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The Changing Faces of Citizen Action: A Mapping Study through an 'Unruly' Lens

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IDS Institute of
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Summary

Changing faces of citizen action:

For the activist, the academic interested in power and politics, the development practitioner and the engaged citizen, the last couple of years or so have offered a veritable treasure of moments with which to re-imagine the world, and the place of the 'citizen' in it, the relationships between rulers and the ruled, and the very meaning of 'democracy'. In this context this working paper develops an approach based on thinking at the IDS about 'Unruly Politics', a framework that offers new ways to understand and engage politics and political action. 'Unruly Politics' is a broad conceptual space rather than a descriptive or nominal category. Broadly, it is an approach that looks at politics beyond what has conventionally been defined as 'politics', institutionally and formally. It is simultaneously the insistence on new languages of politics, the redefinition of spaces of politics, ruptures in the aesthetic regimes of power, and the creation of imaginaries of power beyond what is already intelligible.

This publication is constituted of 5 pieces in conversation with each other. The first piece, the main paper, brings together theoretical approaches from philosophy, anthropology and activism with four case studies – the Egyptian uprising as one part of the 'Arab Spring', the protests in Greece, the hunger-strike that sparked off an anti-corruption movement in India, and the more diffuse context of the role of Information and Communication Technologies such as mobile phones and internet platforms in citizen action. The paper examines new modalities of political action being generated in these contexts and argues that current approaches to citizen action, (approaches concerned either with the relationship between citizens and state apparatus, or identity related collective action) characterised by the assumptions of that politics relates to 'interests', or 'representation', fail to appreciate the potential of these emergent modalities. The paper also asks whether the framework of 'citizenship' is adequate for understanding these modalities, whether 'conscious engagement' or explicit ideological interpretation of action is necessary to constitute it as political, how we might understand the role of ICTs in these emergences, the role of the 'bare life' in generating unruly political action and the usefulness of the notion of 'Event' in understanding the changing face of citizen action. The main paper concludes with a discussion on the cynical deployment of discourse in politics, and argues that several of the recent events might be seen as generating the possibilities of a politics that is *not* cynical.

Main paper is followed by three essays written by academics, activists and development practitioners in response to the main paper. Sonia Correa, Shahrukh Alam and Ute Seela each engage the paper from different locations, contesting claims and examining implications of the arguments therein, providing insights from their own locations and perspectives. The final piece of the publication is a response to these essays, highlighting the directions of thought and practice that these engagements open up, clarifying particular points and making some final provocations.

Akshay Khanna works on the intersections of anthropology, activism, theatre and development praxis. S/he has been associated with the Queer movement in India and elsewhere for 15 years, has worked as a human rights lawyer, focusing on issues arising out of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and contributed to drafting the law against domestic violence in India. akshay is currently a Research Fellow with the Participation, Power and Social Change team at the IDS, and the convenor of the Sexuality and Development Programme. S/he has been centrally involved in developing a programme of work and an intellectual agenda around 'Unruly Politics' along with colleagues and students at the IDS.

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Acknowledgements

Shahrukh Alam is with The Patna Collective in India, a new-age knowledge centre that defies the simplistic and often constraining binary of research-activism and which seeks to articulate, generate and disseminate critical knowledge on new transformative spaces in India. She is interested in ideas of Faith and Transformation.

Ute Seela is a political scientist with a keen interest in the middle ground between theory and practice. Ute has been part of the knowledge team of Hivos since 2007, managing the Pluralism Knowledge Programme. Her role is to connect theoretical concepts to real life challenges as they are experienced by activists striding for pluralism. Within Hivos it is Ute's ambition to stimulate learning and debate on own policies and blind spots. Before joining Hivos, Ute Seela has worked as a fellow at the Clingendael Institute, a Dutch think tank on international relations, and as policy advisor in the European Parliament.

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Is this that time?
That time foretold
in our sweaty dreams
That time
When the earth trembles
Beneath our feet
The rhythm of
A billion
Trampling underfoot
The delicate glass
Sphere
Of
'That's just how things are'

Is this that time
When we realise
That the door
Before
which the guard stood
Guns and towers
And coca-cola signs
Was already
Always
open
And we just needed to walk through?

Is this that time when
We feel the blood
No, Not pumping through our veins
But splashing
On faces bodies gritted teeth
Like so many colours
Of a riotous holi?

Is this that time
That we will look back upon
Hear a song
And cry
Tears of neither joy nor sadness
But tears of something
That cannot be named

Come clench my hand
And let me hold yours
In this time of
Tectonic shifts
flashes of
Smoke bombs
and the screeching sound of metal
Being crushed

For this is that time
When another world is not just
Possible
She is
Already here.
Listen. Carefully in the noise.
You can hear her laughing.

By Akshay Khanna

Politics is a specific rupture in the logic of arche. It does not simply presuppose the rupture of the 'normal' distribution of positions between the one who exercises power and the one subject to it. It also requires a rupture in the idea that there are dispositions 'proper' to such classifications.

Jacques Ranciere (2001)

...politics is of the masses, not because it takes into account the 'interests of the greatest number', but because it is founded on the verifiable supposition that no one is enslaved, whether in thought or in deed, by the bond that results from those interests that are a mere function of one's place.

Alain Badiou (2005: 73)

For those who desire to create a society based on the principle of human freedom, direct action is simply the defiant insistence on acting as if one is already free.

David Graeber (2011)

Introduction, or why an 'Unruly' lens

For the activist, the academic interested in power and politics, the development practitioner and the engaged citizen, the last couple of years or so have offered a veritable treasure of moments with which to re-imagine the world, and the place of the 'citizen' in it, the relationships between rulers and the ruled, and the very meaning of 'democracy'. We have had a series of such dramatic events and spectacles that the sense of some sort of a tectonic shift in relationships of power is difficult to ignore. The multiple uprisings in north Africa and the middle-east, the continuing protest movements on the streets of Greece and Spain demanding 'real democracy', the recent wide spread movement against corruption in India, the Occupy movements in north America and Europe, even the recent riots in several cities in England tell us that there is a crisis in the way things are, but also that citizens are responding, and further, that we need new ways to understand and engage politics and political action itself.

But perhaps these events are not unprecedented. There is nothing particularly new about the riot as a broader phenomenon, or of an uprising that forces a dictatorial figure to step down. What is new is perhaps the particular context, our contemporary moment. Neo-liberalism has had over two decades to play itself out as a practically omnipresent mode of production globally. The heyday of American empire has come and gone, re-articulating perhaps as a diffuse set of relationships between local elites, emerging middle-classes and increasingly dispossessed under-classes. 'Structural Adjustment' has come home, as the 'west' reckons itself as being at the centre of a 'global' economic crisis even while new economic powers in the global south survive the crisis relatively well. At the same time in several parts of the world, including in parts of these emerging global powers, things have never been worse for the poor and marginalised, being increasingly dispossessed and displaced as 'costs of development'. Armed resistance lives side by side with traditional development interventions. We also find ourselves realising the potential of new forms of connectedness and technology, with movements and articulations of resistance in disparate parts of the world making reference to, and learning from each other. And amidst all of this, what is clear is that the western liberal claim to a monopoly over defining democracy and citizen action is a thing of the past. It is all these factors that make it necessary for us to re-visit the very frameworks through which we think of politics and of citizen action. This paper seeks to provide material for just such a reflection.

It is perhaps impossible to 'map' exactly how citizen action is changing today. Each part of the world where we see what seem like radical shifts in citizen action must be understood in their own specific historical, political, economic and cultural contexts. The uprising and what is unfolding in Egypt is distinct from the story that unfolds in near-by Libya, even though they might be seen as being part of a larger shift in modes of citizenship in the 'Arab world'. The anti-corruption movement in India is radically different from the protests in Greece, even though these are seemingly about very similar issues of democracy, accountability and modes of participation of citizens in the distribution of resources. The 'food riots' in Bangladesh, in Haiti, Mozambique and several parts of the world in 2008, almost simultaneously, again suggest a larger connectedness and similarity, and yet take place in very particular conditions. What we have, then, are a diverse set of events and processes that offer up the possibility of being seen as somehow connected, as somehow coming together to provide a larger picture, and at the same time, demanding that they be understood in their own specific contexts. To treat these different historically specific moments and processes as though they are variants of each other, all referring us to the same thing – whether it be 'the citizen' or 'politics' – would be to undermine both their specificities and their connectedness. We do not thus, in this paper, seek to offer a definitive picture of how citizen action is changing in the world, but rather, seek to provide material for

a reflection on each of the instances of contestations of power, and political acts that feature herein.

Undoubtedly, deep ethnographic research on these events and processes would enable us to come up with abstractions about power and politics that might then be brought to bear on the examination of all other events and processes. That is a larger, and more ambitious, project. The objectives of this paper are more humble. Through the examination of some of the events that have taken place in the last few years we seek to identify some common themes, and bring these into conversation with some of the more compelling theoretical offerings of philosophy, anthropology and activism. In other words, rather than an exhaustive list of issues relating to citizenship, power and politics, or a map of citizen action in the contemporary world, we offer a menagerie of ideas and analysis that we hope provides a useful lens through which to see the world in its complexity.

There are a myriad of ways in which the relationship between phenomena of power, politics and citizenship can be, and have been approached. Of these, three broad approaches feature in this paper. The first relates to the engagement of citizens with the apparatus of the state. This is the realm of the institutions of representative democracy and people's ability to access them or act in relation to them. In the context of development discourse this relates most closely to the questions of accountability and governance. The second relates to the collective action of citizens in the form of movements, where people act in relation to the bonds that are the effect of commonalities of experience and place in the world. In traditional Marxist thought this might be 'class consciousness', and in 'new social movement' theory, this refers to identities that enable collective action.

Each of these is ultimately pegged on the imagination that 'politics' refers to 'interests' – i.e. the actions of individuals and groups in furtherance of their own particular and located interests. Both of these approaches are also, crucially, structured by the logic of representation. In the first approach the presumption is that a functional system of democracy structurally enables the representation of interests of citizens, and the question is whether and in what conditions this system of representation may be seen to work. In the second, the presumption is that the bond or unitary identity enables a coherent and representative voice of 'the people'. Civil society, in this framework, places itself at the very intersection of these two approaches, sometimes as a proxy for the voice of people's movements, sometimes as a go between or translator enabling the concerns of movements to circulate in registers of governmentality, and sometimes as a space of critical reflection on the relationships of power between state apparatus and people's movements.[1]

In several of the events and instances already mentioned, and examined more closely in this paper, the actions of people defy both these approaches discussed above. The Egyptian uprising of early 2011, for instance, brought together people from different walks of life, in terms of class, religion, gender and political ideology. People here participated not from some particular identity (save 'Egyptian'), and neither was their demand – that Mubarak leave – any simple articulation of individual interest. This makes engagement with the collective action unwieldy – Mubarak, for instance, did not have either a list of demands to negotiate, or a leadership to negotiate with. His negotiation was, per force, with each and every protestor in Tahrir square and beyond.

On a similar note, the first and main response to the Occupy Wall Street movement, by the state, mainstream media and political analysts alike was 'what are your demands?' This question may well be read as a demand that the movement organise itself into a system of *representation*, whereby 'interests' of the participants become legible to the state, and thus

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[1] For an ethnographic and historical account of such an instance – the emergence of 'civil society' that makes representational claims in the context of the Queer movement in India see khanna 2009. See also, more generally, Nilsen 2007, Oomen 2004, Shankland 2010 and Rao 2010.

negotiable. It is a demand by those with the power to define 'politics' that the movement speak their language. But the movement was not, and perhaps is still not, about coming up with a list of negotiation points arising from individual (or collective) 'interests'. Its challenge is simultaneously far more fundamental, and far more nuanced – it is a challenge to the very logics of capitalism and representative democracy.

The three quotes at the beginning of this paper provide us with a starting point for framing a third approach to the understanding of the relationship between power, politics and citizen action. For Ranciere, 'politics' is a rupture not simply of the distribution of positions of those who exercise power and those who are subject to it – it is a rupture of the very idea of dispositions, or qualifications that enable these positions of power and subjection. Badiou's argument, in turn, (and we shall examine this argument more closely later in the paper) is that politics, or what he calls 'singular politics', lies outside of particular interests or of the bonds, such as identity or allegiance, that arise from shared interest. The subjects of a singular politics, he argues elsewhere (2005), possess no demands that once fulfilled will bring an end to their revolt. Finally, the quote from David Graeber, anarchist anthropologist and a key figure in the Occupy movements, argues that the political act, direct action, is itself a demonstration of the possibility of direct democracy. The relevance of these events, in other words cannot be assessed simply in terms of 'results' or structural changes that they instigate. They are about realising the possibility of acting in a way one feels is right, regardless of law and authority. These thinkers, in their own ways insist on the acknowledgement of politics radically outside of the formal relations of citizen and state, of systems of governance and logics of representation.

There is another key shift that emerges from these arguments that deserves flagging in this introduction. This is a shift in the way we appreciate the significance of events, of movements and of political actions more broadly. Simply put, the relevance of these events must be seen not merely in terms of the impact they have had on formal structures of governance, or the position of the political subject in the juridical register ('has the movement succeeded in bringing about a change in the law?', 'has the uprising given rise to a new (democratic) regime?' etc.). Rather, the questions we might then ask are about the new possibilities for political action and engagement. What are the new *modalities of political action* that these events have generated? How have these events reconfigured political spaces? For instance, sceptics of the Egyptian uprising point that a year after the Mubarak regime was displaced we see the emergence of what is considered a more brutal conglomeration of right wing religious groups with the military. And yet, as Tadros has recently argued, "the Egyptian street will continuously reinvent its strategies of resistance, subversion and entitlements' making." (Tadros 2012) We have, in other words, a shift that is far more fundamental than a legal document or a regime – the re-casting of 'the streets' as a political space. The act of revolting, she argues, should not be confused with the 'outcome'.

In the instances of Tahrir Square and the Occupy Movements, and in the other instances discussed later in this paper, we are seeing forms of collective action that resonate with this third approach. They go beyond the very definition of 'politics' as we have tended to understand it thus far. They are events that are beyond the 'rules' of political action. Painting outside the lines, these phenomena are at their very core 'unruly'. They demand a new mode of political enquiry which spills outside of traditional notions of politics, and in which the relevance of acts and events is not reduced to the effect they have on formal structures of the political establishment. It is in this context that this paper seeks to examine the changing faces of citizen action, and politics more broadly, from a lens or a frame that we call, following Shankland et al (2011) 'unruly politics'.

The research for this paper was based primarily on two processes. The first process drew on recent theoretical debates and writings on power, politics and citizen action. Here we picked particular themes, and questions, that are of particular relevance to understanding how

citizen action is changing in the contemporary moment. Much of this material is notoriously dense and complicated, often written with professional philosophers in mind as their audience. To make this material accessible, the paper uses several examples of citizen action from the contemporary moment. The second part of the research has been the facilitation of four more in-depth case studies of recent citizen action. These include the Egyptian uprising as one part of the 'Arab Spring', the protests in Greece, the hunger-strike that sparked off an anti-corruption movement in India, and the more diffuse context of the role of Information and Communication Technologies such as mobile phones and internet platforms in citizen action. For the sake of coherence and readability, the particular narratives that these researches offer are not presented in their entirety in this paper. Each of these researches is being developed into more detailed papers, but the analysis in them informs the current paper, and there is discussion on the particular contexts where possible. This paper is also enriched by discussions over the summer of 2011 at an informal course/reading group at the IDS called 'SOUR' ('a summer of unruly reading...'), one of the activities undertaken by fellows and students interested in 'Unruly Politics', which we shall discuss presently. This group brought together students from different parts of the world, and from diverse settings, several of whom have experience of being activists themselves, or/and have worked in development.

The paper begins with a discussion on the concept of 'unruly politics', which underlies the analysis of the paper. Here it draws on the collective labours of a larger group of people at the IDS. While explicitly recognising this conceptual space as one that enables new contestations, we begin to lay out some of the components of what might be a useful 'lens' with whih to examine questions of politics, power and citizenship. Part 2 of the paper thereafter discusses the question of whether the framework of 'citizenship' is adequate for understanding political action and collective claims to justice today. We look at how, on the one hand, a large part of such action is inspired by precisely the dispossession of marginalised folk of their rights to citizenship, and second, at how the bodies to which such claims are often made are de-territorialised. In this context we examine some of the conceptualisations of citizenship being offered by anthropologists and other social scientists today. While these conceptualisations work well for civil society activism, they resonate less with claims made by what Partha Chatterjee considers as 'political society'. The paper thus goes on to examine citizen action beyond civil society, and beyond political society too, developing a question of when and how it is possible to hear the 'voice of the people'. The urgency of this question is precisely that several of the recent political moments – such as those in Tahrir square, or in Syntagma square, denied the representation of their claims by civil society, and by the political establishment (Tadros 2011a). We are seeing here a very different mode of functioning that articulates as direct action by citizens, and needs to be understood as such. Part 3 of the paper then proceeds to develop a conceptualisation of 'modalities of political action', which enables us to look beyond the apparent 'outcomes' in terms of 'results' of political action. We start this section by examining responses to the recent riots in cities in England, asking the question of whether a 'conscious engagement' is a necessary component of political action. Recognising the role of information and communication technologies in these riots we then examine ICTs themselves as enabling conditions for the emergence of such 'modalities'. Part 4 of the paper is an engagement with Alain Badiou's ideas of the 'event', where the truth of power can be glimpsed, and 'political unbinding', which relates to the release or subtraction of the political subject from the bonds of socio-economic identity. In Part 5 we engage with the work of Giorgio Agamben on 'biopolitics', and examine the place of the 'bare life' or the very fact of living in politics. Inverting Agamben's argument that all politics today is biopolitics, we see how citizen action has tended to use biopolitical strategies in political action. The conclusion of the paper looks at the cynical employment of political discourse and argues that recent events point to the possibilities of a politics that is *not* cynical. We also provide some reflections on what the unruly lens might imply for practitioners, activists and academics engaged with sites of social action.

1 Towards a conceptualisation of 'Unruly Politics'

This paper arises from a thematic interest amongst a group of us at the IDS, working on a conceptualisation of 'Unruly Politics'. While this concept is a work-in-progress, it has recently provided us a space for discussion on forms of political action that are not, in current theory and development practice considered as 'politics'. To demonstrate what we mean by this, we borrow a story from sociologist Jamie Heckert, of a particular moment in a protest march in the UK[2]. As has become a regular policing practice in these protests over the years, a large group of people were 'kettled in', or trapped by the riot police. Amongst these protestors were a group of clowns from CIRCA, or the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army – an innovative activist group of clowns (not people pretending to be clowns) that 'aims to make clowning dangerous again, to bring it back to the street, restore its disobedience and give it back the social function it once had: its ability to disrupt, critique and heal society.' The Clown Army, a regular feature in protests in the UK and other parts of Europe play a very significant role in the dynamics and flavour of the protest, very often at the boundaries of the protest, placing themselves strategically between protestors and the riot police. Clowning with the riot police, kissing their intimidating shields, mocking and turning the military establishment on its head, they diffuse mounting tensions between the aggressive face of the state and the protestors. At one such interface, says Heckert, a senior member of the police force approached the Clown who seemed to be in charge of the Army, perhaps with the intention of negotiating the dispersal of the march. Taking him aside, he said, "Can I have a serious word?" The Clown thought deeply for a moment and said in return- "'Encyclopaedia' – is that a serious word?"

This instance demonstrates what lies at the core of what we consider unruly politics. The powerful, in this case the state, expects 'politics' to be conducted in a particular language, through particular acts that are indexed historically, recognised in the Constitution, intelligible in the Law or culturally sanctioned as being 'political'. 'Politics', here has a grammar, and a procedure that is first and foremost defined by those in power. Here is a refusal on the part of the citizen to speak in this language, it is the insistence on the use of another language. It is not that this citizen is not engaging with power, s/he is very consciously engaging the state, but is doing so on heris[3] own terms. It is this kind of insistence on new languages of politics, or new modes of political action that challenge that which is acceptable and intelligible to the state that broadly characterises unruly politics. Alain Badiou argues that *'politics is that which escapes those with the power to define what politics is'*. To Badiou, then, politics is by definition 'unruly'.

In Mozambique, thousands of women and young men behind barricades of burning tyres bring the capital to a standstill and force the government to reverse a series of price rises that threatens to drive the urban poor into destitution. In Bangladesh, a poor elderly woman loudly criticises a high-status government doctor, who responds by increasing the consideration with which s/he treats heris patients. In Kenya, a group of pastoralist elders invoke religion and tradition to back a call for peace, and the powerful politicians who have been fomenting conflict are forced to fall into line. In India, *kothis* and *hijras,* working class and very visible queer identities specific to South Asia[4], combine flirtation with threats of

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[2] At a seminar at the University of Sussex, circa 2011.

[3] The pronouns 'heris', 'herim' and 's/he' are used in this paper to introduce a multiplicity of gender into the imagination of the political subject. Rather than 'her/his' etc., which maintain a male-female binary, and create space for gender diversity only insofar as 'transgender' implies a movement between the two, these terms allow for other genders that the development industry, for the large part resists recognising. For a detailed analysis of the linguistic conditions under which these new pronouns become necessary see khanna 2009.

[4] *Kothi* is a primarily working class, effeminate gender identity amongst putative males in South Asia. The HIV/AIDS industry typically frames this identity as the 'penetrated' male in same sex sexual encounters. For an examination of its various and

shaming exposure to bring an end to systematic police brutality against queer folk. In Brazil, war-painted warriors occupy an Amazonian health department office, and the government agrees to remove corrupt officials and give indigenous people a say in health system management.

What these vignettes have in common is what we call unruly politics. Excerpting below from an initial 'manifesto' framing our work on unruly politics:

> 'Broadly, the phrase refers to resource claims made by generally less powerful on generally more powerful actors – but with a particular urgency to the nature both of the claims to resources, and to the power imbalances that give rise to the politics: they emerge in a context of acute and/or chronic need and scarcity. Second, they lie outside of or jar with civil forms of civic and democratic engagement, in that they characteristically take forms that are illegal, violent, disruptive of the social order, strident or rude. Yet, third, despite or perhaps because of the politically transgressive nature of actions, they have a potency: they all make things happen. It is not our view that they must make permanent or even very positive change: but they do elicit a response, or force official attention to the specific concerns being voiced. And fourth, we are interested in this not as the automatic kneejerk response of a hungry, angry mob, but because underlying and informing unruly politics tends to be a normative position – a moral economy of entitlement and obligation, a kind of proto-rights that encapsulates, constructs and defends a powerful popular sense of fairness.

> Unruly politics, as we define it, is political action by people who have been denied voice by the rules of the political game, and by the social rules that underpin this game. It draws its power from transgressing these rules – while at the same time upholding others, which may not be legally sanctioned but which have legitimacy, deeply rooted in people's own understandings of what is right and just. This preoccupation with social justice distinguishes these forms of political action from the banditry or gang violence with which threatened autocrats wilfully try to associate them. Far from promoting state disintegration, these forms of unruly political action can lead to fairer, cleaner or simply better government. In all the cases described above, and in countless others around the world, "good governance" outcomes – of pro-poor policy decisions, of government responsiveness, of respect for human rights, of peace-building, of democratic representation, of accountable and participatory service delivery – resulted not from top-down government initiatives, from donor-sponsored reform programmes, from a well-functioning electoral process or from orderly citizen participation but from the unruly actions of poor and marginalised people. (Shankland et al 2011)

It is this concept of unruly politics that underlies this paper. While several of the nuances of this concept will be spelled out in some detail in the paper below, it is worth putting forth at the outset some broad brush strokes of what these look like. First, unruly politic action is effective because it is transgressive/transcendent[5] – it is in the rupture it causes vis-a-vis settled language of political action that it finds its strength. Conversely, a given act cannot stay 'unruly' for long – when it is recognised as 'political' and engaged as such, it enters the lexicon of political action and becomes instead a recognised mode of political action. It enters

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contesting etymologies, see khanna 2009. *Hijra* is the best known third gender identity in the South Asian context. Famously named as 'neither man nor woman' (Nanda 1990), the Hijra community is neither a simply a physiological category, not a category that easily accommodated the metaphor of 'transition' as the 'transgender' frame in the Euro-north American context implies. See Reddy (2005) for an understanding of the community and the identity political, and political economic.

[5] There is some discussion to be had on the distinction between 'transgression' and 'transcendence' as forms of politics – whereas transgression still refers to the norm it transgresses or overcomes – and therefore reproduces it, transcendence is a far more radical form – it treats the norm as irrelevant and resists its reproduction. To the extent that strategies of 'unruly politics' work in conjunction with more normative forms of political action, they might be better understood in the frame of transgression. Yet, there are forms that do not draw on the normative frame. These, perhaps, are better understood as transcendent.

the fold, the mechanisms for calculation and negotiation of power. For example, when Gandhi first developed the idea of the hunger-strike, or the fast-unto-death in the face of atrocities of the colonial state, it was new, disruptive and 'unruly'. Today the fast-unto-death has emerged as one of the best recognised idioms of political action in India, which while continuing to be effective in some circumstances, is very much tame and draws its power from its reference to the legacy of Gandhi rather than to the conditions it attempts to address.

Third, this appropriation of the unruly into the realm of the recognised political idiom will always fail to completely exhaust either the political impulse or the core question of power that underlies political action. There will always be, in the sense that Slavoj Žižek argues, an 'excess' which will spill out of the attempts to totalise, to contain that impulse into political idioms. For instance, when new social movements forge identities as vehicles for collective political action based on commonalities, omitting the differences between people's experiences, these differences will always come back to challenge the very frame of that totalising identity. In this sense politics itself is a story of successive failures, better failures perhaps, but failures nonetheless in attempts to evolve a totalising politics[6].

Fourth, unruly politics draw on moral economies as ways of evidencing that questions of justice are not contained in the juridical, or the law, but rather, in sociality. Justice is not, in other words, the monopoly of the state, and in fact the state (or other power-that-be) is subject to social discourses of justice. To be clear, this does not mean that 'unruly politics' is without rules, but is often about the production of 'subversive ruliness' (Shankland 2012). As Shankland argues in the context of the Occupy LSX movement "Transparent, rule-bound behaviour is absolutely central to the political practices that characterise OccupyLSX – and to the unique challenge that it poses to the unruly and untransparent intermingling of political and financial interests that has left its mark both on London and on communities across the world" (ibid.).

Fifth, Unruly politics is about the spaces in which political action is played out. As Tadros argues, "Unruly politics exposes the fact that people are finding alternative spaces to engage politically because political and civil societies no longer provide the means to express citizens' voices" (Tadros 2012). Whether this be 'the streets' or a virtual platform such as Facebook, unruly politics is about the recasting of these spaces as political spaces. The re-casting of spaces might equally be about unruly appropriation of the genteel spaces of formal politics – for instance, the incidents of shoe throwing that while a familiar feature in Indian legislative spaces, made its way to global circulation when an Iraqi journalist deployed his footwear as a statement against George W. Bush in 2007.

Finally, while unruly politics is not 'civil society', or 'social movements' or political establishment it works in conjunction with these – it most often does not work to replace the formal political processes, but is entangled in a complex relationship with them (Tadros 2011). As such, in this concept note as well, where we do focus on unruliness, it is not to the exclusion of formal political engagements, or recognised idioms of political action, but rather in relation to them.

A rather persistent response from several of our interlocutors over the last year or so has been to presume that our attempt to understand politics from this frame is a celebration, or an endorsement of all that is unruly. What about violent outbursts, or armed resistance? What about the use of unruly tactics by the powerful? What about the unruly politics of the reactionary, the xenophobic, or homophobic? What about something like the right-wing Tea Party movement in the USA, or the performative aggressions of Hindutva forces in India? What, in other words, of the unruly politics that 'we' don't like?

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[6] Drawing on Žižek's reading of Hegelian dialectics (1989, generally).

This is, in a sense an articulation of what Ghassan Hage in a thought provoking and controversial article on the difficulties in studying suicide bombing in its human complexity calls the 'condemnation imperative'. This imperative in the western public sphere, he argues, "operates as a mode of censoring the attempts to provide a sociological explanation for why PSBs (Palestinian Suicide Bombers) act the way they do. It is difficult to express any form of understanding whatsoever, even when one is indeed also condemning the practices of PSBs. Only unqualified condemnation will do. And if one tries to understand, any accompanying condemnation is deemed suspicious." (Hage 2003)

This is a complex question and a clarification needs to be made in this regard. At one level, in order to enable more nuanced understandings of politics in our contemporary moment, we must resist this form of censorship. Our attempt here is not to engender a normative, or a prescriptive frame. Indeed, normatively and politically, there are difficult contestations amongst those of us who have been involved in this process of thinking together. But rather than shy away from this complexity by falling back on a formal, juridical frame of right and wrong, or even a strategic discussion on the benefits and negative implications of violence, we embrace it and nurture it as a space that enables exactly these contestations.

2 Reconsidering the 'Citizen'

One of the key conceptual challenges of our contemporary moment is the suitability of the frame of 'citizenship', and the idea of the 'citizen' itself, in understanding politics. There are several substantive issues that form the background for asking this question.

At one level, this question comes up in the context of the fact that often the most marginalised folk exist outside the realm of 'citizenship', either in juridical terms of being criminalised or deprived of formal objects and relations of citizenship (documents, access to welfare etc.), or in real terms in the sense of not being in a position to actually use citizenship rights. The idea of criminalised communities, a colonial artefact, continues in new and subtler forms today in the figure of the homosexual, the sex worker, the street vendor of 'pirated' DVDs. The 'illegal citizen'[7], who already lies outside the realm of normative citizenship, has little or no recourse to the formal structures of citizenship, or to the protection of law. An 'illegal' migrant facing extreme violence, for instance, cannot approach the police or social services. And yet, these actors are involved in collective action, in making claims to resources and justice, addressing both state and non-state actors in creative ways. Struggles for justice, especially for the 'illegal citizen' then are not contained within the traditional framework of the citizen-state relationship. Understanding these struggles therefore requires either an expansion of the concept of 'citizen action', or the reduction of the meaning of this phrase to simply one aspect or strategic arena of broader struggles for justice. There are other contexts as well, where there is a broader disaffection between citizens and the state, for instance in parts of post-apartheid South Africa. Vusimusi Dlamini, a part of the SOUR group has recently argued in an unpublished paper based on 8 years of experience working in the field of human rights education in rural South Africa, that people have no reason to suddenly begin trusting the state, or to imagine it in any way as a site for the attainment of positive rights. Instead, access to justice is mediated through local non-state formations. Here we see the context of legal pluralism, where there are multiple sources for juridical principles and multiple sites for making claims to justice. The state, here, is merely one of several sites, and Dlamini argues, not the primary audience for performance or claims of 'citizenship'. There are several sources of legitimacy, in other words, and the state is often in relationships of competition, and collaboration with several of these. This understanding is central to understandings of power in colonial and post-colonial contexts[8].

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[7] A concept developed by the Alternate Law Forum, Bangalore http://www.altlawforum.org/education/the-illegal-citizen
[8] Nick Dirks' influential study of the production of caste as a political identity in colonial India tells the story of how the colonial

At a further position in this spectrum of disaffection with the state is the phenomenon of actual armed resistance to the state, and the actual replacement of the state with other mechanisms. The phenomenon being considered the 'Maoist insurgency' or the 'Naxalite movement' – armed peasant resistance in several parts of India is one such instance. While we see a disinclination to engage in the citizen-state relationship at a very fundamental level, we also see the replication of the state in the form of people's courts, organisation into a hierarchy akin to the state apparatus etc. It is important to recognise that these struggles often emerge as responses to the violence of the state, and its complicity in the negation of basic rights of the most utterly dispossessed. Here again we need to expand our framework of 'citizen action' or else create alternative conceptual frames that engage rather than simply dismiss these collective actions as irrelevant.

A second context, in which the limits of traditional frames of citizenship are apparent, is the shifts in the nature and scope of the nation-state itself, with the surrender of its traditional functions to private hands. Whether this is in the negative sense of the emergence of corporate policing and the strategy of arming non-state militias[9] or the giving-up of welfare functions to private bodies, there is a sense of a withdrawal of the state from its relationship with citizens. To be clear, this is not the 'shrinking' of the state as is often claimed in the writing of neo-liberal apologists, but merely a shift in the role it plays. In neo-liberalism, in other words, the state is very much alive. This is not to suggest, of course, that neo-liberalism through structural adjustment has articulated in the same way everywhere. There are striking differences between structural adjustment policies implemented in Africa and the Caribbean in the early 1980s, policies adopted in Latin America and Asia in the 1990s. The structures of states vary widely across regions, each in relation to longer histories of relationship between state and citizen. The key point here is that citizens now increasingly have to address quite other bodies in their claims to public goods, and in some cases justice itself, and these other bodies in most instances are not (yet) in relationships of accountability to citizens[10].

This is also the inauguration of what Gupta and Fergusson (2002) have called 'transnational governmentality', whereby the conventional spatialization of the state has come to be fundamentally challenged. The relationships of subjectivity, regulation and accountability have spilled out of the realm of the nation-state – i.e. the call to subjectivity is staged not by a nation-state contained within the boundaries of the nation, but by a network of actors both beyond and within this imaginary. Similarly, civil society activist address not simply the state, but meta-, and non-state actors including UN bodies, multi-lateral agencies and even multi-national corporations. The relationship of citizenship, in other words, has exceeded the nation-state both spatially and conceptually. This last context of the transnational bring to the fore the question of information and communication technologies, something we deal with in some detail later in this paper.

Academia, in responding to these emerging forms has, broadly speaking, brought about conceptual innovation in at least two directions. The first relates to the spatial spill-over, the displacement of the nation-state as the frame for citizenship, and the emergence of new forms of mobility – giving rise to such concepts as 'flexible citizenship' (Ong 1999) and 'mobile sovereignty' (Pandolfi 2001). The second relates to the ontological bases of citizenship claims – claims are being made not merely on the basis of being 'citizens', but on the bases of one's biological condition, or particular aspects of one's experience of being

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establishment drew on, rather than replacing existing formations of hierarchy and power, thereby transforming them into modern idioms of politics. (2001, generally) See also Radhika Singha (1998)

[9] See Ahram (2011) for a historical perspective on this strategy of the state in different parts of the world.

[10] To be clear, this observation does not apply in a universal sense across the world, with a range of different patterns with respect to the change in systems of governance, welfare, rights and law. This argument does not also undermine the significance of conditions of legal pluralism discussed earlier in the paper. (on which, see Santos 2006, Merry 1988, Tamanaha 2000)

human. This has given rise to such concepts as 'biological citizenship' (Petryna 2002, Rose and Novas 2005), 'therapeutic citizenship' (Nyugen 2005), 'Sexual citizenship' (Scheper-Hughes 1994, khanna 2009, Richardson 2003), 'pharmaceutical citizenship' (Ecks 2005) and the like. Significantly, the emergence of these ontological bases are closely related to the expansion of notions of what it means to be human, and the scope of the 'Right to Life' in Human Rights discourse, but also the expansion of the discourses of governmentality, such as epidemiology and 'international health'.

To understand these conceptual innovations let us briefly take a look at some of the citizen action in relation to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The last two decades have seen the emergence of the HIV/AIDS industry - a sprawling phenomenon that involves a wide range of players, a translocal network of governments, multinational corporations, international development agencies and institutions, NGOs, support groups, 'community based organizations' or CBOs. Nguyen argues that the industry is 'a complex biopolitical assemblage, cobbled together from global flows of organisms, drugs, discourses, and technologies of all kinds' (2005:126). This industry has generated a new kind of politics, based on new kinds of identities and which relates to the way in which the epidemic is understood. The epidemiological model through which structures the interventions and the understanding of the epidemic divides the population into different types of people – 'high-risk groups', 'bridge populations' and the 'general population'. The presumption here is these 'types of people' live as communities that are linked together by virtue of the peculiarities of their sexual economies. Rather than simply being the recognition of identities that already exist, for the large part, this has been a story of the creation of new identities (Cohen 2005, khanna 2009). The work with 'high-risk groups' or 'Most at risk populations' (or 'vulnerable groups', or 'most vulnerable groups'– the term keeps changing) – i.e. 'men who have sex with men' ('MSM'), commercial sex workers ('CSW'), 'injecting drug users' ('IDU') etc. – in particular, is based on the presumptions that, first, these are 'communities' or 'groups' and second, that sexuality is of a certain sort in each of these groups.

These presumptions are challenged and exposed as inadequate on a regular basis in the field. For instance, one of the problems with operationalising targeted interventions with commercial sex workers in some of the small towns in India, is that the 'sex worker' as a type of person, or as a community, simply does not exist. This is not to say that women are not selling sexual services. The point is that the fact of their doing sex work need not be the basis of their identity at all. Women who sell sexual services are also often involved in other forms of employment - selling vegetables, working as construction workers. Or take the example of the phenomenon of 'MSM', the category through which the industry apprehends same-sex desire between males in most of the global south. This term was created as a 'behavioural category' based on the understanding that the gay identity does not exist in most of the world in the same ways that it does in San Francisco, where the condition called AIDS was first identified as Gay Related Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (or 'GRIDS'). Two decades on, 'MSM' itself has become an identity, an umbrella term for several 'traditional', 'indigenous' identities all over the world, that ironically are simply variants of each other. These 'indigenous' identities – the *Kothi* identity in India and Bangladesh, *Kathoey* in Thailand, *Waria* in Indonesia, *Ponnaya* in Sri Lanka, *zenana* in Pakistan etc. are all instances of local idioms that have been appropriated into a 'global form' (Franklin 2005) that is defined in bio-medical and epidemiological terms. Effectively these idioms are centred around the fact that these (most often) working class effeminate males are penetrated in same sex sexual encounters – and are therefore at risk of being infected with HIV. The biomedical formulation that unprotected penetrative anal sex is more risky due to the increased risk of abrasion, then becomes the very basis for claims to resources being made, as these communities come together to collectively negotiate their rights. This 'biological fact' becomes, in other words, the basis for the creation of identities (Cohen 2005, Boyce 2007, khanna 2009b) and politico-moral communities (Misra). This is one of the key bases, for instance, on which the movement for sexuality rights has challenged the colonial anti-

sodomy law in India, or the basis on which sex workers are fighting for the right for their labour to be recognised as legitimate labour. What we see here is a cosmopolitan claim – a claim to a global connectedness, and this global connectedness is on the basis of a biological state of being. Is it in this sense that the instances of HIV/AIDS related activism relate to a 'biological citizenship' and simultaneously a 'global citizenship'. The other aspect here is of course that these claims are being made not simply to the nation-state but to the World Health Organisation, to the UNAIDS, the World Trade Organisation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation etc., and also to multinational pharmaceutical corporations. The audience of the claim to citizenship is not simply the state, even as the state remains a necessary and central part of that audience. What we have then is a series of strategic collaborations and contestations between state actors, civil society formations and these transnational entities in claim to public goods and justice. It is in this sense that citizen action today challenges the very bases of traditional frameworks through which the citizen-state relationship has been understood.

2.1. The realm of citizen action – 'civil society', 'political society', social movements and the question of 'The People'

There is a diverse history of the ways in which the terms civil and political society have been used. In European philosophy, significantly, 'civil society' has historically been conceptualised as being in a deep relationship with, if not a part of the state. For Hegel, for instance, civil society was a necessary stage in the formation of the state, while for Marx, it was the source of the power of the state (cf Chandhoke 2007). For Gramsci, civil society and political society formed a binary opposition that together constituted the state – civil society referred to the realm of hegemonic practices (including contestation) and the consensual exercise of power, while political society referred to the realm of coercion (Gramsci 1993 cf. Thomas 2009:169). In this context it is interesting to note that in development discourse 'civil society' is uncoupled from the state and seen as something of an opposition to the state, or at the very least a sphere of critical engagement with it (Chandhoke 2007, generally). Perhaps the most crucial implication of this is the opacity that it provides the connectedness of the two.

Partha Chatterjee brings this key Marxist/Gramscian insight back into the framework. His distinction between 'civil society' and 'political society' (2004) has been one of the more persuasive frameworks in understanding political action in academia. Broadly, Chatterjee's argument is that civil society is the realm of the ascetic modern – the journalist, the lawyer, activist – relative elite who negotiate their entitlements and resources through access to the law. This is the realm of constitutionalism and the formal juridical register. The politics of 'civil society' is the language of the law, the framework of the political elite. Coupled with this is his conceptualisation of 'political society' – the realm of democracy, of those who cannot or do not have access to the realms of constitutionalism, the marginalised, often living in the grey zone between legality and illegality. On the one hand, those divested of the ability to use formal 'legitimate' process of garnering resources must generate modes of access to such basic resources by not completely 'legal' means (this being a significant frame for complicating reductionist approaches to 'corruption'). On the other hand, they must exercise their power through 'popular politics', mechanisms of vote bank politics, and the evocation of a moral economy. There is something radical about this conceptualisation that recognises the politics of a people that is not first and foremost mediated by the languages of the law, nor tempered by the genteel consensus of the relatively well-off, about how politics should be done.

This distinction has been appreciated and critiqued in equal measure, and there has been the argument that rather than considering these as separate embodiments, or as empirical categories (Menon 2010), we might more usefully consider political and civil society as first

and foremost different modes of political action. For instance, those that embody 'civil society' – journalists, lawyers, NGOs and the like – might equally be engaged in modes of access to resources that are not strictly legal, they also form part of the constituencies of 'vote bank politics' etc. On the other hand, the formal artefacts of citizenship – documents, identity cards, and business cards even, often carry more significance to the subaltern (khanna 2009, Menon 2010). Another critical question when engaging Chatterjee's framework is the place that might be found for social movements, or people's movements in it. What about, for instance, when a tribal resistance to development instigated displacement, such as the Narmada Bachao Andolan, approaches the courts and makes claims to justice through the mechanisms of Constitutionalism? These movements also tend to have members, identified by the mainstream media and often by the state as 'leaders', whose biographies match up to Chatterjee's 'civil society'. And as argued earlier in this paper, civil society often plays the role of translator. These phenomena of 'people's movements', in other words are complex assemblages of disparate imaginaries of justice, political vocabularies and repertoires of action.

Another point that complicates Chatterjee's distinction is that particular dynamics of relations between civil society, people's movements and the state are perhaps as diverse as the historical experiences of coloniality and modernity in the world. Social movements in Latin America, for instance, offer a very different story. Social movements in the 1970s and 80s, argues Evelina Dagnino, appropriated the concept of 'citizenship', and re-signified it, enabling it to serve as a crucial weapon in the struggle against exclusion and for the widening of dominant conceptions of politics. 'Citizenship', she argues, 'swiftly became a common reference point among a range of social movements such as those of women, black people and ethnic minorities, gays, older people, consumers, environmentalists, urban and rural workers, and those organised around urban issues such as decent housing, health, education, unemployment, and violence' (Dagnino 2007:549). The concept, she argues, was both expanded and given particular meanings in relation to specific claims.

> "The process of redefinition placed a strong emphasis on the cultural dimension of citizenship, incorporating contemporary concerns with subjectivities, identities, and the right to difference. This new citizenship was seen as reaching far beyond the acquisition of legal rights: it depended on citizens being active social subjects, defining their rights, and struggling for these rights to be recognised. At the same time, the emphasis on culture asserted the need for a radical transformation of cultural practices that reproduce social inequality and exclusion" (Ibid.)

The legal idiom of citizenship, in other words, has been appropriated, granted a social life, and transformed into an effective political idiom by these social movements. And yet, as Dagnino laments in the context of Brazil, this also generated the conditions for the re-appropriation of the idiom of citizenship by the elites and the state from the 1990s, paving the way for the articulation of 'citizenship' as the integration of individuals into the market, while simultaneously eroding previously acquired rights, especially labour rights.

Underlying the discussion above, there is something else that demands discussion in the context of the idea of the 'citizen', and that is the recent recurrence of the voice of 'the people'. Giorgio Agamben argues that any reference to the political meaning of the term 'people', in European languages, refers simultaneously to two things. On the one hand it refers to the 'set of the People as a whole political body', i.e. the 'constitutive political subject' and on the other, to the 'subset of the people as a fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies' or 'the class that is *de facto* if not *de jure*, excluded from politics' (Agamben 1998:176, 177). His thesis is that this dual meaning is the articulation of a 'biopolitical fracture', and it is this fracture that politics in the contemporary moment has the task of overcoming. The problem is that neither of these articulations of 'the people' have an unambiguous and clearly identifiable voice. The voice articulated in democratic elections, for

instance, is often exactly that majority voice that excludes the marginalised minority. And in a time when the future of a healthy democracy is increasingly being seen as one of coalition politics, this voice is already fragmented and multi-vocal. As far as the 'fragmentary multiplicity of the needy and excluded body', it is almost by definition mute in the political sense. It is, to use Veena Das' phrase 'judicially incompetent' (1995). On the one hand we have the attempt by civil society formations to speak for (and sometimes as) 'the people', for instance in the phenomenon of public interest litigation or class action litigation. At the same time we have a similar claim being made by the state – as representing 'the people'. What we have then is something of a competition between civil society and the state to be the proxy for the 'voice of the people'. This is most obvious in the case of the Bhopal gas tragedy, where the state took on the paternal role of '*parens patriae*'[11] and litigated on behalf of those affected, and civil society formations continue to contest the legitimacy of this role, arguing that this attempt at representation took away the very possibility of victims speaking for themselves. (Das 1995, khanna 2009). In any case, what is clear is that these are both proxies, and each with tentative claims to representing the 'voice of the people'.

But let us consider the Egyptian uprising in this context. The fact that this uprising took place came as a surprise/shock to both the political establishment and to civil society (Tadros 2011). This was not a 'revolution' in the traditional sense, based on a class (or other) identity/consciousness or indeed shared political experience. Here were people from all sorts of class and religious backgrounds, of a wide range of political persuasions. This was not 'civil society' in Partha Chatterjee's sense that negotiates entitlements within, or in relation to law and through the juridical bureaucracies of the state. And this was not 'political society' either, exercising its power through voting. This was not citizen action mediated through the mechanics of representation. As suggested earlier in this paper, the radical difficulty for the Mubarak regime was, in fact, that there was no representative that could be engaged, with whom to bargain on terms of resolution. There was no scope for negotiation. The voice making the clear and simple demand that Mubarak leave was not, in other words, a proxy. This was perhaps one of those rare moments in history where a voice of 'the people' could be heard and recognised for itself.

Something similar can be said about the ongoing protests in Greece, where there is an attempt at envisioning a practice of direct democracy. The slogan 'real democracy now!' plays this exact role of juxtaposing representative democracy as not being 'real' democracy. Again we see people of disparate political persuasions and a range of class experiences. Perhaps something akin can also be said about the collectivisation (rather than the 'mobilisation') that resulted from the Anna Hazare hunger strike recently in India[12] – while Hazare's collaborators (if not Hazare himself) align with a particular political agenda, Ramlila Maidan, where the protest was staged came to be occupied by people from a far wider range of class, political, religious and ideological formations. And while it is important to critically examine the role of the media in the way the story unfurled, it is clear that the mass of the people who came together in that space, or demonstrated their support for the campaign, were not contained within the agenda of either a civil society formation, or of a formal political party.

How do we make sense of this conceptually? In a sense these moments, and several others taking place at the time of this writing in places as disparate as Senegal and Spain, have a much stronger claim to being considered as 'citizen action', than do the strategies and

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[11] A Latin phrase meaning 'parent of the nation', relating usually to the responsibility of the state towards children whose parent(s) are considered unfit to serve the interests of the child.

[12] The frame of 'mobilisation' implies a distinction between the mobiliser and the mobilised – one places the call for the expression of solidarity and the other faithfully fills that exact space. This description perhaps does describe the initial phase of the Anna Hazare protest. But what took place thereafter, it seems, was something distinct – where people whose political alignments and political-economic positionalities came to occupy the same space, marking a distinct mode of political action. While this is a complex story, it is significant to mark a distinction between 'mobilisation' and 'collectivisation' in this context.

activisms of civil society formations, or of formal political processes. In Tahrir square, for instance, while the uprising was against a 'regime' that had been in place for three decades and had merged itself with the 'state' itself, the one symbol that dominated the landscape was the Egyptian flag. The Egyptian state has been dominated by the figure of Hosni Mubarak for about three decades, where, it might be argued that the symbolic body of the State has merged with the symbolic body of a given individual. Demanding the resignation of this figure was a challenge not simply to an individual, but to the very structure of the state, and the nature of the citizen-state relationship in that country. In a sense it might be argued that by protesting, the citizens of that country are stepping outside of the subject position that has been designated for the 'citizen-subject'.

This subject position, in the Egyptian context, it is argued, has for long been framed by the metaphor of the father-child (or more precisely father-son relationship). In these times the constant refrain of Mubarak was the metaphor of being the father, always the father speaking to his children: First to his errant children, the youth, then slowly recognising their anger as legitimate and calling for a negotiation. To insult the father, (or rather to demand that he be dethroned and tried in a criminal court) was, in this discourse, immoral and significantly, unEgyptian. Several commentators and analysts of politics in Egypt, and more broadly in the 'Arab world' have argued, the citizen-state relationship has been, for the large part, contained within the metaphors of 'father-child' and 'master-slave'.

This question of the gender of the nation and the employment of metaphors of parenthood, and kinship more broadly, is not unique to Mubarak's Egypt. Sonia Corrêa, for instance, points to a long history of gendered, sexualised and racialised nationhood along the lines of these metaphors in much of Latin America. This "engendering" is particularly remarkable, she argues, in independence struggles, revolutions and the early stages of state generative processes. Typically, the nation is equated with the 'mother' and the state apparatus with the father. Women's honour and male virility tend to be the icons of these generative processes. As states stabilise, argues Corrêa, politics come to be dominated by 'personalism', with the emergence of such phenomena as *caudillismo* (or the sense of a populist politics centred around the figure of a charismatic figure, often a militia leader), and *coronelismo* (a political system broadly structured around the domination and patronage by local oligarchs). These phenomena are characterised by overlaps between the state, the leader or patriarch and the *libertador* or liberator. This overlap enables, in turn, the emergence of the powerful image of the 'father of the nation' and the fathers and mothers of the poor. The most well known instances of this phenomenon, says Corrêa, is that of Juan and Eva Peron in Argentina, and Getúlio Vargas. More recently, she argues, President Lula in Brazil has powerfully drawn on the mythological legacy of Vagras and had extensively used gendered and paternalistic language to describe political issues and problems (personal communication).

In India as well, the very idea of the 'father of the nation' in the figure of Mahatma Gandhi, draws upon the affective register of the parent-child relationship such that to be a good citizen means to be a good child. And significantly, this use of metaphors of the parent-child relationship limited to the idea of fatherhood. In several parts of the world the more powerful metaphor is, in fact, that of the Mother. In India and in parts of Latin America, this image of the mother draws heavily on religious registers. In India, the early 20th century emergence of the image of *Bharat Mata* or 'mother India' drew on the images of several Hindu goddesses, all of them imaged as the mother (Thapar 1993). The image of the mother as nation in the Indian context was perhaps best embodied in the image of Indira Gandhi, as the mother of the nation, as the mother whose sons are thus portrayed as capable of carrying out the job she set out to do. The Congress (I)'s, victory post her assassination, portrayed most often as the victory of her son, Rajiv, is one example of the power of this image.[13] An example from

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[13] The irony of her image as the mother is striking – arguably, one of the main issues that brought her downfall a few years earlier in the context of the National Emergency was the drive to coercive sterilization carried out amongst the most marginalised populations. A reported 8 million people were sterilised in the 19 month period of the emergency. Legislation

Latin America would be that of Dona Violeta, the "Mother of all Nicaraguans" (Kampwirth 1996) who won Presidential elections in Nicaragua in 1990, defeating the revolutionary, socialist project of the Sandanista movement. The image portrayed was one of the private woman, the 'traditional mother', who promised to reconcile a war torn nation just as she reconciled her politically torn family[14] (*Ibid.*:67). The 'anti-feminist' politics of Dona Violeta, juxtaposed the image of this 'traditional mother', (and the symbolisation of her similarities with the Virgin Mary) as against the most radical image of women in Sandinista symbolism – that of the woman guerrilla. Catherine Davies frames these 'gender-inflected representations, practices, imaginings and performances', as 'eroticized nationalism' (Davies 1993:333)[15].

In response to Mubarak's attempts drawing upon this eroticised nationalism, by framing the uprising within the father-child relationship, protestors portrayed Mubarak as an abusive husband, where the wife is fighting for divorce. While others portrayed Egypt as a pregnant woman, the new comer is the future, but the new comer refuses to come out of the mother's womb as long as Mubarak is the father. While this was a more creative use of the metaphor, other protestors refused the metaphor altogether, framing Mubarak as an employee, who is not doing his job well, and must thus be let go by the people, who after all hired him. What is being negotiated then, is the gender of the nation, and the gendered positionality of citizen-subject.

What is significant in this context, however, is that the one symbol of the uprising was the flag of Egypt, as the red, white and black bands took on immense political meaning the world over. To us, as one audience of these events, (filtered no doubt through the complexity of media practices and the political-economies that engender them), the protesters are making a loud claim to the Nation, speaking as citizens. This Nation lies outside of, and in opposition to the long standing paternal State. There is something of a paradox here – the objective, and the affective demand, is the displacement of the state itself – the citizen is here denying the current regime the power to speak as the state – these are citizens who are already speaking from a space outside of the eroticised nationalism of that State. In this sense they are not citizen-subjects at all, for, in effect, these voices have announced the end of the very existence of the paternal State, as a moral frame, as machinery, as a government, as the sovereign that makes a call for interpellation. This is not 'democratic politics' mediated through the fictions of representation, or of a social or political contract, this is a politics that lies exactly outside of that frame. We are seeing, then, a cleaving off of the citizen from the subject – a citizen that is not a citizen-subject. And significantly we are also seeing the articulation of a political outside of 'politics'.

To now bring some coherence to this discussion on re-thinking the frame of the 'citizen' – there are a range of forms of collective action that are emerging in the contemporary moment. If some of these are not radically new, but repetitions of familiar forms, the contexts in which they are taking place make them as such. On the one hand we see the emergence of global forms of connectedness, the emergence of a transnational governmentality, and simultaneously of civil society formations that are not contained with a relationship with the nation-state.[16] To call this 'global civil society' would probably be disingenuous –

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on sterilization was enacted through which the central government put pressure on the states to meet sterilization 'quotas'. Government employees' salaries were made contingent on the number of sterilizations they enabled. Those who failed to be sterilized after having three children were threatened with fines and imprisonment and food rations and other government services were withheld from the unsterilized. In some cases, state governments resorted to brute force, using the police force to round up "eligible" men for forcible sterilization. In at least one case, *all* the young men of one village were sterilized (Gwatkin, 1979:29).

14   Of her four children, all of them politically active, two were fervent Sandanistas and two opposed the revolution, as did Dona Violeta herself. Dona Violeta's reconciliatory efforts were celebrated as the victory of maternal love over political divisions.

[15] For a more detailed discussion on eroticised nationalism in the context of reproductive technologies and politics, see khanna 2007.

[16] This is not, of course to suggest that this is the first, or indeed the only form of translocal connectedness. The rich histories of Marxist, anarchist and Trotskyist internationalism cannot be discounted. One might also recall the common experience of coming out of age in the 1960s in the most diverse continents, with Woodstock, the student revolts of 1968 in France, and

transnational civil society is perhaps a better way to think of these. At the same time we are seeing the emergence of mechanisms, and moments for hearing a voice of 'the people' that is not mediated through either civil society or formal politics. Finally, we see the continuation of large scale collective action that stands completely outside of the citizen-state relationship, even if it is affected by this relationship. If we are to make sense of how the face of citizen action is changing in the contemporary moment, we need to understand how these different forms of collective political action relate to each other – the conditions for the collaboration and the productivity of the conflicts between them.

3 'Modalities of political action': does citizen action imply conscious engagement?

On the 4th of August 2011, Mark Duggan, a 29 year old black man was shot dead in suspicious circumstances by police forces in Tottenham, an area of London with a large African-Caribbean population, and one with a history of race related tension. Two days later, a peaceful protest march took place from Broadwater farm, (where Mark lived and which had been the site of race-related riots in 1985 following the killing of a woman by the police), to the police station, demanding information from the police about the circumstances of Duggan's death. These protesters received no satisfactory answers and while it is unclear what exactly transpired, violence broke out and two police cars were set on fire. In coming days riots broke out in several parts of London, and then other cities in England. While the news media dished out the hyperbole with images of fires, destruction of property and the 'looting' of big and small shops alike, in real time, the political establishment set about stripping all meaning from these events. Almost immediately, the actions of these young citizens were named as 'sheer' or 'pure criminality'. There is no political meaning to these actions, we have consistently been told since then, and these acts of 'mindless violence' are to be treated as aberrations of 'criminal individuals' who, even though large in number, must be treated as individuals and given the full penalty of the law so as to be taught a lesson. Resonating with the dramatic statement by Margaret Thatcher, that 'there is no such thing as society' (there are only individuals, she said), a clearly collective action is being denied its political-economic context. More recently the Justice Secretary Kenneth Clarke has spoken of 'criminal communities' – and of 'feral under-classes' or 'families and communities familiar with the justice system'. (Clarke 2011)

More nuanced analysis has attempted to identify the conditions, or the reasons for the riots in terms of such things as the disaffection amongst 'youth' arising from the inordinate frequency of 'stop and check' procedures in black and minority ethnic, and poor area of these cities, the recent inequitable cuts on public spending that affects the poorest people most drastically, the changes in the education sector that makes it close to impossible for those lower down on the economic ladder to have higher education or social mobility, and the impact of the crisis in the financial sector on employment opportunities for the poor. That there is a relationship between the riots and the political economic conditions and changes is clear. It is possible, in other words, to 'interpret' these events in order to see their political relevance, and indeed this is an important task.

But the question is whether these actions can be understood as 'citizen action' in themselves, and whether they need to be 'interpreted' at all, or whether they are not already meaningful.

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the Naxalite movement in India coinciding. The 1990s and early 2000s saw the anti-globalization/altermondialization movements, and the emergence of continuing cross-movement co-ordinations in the forms of the World Social Forum and the anti-G8 protests etc.

The larger conceptual question here is whether, for something to be considered as citizen action, or as 'political', it needs to somehow display a well thought-out 'ideology', a conscious engagement with structures of power that demonstrates a clear understanding of politics and an engagement with the symbolic framework through which the citizen-state relationship is negotiated. With something like the Egyptian uprising, or the Anna Hazare campaign, as with civil society activism, the evidence of such an ideological engagement seems to be the very point of the action. It is as though the demonstration of this consciousness, and its intelligibility as a logical argument with power, is the very qualifier for recognising the action as being political, and therefore a legitimate force to engage. And conversely, if a 'meaningful' statement is not intelligible to those who claim to define 'politics', then a given act is stripped off of its political meaning – hence the possibility of the very idea of 'sheer criminality'. But there is something more profound that these riots call upon us to appreciate – it is the transformation of the 'ideological' in the contemporary moment, a moment marked by 'cynicism'.

Consider the several large scale protests against the cuts in public spending in cities in the UK a few months prior to the riots, or even the marches of more than a million people in the streets of London in 2003, in opposition to the invasion of Iraq. In each of these cases citizens were speaking up, loud and clear, their opposition to particular policies and decisions of the state. In each of these situations, the citizen action has generated a critique of the state and its actions, speaking the language of rationality, fairness, democracy and morality. In each of these situations the response of the state has been to say – 'yes we hear you, and we hear that the majority of the People are opposed to the particular policy/decision, but frankly, we don't care'. This form of power, Žižek calls 'cynicism'. Totalitarian ideology, he argues 'is no longer meant, even by its authors, to be taken seriously — its status is just that of a means of manipulation, purely external and instrumental; its rule is secured not by its truth-value but by simple extra-ideological violence and promise of gain' (1989:30). In such a time and space of cynicism (of course it is not the case that all politics, all over the world is cynical), the ideological ceases to be an effective mode of political engagement – the state, or the corporation *acts*, while cynically maintaining the ideological realm at a distance from these acts. Formal political action, gaining its legitimacy from its reference to the ideological realm, is thus tamed of its disruptive potential. A more true political engagement, to be relevant, must therefore, also simply act. This brings us back to the opening quote from Graeber, a call to 'act as if (we) are already free'.

Let us return to the streets of London during the riots then. Here the consumer is both the perpetrator and the victim (Fiona Summers, pers. comm.) – the act of looting high-street shops is not a perversion of capitalist logic, or an aberration – it is the performance of that imperative of consumption in its purest form. To be a good citizen in this part of the world, is indeed to be a consumer. What we have in these riots is, rather than 'mindless violence', the performance of citizenship *par excellence*, exposing in naked light the central tenet of neo-liberal consumerism – consumption beyond all else. [Zygmunt Bauman](#) argues that 'these are riots of defective and disqualified consumers', the contemporary have-nots, for whom

> 'non-shopping is the jarring and festering stigma of a life un-fulfilled – and of own nonentity and good-for-nothingness. Not just the absence of pleasure: absence of human dignity. Of life meaning. Ultimately, of humanity and any other ground for self-respect and respect of the others around'. In this sense the riots are a reclaiming of the space of legitimacy and dignity reserved for the 'haves' (Baumann 2011)

The conceptual point here is that in order to understand these events it is necessary to not simply interpret what certain acts tell us about the context, but to simultaneously read these acts as interventions in contemporary politics, in and of themselves, ones that speak the language of power back to power, rather than the distant language of ideology that serves a cynical function. Rather than refer us to some other level of reality, these acts/events tell us

something central about the political-economy. The challenge before activists and academics alike is to create the possibilities of a language that can engage these interventions without reducing them to interpretations. The one key lesson from this event of the London riots is thus the importance of the modes of action rather than simply the intention that can gleaned from them.

3.1 Conditions for Modalities of political action

This brings us to a key argument of this paper – the need focus on 'modalities of political action' – rather than simply on the content of claims being made by citizens. I borrow this phrase from Veena Das, whose idea of a 'critical event' is precisely such moments that give rise to 'new modes of political action' (1995, generally). This focus on the modes of action enables us to focus on the conditions that make certain collective acts possible – materially, but also in terms of imagination and discourse. For instance, the emergence and spread of networks such as Facebook and Twitter and other modes of communication such as the Black Berry Messaging Service, were not intended to enable political mobilisation – but have formed part of the conditions that enabled both the Egyptian uprising, and the London riots. But once their potential for enabling political action is realised, they themselves become modes of political action. So while there is a celebration of the role played by new information and communication technologies in the 'Arab Spring' by western states, the London riots immediately instigate a call by the same people for regulation of ICTs.

Material conditions such as access to ICTs form but one part of the picture as far as modalities of action are concerned. These could be locations of speech (as in the example of civil society claiming to speak for the marginalised), or languages of politics (metaphors and frameworks introduced by citizens and states for imagining and negotiating power – 'Big Society' in the UK, for example), or even the recognition of certain acts or bodily states as capable of political engagement (the hunger-strike, or suicide bombing, for instance). These mark a transformation of a political culture and the emergence of new objects, new subjectivities, and new mechanisms of contestation.

A key aspect of the emergence of these modalities is that once they come into existence, they come to be mobilised by a range of actors, including the state. They always exceed their initial impulse or context It is as such that the idiom of 'human rights' came to be used as a justification for the invasion of Iraq, or that it is possible for the populist right-wing Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, the architect of the pogrom against Muslims in that state to effectively use the threat of a hunger-strike against the tribal movement contesting the building of big dams on the Narmada river. In equal measure, citizens reclaim mechanisms through their subversive use – ICTs being a prime example.

3.2 The example of information and communication technologies

Information and communication technologies are a particularly interesting part of the contemporary conditions for the emergence of modalities of political action. In each of the major political events of the recent past, these technologies have not simply played a significant part they have also dominated the analysis of these events. The events in Greece and in Egypt were seemingly made possible through the networks enabled by these technologies, so much so that when the Egyptian state suspended citizen access to these, analysts were surprised that the uprising sustained itself. Zachary Patterson's contribution (Patterson 2011) as part of this project examines in some detail how in the current age of continuous digital innovation, global citizens and governments alike have been presented with ample amount of technological possibilities that could supplement, if not enhance, their associations, interconnections, communications, and observations. The diffusion of 'the Internet, mobile communication, digital media and a variety of social software tools

throughout the world has transformed global news media and communication systems into interactive horizontal networks' that connect local and global individuals and issues (Haider 2011, 1). We see thus, the emergence of the possibility of envisaging a 'global society', which continues to adapt and operate in an era of alternative citizen connectivity. And which features new opportunities for engaging with local and global government actors, international organizations, and various other forms of political and economic power (Coleman and Blumler 2009, 80; Pettit, Salazar, and Dagron 2009, 443; Castells et al 2006, 266; Downing 2001, 98; Ford and Gil 2001, 202). Simultaneously we see the emergence of an imperative of becoming a digital subject, or the very least, the inauguration of 'technosocial subjectivity' (Shah 2007) as a domain for the production of new forms of regulation, and subversion.

On nearly a daily basis, mainstream and independent news media from around the world offer commentary on events regarding citizens' uses of ICTs in communion with or struggles against their governments and global political and economic powers. This, combined with the continuously expanding academic research on ICTs' impacts in contemporary society, leads us to conclude that it is not a question of whether, but how these technologies are informing, influencing, and impacting citizen engagement with domestic and transnational forms of power. Patterson argues that even while existing virtual political spaces have been proposed, recommended, and supported by forms of power within conventional political frameworks, such as the British government's LearnDirect or Brazil's Cidade Democratica, which aim to improve democratic accountability and participation, other unruly political uses of ICT devices and platforms have been condemned and denounced. The politically autonomous virtual spaces that allow for independent channels of communication, from person to person and group to group, provide citizens new arenas and venues for plotting or taking political actions that are not approved, and can be seen as radical or criminal, by forms of power. According to Drache and Froese (2008, 91) 'in a world that is increasingly complex, rights-focused, and process-driven, citizens have a large role to play in the creation of new spheres of interaction', and ICTs afford them a new means necessary to do so. The question then becomes about the conditions for the use of these technologies. In the context of ICTs we have the conceptualisation of a 'digital divide' between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants', or those who have the knowledge of ICT language, a familiarity with its technology and access to it, and use and those who do not (Prensky 2001, 1-2, Buddika 2010). Within all democratic societies there exist various types of digital divides that exclude certain users from democratically participating through ICTs. From the United States and Great Britain, to Ghana and Brazil, ICT usage has been primarily limited to individuals who are educated; employed; young to middle-aged; technologically knowledgeable; reside in urban areas; and have access to the technologies and virtual network (Horst 2011, 440-441; Sey 2011, 397-398; Selwyn 2004, 342; Jenkins and Thorburn 2003, 8-10). These limits to access often exclude the most marginalized citizens from the uses and potentials of ICTs in democratic societies. From one perspective this fact highlights that 'cognitive, cultural, and social factors must be considered in order to achieve an encompassing understanding' (Fuchs, et al. 2006, 4-5) of the application and true potentials of ICTs as mechanisms for citizen action. More and more people need to be brought into this 'network', in Manuel Castells' (2005) sense of the term – a horizontal network of nodes that are inter-dependent and therefore egalitarian. From another perspective, this presumption of inevitability – that ultimately we will all have to become fluent in the use of these particular ICTs – is perhaps an overestimation of their power through which their deployment in every sphere of citizen life is justified. It is, in a sense an apologism for neo-liberal expansion and the imperative that we train ourselves in particular ways.

At one level, it is true that we are all increasingly becoming 'cyborgs' – i.e. we outsource various forms of intellectual, manual and emotional labour that enable our sociality and what it means to be human onto machines (how many phone numbers, for instance, do we remember today?) and other non-human actors. Bruno Latour (2005)argues that these non-

human actors themselves have agency and that to attempt to presume an 'object-subject' distinction in understanding the relationship between humans and technology is unhelpful. This is a very different understanding of the idea of 'network' and has some significant implications for the ways in which we appreciate politics and citizen action, and the question of power in relation to ICTs. For instance, if we consider computers not simply as objects that we use, and must train ourselves to use in order to participate as citizens, we disavow the fact that we are entangled in relationships of power with and through these computers. For instance, the near monopoly that Microsoft corporation has over operating systems implies that we interact with computers – and through computers, with various other actors – in particular ways that are and can be regulated by a centralised agent. The computer here exercises agency in ways that we cannot resist. The Linux literate, on the other hand are in a very different relationship with their computers, and by extension, with the other actors that the computer enables our engagements with. Such an understanding of power, and of agency, thus enables analysis and action in more radical ways. Whereas Castells' understanding of the network implies, ultimately, the deployment of Microsoft packages, Latour's approach implies a more conscious engagement with relationships of power at every point that enables the assemblage. While this does not automatically mean turning the imperative of digital-subjectivity into a demand that we all become Linux geeks, it definitely means a focus on decentralisation of power and addressing power at every point in the network.

If a more general point is to be drawn from this discussion on ICTs and citizenship, it is that the conditions which enable 'modalities of political action' are also potentially the conditions that enable new forms of regulation and discipline. In some sense, then, it is more important to understand these modalities of action, and the conditions under which they might come to be used by citizens, than simply the results of particular actions. So for instance, even if the new Egyptian state that emerges from the rubble of the earlier regime does not live up to the various expectations of those who gathered in Tahrir square – what is firmly established is that this has happened, and if need be, this can happen again. The connections have been made, the material conditions for such collectivisation recognised, and the sensibility of an ownership over one's nation experienced. Similarly, in relation to the London riots, the possibility of co-ordinated action of looting particular shops etc., has been enabled, and even as the government here struggles desperately to gain a modicum of control over the use of these ICTs, this mode of action has been established, and in other conditions can and will be invoked for other forms of collective action. In this sense the focus on the 'changing face' is about the conditions for action, and not simply the results of particular actions themselves.

Maro Pantazidou, in her contribution to this project, (Pantazidou 2011) examines processes through which modalities of political action evolve in relation to each other, and from one form to another. In her examination of the new experiments in direct democracy arising from Syntagma square in Athens, she argues, agreeing with Charles Tilly (2008), that new repertoires of political action develop incrementally through small changes and innovations in previous repertoires: every time there is a staged claim, she argues, 'the powerful will respond in a certain way and the claimants will learn from this response and adapt their repertoire for the next time'. Citizens aiming to a peaceful protest were looking for ways of gatherings that wouldn't allow for co-optation by violent groups. Citizens disengaged with the 'routinised' and 'small politics'[17] approach within all traditional vehicles of organisation, were eager for un-mediated forms of citizen organisation: following the riots of 2008, a number of experiments of direct democracy and popular assemblies had taken place across Greece. Those were small scale changes in the present forms of political organising and action.

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[17] Look for example at the self-critique of one of the key extra-parliamentary left forums that was taken aback by the 'unexpected' rise of the greek indignados and critiques the left's detached language of political groups that focused on their own politics instead of the social urgency: Greek Network for Political and Social Rights, Characteristics and Perspectives of the Movement of the Squares, published at http://www.rednotebook.gr/details.php?id=2929

There are continuities between modalities of action, in other words, with narrative of successive failures incrementally expanding the repertoire of 'contentious politics'.

The other fascinating aspect of continuity in the Greek story is the evocation of protests and events, or instances of unruly politics happening elsewhere. In this context, Pantazidou argues:

> 'The fascinating part of these new elements of contentious gatherings is that they didn't only rapidly develop and spread within Greece, but that the Greek events are inscribed in a series of uprisings elsewhere. The strong presence of national flags of Egypt, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and even Argentina and Ecuador (for their people's struggles against the IMF a decade ago) stands as evidence of the streams connecting these uprisings[18]. The Greek uprising – although a child of the Greek condition – was given its form and texture through a dialogue with other processes. This dialogue consists both of processes of political identification (with the Egyptian demand for 'everyone to have a share in shaping politics' and the Spanish cry: 'we are not commodities') and of processes of developing new action repertoires (transferring everyday life/camping in the streets in Egypt and popular assemblies in Spain). As many Greek activists shared with me, the events in Egypt and Spain were not only the source of inspiration – articulating the common underlying truth: 'our rulers don't represent us, we don't have control over our lives' - but also a transfer of a new 'know-how'. (Pantazidou 2011)

This is beyond simple symbolic evocation of the type that attempts to produce one event as the variant of another (for example, '9/11' is reproduced in the UK as '7/7', and by the media in India as '26/11' – though in the Indian context this number name has a limited currency given the frequency of terror attacks). Both, the 'image and imagination' of the crowds in Tahrir square inspire and inform those on the streets of Athens. This coming together of 'image' and 'imagination' brings us to the question of the relationship between events and the modalities of action that they generate.

4 'Event' and fidelity to truth

The emergence of a heavily connected public sphere – in terms of satellite television, the internet, the dense circulation and movement of images, sounds and affective experiences has perhaps created the imperative for political action to be 'spectacular'. This is not to trivialise the significance of politics in the everyday, or citizen action that is mundane, bureaucratised or within the language of politics itself. (Indeed newscasters struggle to make these everyday actions dramatic.) And yet, there is something to be said about these politics being punctuated, and in some conceptual frameworks, produced by 'events'. We have already encountered Veena Das' idea of the critical event. This is based on her argument that suffering, rather than being the suspension of social meaning (as is argued in the Weberian tradition of sociology (cf. Das 1995: 137)[19], generates new mechanisms of social regulation and, as stated above, modalities of political action. Das' focus in much of her work has been on the languages through which suffering is spoken about, and how the powerful appropriate the suffering by transforming it through language.

In contrast to the focus on the production of mechanisms of regulation in 'events', we have the work of Alain Badiou, who we have also encountered in his definition of politics as 'that

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[18] Kouvelakis talks about internationalist consciousness that comes from concrete identifications and political statements that link processes around the world and not from some abstract cosmopolitanism project at 'The Rise o the Indignants in Spain, Greece, Europe. Event organised on the 22nd of June by the Birbeck Institute for the Humanities. Podcast available at http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2011/06/the-rise-of-the-indignant-spain-greece-europe/

[19] While Das does not identify a particular source for this characterisation, see Weber

which escapes those with the power to define what politics is'. Badiou is a philosopher who marks a return to 'ontology' or the study of the 'nature of being'. Perhaps the best way to understand ontology is as being about the 'thinginess of things'. While this question of 'being' has dominated the discipline of philosophy for centuries, the impact of post-structuralism has been the recognition that the truth of this being cannot be known in such a way that is not mediated by discourse. For Badiou mathematics is the only way in which ontology ('being qua being', or being in itself) can articulate. This 'being in itself', cannot, in other words be known in language outside of mathematics. The 'Truth' of this being, a philosophical category for Badiou, is by its very nature indiscernible in the everyday. It cannot, in other words, be 'represented'. This truth of being becomes discernible, only for a moment, and in the moment, when there is a rupture in the everyday, a rupture in the relationship between the laws of being and appearance. This moment of rupture, Badiou calls 'the event'. In other words, there are moments when, owing to particular 'conditions', the way we see the world – i.e. the way the world appears to us, ceases to make sense – there is a 'rupture' between the 'being' and the 'appearance'. In such a moment we can grasp a glimpse of the truth of being. It is in this moment that the possibility of the subject is born – the faithful subject[20] is that which has a 'fidelity' to the event, to the truth that is glimpsed in the event. The subject, he argues, is nothing but an:

> "Active fidelity to the event of truth...a militant of truth...the militant of truth is not only the political militant working for the emancipation of humanity in its entirety. He or she is also the artist-creator, the scientist who opens up a new theoretical field, or the lover whose world is enchanted' (Badiou 2005:xiii)

In *Logiques des mondes* (translated as 'Logics of Worlds'), Badiou refers us to the story of Spartacus who sparked off the slave revolt in ancient Rome (Badiou 2008:51) . It was in the moment where, despite recognising that his actions would culminate in his crucifixion, that Spartacus glimpsed the truth of being, and the truth of power, and the truth that 'We can go home'. Through his fidelity to the truth, Spartacus emerges as a faithful subject, and through their identification with his fidelity in the famous words 'I am Spartacus', so do his slave followers. Their actions, based on such fidelity, are not subject to the contingencies of (what is usually considered) 'the political', they are going outside of the script laid out by their oppressor, their (individual) acts are collective, rather than relating simply to self-interest, they know very well that these actions will lead to death, and yet, they act with a fidelity to the truth glimpsed in the moment where Spartacus ruptured the narrative of subjection. They are, in other words, going beyond the expectations laid in the social consensus about the relationship between the citizen-subject and the state. This, then, is a form of unruly politics, speaking truth to the structures within which their oppression is coded as (docile) citizen-subjectivity.

Significantly, for Badiou, the 'event' becomes the 'event' only in retrospect, it is "only *decided* as such in the retroaction of an intervention...". This is to say, an event is created through its recognition as such, and through the performance of fidelity to it.

By 'event', Badiou means something quite different from 'revolution'. In this context let us consider his concept of 'political unbinding'. This lies at the core of Badiou's critique of political representation. Based on analysis and experience of May 1968 in Paris – an event to which Badiou might identify himself as a 'faithful subject' – he argues that political mass movements have exposed, irrevocably, the weakness of every form of social bond, whether in terms of belonging to a party or a socioeconomic identity. The source of real politics, it is argued, no longer consists in recasting the bonds (by forming a more representative or

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20 There are three 'subjective destinations' in Badiou relating to their response to the glimpse of truth – the faithful, reactive, and the obscure. Žižek identifies a fourth in Badiou – resurrection – referring to the moments in which Spartacus is revived and his story re-enacted, for instance in the figure of Rosa Luxembourg. See Žižek's commentary on Logiques des mondes: http://yontorress.blogspot.com/2008/10/slavoj-Žižek-on-alain-badiou-and.html

democratically accountable party, or by amending the capitalist system) but in their 'meticulous unbinding'. Badiou's point here is that the political breakdown of 'community' brings about the right conditions for true collective intellectual work. No 'one' can determine what is objectively good for a community. The fiction of political representation, in pretending to advance the interests of others, must, he argues, be swept aside in order to make way for the reality of political processes, for it is only then that a 'singular political sequence' can begin to take shape. "Political unbinding is therefore the creative act whereby subjects, in renouncing any outside interest...break with routine and begin to empower themselves as collectives". In an argument that has been critiqued by more conservative Marxists, he names politics as that which radically detracts, or *subtracts itself,* from all experience of what the 'social world' actually is. For Badiou, politics reveals the discursive inconsistency of social statements and in so doing pierces through the common sense fabric of the existing state of the situation. In this way politics extends the situation beyond the bounds of ordinary common sense. Beyond what seems strictly impossible to begin with.

If revolution is, for the traditional Marxist, that which interrupts the reproduction of a mode of production, for Badiou, revolution fails to be an instance of a 'singular politics'. Being bound up in the totalising practices, with a pathological desire for unity and for the resolution of social struggles, mass movements can only frustrate the possibilities of a singular politics. In this sense, the politics of Badiou lie outside of dialectics, and provide a way of realising, or (re)thinking the failure of revolution in a non-dialectical manner.

Using this framework to re-examine the Egyptian uprising – this would be an instance of a singular politics, and not a revolution. Citizens have broken a long-standing script, and are doing what seemed strictly impossible. There is no totalising, external identity that holds the actions together, and neither do these actions generate – by themselves – a narrative about anything external to the moment. The actions are not, for instance, about religious or class identity, or about the relationship between different communities. They are simply and solely about the truth of being. As the moment passes, of course, it is retrospectively produced as an event, made explicable, invested with meaning, and given a shape such that it might be understood in continuity with other such events. And simultaneously it shall be given its place amongst objects unlike itself within narratives of the Egyptian state, the 'Arab world', democracy and civilisation. But at the same time, a truth has been glimpsed and faithful subjects have emerged, Spartacus has resurrected[21].

Practically, what follows the 'event' is of course a different story. For the event to be meaningful, it must apparently result in the creation of a new, 'democratic' state, and invariably this falls to the mechanisms of representation, the world of identity politics and participation in political processes based on self-interest etc. In Egypt the first parliamentary elections since the ousting of the Mubarak regime were dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, and the Salafi Al-Nour Party, political parties that explicitly mobilise on the basis of particularly defined religious identities. This in itself does not evidence some negation of the democratic impulse or process but there are compelling questions about timing, the conditions under which these elections were held, the question of whether an election carried out under the rule of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces might be considered as fair etc. (see Tadros 2011b and 2012 in this regard). Tadros argues that what is emerging is a 'military regime in alliance with political movements who claim their legitimacy from religion, but who at the end of the day are neither the representatives nor custodians of religion, as much as they like to claim they are'. This is perhaps the very nature of representative democracy – the evocation of identities as spaces for the articulation of interests is inevitable. This is fundamentally distinct from the unruly politics of Tahrir Square in early 2011 and needs to be recognised as such. What we have here is the re-enfolding of the 'event' and the ruptures that it offers to the language of politics, back into the

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21 Not 'been resurrected', but resurrected itself.

language of politics itself. 'This is not' as Tadros argues, 'what the 25th of January youth movement had fought for.'

The point here is that the re-folding of the event of rupture into the narrative of order, of the logics and mechanics of representation will invariably fail the event. But the fact that these other politics of manipulation are not in themselves 'faithful' to the Truth does not mean that they are not significant, or that they have not given rise to new modalities of political action. Maysa Shqerat's (2011) contribution argues, for instance, that the event has resulted in the emergence of a new form of citizenship that is not mediated by the metaphor of the father-child relationship. And of course we have seen the ways in which this event has expanded the repertoires of contentious politics not simply in Egypt, but in other parts of the world.

5 Biopolitics as citizen action

A final conceptual frame that we consider in this paper relates to 'biopolitics'. Following Foucault's formulation (1980, 1976)that power in modernity is 'biopower', i.e., a 'power over life', whereby 'natural life comes to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of state power' (Agamben), it has become a truism to say that politics today is already biopolitics. In this context the argument in this paper is that what we see in terms of citizen action today is the way in which citizens themselves are using this centrality of the biopolitical as a means of doing politics. We are seeing, in other words, the ways in which citizens are using their bodies, and centring the 'bare life' in their negotiations with power.

Foucault's formulation is that power in the modern nation-state is deployed around two poles – the 'subject' and the 'population'. At this threshold of modernity, argues Giorgio Agamben, taking this argument forward, politics becomes biopolitics. Compared to an earlier state that simply held the power to decide who would die (and had to brutally demonstrate this power through public hangings etc.), the state in modernity decides how we live. And significantly this exercise of power takes place through our own sense of self, through our own bodies – through discourses of health, criminality, madness, security and the like. The argument is that the moment we internalise the multiple forms of surveillance and discipline ourselves there is no need any more for the state's brutal force to act on us – we act on ourselves through the body. This is one aspect of 'bio-power'. The other is the emergence of technologies through which life or the biological aspects of 'the population' are calculated and brought to have political effect. Such discourses as public health, economics, epidemiology etc., which today dominate development praxis are based on this aggregation of human life into objects that might find their place in equations.

Agamben brings this frame of bio-power in conversation with the work of jurist Carl Schmitt(Schmitt 1985 [1922], cf. Agamben 1998:15), and offers us a theory of sovereign power and the 'bare life'. This theory defines the sovereign as that body which is in a position to declare a 'state of exception' – that is, a state where law, rights and political meaning to life are suspended. It is by suspending the law that the sovereign establishes its position beyond that law. Agabmen constructs this framework through a consideration of a figure from ancient Roman law – the 'Homo Sacer'. The Homo Sacer is literally a 'sacred person' – one who already belongs to the gods and therefore cannot be sacrificed. The death of this person does not, in other words have political meaning – as such, any person can kill the Homo Sacer with impunity. In ancient Roman law this would be the status of criminals, pushed out of the boundaries of the city – that is pushed out of the boundaries of citizenship itself. Agabmen then considers two conceptualisations of 'life' in Greek – *bios* and *zoe. Zoe* is the simple fact of living common to all living beings – it is simply the breathing, eating, shitting, fucking human animal, the sensory being with blood and organs and tissue. In contrast is *bios* – the political life, the life of the citizen, the agentive subject whose experience and actions already have political meaning. The 'bare life' or *nuda vita* is the body stripped off of

this political meaning – simplistically, the reduction of the political animal or the citizen into the Homo Sacer. The 'state of exception' for Agamben, that which can be announced by the sovereign, is a 'zone of indistinction', where *zoe* and *bios* are indistinguishable, where the citizen and the Homo Sacer are indistinguishable, and thus bleed into each other.

The state of exception might be contained within a time frame, or an event – a political emergency, for instance, where rights and recourse to the law are 'suspended'. It might be contained within a space – the centre of Agamben's analysis, for instance – the Camp – whether Auschwitz or Guantanamo Bay. Or the state of exception might articulate on particular bodies at particular times – the untouchable, the outcaste, the slave. Agamben's central thesis is that the Camp is the nomos (or the paradigm, the central organising principle) of our times. The Camp is the 'space that opens up when the state of exception becomes the rule',(Agamben 1998:37) the norm becomes indistinguishable from the exception. The human here demonstrates its 'absolute capacity to be killed' and is reduced to 'bare life'. The most powerful aspect of this argument is that, in the process, 'bare life' is ascribed to the *entire population.* So it is, he argues, that the Nazi drive to extermination, 'as lice', of Jews, Gypsies, Homosexuals, leads to "transforming the entire German population into sacred life consecrated to death, and a biological body that must be infinitely purified...". (Ibid.) Agamben's argument here is that the mechanisms of regulation and citizenship *stem from* the state of exception, where we are all Bare Life. What this implies is that politics today, is *Biopolitics* – where the biological fact of life itself lies at the centre of our political being.

While Agamben frame is negative, in the sense that it is about the regulation of the human by the State, it opens up also the understanding that the body, the bare life, is the central aspect of the political actions of humans. Lawrence Cohen, examining the phenomenon of organ trade argues that people use their 'bare life' in order to remain politically relevant (2005b). Similarly, akshay khanna argues, in the context of the Queer movement in India, that it is only through the reduction of the Queer body to the bare life that the abstract citizen subject has been ascribed a 'right to sexuality' (2009). At a broader level, the argument is that positive articulations of rights are contingent upon this 'bare life' being made visible – for instance, the human rights framework arises as a response to the holocaust. We draw upon the bare life, in other words, to make radical claims to justice. Citizen action, we argue, is increasingly using the bare life as a mode of political action. We have already seen this in the context of citizen action relating to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, where bodily states become the basis for political action. More dramatic is the phenomenon of the hunger strike or the 'fast-unto-death' – something popularised by Mohandas K. Gandhi in the context of south Asian independence struggles, and in the context of violence engendered by the partition of south Asia. Gandhi here became the body demonstrating not merely its absolute capacity to be killed, but re-claiming the power over death. The uncertainty of his life or death, in other words, became the most powerful question, first, in the struggle for citizenship, and second in the socio-political relationship between identities/communities. The recent instance of self-immolation by Mohamed Bouazizi, which arguably sparked off the events in Tunisia recently, is another instance. The question of suicide bombing, though more complex in that it impinges on the question of life and death of others, is another instance. Or very simply, the image of the Palestinian child holding up a rock against Israeli tanks, again centres the question of the bare life in political struggle.

One of the questions that has been raised in our discussions on unruly politics at the IDS is this – if unruly politics, by definition, relates to actions that are not considered political – are not considered actions of the citizen in the strict sense of the word, might they then arise from the realm of the 'apolitical' bare life? Is unruly politics then a biopolitics where the unspoken essence of the political, i.e. the bare life, is centred? While this is an area of research and conceptualisation that demands some attention, at this point we might usefully look at the conditions under which reference to the bare life and to the very question of life and death, becomes an effective political action.

The contribution by Priyashri Mani (2011)to this project focuses on this precise question, as she compares the performance of two indefinite hunger strikes in India, each seeking to be a political intervention. The first of the two examples she examines is that of Irom Sharmila, a poet and activist from the North Eastern state of Manipur. Sharmila has been on hunger strike for the last 11 years protesting against the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act ('AFSPA') that has been in enforcement in the region since 1958. This region, the north east of India, consisting of seven states, has a complex history of colonisation, identity and struggles seeking independence from the continuing imperialist projects of what is considered 'mainland' India. During British colonialism, Manipur, the state that Irom Sharmila comes from, was a princely state with its own king and since then there has been a transfer of power from British to Indian hands. The nationalist discourse during the independence movement perceived of the north eastern states as communities that were not able to completely 'assimilate' into the 'India' that was being constructed in opposition to the colonial , creating what Bora terms 'incomplete citizens' (Bora, 2010). Bora attributes this to many reasons, from historical writings describing the tribal people of the northeast as being from the 'Mongolian race' of South east Asia, different from the 'original and legitimate' inhabitants of the 'Aryan race' of mainland India, to their apparent lack of participation in the anti-colonial movement for independence, to supposed differences in culture and tribal customs among others.

Since Manipur's forced integration into the post-colonial Indian state there has been resistance from various quarters against the occupation by the Indian state. To control the 'insurgency' in the 'disturbed area' the Indian state announced the application of the AFSPA, which gives them the power to arrest and even shoot at sight. AFSPA was initially introduced in a few regions of the north east as a response to secessionist groups that were fighting for independence, however over time they remained in permanent enforcement, while ironically India was simultaneously being heralded as the one of the biggest democracies in the world. Over the years, there have been numerous reports of illegal detentions, extrajudicial killings, arbitrarily open firing and killing of civilians, rape, disappearances, torture and many more in the 'disturbed' areas, operating under the AFSPA. The atrocities committed by the army have received very little attention in the mainstream media, and remains an issue that mainland India is mostly ignorant of or unconcerned with. Apart from the atrocities of the Indian armed forces, there is another effect of this condition. Areas considered to be strongholds of insurgent struggles also tend to be areas where the Indian state carries out its extra-judicial killings. The Indian state is vested in maintaining these areas as beyond the realm of law, as though it has no control over the area, as areas controlled by 'militants'. What this means, in turn, is that there would be no investigation into any crime committed in the area, for if there were a successful investigation this would create a precedent and expectations for investigation into the various murders carried out by the Indian state (khanna 2009). Death here is therefore stripped of its political meaning, rendering these areas as 'states of exception' in Agamben's sense in a very precise way. Sharmila's hunger strike in this context might be seen as citizen action that attempts to demonstrate this fact of the subject's absolute capacity to be killed, snatching away the monopoly the state claims over death, and attempting to re-ascribe political meaning to death. The Indian state's response, in turn, has been to prevent this reclaiming. Sharmila has been arrested and imprisoned under section 309 of the India Penal Code which criminalises the attempt to commit suicide. She remains in detention in a hospital ward where she is kept alive forcefully, a thin plastic tube attached to one of her nostrils being the very visible marker of the state's intervention. In this context Mani argues,

> 'Irom Sharmila's use of her body depicts biopolitics as politics. The States control over her body is visible in the fact that she is being kept alive, forcefully, because the state deems suicide illegal. *She is using her 'bare life' to resist the forces that have reducedher to it.' (Ibid.)*

Sharmila evocatively puts it in a recent interview, "I have no other power. I do not have economic power, or political power. I have only myself…". There is something to be said about the specificity of a biopolitics as a strategy in conditions of a state of exception, or as a means of highlighting a state of exception. Another striking instance of a biopolitical strategy, for instance, was the protest by 12 women from the Mira Paiti (Women Torch Bearers) movement against the rape and brutal murder of a young woman by soldiers of the Assam Rifles corps. These elderly women stripped naked and paraded before the fort of the Assam Rifles, taunting the Indian state, demonstrating the stripping away of basic dignity as a way of shaming.

These protests, however, occupy little and marginal, if any, space in mainstream Indian media. In this context Mani argues:

> 'Manipur is far removed, in more ways than one, from the political nerve centre of the national capital, and Sharmila's fast has failed to capture the imagination of India's burgeoning urban middle-class. Limited access to media houses and reporters, that are so willing to flock to Jantar Mantar[22] have made her struggle invisible on 24/7 news channels.(REF)

As such, there is a coming together of the materiality of non-access to the ear of the media, the saleability of these struggles in the calibration of news-worthiness calculated in terms of 'TRPs', or ''Target Rating Points', (a measure of the reach of an object through a media vehicle to its intended audience), and the fact that these struggles militate against the nationalist project of 'shining India' that dominates the public sphere in contemporary India.

In contrast to this, Mani looks at the recent protests calling for an anti-corruption law in India, symbolically headed by Anna Hazare. This campaign has been granted so much attention by the media in India and elsewhere, as to be called 'India's second independence struggle', and as expected, it has been dubbed 'India's Tahrir square'. Hazare, portraying himself as a 'veteran Gandhian', has drawn upon the persistent image of the Mahatma appropriating his most powerful idiom, the 'fast-unto-death'. This protest was in support of a particular draft of a Lok Pal Bill, a law relating to transparency and accountability of various state bodies, a Bill portrayed as the panacea for 'corruption', this being framed as the root of all problems in India. While there have been long standing people's movements in the last ten years in India relating to accountability (and resulting in the enactment of the Right to Information Act), the Bill supported by Hazare is the most problematic of three Bills circulating at the moment. The use of the Gandhian idiom which centres the bare life has, however, successfully cornered a monopoly over an anti-corruption position in the wider public sphere dominated by mainstream media. Even as Sharmila's protest is relegated to the occasional corner in slightly left-leaning newspapers, Hazare monopolized the centre stage for a month, his protest becoming the signifier for all that is good against all that is ill with Indian politics and society. The group that orchestrated the campaign was termed 'Team Anna' – much like the Indian cricket team in its corporatized avatar is called 'Team India'. T-shirts and banners read 'India is Anna, Anna is India', much like Indira Gandhi, India's one time dictator was equated with the nation itself. The iconography of the protest itself was self-consciously nationalist – the backdrop on the stage initially being the image of Bharat Mata or Mother India (the powerful heteronormative metaphor for the nation that emerged in the nationalist struggle in the early 20th century, and which has been appropriated by extreme right-wing militant groups such as the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak), and soon after, the image of Mahatma Gandhi himself. Hundreds of thousands of people, from a range of socio-economic contexts flocked to Ramlila Maidan to express support and ownership of the movement. The protests gave rise to heated debates in parliament on the very notion of democracy and citizen

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[22] The spot near Parliament street in New Delhi, allocated for *dharnas*/sit-ins and other citizen protests

participation, and a performance of a 'victory' of the 'revolution' was well choreographed with the passing of a voice vote in Parliament agreeing to forward Hazare's demands to the standing committee of the Parliament that is considering the Bill. And even though the protest has reached its end point during this writing, the figure of Anna Hazare continues to feature in the news on a regular basis. The Hazare campaign, in other words has been a political spectacle *par excellence*[23].

What is it about the Hazare moment that Irom Sharmila lacks? What makes one exercise in biopolitics a spectacle and another barely visible? One point here is that Sharmila's protest arises from a state of exception and its struggle, first and foremost, is to re-ascribe a political legitimacy to the bare life. Hazare's body on the other hand draws upon the power of a body that is saturated with political meaning. In addition is the fact that their protests position themselves in very different ways vis-à-vis the project of nationhood and the emotion of nationalism that the media trades in - while Sharmila's is a challenge to the coherence of the very idea of this nation, Hazare revels in it. Complex narratives of gender and of race, as well, mark these protests as distinct. And perhaps the key difference between these two is the element of cynicism that underlies the Hazare campaign – while Sharmila's mode of protest itself encapsulates the conditions of a state of exception, and is concerned with the very question of life and death, Hazare's is the evocation of the bare life strategically for quite other political questions. There is a disjuncture, in other words, between his action and the political contestation – he plays on the bare life, and the media play along, providing minute by minute updates on the statistics of his blood pressure, his weight, with the country's most renowned doctors in attendance, requesting him to get admitted to a hospital, which he refuses publicly to a cheering audience. He does not want to be distanced from 'his people', he announces, and appeals to the audience to make sure that he isn't forcefully taken to the hospital. Hazare's fast, in other words, had been a spectacle from the very beginning, making it a 'cynical biopolitics'.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Conceptualising a true politics in cynical times

We live in cynical times. It is as though to speak politics is to speak an untruth already. It is possible today to implement policies of dispossession in the garb of a policy of empowerment. US imperialism uses Human Rights arguments as justifications for the invasion of Iraq, the Con-Dem government in the UK justifies severe cuts to welfare for the poorest in the name of empowering communities, the Chief Minister of Gujarat who fashions himself after Benito Mussolini, and who played a significant role in the systematic pogrom against Muslims in his state goes on a hunger strike to promote 'Sadhbhavana' (goodwill, or 'unity in diversity'), and of course the repeated 'bailouts' of banks, where those who created

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[23] There is much to be discussed about the Hazare moment/campaign, its objectives, its appropriations, implications and its subversion. The campaign produced 'corruption' as an empty signifier (Nigam) which at once means nothing and everything, and marked the realm of 'politics' itself as sullied - a 'populist moment' where "the people" have identified an "enemy of the people" in the entire political class, including the government bureaucracy (Chatterjee). Associating with Anna Hazare was good for the ruling party, the opposition, NGOs, civil society and even big corporate honchos. As Bobby Kunhu argues, "everyone who bothered to join the game 'won'. The corporate media, the glamour world, the government, political establishments of all hues and shades, 'civil society'- everyone washed away their sins by participating". In essence it allowed for the performance of moral indignation by those who have most benefited from the processes of inequitable distribution of resources, those who have benefitted most from 'corruption' itself. And yet, there was something radical about the Hazare moment. This was in the ways that the space of the campaign came to be occupied by working class figures – sex workers, railway employees, dabbawaalas, farmers, tailors and the like. In addition, the National Alliance of People's Movements, and various grassroots movements engaged the space of the campaign, in strategic support and attempting to establish the link between 'corruption' and dispossession. The campaign also created the spatial possibilities for new kinds of connections or senses of solidarity as the middle/upper middle class shared a space with working classes and the dispossessed. See kafila.org for interesting debates on this.

the financial crisis in the west gain most from it – these are all instances of a deep cynicism defining politics.

Consider the case of Julian Assange in this context – the Wikileaks phenomenon was rightly recognised by states across the world for the radical possibilities it opens up for the exposure of the dirty underbelly of global capitalism, the negotiations between people in high places. While these murky realities are not exactly news to citizens, as Žižek says, this is the moment where the little boy points out that the emperor is indeed naked.[24] This is the inauguration of a new realm of 'truth', one that, to whatever extent, denies its mediation by the state, by lobbies and corporations. The response of the western states in the face of this challenge was to employ a range of strategies to disable Wikileaks itself – for instance, by pressuring PayPal to suspend its account through which citizens around the world could make donations to the website and freezing its assets, and to paint Assange as dangerous. Rather than engage directly with the question of accountability, transparency and open government, these states openly used arm-twisting techniques. One of these strategies highlights the cynicism of power – the allegations of 'sexual misconduct', on the basis of which Assange is sought to be extradited to Sweden.[25] The sexual misconduct, it turns out, has been Assange's hesitation in using condoms during sex. While the facts of what happened, and the nature of consent or otherwise in the sexual engagements is a matter of speculation, what is clear is the cynical evocation of the powerful discourse of HIV/AIDS that has radically re-configured sexual subjectivity in most of the world, and which has generated new ideas of what it means to be a good, and a bad subject. This is not the employment of the HIV/AIDS discourse of safer sex as a public health strategy, this is instead, the use of this public health discourse as a way of discrediting Assange, of placing him in the realm of the dangerous subject. This is the collapse of various discourses of security, safety and danger as a strategy to address the dangers that the public exposure of the mechanisms of power poses to those in power. Similarly, the cynical appropriation of the feminist concerns consent is not about the right to bodily integrity, but about marking Assange as falling outside of the pale of good citizen-subjectivity. These are cynical applications of humanist concerns, and cynical to the extent that they do not even pretend to be otherwise – the cynical nature of these actions is writ large on their very faces.

But it is not merely the state or the market that is cynical. With the Hazare phenomenon we already have one instance of the performance of cynicism by citizens themselves. Another striking instance would be the recent phenomenon of 'homonationalism' (Puar, Rao), which marks the appropriation of an LGBT[26]) Rights discourse by a racist, islamophobic nationalism. When the hyper-masculinised extreme right-wing group such as the English Defence League marches through Brighton, the Gay capital of UK, with more Rainbow flags than flags of St. George, one simply must acknowledge that we are, indeed, living in cynical times.

In this context perhaps, happenings in squares in Tunisia and Egypt, in Greece and Spain, even in the streets of Delhi are the call by citizens to a return to a true politics, where cynicism is recognised for what it is and where the truth of power can be spoken and acted

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[24]Amy Goodman in conversation with Slavoj Žižek and Julian Assange, last accessed on 16.04.2012, at: http://www.democracynow.org/blog/2011/7/5/watch_full_video_of_wikileaks_julian_assange_philosopher_slavoj_iek_with_amy_goodman

[25] The specificity of the Swedish nation-state is significant here. The peculiarity of the Swedish state, argues Sonia Corrêa, is that it stands at the forefront of contemporary mechanisms of the securitization of sexual matters. (pers. comm.). Even as it is internationally seen as the most progressive state as far as LGB rights (understood in a narrow European sense of sexuality-as-personhood) are concerned, and as far as gender equality it concerned (again, in a strictly binary framework typical of Europe) for instance, it criminalizes the purchase of sexual services, and HIV transmission. Until recently state law required that all persons changing their legal gender undergo sterilization, resonating with a long history of eugenicist policies. What we have here is a state with a strict normativity relating to the body, sexual conduct and gender identity. It is in this context that the Swedish state might be seen as the ideal juridical space for the extradition of Julian Assange.

[26] 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender', the collection of identities that dominate the political imaginary in the Euro-North American context, and in other parts of the world where an identity based politics has been taken on.,

upon. It would be disingenuous, at the same time, to disregard the ways in which citizens themselves have developed the skills of playing games of power – the 'hidden transcript' and the 'weapons of the weak' as James Scott (1985, 1990) has suggested two decades back, have already been citizen's modes of engagement with power. What these new moments demand is the courage to imagine a politics that is not already constrained to be cynical. What this requires is an ability to appreciate the significance of political acts beyond simply the implications they have for a formal politics. It is in this context that we might see the potential of an unruly lens.

So what does it mean to look a politics through an 'unruly lens'? What might be the broad conceptual shifts for practitioners, activists and academics engaged with politics and citizen action? While the objective of this paper has been to provide material for a more nuanced way of looking at things, and not simply to provide a list of recommendations for practitioners, it is helpful to offer some reflections on these questions.

We have argued that 'politics' and 'citizen action' as defined by those with the power to do so have a particular language, and are visible through particular acts that are indexed historically, recognised in the Constitution, intelligible in the Law or culturally sanctioned as being 'political'. While this language is not accessible to all, there are particular historical conditions under which experiences of the marginalised become capable of circulating in these formal registers, capable of making successful claims to justice. There is no doubt of the significance, and potential of formal structures of democracy in addressing questions of power. The importance of Constitutionalism, in other words cannot be denied – either in ensuring that democracy does not collapse into the rule of the majority, or in the ways that it ensures the space for 'political society' to exercise power. The intention in suggesting an 'unruly lens' is not to undermine this. Unruly strategies are, after all, often employed in conjunction with, and often in relation to the more formal structures of citizenship.

The implication, instead, is first, the recognition that a true politics might lies outside of these formal mechanisms. By considering unruly politics as modalities, or instances of action that are political even while they lie outside the realm of formal politics, we might come to a more nuanced, and politically relevant understanding of citizen action. To be able to look at something as seemingly 'mindless' as a riot as citizen action, as in and of itself politically meaningful, for instance, immediately re-configures the possibilities of engagement by practitioners, activists and academics alike. Rather than a 'criminality', such an event might point us to an understanding of larger structural processes. At another level, the unruly lens gives a far more rich understanding of the social and political-economic conditions of citizen action, and of the material and cultural resources available to people in their negotiations over resources and entitlements. At the same time, if we accept the possibility that the 'bare life', the body, or the biopolitical lie at the heart of such citizen action, we are offered the possibility of appreciating modes of political action that are not mediated first and foremost by the limited discursive frames of the juridical, that there is something experiential from which several forms of unruly politics arise. This is a very different point of origin for principles of action, as compared to juridical abstraction.

A key question here is of the relationship between the realm of formal politics and that which we have considered as unruly. The challenge, in practice and conceptualisation is to be able to appreciate this relationship without prioritising the shifts the unruly might cause in the formal realm – the significance of unruly events and acts need to be recognised in their own terms, and the significance of unruly practices need to be understood in terms of the new modalities of political action that they generate.

But perhaps the most significant point about an unruly lens is being able to identify the biggest challenges before us – to be able to imagine a new politics that is not limited to the fictions, (even if politically effective fictions), of representation, of totalising identities or fixed

subject positions from which citizens engage. The challenge that the Occupy movements, the Indignados, or the Greek protestors throw up, for instance is whether we can imagine a politics of direct democracy. The complexity of this challenge cannot be undermined. At stake is the ability to imagine a politics beyond the compromise of 'consensus', to be able to imagine a way of doing politics that maintains the impossibility of consensus, or of totalising solutions, at its very core: A 'radical democracy', in other words, which is based on contestation and incompleteness rather than consensus.

In this context, we might fruitfully look at the idea of 'radical democracy' offered by Chantal Mouffeand Ernesto Laclau (1985), a framework that has been re-cast by Slavoj Žižek in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis. To summarise this framework simply: If we consider the realm of formal politics, of registers of citizenship, for instance, or movements that target the symbolic relationship between the State and the citizen, there will always be something of the 'Real'[27] that will not find articulation. This is the very nature of the symbolic, or of political systems. A revolution might give rise to a new symbolic framework, where, for instance, the citizen is vested with new rights, or where particular acts are made legible as 'political', as mechanisms for the participation of citizens in political processes. But this symbolic framework necessarily leaves something out, and the Real will return to haunt, to challenge, to desacrilise. That challenge is necessarily from outside of the Symbolic register, outside of the realm of legibility. In this framework, this challenge would be the zone of the 'unruly'. Reading Laclau and Mouffe from this perspective, 'radical democracy' entails a challenge to neoliberal ideas of democracy, the recognition that totalising identities are necessarily incomplete, and the framing of democracy around difference and dissent, rather than the fetishisation of consensus. That is to say, if consensus is the basis for imagining new symbolic/political order, its necessary failure must be recognised. 'Radical democracy' entails the centring of this recognition. The challenge of course is how this principle might be imagined in practice. The various movements that we have seen spring up in recent years in different parts of the world are perhaps stepping up exactly this challenge. And perhaps it is for engaged citizens, activists, development practitioners and academics, to participate in these brave experiments of imagining a true politics.

7 Evaluations

7.1 The practical relevance of ´unruly politics´

Ute Seela, Hivos

International NGOs – hosting one set of development practitioners - these days grapple with a lot of criticism.   Politicians, bureaucrats, media commentators and an elusive public opinion question their legitimacy and effectiveness in fighting poverty and inequality. Economic crisis and Western governments' austerity policies have led to shrinking development budgets. International NGOs - whose funds often have a government source - are left to reboot their entire system.

But shrinking funds and populist criticism is one thing. The other is a creeping realisation that problems are becoming ´thicker[28]´ (Edwards 2011). Inequality is rising, especially within

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[27] The Symbolic register is the world of words, of identities, of meaning. The imaginary is a deceptive surface, which while structured by the Real, is marked by alienation. The Real is simply that which cannot be symbolised, that which constantly escapes signification. To understand this, let us look at the Lacanian mirror stage.
When a child first recognises herimself in a mirror, this being a moment of the emergence of the self on the imaginary plane – this moment is self-identification is also marked by an impossibility of identification. The child looks at the image in the mirror and identifies with it, but at the same time recognises that 'this is *not* me' (it is an image). This is a moment of alienation as well as identification. In this sense identification is simultaneously the recognition of the impossibility – the Real, which cannot be symbolised is already written into the form of identity.
[28]

countries. Across countries and political systems, there is a growing discomfort with formal democracy. Climate change and food crisis threaten our very existence. The Western economic crisis questions the current neo-liberal model for addressing these challenges. Fundamentalisms of all kinds grow as a result of people´s attempts to protect narrowly defined groups' interests.

Thickening problems require a radical rethink of current attempts to instill social change. It should make development practitioners want to absorb any analysis that makes an attempt to better understand which way to move. Yet the kinds of responses you are likely to get from an INGO crowd about a new concept like 'unruly politics' suggest more hesitation than enthusiasm:

- It is probably another hobby of an ivory tower academic, nothing to do with my work.

- It is probably again criticizing everything I do.

- Which solution does it suggest? Funding spoiled London rioters?

To my fellow-practitioners I would want to say 'wait a minute'. Let's see what is in it for practitioners. At the same time, practitioners do have something to say about the concept itself as well. [29] This brief commentary will address observations in both directions.

7.2 Understanding why change happens (or not) – What's in it for us?

The Arab Spring, the Indignados of Spain and the Occupy movements in North America and Europe have taken many INGOs by surprise. In their focus on civil society´s organized entities in the South, development organizations seemed to have been looking the wrong way to see change happen. What does the concept of unruly politics suggest? Its authors put forward that the drivers behind the recent uprising are not civil society organizations as INGO's know them. 'Unruly actors' are characterized as follows: they are the less powerful who have been denied voice by the rules of the political game. They do not feel any belonging to 'civil society' or social movements with (a certain degree of) organization and leadership. Their modes of protest are often outside of the civil forms of political action – in the sphere of disruption, rudeness, violence or illegality. However, it is not the angry hungry masses losing temper. Unruly politics builds on a clear sense of entitlement among its actors and the determination to set forth its agenda, such as the food riots in Mozambique, Haiti and other locations throughout 2008.
Is it relevant?

Khanna et.al, in the main paper of this publication, label unruly politics as 'what makes the whole system work'. With numerous examples they show how those who are structurally disadvantaged in a system finally engage in modes of protest against structural humiliation and economic hardship – yet not necessarily along predictable lines. From dancing as a way of mourning that killed Syrian protesters, to the Paris or London riots - unruly action arises out of its own rules and throws off balance the 'way things are'.

By including unruly politics in our analysis we may better see change coming. As Mariz Tadros writes elsewhere: 'the probability of protest in Egypt was severely underestimated because analysts were looking at youth activism in rather conventional terms, such as voting and talking about politics'.(Tadros 2012) What an authoritarian system did to people´s opinion and their openness about it was not captured by opinion polls and conventional research. At the same time, other forms of dissidence by farmers, workers, the April 6th youth movement and Copts were dismissed as being too narrow in their demands to challenge the

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status quo. Looking at protest through an unruly lens, therefore, says Tadros, enables us to better ´capture the pulse of the street´ (Tadros 2012).

An unruly lens may not equip us any better to predict change (the paper also does not attempt to do so) but may make us understand processes of mobilization better. Far from being an instruction manual for successful campaigning, it draws our attention to a number of things:

7.2.1 Our normative framework determines 'what we see'

How do we define ´change´? Khanna et.al (Ibid) show that mobilization of actors who are invisible in the societal spectrum *is* change, irrespective of the outcome and the motives. Even though the outcome of uprisings in the Middle East may not be revolutionary, the incremental change vis-à-vis the Mubarak era is that people will rise again. Their motives for taking to the streets, however, are multiple and difficult to capture fully. Our own normative framework restricts what we see. Whereas ´bread, freedom and human dignity´ - one of the calls at Tahrir Square – may sound like demands for Western- style liberal democracy, it may include support for Islamist parties, too.

Unruly politics shows parallels (and may make us re-value) the concept of civil disobedience, or ´active refusal to obey certain laws´. It is commonly associated with the civil rights movement as well as anti-war, anti-nuclear and environmental movements of the 1960´s, 70´s and 80´s. Increased individual liberties (´better laws´) in the West may have temporarily muffled the immediate need to disobey laws. Unruly politics which manifests itself as much in the West as elsewhere, shows that the current social order equally produces marginalized people who protest ´the rules´.

When do we consider protest politically meaningful? Our lens here tends to be normative as well, overlooking all those actions which do not visibly address ´rights´ or ´justice´. Khanna et.al raise exactly that question: Does citizen action need clear demands or an ideology? Their work adds to similar thinking by Asef Bayat on the role of urban youth and women in social change in Iran and Egypt. Bayat ascribes great significance to the collective representation of ´ordinary´ individual actions (such as women jogging in public spaces) which are not approved by the state and/or Islamist movements. Bayat also uses the term ´social non-movements´ because these actions are unplanned and uncoordinated. Comparable to unruly politics, Bayat would describe the crossover to illegal action as ´quiet encroachment´: …"non-collective but prolonged direct actions of dispersed individuals and families to acquire the basic necessities of their lives (land for shelter, urban collective consumption or urban services, informal work, business opportunities, and public space) in a quiet and unassuming illegal fashion" (Bayat 2011).

Unruly politics rejects a normative position on what constitutes legitimate political actions, deliberately including violence as a mode of action. Rather than falling back on a frame of right and wrong, Khanna et.al want to understand the meaning of violence as a critique of existing social conditions.

7.2.2 Unruly politics questions the frame of 'the citizen'

Unruly politics suggests that the 'citizen' may not be the right term for the actors behind it. This critique resembles Partha Chatterjee's discussion of the usefulness of the term 'civil society' in post-colonial societies (Chatterjee 2004). As a catch-all category for 'the arena outside of the family, the state, and the market where people associate to advance common interests'[30] civil society in a country like India does not make sense. What civil society captures are the organized, often externally funded, urban elites, yet the vast majority of the

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[30]As defined in Wikipedia, based on CIVICUS Civil Society Index. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_society#cite_note-0

population remains far removed from such access to the state, resources and citizenship rights.

Often it is the denial of citizenship rights which is at the core of unruly protest. ´Illegal´ migrants cannot attain citizenship documents. Criminalized members of e.g. the political opposition, sexual minorities, sex workers or street vendors are deprived of freedom of movement, expression and assembly. In some geographical locations, 'the marginalized' may have theoretical access to citizenship rights, but are in reality in no position to relate to institutions of power as citizens. Unruly politics shines light on the representational weakness of civil society organizations as the main interlocutors of INGOs.

While this may be an important insight (which has been at the source of newer development discourses such as 'citizen agency'), there has also been significant criticism of this point, especially from the Latin American context, as mentioned in the main paper . Citizenship can also be seen as a liberating project which works to enable more and more inhabitants of a certain location to claim rights and dignity.

7.3 'Justice' is a contested concept

Khanna et.al describe unruly politics as action which may cross the line of violence but would be different from 'the angry hungry masses' or 'banditry' because of a conscious engagement with social justice. However, a practitioner may tend to look at an ´unruly´ claim to social justice in two ways:

1. A deeply felt conviction that ´justice´ can only be achieved by addressing things differently (or addressing different things). The objective is the same, the means are different.

2. A tactic in order to convince an audience of a different interpretation of ´justice´ . The term 'justice' (or 'rights') is appropriated for different objectives.

While the analyst may reject this distinction, practitioners may feel a need for 'unmasking' these frames to be able to confront those who misappropriate the ´justice´ discourse or the rights language.

For instance, those debating against abortion at times use the rights language to argue for the right of the unborn child. Those against homosexuality may use the concept of family rights. There are human rights arguments against the veil (as a symbol of gender injustice) as well as in favor of the veil (as a way of expressing one´s freedom of religion). Populist parties in Europe cite women´s rights and acceptance of homosexuality as ´modern achievements´ which ´Islam´ is going to take away - and thereby create the assumption that the rights of Muslims should be restricted in order to protect the rights of women and sexual minorities. While Khanna et.al may not want to include all these examples as unruly politics (in many cases these different discourses happen within the framework of 'ruly' political debate) – the question of normativeness and ideology inevitably creeps in again.

What unruly politics may tell us here is ´see it as it is'. Concepts are contested and the contestation in itself is an important phenomenon to recognize. Judging whether one version of a concept is more valid than the other is not relevant for an analysis of the reasons behind it. To be able to keep that analytical distance may also be useful for practitioners.

7.4 What practitioners have to say about the paper

At a point in time when activists and analysts quarrel whether 'Tahrir Square' has actually changed anything in Egypt (and similar doubts are expressed about Tunisia and the wider

region) – the focus on unruly politics as the clue for change versus stagnation seems a lot less convincing. The point here is not how to define change, but what happens when unruly politics becomes ruly (recurring demonstrations on Tahrir Square) and structures of power prove to be resilient to the challenges of unruly disruption? Can the current struggle to rescue gender equality as one of the ideals of Tahrir Square, for instance, be explained by unruly politics? Is the concept truly useful to better 'see change coming', or should one keep it at 'better understanding mobilization retrospectively'?

In trying to understand what is new about the unruly lens, practitioners tend to look for earlier frames that provided explanations for phenomena such as the hunger strike, the Clown Army or squatting. The authors review many philosophical texts, but the practitioner remains with the question why no reference is made to 'civil disobedience'? Movements such as the provo's in the Netherlands belonged to a counterculture in the 1960s and 70's that used unruly tactics to address injustice and the existing political and social power structures. What is the difference between 'civil disobedience' and unruly politics?

A major hurdle to engage with unruly politics for the practitioner lies in the issue of the normative. While the message of the authors to practitioners is clear (don't look away from unruly politics which you don't like), the question for academics is whether defining a concept can do without norms. Unruly politics differs from banditry through its engagement with social justice, Khanna et.al say. Yet even though the motives of actors may not be clearly pronounced, just as in the case of the London riots, the act in itself is still political, according to Khanna. The line between 'political action concerned with social justice' and 'sheer criminal behavior' then becomes blurred. Conceptually 'pure crime' ceases to exist. Analytically, this may not be a problem. In a society which wants to maintain cohesion and discourage violence of all sorts, it is. Conversely, one wonders whether conceptualizing unruly politics is indeed beyond any normativeness. Projecting noble motives onto the rioter – who may display no concern whatsoever about inequality or justice, but fierce inarticulate aggression - may be more of an ideological act than a scientific one. Calling something ´unruly politics´ requires a definition of what an engagement with social justice means - so the judgment inevitably comes in.

Finally, the paper portrays unruly politics as some sort of hopeful phenomenon showing a resistance against double standards regarding human rights, bad states using 'arm twisting techniques' and markets and societies appropriating 'truths' or frames for their own benefit. 'We live in cynical times' it says, in which human rights, dignity and honesty only tell as long as they are politically opportune. One may agree with the critical reflection of 'our times' – especially vis-à-vis the contemporary 'end-of-history' ideology which leaves no room for systematic economic and political alternatives. However, whether the unruly protestor makes for the beautiful vista, seems inappropriately presumptuous at the end of a long and careful weighing of analysis and uncertainties. How do we know what the protestor wants? Why suddenly that normative judgment of the 'good' unruly protestor?

Maybe the times have not become any more cynical. Maybe the change is that people have become much more critical and less submissive. Authorities can no longer suffice to claim that something is in the people's interest but need to convince and please the citizen and voter. That convincing and pleasing does not necessarily work on the basis of the best argument. Framing, spin-doctoring and co-optation have become part and parcel of politics in the information age.

Unruly politics helps to look beyond the dominant or formal registers of political action and helps to recognize the limitations of reach of elites (and civil society organizations as part of them). It throws up the question again whether there are better ways of organizing society, of developing another politics of direct democracy which can be more inclusive. For finding answers analysts and practitioners alike need to dig further.

7.5 Dialoguing with the (im) possibilities of unruly politics

Sonia Corrêa

akshay khanna, Priyashri Mani, Zachary Patterson, Maro Pantazidou and Maysa Shqerat cover vast territories in their cartographies of unruly politics. Their reflections are decidedly provocative in exploring the limits, caveats and pitfalls of crystallized notions of citizenship, civil society and justice. The authors go beyond conventional state and law centred grammars, underlining contradictions, fragmentations and erosion of public spheres and addressing 'the question of the state" in terms of entrenchment and effects of state power and violence, but also in relation to the transnational and biopolitical features of contemporary politics. In talking about 'unruliness',the paper revisits the old question of political violence while also bringing to the discussion the new concepts of bare life and state of exception. The article pulls off the safety of classical conceptual carpets from beneath our feet, by producing many vertigos.

As discomforting as they can be, these vertigos cannot be circumvented because they refract the profound political disorientation experienced in our era (Brown, 2001). I should note, however, that in examining the enclosures, traps and deficits of contemporary politics and of dominant political conceptions, the authors themselves are not paralyzed. Rather, they insistently search for novel, imaginative, daring ways of exiting from the tights grips and deceits prevailing in today's political landscapes. They keep moving forward, even when these paths lead them to new dilemmas and complexities.

Before engaging more substantively with the ideas developed in the article I want to express my appreciation for the concise systematization it elaborates in respect to contemporary theorizing on biopolitics, including Giorgio Agamben's ideas and concepts. The same applies to the interlacing of localities and globalities under the effect of the intensified transnationalization of markets, civil politics and governamentality structures. These nutshell annotations on new conceptual frames and complex dynamics of contemporary politics may trigger the curiosity of a wide range of so called 'development practitioners' who, for a variety of reasons are not able to have access to these streams of literature that, in my view, are illuminating of the conditions of the world landscape in which we move. My comments on the paper do not aim to examine in depth the vast and complex maze woven by khanna *et al*. They remain preliminary, partial and selective in their examination of a few areas and questions that triggered my own imagination or discomfort.

7.5.1 la longue durée/enclosures/exits

khanna *et al* identify the unrelenting expansion of liberal economics and related political conservatism, from the 1980's onwards, as one main source of political disorientation we experience today, or to use Žižek's (2002) vocabulary: the 'desert of the real". Although it is incontestable that the forces underlying the current 'desertification of politics' have intensified after the fall of the walls and of the Soviet Union (1989-1991), in the context of this commentary it is, perhaps, productive to locate the political deadlocks and challenges mapped out by the paper in a longer historical cycle. If nothing else, the repositioning of the paper's reflections within a *longue durée* perspective can provide other lenses to look at the key political events examined by the paper of which the unfolding, since mid 2011, requires great interpretative caution.

I want to start by reminding that, in political Western thinking, at least since the mid 1940's, the corrosive effects of state instrumental reason and of market logics infiltrating and eroding the potentiality of public spheres have been critically and systematically examined by a number of well known political thinkers, such as Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt,

Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas. Concurrently, despite much resistance and denial at the left end of political spectra, the totalitarian features of communist states were also mapped and scrutinized. As observed by Brown (2001), these critiques of "real socialism" [31] are not to be easily erased as something of the past, because many of the state distortions they detected are palpable today: overgrown state power, policing and surveillance, labyrinthine legal machineries, expensive welfare systems that routinely fail the citizens as their beneficiaries.

Furthermore, from the 1960 onwards novel epistemological inquiries have persistently interrogated the foundational tenets of Western emancipatory political narratives: historiographical accounts bound to inexorable progress, the ontological basis of sovereignty, the naturalistic grounds of identities and rights claims, as well as the problematic imprints of the very notion of progress and the colonial impregnation of modern state formations. These critical perspectives have also detected and scrutinized the grips and ramifications of modern governamentality, deployed by both state and non state disciplinary technologies of administration. Some of these authors have also addressed the troublesome question of totalitarian traces, or temptations, lurking beneath the liberal surfaces of democratic governance structures (as we know the authors in this list include Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Felix Guattari, Jean François Lyotard, Edward Said, Gayatry Spivak among others).

Many holes are, therefore, now scattered across the fabric of political narratives regarding citizenship, rights claims, public spheres and the nature of the state itself. These craters are not specific of Western political discursive and normative formations, even when this is where they may, eventually, be more easily grabbed. Rather they can be spotted everywhere because, albeit cultural and historical variations, contemporary state-nation formations derive their structures from the same Eurocentric matrix.

Regardless of where we may be located, in cultural or geographic terms, it is hard to evade the impossibilities and caveats of totalizing progressive narratives about the future, either as accounts of revolutionary transformations or as the ideal image of fundamental rights gradually expanding from the centre to the peripheries and which emanates from liberal political thinking. We cannot efface either critical inquiry of the constitutive premises undergirding the concepts of personhood, social contracts, statehood, constitutions, citizenship itself (Brown, 2001).

A flagrant quality of the 'unruly paper' is exactly to trail these paths, without fear, bringing other theoretical voices into the conversation – such Alain Badiou, Jacques de Certeau, Partha Chartejee, Veena Das, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, or David Graber – who also have explored inquiries in respect to the meanings and pitfalls of 'the political' through other prisms. The khanna *et al* article -- while embedded in a precautionary, not to say pessimist tone and which is characteristic of these streams of thought – is also a quest for 'revolutionary commotions', political unrests and expressions of indignation that challenge states' coercion, states of exclusion and the cynicism of existing political structures. Two compasses guide this quest: the ideal images of 'event' and of 'unruliness'. They will be looked at more closely in the following pages.

7.5.2 'Event': a theoretical rhizome

The concept of 'event' borrowed from Veena Das and Alan Badiou is a hub connecting various argumentative lines developed in the paper. From Das the authors recover a shorthand definition: '*critical events' as those moments that give rise to 'new modes of*

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[31] Interestingly enough the term "real socialism" has been lost in history and we should maybe ask why. But when I entered the meanders of politics in the 1960's it was extensively used and debated as a way to differentiate the "socialism" many of us were struggling for and the harsh realities of communism.

political action' . Badiou's conceptualization is more complex, further elaborated and more central to the authors' reflection. As synthesized in the very beginning of the paper it reads as follows: 'event' is *"the moment when the truth of power can be glimpsed, and 'political unbinding' as a result from the release or subtraction of the political subject from the bonds of socio-economic identity*. Given the centrality of this idea image, I thought it productive to bring other sources and readings into the discussion, not to contest Das' and Badiou's lenses, but to illuminate the rhizome like fabric of this particular domain of theorizing.

In recapturing these other sources, one unequivocal reference is Gilles Deleuze who elaborated a first definition of "event" or 'evénement' in his 1966 book "The Logic of Meaning" (La logique du sens,1966), which, as noted by Kacem (2012), both converges with and differs from Badiou's conceptualization.[32] Zourabichvili (2012) remarks that at the core of Deleuze' s conception lies the distinction, originally crafted by Roman stoic philosophers, between serial 'facts' inscribed in temporality (chronos) from 'events' that assume an extra-temporal signification (aion). Deleuze' s 'event' radically alters the order of signification: what made sense until the present becomes totally indifferent or even opaque, and what makes sense now did not have any meaning before. In Zourabichvili words "*Deleuze's philosophy discloses the primordial link between time and meaning*" (page 11).

This pivotal connection - disconnection between time and meaning is not exactly trivial when the concept of 'event' is transported from the realm of philosophical inquiries to the domains engaged in thinking about political and social structures and change. This is so because social sciences paradigms and methodologies charter chronologies, continuities, patterns, factuality, seriality and the banalities of daily life. In 2002, the French anthropological journal Terrain, devoted an entire issue to explore the complex rapport between "event theorizing' and social sciences research and thinking. While it is not possible to render the totality of the reflections contained in the journal in this short comment, I do think it is productive to share a few of its insights, if nothing else because they touch upon some aspects that underlie the malaise eventually experienced by the audience of development theorists and practitioners who may read the 'unruly paper'.

In the journal's overview article, Bensa and Fassin (2001) observe that "*our* [social science] *disciplines prefer to underline that the "event' is never one: the novelty is not so new, what surges is always inscribed in a historical perspective, in a cultural tradition, in a social logic.*" This overarching frame makes its necessarily difficult for social scientists to value the concept of 'event' as a sharp lens to be used at grasping social, cultural and political shifts. The authors also note that one main theoretical and methodological challenge that may be experienced when the 'event' is transplanted from philosophy to social sciences is the requirement to very precisely distinguish it (the 'event) ' from the multiplicity and repetition of spectacular political affairs inherent to modern and contemporary mediatized public spheres. For social science to productively resort to the 'event' as an analytical tool, the concomitant recognition is required of the highly mediatized environments in which politics evolve. Or, as to recapture the famous formulation of Guy Debord, social science exercises around the "event" require it to be extracted from the seriality of affairs typical of 'societies of the spectacular" (Societé de le spectacle, 1967). Debord's 1960's insight can assume agonizing contours in light of the intensity of the viral intoxication and virality that today continuously mutate facts into *glocalized* 'affairs', regardless of their 'political contents'.

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[32] While it is not possible to examine this divergence in depth here it is worth quoting Kacem vision on the matter: " *Deleuze and Badiou love much each other, even within hate. The number of things in Badiou that come from Deleuze is, without doubt, much more considerable that what is commonly accepted."* (Kacem, 2011, page 5). The same author notes that while one common point of departure between the two philosophers is the notion of nausea- immanence borrowed from Sartre, Badiou's theorizing is imprinted by Plato's ideas in ways that substantially differ from Deleuze thinking.

Bensa and Fassin also note that, in order to avoid being easily caught by the traps of mediatization, social science disciplines tend to emphasize contexts, structures and the longer cycles (la longue durée). These emphases, in their view, tend to limit or even completely void the possibility of capturing 'events'[33] Their suggestion is, therefore, that social scientists, while keeping at hand their classical overarching frames and methods, must refine their lenses and methods as to grab the 'event' fundamentally as 'a rupture of intelligibility'. In their own words: when we are ordinarily immersed in a social, cultural and political environment we "*do know what is going on*", or '*ça va sans dire*', literally, ,– 'it goes without saying'. In contrast, the 'event' makes us a plunge into an extraordinary regime of perception, sentiment and thought. This extraordinariness suspends, even when temporarily, the usual weight of context and structure.

I thought it productive to call attention to this 'suspension effect' because it is quite palpable in the khanna *et al* cartography of the 2011 spiralling revival of street politics: the Arab Spring, the Greek fierce political resistance to 'structural adjustment, the Spanish indignation and Occupy Wall Street. Quite evidently, this string of events is not so easily connectable and comparable through conventional interpretative lenses..The open antagonistic struggles aimed at the full regime change of the Arab Spring cannot be equated with the agonic contestations of neo-liberal economic and political governamentality in Europe and the US. Neither cultural contexts and historical long cycles are exactly comparable, nor structural determinants - though intertwined through the dominant logic of late capitalism trends - can be described as 'the same'. Even so, as underlined in the paper " *the 'image and imagination' of the crowds in Tahrir square inspire and inform those on the streets of Athens*" - and we could also add the Indignados in Puerta del Sol and people gathering at the various locations of Occupy Wall Street - in ways that efface the potentially sharp distinctions of context and structures.

 khanna *et al* are therefore not wrong when affirming that something remarkable happened in 2011 that cannot be easily dismissed, regardless of its measurable outcomes. Yet, it also may be wise to suggest that while valuing the remarkable features of this string of events we may want to keep in mind the perennial challenge to distinguish this 'eventfulness' from the mediatized and cybervirality of political affairs peculiar of our times. Once again, Bensa and Fassin provide an insightful guidance in recommending that - as to discern between ordinary or mediatized factuality and the 'event' - it is vital to search for, and examine, the perception of actors, or if we prefer, political subjects, directly or indirectly engaged. When I read this sober advise I recalled a description I heard from an Egyptian activist about his own experience of being in Tahir Square: " *we did not want to go away, I wanted to be there forever, because we have never experienced before that feeling of being togethe*r".. This utterance confirmed the 'eventfulness' of the Arab spring, echoing the paper's portrayal of the 'event' as an experience of belonging to a 'present' in which the self, the collective, the political coincide in extraordinary ways, or in the terms defined by authors a political experience that lay '*outside of particular interests or of the bonds, such as identity or allegiance"*. Even so, the challenge remains, to continue asking if this extraordinariness is also to be found elsewhere in the remarkable string of 'events" that erupted across the world in 2011.

Last but not least, it is also worth recalling, that the 'event' - in particular, the 'revolutionary event' - is not just about a meaningful present, it is also about remembering and retelling. This other facet of eventful politics was sharply examined by Michel Foucault in two of his late political meditations, both entitled "What is the Enlightenment" (1983, 1984).

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[33] In this context of analyses Bensa and Fassim also identify the dominant tendency in social sciences to consider the 'event' as a phenomenon typical, or even exclusive, of Western or Westernized modern societies. In their view, this is quite problematic because it leaves unexplored the possibility of imagining, for instance, that migrations, famines, cultural encounters, wars or the blossoming of new religiosities had been constructed and experienced as "events", as it can be illustrated by the rich accounts of all cultures in terms of their mythological past, including the retellings of Christianity.

Significantly enough, Foucault's point of departure in both essays is Kant 's own reflection on his 'present' that coincided in time with the French revolution (Kant, 1784, 1799). In is his critical archaeology of Kant's thoughts about the 'meaning of his present' Foucault remarks that:

> "The failures or triumph of the revolution are not [to be seen] as signs of progress, or signs of regression… In contrast, says Kant, what provides meaning, what may constitute a sign of progress is that everywhere the revolution is triggering 'a sympathy of aspiration that merges into enthusiasm'. What matters is not the revolution per se, it is also what happens in the minds of those who have not done it, or at least not those who have been their main actors, it is the relation they have with a revolution in which they have not been active actors". (Michel Foucault, 1983, page 1, my translation)

Though far from novel this elaboration does not seem to have lost its appeal and acuity, particularly in light of the 2011 'revolutionary commotions". What we name 'change' is to a large extent, another name for this 'enthusiasm for the revolution". Foucault, observes that "*what to do about this enthusiasm*" has been one central query defining the contours of modern philosophical inquiry. Then in the concluding remarks of the essay, he also underlines that, in contrast with classical modes of political inquiry, the main challenge of contemporary political philosophy is to systematically charter possible experiments and lived experiences that may not be easily perceived or portrayed as 'events'. As those who are engaged in sexuality thinking and research can easily recognize, he is referring to power fluxes, power effects and resistance at work in the extremities of "the political" that, more than often, remain unseen or void of significance. This is perhaps another useful point of departure to charter the deadlocks and exits of the political in our desertified landscape.

7.5.3 Unruly traces and spectres: incomplete notes

My last remarks concerns "state grammar" and "violence as unruly politics". They are much more scattered, not to say entirely insufficient. In fact, I have hesitated much about including them or not in this commentary. Yet, given that these two argumentative lines are also central to the paper, after some back and forth, I concluded that it could be more productive to risk expressing my views in a precarious shorthand than to entirely silence on these two topics. The authors and the readers should be, however, aware that the ruminations that follow barely touch the complexities and ramification implied in these two vast and complex domains.

7.5.4 'State grammar': traces and layers

One robust argument of khanna *et al* is that one possible exit from the conditions presiding over the 'desert of real' of contemporary politics is the refusal to speak the grammar of the state. Examples are provided that range from the benign 'dissociating grammar' of the clowns to the suggestion that the resource to 'violence' by non-state actors" is also another potential political grammar to be looked at without fear. While the troubling question of violence will be addressed further ahead, this vignette briefly explores the intriguing proposal of searching for a political grammar that is not imprinted by the state logic and vocabulary.

I would like to start exploring it with the following question. Can we really consider this 'refusal of state language' or 'open distrust in relation to the state' as a novel political grammar? Or, instead, when we talk about this refusal and distrust what we do is to fundamentally revolve deep and multiple layers of narratives of 'the political' (at least in the Western tradition). From my own positionality, the refusal of state language or deep distrust in relation to state law leads back directly to Antigone, alone and bravely challenging her uncle, the king of Thebes, for his denial to bury her rebellious brother in the sacred family

land inside the walls. My remembrance refers both to the original Sophocles text and its compelling re-reading by Hegel in the Phenomenology of the Spirit (1807) written in the heyday of the modern nation-state. The refusal of state moors and language, because they have been inevitably corrupted, also evokes Diogenes, who lived in a bathtub outside of the Athens' walls in order to contest those in power and their corrupting and cynical practices.[34] The lineage unfolding from Antigone and Diogenes is long and heterogeneous, including, among others, Renaissance 'dissidents' such as Montaigne; the long standing suspicion of the state elaborated by liberal political thinkers since the 17th century (the state as a necessary evil); Thoreau's civil disobedience in the 19th century, or more recently the beatniks, the hippies encircling the Pentagon in 1968, the European Provos of the same period that have been also recalled by Ute Seela in her comments. Non Western politics have also been spoken in languages that differ from states vocabularies in the context of anti – colonial struggles, Gandhi's trajectory being the most striking example.

This brief and decidedly incomplete lineage illuminates the perennial revival of the dilemma with regard to staying within or to move outside the 'polis', the 'political', the "system', which, it should be noted, assumes quite distinctive contours in our own time. Today, the ideal image of a non state political grammar strongly evokes Chantal Mouffe's (2005) meditation on the agonic nature of the political and her interpretation of the 'political' as 'what exceeds' that is, in fact, one of the conceptual frames inspiring the 'unruly paper'. On the other hand, however, contemporary "state grammars" denote more than the language of voting, of rights or even of re-distribution. They also encompass complex and intricate apparatuses of governamentality, which are not exclusively for the administration of policies and social formations, but also aimed at the regulation of life itself (Rose, 2007). The ramifications of these normative and practical machineries go far beyond the classical limits of the political, to capture bodies, practices and minds.

These disciplinary grammars are intrinsically articulated with 'states of exception" of which one of the most glaring illustrations continues to be 'the prison', a space of confinement over populated by persons whose prerogatives have been minimal or non-existent before they had been captured and punished by the criminal grids of societal regulation.[35] Furthermore these apparatuses are not exclusively constituted by classical state logics but intersect, in complex ways, with market, scientific and technological trends and streams as well as with increasingly powerful 'religious' dogmatic streams of discourses and norms (Corrêa, Parker and Petchesky, 2008)[36].

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[34] Diogenes believed that virtue was better revealed in action than in theory, and he used his lifestyle and behavior to criticize the social values and institutions of what he saw as a corrupt society. The legend says that when the powerful of Athens came to his bath tub home to ask why he was refusing the rules and benefits of the city, he told them to get away because they were taking from him what they could never give: the bright light of the sun. Though this may seem out of place, in strict cultural terms, it is not surprising, in what concerns the political, that during the height of the Arab Spring a twitter trail from Cairo was titled 'diogenes in his barrel'.

[35] The analysis of ' bare life" in the case of Irom Shamilla analyzed by the paper, is perhaps another blatant illustration of how the combined effects of criminal law and biomedical disciplining can go far and deep in defusing political contestation.

[36] I should add, perhaps, that the emphasis of the paper on the 'refusal of state grammars' made me also recapture a different stream: the long standing imagination of politics without state or of the potential dissolution of the state as a result of the revolution, as a replenishment of human aspirations in terms of equality and freedom. As it is well known, this has been a powerful leitmotif of socialist, communist, anarchist thinking, as well as of the 1960's Cultural Revolution. Among other legacies, this long trail
includes the classical and contradictory "The state and the revolution', by Vladimir Lenin, as well as more obscure yet compelling writings, such as Pierre Clastres' anthropological inquiry "The society against the state" (La societé contre l'état, 1971). It is quite instigating to recapture this thread of critical thinking, which has been lost in the past forty years. Yet, this explore will definitely demand new paths of inquiry because the 'matrix like" features of contemporary state formations do not live much space open for imagining politics without the "state" . Furthermore, in 'real politics' terms it not simple either to project the possibility of stateless social formations, when one central crisis of our time is painful eroding welfare states-- which may have been normalizing, or even cynic, but also for some have re-dressed disparities and provided social safety – by the cynicism and greed of financial interests and the reduction of states to their bones is the lemmas brandished by a varied gamut of conservative libertarians.

My central point here is that the 'distance' between within and outside – the polis, politics, the system - has become increasingly narrow. This implies, at least in intellectual terms, the need to re-think the very terms of the dilemma. And while it may seem excessive to get back to Foucault's I dare to say it is once again productive to re-visit his second essay on "What is the Enlightenment?" (1984), as it directly addresses the dilemma of 'positioning' in the following terms: "*we have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative, we have to be at the frontiers.*" (Foucault,1984, page 45). In other words, the 'exit' is a systematic liminal position: being distant enough as not be swallowed, but close enough as not to be "nowhere".

It is also quite instigating to remark that in this same essay Foucault peruses extensively into Baudelaire's interpretation of modernity as a transient, fugitive, contingent way of life and most principally, a peculiar mode of relating with oneself. As re-interpreted by Foucault, the modern mode of relating with oneself implies an ironic 'heroification' of the present, a complex game of transfiguration between freedom and "the real". His conclusion, after this rather surprising detour in the context of an exceedingly complex text, is to underline that Baudelaire himself considered that such a transfiguration could not take place in society or in the "political body", but just in "another place" that he named art. The question can therefore be raised if there are and what may be the nexuses (or disjunctions) between 'the political" and 'art' as manifestations of unruliness?

7.5.5 The unruly spectre

The paper also directly explores the possibility of resorting to violence as a 'political grammar' through quite distinctive angles: the London riots, on-going armed struggles as the one conducted by Naxalite groups in India, remaining struggles for independence, suicide bombers. These analyses sometimes blur the sharp differentials across the heterogeneity characterizing the various contextual situations in which, today, violence may be interpreted as politics, and this, in my view, in one caveat of the paper. Despite this inconsistency, so to speak, the argument in khanna et al, around violence as a legitimate political grammar is also made sharp and clear, in various moments, such as in the assessment of the London riots:

> " ... if a 'meaningful' statement is not intelligible to those who claim to define 'politics', then a given act is stripped off of its political meaning – hence the possibility of the very idea of 'sheer criminality'. But there is something more profound that these riots call upon us to appreciate – it is the transformation of the 'ideological' in the contemporary moment, a moment marked by 'cynicism'. This form of power, Žižek calls 'cynicism'. Totalitarian ideology, he argues 'is no longer meant, even by its authors, to be taken seriously — its status is just that of a means of manipulation, purely external and instrumental; its rule is secured not by its truth-value but by simple extra-ideological violence and promise of gain'...

The (re-)appraisal of violence as politics may potentially trigger much discomfort among readers. I, myself, was quite unsettled when I first read the paper almost a year ago. This unsettledness, in my case, is to be retraced back to my own biography, as someone who entered adulthood and political life happily believing that violence was the midwife of history to later on critically (and painfully) revise the ethical implications and effects of ' justified' political violence. I bring this personal element to the discussion of the paper not to disqualify its reasoning on the topic, but as to make clear from where I speak. As discomforting as the notion of violence as a potentially legitimate language to express 'the political' may be, intellectual endeavours to explore this possibility cannot be curtailed in an era when "the political" tends to continuously lose substance, while state violence and economic exploitation are not exactly receding. It is decidedly provocative to once again

shake the premises of liberal political thinking and the surfaces of democratic governance that may be hiding the potentially totalitarian traits of contemporary states.

Yet, as my own biography sharply illustrates, rhetorical and philosophical arguments in favour of violence as a justified political grammar have been with us for quite a long time. In addition to the above mentioned Marxist trope of violence as the midwife of history, I can add the much older formula of "war as politics through other means" and the modern notion "just war" in which revolutionary commotions and de-colonization struggles of the 18th, 19th and 20th century have been grounded. A notion that continues to justify the Palestinian and other forms of resistance against occupying powers, including the civil strife in Assam examined by the paper, or even the Syrian rebellion against the Assad regime. Furthermore, and more important perhaps, given that states detain the monopoly of violence, this grammar cannot be said to radically differ from state language. Rather, violence as a political language is perhaps more precisely defined as an action that mirrors the state's mode of action. In fact, the conceptualization of politics without violence that has been crafted mostly in the course of the 20th century – although problematic in its potential of the harsh and violent games and realities of power - is more of a novelty than the justification of violence as politics. This distinction could, perhaps, have been made more precise and further explored in the paper in relation to both violent and non-violent modalities of 'the political' that can be identified in the contemporary landscape.

Khanna *et al* recognize that many forms of violence exist. When they state that violence is justified as politics, when it expresses a claim for justice, they are in fact resorting to another mode of articulating the classical notion of "just war". However, as I see it, this recognition and positioning do make things easier from an ethical point of view, because the multi-layered and paradoxical implications and effects of political violence are not so easily circumvented.

My own observation of the world as it is suggests that it is always very difficult to distinguish between 'just' from 'unjust' violence in the messy realities of politics and daily life, when we move beyond the identification and condemnation of the excessive use of violence by states[37] Furthermore, even when the state of the world requires us not to avoid the upsetting question of violence as legitimate politics, these ruminations should not dribble the troublesome question of cruelty that, in my view, is not disconnected from the perennial spectre of otherness. Who deserves to be beaten? Who deserves to be tortured? Who deserves to be killed?

7.6 Engaging Unruly Politics

Shahrukh Alam

7.6.1 The Ordinariness of the State and Politics as 'non-event'

It was the first week of March, 2012. The weather had turned that very day, so the afternoon was balmy. Elections in the northern Indian province of Uttar Pradesh were underway; that is to say, the votes had been cast, the counting would soon begin. The national party, in power at the centre, considered itself a fair contender in the province. Meanwhile, annual plans for different central ministries were being finalized; budgetary allocations were also being made for different sectors.

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[37] This apparently simple affirmation could unfold into a full essay. In a short hand, I can say that the Latin American experience of revolutionary armed struggles and their later "corruption", as it has occurred in Peru and Colombia or, more recently, the use by criminal groupings of political and justice discourses to justify their actions, shows that boundaries between "just and unjust' violence are shifting and highly. Blurred.

A senior officer at the Planning Commission, who looked after the 'Minorities' sector, was leaving a public function accompanied by two minions. A group of men followed in their wake. The senior officer greeted them in the lobby outside, but she quickened her pace, as she greeted, and went hurriedly out of the building. She left her minions behind, though, saying to them so everybody could hear: "these gentlemen wish to discuss something. Please see how we might be of assistance."

The two parties regarded each other with mutual bewilderment. Then a man said, "Who do we speak to about line items in the minorities' budget?"

"What about them?" said a minion and the man said, "We were in Uttar Pradesh mobilizing Muslim votes for your party and the party leaders made some explicit promises regarding scholarships for Muslim children. People have voted on that promise, so now, naturally, we'd like it reflected in the central budget heads".

The minion, whose name was Qadri, was outraged. "Sir, I work in government. I am a servant of the State, not of some political party." Then he breathed hard and continued, "you want the Planning Commission to include your promises to your voters in our line items? I am afraid we cannot be held accountable against your commitments. There is no *gap* between policy and political commitments. They are of a different order of things."

And the other minion, whose name wasn't Qadri, spoke thus: "there is a process to the plans, gentlemen. Steering Committees are formed, they sit in deliberations and they consult the experts and the stakeholders. Many Muslims were consulted, I assure you, before the draft chapter was written. Then it has to be endorsed by the full body of the Planning Commission and the Cabinet. It's not as simple as making promises in public meetings."

An elderly gentleman, who from the look of things was rather a veteran at such negotiations, explained patiently, "you will be held accountable against political commitments, your Ministers know that and I hope that they should want to translate some of the commitments into policies. I think they would, for they might collectively be unseated otherwise. In the event, you'd not be working for anybody."

As they left the building, feeling rather inexperienced, Qadri said to the colleague: "and what happens if they bloody lose UP? Should we then stall the budget, stop planning for the Muslims?"

As it turned out, Uttar Pradesh was, indeed, lost.

However, I shall not say what consequences, if any, it had on general policies and budgets for the minorities sector. That is a state secret.[38] Yet, one may be forgiven for thinking that governmentality and the governed rarely remain unaffected by each other.

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[38] Writing on the *difficulty of studying the State*, Philip Abrams made an insightful comment on the subject of state secrets. It reduces considerably the element of intrigue associated with them. He says:
"Any attempt to examine politically institutionalised power at close quarters is, in short, liable to bring to light the fact that an integral element of such power is the quite straightforward ability to withhold information, deny observation and dictate the terms of knowledge. [...] It seems only reasonable in the face of such elaborate efforts at concealment to assume that something really important is being concealed – that official secrecy must take the blame for many of the current shortcomings of both sociological and Marxist analyses of the state. But can it? Perhaps we have here only a spurious difficulty. So often when the gaff is blown the official secrets turn out to be both trivial and theoretically predictable. [...] Let us enter a note of doubt about the importance of official secrecy before going on." Abrams (1977)

7.6.2 Naming names

The state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is.

Abrams (1977)

The paper entitled "The changing faces of citizen action: A mapping study through an 'Unruly' lens" charts an impressive array of work and a depth of analysis, which I can neither match, nor take lightly. I can only do the unruly thing and hope to create a rupture here, a doubt there.

The paper conjured for me a mental image: that of a bounded space, yet one that keeps changing shape for it has soft jelly-like walls. Ruptures appear in those walls only intermittently and in that moment, political subjects seek to rush out in an act of 'unbinding': Also in a 'political' act. However, because it is only a fleeting image in my head, it does not make clear what happens to the bounded space in the aftermath of such exodus. Does it collapse into a non-space? What is the nature of the bounded space? Are new bounded spaces created with the exodus? Do the old – if it remains -and the new retain any kind of relationship?

I take heart from the fact that Sonia Corrêa seems to have experienced a similar derivation of meanings. She summarizes sections of the paper and uses words like "entrenchment of state power", "exit", " enclosures", "totalitarian traces", "they [authors] insistently search for novel, imaginative, daring ways of exiting out from the tight grips and deceits prevailing in today's political landscapes". The question to my mind is what lies outside of 'today's political landscapes' in the philosophical sense? What is its constitutive other?

The essay does not make loose claims. It cites and analyzes a rich tradition of scholarship on the subject of totalizing power.[39] It describes the sociology of power: how power acts on society, yet it does not speak sufficiently of what constitutes power, beyond the symbolic idea of the state. But "state here acquires an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice, as an illusory account of practice" (Abrams 1977).

What is 'political practice' actually like? How is power constituted – and contested and diffused – across political practice? Is there a centrality and a periphery of power within practice? Laclau and Mouffe (1985) conceive of power and politics as contested, rather than totalizing sites without respite. In this formulation, the site of politics also produces its 'other' and then extends itself to subsume it within, thus specifying, structuring, representing – sometimes reifying – the unspecified, the unstructured and the unrepresentable. Truth itself is subsumed. In the process, the original site of politics is also acted upon by truth: it too gets transformed. In this view of things, the transcendental is transformed into the immanent. More importantly, in this view of things, the 'political subjects' do not rush out making use of the rupture in the walls' membranes: for the very act of articulation, that there has been such a rupture and breaking through, would be a liberating act that requires an intelligibility and a language that belongs to the current political landscape. Truth may only be structured and conveyed in the language of power.

It might be worthwhile to discuss Partha Chatterjee's work here, which introduces the notion of and argues in favour of 'heterogeneous time' (Chatterjee 2004:3-26). He would probably

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[39] Corrêa provides a useful summary in her response. "These critical perspectives also detect and scrutinize the grips and ramifications of modern governmentality, deployed by both state but also by non-state disciplinary technologies of administration. Among other, these thinkers have addressed the difficult question of totalitarian traces, or temptations, which lurk beneath the liberal surfaces of democratic governance structures (as we do know the authors in this list include Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Felix Guatari, Jean François Lyotard, Edward Said, Gayatry Spivak among others)."

find certain other conceptions of political society based in 'homogenous time', where every citizen is equally located within a modern, liberal sensibility extraneous to realities. Chatterjee argues that while the former is an ethical dream comprising equal citizens, who form the nation-state, it is also very normative. The hard realities are different – people do not inhabit the same contexts, nor have the same sensibilities. They live in 'heterogeneous times' within a nation-state.

> "…They do not embody the trust generated among equal members of a civic community. On the contrary, they mediate between domains that are differentiated by deep and historically entrenched inequalities of power. They mediate between those who govern and those who are governed." (Ibid.:81)

These negotiations between the state and those who find themselves outside the regulated domain of civic space take place in the grey zone of suspended legalities. It is inhabited not by 'citizens' but by 'subjects' (not fully citizens in their underprivileged access to power, who come together to negotiate with the state usually on matters of governance and care).

How does the idea of 'exit' treat the notion of heterogeneous time? If the moment of revelation of truth were to result in a political act, whereby the actors left a 'political landscape', would the resulting new (as well as the old) landscape then operate in homogenous time?

The idea of politics being a contested site also forms an important part of Chatterjee's thesis.[40] Aditya Nigam (2011) says in this regard: "In my view, this formulation of Chatterjee's can be properly grasped only if we understand 'democracy' as the point where politics meets the popular, rather than as a specific set of institutions, rule of law and such like." (Nigam 2012)

Chatterjee further argues that solidarities are often formed by governments' own classification techniques of populations, which is done to identify targets for welfare policies (in most of the global south, welfare policies are directed at sub-groups that are considered marginalized because of their social economic contexts). This is 'political society', then – distinct from 'civil society', where claims are made on the basis of legal rights and normative citizenship status. Thus, the transition of governments from representative 'political

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[40] Though this was repudiated by Aditya Nigam in a lively debate between Chatterjee and him. The debate was to my mind an effort to discuss the limits of politics/populism. Nigam's challenges occurred during a most exciting conversation between Chatterjee and Nigam on *kafila*. The context was the Anna Hazare 'event'. Nigam (*supra.*) wrote: "What has been an eye-opener for me is the way a certain other Partha Chatterjee has emerged, as soon as his theories were brought face to face with the hurly-burly of politics.

It was this assessment that led Partha to write the essay, '**Democracy and Economic Transformation**' where, in some elliptical fashion, his own discomfort with popular politics found expression. That is when he extended the definition of 'political society' to say that it was the sphere of 'management of 'non-corporate capital' (of course, by capital and government). That Partha links his discomfort over the Anna Hazare movement {…}, is in my view, a sign of the fact that his idea of 'political society' lies in ruins, that it collapsed at the precise moment of its encounter with the popular.

My initial response to his idea of 'political society' was that it was a momentous intervention in political theory that inscribed the postcolonial (in a generic sense), at the heart of political theory. It now turns out, it is just another version of '**management of populations', where the initiative is always, without any disjunction, only and only in the hands of the governmental state.** If the Habermasian public sphere dreamt of arriving at consensus between rationally acting, disinterested subjects, Partha's political society seems to simply modify that now to define another arena – that of negotiated settlement. This negotiated settlement now seems to be another version of the Habermasian consensus – except that here, in postcolonial societies, governments arrive at it with unlettered people who are forced to live in different degrees of illegality and para-legality – in other words, with those who cannot be dealt with as rationally acting citizens. This settlement is not based on transparent, rational speech – since this population is incapable of it – but rather on mobilization, forming of associations and representation. In his early writings, Partha included in this domain not only the formal political domain of political parties but also social movements and non-governmental organizations, which provided the different forms of associational life and forms of organization and mobilization to these populations. Now, with Anna Hazare, clearly his definition of politics has been abridged to excise everything but political parties and elections."

communities' to 'administrators', which according to some has 'nudged people into indifference', has had very different results in India.

> "I have tried to think about some of the conditions in which the functions of governmentality can create conditions not for a contraction but rather an expansion of democratic political participation. It is not insignificant that India is the only major democracy in the world where electoral participation has continued to increase in recent years and is actually increasing faster amongst the poor, the minorities and the disadvantaged population groups." (Chatterjee 2004).

Chatterjee categorically states that such heterogeneity helps the transition into democracy, though not necessarily into modern liberal sensitivity (which according to him is not something to bother about in any case). He argues that each of the heterogeneities should be given an equal consideration in the imagination of the nation, rather than be considered a transient phase in their journey towards full citizenship.

This also raises questions about 'relevant' political action and about the possibilities of change within the ordinariness, the very everyday-ness of engagements between power and resistance.

7.6.3 The unintelligibility of the clown

The ideological function [of constructing the state] is extended to a point where conservatives and radicals alike believe that their practice is not directed at each other but at the state.
Abrams (1977)

The politics of creating a 'non-state' grammar might have the effect of underlining the illusion of the state (or power) as a complete account of political practice. On the other hand, while encounters between power and the governed may not necessarily be 'unintelligible', they do sometimes escape the notice of those who have the power to define what politics is, for their sheer unexceptionality.

How does the politics of assuming a 'non-stat(ist)' vocabulary help when one considers oneself a participant in the political processes? Neither is a 'non-stat (ist)' vocabulary always a vocabulary of 'non-power'. In fact, it might be useful to explore whether the politics of assumed unintelligibility has a relationship to privilege.

Corrêa has made a point about political violence actually being mirrored in the image of the state. I want to tentatively ask a similar question about the politics of unintelligibility, of creating one's own meanings and whether that is at all possible? Unintelligibility and opaqueness are primary vocabularies of the state and yet in their encounters with this opacity, people create meanings.(Das and Poole 2004). That to my mind is a political act too. But to respond in kind, in a non-state language, mirrors state acts. I am not suggesting that it is any less significant, only that it may not be as much of a disengagement with meanings, as we would like it to be.

I would like to offer that power, or the state, in fact, do *not* expect politics to be conducted in a particular language. In fact, power and politics thrive by accommodating new grammars and forms of resistance, by making them unremarkable. Neither does lying in the zone of the unremarkable take away from the radical potential of any grammar or action.[41]

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[41] In an example that is illustrative of an argument that the paper itself is making, the body was once again used as a site for resistance. Villagers from Ghogalgaon, in the District of Khandwa, a place in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, asked the state for allotment of fresh land to compensate them for their land that was submerged in the Narmada Dam Project. They were also protesting the raising of water levels in the Omkareshwar Dam (part of the Narmada project). As a form of protest, 51 villagers performed the 'Jal Satyagraha', which involved their standing in the rising water until the

My next point is again one that I wish to borrow from Corrêa's response. She cites Bensa and Fassin (2001) thus: "*our* [social science] *disciplines prefer to underline that the "event' is never one: the novelty is not so new, what surges is always inscribed in a historical perspective, in a cultural tradition, in a social logic.*" To this, she also adds the context of our mediatised universe and the resultant difficulties in judging any 'event'. Though, Corrêa explains that Bensa and Fassin offer useful guidance on how to avoid these traps, I would still like to ask a few related question. Having determined the 'eventfulness' of several unrelated incidents, how should social scientists (or development practitioners) respond to the politics of choice? How should they read the emphasis on any one event in the mediatized world? What are the relations of power to the choosing of an 'event'?[42]

7.6.4 The transcendental and the immanent

"I must record my somewhat old-fashioned skepticism about the spontaneity of popular mobilizations and reiterate the importance, so insistently emphasized at one time by Antonio Gramsci, of creating and consolidating the directing element in popular struggles that can make such movements a prelude to a politics of transformation."

Partha Chatterjee

The paper takes a view of state and power as totalizing presences; an event provides the moment of truth, when subjects realize the truth about power and unbind themselves from their social realities: "…break with routine and begin to empower themselves as collectives". Paradoxically, the act of empowerment through collective organisation, would impose new routines, structures and new realities. However, the paper seems almost to be wanting to avoid that paradox: the presumably new realities remain in the realm of abstractions of truth. The paper is silent on the nitty-gritty of organisation, the messiness of political action for transformative change. The transcendtal truth is never allowed to transform into the immanent. If it were to be so allowed, then even the totalizing meaning of 'truth' in the paper might be held up to scrutiny. After all, its privileging of an abstract notion of the 'good' is not explored here.

I have read little Badiou, so I speak mostly from a position of ignorance, but my impression was that he lays sufficient stress on revolutionary structures in the aftermath of the event. The event in itself is merely an opportunity, the rigorous work on structures – that might mirror structures of power, if even superficially – must follow (Badiou 2012).

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government submitted to their demands. They stood in the water for 17 days: "For the next 17 days, 51 people consistently sat on Jal satyagraha, getting up only to bathe, go to the toilet, eat the food served to them at the river bank, and to sleep for three hours every night on the river bank. We sat shivering in the freezing water in the middle of the thunderstorms and downpours of late August and early September. Our hands and feet developed wounds and bled, attracting droves of fish that attacked our limbs. Cobras fleeing from the rising waters ran into us. Three times, the waters reached nose level and we nearly drowned, the last time on 9th September at 5.30 p.m. on the eve of our victory. However not a single protestor, aware that perhaps this was the last moment of their lives rose to escape the waters." (Extract form 'Letter to the Editor', Times of India from one of the protestors. The letter was not published in the newspaper, but later posted on Kafila. http://kafila.org/2012/09/16/letter-to-the-editor-times-of-india-from-narmada-bachao-andolan/ visited on 23rd September 2012.)

The state had to submit to the demands of the protestors. At the same time, exactly similar protests, which started in the neighbouring village of Barkhalia in Khandwa District and Khardana in Harda District, were ignored. These protests had started only a few days after the first Jal Satyagraha, but by then the state had already 'normalized' it. However it could only be a topic of ethnographic study, what everlasting changes this novel form brought about in the responses of the state? Which aspects remained after its normalization?

[42] In the same week as the Jal Satyagraha, several events may have taken place in the political landscape. For instance, the jal satyagraha vied for airtime on television with another (more mainstream) protest in support of a cartoonist who had allegedly insulted Indian national symbols through his cartoons and who had therefore been booked for sedition. The latter series of protests challenged the very notion of sedition.

7.6.5 So whither 'ruptures'?

I agree that in contexts where power defines the discursive terrain, ruptures (or events) make the truth of structuration of meanings evident to the subject. It allows the possibility of unbinding 'meanings' from a given discursive field. However, I also feel that its application to the field of political action has to be more carefully charted. The 'unbinding' of politics may not necessarily require a consciousness that politics has been structured in say, a secular discursive field, it may not require a review of meanings. What it does require is an experience of truth within (possibly) the same discursive field.

To rephrase, if the state is to be critiqued from the perspective of what lies beyond it – the excess- then we must find a way for that excess to either form an approximation (or a substitute) for the state, or political action leading from the knowledge of that excess must still fold itself back into the state. They are both difficult propositions.

In this regard, The Patna Collective has been trying to explore 'faith' as a site beyond the 'universal', or as excess. Is it possible to unbind the meanings of 'politics', 'power', 'rupture', 'crises', 'event', 'organization', 'ethics', 'transcendence' and 'immanence' from the vantage point of faith? Is it possible for critique to escape the secular? We are lucky in that we have not set up for ourselves the goal of separating politics from the political field.

8 Final provocations

Akshay Khanna

8.1 Choosing a metaphor

In their classic text *Metaphors we live by*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson scrutinise the way in which we understand the activity of argument. The metaphor, (i.e. that through which we 'understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another'; (1980:5), that they identify is 'Argument is War', where claims are 'indefensible', weak points are 'attacked', and arguments 'demolished' or 'defended'. This adversarial metaphor, in my view, is outdated as a mode of thought, as a way of engagement and as a way of arriving at important questions and meditations. 'Try to imagine a culture', they suggest:

> '...where arguments are not viewed in terms of war, where no one wins or loses, where there is no sense of attacking or defending, gaining or losing ground. Imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently'. (Ibid)

This metaphor of dance, especially where there is no one choreographer, but rather simply a rhythm, or multiple rhythms and bodies entangled, playful yet determined in their entanglement, is far more appropriate as a way of understanding and experiencing both, the writing of this publication, and what it speaks of. This metaphor is closer to the invigorating activity of 'thinking together'.

It has been a pleasure, and a privilege to dance with the various interlocutors, each moving to a range of rhythms, rhythms we have heard on our streets, in our marches, on our televisions and computer screens, and in the (a)synchronicity of our political and academic spaces. I do not, in this closing comment, thus, intend to 'defend' the main paper, nor 'win' an argument, but rather to celebrate the diversity of moves and ruptures that the comments

have generated. Unruly Politics is, after all, an attempt at a praxis of collective thought where our contestations enrich each other, where we open up new and exciting questions, where we sometimes move together, and sometimes in dissonance. I offer here some reflections on some of the dissonances, and then highlight what to me have been the key issues, the main, thumping rhythms.

8.2 Taking stock

The work on this paper has been ongoing for more than a year now. Several claims and doubts have come to be articulated and contested in this time, even as the streets around the world continue to build on the sense of the 'tectonic shifts' that we began suspecting around the 'Arab Spring'. Some of these bring into question whether that sense of exhilaration was in fact misguided, soaked in an unjustified optimism that we were keen to experience. The incompleteness of the moment inaugurated at Tahrir square, is a case in point. Other developments in this period vindicate some of the arguments made in the main paper. The significance of the Anna Hazare moment, sullied as it was with the cynical politics of its birth, lies in the continuities between the mode of political action it engendered, and those that we saw on the streets of Delhi in December 2012, where outrage against sexual violence essentially shut down central Delhi for a period of 13 days. Similarly, the centrality of biopolitics, and the twinned concept of necropolitics is easily recognised in both the Delhi protests, and more recently in the protests in Shahbag in Dhaka where, uncomfortably, protestors are demanding death penalty for war crimes during the Bangladesh Liberation War. There have been some consolidations of modalities of political action, and some significant, if often imperceptible shifts in the very way in which citizen action is thought about, engaged and experienced.

It might not be an overstatement to say, then, that there has been the emergence of conditions for recognition of the truth that 'over and above their vital interests, human animals are capable of bringing into being justice, equality and universality' (Badiou 2012:87). And yet, we have learnt that the project of enabling Events to generate 'organisation', the long term articulation of this truth into our mode of being, into our political economies, and into our relationships in the world, is a difficult one, full of uncertainties and unpredictable challenges. The challenge is even greater when we consider the disparate nature of these Events, the specificity of the mix of immediate and urgent questions of 'vital interest', history and limitations of each of these articulations. It is in this context that Sonia Corrêa's suggestion that we need to think with the metaphor of the 'Rhizome' gains significance. Rather than attempting to glean a monolithic and singular shift in epoch, we must be able to weave together our abstractions from the events in all the historical, social, cultural and economic peculiarities of their happening, without reducing them simply to variants of one another or evidence of an original true politics. The direction for thought and action perhaps lies in our ability to recognise and act upon the continuities, and repetitions, but also the dissonance between them.

8.3 The Illegible and the Opaque

One of the ruptures that Shahrukh Alam provokes in her intervention goes to what, to me, lies at the heart of 'unruly politics' – the insistence of new languages for politics. New languages, by definition begin in unintelligibility. Alam's argument relates to, and challenges the notion of a radical potential of unintelligibility. This, she argues, mirrors the strategies of the state – opacity and unintelligibility are the primary vocabulary of the state. Alam's challenge, as she acknowledges, resonates with Corrêa's argument about violence being the language of the state. This resonates, ironically, with the critique of the very notion of revolution as that which seeks to take on the reigns of the state, thus reproducing the effects of power inherent in the structure of the state. I say that this is ironic because it is precisely

the attempt at speaking a language that does not reproduce the terms of the state that makes unruly politics powerful. We need to take a closer look at this.

There is a fundamental difference between the opacities of the state, and the insistence of the Unruly on a different language. The state's opacities function as mechanisms of disabling engagement. In Kafka's celebrated parable, 'Before the Law', referenced in the opening poem of this publication, it is this opacity that prevents the ability of the man from the country to recognise that the door was always open, that the door was for him to pass through. It is this opacity that disables the possibility of a true engagement with power. The illegibility of the clown, on the other hand, is specific to the language of the state. It is not an unintelligibility per se – the actors of the state are well in a position to understand the demands, the implications and the radical potential of the language of the clown. They are, after all, (and especially out of their uniforms), participants in social spheres outside of the relationship with law. But in order to engage they must abandon the language of the state. It is when the actors of the state cannot in turn insist on the language of the state that the clown's illegibility becomes a political act, rather than simply a moment of absurdity. The opacity of the state in other words, is a mechanism of disengagement – whereas the illegibility of the clown is a demand for engagement. In this sense, the unintelligibility of the clown is far from a reproduction of the mechanisms of the state. It is, rather, the production of something new, of a potentially horizontal realm of negotiation.

8.4 The difficult question of violence

Alam brings this argument above into dialogue with perhaps the most difficult challenge posed by Corrêa's piece – the question of violence. While this is, as recognised in the main paper as well, the most difficult question in the production of unruly politics as a normative project, I might hazard a theoretical difference between the violence of the state and that of the riot, or of the armed struggle. A defining factor of the violence of the state is that it is tautological. I mean this in the sense that the violence of the state attempts to affirm the monopoly of the state over violence. The state is violent not simply in order to quell a riot or an uprising – it is violent in order to establish that it, and only it, can be 'legitimately' violent. Opportunistically, it extends this legitimacy to its agents, to the militias it sponsors, to the corporations it sets out to protect, to the landlords who dominate the political establishment. But even in these extensions, its monopoly remains intact.

It is this point that lies at the centre of the movements and campaigns opposing the death penalty – to remove from the state this claim, in any circumstances, to legitimately cause death. This is where might begin to recognise the significance of death to the phenomenon of biopolitics. To risk a grand statement, the necropolitics of citizen action – where unruly action is violent (I would like to distinguish here between 'violence' visited upon property, and that upon other people), places a challenge to this second aspect of the violence of the state – it challenges the effect of monopoly over violence. This is quite different, even if connected with, the notion of the 'just war'. For this reason itself, the question of violence needs to be asked not merely in terms of the reproduction of the state, but in terms of the implications of this violence on *the place of death in the relationship between the state and the citizen*, and between citizens themselves. The violent intervention of the citizen then is a challenge to the necropolitics of the state, and the logics through which the monopoly over death writes itself into the centre of the regulation of life.

But there are two more points in relation to this question of violence that need to be stated here. First, to restate the insight that to engage *with* violence is not necessarily to engage *in* violence. One does not 'legitimate' violence by engaging with it and trying to understand it without first and foremost condemning it. The second point adds to Corrêa's critique – a critique of the celebration of violence, or of the demand for violence. To discuss this let me briefly get into the exhilarating protests in Delhi in December 2012.

The protests themselves have several markers that both resonate with and challenge the characterisations of citizen action offered in the main paper. For instance, while the first '*chakka jaam*', or road block at one of the nerve centres of the city was instigated by collectives that have been central to the women's movement in India for more than three decades, the space that was opened up was occupied, for the large part, by people who had no prior direct affiliation to the women's movement. The element of spontaneity, and simultaneously the evocation of idioms from the Anna Hazare moment, the sheer numbers of people and the diversity of voices left the media struggling to provide a coherent account of the protests. A few days into the protests, however, one of these narratives of coherence generated in equal part by the media and by right-wing, nationalist groups who spouted a patriarchal discourse of the protection of mothers and daughters, was that these protests were a demand for the inclusion of a death penalty for rape. Placards and large, professionally made billboards demanding death penalty appeared on the streets overnight. The slightly tempered version of this was the demand for 'chemical castration', a phrase that seemed to achieve a household circulation almost overnight. It must be emphasised that these were very particular, and not the majority of voices on the streets of Delhi, but nevertheless, dominated media circulations.

What we have here is conceptually and politically deeply discomfiting. It is a demand through a 'popular' voice, for a masculinist, aggressive state that must protect vulnerable women and children through the expression of a 'just' and extreme violence. This is the precise structure of patriarchy. There have recently been a spate of celebrations of executions of 'terrorists' and of those convicted of crimes against the state. The Indian state's power over death, in other words, is a matter of great joy for a right-wing nationalist sentimentality. But to see this form of nationalism articulating in the specific context of gender-based sexual violence, something that demands a careful consideration of exactly the problem of masculinity and male privilege was extreme even in these conditions. To the critiques of the strategy of violence, then, let me add an emphasis on its gendered implications. The problem of violence lies in its reproduction of patriarchal and masculinist notions of power. If we can conceptualise violence that does not do so, or that which unhinges power from its patriarchal frame, there might be more of a radical potential to it.

8.5 Fantasies of the unmediated event

Sonia Corrêa draws a distinction between the 'eventfulness' of the Event on the one hand, which I read to be the affects generated by the Event, and the mediatised production of the event as a spectacle on the other. It is, indeed, essential that we not be simply seduced by the spectacle in our engagement with Events and their conditions. The mass media functions on its own (il)logics, dominated by the economic imperatives of TRPs and the like. It typically picks up from an event that which is politically tantalising, and/or useful for some actors. In doing so it generates something of a different order. This brings to mind immediately the fact that even as the protests in Delhi mentioned above were as diverse as they were exciting, they came to be represented as being largely about a demand for the death penalty in cases of rape. And perhaps it is true that the distortions of the media are both inevitable and interpretable – we understand more about the materiality of media production, perhaps than we do about the Event in such circumstances. But in the same breath as she expresses this concern with the mediatised nature of our engagements with Events far away from us, Corrêa mentions 'cybervirality'. And it is at this point that the fact that we must recognise the significance of the emergence of new 'social media' (as though there is any medium that is not social), i.e. that media that is produced 'socially', that which not produced in the first instance by the media industry/ies, but rather by citizens themselves. We see here that the media itself is part of the Event – not simply something that instigates the Event from the outside, but might be an integral part of it. This is not of course to reduce 'activism' to simply 'liking' or 'sharing' someone's facebook update, or re-tweeting something particularly

transgressive. And neither is it to simply state that 'social' media somehow escapes the seduction of hyperbole or to deny that it does, also, produce something of a different order. Nevertheless, the conceptual difference is that the articulations in these media are internal to the Event and cannot be understood sufficiently through theories of representation. The implications of this conceptual difference on the way we do and conceptualise politics, I suspect, will come to be clear over the coming years.

8.6 Thinking with practitioners

Ute Seela's reflections on the main paper strive well to make the relevance of the unruly politics thinking to development practitioners, and to civil society formations interested in questions of social justice. There are two key questions in her contribution that I address here.

First is the question of the difference between the notion of unruly politics and the strategy of civil disobedience. Indeed this juxtaposition should be taken seriously and might add fruitfully to our conceptual development. In answer to this question – we might consider civil disobedience as a key element in unruly action, and not simply a type of unruly action. Civil disobedience is, for the large part, a very explicit rejection of a demand of the state or of law. It marks a relationship with law and places the question of justice outside of the law itself, emphasises injustice of the state and most significantly inaugurates or highlights that the question of justice lies outside of the law itself. It is a demand that the law and the state considered themselves as subject to, rather than as constitutive of social notions of justice and morality. And yet there is something specific about civil disobedience that must be distinguished from other aspects of unruliness – and this is the fact that it is a direct relationship with law – it is, in other words a recognition in negative of the imperatives of the law. In some sense, civil disobedience might be considered interpellation, even in a negative sense. There are other aspects of unruly action which are *irreverent* to the law rather than in opposition to it. Returning to Badiou's call to 'subtraction', the argument is that irrelevance is a distinct (and it might be argued, more powerful) mechanism than resistance. It is in this sense civil disobedience might be considered as a mode of action that relates to unruly action but does not exhaust it either strategically or conceptually.

A second question in Seela's piece, deriving from a practitioner perspective is this – what happens when unruly action turns ruly, and still the structures of power are unhinged? In this context, she asks:

> Can the current struggle to rescue gender equality as one of the ideals of Tahrir Square, for instance, be explained by unruly politics? Is the concept truly useful to better 'see change coming', or should one keep it at 'better understanding mobilization retrospectively'?

It is striking, and fortunate, that this precise set of questions forms the focus of a compelling essay in Alain Badiou's book of reflections on the recent uprisings. The book 'The Rebirth of History' (Badiou 2012) identifies and examines three types of riots: 'immediate riots' that do not containing within them an 'enduring truth', the 'historical riot' which does, which is the political manifestation of the Event, and the 'latent riot' which is a mode of transition between these two[43]. It is unfortunate that in creating this classification he creates also a normative hierarchy whereby the significance of the 'immediate riot' is seen simply in the potential it might offer for transforming into a properly 'historical riot'. Nevertheless, the insights in his

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[43] Badiou refers to the London Riots as 'immediate riots', as not containing within them an 'enduring truth', or Idea, as 'weakly localized' and spread by imitation rather than displacement. The 'historical riot', on the other hand articulates around an Idea, and is what emerges when an 'immediate riot' transforms into something political as such – Tahrir Square would be this kind of riot. The 'latent riot' is something of an in-between, where there is collective action around an Idea, but which is not yet that rupture of the historical riot.

chapter 'Event and Political Organisation' are useful and relevant to the important questions that Seela asks. In this essay, Badiou focuses on what he calls 'the labour of the new truth', or 'Organisation'. In this context, he suggests:

> "That the historical value of the Idea is first if (sic) all attested by the riot is certain. That the political value of the riot is attested by the organization which is faithful to it, and faithful to it because for it the riot affirms the Idea, is no less certain. (Ibid.:63)

In other words, the political value of the rupture lies in the process through which the truth gleaned in the moment attains a long terms existence, a relationship with the structures of power. It is by 'formalizing the constitutive features of the event', he argues, that 'organization makes it possible for its authority (i.e. the authority of the event) to be preserved'.

But what are these 'constitutive features'? Are they those ideological objects that are already intelligible as 'political ideas'? 'Democracy', for instance? Or are these 'constitutive elements' to include the actual micropolitics of the Event itself, the fact that those in Tahrir square were able to organise themselves and provide for food, water and the like almost 'organically'? Must it not include the dynamics of gender and sexuality that enabled the recognition of an 'inappropriate' touch as counter to the Event itself? Must it not similarly, include the fact that Midan al-Tahrir in those days held together not by an alliance of symbols of different religious and ethnic interests, but by a symbol of nation that transcended these? The question, it seems to me, is then not simply whether 'the new thing' has delivered on what is intelligible as an Idea, or towards the realisation of the Idea, however lofty. The question is whether this new thing is structured around the ways of being that became possible in the moment.

Perhaps it might be useful to compare this with the as yet 'unsuccessful' projects of the Indignados and of the Greek assemblies, where there is a seeming unity between the ideological projects and the very organisation of the political movement. But then, Tahrir Square instigated a regime change, and European states continue to be, or pretend to be, resilient in the face of unruly political challenges. But still, conceptually, it seems to me, this is the challenge – if one is to participate in the process of engendering 'change' that is first imagined in the moment of rupture, it is the organisation of the rupture itself that must be formalised – not simply the Idea that it articulates in the language intelligible to the emergent political establishment.

On the question of whether the frame of Unruly Politics is useful simply for sense-making retrospectively, or whether this might be useful in being able to see change coming, at one level I do wonder why development practitioners might want to see change coming. For instance, had we been able to 'predict' the Arab Spring, it is perhaps certain that it would not have happened. The significant aspect of the development industry is after all its structural entanglement with the political elite. This is not to say that there are no international formations that are also part of the development industry, but are more deeply committed to, and engaged with movements and struggles for justice. But the evolution of the Unruly Politics thinking as a mechanism for predicting or anticipating change, I feel, would be amiss. This is not to say that the signs of potential rupture are not already present in the pre-political. People do not simply wake up one day, simultaneously, to recognise an injustice. But these recognitions of injustice are felt, are experienced, are conceptualised and fought against in all sorts of ways. For the development practitioner to be able to see this, s/he will probably have to experience it herimself, or at the least be privy to the experience perhaps. This requires a genuine democratisation of the development industry itself.

8.7 When Chatterjee and Badiou meet

Corrêa brings into the frame an additional, and resonating, notion of the event – that of Gilles Deleuze's 'événement', an understanding that explains the disjuncture as one involving time and meaning. In the event in this conceptualisation, she suggests, 'what made sense until the present becomes totally indifferent or even opaque, and what makes sense now did not have any meaning before.' This conceptualisation, Corrêa juxtaposes with the argument that the event plunges us into an 'extraordinary regime of perception, sentiment and thought', extricating us from the banality of our immersion in our social, cultural and political environments. Shahrukh Alam's insightful intervention in this publication asks a question that resonates with this conceptualisation and which might appropriately instigate the end point of this comment. 'If the moment of revelation of truth were to result in a political act', she asks, 'whereby the actors left a 'political landscape', would the resulting new (as well as the old) landscape then operate in homogenous time?' It is not simply incidental that the opening poem of this publication, asks something similar – 'Is this that time?' I do think that for those of us who characterize ourselves as activists, or work in the field of Development – two modes of being defined by a fixation with 'good change' – this question of 'a time', as a period characterized by modes of being and action, and by the particular range of possible political imaginaries, might lie at the centre of our engagement with politics. But first, to lay out the landscape of Alam's question.

Alam's reference is to the differentiation that Partha Chatterjee makes between the 'empty homogenous time of capital' and the 'heterogeneous time of governmentality' in postcoloniality (2004:4-5). The first, Chatterjee draws from Benedict Anderson's argument – the homogenous time of capital is that which enables the 'material possibilities of large anonymous socialities being formed by the simultaneous experience of reading the daily newspaper or following the private lives of popular fictional characters', and thus, the nation as 'Imagined Community' (Ibid.:4). But, as Chatterjee argues, '…People can only imagine themselves in empty homogeneous time; they do not live in it.' (Ibid.:6). They live, instead, in heterotopia, where time is heterogeneous and unevenly dense, and where 'Politics' does not mean the same thing to all people. In such a heterogeneous and dense time, argues Chatterjee, one could easily show

> "...industrial capitalists delaying the closing of a business deal because they hadn't yet heard from their respective astrologers, or industrial workers who would not touch a new machine until it had been consecrated with appropriate religious rites, or voters who would set fire to themselves to mourn the defeat of their favourite leader, or ministers who openly boast of having secured more jobs for people from their own clan and having kept the others out..."(p.7)

Chatterjee is quick to point out that these times that are 'other' than those of the utopian notions of modernity are not remnants of a past, but are 'new products of the encounter with modernity itself'. This conceptualisation of a heterogeneous time is the starting point of Chatterjee's notion of the politics of the governed, and his re-invigoration of the idea of political society, which we have dealt with in some detail in the main paper, and characterised as the realm of democracy, of those who cannot or do not have access to the realms of constitutionalism, the marginalised, often living in the grey zone between legality and illegality.

In Chatterjee's latest offering, *Lineages of Political Society* we see a reproduction of this distinction between the idealised and the pedestrian (2011). This genealogy lays out a tension between the notions of '*Dharma'* and '*Niti'* – the first, broadly speaking, a conceptualisation of the expectations and imperatives of the ethical subject, or 'eternal rules that are eternally valid' and that are good for the community, and the latter being a closer translation of a politics of interest, as strategy, state-craft and policy. It was in the colonial

interface that the realm of *Niti* was erased, and at best denigrated to a realm lower than that of *Dharma*. In some sense the formal politics of the elite, resonating with the mode of politics in Enlightenment thought, was placed higher up in the hierarchy of political modalities as compared to the possible politics of the under-classes. The project of postcoloniality must then be to either to redress this hierarchy, its inversion or the very reframing of the realm of politics itself.

This points to what seems to me the most significant, and difficult point of contestation in this work. It is that between the notion of a politics based on a 'fidelity to Truth', one that, by definition is irreverent to, if not directly opposed to, a politics of interest, and a notion of the unruly being that which enables the negotiation of interests of those otherwise marginalised by formal politics. In theoretical terms this is something of a stand-off between the strand of thought we have pulled in from Badiou, and that which we draw from Chatterjee. The political implication of Alam's question becomes apparent here – does the display of a 'fidelity to truth' then imply that the resulting political landscape functions in homogeneous time? Do we then enter the realm of the modern utopia of (empty) homogeneous time? And by implication, capitalist time?

Perhaps there can be no 'return' to a homogeneous time – for it never existed on its own, but rather, primarily in the realm of the ideal, the realm of principles and abstraction. It can be argued that there has always been the co-existence of both heterogeneous and homogenous time. What is peculiar in these moments of rupture, in the instances of politics beyond 'interest' and in fidelity to the 'truth of power' glimpsed in the Event, is that those acting on such fidelity are precisely those expected to act in accordance with interest. We see, in other words, the emergence of a mass politics that cannot be characterised either as a politics of interest, or as a politics of abstraction. It is beyond these. It demands that we disable the underlying binaries through which the aesthetic moderns have been distinguished from the mute masses, where those who speak in terms of lofty principles of jurisprudence and justice are distinguished from the 'People'. It is no more simply the monopoly of lawyers and parliamentarians, journalists and academics to speak the language of justice. When the (putatively) mute masses unmistakably demonstrate their ability to create a language that is more true to the question of justice, the realms of politics have been truly 'democratised'.

And perhaps we do not have the languages, or the structures of thought, to conceptualise these new forms of politics. And it cannot, and should not be the project of the intellectual, or of 'civil society' to generate this language or structure of thought – we need to recognise that this new conceptualisation can only be possible through a new epistemology generated from the continuities between these multiple articulations of a new peoples' politics. My sense is that this is only possible through the concerted identification of, and dismantling of modes through which the power to 'define what politics is' has been controlled in a few hands and epistemologies. It is about consciously recognising privilege and forsaking it, or at best, committing it to a horizontal project of enabling the emergence of these new languages of politics. In the recent words of Noam Chomsky:

> 'People with power don't give it up unless they have to. And that takes work'
> (2012:51).

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