COMMENTARY

Social Movements and the Global Crisis: Organising Communication for Change

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This contribution suggests that social movements should be considered as 'prophets of the present' since they "announce what is taking shape even before its direction and content has become clear" (Melucci, 1996: 1). In this respect, movements like Occupy have pointed to the problems of a global crisis that is both economic and political. They have raised questions around the legitimacy and functioning of our democratic institutions and of representative democracy in general. Yet, what such movements express is not only a critique of the current system of governance, but also a willingness to reform it and to build new democratic institutions.

The fields of media and cultural studies have a lot to offer in this effort. Our focus on communication as both a process of meaning-making and an infrastructure of organizing can help us to reflect on our systems of governance and to imagine new ones. This is because by placing communication at the centre, we can observe from the ground up how collectives are created, how they function, how democratic this function is, and what are the visions, symbols and values that keep them together. Such collectives include not only social movements themselves, but also a variety of organizations and their systems of governance, like the European Union.

This contribution further argues that imagination is also required in the media studies field and in universities more generally to help them regain their role as both thought leaders and as spaces of passion and engagement with social change.

Keywords: Protest; digital activism; social movements; communication; Occupy; democracy; governance; globalisation

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

Author Information

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Her work has appeared in journals, such including Media, Culture & Society and Information, Communication & Society and is on the advisory board of the International Journal of E-Politics and Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture.

Reference

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