Meaning Making in the News: A Discourse Analysis on Global Protest

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how the American mainstream media constructed the protests in Tunisia, North America, and Greece, in 2010-2011. My focus is on how mainstream media discourses and narratives function, how they shape and fix meaning in a way that excludes alternative views and alienates groups inside and outside of Western societies. Through the analysis of *The New York Times* coverage of these three events I explore how different expressions reproduce or transform protest discourse and what other discourses they draw upon.

My approach in this study is that of a *bricoleur*, utilizing the discourse analysis approach of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe which, rather than offering a methodology as a totality within itself, promotes an open and interactive exploration of the subject matter. I engage in a cultural studies approach in terms of representation, notions of orientalism and post colonialism from Edward Said and Robert J.C. Young, and Derrida's deconstruction and his notion "democracy to come". I focused on news texts to uncover the ways in which meaning is made—in terms of concepts such as democracy, revolution, protest, and dissent in regards to culture, ethnicity, economy, geo-political region—of events, as well as trace the struggle to fix meaning when established views of the world are being contested.

In this thesis I argue that the production of meaning is a political process that organizes the world in particular ways to the exclusion of others. Both apparently objective discourses and those caught up in political processes or struggles attempt to fix meaning in ways that have consequences for the social world.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Occupy Wall Street, Protest, Democracy, Bricoleur, New York Times

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, 2010-2011 yıllarında Tunus, Kuzey Amerika ve Yunanistan'daki protestoların Amerikan ana akım medya tarafından nasıl kurgulandığını inceler. Tezin odak noktası, ana akım medya söylemlerinin ve anlatılarının nasıl işlediği; bu söylem ve anlatıların alternatif görüşleri dışlayacak ve Batılı toplumların içinde ve dışındaki grupları yabancılaştıracak bir biçimde anlamı nasıl şekillendirdiği ve yönlendirdiği üzerinedir. Bu çalışmada, *The New York Times* gazetesinin üç olayı ele alışını analiz ederek, farklı ifadelerin protesto söylemini ve bu söylemin beslendiği diğer söylemleri nasıl türettiği ve değiştirdiğini inceledim.

Bu tezde, bir *bricoleur* yaklaşımıyla, Ernesto Laclauve Chantal Mouffe'un, metodolojiyi kendi içinde bir bütün olarak görmek yerine alternatiflere açık ve interaktif araştırmayı destekleyen söylem analizini kullandım. Aynı zamanda, kültürel çalışmalar yaklaşımını da benimseyerek Edward Said ve Robert J. C. Young'ın temsil,oryantalizm ve postkolonizim kavramlarını ve Derrida'nın yapı çözümü ve 'gelen-demokrasi' kavramını kullandım. Protesto olaylarının – kültür, etnik köken, ekonomi, jeo-politik bölge bağlamında demokrasi, devrim, protesto ve muhalefet gibi kavramlar açısından – hangi şekillerde ve nasıl anlamlandırıldığını ortaya koymak ve yerleşik dünya görüşlerine meydan okunulduğu bir zamanda anlamlandırma çalışmalarını takip etmek için haber metinlerine odaklandım.

Bu tezde, anlam üretmenin dünyayı belli bir düzene göre organize eden ve olası farklı açılımları dışlayan politik bir süreç olduğunu irdeledim. Hem objektif

söylemler, hem de politik süreç ve mücadelelere maruz kalan eylemler hayatımız için sonuçlar doğuracak şekilde anlamı yapılandımaya teşebbüs etmektedirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bricoleur, Wall Street İşgali, Söylem Analizi, New York Times Gazetesi, Demokrasi.

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To my family and friends

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem of the Study

Noticeable effects of the global economic crisis began to appear in 2007-2008 with the collapse and bailout of major banks and financial institutions. The causes of this were due to the bursting of the housing bubble and the buying and selling of risky loans or subprime mortgages among other things. The financial institutions that survived the crisis due to government intervention began limiting, or increasing the cost of, credit, leading to the fall of house prices, job cuts, and a drop in public consumption leading to further loss of jobs (Shah, 2011). Professor of Economics at Columbia University and Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, (2008) described the financial crisis as originating in America and resounding around the world. With the credit crunch (banks reducing the lending of money), the cost of the Iraq war, the false growth of the housing bubble, Stiglitz called for an approach to the problem consisting of assistance for the poorer home owners—rather than tax deductions for the rich, government bailouts for financial institutions based on stricter regulations and an end to inflated bonuses. Over the years

2009-2010 the EU, IMF, and US government tried to respond to the crisis with a regiment of lending and austerity measures. This in many cases resulted in the weakening of national economies and increase in the need for social aid, such as unemployment benefits. There was also the suggestion that the austerity measure were implemented with another agenda in mind.

As Stiglitz put it: "it is an attempt to weaken social protections, reduce the progressivity of the tax system, and shrink the role and size of government – all while leaving established interests, such as the military-industrial complex, as little affected as possible." (2010, para. 3). He went on, in that same article, to propose several ways to respond to the crisis other than by strict austerity measures such as reducing unnecessary military funding, increasing investment in the public sectors such as education, training, and research, the stripping of welfare for large corporations and a boost in welfare for lower income citizens, and a increase in tax for the wealthiest individuals. (Stiglitz, 2010, para. 5-8).

It was during this period that global protest movements began to form, to a large extent, or at least on the surface, as a reaction to these austerity measures, but also as a way of voicing grievances concerning issues such as a dissatisfaction with free-market practices, with capitalism and the way it functions as a whole, with governments in regards to corporate interventions, with the current state of human right, animal rights, Western-backed dictatorships, to list but a few. On October the 15th, 2011 a day of global protest took place. Inspired by the 'Arab Spring' uprisings, around 950 cities around the world participated and hosted demonstrations. (Rogers, 2011)

Concerning the news coverage of these events, the mainstream media's focus lingered on violence, disturbance of the peace, the lack of unity of message, and relied on police and government sources and points of view. These trends encouraged protestors, supporters, and researchers of the movements to engage with social media and web-based blogs to organize and piece together events.

My thesis, however, looks closer at the mainstream media (in conjunction with protestor manifestos, pamphlets, slogans, and other relevant material) not only to point out or mark these trends mentioned above, but also to explore the contexts within which dominant discourses operate, to explore certain taken for granted assumptions: what is the function of protests? What is meant by democracy in terms of consensus? How do discourses centered on 'economy' shape the way the financial crisis is perceived, and dealt with?

In 2010-2011 a series of protests, demonstrations, and internal conflicts, occurred throughout North Africa and the Middle East. Sparked off by, or at least beginning with, the protests and subsequent revolution in Tunisia. Various explanations have been given for the protests and for the timing of them, from the release of the Wikileaks cables, government corruption, famine due to food costs, to human rights violations, or a combination of those mentioned. In fact strong social/labor movements were for a long time active in many of the countries involved in the 'Arab Spring' as well as persistent and well organized unions (Chomsky, 2012). From Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, protests broke out with the US and European governments much of the time too slow to readjust their position, due to investment, business relations, or covert participation in the

establishment of regimes, from support of dictators to support of the people (Stone, 2011).

Although much of the time portrayed by the US and EU news media as an attempt by the people of the Arab world to 'democratize' themselves, or to 'catch up' with the Western world, many issues raised by Arab protestors resonate with those of the Occupy movement. It was the events taking place in Tunisia and other North African countries that inspired the Occupy movement. Protestors across North Africa and the Middle East reached out to protestors in the West with messages of encouragement, support, and solidarity (CtrGlobalHumanities, 2011).

Putting to one side Western involvement in the establishment of dictatorships in the Arab world and the continuous business partnerships forged out of the oppression of others, which goes unmentioned in the mainstream Western media, the framing by the mainstream media of the conflicts in those regions is worth noting. The dominant discourse used associates Arab countries and peoples with the historical past, a pre-democratic era separated from the West not only by space but by time. This language assumes that the Arabic world had not yet developed culturally, socially, or politically to the point where democracy could be fought for, earned, or implemented. As if, frozen in the past, countries such as Tunisia needed to make that historical leap or journey to the present, in other words to the apex of civilization as exemplified by the West. This ahistorical account ignores both the mark colonialism and neocolonialism has made in the region and also ignores the actual 'otherness' of the other, assuming that with the attainment of basic human right comes a conversion to the broader social/cultural ideals

of the West. With quick stops along the road, journeying through the Renaissance, Enlightenment, revolution, to democracy, the Arab world will transform from the 'other' to one of 'us'. As illustration by this piece for CNN,

> With their own "Berlin Wall" moments, young people across religious, sectarian and ethnic lines are helping to build their undemocratic Arab nations into societies that forgo the dictatorial treachery of the past for the hopeful politics of the future.
> Thomas Jefferson once said: "I hope our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us, that the less we use our power, the greater it will be." (Ifikhar, 2011).

This inability to understand or represent difference helps extricate the Western world from responsibility for the shaping and building, through colonialism and neocolonialism, of dictatorships in the region and the exploitation of the people. In one gestures this implies a propensity in the Arab world for megalomaniacal, oppressive dictators, a characteristic that is just now being overcome, and places the Western world, US and Europe, as the final destination in the Arab world's struggle towards freedom.

1.2 Purpose and Importance of the Study

My purpose in this thesis in conducting a discourse analysis on articles published in 2010-2011 from The New York Times pertaining to democracy, protest, economy, and Western notions of the Middle East and Africa is to explore how within the mainstream media dominant discourses are shaped and fixed in such a way as to exclude alternative views. By looking at how mainstream media discourses and narratives function and validate themselves I attempt not to dismiss them out of hand but to test their foundations, basic assumptions, and linear nature in order to open up new perspective.

In much of the Western mainstream media 'democracy' narratives are used as a shorthand to justify policy or point of view, they incorporate interpretations of concepts

such as equality and consensus and smuggle within them conjectures on how democratic societies should operate and what it takes to be a member . I argue that these narratives rely on contradictions, historical, political, and social, that hinder open discussion and from the outset alienate whole groups within and without Western societies.

1.3 Relevance

I chose The New York Times online version for my analysis for a number of reasons. With its reputation as the "newspaper of record", award winning publication of the Pentagon Papers among other controversial reports, emphasis on objectivity, open-mindedness, and diversity; it stands as a self-appointed archive for "all the news that's fit to print". In print it is the third largest newspaper in America, and its online version is the most popular news website. With 108 Pulitzer Prizes awarded to the newspaper, it prides itself on journalistic integrity, objectivity, and sensitivity to viewpoints other than those of their reporters or of the paper. In one statement to the staff of The New York Times, on the company website, Bill Keller, writer for the paper, broaches the question of the newspaper's credibility:

> The proliferation of critics and the growing public cynicism about the news media pose a threat to our authority and credibility that cannot go unanswered. The challenge, as the committee was well aware, is to answer it without being distracted from our journalistic work, and without seeming defensive or self-absorbed and self-promotional. (Keller, 2005, para. 3)

The claims of objectivity predictably fall short of a realistic endeavor. Within that same release Keller (2005) overreaches himself in a response to lack of diversity at the NYT walking the line between multiculturalism and objectivity, at first stating, "it is part of our professional code that we keep our political views out of the paper" (para.41), and

then in reference to diversity, "It calls for a concentrated effort by all of us to stretch beyond our predominantly urban, culturally liberal orientation, to cover the full range of our national conversation" (para. 42). Where objectivity can be found within the motion of unloading oneself of one ideological viewpoint in order to momentarily adopt another is unclear if such an operation is possible.

In regards to the structure of the company and how this may have an effect on journalistic integrity and objectivity a brief tour through Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model would elucidate,

> The essential ingredients of our propaganda model, or set of news "filters," fall under the following headings: (I) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media. (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p.2).

As a multibillion dollar company owning a number of newspapers and online news websites as well as publishing companies and paper mills (The New York Times Company, n.d.), the NYT functions as a business and therefore must put profit above other considerations.

The institution is, however, a staple source of news in the U.S., with 807,026 online subscribers making it the number one online newspaper (Byers, 2012.). Therefore, with its historically based reputation as a reliable news source, its proclamation of journalistic integrity, diversity, and objectivity, and impressive readership, the paper presents a good example of how dominant discourses are disseminated.

Additional material, articles, social movement manifestos, pamphlets and slogans I find relevant to the study as a way of exploring how dominant discourses can also shape the critical responses to them. To look at how a discourses centered around a term such as 'economy' have been constructed in such a way as to limit the range of discussion. I also find it helpful to represent at least a fraction of the protestor's viewpoints via their semi-official media outlets due to the fact that in the mainstream media their views are either ignored or handpicked to reflect or guide the tone of any given article.

1.4 Method of the Study

In this thesis I focused predominantly at the New York Times online news coverage of three protests, primarily at the first month of each event, with the inclusion of subsequent news coverage and alternative publications provisionally. I engage in a discourse theory approach, a cultural studies approach in terms of representation, notions of orientalism and post colonialism from Edward Said and Robert J.C. Young, Derrida's deconstruction and his notion "democracy to come". I focused on news texts to uncover the ways in which meaning is made—in terms of concepts such as democracy, revolution, protest, and dissent in regards to culture, ethnicity, economy, geo-political region—of events, as well as trace the struggle to fix meaning when established views of the world are being contested. This attempt to naturalize signifiers is at the heart of my analysis. Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the notion of difference, that each signifier refers to another through difference, and John Phillips notes how any connection made or link established between signifiers is ultimately arbitrary and is the outcome of a historical, cultural process,

> The linkage remains unstable and is subject at any given moment to the possibility of unpredictable change. In nineteenth-century Europe the signifier 'women' seems to have been attached to the signifiers 'passive' and 'weak' when applied in non-domestic contexts (in domestic contexts like the kitchen the reverse is true). The link was apparently inextricable, it seemed both necessary and natural. (Phillips, 2000, pp.121-122).

I looked at how different expressions within the NYT coverage of these protests challenges, reestablishes, or transforms protest discourse and what other discourses they draw upon and at how certain narratives operate within these media texts, centered on terms such as 'democracy', 'economy', 'west', and 'east' and how they limit or direct the discussion. I problematized discourses centered on terms such as 'economy' as used by both the mainstream media and protestors and activists alike. Do particular usages of these terms amount to a form of reductionism, misrepresent the qualities of the notion, or shape the debate?

My approach in this thesis is that of a *bricoleur* in the sense that rather than restricting myself to one theoretical viewpoint as a totality within itself, I venture where necessary or where the subject of my analysis leads me in order to explore the complexities within.

From Claude Levi-Strauss *bricolage* was used in reference to what he called a "prior" form of science. The *bricoleur*, limited in regards to material makes do with what he/she has. Levi-Strauss (1966) contrasted this to the modern engineer, "the engineer is always trying to make his way out of and go beyond the constraints imposed by a particular state of civilization while the '*bricoleur*' by inclination or necessity always remains within them" (p.19). Derrida however notes that all systems are constructs made up of

disparate parts, and that the *bricoleur* can recognize the structure of a borrowed system without having to adhere to its totalizing nature. (Klages, 2006, p. 61).

It is also in the nature of the opening up of, the flushing out of apparently fixed discourses to avoid self-contained systematized approaches or all-encompassing formulas. The translator's introduction of Derrida's *Writing and Difference* (1978) describes Derrida's notion of *solicitation*. Coming from the Latin *sollicitare* (move, shake) Derrida uses this to confront the totality (totalitarian nature) of structures. By showing the differential foundation of a structure—it being defined by what it *isn't*, what it excludes—Derrida "sees structuralism as a form of philosophical totalitarianism, i.e., as an attempt to account for the totality of a phenomenon by reduction of it to a formula that governs it *totally*" (p. xvi).

1.5 Limitation of the Study

I have limited my research to a large extent to The New York Times because of its reputation as a reliable and unbiased news source.

In regards to the relevance of the internet, social media, blogs, and forums I have left this dimension of the study to one side for two reasons. The first being that the majority of my focus is on how dominant discourses in the mainstream media function, limit or direct the discussion, reinforce taken for granted ways of viewing the world. Although many internet sites have broadened their range in terms of social/cultural impact it is my view that their influence does not meet the level of a well-established news source such as The New York Times in readership or cultural and historical significance. The second reason is in reference to mainstream news coverage emphasizing the role social media

has played in the protests, demonstrations, and revolutions. I argue that the internet functions in a similar way other new forms of media have functioned in the past: as a tool for liberation or oppression, innovation or indoctrination. Although it can be, and has been, used for aiding protest movements, connecting marginalized groups, it also can be used by governments or corporations for surveillance over, or manipulation of these same groups.

Therefore, although a study of how the dissemination of information about the events and the organization and realization of the actual protests were influenced by new technologies and social spaces would be timely and relevant, I focus not on the medium of the message so much as the message itself.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND, DEMOCRACY, PROTEST, NEWS MEDIA, AND ECONOMY

2.1 Background, the Protests, and the Notions

The Tunisian protests culminated with a revolution on January 14, 2011, ousting President Zine Abine Ben Ali from power. Pre-revolution Tunisia has been described as a country lacking in possibility for socio-economic advancement, devoid of political liberalization with rigged elections and suppressed opposition, with a concentration of wealth reserved for top officials and a small group of connected families, and censorship of any alternative media outside of government sanctioned. For the international media the protests began with a symbolic gesture, a desperate street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, harassed by the police and unable to make a living set himself alight. From one of the more economically deprived areas of Tunisia, Bouazizi, educated but unemployed, represented the youth of Tunisia and their frustration with the regime.

Although this act may have sparked off the protests, as Laryssa Chomiak points out in her paper, "The Making of a Revolution in Tunisia", the revolution was not as spontaneous as that, it had been cultivated over years in Tunisia by word-of-mouth, on the streets and in cafes.

> In Tunisia, spaces of political contention and resistance have existed all along, even under the increasingly authoritarian political conditions of Ben Ali's rule. Yet such spaces and practices were largely ignored because of their unseen location outside the official realm of politics, which included a controlled civil society and the co-opted electoral system with a few legal political parties that were allowed to compete in one of the region's most un-competitive systems (Chomiak, Feb2011)

She goes on to note that the protests, rather than erupting out of nowhere, were in fact the next step in a pre-existing "culture of dissent".

The birth of the Occupy movement is said to be the September 17th 2011 Wall Street protests that sparked off demonstrations across America and Europe. The movement, although made up of protestors with a wide range of reasons for going out onto the streets, rallied under the banner of "the 99%" signaling their discontent with inequality in America. As with Tunisian protestors relying on Facebook and other social media to communicate and broadcast their messages uncensored, protestors in America chose not to rely on mainstream media to relay their message to the world and each other. *Adbusters*, Occupy Wall Street's "unofficial *de facto* online resource" occupywallst.org, the twitter account #occupy wall street, the *Take The Square* group and their partners and supporters were among the online resources used by protestors to voice their concerns, namely: the income earned by a minority of wealthy Americans called the 1 percent (and the tax cuts for the top of that 1 percent for money earned from capital gains) and the rise of unemployment and poverty for the majority of Americans. *Adbusters*, on behalf of the Occupy Wall Street movement suggested on its website some alternatives for the group's "one demand": The reinstatement of the Glass-Steagall Act that separated investment banks from commercial banks, the repeal of this

act in 1999 led to the recent financial crisis, a tax on all financial transactions, or an end to corporate personhood.

Lastly I look at the protests in Greece, ranging from May 2011 through to August of the same year. Inspired by the Spanish protests of earlier that year the demonstrations were a reaction to austerity measures proposed by the Greek government in accordance with the IMF, EU, and European Central Bank.

Greece's initial austerity measures were caused by the government's large deficit from the early 2000s and subsequent government debt due to the late 2000 world economic crisis brought about by the housing bubble (and house-price crash), the revelation concerning risky loans, and the near bankruptcy of major international banks. The austerity measures, a requirement for the EU and IMF loan agreement, included public sector cuts, the freezing of pensions, pension cuts, the raising of taxes, and the privatization of state-run businesses and institutions . (Inman,2012, para. 3) May 2010 came with protests in Athens 100,000 strong, involving acts of arson and vandalism (tactics which in later protests were dropped in favor of the Spanish-style encampments), with accusations against the government of corruption and incompetence. The parliament passed the austerity measure that same month, nevertheless, as an act of goodwill and commitment to the EU and IMF. Cephas Lumina, UN expert on foreign debt and human rights, in June, 2011, stated that the austerity measures were both inefficient—the stripping of a nation's infrastructure hinders rather than helps its recovery—and inhumane in regards to Greek citizens deprived of basic human needs in exchange for the assistance of the IMF and EU. (United Nations News Center).

In May, 2011, with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel's support for austerity measures, the protests began again across Greece focusing on major cities. Now a peaceful, but powerful, movement, protestors called on government officials to leave the country, questioned the role democracy played in the crisis, and the control the IMF and EU exercised in their country's decision-making processes.

Supported by, and made up of the left wing organization SYRIZA and the Indignant Citizens Movement, the demonstrators emphasized intolerance for political affiliations, trading party politics for a broader anti-capitalist stance. The Real Democracy Now! Movement published a statement agreed upon by their first people's assembly:

> For a long time decisions have been made for us, without consulting us. We are workers, unemployed, retirees, youth, who have come to Syntagma Square to fight and give a struggle for our lives and for our future. We are here because we know the solutions to our problems can only be provided by us. We call all residents of Athens, workers, unemployed, and youth, to come to Syntagma Square, and all of society to fill the public squares and to take their lives into their own hands. In these public squares we will shape our claims and demands together. We call on all workers who are going on strike in the coming days to show and stay at Syntagma Square. We will not leave the square until those who compelled us to come here leave the country: the governments, the Troika (EU, ECB, and IMF), banks, the IMF Memoranda, and everyone who exploits us. We send them the message that the debt is not ours. (Real Democracy Now.net)

Among other slogans at Syntagma Square were, "their democracy guarantees neither Justice nor Equality", and, "the taxation system is not the same for the rich and the poor. Equal rights for everyone."

Over the months of protest the main issues were reiterated by protestors, mainly the austerity measures which included privatizations, public sector cuts, and raised taxes.

2.2 Dissemination of the Protests

The protests beginning in Tunisia were followed by protests in Algeria, and in January of 2011, in Lebanon, Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Syria, and Morocco. Following the overthrow of the Tunisian government—just 11 days later, in Tahrir Square in Cairo thousands on the streets protested. Around the same time, although not connected by the mainstream media to what was already being labeled "Arab Spring", were student strikes in Puerto Rico and protests in Madison, Wisconsin. In February, however, the general coordinator of the Center for Trade Union and Workers Services in Egypt, Kamal Abbas reached out to the protestors in Wisconsin stating, "We want you to know that we stand on your side. Stand firm and don't waver. Don't give up on your rights. Victory always belongs to the people who stand firm and demand their just rights. We and all the people of the world stand on your side and give you our full support." (MichaelMoore.com)

As protests continued in Africa and the Middle East, protests began in Spain in May 2011 drawing inspiration from the Tunisian Revolution and the Arab Spring. Known alternatively as the *Indignants movement*, they set up encampments that were to inspire the tactics of the Occupy movement in the United States and elsewhere. On and around October 15, 2011 nearly 1,000 cities around the world joined together to protest in over 80 countries.

2.3 Why News Media

The concept of freedom of the press is closely linked to democracy and universal human rights. Notions of the role of the journalist and of news media in society are varied and diverse. There is the centuries-old notion of the journalist as "watchdog", an independent and objective pursuit with an aim to guard the rights of citizens against corruption or tyranny from their leaders. There have also been the contributions of Walter Lippman such as *Public Opinion* (1922) in which he described the manufacture, or creation, of consent. Lippman argued that the complexities of world events and decision making within the political process mean that the general public cannot, and should not be depended on to, make sense of facts or world events alone, it is rather the intellectual's, expert's, and journalists' duty to deliver news via official sources and elites to the general public (p.227). John Dewey, a contemporary of Lippman's, argued that although he agreed that the public were incapable of true self-governance, their role would be to intervene at critical moments in order to readjust or maintain the government it was represented by, making it necessary for there to be access to impartial information.

Critical media scholars take the notion of impartial news reporting to task, arguing that mainstream news making, due to its heavy reliance and emphasis on official sources, in terms of government, corporate, police, adoption or incorporation of language reestablishing social norms, it reinforces dominant cultural worldviews. As Roger Fowler in his book, Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press (1991) argues, concerning standard media analysis, "What is being said is that, because the institutions of news reporting and presentation are socially, economically and politically situated, all news is always reported from some particular angle." (p9) What is news is

not just the reporting of an event, as journalists in the mainstream media purport to do, but the choice to report on particular events and in particular ways that coincide with dominant world-views. Stuart Hall, in a similar vein described how a news event is defined by its being out of the ordinary and yet at the same time cannot be considered news until it is situated in a "cultural 'map'".

By looking at news media texts we can trace back, through the study of the language, what Fairclough calls the "intertextual chain" of a text (Chouliarak&Fairclough, 1999, p. 51). By looking at what sorts of fields of knowledge a media text draws from, what official sources are quoted or incorporated, what basic assumptions the language within these fields of knowledge contain, and how does it communicate to the reader, we can uncover how it reinforces certain social understandings of the world.

Therefore the critical study of news media can help us map out social fields of knowledge, networks of meaning and assumptions about what the world is and how we are encouraged to think about it. It's not a question of detecting bias in news coverage of the events in Tunisia or Wall Street, but a question of how events are made sense of, meaning is constructed, within particular discursive fields.

2.3.1 Protest Movements

Protest movements are an important part of the social and political structure of a democratic country. The ability of a group of people to challenge the state and publicly voice their grievances is a test of a nation's openness and commitment to the ideas of equality and freedom of speech. Protest/social movements are largely made up of—and represent--those social groups who are not represented by party politics or who are at

odds with existing political systems. This poses the question: is protest a sign of democracy functioning properly or of a system of governance that excludes certain groups who are forced to represent themselves outside of designated institutional settings? Chomsky argues that many, if not most, of the liberties and freedoms found in the U.S. exist due to the work of social/civil rights movements rather than a reflection of the structure of the system and that it is a perpetual struggle to ensure they remain in place. He notes that legislation such as The New Deal, women's vote, the end to slavery, segregation, were not the products of a pre-established constitution or governmental body but the results of democracy in motion, in opposition to interpretations of the founding principles of the United States (Chomsky, 2012, p. 63).

It is, in fact, much of the time the outcome of a struggle, a battle with the system or the law, or what is known as public opinion or consensus, that grants marginalized or oppressed people's rights and representation formerly withheld, or alternative or dissenting views a place or space in the public realm.

In John Hartley's *Understanding News* (1982) he quotes Stuart Hall in a subsection mapping reality: consensus and dissent:

> If news men did not have—in however routine a way—such cultural 'maps' of the social world, they could not 'make sense' for their audiences of the unusual, unexpected and unpredicted events which form the basic content of what is 'news-worthy'(Hartely, 1982, p. 81).

Hartley goes on to describe what these maps make up of society including the notion of consensus. He borrows from Hall again to outline the contradictions within the concept of consensus in news making. Hall describes newspapers as saturated with the views and

lives of the elite and yet at the same time assuming the values of social equality and unity of worldviews. Despite this contradiction, however, the concept of consensus creates a "closed societal circle" and Hall notes that this consensus in essence excludes, ignores, or criminalizes the ideas of alternative groups with other world views and labels them deviant. Dissent, therefore, Hartley argues, is not treated hostilely in news media on an individual, personal level but rather because of the need for journalists to document "facts" in an understandable and socially expectable way. Objectivity, as depicted in the world of journalism, necessarily calls for the marginalization of protest groups in accordance with the concept of consensus. A journalist's assumed duty to properly frame or describe events in understandable ways forces them, intentionally or unintentionally, to discriminate against, and marginalize protestors and protest groups. The culmination of this, Hall explains, is the grouping of protestors as outside of "civilized" society along with other criminals (Hartely, 1982, p. 81-86).

2.4 Consensus and Democracy

Habermas, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989) describes a "bourgeois public sphere" in the 1700s that was made up of private persons brought together to form a public entity. It existed as a way of "overcoming private interests and opinions to discover common interests and to reach societal consensus" (Kellner, 2000, p.263) in order to challenge the authority of the state via contemporary media (newspapers, books, journals) and the formation of spaces of political discussion. It was in these spaces, he proposes, that public opinion was formed. Near the end of the 19th century, Habermas argues, the media and the state fell under the influence of corporations, private interests of the dominant elite's hijacked political decision making, thus deteriorating the function of the public sphere.

Much criticism has been aimed at Habermas's study, particularly at his description of the "bourgeois public sphere" from which a consensus or public opinion is created. Outside of the question of historical accuracy in regards to whether such a homogeneous group of individuals functioned as described actually existed, there is the question of if such institutions did exist, who would be included in that public sphere, which races, genders, classes, would take part in the making of consensus. Of which public would public opinion be made up of?

In Habermas's explanation of why the public sphere in its liberal model would not function in modern societies he points out that the foundations on which such a public sphere were based on ceased to exist.

> Because of the diffusion of press and propaganda, the public body expanded beyond the bounds of the bourgeoisie. The public body lost not only its social exclusivity; it lost in addition the coherence created by bourgeois social institutions and a relatively high standard of education. (Habermas, 1964)

It is inherent in the manner in which Habermas describes the conditions necessary to maintain a "bourgeois public sphere" that even within the notion of consensus, or even of public opinion, there is implied exclusivity. This is what helps reinforce the view of protestors in democratic societies as outside of the public realm, defying the consensus if their rationale is not deemed rational.

Jacques Derrida, in his book *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* as an explanation of his notion "democracy to come", helps us better understand why the concept of an 'achieved' democracy based on the foundations of consensus undermines the uniqueness of the system in its absolute or historical context. Although Derrida stresses

that democracy has not been, may not be, actually realized as such, he does point to certain aspects of the notion or process that sets it apart from others. The argument that democracy has not, and may never, fully exist in the here and now holds within it a notion of what democracy describes.

> Force *without* force, incalculable singularity *and* calculable equality, commensurability *and* incommensurability, heteronomy *and* autonomy, indivisible sovereignty *and* divisible or shared sovereignty, an empty name, a despairing messianicity or a messianicity in despair, and so on. (Derrida, 2005, p.86)

This openness, these contradictions, exist within a system of open self-criticism where within the very structure of the system lies the ability and right to oppose the system or the form it has taken. It is the openness of democracy that gestures towardsthe opening of the public sphere, a space wherethere can be unity in diversity.Not reliant on a predetermined destination, the incompleteness, the unpredictability implied in this notion of democracy describes its nature as ‘to come’.

In terms of protest, and the Occupy protest movement in particular, this helps expand the discourse beyond protestors as a singular group in oppositionn to the system, the mainstream, or the one-percent. It points towards public discussion, expression, and conflict as part of a democratic process. The mainstream media’s representation and criticism of the Occupy movement as a disparate, unfocused, reactionary collective of confused individuals, could in fact—minus the negative connotations—be used to describe democratic societies as whole in potentially their highest form. Derrida’s democracy to come moves past the notion of democracy as a completed process, either existing within the borders of a nation-state made up of unchangeable institutions and

ideals, or as an assumption of a universalizable, pre-arranged, expectable mode of discussion.

> This indecidablility is, like freedom itself, granted by democracy, and it constitutes, I continue to believe, the only radical possibility of deciding and of making come about (performatively), or rather of letting come about (metaperformatively), and thus of thinking *what* comes about or happens and *who* happens by, the arriving of whoever arrives. It thus already opens, for whomever, an experience of freedom, however ambiguous and disquieting, threatened and threatening, it might remain in its "perhaps," with a necessarily excessive responsibility of which no one may be absolved. (Derrida, 2005, p.92)

The implication behind the concepts of consensus and 'civilized' society is that in the United States democracy has been achieved and therefore protest is unnecessary, a 'nuisance', or a criminal activity. Frame analysis of protests portrayed in the media reveal that protestors are described either as 'confused' about the issues they are protesting about (in other words not aware that democracy has been achieved and protest is unnecessary) or a danger or a nuisance, weighted under descriptions of criminal behavior. These frames, and the concept of consensus that helps shape them, can exist in these forms only within American media concerning American protests/protestors.

To better understand how this works we can look at Edward Said's concept of Orientalism and his use of Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Hegemony describes leadership or a particular group's influence on society. Through the adoption, to certain extent, of lesser group's worldviews and causes, and the suppression of those groups that threaten the essential foundation of the leading group, hegemony is created. The social aspect of life, seemingly separate from politics, ideology, or the structure of the system is made up of mundane or ordinary tasks and duties such as work, shopping,

leisure, but is actually deeply rooted in the political. The appearance of choice within this aspect of life blinds people to the power structure that shape society and holds it all together. With the guarantee of security and ideological persuasion comes active incorporation of certain world views and subsequently the dissemination of them (Jones, 2006, p. 52). Gramsci describes the "man-in-the-mass" as having a split consciousness, the based in the practical world of activity and the other holds together these social groups, "superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed" (cited in Alexander &Seidman, 1990, p. 53).

Edward Said describes how cultural hegemony functions—a collective, excepted understanding of what we are as a society and our general worldview. Orientalism thrives in the Western collective consciousness, Said argues, because it contains within it the exclusive framework, "identifying "us" Europeans against all of "those" non-Europeans" (Said, 1979, p .7), along with the superiority implied within that notion. Historically, power has shaped the way the West has come to terms with the East, and Said traces this back to the late Renaissance with the European study and exploration of the East and later the British colonization of India. He describes the placement of the Orient under the scrutiny of Western investigation as possible through hegemony of the West over that part of the world,

> There emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character (Said, 1979, p .8).

This, therefore, places the protestors in Tunisia automatically outside of the consensus,

in the role of "them" rather than "us" and makes it possible to 'study' and remark upon the protests as an objective observer. Coverage of protests outside of America, particularly in the 'third world' (depending on United States foreign policy to a large degree, Chomsky (CtrGlobalHumanities, 2011), in an interview about the 'Arab Spring' uprisings, describes a pattern in the U.S media of supporting useful dictators in 'third world' countries until a revolution appears immanent and then reversing tactics) can therefore be more varied in their approach. The frames of 'confused' or 'criminal' protestor can be reversed on to the government, police, or military of a country in turmoil, and protestors and dissenters might be labeled 'freedom fighter' or revolutionaries. This is only possible, expanding on the concepts of consensus and democracy, because in these countries democracy allegedly has not yet been achieved. A teleological--goal orientated historical--mapping of this would put the protestors in the position of early 'American Revolutionaries' with a just cause, fighting for equality and representation and ultimately the final stop: democracy. Outside of the obvious disregard for time, space, and difference that forms the basis of this account there is also an ahistorical narrative at work: that of the heroic "American Revolutionaries". As Chomsky explains, there was an ideology underpinning the American Revolution and those directing it, in order to contest established powers early Americans constructed solidarity amongst themselves through a form of equality,

> Now of course, their sense of "equal participants" included only a very small part of the population: white male property-owners. Today we would call that a reversion to Nazism, and rightly so. I mean suppose some Third World country came out saying that a part of the population is only three-fifths human—that's in the U.S. Constitution, in fact. That would be unacceptable (Mitchell &Schoeffel, 2002, p. 267).

The protests in Greece as covered by mainstream US media reveal a new element to the

protest discourse. Historically the European conception of Greece as the "cradle of civilization" and of the "birthplace of democracy", as well as having been incorporated into European traditions of philosophy and art have placed Greece in a symbolic position of the romanticized and idealized backbone of modern civilization.

The same teleological concept placing other—especially Third World countries, in the past, or in a primitive stage of development become problematic. As does the notion of protestors and activists as 'local' criminals, or confused citizens. The framing, therefore, of both the government and the protestors in Greece appears to rely on the notion that they 'got it wrong', that they were irresponsible, lazy, or untrustworthy.

2.5 Notions of Economy and Grand Narratives

By looking at different theories and notions of and on economy we can begin to explore the assumptions, contradictions, hierarchies, and omissions that make up these metanarratives and how they place 'us', the audience,—people of the Western world, the moneyed, the male—in privileged positions, and 'them'—the lower animals, the slaves, women, poor, non-white—in subordinate positions or outside of the historical trajectory all together. These all-encompassing stories tend to delimit the range of diversity in 'human nature' and rely upon their own assumptions as evidence of their authenticity.

When Jean-FranciosLyotard (1997) wrote about scientific and non-scientific knowledge he pointed out their structural similarities. Non-scientific knowledge, what he terms as narrative knowledge (the stories passed on in various cultures that help sustain its identity), functions within certain linguistic, cultural, criteria, a structure within which the legitimacy of knowledge is based on its occupation of the structure. Scientific

knowledge, although not deemed valid on the basis of its existence, or utterance, in a particular structure does, through the process of 'falsification' rely on previous statements made within that structure—true or false—in order to legitimate a claim by reference to it. The hierarchy of claims to knowledge formulated by the scientific world place narrative knowledge in a category of lower knowledge, suitable for children or the 'uncivilized' (Lyotard, 1997, p. 27).

Lyotard notes that the narratives of folk-lore, nursery rhymes and so forth hold within them rules, codes of conduct, ethics, of a culture which in the same gesture appear to reference the past while at the same time make the injunction to forget it, or not feel the need to remember (p. 22). He compares this to a scientific narrative of a certain theory or knowledge and how this functions in society, "the state spends large amounts of money to enable science to pass itself off as epic: the state's own credibility is based on that epic, which is used to obtain the public consent its decision makers need" (Lyotard, 1997, p. 28). The new scientific narrative is caught up in the need for legitimization via reference to something within its own structure, something 'scientific'. The proof is true if others in the field acknowledge it to be (p. 29).

In terms of consensus, Lyotard observed that due to revolutions throughout the Western world (Humanist, Enlightenment) and the displacement of former authorities (monarchs, the church) there came a necessity for new narratives, and the legitimacy of them would be decided by the people, through consensus and the establishment of social norms. Lyotard points out that this new form of legitimacy mirrors that of scientific knowledge, proclamations of universal truths and the exclusion and marginalization of those outside

of the legitimate structure (p.30). This new narrative is a narrative of humanity. As humanity, rather than knowledge, takes center stage, laws obeyed by the people are put into action by a government composed of the people—outside of this a theorist or scientist may use knowledge to oppose the structure of a given system but ultimately consensus provides legitimacy (p.31).

Found in these economic metanarratives there is always of process of defining the essential nature or quality of people, these stories are self-referencing, based on a time and space in history and yet calling on us to disregard, in one way or another, the past.

How discussions on economy are framed coincide directly with which narrative we have been told, or have chosen to adopt. The self-referencing nature of the narratives, in moments of dissent or protest, limit the scope of the questions we find ourselves asking—how these questions are formulated, and can lead to a reshuffling or a patching-up of power-structures at the expense of change. By opening up or exploring the foundations or assumptions on which different discourses on economy rely we can better recognize which narratives we have been caught up in and whether they serve the purpose they purport to.

In her book *The Human Condition* (1958) Hannah Arendt notes that in ancient Greek thought, for the philosopher Aristotle, the defining characteristic of the human species was not the social—this was merely a biological necessity shared with other animal species—but the political. This ability to contemplate, argue and discuss stood in opposition to the natural responsibilities of the home and of the family, in Greek *oikos*

(from which we get our word 'economy'), where day to day struggle to survive took place. The political sphere in ancient Greece was thought of as the only place where man was truly 'free', not obliged to interact—serve or command—in such an environment (the household) in which activities were based on the necessities of survival (p. 33).

Regarding our active life or *vita activa*, Arendt describes three different aspects: Labor, work, action. Labor describes the process of existing on a biological level, work describes the human-made aspects of life as opposed to the natural, such as architecture and art, what she calls "worldliness", and action describes the state of political life, meaning to be among others as equals, the speech and acts made in the public realm. Through Aristotle, Arendt saw the private sphere of labor, the household or economy, as merely something that needed to be taken care of in order to get to activities of higher value: public politics and creativity (p.13).

Arendt argues that the distinction between the public and the private, or the household and the political aspects of life became gradually confused over time and especially in the modern age. The rise of the nation-state brought about "the emergence of the social realm, which is neither private nor public" (Arendt, 1958, p. 48)

With the rise of the nation-state, this new realm of the social focused on economy at the expense of public politics.

> In our understanding, the dividing line is entirely blurred, because we see the body of peoples and political communities in the image of a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic nation-wide administration of housekeeping. The scientific thought that corresponds to this development is no longer political science but "national economy" or "social

> economy" or *Volkswirtschaft*, all of which indicate a kind of "collective house-keeping", the collective of families economically organized into the facsimile of one super-human family is what we call "society", and its political form of organization is called "nation". (Arendt, 1958)

She goes on to add that for societies from the Middle Ages, through the times of Locke, Hobbes, Marx, to modern society, freedom is found in the realm of the social and violence and authoritarianism can be found in the maintenance and governance of this realm. For the Greek philosophers freedom was solely an attribute of the political realm, violence was found in the private sphere, with a biological, animal-like need as the driving force. The need of governance or rule in order to control others was a non-political notion. In addition, at the time it was thought that to be poor and free was a preferable condition to the security of guaranteed work, as this was akin to slavery. The equality found in the realm of politics was in direct contrast to the structure of the household, to be neither a master nor a slave, nor to resort to violence—which are the characteristics of the survival aspect of human existence--meant that man had the opportunity to fulfill his greatest potential which was contemplation and public speech (p.31).

The hierarchies implicit in this historical narrative place man, in terms of species and gender, as the central character, the hero, and those associated with the household, the slave, the woman, the animal, as the necessary, the burdensome, the biological springboard from which our hero can reach his highest potential. Reference to this narrative serves a purpose in terms of role-reversal regarding the placement of economy in modern society as the system for which we must sacrifice our own personal well-being (austerity measures, bail-outs) rather than our own well-being being the impetus

behind the creation of economic systems, but it also brings with it a variety of assumptions based on inequality and deterministic notions of human nature.

This narrative also calls for a reevaluation of modern notions of politics, according to Arendt the modern juxtaposition of the private and social aspects of life in regards to ancient Greek thought presents a paradox. The private realm in ancient Greece was a place for the maintenance of existence, the public a place for individualism. The social aspect of the nation-state based on collective economy consists of the same dynamic as the household but on a larger scale. With this new social realm comes the notion of a society of workers whose primary public function is survival. This large-scale household is obliged to act as a unit under modern notions of 'equality' which have historically been fought for and gained--but which are in fact what Arendt describes as the normalization of mass society--thus banishing the uniqueness and differences found among those in the ancient public/political realm to the modern private realm. In this sense political thought and speech becomes private, and labor, economy, the Greek realm of the household, becomes public. The abolition of public forums for political action means there is no space for human excellence (p.46-49).

Arendt in her critique of modern societies makes no distinction between Karl Marx's notion of economy or that of the political economists he critiqued, such as Adam Smith, because the foundational assumptions, be they base and superstructure or the "invisible hand" make no reference to the notion that economy holds a lesser, private, place in human life than does public politics.

The members of society take on the role of the members of the household, and rather than (in some instances) the head of the household dictating the rules there is what she calls, "the phenomenon of conformism" (Arendt, 1958, p.40) which guides political and economic conditions.

In her remarks on the conformity of mass society Arendt notes that economic sciences, the laws of statistics in particular, function by filtering out abnormalities or deviations thus rendering those anomalies highly praised in ancient Greece, of outstanding political thought or speech, unrecorded (p.41).

In this light both Marx and Engels' "Communist Manifesto" and the previous work by Adam Smith *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* reduce the citizen to a worker or laborer, whether exploited in a bourgeois factory or as an 'equal' obliged to labor for the common good.

In *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith again uses notion of economy in an attempt to separate us from the other animal species. He begins with the impossibility of an animal consciously conducting a transaction with another animal, he notes how even the collaboration of two animals hunting down their prey merely reflects a common desire, and concludes that each animal fully grown lives a life of independence, unlike those of the human species who rely on interaction. With these assumptions Arendt would already take issue but Smith goes on with the argument to where he appears to reiterate her point.

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities, but of their advantages. (Smith, 2005, p19)

This statement deviates from his initial argument, that one of the dividing factors between humans and other animal species is the business transaction, and on to an argument for a sort of productive self-centeredness of the human species, which oddly enough mirrors his description of solidarity among other animals. A collective of animals hunting down their prey function together out of a shared self-satisfaction which seems to be the motivating force behind a butcher or baker offering up dinner: mutual advantage. For Arendt this comparison offers no problem, the economics of the human species are located in the biologically driven, survival realm of other animal species. It is only with the fetishization of economy that distinctions have to be made and the concept of economics has to bring with it a purely 'human' condition. Both attempt to nail down characteristics of human nature by contrasting it to the nature of 'lower' species, Arendt almost explicitly designating the majority of people (slaves, the poor, women) to the category of the 'lower', and Smith makes the distinction between the 'lower' animal's selfish nature (which in hindsight, in terms of evolution, would really only apply to a whole species, if such a personification of animal behavior held true) and the human trait of self-interest resulting in a common prosperity.

Smith, as later with Marx and Engels, has placed the essence of humanity in the realm of the social and thereby the economic, tethering any definition of humanity or the trajectory of it to the ways with which labor is divided, or in which the household is managed.

The Manifesto, in fact, describes within it the very antithesis of what Arendt would argue for.

> In bourgeois society, living labor is but a means to increase accumulated labor. In Communist society, accumulated labor is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the laborer.

While she would agree that the purpose of human labor is not the accumulation of capital or of wealth for capitalists, the identification of oneself with labor in Communist society presents another problem, the priority of labor over—in her terms, work or action. If one labels oneself a laborer, or is thought of as such, this already puts the cart before the horse. The sole purpose of labor, of maintaining the household and baser human needs, is in order to be granted a place in the higher realms of human life such as public politics and craftsmanship.

> When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another.

It is this understanding of the of role politics that promotes within the Manifesto an all-or-nothing approach to combating inequality. Those who wish to reform some specific social injustice or address particular political issues are seen not only as merely missing the point or attempting to put a band aid over the wound, but are seen as actively participating in the maintenance of the system.

> A part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of the bourgeois society. To this section belong economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organizers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole and corner reformers of every

> imaginable kind. This form of socialism has, moreover, been worked out into complete systems.

Those who would dwell on such issues as mentioned above would, according to the text, be socialistic bourgeoisie, tinkering with the system in order to maintain a system of economic inequality. This focus on economy at the (at least immediate) expense of political discussion sacrifices the main aim for the method of achieving it.

Arendt's approach to the role economy plays in our lives doesn't reduce the importance of the distribution of wealth and resources, it rather aims towards a higher purpose, albeit for a select few.

These metanarratives each in turn edit out particular historical backdrops, unselfconsciously designate a hero, a particular form of human nature as the center, whose ends justify the means. The exclusion of diversity, variation, contradictory detail, ensures that the final system or structure holds within it the seeds of intolerance via notions of universalizing consensus which cannot function with difference. The stories must be told in particular ways in order to maintain their egalitarian thrust, if North America and Ancient Greece stand for democratic ideals then these narrative cannot include colonialist practices of slavery, theft of land, genocide, or an exploration of the Ancient Greek 'household', the taken for granted authoritarian structure, the subordination of the non-citizen, non-male, non-affluent members.

It is not simply a case of historical accuracy, or of argumentation that certain narratives be investigated, but of knowing at what cost a system of governance or economy has or

could be implemented. SlavojZizek, in one of his open lectures concerning the Occupy protests (NewYorkRawVideos, 2011), references an article in *The Washington Post* by Anne Applebaum on the same subject (Applebaum, 2011). Her critique is of the protest movement's unfocused aims and failure to engage with democratic processes. She also questions the comparability of protests in New York and London with those in Egypt. Zizek's initial criticism of Applebaum's contextualization of two protests (New York and Egypt) is of her assumption that the Egyptians are calling for a version of Western Democracy and that this makes impossible an equal alliance between them and the United States based protestors as such a system of governance already exists in the United States. He notes that with this argument she fails to acknowledge their mutual critique of global capitalism and that this is what bonds protestors the world over. He goes on to question her notion that with global capitalism existing outside of the structures and restrictions of democratic institutions, undermining democratic processes, global activists actually exacerbate this by questioning the internal democratic processes of their own nations. Zizek points out a paradox in her reasoning here: by first of all stating that global capitalism undermines western democratic processes, and then by stating that protestors, rather than critiquing their respective nation's democratic processes, should support and work within them in order to solve the above mentioned condition.

Zizek's conclusion is that what is needed is in fact is a critique of current attempts to democratize capitalism. He argues against attempts to 'fix' certain weaknesses in the capitalist system through isolated democratic interventions. Zizek calls for a moment of reflection, not a dialogue between those in power and the people on the street, but a

dialogue solely between the people on the street. A place, a space for people to have time to come up with the right questions rather than reactionary answers. This is in contrast; he makes clear, to the "carnivalesque" atmosphere produced by naïve protestors, protests for the sake of protest. Zizek sees this "vacuum"—the protestors not attempting to come up with simple demands or unified complaints—as that public-political sphere which is missing in current democratic systems and which has no place in global capitalism.

Although Zizek's criticism of attempts to 'fix' the capitalist system mirror Marx and Engels' description of the socialistic bourgeois, it is his conclusion, that a moment needs to be taken, a space needs to be opened up, within which a public-political sphere could emerge, that resonates with Arendt's argument while at the same time ensuring its deconstruction.

Noam Chomsky points towards (Chomsy, 2012) what Arendt would describe as the link between the household or economic side of human existence and the survival, biological side of all animal life by looking at the origins of a well-known phrase by Adam Smith: "invisible hand". Smith, Chomsky points out, used this phrase only once in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, in an effort to describe why in England manufacturers would prefer to do their business at home rather than abroad, in terms of investing and importing, which would have detrimental effects on the home nation's economy. If English manufacturers continued with this ethos, according to Chomsky (2012), "England would be saved from the ravages of what is now called neoliberal globalization." (p.21). With this, Adam Smith having found an essential

characteristic of humanity in self-interest, in the business transaction as a singular trait within the human species, attempts to explain how such individual behaviorisms stop short from having a negative effect on a community as a whole. Chomsky points out that this has hardly been the case, especially within recent years, with deregulations and privatization resulting in what he describes as the "Plutonomy and the Precariat". (Chomsky 2012, p.21). Smith also excludes from this big picture the story of the colonized from which such an economic system would find its basis, as with Arendt, the struggle for equality, liberation, and prosperity ignores the very foundations on which such goals would be obtainable.

By not relying on these stories to decide for us the trajectory of where we have been and where we are heading, we are able to, in fact forced to, come upon every notion, concept, situation, or conflict, unburdened with a blueprint or totalizing narrative, that prescribes for us ready-made answers. As Ernesto Laclau puts it, "we live as *bricoleurs* in a plural world, having to take decisions within incomplete systems of rules (incompletion here means undecidability), and some of these rules are ethical ones (cited in Torfing, 1999, p. 281).

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Discourse Theory

Discourse theory, as used here, refers to an anti-essentialist, social constructionist approach that deviates from notions of objective truth, pre-determined or given structures located outside of the meaning-making process of language (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 4.) In addition to discourse as confined to language as such, Laclau and Mouffe's approach broadens the notion of what discourse entails, as Laclau puts it, "what is true of language conceived in its strict sense is also true of any signifying (i.e. objective) element: an action is what it is only through its differences from other possible actions and from other signifying elements" (Laclau, 2005, p. 68). In short the world can only be accessed through language, rather than language being a representation of an external, material, realm.

The importance of these foundational assertions is that as language constructs the (social) world, it is also where the ability to reconstruct, reproduce, to change the world lies. The way we view the world and ourselves—or the way we constantly construct the

world and ourselves—is arbitrary, in the sense that it is one of many possible ways, and is the outcome of cultural and historical discursive processes or struggles (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 7).

To better understand how Laclau and Mouffe arrive at these notions I would be helpful to review a brief summary of their main work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) as well as additional sources and material. Their deconstruction of other theoretical texts means that rather than present a formal methodological structure, they arrive at new understandings and concepts through the inconsistencies or unexplored aspects and assumptions of texts. The thrust of their work points towards the tracing of the struggles to fix meaning and the results of these struggles (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 24).

3.2 Approaching the Discourse Theory of Laclau and Mouffe

Laclau and Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) challenged Marxist historical necessity. Their approach presented a critique of the notion of the working-class as a unity that rises up against the capitalists as a reaction to dire economic conditions as a natural, inevitable, process (Laclau&Mouffe, 1985, p. 49). The economic determinist models describe the economic base as the deciding factor of the superstructure (state, religious institutions, education, media), or, with the reductionist view, that one's location in the realm of production defines one's class and therefore affiliation with certain world views, politics, ideology, in short, one's nature (Torfing, 1999, p. 20). Gramsci critiqued the Marxist notion of false consciousness, which describes the capitalist superstructure ensuring the continuation of the capitalist economic structure through the indoctrination of the workers whose consciousness is shaped by ideology. Gramsci introduced a collective will, created through the

cultural/historical process of struggles taking place in the superstructure, opening up the realm of the political. Gramsci's hegemony describes the end result of a process resulting in social consensus taking place in the superstructure and not entirely determined by the base (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 32). With Gramsci--and this is where Laclau and Mouffe deviate and reconsider--hegemony and consensus remain attached to the deciding economic determination of class divisions defined by people's true interests (Laclau&Mouffe, 1985, p. 76).

Laclau and Mouffe note that economic determinism remains the core in Gramsci's theory. For this to be reconciled with the notion of hegemony, they put forth, the level of economy must autonomously fulfill its historic role, unchanged by outside, political, anomalies, it must account for, and be the cause of, the unity found amongst social groups and define these groups in roles of production. They argue that even within the notion of the work force purchased by the capitalists in order to extract labor there is an act of domination, a political action, and with, what was empirically found to be the case, the resistance of workers, or the struggle between capitalists and workers, there is the creation of a new situation, a social/political struggle, a different struggle in different places, making the notion of a universal, singular, 'worker' or 'workforce' collapse into diverse political actors, and the economy not placed outside of the effects of the struggle (Laclau&Mouffe, 1985, p. 80).

The economy, the state, and social are all places of contestability, political struggle, and through this severing of ties with economic determinism, Laclau and Mouffe begin questioning the transcendental status of economy in the structure of the theory, and in

doing so move beyond essentialist views of identity and society as natural states of being (Torfing, 1999, p. 41). They do so via Derrida.

Derrida, in "Structure, Sign, and Play" (1978), explores the function of structural centers that give structures both origin and order. This center allows "freeplay" within structures, but the "freeplay" stops at the center which must remain fixed and unchanged as it both determines the structure and remains outside of the structural make-up of the structure (Derrida, 1978, p. 279). This center, Derrida terms 'presence': the subject, "I", consciousness, God, man, and it is never at risk of being subjected to the same "play" that takes place within the structure it holds together (Derrida, 1978, p. 280). This means that the center must take existence in the form of a substitution, representation—the recognition of this is what he calls the "rupture" (p.280) in the notion of structure.

> This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse—provided we can agree on this word—that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences (Derrida, 1978, p. 280).

Even with the critique of metaphysics, presence (Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger), there is an adoption, a taking on board, of the centered structure, that the language and theories put forth to critique these systems take the form of what they critique—a totality vs. a totality. It is therefore discourse, language that holds within it its own critique.

3.3 Discourse and Society

Laclau and Mouffe, by problematizing the determinist model, revealing its transcendental function, by decentering the center of the structure they introduce their notion of discourse. As there can be no real total structure with a metaphysical center

limiting the movements of meaning, structures of signs are therefore signs with temporarily fixed relations whose meanings are never exhausted (Torfing, 1999, p. 85). For Laclau and Mouffe (1985) discursive formations are never completed, they are susceptible to change, temporary totalities made up of groups of differential relations not held in place by an external rule. From Saussure's structuralism--the signs that make up language take their meaning from relations of difference within a structure—poststructuralists preserve the relations of difference but argue that the relations are fluid, changeable, and contingent. There is however the need for the appearance of fixation of relations in order to make meaning (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 25).

Laclau and Mouffe's notion of discourse does not stop at language but describes all aspects of the social. The need for, or the appearance of, the fixation of signs in a structure objectively defined and situated applies to the structure of the social. Society, groups, and identity, all fall under the logic of seemingly objective totalities which are, just like decentered structures of language and philosophy, made up of differential relations, temporary, changeable (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 33). Society, for Laclau and Mouffe is the attempt to produce, or define, 'society', as with collective and individual identity, it is contingent, culminating from discursive struggles. Society is constantly being produced, partially structured, but with temporary "closure" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 39) that allows us to function as if society was an objective totality, and how we function, act or speak, keeps producing or reproducing society.

In reference to the notion of discursive as opposed to non-discursive practices, Laclau and Mouffe argue that the meaning of objects lies not in an internal essence, nor is it

found through an external metaphysical source, but within structures of meaning, discursive formations,

> An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends on the structuring of a discursive field (Laclau&Mouffe, 1985, p. 108).

The relational quality of social identity, the impossibility for these relations to be fully fixed or complete, and the field of discursivity—which describes potential, possible alternative meanings of signs that are excluded from a particular discourse—means that, on one hand a discursive fixation is never finished or complete, always threatened and potentially undermined, and on the other hand, social identity as relational will always be subject to change (Laclau&Mouffe, 1985, p. 113). Each social action involves the *articulation*: modification or repetition establishing relations of *elements:* polysemy signs not yet fixed, with multiple potential meanings, which turns these elements or floating signifiers into *moments*: differential positions inside of a discursive structure (Howarth, Norval, &Stavrakakis, 2000, p.8).

3.4 Hegemony, Ideology, and Social Antagonism

From Gramsci's hegemony referring to the manufacture of "common sense", Laclau and Mouffe through their decentering of the structure of social totalities allow articulations and political agency. Hegemony for them describes, "the expansion of a discourse, or a set of discourses, into a dominant horizon of social orientation and action by means of articulating unfixed elements into partially fixed moments in a context crisscrossed by antagonistic forces" (cited in Torfing, 1999, p. 101). Ideology helps construct hegemony. Laclau first distances his use of the term from Marxist 'false consciousness'

by noting that access to the world is through the construction of meaning the world , therefore there is no 'true' or 'false' consciousness, but there are hegemonic discourses that attempt to make such notions appear 'true', in other words objective, which is ideology's aim (Torfing, 1999, p. 114). Ideology that points to universal ideals or horizons, Laclau describes as *myths*. Myths are hegemonic in the sense that dislocations are rearticulated forming a new objectivity which integrates social demands, therefore myth is a fullness, an ideal, a promise but is loaded with particular norms and values. Hegemonic articulations produce social antagonism in the sense that the repression, negation, or exclusion, of alternative views, actions, or options leads to conflict. As Torfing (1999) puts it, these conflicts take form in various ways in individuals and groups as the hegemonic force constructs the negated or excluded meanings into blockages standing in the way of the realization of the full hegemonic aim. These antagonistic relations take the form of open conflict, displacement of aggression, resignation, or defeatism (p. 120). Whether the antagonism is situated between the hegemonic force and the negated or not, the process leads to social antagonism. It is due to the role of antagonism in hegemonic articulations that they can be described as political.

3.5 The Political, Power, and the Subject

Politics in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory describe how society is organized in particular ways that by definition exclude alternative ways, giving it meaning. "It is the social organization that is the outcome of continuous political processes." (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 36). The organization of society can be seen in discursive struggles, or in stable discourses that are the result of historical-political processes which Laclau and Mouffe term "objective" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 36). These are seemingly

natural discourses which are the products of previous struggles. These objective discourses are ideological, meaning that they present themselves, and function, as if they are not contingent or contestable. They make up our taken-for-granted views of the world—not necessarily in a negative sense--and do not undergo the same scrutiny or critique as other aspects of the social (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 37). The objective and the political are contrasted by the apparent unchanging nature of the objective, but in fact they flow into each other through hegemonic interventions which naturalize political articulations. Objectivity is the combination of politics and power, politics being the constant changeability and contingency of meaning of society and identity, and power being what produces, or the process that brings into being, these structures (society, identity) in a particular form, to the exclusion of others (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 37). Foucault's notion of power takes away from it its solely negative connotations and attaches it to power,

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault [1980], p. 119; cited in Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 13).

Both the social and the identity are contingent and power produces them—which is necessary for there to be any meaning—but produces them in particular ways. This means that in the same gesture it opens up a field of understanding and closes it to the exclusion of other ways of understanding. Laclau points out the function of power in the creation of social identity,

> If…an objectivity manages to partially affirm itself it is only by repressing that which threatens it. Derrida has shown how an identity's constitution is always based on excluding something and establishing a violent hierarchy between the

> two resultant poles—man/woman, etc. (Laclau, [1990], p.33, cited in Gay & Hall, 1996, p. 15).

For Laclau and Mouffe individual and group identity function and are formed in the same way. Overdetermintation, a term borrowed from Freud's *The Interpretations of Dreams* (1986), involves condensation, which is the bringing together of many meanings into one, a whole, which in terms of collective identity would for example mean incorporating many different struggles or demands into one cause, and displacement, placing of a meaning onto another moment, for instance symbols of resistance and struggle (Torfing, 1999, p. 98). On the level of the individual the incorporation of many meanings into one whole work's through Althusser's notion of interpellation. The subject takes on an identity through being interpellated, or placed in a subject position within a particular discourse. As Althusser took on economic determinism, this interpellation also functions as a way of disguising true relations between people. From Laclau and Mouffe's view the notion of a 'true' or 'real' relation outside of discourse doesn't hold, and further more identity is made up of numerous subject positions in numerous discourses. In this context over determination describes different subject positions in different discourses, emphasizing the lack of singularity of identity (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 41). There are multiple ways in which subjects are produced as social actors, "a particular empirical agent at any given point in time might identify herself, or be simultaneously positioned, as 'black', 'middle class', 'Christian', and a 'woman' (Howarth, Norval, &Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 13). The formation of groups, in terms of condensation, narrows down or calls for particular forms of identification from subjects, and these common forms of identification are defined by what they are not: the other (Laclau&Mouffe, 1985, p. 127).

Political subjects are obliged to act when the structure of social identity is weakened and reformulation needs to take place. The appearance of the emptiness of the structure, the contingent nature of the structure describing dislocation, or social antagonisms, creates political identities.

3.6 Logic of Equivalence

Laclau uses Lacan's theory of the subject to explore decentered and incomplete structures and identities. "Like the social, the individual is partially structured by discourses, but the structuring is never total. The wholeness is imaginary but it is a necessary horizon within which both the self and the social are created" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 42), this can be seen in terms of myth. Lacan describes the process of identification beginning with the infant unaware of the difference dividing itself from the outside world and its mother; it experiences a wholeness or completeness. As the child develops it recognizes the difference and is aware of an emptiness within itself. Identity then becomes the process of the subject identifying itself with external sources which are internalized but at the same time always foreign, contrasted to the infant's feeling of completeness (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 42). Therefore subject positions offer an understanding of the self, they seemingly complete the identity but ultimately they are always inadequate and therefore open the way to negotiation and change. "Chains of equivalence" (Laclau&Mouffe, 1985, p. 129) function as a way to understand oneself in reference to what one is not: centered around reference points--nodal points--such as 'man' these signifiers construct the discourse of what 'man' is in relation to what it is not."The discourse thus provides behavioral instructions to people who identify with man and woman respectively which they have to follow in order to be regarded as a (real) man or woman" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 43). The logic of equivalence

functions in political spaces similarly, groups breaking down or weakening their differences to organize, differentiate themselves against another group (Howarth, Norval, & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 11). This logic creates a binary opposition, the organization of two dividing groups in society, it limits the range of difference by reducing the political realm to 'them' and 'us' under which all variations of differences fall (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 131).

3.7 The Aim of Discourse Analysis

Laclau describes the other side of hegemony as deconstruction. "Hegemony is the contingent articulation of elements in an undecidable terrain and deconstruction is the operation that shows that a hegemonic intervention is contingent" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 48). The construction of objectivity through hegemonic discourses and the weakening of these discourses into the realm of the political are the places where discourse analysis functions. As there are no objective, external, truths, discourse analysis works through the discourse, in this case the text, to explore how they make meaning of the world, the social, the individual, and the consequences of such constructions of meaning. Derrida states that, "The movements of deconstruction do not destroy the structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures (Derrida, 1998, p. 24, cited in Jorgensen& Phillips, 2002, p. 49). As previously pointed out, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse offers no guideline of fixed sets of instructions for a specific analysis; therefore I shall utilize key terms and concepts where applicable.

In the next chapter I analyze 6 articles from The New York Times pertaining to protest events and issues connected to them. These events take place in Tunisia, Greece, and the United States during 2010-2011. I have chosen The New York Times for the selection of articles because it offers a representative framework within which people see and experience events. As the leading online news source and third largest print news source in the United States it holds a cultural and historic position in the world of mainstream media.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE NEW YORK TIMES COVERAGE OF THE TUNISIAN, GREEK and NEW YORK PROTESTS

4.1 Analysis of the New York Times on Tunisia

The first two articles I will analyze were published by The New York Times online website on January 21, 2011 and the February 20, 2011, concerning the Tunisian protests and subsequent revolution.

The first article, "Slap to a Man's Pride Set off Tumult in Tunisia" by Kareem Fahim (January 21, 2011) narrates the events that took place in Sidi Bouzid on the 17th of December 2010 leading to Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation and the subsequent protests and demonstrations. The piece, published a little over a month after the event relies on interviews with friends and family of Bouzizi as well as descriptions of the city of Sidi Bouzid. The social space, in this instance the city of Sidi Bouzid, is constructed discursively through descriptions of poverty, corruption, and dilapidation. Identity—the

focus being on young men—is constructed through chains of equivalence made up of signs such as “idle”, “complacent”, “frustrated” (Fahim, January 21, 2011).

> The country’s official unemployment rate is 14 percent, concentrated among young people, but the rate is much higher in Sidi Bouzid, say local union leaders, who put it higher than 30 percent. Neglected by successive central governments, bereft of factories, seized with corruption and rife with nepotism, Sidi Bouzid and the small towns surrounding it are filled with idle young men, jobless, underemployed or just plain poor (Fahim, January 21, 2011).

The social space is constructed in the article as a timeless, objective, whole, rather than the site of political and social struggle. Descriptions such as, “The nearest movie theatre is 80 miles away”, “There are jobs at a toy factory, one of the two biggest plants in the town, but they only pay about $50 a month” (Fahim, January 21, 2011), mirror depictions of a, if not quite complicit, then complacent society: “Some of them pass the time at cafes playing a card game called rami. Others get drunk on the moonshine they buy at cigarette stands and stumble around Sidi Bouzid’s town center”, “Everyone in Sidi Bouzid has a story about a bribe: to get a loan, to start a business or to land a job” (Fahim, January 21, 2011). The interactions between government officials and citizens as told by the article appear oppressive and antagonistic yet routine, and as the vendors, of which Bouazizi was one, may have been breaking the law by selling goods and may have offered bribes as a daily practice, the conflict as portrayed in the article appears to be constructed between Bouazizi personally and the government official in a “seemingly routine confrontation that had set off a revolution” (Fahim, January 21, 2011). This unpleasant, yet oddly symbiotic relationship portrayed in the article between the citizens and officials of Sidi Bouzid poses two questions, the first is: are the antagonistic relations portrayed in the article represented as the cause of the protests? The second is: how are social groups designated or distinguished within the article if both the officials

and citizens are articulated with similar discursive signs? Through the telling of the events of December 17, 2010, the article designates subject positions and antagonistic relations which conflict and contradict each other.

> Ms. Hamdy tried to confiscate Mr. Bouazizi's fruit, and then slapped him in the face for trying to yank back his apples, he became the hero—now the martyred hero—and she became the villain in a remarkable swirl of events in which Tunisians have risen up to topple a 23-year dictatorship and march on, demanding radical change in their government (Fahim, January 21, 2011).

The article is partially written in the style of a storyline, of folklore or legend, with all the attributes with which Lyotard points out scientific knowledge describes narrative knowledge by (Lyotard, 1997, p. 27). Fahim depicts the dissemination of information in the region and the spread of civil disobedience in accordance with this 'lower' mode of knowledge, "the story has traveled past the olive groves and cactus that surround Sidi Bouzid, others saw the tale of oppression, despair and recovered dignity" and "people in other impoverished countries have started mimicking Mr. Bouazizi's act (January 21, 2011). This represents the people of Sidi Bouzid—and more generally citizens of impoverished countries--as a people who both produce and rely on legend and folklore, oppositional logic implying the exclusion of rationality or facts. The article describes one citizen posting the protests on Facebook from which the news was carried by Al Jazeera: "I did my best," Mr. Abidi said, "It's a miracle" (Fahim, January 21, 2011).

The antagonistic relationship between the inspector who accosted Bouazizi and Bouazizi himself is produced in the article as a gender discourse rather than one centered on the oppressed and the oppressor. The inspector was female and is described in the article via her supervisor: "a police officer's daughter, was single, had a "strong personality" and

an unblemished record (Fahim, January 21, 2011). Bouazizi, on the other hand, a vendor "whose itinerant trade may or may not have been legal" (Fahim, January 21, 2011) is constructed in the article as a contradiction, at once as a victim/hero and also as a young man in Sidi Bouzid with all of the chains of equivalence that that identity brings along with it: "idle", "poor", "complacent". Bouazizi, as the "revolution's icon" (Fahim, January 21, 2011), is presented as a paradox:

> Mr. Bouazizi made it to high school, but it was unclear whether he graduated: a cousin said he devoured literature and especially poetry, but his mother said he preferred math. He had a girlfriend, but they had broken up recently. He was a soccer fan and spent much of his spare time at the Fustat café downtown, engaged in the local diversions of smoking and playing cards (Fahim, January 21, 2011).

The article constructs the legend and then subverts it through emphasizing its status as legend. Through interviews the article explains why this antagonistic interaction had such a resonating effect. The logic of the article rests upon the notion that an Arab man, at least in the city of Sidi Bouzid, could remain complacent in the face of poverty, oppression, corruption, lack of human rights, but not when confronted or humiliated by a woman. Ex-government officials and friends and family members of Bouazizi in the article disagree on whether the slap actually occurred but both groups are depicted as astounded and incensed by such an attack specifically by a woman. Bouazizi's sister is reported as saying "She humiliated him", "Everyone was watching", and Ms. Hamdy's supervisor in defending her innocence is reported as saying, "Do you really believe a woman can slap a man in front of 40 other people and no one would react?" (Fahim, January 21, 2011). It also, as Fahim constructs the genesis of the protests and subsequent revolution around the "slap", implies that a nation-wide campaign of civil disobedience in a North African country was the result of the injury of a "man's pride".

With the construction of identity the article utilizes a colonialist discourse mirroring, almost exactly, Edward Said's analysis of the sentiments put forward by Evelyn Baring, the 1st Earl of Cromer, a colonial administrator located in Egypt and India during the early 1900s.

> Orientals or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, "devoid of energy and initiative," much given to "fulsome flattery," intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; Orientals cannot walk on either a road or a pavement (their disordered minds fail to under-stand what the clever European grasps immediately, that roads and pavements are made for walking); Orientals are inveterate liars, they are "lethargic and suspicious," and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race (Said, 1977, p. 39).

The article constructs the social world of Sidi Bouzid through the designation of the events as legend rather than report, the construction and then subversion of the "hero" (Fahim, January 21, 2011), the introduction of a gender discourse and then absence of any real representation of women: what is their role in that social construction? How do they make sense of those events? In doing so it excludes a range of alternative narratives, such as the impact of previous protests and struggles in Tunisia by social movements and unions and their role in the 2011 uprising. An alternative narrative might be, for example, the one Laryssa Chomiak tells in "The Making of a Revolution in Tunisia" (2011) concerning the unauthorized and unofficial political practices that took place on the streets and in private venues in Tunisia years prior to the Bouazizi event. This would tell the story of the protests as a culmination of an undercurrent of political action and subversion rather than the explosive result of antagonistic gender/power relations. Moreover the narrative of this article hints at, implies, and introduces a gender discourse but then fails to represent women in any real way, as Spivak puts it in reference to a Western feminist understanding of women in the Third World,

> I see no way to avoid insisting that there has to be a simultaneous other focus: not merely who am I? but who is the other woman? How am I naming her? How does she name me? Is this part of the problematic I discuss? (Spivak, 1988, p. 150, cited in Young, 2004, p. 209).

The article, "Next Question for Tunisia: The Role of Islam in Politics" by Thomas Fuller (February 20, 2011) describes a post-revolution Tunisia in conflict concerning the role Islam will play in governance after the fall of the Ben Ali regime. The article describes large demonstrations "demanding the separation between mosque and state" (Fuller, February 20, 2011), "mobs of zealots" and "rock-throwing protestors" demanding brothels be closed down due to it being a Muslim country, and "daily protests by competing groups" (Fuller, February 20, 2011).

The article depicts social antagonism and the attempt to construct a hegemonic discourse around the identity of the recently liberated Tunisian population through the hegemonic articulation of Tunisians as either Muslim or Western/European, along with the signifiers that complete or fill in these nodal points. As Jorgensen and Phillips explain, "Antagonisms may be dissolved through hegemonic interventions. A hegemonic intervention is an articulation which by means of force reconstitutes ambiguity" (2002, p. 48). In terms of the Tunisian population represented in the article, attempts are being made to shape or exclude threatening meanings of identity in order to establish hegemony.

The nodal point or key signifier "Islam" is attached to various other equivalently signs which together construct a discourse which is maintained through its opposition to another nodal point or myth, "the West". "Islam", "Muslim", "the Arab world" are

synonyms used in the article in opposition to “liberal”, “Western”, “secular”, “feminist”, which creates a binary opposition which demonstrates the logic of the article. An example of this logic is clearly shown here,

> About 98 percent of the population of 10 million is Muslim, but Tunisia’s liberal social policies and Western lifestyle shatter stereotypes of the Arab world. Abortion is legal, polygamy is banned and women commonly wear bikinis on the country’s Mediterranean beaches. Wine is openly sold in supermarkets and imbibed at bars across the country (Fuller, February 20, 2011).

In this paragraph what appears to “shatter stereotypes of the Arab world” is not a deeper, broader understanding of the ‘Arab world’—it is not that stereotypes as reductive representations of complex identities will “shatter” through deeper understanding of what they appear to represent—but that Tunisia is actually not ‘the Arab world’: it is Western and liberal. The Tunisia constructed in this paragraph, not the current Tunisia under conflict, must be the Tunisia under the Ben Ali dictatorship, which in one interpretation could explain why a society made up of 98 percent Muslim Arabs—a consensus--would deviate so radically from “stereotypes of the Arab world”. The implication being that women’s rights and human rights are attributes of the Western, liberal, world, not the religious Arab world. The Islam of the people is represented here through scenes of violence and intolerance and a “fierce and noisy debate about how far, or even whether, Islamism should be infused into the new government” (Fuller, February 20, 2011). The secularists and feminists are portrayed as “concerned” and “afraid” (Fuller, February 20, 2011) or as activists in a Western sense, utilizing a slogan of a variation on the separation of church and state.

> Tunisians are debating the future of their country on the streets. Avenue Habib Bourguiba, the broad thoroughfare in central Tunis named after the country’s

> first president, resembles a Roman forum on weekends, packed with people of all ages excitedly discussing politics (Fuller, February 20, 2011).

The major Muslim political group, banned under the dictatorship, in Tunisia is reported in the media as having no intention of imposing Islamic fundamentalist rule. It is reported as a group promoting moderation and openness to the international community. The article, however, describes them as having "taken pains to praise tolerance and moderation" (Fuller, February 20, 2011) and emphasizes that "some Tunisians remain unconvinced" (Fuller, February 20, 2011).

Of interviewees represented in the article, women are portrayed as particularly wary of Islam and the Muslim political group, "We don't know if they are a real threat or not," she said. "But the best defense is to attack." By this she meant that secularists should assert themselves, she said" (Fuller, February 20, 2011). Another interviewee is represented as conflicted over Ben Ali's suppression of religion and oppression of religious groups, "We had the freedom to live our lives like women in Europe" (Fuller, February 20, 2011). This again highlights the oppositional logic used in this article. The strength of the binary opposition between "Islam" and the "West" is such that although certain attributes of the nodal point "West" come with poverty, oppression, and lack of human rights under Ben Ali, and although "Islam" or religious expression in this case is a result of liberation and freedom of expression, the possibility of "Islam" fulfilling its designated potential positions it as the threat.

> To the extent that Islam is known about today, it is known principally in the form given it by the mass media… populated by shadowy (though extremely frightening) notions about *jihad*, slavery, subordination of women and irrational violence combined with extreme licentiousness. If you were to ask an average literate Westerner to name an Arab or Islamic writer, or a musician, or an

> intellectual, you might get a name like Kahlil Gibran in response, but nothing else. In other words, whole swatches of Islamic history, culture and society simply do not exist except in the truncated, tightly packaged forms made current by the media (Said, January 1, 1998).

4.2 Analysis of The New York Times on Occupy Wall Street

I will now focus on two New York Times articles on the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York City, "Gunning for Wall Street, With Faulty Aim", by Ginia Bellafante, September 23, 2011, and "Wall Street Occupiers, Protesting Till Whenever", by N.R. Kleinfield and Cara Buckley, September 30, 2011.

"Gunning for Wall Street, With Faulty Aim" (Bellafante, September 23, 2011) published over 10 days after the initial demonstration in New York describes the social space, Zuccotti Park, as a carnival. The social space is divided into groups: the police, locals and tourists who are represented in the article could be grouped under "Citizens" and the "Protestors" represented as a group of conflicting identities, gathered from across North America, described in the article as, "a diffuse and leaderless convocation of activists against greed, corporate influence, gross social inequality and other nasty byproducts of wayward capitalism not easily extinguishable by street theater" (Bellafante, September 23, 2011). The diverse nature of the protest, in terms of ideology and strategy, are portrayed in the article as subverting the protest itself. The construction of the "confused protestor" brings with it signifiers such as "youthful" or "child-like", "chaotic", "directionless". The author appears to reprimand the protestors for making light of the seriousness of the economic situation that brought many of them there to protest in the first place,

> Last week brought a disheartening coupling of statistics further delineating the city's economic divide: The Forbes 400 list of wealthiest Americans, which included more than 50 New Yorkers whose combined net worth totaled $211 billion, arrived at the same moment as census data showing that the percentage of the city's population living in poverty had risen to 20.1 percent. And yet the revolution did not appear to be brewing (Bellafante, September 23, 2011).

As a group, as a unit, the "Protestors" are constructed as self-contradictory, through interviews with several protestors, the article develops a motif centered on whimsicality, irresponsibility, and play-acting. Judgment statements such as, "The group was clamoring for nothing in particular to happen right away" (Bellafante, September 23, 2011), and "The group's lack of cohesion and its apparent wish to pantomime progressivism rather than practice it knowledgably is unsettling in the face of the challenges so many of its generation face" (Bellafante, September 23, 2011) create first a form through which protests should manifest themselves, and then place the "Protestors" in the position of 'not doing it right'. Without a unified message, without going through the proper channels, "not the implementation of the Buffett rule or the increased regulation of the financial industry" (Bellafante, September 23, 2011), the protests as constructed by the article are not valid. These critiques are based on assumptions on how 'protest' and 'democracy' as meaning-filled signs should function to the exclusion of others. Protest in democratic societies, according to the article, should take the form of a singular entity, a unified voice whose message or objective should remain within the parameters of the established governmental/social/cultural structure. This automatically excludes the Occupy protest movement. They are not to be counted on--or even counted (in terms of consensus)—to provide 'rational' input in the debate. In Habermas's public sphere particular forms of rationality, education, and consistency were criteria on which members would be included into the forum, to form

part of public opinion or the consensus. As with this article, what these particular forms of rationality are based on are left for the rational mind to assume, any deviation becomes apparent through exclusion.

As Derrida describes with his notion “democracy to come”, it is the ability (it resides within the notion of democracy) to critique democracy itself that makes it unique among notions of social structure. Therefore to critique *particular forms* with which democracy manifests itself, or to act outside of any established norms is, or should be, a given. The form—or as critiqued, lack of form—the Occupy protests take is that of a moment in the process towards democracy. Not a full complete presence,yet present in the here and now in the form ofbecoming, and necessary as a motivational force. This notion complicatesthe formulaic step-by-step process of protest suggested by the article.

The article could also benefit from Zizek’s call for the protestors to maintain the ‘vacuum’, embrace the moment of questioning rather than feel the need to construct simple, acceptable, demands or solutions.

This notion opens the space for diversity, contradiction, lack of a unified message, by perceiving of democracy as a process rather than something that has been achieved, or as existing as full and complete presence.

In this light, the article “Wall Street Occupiers, Protesting Till Whenever” by N.R. Kleinfield and Cara Buckley (September 30, 2011) which constructs the protest as the “hodgepodge Lower Manhattan encampment known as Occupy Wall Street”

(Kleinfield& Buckley, September 30, 2011) presents a moment out of time and misplaced. The article describes the protest as lacking a leader, a schedule, a message. Individuals are constructed through their various occupations, origins, ideologies, destinations, and aims. They differ in experience concerning activism and in political education. The article positions them as ignorant and reactionary, gathering out of frustration.

The open-space public forums, such as those described as a "Roman forum" in "Next Question for Tunisia: The Role of Islam in Politics" (Fuller, February 20, 2011) opens the antagonistic relationship between "Protesters" as a whole and "The System". What is portrayed as a positive development for Tunisians, the open, public "Roman forum"—complete with its Eurocentric thrust—is with American protests constructed as a group whose "politics zigzag wildly" (Kleinfield & Buckley, September 30, 2011), whose plurality, diversity, and lack of singular message is described as 'play-acting'. I argue that this can be put down to the assumption that democracy has already been 'achieved' in America, that there is no need for alternative modes of discussion, that as a violent protest can be labeled 'criminal', a peaceful gathering of the Occupy sort can be constructed as 'confused', 'unnecessary', or as harmful as it is subverting 'real' politics. Therefore, placed firmly outside of the consensus, outside of society, the protests can be studied 'objectively', anthropologically,

> Not allowed to use amplified sound, the protesters have devised their own means of communication. Each speaker says a sentence, and then everyone else repeats it, so it ripples outward. Decisions must be by consensus. Hand signals convey responses. For instance, holding your palms upward and wiggling your fingers means approval, while holding them downward means disapproval. Level hands mean uncertainty (Kleinfield & Buckley, September 30, 2011).

This plurality or diversity was not even anticipated by those that helped organize the protests, as shown by a website calling for suggestions for a unified message with which the protest could have better results,

> …we zero in on what our one demand will be a demand that awakens theimagination and, if achieved, would propel us toward the radical democracy of the future … and then we go out and seize a square of singular symbolic significance and put our asses on the line to make it happen.The time has come to deploy this emerging stratagem against the greatest corrupter of our democracy: Wall Street, the financial Gomorrah of America.On September 17, we want to see 20,000 people flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for a few months. Once there, we shall incessantly repeat one simple demand in a plurality of voices.(Adbsuters, July 13, 2011).

Pointing towards the spontaneity and openness that Derrida's 'democracy to come' suggests, as the protests unfolded, as the messages became diverse and distinct from one another, the protest itself, as a social space, had to host dialogues within itself, had to negotiate and interact with itself.

4.3 Analysis of The New York Times on Greek Protests

The two articles, "Greeks Stage Protests Against Spending Cuts and Tax Increases" by Niki Kitsantonis and Suzzane Daley (May 11, 2011) and "Greek Leaders Fail to Reach Consensus on Austerity" by Niki Kitsantonis (May 27, 2011), describe the protests in Greece in May 2011 concerning the austerity measures and privatizations demanded by the EU and I.M.F. in return for financial aid.

"Greeks Stage Protests Against Spending Cuts and Tax Increases" by Niki Kitsantonis and Suzzane Daley (May 11, 2011) describes Greek protestors in the thousands on the streets in Athens and a day-long labor strike. As cuts in spending deepen and taxes

increase, the article queries Greece's economic condition without the intervention of the EU and I.M.F. "Greek Leaders Fail to Reach Consensus on Austerity" by Niki Kitsantonis (May 27, 2011), over ten days later follows the Greek government's negotiations with the EU and I.M.F, putting Greece in the position of having to ensure privatizations, tax increases and wage-cuts in order to qualify for the loan. In the article the international community is described as concerned that Greece is having difficulties privatizing its public sectors and cutting wages and raising taxes on its citizens. The article, from the point of view of the I.M.F. constructs the Greek government as an anomaly, one of the EU countries that couldn't get it together after the global economic crisis, a risk to its fellow members that could possibly "infect" them.

The antagonism as constructed in these articles exists between the EU and the I.M.F., and the Greek government. To what extent will Greece be forced to impose austerity measures and privatize the public/state sectors? Rather than the citizens being the reference point around which signifiers such as "austerity", "crisis", "aid", "rescue" (Kitsantonis, May 27, 2011) are grouped, it is the economy ,"The aim of Friday's meeting was to convince officials of the European Union and International Monetary Fund that Greece is serious about repairing its finances" (Kitsantonis, May 27, 2011).

This narrative, the struggle of the Greek economy to be revived, become a 'healthy' economy, excludes the narrative of the citizens of Greece. Although protestors are represented in these articles they are not depicted as representative of the citizens of Greece: "Ordinary Greeks seem less outraged, despite the indignant slogans at rallies. By early afternoon the crowds in central Athens had thinned, and tourists were

photographing the riot police stationed in front of Parliament" (Kitsantonis & Daley, May 11, 2011). This is the articles' construction of social groups despite wage cuts, tax increases, and privatizations. The protestors described in these articles as a group are made up of labor unions, the young, the old, teachers and employees at phone companies, and yet are not designated as "Ordinary Greeks" (Kitsantonis & Daley, May 11, 2011).

From Hannah Arendt's notion of the Greek household (in Greek *oikos*, or economy) an analogy with the classical Greek democratic city state would put the citizens of Greece in the position of slaves or workers of the household, outside of the main narrative, a necessity whose function is to enable the master, the represented, the true citizen—in this instance various governmental and financial institutions and those affiliated with them—to rise to their full height in the realm of the political. It is consistent with the discourse used in these articles, such as "the I.M.F., which last May pledged 110 billion euros in loans to Greece in exchange for the country's getting its fiscal house in order" (Kitsantonis, May 27, 2011), that the economy is something that 'runs' and that its function is to function smoothly. Institutions such as the World Bank, I.M.F. and the WTO, focus on 'economy', detached from national sovereignty or the citizens of the nations it deals with. The articulation of 'economy' in this way also detaches it from the economic well being of the citizens, or continuing the analogy with the classical Greek democratic city state: from the "economic" concerns of the "households" whose members are protesting on the streets.

> The objection to the World Bank is that it tends to make stringent conditions that conform to its own precepts of what is economically desirable, not those of the country itself. This is exacerbated by the fact that it works with

> governments rather than people. It never seems to learn. Again and again, its grand schemes are criticized because the local people affected are never involved (Young, 2003, p. 134).

As we have seen notions of economy work as metanarratives that are constructed through a process of exclusion. They function through story lines that privilege certain groups and either marginalize or erase others from the myth of history. These articles establish hierarchies through placing 'economy' in a position of importance over people. Rather than economic structures set in place or established in order to better the quality of life for the citizens of a country, it is the citizens of Greece who are called on to function in a manner that betters the quality of the economic structure.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have endeavored to provide an analysis of how, through dominant mainstream media discourses, meaning is made of events, social spaces, groups and identities in ways that exclude alternative meanings. These discourses construct the world in ways that can appear objective or natural but in fact entail historical and cultural narratives which attempt to delimit the range of what can be represented or how it can be represented.

I argue that by studying news media we can better understand how particular views of the world are constantly being constructed, reinforced, and relied upon, and how these shape discussions about how the world could or should be.

With Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis through Derrida's deconstruction I have been able to disclose the contingency of apparently natural discourses, to explore how

logics of equivalence construct identity through differential relations; an identity is constructed in relation to what it is not. These insights help open up seemingly stable or fixed areas of knowledge and explore their leaps of logic, test their basic assumptions.

By analyzing a sample of the New York Times news coverage of the events in Tunisia I was able to explore how discourse centered around "West" in oppositional relation to "the Arab world" bring with them notions of liberalism, freedom, progress, and modernity and through that oppositional relation naturally designate oppression, poverty, backwards, and intolerance to the "the Arab world". This helps disclose how the structures of particular discourses automatically situate others and help construct an understanding of the world.

Derrida's notion, 'democracy to come' was useful in analyzing The New York Times coverage of Occupy Wall Street, rearticulating the articles' critique of the protest as directionless or confused into a potential description of what a particular movement in the direction of democracy could look like. The diversity, plurality, antagonism, and essential openness of the protest could be constructed—as it was in the articles analyzed—as a failed attempt at unity and clarity, or as the attributes of a process that with no totally fixed destination mapped out, relies on its openness to sustain itself. This openness remains in the face of attempts at closure, attempts at stopping the process of future becoming.

By exploring how metanarratives built on notions of economy function I was able to problematize economic discourses in terms of what they exclude and include as

important and relevant. Exploring how The New York Times articles focused on financial and governmental institutions rather than the citizens of Greece revealed that the economy as discourse functions without 'the people'. And yet the word economy brings with it the realm of the household which is the concern of those very people.

With the current crisis of capitalism, crisis of ecology, surge in campaigns for animal rights, human rights, redistribution of wealth, protests against dictatorships, the global dominance of a minority of countries, the construction of the world through discourse is an area of struggle that must be addressed consciously.

To ignore, accept, or tolerate, dominant mainstream media discourses at this time is to forfeit the construction of objective discourses to a wide-reaching, culturally and historically established meaning-making machine. With the rise of social media, blogs, forums, and independent online-line resources, the hegemony of the mainstream press is being tested and fractured, but as all new modes of communication—print, radio, television—have come under the domination of a small number of powerful groups and organizations, vigilance is still required.

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APPENDICES

Appendix: A. Headlines and Dates of the Articles

(1) Slap to a Man's Pride Set Off Tumult in Tunisia

By KAREEM FAHIM

Published: January 21, 2011

(2) **Next Question for Tunisia: The Role of Islam in Politics**

By THOMAS FULLER

Published: February 20, 2011

(3) Gunning for Wall Street, With Faulty Aim

By **GINIA BELLAFANTE**

Published: September 23, 2011

(4) Wall Street Occupiers, Protesting Till Whenever

By N. R. KLEINFIELD and CARA BUCKLEY

Published: September 30, 2011

(5) Greeks Stage Protests Against Spending Cuts and Tax Increases

By NIKI KITSANTONIS and SUZANNE DALEY

Published: May 11, 2011

(6) Greek Leaders Fail to Reach Consensus on Austerity

By NIKI KITSANTONIS

Published: May 27, 2011

#OCCUPYWALLSTREET

A shift in revolutionary tactics.

Adbsuters, July 13, 2011.

Retrieved from

http://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html

Appendix: B. News Stories

(1) Slap to a Man's Pride Set Off Tumult in Tunisia

By Kareem Fahim

Published: January 21, 2011

Faida Hamdy, a 45-year-old municipal inspector in Sidi Bouzid, a police officer's daughter, was single, had a "strong personality" and an unblemished record, her supervisor said. She inspected buildings, investigated noise complaints and fined vendors like Mr. Bouazizi, whose itinerant trade may or may not have been legal; no one seems to know.

On the morning of Dec. 17, when other vendors say Ms. Hamdy tried to confiscate Mr. Bouazizi's fruit, and then slapped him in the face for trying to yank back his apples, he became the hero — now the martyred hero — and she became the villain in a remarkable swirl of events in which Tunisians have risen up to topple a 23-year dictatorship and march on, demanding radical change in their government.

The revolution has rippled beyond Tunisia, shaking other authoritarian Arab states, whose frustrated young people are often written off as complacent when faced with stifling bureaucracy and an impenetrable and intimidating security apparatus. That assumption was badly shaken with Mr. Bouazizi's reaction to his slap, and now a picture of him, in a black jacket with a wry smile, has become the revolution's icon.

In a series of interviews, the other fruit vendors, officials and family members described the seemingly routine confrontation that had set off a revolution. They said that Mr. Bouazizi, embarrassed and angry, had wrestled with Ms. Hamdy and was beaten by two of her colleagues, who also took his electronic scale. He walked a few blocks to the municipal building, demanded his property, and was beaten again, they said. Then he walked to the governor's office, demanded an audience and was refused.

"She humiliated him," said his sister, Samia Bouazizi. "Everyone was watching."

Sometime around noon, in the two-lane street in front of the governor's high gate, the vendor drenched himself in paint thinner then lit himself on fire. A doctor at the hospital where he was treated said the burns covered 90 percent of his body. By the time he died on Jan. 4, protests that started over Mr. Bouazizi's treatment in Sidi Bouzid had spread to cities throughout the country.

On Jan. 14, the president, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, fled the country.

People in Sidi Bouzid use the words "impossible" or "miracle" to describe the events of the last month. But they also say that what transpired was much more likely here, in this impoverished, agrarian central Tunisian city, with a history of resistance to colonial rule and nothing to lose.

The country's official unemployment rate is 14 percent, concentrated among young people, but the rate is much higher in Sidi Bouzid, say local union leaders, who put it at higher than 30 percent. Neglected by successive central governments, bereft of factories, seized with corruption and rife with nepotism, Sidi Bouzid and the small towns surrounding it are filled with idle young men, jobless, underemployed or just plain poor.

Some of them pass the time at cafes playing a card game called rami. Others get drunk on the moonshine they buy at cigarette stands and stumble around Sidi Bouzid's town center, near the mosque where Mr. Bouazizi sometimes parked his fruit cart.

The nearest movie theater is 80 miles away.

There are jobs at a toy factory, one of the two biggest plants in town, but they pay only about $50 a month. People with college degrees head for the more affluent coastal cities or settle for less.

Wassim Lassoued, who has a master's degree in physics, works part time in an Internet cafe. "Five years ago, lots of money was sent here to establish new businesses," he said. "That money disappeared."

Mr. Ben Ali rarely visited Sidi Bouzid, and when he did, local politicians paved roads and arranged for the planting of fully-grown trees to hide their neglect. On the edge of town, there is a gleaming youth center with fenced-off skateboard ramps that appear untouched. Residents said no one uses the center, which is reserved for people with connections.

Amin Beyaoui, an English teacher who was able to find work in a town 20 miles away, said: "There are Ping-Pong tables. But they only let a few people use them, like teachers. Young people can't use them. I know this from personal experience.

“People are accustomed to seeing injustice and staying silent,” he said. “It was like we were colonized.”

Everyone in Sidi Bouzid has a story about a bribe: to get a loan, to start a business or to land a job.

In the world of the fruit and vegetable vendors, the bribes were small — 10 dinars, about $7, to appease the inspectors, or sometimes just a bag of fruit, the vendors said. When the municipal inspectors would arrive, the vendors had three options: to run and leave the fruit that some of them had bought on credit, to offer a bribe or to pay a fine of 20 dinars, the equivalent of about $14, or several day’s wages.

Mr. Bouazizi had received two fines in the last two years, according to officials with the municipality, though other vendors and his family say he was frequently harassed.

His first name was actually Tarek, but he went by Mohamed. He was not a college graduate, as earlier reports had said. He had been a vendor since he was a teenager, and had worked odd jobs since he was 10, his relatives said. His father, a construction worker in Libya, died of a heart attack when he was 3, said his mother, Mannoubia Bouazizi. She later married Mohamed’s uncle.

Mr. Bouazizi made it to high school, but it was unclear whether he graduated: a cousin said he devoured literature and especially poetry, but his mother said he preferred math. He had a girlfriend, but they had broken up recently. He was a soccer fan and spent much of his spare time at the Fustat cafe downtown, engaged in the local diversions of smoking and playing cards.

Despite his struggles to work, he was easygoing and liked to laugh. His relatives saw no hint of depression, and though they said Mr. Bouazizi refused to pay bribes, they could not recall any time where he had made such an unyielding stand.

The protests in Sidi Bouzid were small at first, starting soon after the fire seared Mr. Bouazizi’s clothes to his body and burned off his lips.

Bilal Zaydi, 20, saw the vendor’s relatives and friends outside the governor’s office that afternoon, throwing coins at the gate. “Here is your bribe,” they yelled. Over the next day and half the protests grew and the police “started beating protesters, and firing gas,” he said. Mr. Zaydi, a high school student, slept during the day, and then he and his friends would take on the police at night.

At the same time, news of the unrest was spread on the Internet by people like Shamseddine Abidi, a 29-year old interior designer who posted videos and updates to his Facebook page. A journalist from Al Jazeera was one of Mr. Abidi’s Facebook friends, and quickly the Arabic channel, almost alone, carried the news abroad.

“I did my best,” Mr. Abidi said. “It’s a miracle.”

Labor leaders said their members quickly joined the demonstrations, which grew violent in the face of increasingly brutal police retaliation. Dr. Ali Ghanmi, who works at the hospital in Sidi Bouzid, said the number of patients doubled during the unrest, injured from beatings or bullets. Two men who had been shot died of their wounds.

Today, the city is transformed. The main avenue now bears the name Mohamed Bouazizi in spray paint. A sculpture that carries his now-famous picture is the site of frequent demonstrations and freewheeling political arguments, the things that Tunisians say Mr. Bouazizi made possible.

The inspectors in Sidi Bouzid now wear street clothes, too frightened to wear the blue overcoats with the epaulets and the stripes. The vendors no longer run.

Ms. Hamdy, arrested on orders from the now-deposed president himself, is in jail in another town. Her colleagues maintain that she is honest and did not take bribes. Her supervisor, who requested anonymity for fear of being beaten in the streets, said an investigation found that Ms. Hamdy had never slapped Mr. Bouazizi.

“Do you really believe a woman can slap a man in front of 40 other people and no one would react?” he said. He also drew attention to the fact that the news media erroneously reported that Mr. Bouazizi was a college graduate. “Anyway, we respect him as a human being,” he said.

Ms. Hamdy’s brother, Fawzy Hamdy, was more conflicted. He said he was among the first to join the protests in Sidi Bouzid and was thrilled by the revolution. But he also said he did not believe his sister had mistreated Mr. Bouazizi.

“It’s the lie that toppled a dictator,” he said.

Those closest to his rebellion — his sisters, the other vendors — seemed to focus on the slap and Mr. Bouazizi’s wounded male pride. The other young men in town, armed with their own tales of injustice, marveled at his example. And as the story has traveled past the olive groves and cactus that surround Sidi Bouzid, others saw a tale of oppression, despair and recovered dignity. In the last few weeks, people in other impoverished countries have started mimicking Mr. Bouazizi’s act.

“I’m sad for their families,” said Samia Bouazizi, his sister, as she hurried from interview to interview, sharing a family’s personal tragedy with the world. “I know what they go through.”

(2) **Next Question for Tunisia: The Role of Islam in Politics**

By Thomas Fuller

Published: February 20, 2011

TUNIS — The Tunisian revolution that overthrew decades of authoritarian rule has entered a delicate new phase in recent days over the role of Islam in politics. Tensions mounted here last week when military helicopters and security forces were called in to carry out an unusual mission: protecting the city's brothels from a mob of zealots.

A woman carrying a sign reading "Ghannouchi get out" during a demonstration in Tunis on Sunday.

Police officers dispersed a group of rock-throwing protesters who streamed into a warren of alleyways lined with legally sanctioned bordellos shouting, "God is great!" and "No to brothels in a Muslim country!"

Five weeks after protesters forced out the country's dictator, President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, Tunisians are locked in a fierce and noisy debate about how far, or even whether, Islamism should be infused into the new government.

About 98 percent of the population of 10 million is Muslim, but Tunisia's liberal social policies and Western lifestyle shatter stereotypes of the Arab world. Abortion is legal, polygamy is banned and women commonly wear bikinis on the country's Mediterranean beaches. Wine is openly sold in supermarkets and imbibed at bars across the country.

Women's groups say they are concerned that in the cacophonous aftermath of the revolution, conservative forces could tug the country away from its strict tradition of secularism.

"Nothing is irreversible," said Khadija Cherif, a former head of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, a feminist organization. "We don't want to let down our guard."

Ms. Cherif was one of thousands of Tunisians who marched through Tunis, the capital, on Saturday demanding the separation of mosque and state in one of the largest demonstrations since the overthrow of Mr. Ben Ali.

Protesters held up signs saying, "Politics ruins religion and religion ruins politics."

They were also mourning the killing on Friday of a Polish priest by unknown attackers. That assault was also condemned by the country's main Muslim political movement,Ennahdha, or Renaissance, which was banned under Mr. Ben Ali's dictatorship but is now regrouping.

In interviews in the Tunisian news media, Ennahdha's leaders have taken pains to praise tolerance and moderation, comparing themselves to the Islamic parties that govern Turkey and Malaysia.

"We know we have an essentially fragile economy that is very open toward the outside world, to the point of being totally dependent on it," Hamadi Jebali, the party's secretary general, said in an interview with the Tunisian magazine Réalités. "We have no interest whatsoever in throwing everything away today or tomorrow."

The party, which is allied with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, says it opposes the imposition of Islamic law in Tunisia.

But some Tunisians say they remain unconvinced.

Raja Mansour, a bank employee in Tunis, said it was too early to tell how the Islamist movement would evolve.

"We don't know if they are a real threat or not," she said. "But the best defense is to attack." By this she meant that secularists should assert themselves, she said.

Ennahdha is one of the few organized movements in a highly fractured political landscape. The caretaker government that has managed the country since Mr. Ben Ali was ousted is fragile and weak, with no clear leadership emerging from the revolution.

The unanimity of the protest movement against Mr. Ben Ali in January, the uprising that set off demonstrations across the Arab world, has since evolved into numerous daily protests by competing groups, a development that many Tunisians find unsettling.

"Freedom is a great, great adventure, but it's not without risks," said Fathi Ben Haj Yathia, an author and former political prisoner. "There are many unknowns."

One of the largest demonstrations since Mr. Ben Ali fled took place on Sunday in Tunis, where several thousand protesters marched to the prime minister's office to demand the caretaker government's resignation. They accused it of having links to Mr. Ben Ali's government.

Tunisians are debating the future of their country on the streets. Avenue Habib Bourguiba, the broad thoroughfare in central Tunis named after the country's first president, resembles a Roman forum on weekends, packed with people of all ages excitedly discussing politics.

The freewheeling and somewhat chaotic atmosphere across the country has been accompanied by a breakdown in security that has been particularly unsettling for women. With the extensive security apparatus of the old government decimated, leaving

the police force in disarray, many women now say they are afraid to walk outside alone at night.

Achouri Thouraya, a 29-year-old graphic artist, says she has mixed feelings toward the revolution.

She shared in the joy of the overthrow of what she described as Mr. Ben Ali's kleptocratic government. But she also says she believes that the government's crackdown on any Muslim groups it considered extremist, a draconian police program that included monitoring those who prayed regularly, helped protect the rights of women.

"We had the freedom to live our lives like women in Europe," she said.

But now Ms. Thouraya said she was a "little scared."

She added, "We don't know who will be president and what attitudes he will have toward women."

Mounir Troudi, a jazz musician, disagrees. He has no love for the former Ben Ali government, but said he believed that Tunisia would remain a land of beer and bikinis.

"This is a maritime country," Mr. Troudi said. "We are sailors, and we've always been open to the outside world. I have confidence in the Tunisian people. It's not a country of fanatics."

(3) Gunning for Wall Street, With Faulty Aim

By Ginia Bellafante

Published: September 23, 2011

By late morning on Wednesday, Occupy Wall Street, a noble but fractured and airy movement of rightly frustrated young people, had a default ambassador in a half-naked woman who called herself Zuni Tikka. A blonde with a marked likeness to Joni Mitchell and a seemingly even stronger wish to burrow through the space-time continuum and hunker down in 1968, Ms. Tikka had taken off all but her cotton underwear and was dancing on the north side of Zuccotti Park, facing Liberty Street, just west of Broadway. Tourists stopped to take pictures; cops smiled, and the insidiously favorable tax treatment of private equity and hedge-fund managers was looking as though it would endure.

"I've been waiting for this my whole life," Ms. Tikka, 37, told me.

"This," presumably was the opportunity to air societal grievances as carnival. Occupy Wall Street, a diffuse and leaderless convocation of activists against greed, corporate influence, gross social inequality and other nasty byproducts of wayward capitalism not easily extinguishable by street theater, had hoped to see many thousands join its protest and encampment, which began Sept. 17. According to the group, 2,000 marched on the first day; news outlets estimated that the number was closer to several hundred.

By Wednesday morning, 100 or so stalwarts were making the daily, peaceful trek through the financial district, where their movements were circumscribed by barricades and a heavy police presence. (By Saturday, scores of arrests were made.) By Thursday, the number still sleeping in Zuccotti Park, the central base of operations, appeared to be dwindling further.

Members retained hope for an infusion of energy over the weekend, but as it approached, the issue was not that the Bastille hadn't been stormed, but that its facade had suffered hardly a chip. It is a curious fact of life in New York that even as the disparities between rich and poor grow deeper, the kind of large-scale civil agitation that Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg recently suggested might happen here hasn't taken shape. The city has two million more residents than Wisconsin, but there, continuing protests of the state budget bill this year turned out approximately 100,000 people at their peak. When a similar mobilization was attempted in June to challenge the city's budget cuts, 100 people arrived for a sleep-in near City Hall.

Last week brought a disheartening coupling of statistics further delineating the city's economic divide: The Forbes 400 list of wealthiest Americans, which included more than 50 New Yorkers whose combined net worth totaled $211 billion, arrived at the same moment as census data showing that the percentage of the city's population living in poverty had risen to 20.1 percent. And yet the revolution did not appear to be brewing.

Most of those entrenched in Zuccotti Park had indeed traveled from somewhere else; they had come from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Missouri, Texas and so on with drums, horns, tambourines and, in the instance of one young man, a knee-length burlap vest, fur hat, ski goggles and tiny plastic baby dolls applied to the tips of his fingers.

One of the few New Yorkers I met, a senior at Bronx High School of Science, was stopping by in fits and spurts, against the wishes of his psychiatrist mother, who feared the possibility of tear gas and had chastised her son for giving his allowance to the cause.

That cause, though, in specific terms, was virtually impossible to decipher. The group was clamoring for nothing in particular to happen right away — not the implementation of the Buffett rule or the increased regulation of the financial industry. Some didn't think

government action was the answer because the rich, they believed, would just find new ways to subvert the system.

“I’m not for interference,” Anna Katheryn Sluka, of western Michigan, told me. “I hope this all gets people who have a lot to think: ‘I’m not going to go to Barcelona for three weeks. I’m going to sponsor a small town in need.’ ”

Some said they were fighting the legal doctrine of corporate personhood; others, not fully understanding what that meant, believed it meant corporations paid no taxes whatsoever. Others came to voice concerns about the death penalty, the drug war, the environment.

“I want to get rid of the combustion engine,” John McKibben, an activist from Vermont, declared as his primary ambition.

“I want to create spectacles,” Becky Wartell, a recent graduate of the College of the Atlantic in Maine, said.

Having discerned the intellectual vacuum, Chris Spiech, an unemployed 26-year-old from New Jersey, arrived on Thursday with the hope of indoctrinating his peers in the lessons of Austrian economics, Milton Friedman and Ron Paul. “I want to abolish the Federal Reserve,” he said.

The group’s lack of cohesion and its apparent wish to pantomime progressivism rather than practice it knowledgably is unsettling in the face of the challenges so many of its generation face — finding work, repaying student loans, figuring out ways to finish college when money has run out. But what were the chances that its members were going to receive the attention they so richly deserve carrying signs like “Even if the World Were to End Tomorrow I’d Still Plant a Tree Today”?

One day, a trader on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Adam Sarzen, a decade or so older than many of the protesters, came to Zuccotti Park seemingly just to shake his head. “Look at these kids, sitting here with their Apple computers,” he said. “Apple, one of the biggest monopolies in the world. It trades at $400 a share. Do they even know that?”

(4) Wall Street Occupiers, Protesting Till Whenever

By N. R. Kleinfield and Cara Buckley

Published: September 30, 2011

A man named Hero was here. So was Germ. There was the waitress from the dim sum restaurant in Evanston, Ill. And the liquor store worker. The Google consultant. The circus performer. The Brooklyn nanny.

The hodgepodge Lower Manhattan encampment known as Occupy Wall Street has no appointed leaders, no expiration date for its rabble-rousing stay and still-evolving goals and demands. Yet its two weeks of noisy occupation has lured a sturdily faithful and fervent constituency willing to express discontentment with what they feel is an inequitable financial system until, well, whenever.

They arrived by design and desire. Or by sheer serendipity.

Like Jillian Aydelott, 19, and Ben Mason, 20. They are a couple, both having taken an indefinite leave from school in Boston to travel across the country, very much on the cheap. Stopping in Providence, R.I., five days ago to sleep at a homeless shelter, they encountered a man who called himself Germ and said he was an activist. He was coming to the protest. They figured why not. They have yet to leave.

Ms. Aydelott's feeling was: "Nothing is happening. People on Wall Street have all the power."

The stalwarts seem to range from a relatively modest 100 to 300 people, though the ranks swelled to more than 2,000 on Friday as the protest began to attract mainstream attention from those disaffected with the weak economy and to enlist support from well-known liberals.

The actress Susan Sarandon stopped by, as did the Princeton professor Cornel West and former Gov. David A. Paterson of New York. A widely reported episode last Saturday, when four protesters were pepper-sprayed by a police commander, elevated the visibility of the demonstrators.

On Friday night, many marched to Police Headquarters to criticize what they described as the improper tactics that the police had used against their movement. (The police commissioner, Raymond W. Kelly, has defended the actions by the police, though he has said they will be reviewed.)

Nicholas Coniaris, 35, came to the makeshift village in Zuccotti Park near Wall Street on Friday and will be gone soon. He is from San Diego, a counselor who works with homeless veterans, and was squeezing in protesting while awaiting a wedding he was attending on Saturday. A friend from Japan, a fellow wedding guest, was here as well.

Having brought a tuxedo for the wedding, Mr. Coniaris decided to get extra mileage out of it. He wore it while he stationed himself in the center of the park clutching a coffee cup that said "God Bless," and a sign that said, in part, "Support the Rich."

“Just a little something,” he said mockingly to passers-by. “Half a billion dollars. I’m not asking for a trillion.”

After a couple of hours, his cup contained $1.15.

It all began when a Canadian advocacy magazine, Adbusters, posted a call for action on its blog in July. A New York group naming itself the General Assembly, inspired by recent meetings in Madrid, began to hold organizing meetings in Tompkins Square and other public places, leading to a Sept. 17 march near Wall Street. Shooed away from Wall Street, the protesters wound up in Zuccotti Park, which is bounded by Broadway and Liberty Street and has become their base.

Most of the demonstrators are in their teens or 20s, but plenty are older. Many are students. Many are jobless. A few are well-worn anarchists. Others have put their normal lives on pause to try out protesting and see how it feels.

Not all of them can articulate exactly why they are here or what they want. Yet there is a conviction rippling through them that however the global economy works, it does not work for them.

“I’m angry because I don’t have millions of dollars to give to my representative, so my voice is invalidated,” said Amanda Clarke, 21, a student at the New School. “And the fact that I’m graduating with tens of thousands of dollars in loans and there’s no job market.”

Their politics zigzag wildly. An unemployed schoolteacher calls herself a fierce independent, while an employed teacher is a conservative. An anarchist photographer wants libertarianism to be reclaimed by the left.

“This is not about left versus right,” said the photographer, Christopher Walsh, 25, from Bushwick, Brooklyn. “It’s about hierarchy versus autonomy.”

A finance worker walked around with a dollar bill duct-taped over his mouth and carrying a pizza box, on which he had written, “I could lose my job 4 having a voice.” Nikita Nikitovich, 44, a New York Pilates teacher, was working as one of the protest’s media contacts. A 38-year-old bicycle messenger with a head shaved except for a long braid arrived early Friday by bus from New Orleans, and had been waiting for a protest to erupt since Hurricane Katrina. “That’s when we were shown the big picture,” she said.

For all the bedraggled look of the mattress-and-sleeping-bag-strewn camp, it has a structure and routine. A food station occupies the center of the park, where donated meals are disbursed, especially pizza and Popeyes chicken. Sympathizers from other

states have been calling local shops and pizza parlors and, using their credit cards, ordering food to be delivered to the park.

There are information stations, a recycling center, a media center where a gasoline generator powers computers. At the east end sits the library, labeled cardboard boxes brimming with donated books: nonfiction, fiction, poetry, legal. There is a lost and found.

A medical station was outfitted with bins holding a broad array of remedies: cough drops, Maalox Maximum Strength, Clorox wipes, bee pollen granules. The main issues have been blisters, including some from handcuffs, and abrasions.

There are also a few therapists. Some out-of-work protesters are depressed. They need someone's ear.

Elsewhere is a sanitation station, with designated sanitation workers who sweep the park. The park is without toilets, a problem that many of the protesters address by visiting a nearby McDonald's.

The encampment even has a post-office box, established at a U.P.S. store, and has been receiving a steady flow of supportive letters and packages. Someone from Texas sent a bunch of red bandanas, now draped on the necks of demonstrators. Others have sent camera batteries, granola bars and toothbrushes.

Two General Assembly meetings are held each day to conduct organizational business and work on objectives. "We meet every day to decide what our demands are," said Hero Vincent, 21, an artist and singer from Charlotte, N.C., who has been here from the beginning.

Not allowed to use amplified sound, the protesters have devised their own means of communication. Each speaker says a sentence, and then everyone else repeats it, so it ripples outward. Decisions must be by consensus. Hand signals convey responses. For instance, holding your palms upward and wiggling your fingers means approval, while holding them downward means disapproval. Level hands mean uncertainty.

People are divided into committees, including town planning, child care, direct action and a de-escalation group charged with keeping things orderly. There have been a few arguments.

When will all this end?

One protester thought when the temperature fell below 50. Others were less sure.

Sid Gurung, 22, a student at the New School who enlisted because he said he was "extremely disappointed and angry that I have no future," would agree to no timetable.

“Our task is important,” he said. “We could be here for months. Our opponents are giants.”

(5) Greeks Stage Protests Against Spending Cuts and Tax Increases

By Niki Kitsantonis and Suzanne Dealey

Published: May 11, 2011

Tens of thousands of Greeks took to the streets here on Wednesday for a largely peaceful protest against the debt-ridden government’s austerity drive, as a general strike called by labor unions disrupted transport services and closed schools and other public services.

The one-day strike came as the government — still struggling to get its financial house in order — is about to unveil yet another raft of spending cuts and tax increases. But many experts are increasingly skeptical of Greece’s ability to find a path to solvency without further aid from its European partners.

Greece’s economy has shrunk far more than experts originally expected last year, when the government needed a $140 billion rescue package to avoid bankruptcy. It shrank 4.5 percent last year, and is likely to contract by an additional 3 percent, according to Greece’s Central Bank. The national debt — now at about 140 percent of G.D.P. — is forecast to hit nearly 160 percent by 2012.

Just how that debt would be restructured to keep Greece from falling even further behind remains an open question. So far, Greek and European officials have said a restructuring that would cause bondholders to suffer a haircut — a loss on their holdings — is out of the question. But that does not preclude softer options, like longer maturity dates on the loans in the rescue package and perhaps even a lower interest rate.

Experts believe proposals are likely to come after the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund complete an audit of Greece’s progress in executing various reforms it agreed to in exchange for the emergency loans last May. That report is due next month. But despite Greece’s grim finances and the appeals of labor unions, the demonstration Wednesday drew a modest turnout by Greek standards, with the police and the unions putting the figures at 20,000 and 40,000, respectively.

Prime Minister George Papandreou continues to outpoll his rivals, though he is facing some disorder in his own party. He held an emergency cabinet meeting on Tuesday after one of his most popular and visible ministers, Andreas Loverdos, criticized his government for “mixed policy messages.”

Mr. Loverdos, the health minister, was referring to months of cabinet in-fighting that has delayed an austerity package and a $70 billion privatization program, which the European Union and the International Monetary Fund are demanding be in place before any further talk of new aid.

During the demonstrations, tensions flared up outside Athens University when hundreds of youths pelted the police with stones and bottles. Officers responded by firing tear gas that sent passers-by scurrying into side streets. Maria Kalimeri, a 48-year-old teacher, sheltering from the tear gas under a bus stop, said she had had enough of austerity, and of protests. “It’s not enough that we’ve had our salaries cut, they treat us like trash,” she said. “I’m not an anarchist, I’m a taxpayer. Are they going to arrest me for demonstrating?”

A statement posted on the police’s Web site on Wednesday night said that 12 people had been detained and that 15 officers had been injured. The statement did not give an overall figure for injured demonstrators but confirmed reports on local news Web sites that a 30-year-old man had suffered serious head injuries during the skirmishes.

The labor unions that organized Wednesday’s strike want the government to revoke wage cuts and tax increases. They are particularly opposed to a privatization plan to raise up to $71.3 billion by 2015 through the sale of state utilities and venues built for the Athens Olympic Games in 2004.

Ordinary Greeks seem less outraged, despite the indignant slogans at rallies. By early afternoon the crowds in central Athens had thinned, and tourists were photographing the riot police stationed in front of Parliament.

(6) Greek Leaders Fail to Reach Consensus on Austerity

By Niki Kitsantonis

Published: May 27, 2011

At an emergency meeting on Friday, the country’s political leaders failed to agree on new austerity measures proposed by the government, but Prime Minister George Papandreou said there was still hope that an agreement would be reached.

“Essentially, there are many points on which we can agree,” he said, speaking to the nation in a televised speech. “But there is a need for political will from all sides.”

“Over the next few days we will continue efforts to reach a consensus,” he continued, adding that “the government has assumed the responsibility to extract the country from the crisis and will do this with or without consensus.”

But leaders of the opposition parties have refused to fall in behind the president, Karolos Papoulias, who had called the meeting. The measures have been proposed by Mr. Papandreou’s Socialist government.

The aim of Friday’s meeting was to convince officials of the European Union and International Monetary Fund that Greece is serious about repairing its finances, and has the political will to impose more tax increases and spending cuts on a public already weary after a year of belt-tightening. The effort came amid mounting speculation about the Greek government’s ability to avert a default, which would very likely lead to a new financial crisis across the euro zone.

Olli Rehn, Europe’s commissioner for economic and monetary affairs, said in a statement that the commission “regrets the failure of Greek party leaders to reach consensus on economic adjustment to overcome the current debt crisis.”

“An agreement has to be found soon,” Mr. Rehn said. “Time is running out.”

Earlier in the day, Antonis Samaras, the leader of the country’s main conservative opposition party, New Democracy, said he would not back a program that would “raze Greece’s economy and destroy its society.”

He called for the renegotiation of the terms of an agreement with the union and the I.M.F., which last May pledged 110 billion euros in loans to Greece in exchange for the country’s getting its fiscal house in order.

Mr. Samaras also reiterated calls for an alternative approach to Greece’s finances, one that favored the lowering of taxes and faster privatization of state assets.

Other leaders also criticized the Socialists’ plan. Among them was the leader of the Communist Party, Aleka Papariga, who said Greeks were being subjected to “ideological terrorism” and should not give in to “coercive dilemmas.”

On Thursday, the head of the group of euro zone finance ministers, Jean-Claude Juncker, said again that the European Union would be unlikely to step in if the I.M.F. withheld its portion of a fifth installment of emergency funding to Greece — 12 billion euros ($17 billion) scheduled to be disbursed next month.

Greece’s lenders are demanding additional measures after the country missed its deficit-reduction target for 2010, putting the goals for this year and beyond further out of reach. A mission from the European Commission, the I.M.F. and the European Central Bank is

currently compiling a much-anticipated report on the Greek government's progress, after which European ministers will have to decide how to react.

The situation is difficult because public opinion in creditor countries is hardening and some euro zone governments, including that of the Netherlands, have made it clear that they will not step in and fill the funding gap if the I.M.F. does not believe that it can justify releasing its portion. That has increased pressure on the Greek government to agree to revenue-raising measures, including privatization, that will be sufficient to win over the I.M.F.

At the Group of 8 meeting in Deauville, France, on Friday, the United States expressed support for European efforts to prevent a renewed debt crisis in Greece from mushrooming into a larger problem for the euro monetary union, said two European diplomats who were present during the discussions but did not want to be named.

The Americans said that Europe's ability to manage these problems was important to the United States, but that President Obama did not specify what kind of help the United States would be willing to extend, other than statements of support, the diplomats said.

The European leaders said during the discussions that Europe's problems were limited to Greece and that they did not believe Greece risked infecting the rest of the euro zone, which covers 17 countries. They pointed to the continued strength of the euro vis-à-vis the dollar as proof that the situation was still under control.

The leaders agreed, however, that Greece needed to be more aggressive in adjusting its own finances, and said they believed that the country would ultimately be able to avoid defaulting on or restructuring its debts.

Greek media has speculated in the last week that the country will hold snap elections or possibly return to the drachma. The European marine affairs commissioner, Maria Damanaki, who is a Greek Socialist, added fuel to the fire when she suggested on Wednesday that talks were already taking place about Greece's possible exit from the euro zone.

Apart from tax increases and public spending cuts, the Greek government's proposed austerity program also includes a privatization drive that foresees sales in stakes of state utilities and assets including the state telecommunications company OTE.

On Friday, Deutsche Telekom, which already has a 30 percent stake in OTE, confirmed the receipt of a letter from the Greek finance ministry asking to arrange talks to discuss increasing its stake.

But a few dozen employees of the phone company protested a further sell-off by blocking one of Athens's busiest roads, in front of the company's headquarters, during the morning rush hour Friday.

Larger protests have been held over the last three days as Greeks, facing a deepening recession and mounting unemployment, seek to air their grievances.