant at the second *encuentro* put it:

In spite of vastly different contexts, we discovered that our struggles are increasingly similar in every part of the global empire, and that a new, horizontal form of solidarity is emerging (Style 2002).

The PGA hallmarks served as a very vague (and thus not too restrictive) common ground within the highly disparate and diverse alterglobalization movement. If there is a birth place at all for 'horizontal decision-making' as a key international social movement practice, then it might be in the *encuentros* of the Zapatistas. These practices merged with movement experiments with participatory democracy in Europe and the US and before long they became the guiding principles of the anti-summit mobilizations and to a lesser degree the European Social Forums. Now, it would seem these decision-making practices have become the guiding principles within the 15 May movement, at least for the inter-barrio meetings.

Chesters and Welsh (2005: 195) argue that the *encuentro* is a meeting structure based on "the concept of creating a global 'mirror and lens' (collective recognition and focus) for antagonistic movements" and that "[t]his process enabled activists to 'bridge worlds' through the deliberate construction of spaces wherein links between diverse movements could be made." This meeting practice of the 'encounter' was applied differently each time it was enacted, but despite, or perhaps because of this malleability, it has had a strong influence on the alterglobalization movement over the past ten years.

What the alterglobalization movement learned, however, through years of practice with this type of meeting ethos, was that the *types* of links that are made is of crucial importance. The links that were most valued within the alterglobalization movement were the links that brought people into, "new spaces, meet new situations, establish different relations" (Nunes 2005) and links that had a transforming capacity – an ability to help each actor to see with the eyes of the other actors, a process sometimes referred to by activists as 'reciprocal contamination' (de Angelis 2003).

With a heightened awareness of the importance of how and what kinds of links were being made, the alterglobalization movement developed an embodied understanding of how conflict functions and at times dysfunctions within horizontal decision-making. Chesters (2004) argues that *encuentro* always:

implies a degree of friction and confrontation. Which can energise or debilitate depending upon how it proceeds. Such friction is often a necessary part of movements traversing problems and oppositions and provoking intensities that leap the gap separating the potential from the actual.



If friction can be either debilitating or energising, then the important question that emerges is under which circumstances does it become debilitating and how can we help to enhance the role of conflict as energising?

### **The general assembly: incorporating conflict**

The next evening, there was a large general assembly in the Plaça Catalunya. The meeting began with an introduction to the *process* of the meeting. The details of how the meeting would be organized began with the announcement that there would be translation into Urdu, Arabic and Sign Language. Then the facilitator, a woman who was stood on the podium at the front of the thousands-strong crowd, introduced the process of the meeting and the different roles that the facilitation group would be playing – including her role as facilitator and the others who were in the crowd who would go around and count the hands when something needed to be voted on. Then the hand signals were explained. First, the hand signal for agreement: two hands in the air and fingers 'twinkling'. Then she explained the hand signal for blocking a decision which is making an X with both forearms up in the air; the hand signal for "speed it up": two fists rolling over each other in a circular motion; and the hand signal for sexist language or behaviour – banging two fists together with your arms raised in the air (to be used whenever someone speaks with or exhibits sexist or racist behaviour). These hand signals were almost identical to the hand signals used within the alterglobalization movement as was the practice of explaining how horizontal decision-making works at the start of the meeting to make sure everyone knows what the meeting procedures are.

In the case of the *acampadaBCN*, however, the situation was considerably more difficult. First, there were far more people than I had ever seen at an everyday planning meeting in the alterglobalization movement and because the space was open, people kept arriving throughout the meeting, which meant that many people did not hear the 'instructions' or understand what was going on. When I spoke to one of the facilitators later, he expressed exhaustion about the general lack of familiarity with decision-making mechanisms:

So people were arriving, because it is obviously in the street, people were arriving in the middle of the meeting and they would understand that there is someone telling them 'you vote.' And they were wondering who is this person, they didn't know that there is this figure of the facilitator. So you have start from the very beginning, stop the meetings and say, look this is a facilitation, this is the third or fourth time I am explaining today. Because there is no facilitation culture at all in Spain. Even among activists. Now that has changed a bit.

This lack of 'facilitation culture' in Spain is hard to imagine in the aftermath of the 15 May movement and in the case of this particular general assembly, at least the introduction of facilitation was going very smoothly: after explaining the hand signals, the facilitator then went on to explain that there would be two parts to the meeting. The first part would be the organized part, meaning that

there were a series of proposals that had already been developed within the different working groups that needed to be discussed by the general assembly. The agenda for this part of the meeting was relatively fixed. The second half of the meeting would be an open part in which anyone could take the microphone and add their item to the agenda for discussion. The facilitator then requested one more time that people please use the hand signals to express agreement or disagreement because cheering, booing, or clapping creates an atmosphere that can impact the way decisions are made.

The first item on the organized part of the agenda was a proposal to support a statement for the self-determination of Catalonia and other regions that do not want to be a part of Spain. I had earlier noticed that there were surprisingly few Catalanian flags in the square – previously a common sight at mass mobilizations in Barcelona. When I enquired about the lack of flags, I was told that the assembly had voted against having flags of any nation, union or political party in the square. Now there was a proposal on the table to support a declaration. This proposal, I was told, had already gone through several general assemblies, but never passed. It had already been changed from support for self-determination for Catalonia to include also self-determination for other regions of Spain, but the assembly on this day was still not keen on approving the statement.

The statement was read out loud from the podium and almost immediately arms raised in the air, many in agreement, but also many in disagreement, with Xs raising all around me. First, the facilitator asked two people for and two people against the proposal to come up and make their case. The main concerns with the statement seemed to be that it was too focussed on Catalonia and that there are people all over the world who need support for their independence and self-determination in a non-nationalistic framework. These concerns were incorporated into the wording of the statement, but disagreement continued. After the four interventions, the facilitator explained that if there were more than 40 people who had their forearms crossed in an X to block the proposal (which there were – many more), then the proposal is supposed to go back to the working group for further discussion. Those who opposed the proposal were supposed to join the working group meeting in order to help improve the statement until it took the concerns of the blockers into account.

### **Incorporating conflict, fostering diversity and rejecting uniformity**

At this point I was astonished to see how similar, into the details, these meetings were to the hundreds of meetings I had taken part in over the past ten years within the alterglobalization movement. Not only were the hand signals and the basic notions of participation and horizontality the same in the *acampada* as they were in the anti-summit mobilizations, but it seems even the process for dealing with conflict was the same. This is an important point because one of the key innovations within the decision-making of the alterglobalization movement is this particular approach to conflict. In the

alterglobalization movement conflict is not avoided, but embraced, because it is believed to be necessary and even beneficial to fostering diversity:

If Fora [Social Forums] will be capable of expressing the diversity of the movement(s) they say to bring together and serve as a public arena, it'll be because of their capacity to incorporate conflict, not to subsume it under a semblance of forced consensus (Nunes 2004: 8).

Allowing diversity to flourish, in turn, is thought to be necessary for the development of a truly democratic politics.<sup>7</sup> As the Horizontals (2003) statement issued in the run-up to the 2004 European Social Forum concludes, "diversity is healthy and necessary, as no political process however inclusive can lay claim to represent the totality of social movements and alternatives." It was widely believed that if the types of people that can be involved is restricted, or if the types of ideas that can be expressed are limited, due to an over-emphasis on a singularity of purpose, then the political space closes off to all those who have conflicting beliefs or identities:

The issue is no longer to express a common way of struggle, nor a unified picture or one-dimensional solidarity, neither an ostentatious unity nor a secretly unifying sub-culture, but the profound understanding and the absolute will, to recognise the internal differences and create flexible groups, where different approaches connect with each other reasonably and for mutual benefit (Lang and Schneider 2003).

A truly inclusive democratic process therefore is one that remains open to new people, new ideas, and new aims.<sup>8</sup> This inclusion of diversity and opposing beliefs leads to conflict, but this conflict is not viewed negatively, instead it is considered to be one of the ways in which creative new solutions to problems

---

<sup>7</sup> This point differentiates the movement's praxis from most democratic theories and practices. Even deliberative democratic models which are presented as alternatives to liberal representative democracy consider univocity to be the aim of the democratic process (see Gould 1996: 172). It is precisely this normative principle of uniformity that is being challenged here. Mouffe (1996: 246) argues that "pluralism is not merely a *fact* . . . but an axiomatic principle. It is taken to be constitutive *at the conceptual level* of the very nature of modern democracy and considered as something that we should celebrate and enhance." The alterglobalization movement welcomed conflict as a sign of diversity, resolving it by rejecting the normative principle of singular unity and refusing to "choose between unity and plurality" (Hardt and Negri 2004: 105). For a discussion of the implications of this rejection of 'univocity' for the way we understand and theorize 'democracy' see Maeckelbergh (2009: chapter 4).

<sup>8</sup> This openness, however, occurs, and in fact requires, rather strict guidelines of behaviour to ensure that some people are not excluded by the inclusion of other people's beliefs or practices. For example, the common anti-racist and anti-sexist guidelines would certainly exclude some people from the process, but does so to ensure that women and people of colour can be included in the process.

and better political analyses (better in the sense that it better represents the diverse needs of the people) are developed.



Despite these similarities, there were some important differences too. First, the idea of trying to reach consensus about a statement is something that within the more autonomous strands of the alterglobalization movement would (probably) be quickly identified as a trap that will lead only into deterioration and endless discussion about specific wordings. Within the alterglobalization movement, I often heard people point out that it is rarely possible, and almost never necessary, for a whole large group of people to all agree to support a single statement. When declarations or statements were issued by certain groups within the alterglobalization movement, it was usually done in the name of the smaller group and not in the name of the movement as a whole. One common solution to the “we need a statement” problem within the alterglobalization movement was to issue statements on behalf of a given meeting, for example, ‘statement of the meeting of 25 May’. In this way the group avoided speaking on behalf of anyone who was not present and who did not get the chance to have input into the statement.

## **From networks to neighbourhoods: resisting uniformity**

Employing this tactic was made more complicated in Barcelona, however, because of geography. The alterglobalization movement was a diffuse network with no beginning and no end and consequently there was no sense of “one group” of thousands of people – there was no movement as a whole. Although there is only a vague sense of nationhood or city-hood at the *acampadaBCN* there was still an apparent belief in the need to decide all together about nearly everything. What the inter-barrio meeting had shown, that most decisions can be taken at the barrio level and merely communicated at the inter-barrio level – creating a sense of autonomy between interconnected neighbourhoods – was being somewhat undermined by the general assembly format. The general assembly was being treated as the “highest authority” in the decision-making system of the *acampada* and this meant for many people that no decisions could be approved without going through the general assembly first.

Many of the people camping in the square pointed out to me that this had an unintended stifling effect on the creativity and autonomy of the movement, leaving people feeling as though their actions had to be “approved” by the general assembly before they could do anything. Given the lack of time and the complex set of structures that determined which proposals made it to the general assembly and which did not, for many people it was not an option to bring their action plans to the general assembly for approval. For the people I spoke with most frequently, this very idea that they should need approval from some centralized authority was a problem in and of itself.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of the Barcelona meeting, bringing the statement to the general assembly, although possibly unnecessary (it is of course hard to know what would have happened if the statement were not brought to the assembly), helped to transform the statement to better represent the positions and beliefs of a wider group of people, even though it never managed to fully incorporate the positions of everyone. In this case the general assembly proved useful for the improvement of proposals so that they better represented a diversity of interests, but in this case there was little chance that the proposal would ever be acceptable to everyone. Given the sheer numbers of people present at the meeting and the meeting format which was geared towards unanimity, requiring an overwhelming majority to pass a proposal, without any structure for granting autonomy to those who want to issue statements or carry out actions without the explicit agreement of everyone else, it was impossible to either pass or reject the proposal without violating the procedures of the meeting.

---

<sup>9</sup> According to one of the facilitators, the facilitation team would decide ahead of time how many interventions they would have time for during the meeting and then send between 15 and 20 volunteers out into the crowd to select the people who would get a chance to speak. Proposals usually came through the working groups/commissions and were discussed first in a 'parallel' meeting structure (also open to anyone) and prepared before they were brought to the general assembly and opened up to thousands of people without any clear structure.

Apparently, in this case, those who opposed the statement had not attended the working group meetings where the proposal was being written and therefore did not make use of the avenues of input available to them. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the very well-structured conflict-embracing general assembly ended up violating its own principles in order to pass this proposal. The very tired facilitator first concluded that there was clearly no consensus, so we would need to talk about it again later, but then after a bit more discussion she decided to simply approve the proposal even though a bit less than half the hands counted (hundreds of people) were opposed to the proposal. When she passed the proposal, the crowd got upset and she simply said, "You fix the methodology if you don't like it. We've been talking about this text for three weeks." This was an expression of exhaustion and in a sense, she was admitting defeat, that there was no way for this proposal to ever satisfy everyone, and it was taking up much needed time to discuss other matters, so she just passed the proposal on a majority rule principle and moved on to the next item on the agenda.

On the surface this looked like a failure of the decision-making structures, which clearly reject the principle of majority rule on the grounds that it always necessary excludes minority opinions. It would be unrealistic and unfair to expect these meeting structures to work perfectly all the time and to expect the facilitator to be able to come up with a clever solution on the spot with thousands of people there just waiting to pass judgement on the decision and the process. Nevertheless, this example raises important questions about how to keep decision-making horizontal and inclusive when dealing with topics about which people will never agree. In this case, those who wanted to have input into the statement had already had three weeks to give their input, they had a clearly identified (by the facilitator) channel through which to provide that input, and when they did not take advantage of this channel, their block was negated.

Within the alterglobalization movement the principle was that people could not just block decisions for no reason. One common definition for a block was that people could only block decisions when the decisions went against their most deeply held beliefs or the beliefs of the group as a whole (if the group had such shared beliefs). In practice this meant that people could 'stand aside' instead of blocking – choose to not take part in an action or not sign a statement or issue their own statement. Less frequently, when it was something really important to them they would be given the chance to have direct input into transforming the proposal together with those who originally drafted the proposal. A block was therefore only recognized as such when someone was willing to engage with the process.

In the square in Barcelona though, there were so many people and so many blockers that the proposal probably should not have passed, but on the other hand, it is easy to block something just because you don't like it and that is a scenario that should be avoided because people will always disagree and agreement cannot work as the guiding principle of horizontal processes. If a proposal seriously violates the most important values of those involved then it

should not pass, but then the question of how to establish the 'seriousness' of a block has always been a difficult one. One way to assess this could certainly be whether those blocking are willing to do the work required to help reshape the proposal, and if they are not, then this might be a good indication that the block they are expressing is not 'serious' enough to impede the passing of the proposal.

However, while this approach might have been a useful one for the alterglobalization movement, this 'solution' is confounded in the larger more diffuse movements such as the 15 May movement because the people in attendance at these assemblies are not only different people every day, but also different people at the start of the meeting and at the end of the meeting due to the coming and going made possible by the open square. Under these circumstances, giving one or two people the chance to input their criticism into a proposal is not enough to satisfy the people who just arrived, not to mention all the people who do not follow the assembly process closely.

Although the *acampada* was disbanded soon after this meeting and much bigger problems quickly presented themselves, the principles that this example highlights are crucial. When should decisions be taken to a general assembly? What kinds of decisions should be taken at a general assembly and, especially, which ones should *not* be brought to the assembly? Should the assembly be a decision-making body at all or a rather space for collaboration and communication as in the inter-barrío structure? If it is to be a decision-making space, then what are the procedures for overriding blocks? What are the procedures for incorporating concerns into proposals? These are questions that have to be answered if the alternative democratic process that the 15 May movement is developing is to become a viable and more inclusive alternative to existing systems of democratic governance.

## Conclusion

It is my feeling that the only real way these questions will be answered is through praxis. An article can perhaps highlight implicit values, explain practices and draw on historical examples as comparison, but the circumstances have changed since the alterglobalization movement and solutions to current dilemma's will likely have to be found through what Sturgeon (1995: 36) calls 'direct theory': theory developed through action.

When I first began to analyse the theory of democracy that underlies global social movement networks, one of the key limitations for which I had trouble finding a solution in the practices of the movement, was the idea that in order to embrace conflict, which is necessary for horizontality, and in order to create *real* equality and not just an officially 'declared' equality between 'the people', then time and space needed to be divisible – in other words, geography cannot be fixed. This was a working solution for many situations that the alterglobalization movement faced partially because it was a global disembedded network structure that travelled across time and space. If you had three groups who all

wanted to protest the G8, but they could not agree on a common mode of action, then you divided up time and space. If the location was very important (for example if everyone wanted to hold their protest at the conference centre where the G8 was meeting) then you divide the time – one group does Monday, the other Tuesday, or one group goes in the morning the other in the afternoon. If, on the other hand, the timing was very important (everyone wants to take action right before the opening of the summit meetings) then you divide the space – those who want to hold a march follow the a given route through the city centre, those who want to smash windows go to the main shopping street, and those who want to blockade the delegates from getting in go into the 'red zone' around the conference centre. This didn't work every time, but it became common practice within the alterglobalization movement and meant that the mainstream political parties and the anarchists rarely had to agree on a single course of action.

This system of dividing either time or space worked as a practical solution, but theoretically, it was a serious limitation to the alternative democratic decision-making system they were developing because you cannot divide geography infinitely. If the democratic system were a real governing system, people would live in particular places and need to be satisfied with the decisions taken for their locality and could not just move elsewhere every time they disagreed. The current developments in Spain and occupy movements more generally, are precisely interesting for this reason. They are employing many of the same decision-making structures, but they are doing so in a way that is very grounded in the material reality of neighbourhoods and pre-existing communities that cannot be easily shifted based on the types of decisions taken. People cannot simply realign themselves politically, keeping the wider network intact, as was so often done as a solution to conflict within the alterglobalization movement.

And yet, I was surprised by the results of this grounding in geography. When I witnessed the inter-barrio meeting, based in actual barrios, a curious effect arose that I had not anticipated and which laid many of my concerns to rest. I realised that although space can less easily be divided, time gets much longer – the process becomes more permanent and so the question of time becomes less restrictive. When the 'barrios' are real, then the number of decisions that have to be taken together are even fewer than within the alterglobalization movement. The various barrios in an anti-summit camp are by virtue of their presence at the anti-summit mobilization implicated in a common process of opposition. With the barrios in Barcelona, it was relatively easy to reach agreement between the various barrios, and even to incorporate differences because each group had a degree of autonomy from the other groups. Much more so, at least, than within an anti-summit camp where the barrios had this autonomy in principle, but depended on each other for carrying out effective action or for maintaining the running of the camp.

The general assembly structure as developed in the example above has also raised some important lessons learned since the days of the alterglobalization movement. The first is that these assemblies work very well for the exchange of



information, ideas and lessons across contexts but perhaps less well as a decision-making body when the tactic of decentralization is not used (the small group to large group structure). Second, they result in far more dynamic proposals because of the meeting structure of preparing the proposal before the meeting, presenting the proposal to the large meeting, and reworking the proposal in the working group meetings and smaller 'parallel' meetings. However, although this is an effective way to merge some of the conflicting opinions and needs, it is not a perfect solution and other ways to incorporate conflict might be necessary – perhaps through counter-acting the idea that the general assembly needs to approve people's actions and promoting instead decentralization so that people can turn to multiple decision-making bodies and even create their own spaces and procedures of decision-making.

Prefiguration as a strategy for social change relies on movement actors (or those involved) to remain open to the idea that goals may shift and may need to be multiple in order to accommodate everyone. The decision-making process itself, therefore, also needs to remain open and fluid. As soon as a coherent and singular political platform becomes the basis of unity, as the alterglobalization movement has learned over the past ten years, the political space closes off to new ideas, new people and new potential structures of democracy. One of the more innovative guiding principles of the alterglobalization movement was that in order to create more inclusive forms of democracy, structures are needed that can incorporate diversity and differences – even incorporate the people who hate meetings. These structures also have to account for the power inequality implicit in any one group of people (even the general assembly) determining for everyone else what the aims should be.

Within the alterglobalization movement this openness was facilitated by the liminality of the process – the temporary coming together of people for a weekend or a few weeks usually in a different location each time combined with an action-oriented focus. This made it much easier for those involved to stay open to new ideas and people because there was so often a new context to be taken into consideration. In other words, the structures developed by the alterglobalization movement were continuous but never permanent.

This liminality, therefore, was also a constraint. Prefiguration relies on the creation of a process that transforms those involved through practice. In other words, social change arises when a collective process is able to transform the way power operates between individuals. This transformation takes time and continuity – people do not change quickly without the use of force. One of the limits to the alterglobalization movement's strategy was that the continuous process required for prefiguration to work had to be moulded out of a series of disparate events (summit mobilizations and social forums). Without the infrastructure to ground this collective process in the lives of those involved, prefiguration stood little chance of succeeding.

The 15 May movement, however, has added the key innovation of the tactic of occupation, and with it an element of permanence (whether the occupation itself is permanent or not, the organizing continues in a given locality). The 15

May movement, for all its faults, may finally make it possible for this continuous process to be grounded in our everyday lives. If it succeeds in this, as the interbarrio meeting in Barcelona did, then there is a real chance for the development of democratic decision-making structures in the here-and-now that can replace those that are currently crumbling around us.

## References

- Anonymous. 2012. "The Characteristics of the Occupation (Barcelona)" in Aragon! (ed.) *Occupy Everything: Anarchists in the Occupy Movement 2009-2011*. LBC Books.
- de Angelis, Massimo. 2003. "The 1<sup>st</sup> LSF: What Have We Achieved?". Email. Posted October 11, 2003. Also available online: <http://www.commoner.org.uk/01-10groundzero.htm> (Last accessed 22 March 2012).
- Chesters, Graeme. 2004. "ESF: Encounter or Representation". Available online: [www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/london2004/1022encounter.htm](http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/london2004/1022encounter.htm) (Last accessed 22 March 2012).
- Chesters, Graeme and Welsh, Ian. 2005. "Complexity and Social Movement(s): Process and Emergence in Planetary Action Systems," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 22(5):187–211.
- Epstein, Barbara. 1991. *Political Protest & Cultural Revolution*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.
- Franks, Benjamin. 2003. "The Direct Action Ethic from 59 Upwards," *Anarchist Studies* 11(1): 13–41.
- Gassert, Philipp. 2008. "Narratives of Democratization," in Klimke and Scharloth (eds.) *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gould, C. 1996. "Diversity and Democracy: Representing Differences," in Benhabib, S. (ed.), *Democracy and Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Graeber, David. 2009. *Direct Action: An Ethnography*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.
- Graeber, David. 2011. "Occupy Wall Street Rediscovered the Radical Imagination" *The Guardian*, 25 September 2011. Available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/sep/25/occupy-wall-street-protest> (Last accessed 22 March 2012).
- Hardt, Michael and Negri, Toni. 2004. *Multitude*. London: Hamilton.
- Horizontals. 2003. "Horizontals Statement: The Horizontals Come to Town". Online: [http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-download\\_file.php?fileId=207](http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-download_file.php?fileId=207) (Last accessed 30 October 2011).

Horn, Gerd-Rainer. 2007. *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America 1956-1976*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Juris, Jeff. 2008. *Networking Futures: the Movements against Corporate Globalization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Klein, Naomi. 2011. "Occupy Wall Street: Lessons from Anti-Globalization Protests". Available online: <http://rabble.ca/columnists/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-lessons-anti-globalization-protests> (Last accessed 22 March 2012).

Klimke, Martin and Scharloth, Joachim. 2008. *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lang, Susanne and Florian Schneider. 2003. "The Dark Side of Camping". Online: <http://makeworlds.org/node/44> (Last accessed 30 October 2011).

Maeckelbergh, Marianne. 2009. *The Will of the Many: How the Alterglobalization Movement is Changing the Face of Democracy*. London: Pluto Press.

Maeckelbergh, Marianne. 2011a. "The Road to Democracy: The Political Legacy of '1968'" *International Review of Social History* 56(2): 301-332.

Maeckelbergh, Marianne. 2011b. "Doing is Believing: Prefiguration as Strategic Practice" *Social Movement Studies* 10(1): 1-20.

McKay, George. 1998. *DIY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*. London: Verso.

Miller, James. 1994. *Democracy is in the Streets*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mouffe, Chantal. 1996. "Democracy, Power and the 'Political'," in Benhabib, S. (ed), *Democracy and Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Nunes, Rodrigo. 2004. "Territory and Deterritory: Inside and Outside the ESF 2004, New Movement Subjectivities," *Euromovements*. Online: <http://www.welt2raum.de/welt2/texte/territory.pdf> (Last accessed on 30 October 2011).

Nunes, Rodrigo. 2005. "Nothing is What Democracy Looks Like; Openness, Horizontality, and the Movement of Movements," in Harvie, D., Milburn, K., Trott, B., Watts, D. (eds), *Shut Them Down!*, Leeds: Autonomedia / Dissent!. Online: [www.shutthemdown.org/contents.html](http://www.shutthemdown.org/contents.html) (Last accessed 30 October 2011).

Occupy Together. 2012. "Actions and Directory". <http://www.occupytogether.org/actions/> (Last accessed 22 March 2012).

Polletta, Francesca. 2002. *Freedom is an Endless Meeting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Raza, Maple John. 2012. "The Occupy Movement in Zizek's hometown: Direct democracy and the politics of becoming" *American Ethnologist* 39(2).

Reyes, Oscar. 2011. "A Road Made by Walking" *Red Pepper*, August 2011. Available online: <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/a-road-made-by-walking/> (Last accessed 22 March 2012).

Rodríguez, Emmanuel and Tomás Herreros. 2011. "It's the Real Democracy, Stupid". Online: [www.edu-factory.org/wp/spanishrevolution/](http://www.edu-factory.org/wp/spanishrevolution/) (Last accessed 31 May 2011).

Sitrin, Marina. 2006. *Horizontalism*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.

Sturgeon, Noel. 1995. "Theorizing Movements: Direct Action and Direct Theory," in Darnovsky, M., Epstein, B., and Flacks, R. (eds), *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Style, Sophie. 2002. "People's Global Action". Available online: [http://www.zcommunications.org/peoples-global-action-by-sophie-style\\_](http://www.zcommunications.org/peoples-global-action-by-sophie-style_) (Last accessed 22 March 2012).

Waging Nonviolence. 2011. "The Demand is a Process". Posted online on 21 September 2011: <http://wagingnonviolence.org/2011/09/the-demand-is-a-process/> (Last accessed 30 October 2011).

Wainwright, Hilary. 2012. "An Excess of Democracy" *Open Democracy*, 24 February 2012. Available online: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/hilary-wainwright/excess-of-democracy> (Last accessed 22 March 2012).

### **About the author:**

**Marianne Maeckelbergh** is Lecturer in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University, the Netherlands and is the author of *The Will of the Many: How the Alterglobalisation Movement is Changing the Face of Democracy*. She has been active in grassroots social movements since the 1990s and is now working on the independent film project [www.globaluprisings.org](http://www.globaluprisings.org). Email: [mmaeckelbergh AT fsw.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:mmaeckelbergh@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)