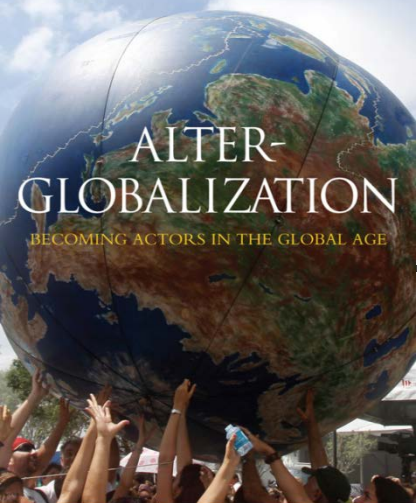


GEOFFREY PLEYERS



# *Alter-Europe: From post-democracy to multiple democracy?*

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# *Post-democracy*

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*While formal democracy is now solidly established in a record number of countries, the substance of democracy has considerably declined in the last decades.*

C. Crouch, 2004

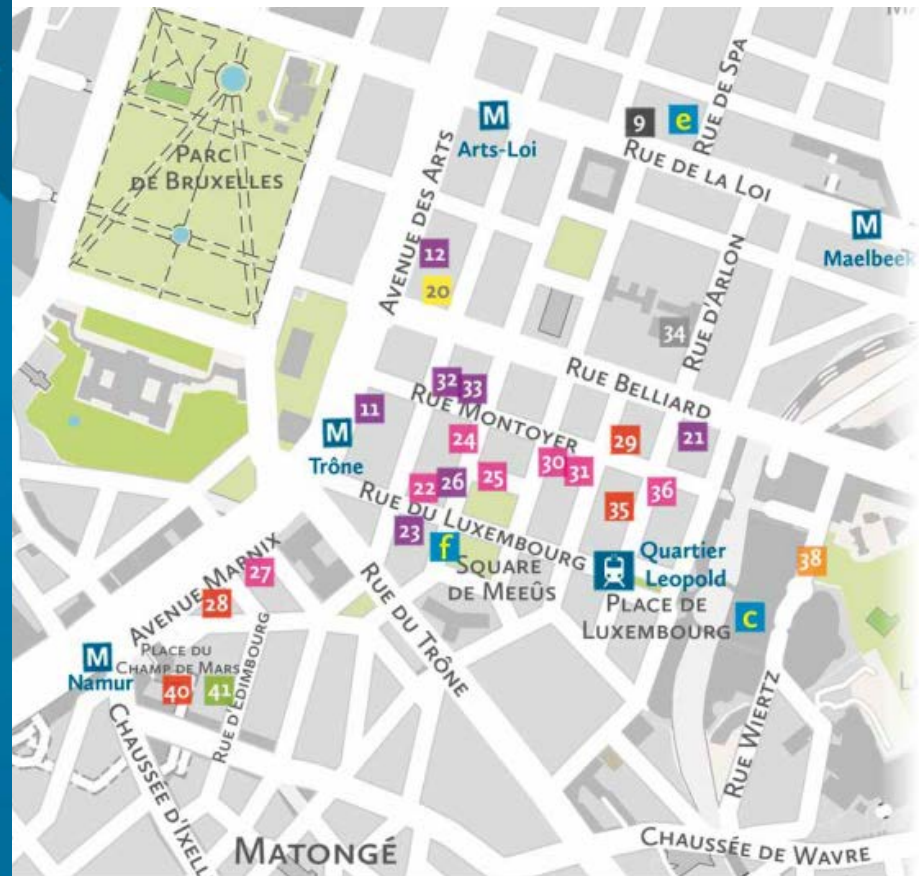
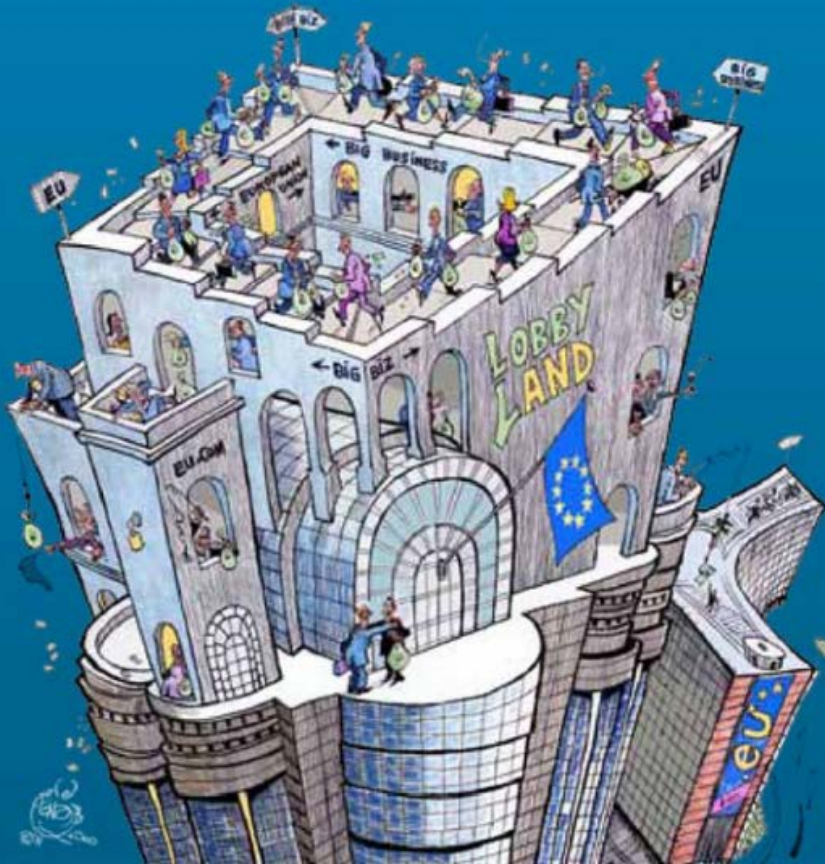
- Move downwards from the 'peak of democracy'
- Narrowing of democracy?

lobby planet

NEW EDITION

# Brussels

## The EU quarter



### EU institutions:

- a** EU Commission (Berlaymont)
- b** Council (Justus Lipsius)
- c** European Parliament
- d** DG Health and Consumers
- e** DG Internal Market and Services
- f** DG Research and Innovation
- g** DG Trade
- h** Albert Borschette Centre

### The lobbyists:

- 1** European Financial Services Roundtable
- 2** City of London
- 3** US Chamber of Commerce
- 4** BP
- 5** Shell
- 6** Aquafed
- 7** Lisbon Council
- 8** FIPRA
- 9** White & Case
- 10** IETA

- 11** AmCham EU
- 12** Food and Drink Europe
- 13** FEFAC
- 14** European Training Institute
- 15** Daimler
- 16** BusinessEurope
- 17** European Services Forum
- 18** BASF
- 19** Gplus
- 20** ECIPE
- 21** Foratom
- 22** Interel Cabinet Stewart



# Post-democratic Europe

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- Lobbies
- Powerful “technocrats”
- The rule of the “troika” in Southern Europe
- Secret negotiations of international treaties



# *Alarming surveys*

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## *2014 European elections: abstention & far right*

## *2012 Eurobarometer*

Young citizens the age category most critical and suspicious towards the European Union.

- 50% of young people distrust the EU
- 47% of them consider that “things are going in the wrong direction in the EU”

# *Post-democracy:*

## *An incomplete picture*

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*Expansion of democratic practices and  
democratic considerations  
in all realms of life.*

*Europe, Democracy & Social Movements*

*Do we look at the right place when we look for democracy?*

- Below the tip of the iceberg
- Young people are not apathetic, but active in different ways



# Expand /rethink democracy starting “from below”

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- *Beyond formal/institutional democracy*
- “Monitory democracy” (Keane/Rosanvallon)
- Beyond the relations with formal democracy
- *Multiple democracy*
  - Multiple ways to conceive democracy
  - How do they combine?



# *A sociology of emergences*

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**Social movements beyond protests**

**Look below the tip of the iceberg**

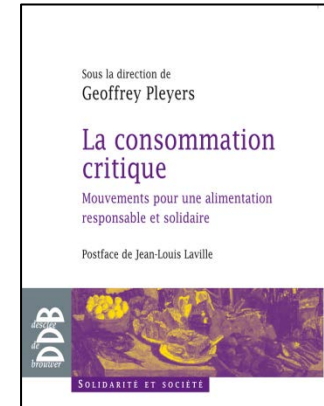
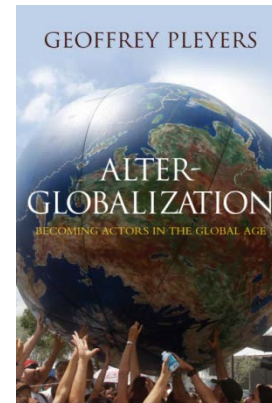
- Initiatives, even small ones, to become actors of their lives and of their world
- Movements as set of experience
- Successes and limits



# Background & fieldwork data

## Previous research

- “Alter-globalization”
- Critical consumption
- A focus on youth activism



2012: Progressive activists & Europe (L.S.E.) :

A focus group (Paris), 30 interviews in France (14), Belgium (7), Finland (2), Poland (2), Germany (2), Barcelona (3).

2013: Research stays in Moscow (27) and Rio (43)/ WSF Tunis  
2 Sociological interventions with young ecologists

2014: Bucharest & Belgium

# Actors

# Models of democracy

**Occupy**

**Direct democracy  
Deliberative demo.**

**Transition  
movements**

**Responsible demo.**

**Bloggers,  
Netactivists  
Journalists**

**Informational  
democracy**

**Expert activists**

**Argumentative demo.**

**'Mobilizers'  
SM Organizers**

**Protest democracy**



# Democracy at the core of the 2010s movements

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A will to renew activism/political commitment

*Point to the symptoms of post-democracy*

*Actual and structural limits of  
representative democracy*

- “Democracy without choice”
- Collusion between economic, mass media and political elite



# The 2011-2013 wave of movements Indignados / Occupy

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## *Collusion between economic, media and political elites*

- Iceland's family ties
- The Ben Ali family in Tunisia: politics & business
- Occupy Wall Street's "1%"
- #YoSoy132 in Mexico
- *Indignados: "We must break the vicious link between the capital and the representatives of democracy, who defend more the interests of the capital than those of the voting population."*

*David Barcelona*

# *'Squares' movements'*

*Occupy, indignados, Gezi...*

*Deliberative / Direct democracy*

## *Democracy as practice*

### **Prefigurative activism:**

To implement democracy in local public spaces:  
assemblies, camps, local actions

*"We don't separate our practices and aims. We choose a horizontal, anti-sexist, self- and eco-managed way of operating." (Paris, 2003)*

- Consistency means / ends
- Social change as process
- Lived experience



# Spaces of experience

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*Places sufficiently autonomous and distanced from capitalist society which permit actors to live according to their own principles, to knit different social relations and to express their subjectivity.*

(Pleyers, 2010, Alter-Globalization, Polity Press)

**Activists camps** (alterglobalization, climate justice, Occupy)

- Individual experience intersects with collective history
- Long-term impact on individuals
- But sporadic in the public space



# *Democracy as a personal commitment*

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“I think that things happen much through a change of oneself. ... After having been part of the indignados, I don't see the people in the same way anymore. I realized that everyone has something to say and I try to care about everyone's opinion, and also about everyone as a human being”

(Anne, Focus group in Paris, 2012).



# Ethics of democracy

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## *Subjective dimensions*

*“Democracy is a way of life. It is living with other people and taking them as they are”*

*(An Egyptian student, 2013 WSF)*

Democracy as a *demand*

Democracy as *practice* (Glasius & Pleyers, 2013)

Democracy as *personal commitment*,  
embodied in concrete practices





# Occupy: Deliberative democracy at the local scale

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- Local actions and direct democracy
- Subjective dimension

*"I'm not sure democracy can work beyond a certain level, beyond the local or city level. Beyond, it is rather about coordination than democracy." (Sophie, Paris, 2012).*

# Occupy/ indignados

## Limits of direct/local democracy

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- *Direct democracy as a global solution?*
- Over-investment in internal dynamics
- From local changes to world transformations

# *2. Responsible democracy*

## *Transition movements*

### **Lifestyle change – Localist movements**

- De-growth - Voluntary simplifiers
- Transition towns (1107 initiatives, 43 countries)
- Alternative food networks, CSA...
- City gardening



### **Prefigurative activism**

- Implement the values of the movement in your daily life
- Both the problem and change lie partly in yourself



# Responsible democracy

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*Relation to oneself at the core of activism*

*'I have done it because I don't want anymore to take part in that, I don't want to tell myself that somewhere people are suffering from my choices as a consumer'*     *Laure, 25, Paris*

*"It is first and foremost a way to refuse playing a game with which I disagree. At least with vegetables, I don't play the game, I don't provide more water to the system"*     *Jerome, 23, Belgium.*



# Democracy as a *personal commitment*

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Implement democracy in all realms of live

(consumption, decision making, processes relations with other citizens...)

“Democracy is to respect people as they are”

Egyptian activist, 2013

Democracy is an emancipation project that lies in “people practices oriented towards the presupposition of the equality of anyone with anyone” (Rancière, 1998)



# Democracy beyond the state

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*Solidarity economy (Laville)*

Democracy as emancipation (Rancière, 1998)

“People practices oriented towards the presupposition of the equality of anyone with anyone”.

Democracy against the state? (Abensur)

→ *Politics is not a monopoly of institutional actors*

# 3. Informational democracy

## 'The battle of information'



- Internet opens access to information
- The challenge of the flows of information
- Mass media manufacture information and consent
- Collusion between pol, eco & media elite (Berlusconi)

# Informational democracy

## 1. Beyond the offline/online divide

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*Social media  
have not replaced mass media*

Combination of mass media, social media and online media

e.g. alternative media reach large audience through mass media

e.g. mass media websites

*Integration of digital technologies  
in a complex media ecology*





# Beyond the online/offline divide

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2. Internet is not only promoting an “open and tolerant culture”: spread of **hate and racism**, far right movements and fundamentalism.
3. Not a space freed from states & politicians
4. Digital issues are sometimes *used to avoid dealing with social and political issues*

*Digital tools are not a magic solution*

5. **Inequalities** haven't disappeared  
*May overpass some inequalities, but asymmetries are mostly displaced and reproduced*



# 3. The battle of information

## Beyond the online/offline divide

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Not to minimize the impact of NICTs &  
social media

**Interplay of online and offline actions**

# 4. Expert activists

## Argumentative democracy

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- Expertise: technical and abstract knowledge
- Advocacy and citizens' popular education
- Mostly single-issue
- Less visible but efficient
- European & International arenas - Global institutions



# Argumentative democracy

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*“We try to mobilize expertise and apply it in relevant policy and advocacy sort of processes, rather than mobilizing citizens and have the outcry, we believe that once we create enough public information, people will mobilize themselves.”* (Tax Justice network)

“We have some experts who’ve actually advised the European Commission on the EU savings tax directive, on how to make it effectively tax evasion proof.”

# Argumentative democracy

## Limits

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- A new technocracy?
  - Weak connections with grassroots
- Corporations' lobbies
- Does the best argument prevail?



# After the financial crisis

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- The 2008 financial crisis has proven alter-globalization expert activists' analyses to be right. But what has changed?
- However large it is, *the crisis in itself will not generate social change.*
- Social change depends of the capacity of social movements to bring out the questions posed by the historic situation and to advance alternative political visions and economic rationality.

# 5. “Mobilizers”

## Civil society organizers

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- Focus on building social movements
- Experts in organizing / connecting movements
- A new balance of power against capitalism and in the institutional political arena.
- Social change through “power struggle”



# Mobilizers: Protest democracy

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*“Social progress has never been obtained only by elections. In 1936, social benefits were obtained not thanks to the progressive government but because millions of people were striking and demonstrating in the street”*



## **Actors**

## **Models of democracy**

**Occupy**

**Direct democracy  
Deliberative demo.**

**Transition  
movements**

**Responsible demo.**

**Expert  
activists**

**Argumentative demo.**

**Mobilizers  
SM Organizers**

**Protest democracy**

**Political parties**

**Formal democracy**



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*6. The come back of parties?*

*« Occupy the state »  
or multiple democracy?*

# *Are young people back in representative politics?*

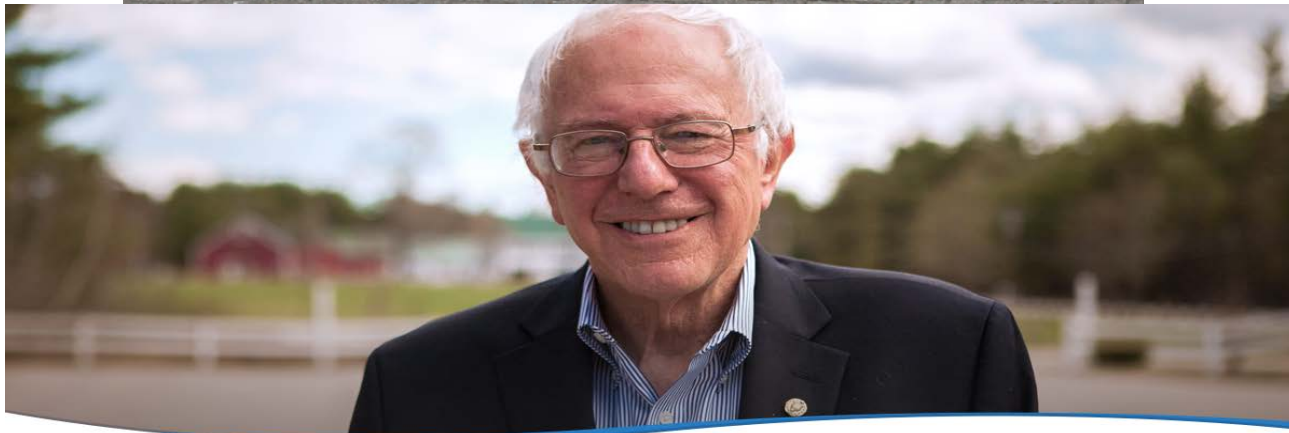
*2011*



*2015*



*Is that what  
'new ways of doing politics' look like?*



**Bernie**  
2016



# *Is that what 'a new way of doing politics' looks like?*

## **3 lessons on young people political participation from J. Corbyn election**

### ***1. Not a geek***

99 meetings in towns in 100 days

### ***2. Directly addresses young people's issues***

a generation that has suffered from cuts, inequalities, education prize and neoliberal politics (0 hours contract)

"This is a campaign about hope, about democracy, about opportunities for young people."

Political ideas in the debate

### ***3. Personal ethics and authenticity***

"He really believes in what he says."



# Back to old politics?

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1. It wouldn't have happened without digital media  
Politics in a digital world

2. Multiple democracy

Combine representative democracy with direct democracy, using different forms and tools to foster participation.



# Multiple democracy

## Which articulations?

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- Direct democracy as a piece of the puzzle
  - Podemos, Pirate party, Participatory budget...
- **No direct translation to electoral politics**
- Small victories / changing public debates
- A new generation of political activists and leaders?
- Electoral politics is only a piece of the puzzle



# Experiments in a multiple democracy

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Pirate Party (Germany & Sweden)

5 stars party (Italy)

Podemos (Spain)

To translate direct democracy in institutional politics??

Direct participation (local groups, online...), protests and  
representative democracy

From Indignation to organization

From a horizontal movement to a charismatic party  
leader

**The challenges of democracy in a digital era**





# Multiple Democracy

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- Complement representative democracy
- Local, national and global citizenship

*Global democracy and citizenship remain, for the most part, to be invented.* (M. Albrow)

*Taken together, multiple forms of democracy offer concrete ways forward for a multi-dimensional approach to deal with the structural limits of representative democracy and to explore paths towards more democratic societies*