

Occupying a Square?

A Recognition Theory of Social Movements in the Age of Wealth-Induced
Political Inequality

Christopher Senf

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
University of Bergen, Norway
2023

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN



Occupying a Square?

A Recognition Theory of Social Movements in the Age
of Wealth-Induced Political Inequality

Christopher Senf



Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
at the University of Bergen

Date of defense: 20.01.2023

© Copyright Christopher Senf

The material in this publication is covered by the provisions of the Copyright Act.

Year: 2023

Title: Occupying a Square?

Name: Christopher Senf

Print: Skipnes Kommunikasjon / University of Bergen

Abstrakt til Ph.d.-avhandling

Occupying a Square?

A Recognition Theory of Social Movements in the Age of Wealth-Induced Political Inequality

av Christopher Senf

Ph.d.-kandidat, Universitetet i Bergen, Institutt for filosofi

Vår tid er preget av sosiale konflikter. Fra og med Den arabiske våren og de spanske Indignados i 2011 har vi sett et tilbakevendende globalt konfliktfenomen i form av alt fra Occupy Wall Street og den israelske sosiale rettferdighetsbevegelsen til Euromajdan-revolusjonen i Ukraina. Hendelser der folkemasser ulovlig slår leir på sentrale offentlige plasser (allmenninger) – hvor de fremmer sine krav og ber om strengere markeds kontroll og ekte demokrati – har utløst omfattende debatter om årsakene til og følgene av *Square Occupation Movements*.

Selv om det hersker generell enighet om at disse bevegelsene skal sees på som kollektive sivile ulydighetsaksjoner og forsøk på å revitalisere demokratiet, er politiske filosofer og teoretikere uenige om hvilke konsepter vi bør anvende for å forstå protestaksjonene og beskrive de aktuelle kollektive praksisene på en måte som fremhever de moralsk betydningsfulle aspektene ved dem. Det pågår en livlig debatt om *hvilke begreper som er best egnet til å gi mening til massive transnasjonale protester* mot dagens liberale verdensorden og global markedsøkonomi, og om hvilket språk som er nyttigst for å overbevise offentligheten om at slike kamper faktisk er for en god sak. Med nyetablerte slagord som «Vi er de 99 prosentene» følger et behov for fortolkning og kritisk refleksjon. Dette problemet gjelder spesielt for Occupy Wall Street, som ble anklaget for verken å uttrykke krav eller forslag til løsninger. Videre er det utfordrende å avgjøre om man skal støtte disse bevegelsene eller ei. *Kan de rettferdiggjøres? Hva er gode kriterier for å vurdere deres påstander og protestaksjoner?* Den parallelle fremveksten av høyrepopulistiske og fascistiske bevegelse viser at det haster med å avklare hva som skiller de berettigede sakene fra de uberettigede.

I min doktorgradsavhandling, skrevet som monografi, utvikler jeg en filosofisk metode som kan gi ny innsikt i disse problemstillingene ved å bruke et uutnyttet potensial i Axel Honneths anerkjennelsesteori. Jeg tar til orde for å skifte innfallsvinkel ved å analysere disse bevegelsene (med vekt på vestlige avleggere som Occupy i USA og Indignados i Europa) som flerdimensjonale kamper for anerkjennelse. Jeg rekonstruerer de normative påstandene som

bevegelsene uttrykker langs tre akser: 1) som *korreksjonskamper* for å forsvare gyldig anerkjennelse for sosiale rettigheter som tidligere var sikret, samt tilvente nivåer av verdsettelse og status/respekt; 2) som *inkluderingskamper* for å bygge et mer deltakende demokrati, ved å utvide dets mottakere og fordype prosessene for samfunnets anerkjennelse for likeverdig politisk handlefrihet, utover ren representasjon; og 3) som *endringskamper* som motsetter seg politisk ulikhet utløst av rikdom, og strukturell mangel på respekt av samme grunn, basert på økonomisk ulikhet. Dette er kamper som utkjemperes for å endre den normative ordenen i markedsøkonomien, der prinsipper om lønnsomhet og ytelsesrettferdighet er med på å oppheve politisk likhet, og derfor må begrenses av prinsipper som offentlig kontroll, velferd, gjensidig grad av respekt og demokratisk planlegging.

Med tanke på å analysere slike *square occupation movements* gjennom bruk av anerkjennelsesteori, er doktorgradsavhandlingen min organisert i tre deler. *I første del* utvikler og diskuterer jeg anerkjennelsesteoriens todelte tilnærming til sosiale bevegelser, bestående av en forklarende tilnærming for å gjøre deres protestaktiviteter forståelige, og en evaluerende tilnærming for å vurdere sosiale bevegelsers normative påstander om rett og urett opp mot anerkjennelsesteoriens prinsipper om rettferdighet. *I den andre delen* anvender jeg denne foreslåtte todelte tilnærmingen på vestlige *square occupation movements*, og fremhever de tre analysenivåene skissert ovenfor, samt argumenterer for at disse er berettigede anerkjennelseskamper. *I den tredje delen* går jeg tilbake til teorien, og diskuterer hvordan vi burde teoretisere tilfeller der for eksempel demonstranter reagerer på urett, men fremmer påstander som ikke respekterer andres menneskerettigheter, og kjemper for å velte demokratiet. Med andre ord, hvordan skal vi vurdere, konseptualisere, og undersøke skadelige protestbevegelser. Jeg avslutter doktoravhandlingen min med mer komparativt arbeid, som kontrasterer de berettigede anerkjennelseskampene til *Occupy et al.* med eksempler på skadelige protestbevegelser.

Min foreslåtte bruk av anerkjennelsesteori og systematisk analyse av samtidens sosiale bevegelser søker å leve opp til kritisk teori sitt viktigste løfte: å bidra til klargjøringen av «tidens kamper og ønsker», av berettigede og uberettigede protestbevegelser i en tidsalder hvor økonomisk ulikhet fører til politisk ulikhet.

Abstract PhD Thesis

Occupying a Square?

A Recognition Theory of Social Movements in the Age of Wealth-Induced Political Inequality

by Christopher Senf

PhD Candidate University of Bergen, Philosophy Department

Ours is a time of social conflicts. With the Arab Spring and the Spanish Indignados of 2011, a recurring global conflict phenomenon began to emerge, ranging from Occupy Wall Street and the Israeli Social Justice Movement to the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine. Events with mass occupation of central squares with illegal encampments—where protesters express claims in popular assemblies, while calling for control over markets and real democracy—have triggered extensive debates about the causes and impact of *Square Occupation Movements*.

While there is an overall consent that these movements should be seen as sharing civilly disobedient actions and the effort to reinvent democracy in public, political philosophers and theorists disagree over what concepts we ought to apply for comprehending protest actions and describing the collective practices in question in a way that highlights those features that are morally significant. In fact, there is a lively debate about *which conceptualization is suitable for making sense of massive transnational protests* against the fabric of global politics, the market economy, and liberal democracy, and which language is most useful in convincing the public about the justified cause and the positive value of such struggles. Due to inchoate slogans like “We are the 99%”, there is an urgent need for interpretation and critical reflection. This issue applies in particular to Occupy Wall Street, which were accused of expressing neither demands, nor solutions. Furthermore, it is challenging to determine whether to support these movements or not. *Can they be justified? What are sound criteria for assessing their claims and actions?* The parallel rise of right-wing populist and fascist movements shows the urgency of clarifying what separates justifiable from unjustifiable cases.

In my monograph doctoral thesis, I provide a philosophical method for gaining new insights into these issues, using the unexploited potential of Axel Honneth’s recognition theory. I encourage a shift in focus by analyzing square occupation movements—with an emphasis on Western offshoots like Occupy in the US and the Indignados in Europe—as multidimensional struggles for recognition, reconstructing three axes along which they express normative claims: 1) as *correction struggles* for defending valid recognition concerning previously assured social

rights and accustomed levels of esteem and status-respect; 2) as *inclusion struggles* to build a much more participatory democracy, extending the recipients and deepening processes of society's recognition for equal political agency beyond representation; and 3) as *transformation struggles* that resist wealth-induced political inequality and related structural disrespect, and as fighting for altering the normative order of the market-economy, as far as the principles of profitability and merit-based esteem undo political equality, and therefore have to be limited by principles of public control, social protection, equal respect, and democratic planning.

In order to analyze square occupation movements through the application of recognition theory, my thesis is organized into three parts. *In the first part*, I develop and debate recognition theory's twofold approach to social movements, consisting of an explanatory approach to make their protest activities intelligible, and an evaluative approach for assessing social movements' normative claims about (in)justice against recognition theory's principles of justice. *In the second part*, I apply this proposed twofold approach to Western square occupation movements, highlighting the above outlined three levels of analysis as well as arguing that these are justified recognition struggles. In the *third part*, I go "Back to the Theory", debating how we should theorize cases where protesters, for instance, react to injustices but voice claims that disrespect others' human rights, and fight to overcome democracy? Put differently, how should we assess, conceptualize, and examine harmful movements? Finally, I finish my doctoral thesis with more comparative work, contrasting the justified recognition struggles of Occupy *et al.* with harmful movement cases.

My proposed application of recognition theory and systematic analysis of contemporary social movements seeks to live up to the main promise of critical theory: that is, contributing to the clarification of "the struggles and wishes of the age", in fact, the justified and unjustified struggles of movements in the age of wealth-induced political inequality.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements *iii*

Introduction: Struggles and Wishes of Our Age..... *iv*

PART 1 UNFOLDING RECOGNITION THEORY’S TWOFOLD APPROACH..... ***1***

Chapter 1 An Explanatory Approach to Social Movements **2**

 1.1 Recognition Theory and Social Conflicts 3

 1.2 Analyzing the Concept of Recognition 9

 1.3 Three Conditions for a Positive Self-Relation 14

 1.4 Denial of Recognition and Social Suffering 17

 1.5 Individual Suffering and Communal Space 20

 1.6 Resilient Individuals and Collective Action 26

Chapter 2 An Evaluative Approach to Social Movements **31**

 2.1 Joint Normative Claim-Making 33

 2.2 Recognition and Justice 38

 2.3 Injustice and Methodological Negativism 46

 2.4 Justifiable and Unjustifiable Claims 50

 2.5 Concluding Remarks: Applying a Twofold Approach 56

PART 2 UNDERSTANDING AND JUSTIFYING SQUARE OCCUPATION MOVEMENTS..... ***67***

Chapter 3 Correction Struggles for Defending Recognition **68**

 3.1 Defining Square Occupation Movements 69

 3.2 Beyond Interest, Power, and Identity 71

 3.3 Struggling in Defense of Certified Recognition Norms 75

 3.4 Correction Struggles and Internal Critique 80

 3.5 Correction Struggles and Defending Achievements 83

 3.6 Correction Struggles and Resisting Injustice 86

Chapter 4 Inclusion Struggles for Extending Recognition **90**

 4.1 Inclusion Struggles and Radical Democracy 95

 4.2 Assembly-based Democracy and Prefigurative Politics 102

 4.3 Square Occupations and Counter Cultures of Respect 107

 4.4 Inclusion Struggles and A Movement’s Populist Politics 113

Chapter 5 Transformation Struggles for Reordering Recognition..... **121**

 5.1 The market’s internal imbalances 124

 5.2 The market’s external imbalances 126

 5.3 Market Imbalances and Misrecognition 129

 5.4 Recognition Theory and the Capitalist Market Economy 139

 5.5 Class Struggle Lenses and Being an ‘Organ’ of Protest Reflection 146

 5.6 The Multitude’s Struggle against Precarious Capitalism 154

 5.7 Boundary Struggles and Transforming Markets 160

Occupying a Square?

Chapter 6 Square Occupation Movements' Justified Struggle	169
6.1 Evaluating Occupy et al.'s Justifiability	171
6.2 Fraser's Criteria for (Non-)Emancipatory Movements.....	173
6.3 The Ehrenberg Retrospection: "Occupy is a failure".....	189
6.4 Critical Views: Ignorance, Anti-Semitism, and Inappropriate Means	198
6.5 Concluding Remarks: There is no success like failure	221
PART 3 BACK TO THE THEORY	227
Chapter 7 Can Struggles for Recognition be Evil?	228
7.1 COVID-19 Protests and Justified Denials of Recognition.....	231
7.2 Anti-Immigration Protests and Anxiety About Loss of Status	239
7.3 Right-Wing Populism and the Struggle Against Equality	251
7.4 Concluding Remarks: Not Innocent and Not Worthy of Support.....	268
Chapter 8 Progressive and Regressive Resistance?	272
8.1 Honneth's View on Social Progress and Regress	275
8.2 Progressiveness of Movements	282
8.3 Regressiveness of Movements	290
8.4 Concluding Remarks: Discontinuity and (Counter)Movement Dynamics	299
Conclusion: Learning from the Streets	308
References	317

Acknowledgements

Though philosophy is deemed a solitary business, this philosophical work, in contrast, would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many others. In fact, this doctoral thesis is the result of manifold collaborative processes. The ideas and arguments that appear here depend on the input and talks with my friends, family members, and colleagues, but also on the engagement of activists around the world fighting for greater justice, who thereby inspire me to write about the philosophy of social movements.

I want to express my profound gratitude for my supervisors and friends, Anat Biletzki (Quinnipiac), Jesse Tomalty (UiB Bergen), and Christopher F. Zurn (UMass Boston), for all their intellectual, practical, and social support throughout all these years that I was writing my thesis. I became a better philosopher and colleague with their guidance, and learned so much from them. Connecting Bergen and Boston during a pandemic is not exactly a leisurely stroll, but they helped me make it possible and always encouraged me.

I wish to greatly thank Lauren McGillicuddy (Malden, MA), for her careful editing and enormous commitment in the last months. Lauren joined this project in the end of 2021, and since she is on board, this thesis evolved terrifically. In retrospect, it feels like a godsend.

My acknowledgments are due to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Bergen for funding my project and supporting me in many ways all these years. I have learned a great deal from the members of the research group for practical philosophy and the critical theory colloquium at the department, with whom I have debated many of the themes treated here. The same is true for the philosophers at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where I presented my work, and from whom I got wonderful and encouraging feedback. The German-American Fulbright Program enabled my research stay at UMass Boston in the Fall semester 2021 and therefore also must be mentioned and recognized.

Many thanks to Omer Shatil and Stehn Aztlan Mortensen for supporting this project since the early innings. Also, thanks much to Emmanuel Renault, whose positive feedback in the final stages of this work gave me a motivational boost that I was on the right track.

Finally, it is my pleasure to thank my family and friends in Germany, Norway, Israel, and the United States, for their support during the last four years. I am particularly grateful to my partner Noam Eidelman Shatil. She deserves a lot of gratitude for being an inspiration and powerful force, and the emotional anchoring point in my life every day.

Thank you all. Tusen Takk. Toda Raba. Vielen lieben Dank.

Introduction
Struggles and Wishes of Our Age

“[...] flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street [...] It’s time for DEMOCRACY NOT CORPORATOCRACY, we’re doomed without it.”

—Adbusters, 2011a¹

Ours is a time of *social conflicts*—intra-societal disputes between groups who conduct civilly disobedient street actions to attain political goals, often expressed in social movement protests external to state institutions. One of the biggest and most fascinating conflict phenomena of the last decade began to emerge with the Arab Spring and Spanish Indignados movements of 2011, ranging from Occupy Wall Street and the Israeli Social Justice movement to the Gezi Park revolt in Turkey and the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine 2014. This was a global protest wave, characterized by mass occupations of squares with illegal encampments, where protesters express shared claims for dignity and justice in popular assemblies while calling for real democracy and for control over markets, inspiring millions around the world and inciting extensive debates about the causes and impacts of *Square Occupation Movements*.

In this monograph thesis, I provide a philosophical method for gaining new insights into these movements, using the unexploited potential of Axel Honneth’s recognition theory ([1992] 2012). I encourage a shift in focus by analyzing movements—with an emphasis on Occupy in the US and the Indignados in Europe—as multidimensional struggles for recognition, embodying the defense of social status, extension of political agency, and the normative transformation of the market economy. For clarifying what it means to philosophize about movements in this way, and why it is worthwhile to focus on cases that already have faded out, let us turn to two stories.

The Actuality of the ‘1% issue’

In the fall semester of 2021, during my Fulbright stay in the US, I had the opportunity to visit the exhibition “Activist New York” in the Museum of the City of New York on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. This wonderful exhibition explores the history of social movements

¹ Parts of the email sent by the Canadian magazine Adbusters to its readership that is seen to have begun Occupy Wall Street.

in New York City from 1600 through today, covering important episodes like the struggle for political and civil rights, for social and labor rights, and for religious freedom, climate justice, gender equality, and the struggle over immigration, drawing on many artifacts, images, and interactive features.² It offers a sweeping look at the causes and passions that underlie the city's history of mass protests, and how these mobilizations often incited both movement and countermovement dynamics. What struck me, though, was what was missing in this exhibition. There was no mention whatsoever of the Occupy movement—one of the largest protest mobilizations in US history, which had its start at Zuccotti Park, a stone's throw away from Wall Street.³ Addressing this issue in a talk with an exhibition guide, I learned that the last part of the exhibition is always updated with newer cases: for instance, with the movement for Black Lives. Further, the guide said that that it was unclear where to place Occupy after the movement faded out (e.g., in the part of the exhibition on social rights, or on youth and subculture), since its slogans, such as “We are the 99%” would have been inchoate. This is a reasonable reply, but in my view Occupy was more than just a single protest event. It was part of a global wave of mass square occupations in the aftermath of the global economic crisis of 2008—a panoply of local movements (e.g., Indignados in Spain and Greece, or Blockupy in Germany), connected through transnational networks, engaging in fierce protest in reaction to rescue bailouts for the banking sector of the market while social cuts were imposed on national populations. Ten years ago, these spectacular actions of disobedience shifted public debate towards issues that were long concealed under the veil of neoliberalism: Is economic inequality undoing political equality? Is capitalism consistent with democracy? What should an improved democracy look like? Their mantra of ‘the 99%’ re-popularized these issues that are, to this day, far from resolved. They engaged in intra-societal disputes that still move us, and made use of protest practices that we need today more than ever. To illustrate this, let us turn to the second story, a news story.

Back in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I read the Boston Globe from October 9th, and my attention was caught by an article entitled “Top 1% holds more wealth than middle class.” For the first time in US history, all middle-class Americans combined hold less wealth than the top 1% of earners. After decades of bottom-up redistribution, and a swelling gap between capital and labor income, we have reached levels more unequal than in the 1920s. In numbers:

² See details at the Museum's webpage: <https://www.mcny.org/exhibition/activist-new-york/> (last accessed August 4, 2022).

³ At its peak, the ‘Global Day of Action’ on October 15, 2011, the Occupy movement network was able to mobilize 1.5 million demonstrators through powerful social media campaigns. People were protesting on every continent, in 80 countries and in over 300 cities around the globe. (cf., Abellán *et al.*, 2012, 320 ff; Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 134 ff)

Occupying a Square?

60% of US households (77.5 million families with an annual income from \$27 K to \$141 K) now hold only a 26% share of US wealth, while 1.3 million families (with an annual income of more than 500 K) outpaced all other income groups and reached a stunning 27% share. (cf., Tanzi *et al.*, 2021) This looks like a minor disparity, but it becomes shocking if we focus on the details. During the Occupy protests, this gap was still around 20% vs. 30% in favor for the middle class. Yet major gains especially to the benefit of the super-rich (the 0.01%), who doubled their share to more than 5%, wiped out the middle-class' lead in only ten years. Globally, the figures are even worse (Gold 2017), leading some thinkers to say that we are living in a plutocracy (Krugman 2022).

In short, Occupy *et al.*'s criticism about the wealth and influence of the richest 1% is more realistic than ever. But it seems that not only their fears have come true; their criticism has become a key part of our collective consciousness as well. The Globe article is one example, but this shift in public awareness towards the issue of economic and related political inequality is particularly visible in the revival of Democratic Socialism, the rise of left-wing politicians like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, or the increasingly popular claims in European and US politics for free healthcare for all, higher taxes on the wealthy, debt relief for college tuition, robust social rights, and restrictions on the private funding of political campaigns—awareness that was initially imposed by activists, who voiced the issues by occupying squares and rallying citizens in public assemblies. The following quote shows the foresight and actuality of their struggles:

We will not remain passive as formerly democratic institutions become the means of enforcing the will of the 1% of the population who control the magnitude of American wealth. Occupy Wall Street is an exercise in Direct Democracy. Since we can no longer trust our elected representatives to represent us rather than their large donors, we are creating a microcosm of what democracy really looks like. (Occupy Wall Street, Ithaca GA, 2011c, 1)

Yet, though the Western square occupation movements unleashed political energy and raised public awareness about wealth-induced political inequality⁴, they are typically portrayed as “a failure” (Ehrenberg 2017), as a movement with blurry or “without any demands” (Dean and Deseriis 2012), just a “protest moment” (Calhoun 2013), or even as “status quo affirming” (Azmanova 2014). And here is where I draw the connection between the Museum of New York exhibition and the news story. Why is it that one of the most remarkable protest waves since the 1960s, carried by movements around the globe that

⁴ *Wealth-induced political inequality* is the thesis that economic inequality can structurally undermine political equality, as growing, but heavily unequally distributed wealth equals growing and heavily unequally distributed opportunities to impact public debate and decision making through various means. I debate this issue in further details in Chapter 5 of this work.

connected local citizens with structural, societal problems that have continued to be important, is usually judged so negatively, is so unappreciated and underrepresented in our institutions, museums, and public memory? This is where philosophy comes into play.

Making Sense of and Assessing Square Occupations

How we conceptualize and theorize social movements, and what we expect from their protests, is decisive. If we await effective uprisings with direct impact on policy-making and institutions, we will certainly be disappointed by the Indignados and Occupy and quickly forget about them. But if we approach movements in a less demanding way, as seismographs of swelling problems and negative societal trends, and as joint efforts to resist and solve injustices with experimental practices—a perspective I engage in—we have good reasons to evaluate the Western square occupation movements as more positive, seeing them as epistemic resources from which we can learn, draw political inspiration, and hope for long-term, positive social change.

Given the upsurge of movement protests around the globe in the last decade, there is a rise in debate in political philosophy and theory about these phenomena. While there is plenty of attention to ontological issues like the status of collective agency and responsibility (e.g., Schmid and Schweikard 2020), and ethical issues like the justifications for civil disobedience (Celikates 2010; 2016) or arguments for a duty to resist injustice (Brownlee 2012; or Delmas and Brownlee 2021), or to the role of movements in the achievement of justice and advance democratic culture (Cohen 1985; 2019), there is also increased attention to “movements as such” (Kolers 2016), and to the “social level of analysis” and “interdependence of description and evaluation” (Haslanger 2012, 16 f). In fact, there is an upsurge in debate about what concepts we ought to apply for comprehending protest actions and describing the collective practices in question in a way that highlights those features that are “morally significant” (Haslanger 2012, 17), and which language is suitable for making sense of the meaning of contemporary movements’ claims and assessing their actions (Niesen 2019).

My work is a contribution to this debate, and reflects in particular on the Western square occupation movements. While there is an overall consensus that these movements can be seen as sharing civilly disobedient practices and the effort to reinvent democracy in public, there is a lively debate about which conceptualization is most adequate for making sense of these massive transnational protests against the fabric of global politics, the market economy,

and liberal democracy (Volk 2018), and which language is most useful in convincing the public about the justified cause and the positive value of such struggles (Delmas 2018, 23).

Among influential philosophical approaches to Western square occupation movements are 1) works that show that these movements take a stand against neoliberalism, treating them as more or less successful forms of class struggle (e.g., Azmanova 2014; Dean 2014); 2) those that see occupying squares and starting processes of assembly-based democracy as the rise of a new form of sovereign people (e.g., Butler 2018; Volk 2019); and 3) works that analyze these movements as expressing a struggle over power (e.g., Mouffe *et al.*, 2016). However, I have concerns about the usefulness of these approaches. What is striking is, in fact, the lack of scholarship dedicated to the normative claims and justifications underlying these movements.

Square occupation movements are first and foremost characterized by morally guided claims for real democracy, and against the power of money in politics, rather than by clear-cut political goals, ambitions for power, or demands for a larger piece of the wealth pie. Yet, none of the mentioned approaches connect complaints about injustice, joint actions of disobedience in squares, and the onset of a crisis expressed in these movements for illuminating the meaning of their claims. Also, none of them offers sound criteria by which we can evaluate these claims. The parallel rise of right-wing populist movements shows the importance of illuminating what separates justified from unjustified cases. Given these research gaps, I make use of Honneth's theory of recognition for analyzing the multilayered normative claims underlying the Western square occupations movements, a philosophical analysis that has not yet been done in this way.

Theory and Concepts

Recognition theory's appeal leans upon the familiar notion of depending on the affirmation of others (persons and institutions) for one's positive self-relation in social coexistence (Honneth [1992] 2012, 320;⁵ Lepold *et al.*, 2021, 1). While respect, esteem, and love are seen as institutionalized forms of such affirmations—in fact, as enabling conditions for a free life for all—actions of disregard are seen as threats to that end. Crucial to my work is Honneth's argument that movement protest can be traced back to collective experiences of injustice generated by violated expectations of affirmation and disturbed social relations—i.e., denials of recognition—equipping agents with a motivational potential to resist these threats (Renault

⁵ Honneth, Axel. [1992] 2012. *The struggle for recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. In the following referred to as (Honneth 2012).

2019, 33 ff) and to act jointly against a perceived unjust state in order to satisfy disregarded claims in the quest for future recognition. This theory's strength lies in taking up ordinary feelings of outrage and using them to encourage explorations of concepts by which to identify the harms that occasion this outrage. While being empirically informed, it offers philosophical guidance to a morally led formation of movements and seeks to anchor its assessments in the actions of victims of injustice (Honneth 2012, 113).

Thus, the recognition struggle approach meets essential features of critical theory. It is epistemically and politically situated, resting on the assumption that current societal conditions are unacceptably unjust. It is focused on the aims, actions, and wishes of those movements with which it shares a commitment—though not an uncritical one—to understand and remedy such injustice, trying to contribute to the self-understandings and questions of both the movement as a whole and its participants, and to give a voice to their struggles (Haslanger 2012, 22). On that view, recognition theory is an intellectual means to practical emancipation (Christ *et al.*, 2020, x) and could be evaluated, in part, by whether movement activists and protesting allies find it instructive and useful; whether it contributes to their quest of and related struggles for justice (Haslanger 2012, 26). This view is also reflected in Honneth's own understanding, when he argues in his doctoral thesis *The Critique of Power* that critical theory has a specific “practical realm of application,” namely, that it is part of a “dialogical” and “cooperative” process with oppressed classes to interpret social reality in light of experienced injustice, and with the clear “interest to abolish” this injustice (Honneth [1989] 2014, 25).

But what is a *social movement*? In chapters that follow, I discuss this question at length (e.g., 1.6). Briefly, however, my view is that movements are expressions of social conflicts.⁶ While being anchored in collective experiences of injustice, they express deep political disagreements and controversial processes of negotiation over such injustice in society, being, in fact, intra-societal group conflict (Tropp 2012) between the (mis)recognized and the (mis)recognizer. Those who view themselves as victims of injustice and without sufficient means to make their voices heard organize in a collection of networks and form movements to mobilize political leverage to advance objectives; collective agency sustained by shared beliefs and solidarity. Movements are characterized by long-term campaigns of joint claim-making and protest action in public—external to formal state channels—over

⁶ The term can be traced back to the Latin word *confligere*. It means to dispute or beat together. Also, it means to collide or be involved in a quarrel. It addresses an interactional relationship of contestation, in which at least two entities participate, and it highlights a collision of claims (Imbusch 2008). There are interpersonal conflicts, crises between states (international conflicts) and inside corporations (intragroup conflicts), or emotional struggles within individuals (intrapersonal conflicts).

Occupying a Square?

contested objects (e.g., wages, rights, and liberties), through non-institutionalized political means, and with regard to targeted agents (e.g., cooperations, or government institutions) from whom they seek recognition of their claims⁷ (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 145 ff). These are expressions of social conflicts, since they are joint efforts to enforce claims (e.g., changes of norms, practices, institutions) against the opposition of others, while also appealing to bystanders or seeking for allies. In fact, movements disrupt ordinary decision-making and understanding of majority-oriented politics. They disturb daily routines and public spaces, shift media attention, and generate costs for participants and society. They often use civil disobedience, touching the edge of legal and illegal means, or even turn into militant acts of resistance: for instance, in violent dynamics with the police forces.

Despite these clarifications, a careful reader will notice that in the course of the thesis I use the concept of movement interchangeably and intertwined with protest, resistance, and, in particular, struggle. However, I always focus on sustained collective efforts (not just individual opposition or online petitions) to resist injustice through non-institutionalized, political means in the context of public protest. To be clear, this work does not seek to explore the impact of social movements and events that took place in the past, but to examine and assess collective expressions—what protesters say and do—in response to shared experiences of injustice.

Structure of this Work and Overview of its Chapters

In order to analyze square occupation movements like Occupy and the Indignados through the application of recognition theory, this work is organized into three parts and eight chapters.

In the first part, I develop and debate recognition theory's twofold approach to social movements, consisting of an explanatory approach (Chapter 1) to make their protest activities intelligible, examining the motivating reasons and morally-led justifications to rise up, and an evaluative approach (Chapter 2) for assessing movements' normative claims about (in)justice against recognition theory's principles of justice. This part indicates my admiration of Honneth's theory, yet it likewise illuminates my own take upon it. My proposed twofold approach not only clarifies the division of labor and interdependence of explanation and evaluation, but also how we might analyze social movements with special emphasis on two types of collective expressions, namely, negative-evaluative claims about experienced

⁷ Thus, movements are social in the sense that they are not initiatives or organs of state institutions, but their networks and practices are rooted in the needs and wishes of the civil society, and they express political controversies within that society.

injustice as well as positive prescriptive claims to some kind of future treatment, entitlement, or method of ending injustice. Since both types can be right or wrong, these distinctions improve our abilities to distinguish between movement protests in reaction to either justified or unjustified denials of recognition, and between justified or unjustified demands for future recognition. Importantly, they can help us to avoid attaching ourselves to struggles that are merely imitations of what we really value.

In the second part, I first apply the proposed explanatory approach to Western square occupation movements. I examine them as struggles for recognition, reconstructing three axes along which they voice normative claims: 1) as correction struggles (Chapter 3) for defending valid recognition concerning previously assured social rights and accustomed levels of esteem and status-respect; 2) as inclusion struggles (Chapter 4) to build a much more participatory democracy, extending the recipients and deepening processes of society's recognition for equal political agency beyond representation; and 3) as transformation struggles (Chapter 5) that resist wealth-induced political inequality and related structural disrespect. The third axis is at the heart of this examination. I argue that Occupy *et al.*, far from being without political direction, should be understood as fighting for altering the normative order of the market-economy, revitalizing Polanyi's concept of a struggle between free-marketers and social protectionists: one that breaks out where crisis-torn capitalist markets hit social welfare, equal citizenship, and democracy.

Later in the second part, I apply the evaluative approach to Western square occupation movements, arguing that these are justified recognition struggles (Chapter 6), since protesters voiced justified complaints about social disenfranchisement when faced with austerity politics, and sought to not be weakened in accustomed levels of social respect and wage-based esteem. Also, they expressed justified claims about mass experiences of political exclusion during the post-democratic handling of the Great Recession, and sought to extend each one's chances to identify as political agents that have an equal voice through facilitating grassroots activism, and active involvement of people in democratic assemblies. As a last dimension, I will argue that they are justified since they criticized systemic disrespect for equal status, induced by wealth inequality, and sought to foster respect for each one's autonomy in civic life and politics through making the market economy more publicly controlled and socially embedded. Also in chapter 6, I debate in detail critical views of Occupy *et al.* such as those that charge these movements with being unsustainable, undemocratic, and domination-enhancing (Fraser *et al.*, 2018), or those that criticize them for their ignorance of further forms

Occupying a Square?

of inequality, for their alleged antisemitism, and for their use of inappropriate means (see section 6.4).

The main aim of the second part is to show that if we use recognition theory's twofold approach, we will not neglect the positive value of Occupy and Indignados, and instead assess their fight against social disenfranchisement, political exclusion, or wealth-induced inequality as justified movement struggles against serious and ongoing injustices that deserve support and merit a positive place in our public memory. Moreover, I seek to show that a recognition theory conceptualization is promising in making sense of the practices and slogans of the modern-day movements, providing an answer to the "nearly hysterical question" (Deseriis and Dean 2012), what they did, and what could they want.

Part two shows, on the one hand, that the Western square occupations should be in part seen as an ends-in-themselves for the participants, as they these are "counter-cultural spaces of compensatory respect" (Honneth 2000, 127). On the other hand, it illustrates that recognition theory's twofold approach overcomes those theorizations that reduce their protests to forms of clashing economic group interests, to typical antagonisms of representative politics, or those that use a binary image of a populist revolt against elites. In fact, we can analyze these square occupation movements in a much more differentiated way, illuminating how they voice claims along multiple axes and contain defensive and reformist, as well as transformative aims.

In the *third part*, I go "Back to the Theory", debating evaluative, conceptual, and explanatory issues arising from analyzing Occupy *et al.* as justified struggles for recognition. I ask: how should we theorize cases where protesters, for instance, react to injustices but express claims that disrespect others' human rights, and fight to overcome democracy? Put differently, how should we assess, conceptualize, and examine harmful movements? This issue is relevant since it picks up a blatant research gap in recognition theory. Also, as the long decade after the breakdown of the world financial markets 2008 f. is also characterized by distinct expressions of collective critique, various theorists (e.g., Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 1) pointed out that the existing anti-capitalist sentiment and feelings of societal instability do not automatically incite positive protest mobilizations, but also led to a renewal of nationalism and the election of Trump in 2016 (cf., Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, viii). In light of this, I ask: can recognition struggles also be evil? I outline an answer to this question (Chapter 7), by applying recognition theory's twofold approach to three case studies—to Corona protests, anti-immigration movements, and right-wing populist movements—arguing that we can explicate at least three accounts for the rise of such protest claimants: 1) justifiable denials of

recognition, 2) anxiety about potential loss of status, and 3) resistance to the claims of others for universal recognition and equality.

Yet, such conceptualizations of these movements as recognition-led struggles, in fact, as joint reactions to violated recognition-expectations, do not automatically offer justifications. Quite the opposite. In contrast to those philosophers that amplify these protesters' rhetoric of victimhood (e.g., Fukuyama 2018), I will show that it is important to assess movements against the justifiability of the actual or future recognition denials the activists are complaining about. While testimony should be taken seriously, complaints from those who feel maltreated cannot be self-validating, as they might reflect attention-seeking and can be exaggerated. Instead, we must assess whether claims are justifiable against recognition theory's principles of justice.

Finally, I will finish with more comparative work, contrasting the justified recognition struggles of Occupy *et al.* with harmful movements (Chapter 8). To do this, I scrutinize if the conceptual couplet of "progressive" and "regressive" is politically useful and complements my proposed evaluative approach to movements as outlined so far. In order to clarify my view, I first look at how Honneth himself conceives progress and regress within recognition theory. Then, I recap and compare the explanatory, evaluative, and conceptual findings of my analyses of both the square occupation movements and my illustrative case studies of evil struggles for recognition. Based on this, I will outline the strengths and weaknesses of reframing justified and unjustified recognition struggles along the lines of progressiveness and regressiveness.

Interest and Ambition of this Work

The objective of this work is manifold. In general, I wish to show that philosophy matters for dealing politically and within our civil societies when addressing movements—because the way we conceptualize and the language that we choose to apply to their protest actions influences our assessments and justifications of them, and thus our willingness to reject, support, or be indifferent to such practices and protests. In particular, this is a call to make use of Honneth's recognition theory as one philosophical tool for this endeavor. By developing and applying my own twofold recognition theory approach to the Western square occupation movements, I show the unexploited potential of his theory in making sense of and assessing contemporary cases. Furthermore, my proposed application of recognition theory and my systematic analysis of these movements—an innovative project that has not been undertaken

Occupying a Square?

so far—seeks to live up to the key promise of critical theory: that is, contributing to the clarification of “the struggles and wishes of the age” (Marx 1843a, 346), in fact, the justified and unjustified struggles of movements in the age of wealth-induced political inequality. Not since the interwar period have people in Western societies felt themselves so exposed to the unpredictability of our economic order. There is a broad sentiment that the fabric of social integration is damaged, a sentiment that can lead to the evolving of protests of various colors. Considering that Occupy and Indignados were the onset of a movement trajectory that we are still in, namely, the global struggle against structural disrespect for equal political status, and over the social embedding and democratization of the market economy through new experimental mass practices, I want to bring awareness of the movements that launched this unruly era of protests to a new generation of students, activists, and theorists. Thus, my work is a work of emancipation, guided by the hope that future protests will be more successful if we recognize that previous uprisings had shared goals, and that we can learn lessons from them. Recognition theory helps us to go beyond theorizing movements as succeeding or failing in reaching certain goals and quotas: instead, we can understand that there is nuance in what we consider a win for a movement and there is nuance in progress. Most importantly, it helps us to not only decode, make sense of, and critically evaluate movements, but also to learn from the streets, listening to protesters’ claims as we try to grasp the meaning of new types of political struggle generated by the harm engendered by an unregulated economy and the urge of capitalist markets to undo all social restraints; a struggle where we from time to time may flood into the major squares, set up tents and peaceful barricades, act together with millions of others in all continents, and stop living business-as-usual lives to show our governments and society at large that we need to change everything, since it is “time for democracy not corporatocracy”. (Adbusters 2011a)

PART 1
UNFOLDING RECOGNITION THEORY'S
TWOFOLD APPROACH

Chapter 1

An Explanatory Approach to Social Movements

“... the self-clarification (critical philosophy) of the struggles and wishes of the age. This is a task for the world and for us.”

—Karl Marx, *Letter to Ruge*

In this chapter, I will clarify my view on *Honneth's theory of recognition*, beginning with a question central to this issue: Why is this theory a promising approach to examining mass social movements? One could argue that the social and political sciences alone should deal with this topic, since they have established a differentiated research field on movements, providing a wide range of empirical approaches (e.g., della Porta and Diani 2014; Snow *et al.*, 2018). But while empirical research primarily informs us why and how such phenomena emerge—examining their societal causes and contexts, political strategies, resource mobilization, opportunity structures, and the framing of protest campaigns (e.g., Martin 2015, 35 ff)—there is still a challenge in understanding what social movements exactly aim at. Due to often-inchoate slogans and demands such as “We are the 99%!” (Adbusters 2011a), or “We are worth it!” (Verdi 2019), there is a lively debate about how to make sense of such protest activities, and, more particularly, which concepts are best suited to understand their relation against the fabrics of globalized market economy and liberal democracy (e.g., Celikates and Höntzsch 2019; Volk 2019, 112). Hence, it is also challenging to decide whether one ought to support social movements. Since they are able to choose among diverse vocabularies of varying ambition and refer to protest narratives that have strategic and justificatory dimensions (Niesen 2019), there is an urgent need for interpretation, evaluation, and critical reflection of their joint actions beyond mere empirical descriptions (Volk 2018, 1).

I claim that social and political philosophy complement the empirical research on movements because they can help avoid the following shortcomings: a) Empirical research typically studies social movements from a bird's-eye view, overlooking the morally guided justifications of protest agents' normative claims that underlie their demands; b) Consequently, there is no theory of social movements that undertakes the normative enterprise of separating justifiable from unjustifiable activities: differentiating, for instance, between progressive and regressive movements. These issues trigger philosophical questions: a) What is the meaning of social movements' claims and practices (Young 2011, 7), and b) are those

claims and practices justifiable (Renault 2019, 56 ff)? Answering these questions requires the exploration of normative implications, ethical reasoning, and the analyses of concepts, as well as the application of social and political theory. This is just the kind of task for which recognition theory (Honneth [1992] 2012) is well suited. Combining moral psychology and social philosophy, this theory offers both a solid basis for understanding the meaning of demands, and sound criteria to evaluate movements. It offers a) *an explanatory approach to the emergence and meaning of movements' activities*, conceiving these massive inter-societal conflict phenomena as joint reactions against shared experiences of injustices due to violated expectations and disturbed intersubjective relations, as well as b) *an evaluative approach to the moral grammar of movements*, exploring the normative claims underlying their political activities. Recognition theory takes up widespread feelings of moral outrage and encourages explorations of concepts by which to identify the harms that occasion these feelings (cf., Zurn 2015, 57). It therefore offers philosophical guidance to the morally led formation of social movements—seeing their protest as a response to such feelings—and is able to anchor its assessments in the actions of those agents who are victims of injustice. Rather than being just an observer of movements' activities, a recognition theorist is positioned in solidarity with those who oppose injustice (Ingram 2018, 78), is “taking sides” (Renault 2019, 5), and aims to contribute to positive changes as a “helpmate” (Zurn 2015, 68).

Recognition theory provides explanatory resources for making sense of movements' activities and normative resources for evaluating their justifiability. In this part of my thesis, I will illuminate the division of labor in the theory's twofold approach as well as its usefulness for philosophically analyzing contemporary movements. I start with debating and refining my account of recognition theory's explanatory approach, referring to the following background criteria: 1) how well it explains the emergence of movements, and 2) how well it accounts for their aims. In chapter 2, I will discuss its evaluative approach to movements, assessing 3) the sorts of criteria it offers for evaluating the justifiability of collective protest activities.

1.1 Recognition Theory and Social Conflicts

What are the origins of social movements, and which approaches, and underlying concepts ought we apply to these phenomena for grasping the meaning of their activities, and for evaluating them? There are two influential responses to this question. One idea claims that groups struggle against each other in order to secure their stake in scarce material resources. This idea is at the heart of the tradition of viewing *social movements as forms of conflicting*

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

interests, which can be traced back to Hobbes' hypothesis of a "war of all against all" in the state of nature (cf., Noetzel 2002, 33 ff). The English philosopher and author of *The Leviathan* (Hobbes 1651) might be most famous for his social contract theory, though he can also be seen as laying the ground for conceiving social interaction as a strategic competition between agents in politics and the market, mainly guided by (self)interest-based choices. Conceiving societal interaction in this manner became particularly influential in research on movements' activities (Zurn 2015, 55), considering the lasting impact of Orthodox Marxism (e.g., Kautsky 1924) and its method of tracing all movements' struggles back to expressions of conflicting class-interests. Undoubtedly, it is illuminating to put the economic interests of social groups at the center of understanding the meaning of social movements' conflict activities, since arguably all aim at sufficient conditions of self-preservation. And these conditions are continuously threatened by economic deprivation caused by maldistribution, producing a recurring fight over the allocation of material resources.

Another popular way to approach movements is as a *strategic struggle for power*. In this context, power is seen as a position of authority in society, like the government, in which agents are capable of enforcing aims against opponents. Power-based approaches can be traced back to Gramsci's interpretation of Machiavelli's idea of a pragmatic leader, seeing the means to gain and preserve power as achieving one's ends (Kersting 2008, 748), and seeing politics only as a strategic game over hegemony by all means necessary (Machiavelli 1532). For Gramsci, societal change can be seen as a shift in power in both political relations and cultural dominance, as the result of a struggle in which groups face each other in coalitions (Gramsci 2002, 1281 ff). Drawing on these ideas, later ideas—such as agonistic and radical democracy theories—employ Gramsci's concept of power struggle, highlighting a lasting conflict between the popular street politics of governed agents against the governmental rule of elites as the origin of movements (Laclau and Mouffe 2015, 98 ff). Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and others (e.g., Rancière 1999), can be seen as representatives of this view. They locate an agonistic struggle over hegemony among rival groups at the heart of (not institutionally pacified) politics (cf., Laclau and Mouffe 2015, 163).

It is tempting to follow these approaches. However, I contend that they have essential shortcomings when applied unilaterally. The *interest-based approach* can fail to provide a persuasive case for how to evaluate claims external to socioeconomic context or struggles over distribution (e.g., claims concerning race or gender equality), while the *power-based approach* often does not clarify what separates justifiable from unjustifiable actions, idealizing the struggles of the powerless against the powerful and the urge to disrupt authority

(Volk 2018, 12). Both approaches underrate the broad range of motivations and justifications of agents who participate in movement protest, which often cannot simply be linked to clear group interests or ambitions for power. They pay too little attention to the fact that agents often protest for equal rights, freedom, or democracy rather than for influence and wealth. Instead of subsuming movement protests under stiff, inflexible concepts, we should favor those approaches that start by listening to the claims of protesters and use interpretation as a path of social and political philosophy as well as moral theory, shedding light on their underlying meaning and value.

Another promising way to approach movements—the one I will engage in—is as an expression of *moral outrage and indignation*, depicting their activities as an urgent reaction to shared experiences of injustice. This notion is at the heart of the *recognition-based approach*, believing that movements arise if moral values and norms thought to be valid are not fulfilled in reality, e.g., do not result in actual societal interactions. Movements' conflict activities then arise in reaction to a perception of violated or non-fulfilled expectations. This approach can be traced back to Hegel's idea of the recognition-led struggle between master and servant, where people begin to rise up as they realize that individual freedom within our coexistence requires mutually accepting one another as equals, alongside legal protection that guarantees a robust social status for each without depending on the will of others (Honneth 2012, 54 ff, 230 ff).

Axel Honneth, along with Charles Taylor (1994) and Nancy Fraser (2017), offers one of the most influential theories of recognition (cf., Thompson 2006). His critical theory treats a society as a normative order that institutionalizes the distribution of *respect*, *esteem*, and *confidence*, reflecting those valuations and norms that are legally valid, and assuming that most people within a society see these as legitimate (Honneth 2015c, 208 ff). While this tripartite recognition *scheme* is understood as necessary for a free life for all, *actions of disrespect* such as the denial of rights are understood as threats to that end. They are experienced as damaging personal integrity and as violations of expectations for recognition (Jütten 2017), and generate a motivational potential to fight such threats (Renault 2019, 33 ff). This idea is vital for Honneth's theory. Central to his argument is that a movement's conflict activities can be traced back to a denial of recognition. This equips agents with reasons to act against an unjust situation, in order to find a solution and satisfy their disregarded, morally-guided claims in a quest for future recognition. (Honneth 2012, 113). On this view, social movement protests can be understood as a form of moral outrage and their claims can be seen as having a moral grammar (Honneth 2010, 265).

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

However, some have criticized Honneth for reducing movements to mere expressions of moral (symbolic) conflicts without any real impact on societal institutions, and claim that he would ignore—unlike the two other approaches—the power and economic relationships in society that trigger uprisings (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 21 ff; McNay 2008; Zurn 2015, 84 f). In fact, he seems to ignore that power also is a crucial aspect of movements' protests. Most movements combine moral claims with profound opposition to those whom they accuse of abusing power, ignoring peoples' needs, and oppressing minorities. Movements can usually be seen as fighting against power, as activists try to put an end to relations of suppression (cf., Laclau and Mouffe 2015, 191). Further, these uprisings typically contain a struggle over power, as it is often only possible to enforce claims by winning public office, by building new coalitions, or by pushing opponents to accept terms and create a new balance of power. For example, labor movement strikes push employers to negotiate new terms of payment. As another example, feminist movements fight for new legislation to enforce equality through the sanctioning force of legal norms. Hence, the dimension of power seems crucial and should not be ignored (Haslanger 2020, 39—43). The same seems true for the dimension of economic interests. In fact, vast economic inequality, and the call of low-income agents for a larger share from wealthy agents is a key issue of our time. And labor movement or democratic socialist protests could surely be examined as a group conflict over distribution of wealth in favor of workers' interests. Given these dimensions, the question arises whether a theorization of movements as forms of moral conflicts misdirects our focus; perhaps the interest- and power-based approaches must be preferred after all.

In response, we should note that Honneth is well aware that movements are able to follow various conflict logics. They may strive for material survival, for utilitarian profit, for power, or for improved, group-related chances of social reproduction through increased stakes in scarce resources or cultural goods (Honneth 2012, 264 f). But, more importantly, he thinks that the hegemony and related one-sided applications of both the interest- and power-based approaches would obstruct our view of the significance of injustice experiences and collective emotions that underlie the uprising of movements. In fact, he not only thinks that shared expectations for recognition in economic and political relations often precede the forming of group interests, but that we should pay more attention to agents' *emotional urgency to rise up* in context of a perceived crisis of societal coexistence (Honneth 2012, 265 f.). This is why recognition theory should be seen rather as complementing the other approaches.

While recognition theory agrees with the power-based approach that movements must be understood as rational attempts by groups to mobilize sufficient leverage to advance their

objectives through different means against opponents (e.g., by using disobedient actions they strive for hegemony in civil society, for consent in public, and for a change of power-relations in state institutions), it does not overrate this dimension and sees power just as the means for groups to achieve objectives, rather than giving the misleading impression that this is an end in itself. Power is a tool for reaching other objectives. Even in the case of a struggle against oppressive power, we find that overcoming oppression and claiming liberation is the real aim. Recognition theory approaches movements as aiming for change through struggles over and against power. By overrating the dimension of power in such struggles, we risk underrating the value of law, fairness, and political order in liberal societies, and we become unable to assess what protesters owe to other citizens and to large democratic processes. One-sided, power-based approaches may not be able to separate justifiable from unjustifiable movement cases, since these approaches view power clashes as natural phenomena arising from each groups' rational urge for self-assertion. The issue will be further discussed in chapter 4, where I address the strengths and weaknesses of agonistic and radical democratic theories applied to *Occupy et al.*

As another complement to other types of analysis, recognition theory emphasizes the communicative dimension of movements. While interest-based approaches often misleadingly portray movement protests as clashing monolithic blocks, where agents mechanically voice claims in accordance with their economic positions, recognition theory shifts the focus, viewing protests as also expressing deep political disagreements and heated processes of negotiations among group agents in society over what each is properly entitled to. In that view, movements are characterized by joint normative claim-making over contested objects, claims that are made against an agent dispensing justice, whether that is a person or an institution (e.g., fair pay, freedom, or security). For instance, labor unions express clearly that their demands for higher wages are not about envy and stealing someone's property on behalf of their interests but are about claiming a fair share. They call out injustices and seek redistribution. The recognition-based approach offers promising resources to examine this aspect by overcoming the tendency to reduce social movements to a zero-sum struggle over scarce economic goods and explicating their conflictive processes over entitlements and normative expectations among agents. The theme will be further discussed in chapter 5, where I debate the strengths and weaknesses of the class struggle concept applied to *Occupy et al.* and discuss how recognition theory could be adjusted to better integrate the dimension of political economy and market-related struggles in its model.

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

In sum, recognition theory's focus on movements' morally guided conflict interaction neither ignores the importance of economic relations and related interests, nor the dimensions of a power struggle that often underlie the activities of protesters. Instead, it aims to complete—not supersede—the interest- and power-based approaches. In fact, it rather aims to inspect why economic relations and structures of power or privilege can be experienced as harmful to an individual's integrity. Instead of reducing movement protests to manifestations of economic interests, or to a clash between the elites and the people, recognition theory's strength lies in conceptualizing the harm to social relations done by economic or political processes, how these are experienced and responded to by individuals or communities, and how such harms motivate people to collectively fight such threats.

In the course of my work, I will use Honneth's theory as a bridging device, since it is dedicated to the links among motivations, morally-guided protest justifications, and the joint claims and conflict activities of social movements. In particular, I will use Honneth's early writings. *Social Action and Human Nature* (Honneth and Joas 1980), *The Critique of Power* (Honneth [1989] 2014), and *Struggle for Recognition* (Honneth [1992] 2012) offer an explicit, explanatory approach to the emergence of social movements. Honneth's take on movements appears as well in his later works such as *Redistribution or Recognition* (Fraser and Honneth 2003), or the anthology *The I in We* (Honneth 2010). Arguments elaborated in his exchange with Fraser will be particularly important in section 5.5, where I analyze new types of market-related struggles by applying recognition theory. Regarding Honneth's anthology, the concept of "counterculture of compensatory respect" introduced therein will be picked up in section 4.3, where I study square occupations as ends in themselves for protesters.

Other than that, I will put some emphasis on Honneth's later works such as *Freedom's Rights* (2014), or *The Idea of Socialism* (2015b). I refer to certain parts of these works in order to show discontinuities in his argumentation and to make use of new ideas, but these works do not serve as my main sources. That said, I also will not apply his concept of social pathology (2007a) and his extended reflection on social freedom (2020) in my thesis. My concern is that Honneth is shifting his theoretical ambition in his later works, deviating from the perspective of protest agents and related negative methodology (i.e., understanding justice through expressions about injustice). In his earlier writings, he aims at reconstructing the moral grammar of movements' conflicts; in his later works he focusses more on explicating the normative principles underlying modern institutions, achieving a theory of justice through the social analysis of current liberal societies (2014). I think this theoretical and methodological shift in his work is disadvantageous, as it is accompanied with a new form of social critique.

While the initial starting-point of Honneth's critique was experiences of injustice and related group claims—which incites us to treat protesters as a political resource of change and as seismographs of societal issues—his later focus is on explicating the positive normative potential in liberal institutions—which incites us to political conservatism, and to judge agents against their level of knowledge about institutional settings. Positive exceptions are here the recent exchanges between Honneth and Ranciere (2016) and between Honneth and Butler (Lepold *et al.*, 2021), further illuminating the relationship between power inequality and ambivalent forms of recognition in his social conflict model.⁸

In short, I take it that most of Honneth's early writings live up to their emancipatory intent to turn critical theory into a support for movements' struggles for progressive change. Focusing on Honneth's recognition-based approach to movements, his anthology *Disrespect* (2000) is also, therefore, of particular importance to my work, since it collects crucial early writings (e.g., *The Social Dynamics of Disrespect* (1994) and *Moral Consciousness and Class Domination* (1982)). Considering these works, important questions in this chapter include: In what way could social movements and their collective protest activities be traced back to an experienced denial of recognition? How well does this explain their emergence, considering that other theorists often see recognition theory as solely applicable to the identity struggles of minorities? I try to answer these and related issues in the following section, beginning by clarifying the general concept of recognition.

1.2 Analyzing the Concept of Recognition

Some of the disagreements voiced by other theorists about the applicability of Honneth's approach to the wide range of movements are centered on conceptual issues (e.g., Fraser and Honneth 2003, 27 ff; or Honneth and Rancière 2016, 83 ff). In fact, the term struggle for recognition might give the false impression of a submissive claim for better treatment from powerful agents. It seems to include the notion of begging for attention without overcoming a suppressive order. It seems to depoliticize movements' attempts to enforce claims, applying concepts that rather moralize and pacify their collective action, in contrast with the often antiauthoritarian activities of many movements and their visions of new orders.

Certainly, "recognition" is ambiguous. We are using this term in a rather narrow sense, in a different way from common language. Consider the German word *Anerkennung*.

⁸ Most of the time I refer to Honneth's German publications, with some exceptions such as of *Freedom's Right* (2014), and *Recognition and Disagreement* (2016), "Rejoinder" (2015c), or "Is there an emancipatory interest?" (2017).

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

We usually apply the term in order to admit, acknowledge, or certify something or someone. A case in point is the sentence: 'I, hereby, recognize that you are the legitimate winner of a game'. Yet, if recognition is only about receiving a *symbolic gesture of moral regard* for one's merits in interaction or group identity features (e.g., from the government), it is indeed hard to see how a recognition-based approach can be used to assess and interpret the broad set of a movement's aims. In that sense, recognition seems simply to be reduced to a *contested immaterial good* that one wants to attain in cultural-based identity struggles, allegedly distinct from material goods that one wants to achieve in interest-based struggles over resources and political power (Haider 2018). Hence the concern that recognition theory is only applicable to struggles of underprivileged groups for cultural change and the tolerance of minorities, and is unable to address fights for economic or institutional change (Rorty 1999, 229 ff; Barry 2002).

These concerns indicate a common misinterpretation of the concept of recognition, narrowing its meaning to *symbolism* and *appraisal*. However, Honneth is neither defining a particular type of movement, nor claiming we ought to conceive all contemporary movements as simply identity-related, cultural struggles (in alleged distinction and contrast to class-related and redistributive struggles). Instead, his recognition approach cuts across the various forms of conflict actions and movement types (Renault 2019, 158). While Honneth agrees with theorists like Taylor (1994) or Young (2011) that *multiculturalism* and the *politics of difference* are indeed important forms of recognition-led struggle, his broader model has a much wider scope, ranging across anti-violence and civil rights movements, redistributive struggles, and beyond (Zurn 2015, 59). His recognition approach can be used to *examine the micro-level of movements*, such as protest motivations, justifications and claims of injustice.

I here suggest that we should shift our attention to the subtitle of Honneth's book: *The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. (2012) This subtitle emphasizes that social movements result from shared experiences of recognition denial, in which agents realize what normative expectations (e.g., that one deserves a certain status or treatment) they first had and strive for a future fulfillment of these expectations (Iser 2008, 252 ff). When applying this approach, a protester may be seen as one that suffers moral wrongs and joins with others to raise claims with those who can recognize such claims, e.g., by granting rights, raising salaries, defining new cultural practices, or improving political inclusion. However, this raises a question; what exactly is an *act of recognition*, if it is not simply a symbolic gesture of moral regard?

We can define the concept of recognition in a broad manner. At the phenomenological level, it refers to *interactions and relations* among individuals, and also between citizens and

institutions. In this sense, recognition includes but is not restricted to interpersonal relations. There are a broad variety of entities associated with this concept, such as personal and collective agents, natural or legal subjects, and even states and nations. For all such entities, recognition theory presupposes a *subject of recognition* (the recognizer) and an *object* (the recognized). Instead of asking what kind of subjects and objects of recognition are possible, I will here focus on discussing the meaning of recognition. On the one hand, recognition means to *cognitively perceive* something or someone (re-Cognition). For example, we speak about realizing or identifying. On the other hand, it means to *acknowledge* something or someone *in practice* (Re-cognition) (Iser 2008, 165 f; Pollmann 2008, 28 f). In that sense, we may refer to appreciating and esteeming. Hence, the broader recognition concept includes two important elements. It is an *evaluative attitude* (Zurn 2015, 25) in which one (the recognizer) perceives and at the same time acknowledges another person, opinion, or action (the recognized subject). Accordingly, a recognition act requires the knowledge that someone or something has valuable features (e.g., one's emotional vulnerability)—one accepts that they are valid or true—and one is practically willing to acknowledge these features (e.g., one's care and emotional support for another). Attitudes of recognition, therefore, *must be expressed* by the recognizer—for instance in words, nonverbal gestures, actions, or even in institutional treatment such as the recognition of civil rights through laws—in such a way that the recognized can identify these expressions as the responsive regard toward the valuable features identified at the beginning of the social recognition process (cf., Zurn 2015, 52).

Instead of seeing recognition solely as a moral gesture of praise and symbolic regard for identity features, we can describe it as an attitude in which one is perceiving and at the same time practically acknowledging the validity of insights, values, or social norms (cf., Ikäheimo and Laitinen 2007, 34–37). It is an attitude in which one is consciously self-limiting one's own actions in order to acknowledge the valuable features and related normative expectations of others, as one tries to treat others justly (e.g., not interfering in others' freedom). In addition, recognition refers to actions in which people actively support each other (e.g., helping to apply for a job, lending money, or discussing solutions in times of personal crises). This practical activity is not simply symbolic but covers a broad variety of interactions and institutional arrangements. For instance, treating each one as free and equal (e.g., not excluding others) is an act of recognition. But also granting rights (e.g., to universal suffrage, liberties, and welfare) should be understood as such an attitude, since it is a form of public or societal recognition of the valuable features of each citizen (e.g., the moral autonomy and vulnerability of citizens) and their related normative expectations. Thus, an act

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

of recognition is accompanied with duties towards someone or something, from respecting the other to caring for their well-being, supporting their confidence, and/or appreciating their achievements. For legal entities (e.g., states or companies), recognition includes acts of official confirmation, the declaration of validity or legality, and the approval of or acceptance of norms. In short, Honneth's recognition concept goes beyond mere symbolic praise. It moves from the Kantian notion of respect for humans' equal status and rights that should be seen as depersonalized symbols of legal recognition for moral autonomy, to esteem for particular worth and reward for individual contributions, and on to mutual care for person's emotional uniqueness. The second chapter of this work discusses how Honneth's theory covers *respect-, esteem-, and love-recognition*.

However, after this conceptual analysis, we still may not clearly understand why recognition is a promising concept to use when evaluating and understanding the activities of movements. In that context, I would like to highlight the following: When we apply Honneth's theory, a core idea is that for a human agent to be an *agent*—i.e., acting freely and in moral responsibility—a necessary condition is that this agent must have been able to develop a strong personal identity, understood as a positive self-relation (Deranty 2009, 272 f). In *Struggle for Recognition* (Honneth 2012) as well as in *The I in We* (Honneth 2010), it is argued that this kind of positive self-relation (i.e., self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem) can only be attained through experiences of mutual recognition, i.e., experiences where one feels positively evaluated and acknowledged in practice. (Honneth 2012, 156 ff; and Honneth 2010, 32) Recognition is thus seen as necessary for the integration of an agent into society and all the related types of societal coexistence, such as in marriage, in school, and at work. *Vice versa*, it is thought that if a person is not appropriately recognized (e.g., as an equal or as valuable), there is a risk of becoming an outsider and of being placed in a precarious position (Honneth 2012, Chapter 6).

From this we get a first glimpse as to how recognition can be a promising concept to approach the conflict activities of social movements. It relies on a social-psychological understanding of individual autonomy and sociability. Recognition acts are understood as essential requirements for modern agents to develop an autonomous life and guarantees their integration into societal co-existence. On the other hand, a systematic denial of recognition destabilizes the individual's chances to develop autonomy and sociability, opening the stage to critique and morally-guided conflict actions and eventually raising claims for recognition (Honneth 2012, 219 ff). Obviously, Honneth employs a positive concept of recognition (cf., Lepold 2019) as he sees acts of recognition as crucial to enabling the realization of individual

autonomy, the development of social skills, and the inclusion into the society. But others have regarded recognition in this broad sense as preventing the realization of freedom, theorizing recognition in a negative manner (Markell 2003). Philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Althusser, and Judith Butler (Bertram and Celikates 2015, 839 f; or Lepold *et al.*, 2021, 3 f) highlight an unresolvable intertwining of recognition and domination in social coexistence, conceiving acts and relations of recognition as affecting conformism and personal dependency by normalizing and disciplining agents. In that sense, recognition is seen as an ideological practice that objectifies agents by labeling them with hegemonic norms.

While I agree that well-intended acts of recognition are not automatically positive and may even have a negative impact on recipients (e.g., treating every person as equal may solidify unacknowledged hierarchies), I disagree with the idea that recognition is genuinely negative. Central to the disagreement between positive and negative accounts of recognition is the question as to whether we should see acts of recognition as either ascribing or responding. The *ascriptive model* puts the *recognizer* in a privileged social position, controlling the recipient's development of personal identity by ascribing positive and negative characteristics, while the *responsive model* puts the *recognized agent* in the privileged spot; analyzing recognition as perceiving objective characteristics in the recipient that are assessed (cf., Zurn 2015, 52). Negative accounts seem to endorse the ascriptive model and reduce recognition acts to forms of labeling someone with dominant norms. But Honneth's positive account offers a more differentiated position: he gives both parties, the recognizer and the recognized, crucial roles in successful acts of recognition. On the one hand, he shows that a recognition act must correspond to an actual characteristic (e.g., praising those as winners who actually deserve it). On the other hand, the recipient must realize and internalize the evaluative attitude in order to fully constitute social characteristics (e.g., strengthening the confidence of one's fellows in their abilities). Therefore, both the recognizer and the recognized should be seen as having a crucial role in the conflictive dynamic between other-regarding attitudes and developing a positive social identity (cf., Zurn 2015, 54).

I follow Honneth's "middle position", as it allows me to distinguish appropriate and inappropriate forms of recognition with objective criteria as to whether one actually possesses a characteristic and thus deserves to be recognized. In chapter 2 I explore in more detail the underpinnings of the model for separating justifiable and unjustifiable claims of movements.

1.3 Three Conditions for a Positive Self-Relation

So far, I have argued that Honneth is positioning recognition as crucial for all individuals to ensure autonomy and develop the capacity to engage in social bonds. Following the American pragmatist George H. Mead and his social theory in *Mind, Self, and Society* (Mead 1934), Honneth sees intersubjectivity—as expressed in recognition-led interaction—as a condition to constitute subjective autonomy and self-understanding (Honneth 2012, 114 ff). Additionally, following John Dewey's social psychology (Dewey 1895) and the related notion of emotive expectations underlying interactions (Honneth 2012, 2020 ff.), Honneth reveals recognition as an anthropological desire and an urgent need of each person in societal coexistence (cf., Iser 2008, 173 ff). His concept relies on the notion that we have to see ourselves and our desires confirmed by others in order to be able to confidently realize individual ends in coexistence. As I discuss throughout this work, Honneth emphasizes a threefold set of recognition-based positive self-relations. These are: care and love for the development of basic self-*confidence*; legal relations and civil rights for developing self-*respect*; and relations of appreciation and solidarity for reaching self-*esteem* (cf., Zurn 2015, 6). For Honneth, *to experience yourself as recognized* by others is the normative target of interaction. Since each person's self-relation depends on the positive reassurance (i.e., evaluative perception and confirmation in practice) from interaction partners and institutions, recognition is understood as a vital need of each person, thus as an *ought* that includes a set of *expectations*, interpersonal *entitlements*, and *obligations*. I elaborate on the obligations in 2.2.5.

Here we get a second glimpse as to why recognition is a very promising concept when examining movements and their conflict actions. Recognition is accompanied with a normative theory about what each of us needs for our well-being in social coexistence, what we can demand from institutions or other citizens, and what we owe to those with whom we interact. By employing recognition theory, social critiques, and collective claims—as expressed in the efforts of movements—can be conceived as arising in reaction to a perception of violated or unfulfilled expectations and related duties in coexistence, demanding reconciliation of these issues. Recognition is a promising concept because it helps us to see the protester as one who likely suffers moral wrongs and therefore raises claims for better recognition (Zurn 2022, 7).

However, this may leave the deficient impression that Honneth conceives recognition merely as an abstract normative ideal to assess practices in the light of substantial assumptions about humans' desires for autonomy and sociability. Instead, the theory of

recognition assumes an underlying normative order of societal institutions. Following a *moderate ethical realism*, Honneth regards recognition as both a *prescriptive* and an *objective* part of our world (Honneth 2010, 115 f). Realism here means that recognition norms are assumed to be already embodied in and underpinning societal institutions, highlighting three *spheres of recognition-led interaction* (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 204 f). Based upon his reinterpretation of Hegel's social spheres of an ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*)—initially introduced under the terms of family, bourgeois society, and the state in Hegel's *Philosophy of Rights* (Hegel 1820)—Honneth focusses on three institutionalized spheres of social recognition that correlate with distinctive forms of normatively guided interactions. Subdividing the notion of recognition, he transforms Hegel's social spheres into the tripartite institutional framework of 1) *reciprocal love* in intimate relationships, 2) *mutual esteem* in cooperation, and 3) *equal respect* in a liberal democracy. Honneth argues that this tripartite institutional framework would offer individuals the required mutual recognition they need to achieve a positive self-relation, and thus an autonomous life in a setting of modern coexistence (Honneth 2012, 148 ff; Deranty 2009, 271 ff).

As a result, Honneth's concept of recognition should be understood as an umbrella term, covering *three distinct forms of recognition* that are in turn directed to distinct personal features, enabling distinct forms of a positive self-relation (Zurn 2015, 51). Whereas respect recognizes *personhood* and *equal status* and is universally owed to everyone in the form of civil rights, social esteem recognizes a valuable *quality*, *a particular worth* of a person and is conferred on all who possess that quality, while love recognizes *emotional uniqueness* and is afforded to persons in intimate relations. Accordingly, we can expect that the experience of reciprocal love provides the chance to accomplish *self-confidence*, while the experience of legal respect provides a chance to gain *self-respect* and appreciation provides the chance to gain *self-esteem*. (Zurn 2015, 28 ff)

The key normative target of Honneth's recognition theory is "social freedom." This type of freedom could be realized through the institutional and interactional conditions that promote, facilitate, and secure at least a basis level of assured experiences of the threefold set of recognitions. Each person could realize a free life in in our modern societies a) if they are able to contribute to social coexistence based on a fearless and confident trust in the unconditional emotional care and support of a beloved person, b) if they are equally, legally protected in their liberal basic rights against the arbitrariness of others' wills, and lastly c) if they enjoy the merit awarded for their individual contribution to collective aims and cooperation in market relations (Honneth 2012, 278; and *ibid.*, 2010, 33 ff).

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

Since individuals are understood as depending on mutual care, the state's legal respect for moral autonomy, and esteem in coexistence, we can see more clearly why recognition could be a valuable concept when examining a movement's activities. Honneth offers a theoretical framework that enables us to assess the quality of actions and diagnose the injustices that arise from institutional practices and afflict individuals. This framework is particularly well equipped for assessing whether social institutions promote or dismantle freedom, dignity, and equality. Although he does not offer an explicit normative ethics of movements, Honneth provides a reconstructive (or descriptive) account of ethics, analyzing current practices (Honneth 2014, 3) and institutions in western liberal societies that is attuned to the ways in which they facilitate or frustrate values of mutual recognition and social freedom (Zurn 2015, 20).

In this context, *actions of disrespect* are conceived as threats to the autonomous social life of individuals (e.g., a denial of rights, contempt, or exclusions). Honneth assumes that such negative actions are experienced by victims as violations of vital needs for mutual recognition and thus create a motivational potential to fight such threats. This idea is important for the recognition-based approach to movements, since it posits that individuals rise up if they feel that their needs for recognition are illegitimately denied or injured.⁹ Honneth conceives the feeling of an unjustified treatment as the motivational starting-point for movements' conflict activities (Honneth 2012, 265). A denial of recognition equips agents with motivating reasons to act against injustices in order to achieve a future satisfaction of those disregarded, morally-guided claims for mutual recognition. Thus, social theory, moral psychology, an implicit theory of justice, and a collective critique are all contained in Honneth's theory of recognition (Deranty 2009, 272), offering an original approach to studying the motivational forces and justifications of movements. Recognition theory offers explanations for what reasons motivate protesters to act—reasons that make action intelligible—without saying that this exhausts the full range of all motivations. As a pattern, struggles start from a shared feeling of disrespect (Zurn 2015, 65).

To conclude, I have argued that we should reject the false assumption that recognition is only a symbolic gesture of regard (e.g., Imbusch 2008, 640). Instead, we should conceive of recognition as a *threefold evaluative attitude* in which a recognizer acknowledges in practice a certain insight, value, or social norm, with special regard for personal needs and emotions,

⁹ That needs for recognition can indeed be legitimately denied will be addressed in Chapter 7 in the context of exaggerated expectations and harmful practices of moral superiority, further elaborating recognition theory's evaluative approach with regard to evil protest claimants and bad kinds of social movements.

respect for autonomy, or esteem for valued contributions (Zurn 2015, 51). I also have argued that recognition should be seen as a normative ‘ought’, since the autonomy and sociability of all individuals depends on a positive self-relation assured through experiences of mutual recognition. The conflict activities of social movements can thus be seen as joint reactions to a denial of recognition affecting many individuals. Following such a broad conception, one can argue that recognition is a promising concept to apply when trying to understand movement protests since it sees them as expressing contradictory claims about what the core principles of society ought to be as they struggle *over* the hegemony of societal norms ranging from the distribution of the burdens of work and the resulting wealth, to the dissolution of privileges in favor of inclusion. This framing highlights a competition over the interpretation of norms and widely accepted values as well as over their actualization and application, which might at times be unenforced, violated, or accepted only by few (Honneth 2017, 913). Protesters could thus be seen as struggling over relations of societal coexistence, the validity of values and norms, the worthiness of features—in which they claim not to be recognized—as well as over the social status of individuals and groups. In my work, I attempt to engage in a similar broad understanding of recognition.

However, we are left with an issue of ambiguity: what type of motivating reasons are triggered through denials of recognition and consequently urge us to rise up, organize in groups, and deliberate strategies to jointly struggle in the quest to overcome experiences of injustice? In the next section, I try to answer this question by debating the link between experiences of disrespect and the suffering of moral wrongs, clarifying the concept of a *denial of recognition*.

1.4 Denial of Recognition and Social Suffering

While defining interactions and institutions of recognition as requirements for accomplishing a positive self-relation, and thus a free social life for all, Honneth introduces *actions of disrespect* as threats to achieving this end. In particular, building upon his tripartite concept of recognition, he highlights three types of recognition denial—summarized under the concept of *disrespect* (German: *Missachtung*)—that would harm the essential conditions for the positive self-relation of a person. Here I will show how an *experienced denial of recognition* can trigger moral outrage and equip its victims with motivating reasons to fight related threats. Following these clarifications, I will show why the notion of a denial of recognition should be

understood as an important part of the story of how we evaluate the joint conflict activities of social movements and how individuals participate therein.

1.4.1 Disrespect for Personal Integrity and Disruption of Self-Confidence

The first type of recognition denial refers to each individual's vital desire and essential need for affection, support, and empathy. Honneth highlights actions that express disrespect for *personal physical integrity and associated emotional vulnerability*. Though individuals also suffer from the withdrawal of love, our focus here is on those actions that deny others' physical as well as emotional self-determination. Cases in point are extreme activities such as torture, physical abuse, and rape. Besides the physical pain, in the context of recognition theory a person experiences these actions as an unprotected exposure to the will of others, i.e., as a willful violation of physical integrity in particular (Zurn 2015, 32). Considering social psychology, such experiences are able to fundamentally disrupt one's trust in the autonomous usage of one's body as well as one's trust in the emotional sensitivity and care of beloved people. Further, victims are threatened with the loss of both their own self-confidence in their unique emotional and physical abilities, and with loss of confidence in their social environment. Lastly, denial of recognition for personal integrity can cause people to *suffer from shame*, thus harming the *self-confidence requirement* for one's positive self-relation and the achieving of an autonomous life in modern societies (Honneth 2012, 212 ff).

1.4.2 Disrespect for Social Integrity and Disruption of Self-Respect

The second type of denial of recognition refers to each individual's vital desire and essential need to feel fully accepted as an equal member (e.g., as a citizen) in societal coexistence. While keeping in mind that we focus on modern, liberal legal systems in which rights are granted that recognize the universal capacity of each person for autonomous life, we here primarily refer to the normative expectation that one will be treated as a free and equal legal subject (Zurn 2015, 39). Honneth highlights those actions that express disrespect for the social integrity and moral self-respect of individuals, e.g., through the withdrawal or denial of basic rights. Examples are the historical exclusion of workers and women, as well as the current exclusion of refugees, from political institutions and the labor market. The withholding of rights and related cultures of exclusion are understood as expressing a collective bias about underprivileged groups, who are stigmatized as incapable of either sound moral judgment or rational articulation of demands. These types of recognition denial can lead to a *loss of self-*

respect. Those who are excluded from rights may lose the ability to perceive themselves as equally worthy and morally adequate interaction partners in social coexistence and collective will formations in democratic societies. Based on the work of Frantz Fanon, we may further claim that those who suffer from a denial of recognition for social integrity—e.g., victims of disenfranchisement—experience a dead social life (cf., Fanon 1952), since they are legally unprotected and thus subjected to arbitrary domination by others. In short, disenfranchisement harms the self-respect required for a positive self-relation and the achieving of an autonomous life in society (Honneth 2012, 256).

1.4.3 Disrespect for Individual Worthiness and Disruption of Self-Esteem

The third type of a denial of recognition refers to each individual's vital desire and essential need to be appreciated in one's individual contributions, merits, and achievements, as well as to feel appreciated as a valuable part of a group or within a communal space, i.e., being perceived as *having a certain communal worth in coexistence*. Honneth here puts emphasis on actions of disrespect by which people feel actively downgraded as inferior and deficient, such as the devaluation of one's labor contributions, personal abilities, passions, or lifestyle. Cases in point include ordinary interpersonal insults e.g., gestures of contempt about allegedly unworthy lifestyles, paying low wages, bullying others, or unfairly denying merit. Such denials of social esteem make their targets feel unworthy, destroying the ability to develop a healthy relation to oneself. Denials of esteem create the possible threat that an agent can *perceive themselves as unworthy* in light of conceptions of communal ends and values (cf., Zurn 2015, 43). Victims of such denials of recognition for individual worthiness thus *suffer from the feeling of not being valuable* and see themselves as having no positive individual contributions to make to social coexistence. Experiences of *communal worthlessness* would thus be able to produce a fundamental disruption of personal self-esteem and develop a sense of futility in the life of victims. This harms the above-mentioned *self-esteem requirement* for a positive self-relation in order to achieve an autonomous life in modern societal coexistence (Honneth 2012, 216 f).

To restate, Honneth's analysis of these distinct types of recognition denial includes the following: A positive self-relation, and therefore autonomy and one's inclusion into society, depends on recognition relations and interactions, in which we reassure each other of valuable features. Recognition is a vital need of each person, not just a nice benefit or symbolic gesture that one might happen to gain in a charmed life. Rather, actions and institutions of recognition

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

ensure that humans can attain a free social life based on self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. Surely, Honneth's theory here rests on the optimistic anthropological view (Zurn 2015, 47) that humans are, by nature, social beings with desires towards others. One might object that not all humans have such needs (e.g., unsocial people). But these exceptions are negligible for this theory. Research suggests that healthy social bonds are a crucial condition for well-being (e.g., Gable *et al.*, 2018), and that being denied tripartite recognition constitutes a serious harm for human beings (Tomalty 2020). Many human rights theorists follow that point of view (e.g., Brownlee 2013, 200 ff), similarly arguing that humans have the capacity to engage in social bonds and are thus capable of having good lives. Experiences of physical harm, exclusion, and devaluation can prevent us from confidently participating and realizing our own ends in our coexistence, causing us to suffer shame, worthlessness, and the feeling of being arbitrarily treated (Honneth 2012, 256). In sum, what is essential is that illegitimate denials of recognition are lasting threats, able to disrupt an individual's chances to gain a positive self-relation and the conditions for a free life. These are forms of harm that one should aim to prevent.

After illuminating the causal connection between recognition denial, the suffering of moral wrongs, and the harming of positive self-relations, I will now discuss the issue of how such experiences can cause collective actions. Why do not harmed individuals simply struggle alone? What is the transition from individual to joint recognition claims? I will try to answer these questions through further elaborating Honneth's explanatory approach to movements.

1.5 Individual Suffering and Communal Space

In previous sections, I have argued that elements of moral psychology—i.e., the notion that a human's positive self-relation depends on forms of mutual assurance, which in return impacts their ethical evaluations of actions and social institutions— and an implicit theory of justice as well as collective *critique* come together in Honneth's concept of recognition, providing a promising approach to explore the *motivational forces behind and the justifications for social movements' activities*. In general, recognition theorists think that joint feelings of disrespect underlie the conflict activities of protest movements. Such an approach is largely interdisciplinary, applying conceptual and normative resources from social and political philosophy while drawing on empirical resources from the social sciences (particularly psychology and history), in order to systematically relate agents' beliefs, behaviors and

evaluative emotions to movements that raise claims against oppression and for change (Honneth 2012, 267 ff; Zurn 2015, 4).

However, in this section I try to distance myself from overly psychological premises in favor of the social theory as well as the normative components of Honneth's recognition-based approach to movements. I will continue to focus on his *explanatory approach*, further elaborating under which societal conditions movements are assumed to emerge. Briefly, there are three requirements that must be fulfilled so that movements can be seen as starting from feelings of disrespect. *First*, denials of recognition must be experienced collectively. *Second*, these experiences have to be generally relevant, i.e., they must contain issues of coexistence and not merely affect personal concerns or interests. *Third*, a communal space must exist in which victims of disrespect are able to share experiences, deliberate about how to deal with issues, and invent strategies to tackle them. Only shared experiences of a denial of recognition caused by problems that are of relevance for broader coexistence and deliberated in communal space are understood to cause collective moral outrage and movement protests (Honneth 2012, 258 ff). But what does it mean that a problem is relevant, and why is communal space essential? Below, I will try to answer this question, discussing the requirements outlined above and the relationship between individual experiences of suffering and collective action.

To begin, the *first and second requirement* seem interwoven. On the one hand, there must exist a group of individuals who share experiences of a certain recognition denial. On the other hand, their experiences must relate to problems that concern broader coexistence. What does this mean? For instance, suppose that a student is unfairly graded for an assignment. This might cause individual outrage and interpersonal conflict between an enraged student and an accused professor. Nonetheless, as long as this instance takes place once and builds simply upon personal dissonances (e.g., the professor does not sympathize with the student), it seems unlikely that it will produce a social movement. A movement's activities are built upon joint conflict engagement, which obviously is caused rather by the shared experience of an entire group¹⁰ than by individual unease. We can further understand the *relevance requirement* for the emergence of movements' activities: experiences of injustices must occur repetitively and appear to groups as caused by systematic problems of coexistence (Honneth 2012, 256—265).

¹⁰ In contrast to an essentialist account, the concept of the group means here that agents belong to a cluster of people who have the same experiences (e.g., because of going to the same school, working together, or being of the same age).

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

To illustrate what I mean, I will briefly apply both requirements. Let us assume that a group of students of color frequently experience biased, unfair grading. Additionally, they see themselves stigmatized by their teachers as incapable of doing the work of higher education. Clearly, this seems to be a serious case, one that is able to trigger joint moral outrage. Whereas the single student in the first case is treated unfairly due to personal dissonances, the students of color in the second case are treated unfairly due to an unjustified overemphasize of “morally irrelevant differences,” (Singer 1989, 3) such as appearance or ethnic identity. The students are thus victims of racist discrimination, seeing that their teacher violated the duty to grade each student only with regard to merit, rather than with regard to identity with a racial group. Their possible outrage and related demands (e.g., the limitation of professors’ power, or institutional liability in cases of proven discrimination) can thus be traced back to the shared experiences of being deprived of equal status or opportunities, as well as to a failure of impartial treatment. In short, the students experienced not being recognized as the moral equal of those who were, in fact, their peers, namely their fellow students who were not people of color.

This illustrates that negative experiences caused by disrespect must appear to a group of people as a violation of crucial norms of coexistence (e.g., a withdraw of rights or an act of contempt) in order to be a candidate for collective action (Honneth 2012, 260). Admittedly, this requirement for the emergence of movements is ambiguous. Honneth seems to emphasize it, since he also sees it as an implicit normative criterion, namely that social movements are justifiable when their goals are about serving the common good and are not only about private interests (Honneth 2012, 259). I focus more on the relation between recognition and justice in chapter 2.

Considering the aforementioned two requirements for the emergence of movements, the *social sphere of respect* (i.e., the democratic state of law) as well as *estimation* (i.e., market cooperation) seem particularly vulnerable to outbreaks of movement activities, since citizens often contest the social norms of coexistence here (e.g., by negotiating tariffs, work conditions, laws, or taxes). In fact, people easily feel left behind in complex decision-making processes and in the capitalist marketplace, which in turn escalates contention in societal coexistence. However, inter-societal conflicts caused by feelings of disrespect also take place in other social spheres. *Feminist movements* are a case in point. Their protests shifted public attention toward problems in the *sphere of primary relations* (e.g., childcare, housekeeping, or family), challenging the position that this sphere merely builds upon privacy, personal responsibilities, and individual lifestyles. (Zurn 1997) Rather, feminists expressed grievances

over injustices in this sphere (e.g., over an unfair division of labor, or care-work exploitation in families etc.), initiating extensive public debates about unpaid labor, gender inequality, vulnerability, and the states' responsibility to fairly organize eldercare and childcare in order to prevent oppression in our primary relations. Their protests shifted the public's attention towards the issue—to use the central slogan of twentieth-century feminist movements—that “the personal is political” (Young 2011, IX).

The *third requirement* for the emergence of social movements emphasizes the aspects of deliberation and group communication. *Communal spaces* (either already in place or newly constituted) must exist so that victims of a recognition denial can talk about their experiences, discuss ways of dealing with them, and invent strategies to tackle associated issues. I argue that this is a crucial requirement for recognition theory, which says that a movement's activities are rational attempts to address and solve problems in societal coexistence. This emphasizes that movements heavily build upon communicative actions, collective debates, and interpretations of problems. In addition, it shows that communal spaces (e.g., assemblies, sport associations, social media, plenary sessions, etc.) are essential if individual experiences of injustice are to be transformed into collective activities (Honneth 2012, 262 f.; and *ibid.*, 2010, 264—270). Quite often, such communal spaces need to be newly created by the suffering agents, since they do not already exist. For example, consciousness-raising feminist groups were part of the second wave feminist movement, founding secure social spaces and collective housing projects for women. Further, while there is a popular tendency to associate ‘space’ primarily with physical location, the last decade has shown that virtual spaces (e.g., Facebook groups; social media forums) can also meet this requirement and become crucial in contemporary movement campaigns and mobilizations (e.g., Martin 2015, 200—218).

Since we have no direct access to other minds, *communal spaces* offer a forum in which we can share thoughts, ideas, and feelings in order to understand each other and build common ground. Such spaces can trigger a cognitive shift in individuals. Sharing thoughts may create awareness that one is not alone in experiencing injustice, but that others are victims as well. Instead of individualizing problems, communal space can shift attention to the fact that one is dealing with issues of broader scale and shared experiences of injustice. On the other hand, such space might help develop the understanding that one is a victim of injustice by learning that an individual painful experience was not just and must be addressed.

Moreover, communal space should be seen as a *political forum*, in which we are enabled to collectively deliberate, reflect on, and interpret experiences, generating reasons and explanations. For instance, one can learn that negative experiences of poverty should not be

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

seen as individual failures but can be traced back to a systematic maldistribution of wealth and market instability. The existence of communal space may enable us to turn mere intuitions about justice into political convictions. Such spaces can be seen as the base for the emergence of movements, since they provide forums where individuals can share thoughts and deliberate interpretations about the causes of experienced injustice and develop strategies for joint action against such issues (Honneth 2012, 224).

In this context, the notion of communal spaces is a shift in conceiving the *group* in Honneth's theory. Whereas in previous paragraphs a group was simply presented as a cluster of individuals who share experiences, here it relates to collective agency, joint action, and claim making (Honneth 2012, 264 f.). In this view, communal space enables people to create a common understanding that they are part of a group of individuals who share negative experiences and should therefore deliberate together about how to overcome the related societal causes. This seems reminiscent of Marx's notion of the conversion from an objective (*Klasse an sich*) to a subjective (self)-understanding of a class (*Klasse für sich*) (cf., Marx 1847, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 181).¹¹ The subjective concept emphasizes the fact that groups may be constituted if the members know each other through communication in communal space as well as through shared experiences, and if the agents involved actually perceive themselves as a group. These ideas are supported by newer theories on collective intentions and actions, which show that shared beliefs and interpretations of problems as well as joint organizational network schemes are key to the constitution of joint agency (Neuhäuser 2011, 133 f.). Such a process transforms an individual moral outrage produced by feelings of disrespect into political convictions and finally into motivating reasons for collective actions of social *critique*, one form of which may be massive protest activities.

Besides enabling joint discussion and constituting agency, communal spaces have a *psychological utility*. Participants can satisfy those claims and moral desires that are normally denied them in the hegemonic actions of society. In this sense, communal spaces should be seen as having a compensatory impact on participants, providing *in-group social esteem* (Zurn 2015, 42), making the disrespect shown by the rest of the society weigh less heavily. Labor movement meeting spaces are a case in point, where comrades organize projects and enact

¹¹ All quotations from Karl Marx are taken from the German edition of the *Marx-Engels Werke* (MEW). I will also refer to the *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe* (MEGA) that completely documents the development of his works. Throughout my thesis, I refer to Marx, especially to his theoretical reflections on social conflicts, which permeate many of his works. In his early writings, he sees philosophy as the head of the labor movement, providing the spiritual weapons for its struggles (MEGA I/2, 172). In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, he assigns to science the task of turning itself into the organ of a movement (MEW 4, 143). Explicit explanatory approaches to conflicts can be found in his historical and political writings, for example *The 18th Brumaire* (MEW 8), but also in his chapter about the struggle for the limits of the normal working day in the first volume of *Capital*. (MEW 23, 245 ff) These writings shed light on how Marx sees the prospect of being a reflective part of a conflict.

solidarity. The same is true for female café bars, i.e., experimental spaces in many Western European cities where woman could support and encourage each other. Another example is the Black Church, which was the central organizing space for much of the US Civil Rights movement in the 1940s-70s. Such spaces promote alternative practices of mutual respect and provide a safe environment for sharing thoughts. Participants are able to create the collective motivational boost necessary to empower them to feel valuable, and to understand that their claims for justice are important. A social movement's underlying communal spaces should be understood as a "counterculture of mutual respect and alternative forms of recognition" (cf., Cobb and Sennett 1972), enabling individuals to gain a crucial amount of (self)respect and (self)confidence, in order to start tackling their problems through joint actions with their "fellow sufferers" (*Leidensgenossen*) (Honneth 2000, 127 f.; and *ibid.*, 2010, 268 f).

Therefore, communal space is a crucial requirement for Honneth's approach to the emergence of movements. These spaces are the turning-point from individual experiences of injustice to collective action. In this context, the emergence of social movements can be traced back to sharing and interpreting experiences in communal spaces that enable the participants to gain self-confidence, build collective agency, and, finally, create strategies to contest shared problems. Although these explanatory components in Honneth's theory of recognition are often neglected (e.g., Iser 2008, 251 ff), they are especially relevant when it comes to the meaning of a social movement's activities. Understanding the importance of communal space as an end in itself enables us to interpret the partial satisfaction of previously disregarded normative claims for the participants in movements, beyond their political impact on state institutions.¹²

However, are these requirements sufficient to explain the emergence of movements? It seems to me that Honneth does not provide a thorough explanatory approach. For instance, the ways agents organize to form a movement remain ambiguous. Furthermore, Honneth does not clarify what distinguishes a social movement's actions from the actions of other political organizations. For example, why do not individuals decide to form a new party, or perhaps a non-governmental organization (NGO) to enforce political claims? Given these issues, I think it is necessary to complement Honneth's explanatory approach in at least one way. Namely, the emergence of movements also depends on the availability and attractiveness of suitable

¹² Empirical elaborations on the relevance of space for the emergence of movements' activities in: Martin 2015, Chapter 7.

and formal forms of joint claim making.¹³ Only if the moderate and established means for expressing political grievances (e.g., elections, public debates, an appeal to courts, petitions, or the formation of parties) appear unsuitable, inaccessible, or inefficient to those who aim to correct injustice, will movements be likely to emerge. Considering the 'availability of political means' requirement would strengthen the explanatory power of recognition theory.

Nonetheless, Honneth's theory of recognition provides an explanatory approach that is well equipped for exploring the moral grammar of social movements (i.e., their motivations, justifications, and normative claims). It incites us to grasp that the emergence of movements should be understood as morally guided collective reactions against injustice. It complements empirical approaches, showing that the victims of a recognition denial start protesting when they realize that they are part of a group with shared experiences. If these requirements are met, individuals may be equipped with motivating reasons to rise up in order to satisfy disregarded, morally guided claims in their quest for future recognition in societal coexistence. However, these elaborations raise new issues: Are we destined to be outraged when we feel disrespected? I try to outline a response that question in the following section, through a further discussion of the recognition approach to movements.

1.6 Resilient Individuals and Collective Action

In the previous sections, I discussed why recognition is a promising concept to apply when understanding the emergence of mass movements and their related struggles. In addition, I analyzed the concept of recognition denial, and discussed the conditions under which agents may be equipped with motivating reasons to join such collective activities. In this section, I further elaborate the underlying motivational assumptions of recognition theory, debating the transition from individual suffering caused by a denial of recognition to joint moral outrage and normative claim-making. This is a further discussion of Honneth's account of why agents should be seen as motivated to strive against injustices in their quest for mutual recognition.

One general answer is that each agent is able to reject demands to take on societal roles and accept moral obligations due to the human condition of being autonomous. It means that deep disagreement and resistance can simply be seen as caused by perceiving norms and roles as unjustifiable, and therefore impossible to accept. Another answer is that suffering

¹³ For instance, whereas wildcat strikes and machine sabotaging were a key repertoire of the historic labor movement to tackle exploitation, at present legalized tariff negotiations are a standard procedure of labor unions. Hence, the incorporation of conflict actions and political contestation into a legal framework affects the rise and fall of the activities of movements.

from injustices results in a shift in an individual's moral attention. In this view, an agent who feels disrespected is inclined to review the normative expectations she had towards individuals and institutions in the first place, experiencing a deep dissonance between expectations and reality, and ultimately recognizing that it is outrageous that her (alleged) legitimate expectations of recognition have been denied. This shift in moral attention leads the victim eventually to the belief that, instead of passively accepting suffering, an active counter-reaction offers the only chance to overcome the suffering. Hence, suffering equips victims with the motivating reasons to pursue reactions against an unjust state, to find a way forward for the present and, possibly, move towards future satisfaction of disregarded, morally-guided claims. These thoughts follow critical theory's notion that suffering is an epistemological resource, assuming a constitutive link between a social crisis, individual suffering, a shift in moral attention, and the resulting belief that resistance may lead to one's liberation. (cf., Iser 2008, 255; Renault 2019, 181 ff)

In fact, the idea of an *attention shift* caused by negative experiences of disrespect seems plausible with regard to both interpersonal and societal conflicts. Recall the hypothetical cases discussed earlier. Both the individual student and the students of color believed they were graded unfairly; they became aware of their normative expectations because of a teacher's unfair grading. Negative experiences can thus be seen as a starting-point for both individual and collective outrage. But does recognition denial cause moral outrage as if it were a mechanistic chain reaction? Are we predetermined to rebel because we feel angry and vengeful? Honneth does not offer a satisfactory reply to the question (Honneth 2012, 212—225).

As an attempt to answer, I will draw on helpful resources offered by Albert Hirschman and his well-known concepts of *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (Hirschman 1970). I contend that a denial of recognition is at least able to initiate three kinds of reactions: First, it is possible to passively endure suffering. Second, one can actively react against and try to change the conditions that produce suffering. And third, it is possible to escape from an unjust state and feared enemies (as do refugees, when they flee from places of poverty or civil war because they see no chances to enforce positive change in their home countries). (Heins 2020)

Considering the first kind of reaction (i.e., passivity or loyalty), one might simply not notice the disadvantaging situation one is living in, which encourages one to either passively accept or loyally endure an unjust status quo. One may approach such forms under the term *ideology*, which is a false belief that would solidify injustices. Nonetheless, besides indicating a misunderstanding of one's social status, individuals undoubtedly can suffer so greatly from

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

repetitive discrimination and contempt that it becomes unbearable to act against or talk about their situation. Lasting feelings of shame or exclusion emotionally disable them from tackling, or even examining, the causes of injustice.¹⁴

Thus, it seems unconvincing to argue that such people, who suffer most, would form the spearhead of a rising protest movement. In this situation, recognition denial is not causing outrage as a mechanistic chain reaction. Rather, it seems more convincing to argue that those individuals who are empowered enough to face their suffering despite a denial of recognition are able to act against injustices.¹⁵ Especially when we consider the second kind of reaction (i.e., activity, voice), it seems clear that *resilient individuals* (Fröhlich-Gildhoff 2014, 40 ff)—those who are able to make use of intellectual, emotional, or communal resources to tackle negative experiences—are empowered enough to turn experiences of recognition denial (e.g., physical harm or disregard) into protest action. Instead of feeling shame and guilt, resilient individuals seem to have an inner confidence (and perhaps a sufficiently stable environment) that enables them to communicate about and react against experiences of injustice in a collective manner.

However, this raises another issue. Does recognition theory's explanatory approach depend only on subjective experiences of injustice? If these experiences are a necessary part of the causal explanation, then it is hard to see how we could explain the participation of non-victims in mass movements. In response, we should understand that recognition theory's view on movements indeed starts from *victimhood*. At its center are the experiences of those that are oppressed and directly affected by injustice. My interpretation is that recognition theory includes the supposition that at least some victims are able to face and tackle their misery. In fact, Honneth's explanatory approach will lose its social ground if *no* victim feels urged to fight injustice. Fortunately for recognition theory, social and psychological research on movements suggests that experiences of injustices do indeed equip agents with motivating reasons to rise up.¹⁶ Nonetheless, it does not mean that non-victims are unmotivated to join protest movements. We can distinguish between support and solidarity on the one hand, and victims' activism on the other. Perceiving injustices that others are exposed to is certainly an

¹⁴ Also, there might be a type of resistance that is little discussed. This type could be seen as a hybrid version between passive and active reactions to suffering. One may call it "introverted resistance" or "passive resistance". Namely, an inward insistence on one's knowledge of self-worth, and deep disagreement with an unjust institution or treatment, that may not result in collective action but still leaves the individual internally free. That could be also seen as a case of "dissident-consciousness" without practicing "public dissidence".

¹⁵ A similar issue and ambivalence in recognition theory is addressed by Celikates (ibid., 2021, 269—271).

¹⁶ Illuminating elaborations can be found here: Van Stekelenburg, Jacquelin, and Bert Klandermans: 2017. "Individuals in movements: A social psychology of contention". In: *Handbook of Social movements Across Disciplines*, 103-39. Springer.

important motivating reason for participating in movements. Very often, though, there would not be a movement in the first place for nonvictims to support, without the victims of injustices jointly rising and passionately attempting to tackle their urgent problems and fight for ending their own misery, in the hope for a better future. Recognition theory highlights this notion, and thus relates to the perspectives of victims and their activism.

Cases in point are the European pro-immigration movements, which express solidarity and also organize support for those struggling for asylum and inclusion into society in the places where they seek refuge. Yet, without the fight of those agents that are negatively affected by the western border regime, racism, and exclusion from rights, activism in favor of migration and against policies of national isolation is hard to imagine. The civil disobedient activities of refugees and their movements drew attention to and politicized the issues in the first place (Celikates 2019). The same is true for the most famous social movements in modern history, such as the abolitionist, labor, and women's movements. Recognition theory emphasizes that group-related experiences of injustice, victims' activism, and networks of victims are crucial components for examining the emergence of movements. Hence, the advantage of recognition theory's explanatory approach lies in illuminating movements' demands and actions as an urgent, joint counterreaction to shared first-person experiences.

This does not mean it is unimaginable to conceive social movements built entirely on solidarity networks, or the pure vision to build a better world. In fact, there is valuable literature discussing whether there is a duty to resist injustice and join protests even if one is not directly a victim of injustice (e.g., Delmas 2018; Chapter 5—6). I deeply appreciate these inquiries and the idea of solidarity as a crucial component of social movements. Nevertheless, I believe that recognition theory rather aims at following Marx's notion that victims' activism, i.e., the efforts of those who suffer and feel oppressed instead of proxy politics (Marx 1875, 165), should take center stage in our protest examinations. At the heart of recognition theory are protesters' motivating reasons to fight injustices that are related to their personal lives. Although Honneth is obviously not providing complete explanations, I think that the *minimal requirements for the emergence of movements* put forward by his theory provide a very useful framework to pursue the inquiry to normatively reflect the meaning of each movement's conflict activities and to detect injustices in society. His recognition theory framework is particularly valuable, since sociologists tell us that joint actions are often implicitly articulated and only rationalized by agents in an *ad hoc* manner (Herzog and Zacka 2017, 772). This is why there is an urgent need for the interpretation and normative reflection of movements'

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

actions, and Honneth is offering a particularly useful framework to satisfy that need through the application of recognition theory.

To summarize, I have argued that recognition theory is illuminating the emergence of social movements by providing six requirements: such activities emerge if a) the victims of recognition denials realize and deliberate within b) a shared communal space with c) a group of individuals who had shared experiences, which stem from d) problems that are of public relevance and not simply of personal interest. Such conditions eventually e) shift the moral attention of resilient individuals toward actions to tackle these issues, and f) under the absence of sufficient institutional political means, cause them to join forces and struggle using non-institutionalized means against injustices in a quest for mutual recognition and future satisfaction of disregarded claims.

Based on these elaborations, new pressing questions arise: How should we apply the concept of experiences of injustice in order to interpret the meaning of movements' activities? Also, how should we evaluate the justifiability of movements' claims? I try to answer these questions in the next chapter by first debating the applicability and the methodological implications of recognition theories' explanatory approach to movements, and later marking the transition to its evaluative approach for justifying their claims and actions.

Chapter 2

An Evaluative Approach to Social Movements

“... social philosophy is confronted with the yearning for a new interpretation of a life trapped in its individual striving for happiness.”

—Max Horkheimer, *Inaugural Address*

There are two counter-positions against Honneth’s explanatory approach to movements. One accuses him of depoliticizing movement attempts to enforce demands by applying concepts that moralize and pacify their conflict activities (Haslanger 2020, 39 ff; Honneth and Rancière 2016, 83 ff). The other one accuses him of psychologizing activists’ justifications and goals, misconceiving them as determined by feelings of disrespect and unsatisfied desires, while downplaying their rational and political agency (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 231 ff). As I have argued in 1.2., the first criticism relies on a misleading conception of recognition theory’s notion of struggle. This objection says that the theory considers struggle as demanding merely a symbolic gesture of moral regard. The second criticism arises, I believe, due to a gap in Honneth’s theorizing: he fails to clarify how the concept of experiences of injustice should be applied. Responding to this issue, I will here highlight the importance of movements’ claim-making and related collective expressions about shared experiences of injustice.

In this section, I argue that the concept of *expressions of injustice* is key for Honneth’s recognition-based approach, since such expressions are the source of information for exploring the meaning of, and the norms expressed by, movements. Instead of psychologizing protesters’ aims, Honneth’s theory should be understood as referring to collective expressions about shared experiences of injustice as a way to uncover social and institutional circumstances where people feel oppressed, harmed, and unfairly treated. These expressions become material for examining and evaluating movements, since they can be understood—as shown in previous sections—as being produced by actions of disrespect and experienced violations of normative expectations, which supply the motivational potential to fight such threats. For instance, recall the slogan of the anti-slavery movement: “No person should be the property of another” and “Take off the chains. Abolish slavery”. Activists branded the commodification and exploitation of individuals, unfree labor, and personal domination as dehumanizing, and thus demanded an end to slavery. Further, remember the famous slogan of the women’s movements: “Equal pay for equal work”. Unequal pay is here branded as unjust,

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

and activists thus demand the same pay as their male fellow-employees who do equivalent work. If we apply recognition theory to these cases, we first focus on activists' demands, slogans, joint practices, and articulations of grievances (i.e., movement activities), examining them as expressing information about experienced injustices. Second, we trace these expressions about injustice back—reformulate them—to morally guided recognition claims, e.g., the claim to be equally respected in one's human autonomy and protected against domination, as well as the meritocratic claim to be fairly esteemed according to one's personal achievements and contributions to collective aims.

The idea that *movements' activities express and testify to injustices* is also suggested by sociological research, which shows that the victims of shared experiences of injustice are inclined to join forces and *collectively express claims and grievances* (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 3 ff). My understanding of Honneth's recognition theory is influenced by such research. In my view, he offers a promising social-theoretical framework that holds out the prospect that there is reason in revolt¹⁷ through reconstructing the normative content underlying social movements' protest actions and related claims. In such claims, protesters complain about shared experiences of injustices and moral injuries, and recognition theory illuminates these claims with regard to failed expectations of mutual recognition in societal coexistence.

Yet others have argued that this theory should be understood as mainly focusing on the normative content of protesters' motivations, rather than on claims (Renault 2019, xix and 60). But this description is slightly misleading. Surely, recognition theory views suffering caused by recognition denials as the motivational starting-point to the struggle for a future satisfaction of disregarded expectations. On a methodological level, however, we begin with collective claim-making, rather than motivations, when examining movement protest. Thus, it is more suitable to say that we examine *how protest claims are normatively grounded in recognition expectations and disregards*, and how the related experiences motivate victims to rise up and refuse injustice. Asserting that we examine motivations (Renault 2019, 64) gives instead the confusing impression that recognition theorists start their endeavor with conducting surveys on the streets and provide psychological analyses about protesters' suffering.¹⁸ But *motivations*—defined as mental states, feelings, and affections—are complicated sources for philosophical assessments. Motivations may be unconscious and

¹⁷ I here pick up the inspiring subtitle of the printed version of the leftist US magazine *Jacobin*: <https://jacobinmag.com/>

¹⁸ To be clear, I admire Renault's work *The Experience of injustice* (2019) and align with his view that Honneth's recognition paradigm makes it possible to account for movements' affective dimension (i.e., taking seriously the feelings of injustice at the center of protesters' moral outrage, provoked by the non-satisfaction of recognition expectations) (Renault 2019, 55 ff.).

distorted for protesters, and thus difficult to extract. Recognition theorists make use of and are inspired by psychological research, but seldom conduct it themselves. Rather, they start with applying theory to social phenomena like the collective claims of movements, which are seen as sources of information that are up for interpretation and critical reflections. Motivations are crucial in this framework but should be seen more as *motivating reasons* than as mental states and feelings (Alvarez 2016, and 2018). This concept enables us to focus on the question: what reasons motivate agents to act? As mentioned in the first chapter, recognition theory offers *explanations for what reasons motivate protesters to rise up and fight* (1.3), without saying that these explanations exhaust the full range of protesters' motivations. The precise mental states from which a person or group acts can differ from the explanations that enable us to understand actions, i.e., the reasons that make action intelligible (cf., Alvarez 2018, 3297 f.). Honneth provides more of an *explanatory framework to reconstruct motivating reasons* than a psychological method to assess actual mental states, as he clarifies when he says that recognition theory does not differentiate between intentional or unintentional forms of protest, and is not focused on whether protesters are aware of their recognition-based motivational drives (Honneth 2012, 261).

Therefore, I distance myself from an overly psychological reading and rather stress the notion that social movements are characterized by collective normative claim-making. On the one hand, those claims describe negative social experiences, which point at injustices. On the other hand, they claim that injustice must end. On the explanatory level, we aim to reconstruct the motivating reasons of protesters through applying recognition theory to these claims. On the evaluative level, movements' activities are understood as expressing shared experiences of injustice by making two types of claims: these are negative, evaluative claims as well as positive, prescriptive claims. In this chapter, I will further illuminate how these types of normative claims should be conceptualized, how recognition theory can be applied to them, and what resources this theory provides for evaluating them and thus for evaluating the justifiability of social movements.

2.1 Joint Normative Claim-Making

Experiences of injustice expressed through the joint normative claim-making of participants in social movements are particularly relevant to recognition theory for two reasons. First, they are relevant on a descriptive level since they provide sources for exploring the meaning of conflict activities, displaying how they arise from morally guided reactions to disturbed

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

intersubjective relationships and violated expectations and thus revealing a moral grammar. To approach movements as expressing experiences of injustice is to gather material to explore their meaning. While other approaches focus on movement protesters' political and legal statements, inquiring whether these statements provide concrete solutions to clearly articulated problems, recognition theory is sensitive to the hidden claims underlying anti-social behavior, acts of contention, evaluative emotions, and spontaneous acts of collective protest. It does not treat activists as passive victims of blind emotion, but as beings motivated by distinct experiences of disrespect. Its focus on the injustice experiences expressed through joint normative claims sensitizes its practitioners to listen to activists' inchoate slogans and demands to broaden society (cf., Zum 2022, 1). Recognition theory holds out the prospect of understanding protesters' introspection, taking seriously their moral and political agency and, most importantly, reflecting their stories at face value as making understandable claims. As such claims and related protest actions are not only emotional but include evaluative judgements accompanied by explanatory narratives about moral rightness and wrongness in life, it behooves the social and political theorist to take such elements of self-understanding seriously. Hence, recognition theory is sensitive to what Miranda Fricker (2007) notably calls *epistemic injustice*, namely that some forms of knowledge are overlooked or marginalized. Recognition theory posits that protest activities are urgent acts against violated expectations, uncovering their political relevance by turning to hidden levels of frustration, misrecognition, dishonor, and feelings of social shame—instead of dismissing them because protesters do not make appropriate or systematic demands¹⁹ (Renault 2019, 61 ff.; Zum 2022, 10).

Beyond this *descriptive* utility, another reason why experiences of injustice expressed through movements' joint normative claim-making are relevant for recognition theory is that this theory treats the claims of protestors as *epistemological* and *normative resources* (Herzog and Zacka 2017, 768) to detect both societal issues and claims for justice. The theory grounds its critique and promotion of norms in a reformulation of progressive protesters' demands in terms of urgent, recognition-led claims (e.g., rights, social esteem, and dignity), assuming they include claims about both current injustices and what future justice requires. Honneth's theory of recognition starts its normative reflections from specific social contexts and related situated interests in justice. In this, it is following critical theory's original goal that social and political philosophers ought to start inquiries from the implicit morality of actual practices. Thus, it aims to unify its ideal theory and actual non-ideal practices (Ingram 2018, 30).

¹⁹ A case in point is the famous slogan of the German squatters' movement: "Break, what breaks you". It is an inappropriate political claim, which nevertheless reflected actual problems and a protest justification of young activists in the 1970/80s.

Idealizing moral theories adduce timeless norms of justice from human nature or from reason, without reference to a particular society. Such theories are used to define principles of rights and duties that are detached (external) from citizens' actual claims and related actions. Such ideal moral theories acquire real force and content through subsequent application to social circumstances. Recognition theory works in the opposite direction; its advocates seek norms based on and reformulated from the demands and practice claims of conflict agents as these take place in society. This establishes a dynamic (immanent) relationship between theory and practice for formulating future demands for justice and progressive societal change, taking the normative claims of social movements as a starting point. This approach assumes that the principles we apply in the analysis and evaluation of society must have a pre-theoretical basis, namely, they should be anchored in "the critical practices" of protesters (Honneth [1989] 2014, 20). This is about feasibility. The normative claims developed through a deep understanding of movements' protests are assumed to be more realistic (Valentini 2012, 660), easier to enforce and more strongly linked to citizens' actual needs than those envisioned in theoretical utopias, as well as more persuasive than the mere abstract ideals often provided by political moralism (Stemplowska 2016, 294). Without such a basis, normative reflections are assumed to contain little substance. In short, recognition theory begins with the moral grammar of social conflict practices, aiming to understand, assess, and draw lessons from them regarding what one ought to do or to value.

However, following the notions of the Frankfurt School tradition of critical theory that the normative ideals used to criticize a society ought to be rooted in the experiences of and reflections on that society—reconstructing the normative possibilities in a particular given context and intellectually helping to realize them (Young 2011, 5-6)—there are various answers to this question: what are the crucial resources of social critique and positive social change? For instance, Horkheimer's early work concentrates on the labor movement and the notion that the actions of this movement would represent major human interests, which should be advocated and guided by critical social theory. (Horkheimer 1937, 269; Honneth [1989] 2014, 26) Adorno, by contrast, focusses on aesthetic and childhood experiences as sources for change (cf., Honneth [1989] 2014, 80 f), following the pessimistic notion that progress should be seen as the prevention of regress (Adorno 2006, 202). Alternatively, many of those who follow Habermas highlight the more general idea of drawing on immanent sources of normativity, which are assumed to exist in the institutional framework and legal norms of modern societies (e.g., Forst 2020). Finally, there are those in the critical theory camp who

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

insist on the conflict activities of social movements as the preferred sources of inspiration for *critique* and change. (e.g., Zurn 2015; Renault 2018; Celikates 2018).

As should be apparent by now, the recognition-based approach clearly belongs to the last camp. While following Horkheimer's call for a theoretical analysis of societal injustice that is both interdisciplinary and politically intervening (Horkheimer 1937, 195 ff.) and the claim of the young Marx that critical philosophy ought to be the "self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age" (Marx 1843a, 346), recognition theory aims to use the "critical activities" of protest movements as the empirical anchoring-point for social critique (Honneth [1989] 2014, 19—27). It tries to anchor its criticisms in societal reality through the elaboration of oppositional expressions, from which it takes its cue, but which it does not uncritically follow. Recognition theory's special link to movements rests upon three premises: First, it treats *movements' protests as the inspirational sources* for its normative reflections on society, using these massive conflict phenomena as "seismographs"²⁰ that provide *knowledge about major problems* and related normative issues in societal coexistence, which must be addressed in both a theoretical and a practical manner. Second, recognition theory assumes that social movements are *able to assist in solving the problems* they articulate, through effects such as shifting public attention, fighting injustices, and building new political networks. (cf., Renault 2019, 50) Third, recognition theory sees its elaborations *as a form of intellectual support* for movements. (Horkheimer 1937, 189) It aims to ground its analyses in practices of collective critique (e.g., movements' actions carried out by disobedient citizens), echoing Marx's early notion that the theoretical critique of society occurs in the context of massive critical practices, and that such a theory should turn itself into an "organ" of these practices (Marx 1847, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 143). Hence, recognition theory takes sides, and it seeks to promote, support, and illuminate chances for progressive societal change by examining and assessing movements' claims, activities, and effects (Celikates 2018, 206).

The third aspect in particular must be emphasized. Recognition theory claims to be inspired by *critical theory's hope for progressive social change* if social critique is anchored in the practical force of collective actions. One could say that this theory requires an activist approach (Dempsey *et al.*, 2017, 321): it seeks to anchor its evaluations and critiques in social movements since it understands their critical activities as an inner, societal, driving force for positive change (Horkheimer 1937, 189). In fact, the ability of movements to produce change

²⁰ Social movements fulfill an *epistemic function* in both revealing collective grievances and in alerting the public to societal problems. They shift the public's attention and change its attitude through spectacular mass events. Beyond these *seismographic abilities*, movements' activities are productive by spurring creativity in understanding those problems and elaborate solutions (cf., Kolers 2016, 583 f.).

is the key assumption that inspires recognition theory to reason about movements in the first place. If change enforced through protest were seen as illusory, then movements would be unworthy of attention. Accordingly, movements have an epistemic and practical function for recognition theory. Their activities are seen as points of reference to spot societal problems as well as to elaborate solutions. In turn, such solutions can justify the hope that there exist agents in society who are willing and capable of enforcing change and remedying identified problems.

But a problem remains: how can we be sure that activists' testimonies are authentic and that we are willing to advocate for these solutions to their underlying claims? Expressions of negative experience do not seem like a well-founded starting point for detecting real social injustice, since they can be traced back to either actual or merely perceived individual injustices. People may struggle for recognition even though their beliefs are false and their claims exaggerated. For instance, Neo-Nazis think that they ought to be treated as superior humans. Right-wing populists complain about the violation of their freedom of speech when they receive public criticism. Even though this might be a case of a shared experience of injustice regarding legal respect, in liberal societies there is no right to pass through public life uncriticized. Instead, legitimate criticisms remind us that neither a negative description of a person nor a challenge to a person's status is necessarily a recognition denial. On the contrary, by being subject to critique we can improve ourselves and achieve a truer understanding of our experiences (cf., Iser 2019).

Hence, we should address the question of whether the activities of movements always promote the values of mutual care, equal respect, and esteem. In fact, experiences of a denial of recognition cannot, on their own, justify protest activities. Instead, the rise of populist, fascist, or religious fundamentalist movements shows that it is necessary to clarify *what separates justifiable from unjustifiable cases*. This is an unsolved puzzle for the theory of recognition, as has been noted by many scholars (Iser 2008, 174; Zurn 2015, 90), who say that Honneth has not sufficiently clarified the relationship between his normative and explanatory approaches to social movements. For instance, how should we think about those who clearly begin their social involvement from experiences of disrespect, but struggle against equal rights and deny the equal value of other humans?

Such cases encourage us to discuss the kinds of resources recognition theory offers for evaluating the justifiability of movements. To do this, I wish to pick up two concepts introduced previously: *explanations for movement protesters' motivating reasons to rise up* on the one hand, and the *justifiability of their normative claims* on the other, drawing on the

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

work of Maria Alvarez (2016; and 2018). Such a distinction enables us to better separate the question of what reasons motivate agents to protest from the question as to whether these are good reasons, i.e., reasons that favor and justify their acting thus (Alvarez 2018). Recognition theory enables us to pursue both tasks. *Applying its explanatory approach* enables us to reach an understanding of activists' motivating reasons; an approach to make their activities intelligible. *Applying its evaluative approach*, on the other hand, enables us to critically assess movements' collective normative claims. In order to discern whether their claims are justifiable, however, we must complement recognition theory's explanatory approach (at least) with elements of a normative theory of justice (Renault 2019, 64).

2.2 Recognition and Justice

Social and political philosophy is widely regarded as the critical reflection about how we should best organize our collective life. (Miller 2007, 104) When we use these philosophical tools to reflect on ourselves as social and political beings (Forst 2020, 17), we aim to clarify and justify our basic social norms, values, and principles (e.g., equality, liberty, solidarity, diversity) and our related institutional arrangements (e.g., rights, nations, senates) for our coexistence. These philosophies focus on the “political,” since they ask how we should distribute the burdens and benefits of our cooperation, why we should obey laws, or when authority is legitimate. Further, they see social orders as collectively made—instead of natural and unchangeable—and, thus, open to change through joint political actions—which in turn raises the need for justification (Gosepath 2008). Certainly, justice is one of the key concepts in social and political philosophy. It concerns mutual claims and obligations between partners in societal interactions; claims that can be rightfully made against the agent dispensing justice, whether that be a person or an institution. Issues of justice thus arise in circumstances in which agents advance claims—e.g., for fair distribution of wealth, freedom, or security—that are potentially conflicting, and we appeal to justice to resolve such conflicts by determining what each is properly entitled to have (Miller 2007). A traditional aim of such philosophies is to articulate and defend a theory of justice that is best suited to evaluate the legitimacy of social orders and of political actions against the background of justified claims (Gosepath 2008, 1010).

The contemporary debate is largely built around John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1971), in which he argues in favor of a social and democratic state of law, wherein civil liberties have priority while wealth and income must be equally distributed, unless an unequal

distribution is to the benefit of the worst off. In response to this *liberal egalitarianism*, other theories reject redistribution and endorse market *libertarianism* (e.g., Robert Nozick), or promote *socialism* and aim to overcome private ownership of the means of production (e.g., G.A. Cohen), while others are rather aiming at the greatest possible good for the greatest number, as in *utilitarianism* (e.g., Peter Singer), or seeking for a more community-based justification for social justice like *communitarianism* (e.g., Michael Sandel). As a result of this debate, there has been an explosion of interest in finding a theory of justice which best illuminates what justice means as well as what is required to treat each person as free and equal (Kymlicka 2002, 3; Miller 2003, 74 ff).

What can recognition theory contribute to social and political philosophy's debate over justice? In this section, I will not respond by promoting a new, comprehensive theory of justice and refuting those of others. I aim to explicate the normative principles underlying Honneth's theory and to outline how they can help us when evaluating political actions and institutions.

2.2.1 Three Forms of Recognition led Obligations

Let us begin with a basic question. Is every denial of recognition unjust? Given that we have understood recognition as vital for each person to constitute a positive self-relation, and we have understood the denial of related claims as possibly causing serious to harm one's autonomy and sociability (sections 1.3 and 1.4), one might think that a denial of recognition is never justifiable. But this is a misconception. Recall the example of the single student mentioned earlier: A student complains that she feels her grade is unfair—she experiences a denial of esteem—and requests a better grade. However, a subsequent investigation suggests, for the sake of our argument, that the grading process met all requirements of fair grading and other teachers agreed with the grade she received. In short, her grade was appropriate. Such cases illustrate that one might feel unfairly treated, crave recognition, and seek esteem for one's merit, even though one was actually not exposed to injustice. As upsetting as such assessments might be, not every denial of esteem recognition is unjust. People might feel hurt just because they hold unreasonable views about their abilities and merit in the first place (e.g., a mediocre student expects others to view her as a genius) (Iser 2019). Nevertheless, there is no right to be esteemed as the best, the winner, or the smartest. Bearing in mind that university grading systems should essentially build on the principles of meritocracy, there is no good reason to give esteem to someone by assigning them a fabulous grade if they turn in a

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

bad assignment.²¹ Rather, students expect to be graded in an equal manner using criteria (often published in a rubric) that clearly enable both students and teachers to compare each individuals' merit. It is justifiable to not grant everyone exactly the same rewards for merit, to deny recognition to those who have not earned it, to separate beginners from professionals, or to offer unique praise to winners. Hence, there is no support for the claim that every denial of recognition is unjust. A denial of esteem—that is, of one type of recognition—can be just, as it depends on the individual who earns and merits the esteem. Such cases can be understood as *justified denials of recognition*.

However, even though we should judge and esteem each person based on the particular worth of their work, their abilities, their traits, and their merits, we still have an obligation to treat each person with equal respect regarding their formal status of being human. Thus, *recognition for equal status* should be separated from *recognition for particular worth* (Bird 2018, 15). While the latter resembles an appreciation for special and valuable features of a person, the former resembles universal mutual respect for the fact that a person is a rational agent and thus capable of moral autonomy (Iser 2019). Here, I emphasize recognition theory's underlying deontological elements, in particular with regard to the idea of respect. In fact, recognition theory's irreducible Kantian moment is promoting the absolute duty that each one equally deserves legal and interpersonal respect, recognizing each person's capabilities for autonomy (Deranty 2009, 354). In cases of deep disagreements, claims to equal respect for moral autonomy enjoy absolute priority in Honneth's framework (Honneth 2000, 190). He thus emphasizes that the most common way in which complaints about disrespect arise in politics concern the status that agents are accorded by society (Honneth 2012, 259 f.). Modern struggles for recognition are often positioned against unjust privilege in the legal sphere and promote egalitarian status (Bird 2018, 2) Hence, depriving citizens of valid civil rights can be seen as uncontroversial cases of unjustified denial of recognition.

At this point, Honneth's normative theory seems to be much less unique than expected. Many Western political philosophers have devoted sustained attention to *respect recognition* since the publication of Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*. In fact, Rawls moved the problem of a secure sense of self-respect, and the social bases that support it, to the forefront of conversations about distributive justice (Bird 2019), treating it as a fundamental primary good that state institutions ought to secure for all subjects. Self-respect is here characterized

²¹ Note that university or college grades are not merely based on merit. In some parts of modern education systems, grades or written assessments are also based on improvement by the student or the meeting of milestones; this is particularly true in early childhood. Merit arises when we are compared with others, which tends to happen in later childhood or early adulthood.

by two elements: a "... secure conviction that [one's] conception of [one's] good, [one's] plan of life, is worth carrying out ..." as well as "... a confidence in one's ability, so far as it is within one's power, to fulfill one's intentions..." (Rawls 1971, 440). Honneth's recognition theory shows parallels to such Kantian-inspired political theories, conceiving a social institution as just if and only if it is granting all members the opportunity to participate in and experience respect (Honneth and Farrell 1997). However, the multiculturalization of Western societies spurred the interest of social and political philosophers to define a broader scope of recognition-led claims. Advocates of the ethics and politics of recognition draw attention to the issue that securing one's equal status and related respect recognition is insufficient to increase autonomy for all, arguing that a one-sided emphasis on equality can risk contributing to solidifying group-based oppression. Such critics insist that *esteem for group differences* and *special care for individuals* are crucial requirements as well, since mere equal treatment without support for the disadvantaged may simply benefit the already-advantaged agents in a society (Young 2011, 11 and 156 ff).

The recognition-based approach which I propose to adopt takes these concerns seriously. Honneth's Hegel-inspired theory provides a promising framework, since it covers three types of social recognition, ranging from *love and care* to the forms of interpersonal *esteem* and legal *respect*. (Honneth 2012, 148 ff) Expanding on this idea, recognition involves a *threefold set of obligations* in distinct spheres of liberal society. In primary relations, on the one hand, we have *special obligations* towards friends and family members, owing each other emotional love and care. In cooperation, on the other hand, we have *special obligations* towards colleagues and comrades, owing each other mutual esteem or work-related solidarity. Whereas *love* recognizes emotional vulnerability and uniqueness and is afforded to persons in close primary relations, *esteem* enables us, for instance, to assess and compare merits (e.g., esteeming worthy individual contributions in market competitions), and can also help us express *solidarity* for those to whom we have made promises or commitments. *Respect* for the humanity in each person, by contrast, is distinct from esteem in which we recognize the particular worth of an individual person's traits and conduct. Whereas the latter resembles appreciation for the special features of a person as valuable, the former resembles the *universal respect* for the fact that a person is capable of moral autonomy (Iser 2019). These forms should be differentiated as *love-*, *esteem-* and *respect-recognition*. While love- and esteem-recognition relate to special obligations owed to a subset of persons, *respect-recognition* relates to *universal moral obligations* owed to all simply *qua* humans (Jeske 2019). Recognition is, thus, a threefold evaluative attitude that we are mutually obliged to

adopt in order to jointly protect humans from injustice arising from vulnerable social conditions of our integrity (Deranty 2009, 353—360; Honneth 2000, 184 f).

2.2.2 *A Politics of Universalism and Difference*

Instead of only focusing on respect-recognition and universal justice in the form of equal rights and relational duties, Honneth is particularly attentive towards pluralistic conceptions of a good life, acknowledging that what is good, satisfying, and worth striving for has diverse forms. This notion is crucial with regard to esteem-recognition. He emphasizes that esteem for diverse forms of a good life (e.g., for honorable work as an artisan, or for being a proud member of a community) is as much a crucial condition for each person's freedom as it is a requirement for their authentic, individual self-realization (Zurn 2015, 75). He treats each individual's views as resources for understanding why people might feel humiliated and what we owe each other, and also where we damage people's chances to reach a positive self-relation in coexistence if we marginalize beliefs. For instance, Honneth regards having to abandon one's particular cultural practices and language as an enormous sacrifice for the person affected by it, harming the chances to develop a positive social identity (Honneth 2000, 171 ff).

Against this background, Honneth offers a so-called "formal conception of ethical life" designed to highlight the social conditions necessary for individual well-being (Honneth 2012, 274). He advances an account of three recognition-led attitudes states of affairs, and relationships (i.e., care, esteem, and respect) as good in themselves, not necessarily by virtue of the fact that humans knowingly desire them. Rather, he is justifying recognition interactions and institutions as those conditions that somewhat objectively enable humans to attain a secured status of free agency, and self-integrity. This secured status is vital for realizing human flourishing and a good social life (Zurn 2015, 50). Honneth's account is considered "formal," as it is not recommending any particular form of life but is positioning esteem for one's form of life as one of three *fundamental social conditions necessary*²² for *authentic individual self-realization* within a variety of potential avenues, as well as the plurality of forms of life available in contemporary society (cf., Zurn 2015, 76; and Honneth 2012, 283). Recognition theory here is positioned as a contrast to the persistent influence of

²² Honneth views equal respect and esteem for the communal conditions for a positive identity formation as complementing each other: "The legal guarantee of personal autonomy is not something which stands in the way of intersubjective process of personal identity formation, but rather, conversely, first makes it feasible in society" (Honneth 1991, 23).

classical utilitarianism²³ in the moral justifications of modern political actions and institutions. It criticizes the popular focus on the satisfaction of individual interest through balancing utilities in economic calculations (cf., Honneth 2013, 350). In recognition theory, humans are viewed as much less individualistic (cf., Honneth and Joas 1980), since they are dependent on emotional care from others, on the state's legal security, and on mutual assurance and appreciation. The theory spells out the societal institutions and intersubjective conditions necessary to provide everybody with an equal chance to constitute a free and good social life. An underlying premise of recognition theory is that humans need to take part in and enjoy at least a basic level of three kinds of recognition practices in order to obtain and uphold a positive self-relation (i.e., self-respect, self-esteem, self-confidence). Social freedom for all humans can only be accomplished through a basic level of mutual acknowledgment (Honneth 2012, 283). Such a concept of freedom—one that depends on mutual assurance in social interaction—also aims to go beyond the influential commitment to methodological individualism in contemporary social and political philosophy.

By contrast, recognition theory emphasizes that the realization of freedom depends on the development of certain practical and social abilities, which in turn depend on the existence of intact communities. It emphasizes the importance of group belonging, interactions, and social bonds. In that sense, recognition is not only seen as a condition but as a *medium* in which individual freedom and a good social life is actualized. Instead of presenting the external world as simply constraining the satisfaction of individual ends, Honneth's theory focusses on social bonds as primary to constitute free agency and personal integrity. While criticizing the negative social-psychological effects related to the atomistic tendencies of modern society and related political liberalism (cf., Honneth 1991, 18f), he is thus following a modest communitarian path. He argues that humans can only enjoy themselves as free agents—understood as having authentic self-realization and control over ones' life—if they interact in primary relations, collaborate with others, and engage in public affairs, and if they experience appreciation, status respect and solidarity in communities (Honneth 2000, 185). His account of social freedom highlights humans' social and emotional interdependency (Bankovsky 2012, 156). I will further elaborate on this account in chapter 4, examining Western square occupations and the related coactive activity as well as creation of democratic assemblies as an end in itself for the participants, as they aim at partially and compensatorily

²³ However, consequentialists like Peter Singer (1989) appear to share recognition theory's moral-psychological notion that suffering is intrinsically bad, which is why we ought to strive for pleasantness and increased emotional satisfaction.

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

satisfying the need to feel regarded as worthy political actors within a community—even if these protest communities have only a brief existence.

The transition to politics seems a natural one to make. Recognition theory directs humans to protect and promote the outlined social conditions for a free and good life, focusing on institutions that should be arranged and policies that should be adopted that do the best job of promoting and implementing recognition values (Bird 2018, 3). Furthermore, the strength of Honneth's theory lies in highlighting two dimensions as equally important for a politics of recognition, suggesting that we ought to employ two strategies simultaneously: a *politics of universalism* that tries to protect the autonomy and legal rights of all humans, as well as a *politics of difference* that tries to protect agents' social identity by allowing each one to uphold their distinct culture and uniqueness²⁴ (Bird 2018, 2). Thus, while Honneth agrees to the claim—central to egalitarian conceptions of citizenship—that legal, political, and social status should never be conditioned by arbitrary factors like class, race, gender, or creed, he is likewise aligned with both Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka, agreeing that having special obligations regarding certain vulnerable groups and giving special rights, affirmative action, and exceptional treatment is sometimes the best way to promote full participation or equality, and to dismantle oppression (Kymlicka 2002, 343 ff; Taylor 1994).

Honneth's approach draws attention to a broad scope of recognitional concerns in politics. It ranges from formal universal equality recognized through legal rights, to forms of compensation for historic wrongs; from social policies that are intended to help accommodate the needs of marginalized groups and those who suffer from structural injustices, to forms of interpersonal care, mutual support, redistribution of wealth to create equal opportunity, and the promotion of change in cultural attitudes in the private and civic sphere that help undo systemic discrimination (Bird 2018, 5; Young 2011, 63). This understanding goes beyond the notion of treating recognition merely as a good that may be distributed by state institutions; instead, it is something that can only be fully realized when practiced in everyday life in general. While it is important that recognition theory be both expressed and built into institutions, it is above all a threefold evaluative attitude that should be manifested in social relations (Young 2011, 27).

²⁴ This dual strategy also separates recognition theory from those “communitarians” that claim the full realization of human potential is only realized within a recognized cultural community, as is argued by neo-Heideggerians (and, by extension, Anti-Immigrationists and Neo-Nazis). Such views are problematic as they employ an essentialist account to group-identity, emphasize esteem for groups rather than individuals, and downplay universal respect for all humans regardless of belonging.

2.2.3 Justice and the Social Conditions for Self-Realization

I have argued, so far, that Honneth's theory requires an empathetic concept of social freedom as only realizable through a threefold set of recognition-based attitudes, institutions, and related obligations. Against this background, the relation between justice and recognition should be conceived in the following way: recognition is in favor of those actions and institutions that promote, facilitate, protect, or, at least, do not violate the outlined conditions needed to achieve a positive self-relation, and thus promote a free social life for all (Zurn 2015, 10). One can pursue such a life if one is able to experience at least a basic level of three forms of recognition. Namely, if one is (i) able to contribute to coexistence based on a fearless and confident trust in the sustained emotional support of a beloved person; and (ii) if one enjoys equal legal rights to protection, along with all others, against the arbitrariness of others' wills; and also (iii) if one feels esteemed in one's individual contributions to communal ends.²⁵ Thus, Honneth grounds the constitution of both individual autonomy and social skills (and related inclusion into society) in assured experiences of recognition, i.e., in one's chances to develop a positive self-relation obtained through emotional care (self-confidence), a robust legal status (self-respect), and social appreciation (self-esteem). Thus, at the heart of recognition theory's ethics and politics (Deranty 2009, 354) is the principle that an action or institution is just by virtue of ensuring individual freedom for all through mutual recognition (Honneth 2012, 283; 2014, 57).

What about *injustice*? Following recognition theory's normative framework, an action or social institution should be evaluated as not just if it undermines, disassembles, or violates an individual's chances to attain a positive self-relation. Bearing in mind the threefold set of obligations we have listed, a denial of respect-recognition for equal status is unjust since it is harming one's human dignity. On the other hand, a denial of love-recognition for emotional uniqueness as well as esteem-recognition for particular worth could be justifiable, as it depends on the specific case whether we owe these sorts of recognition to each other. In this context, recall that actions of disrespect are threats (1.3) that are able to harm one's chances to develop a positive social identity, dismantling the conditions necessary to develop and exercise choices as part of a free and good social life (Honneth 2000, 185). For instance, while physical violence is frequently experienced as harming one's personal integrity, the

²⁵ Robin Celikates points out (Celikates 2021, 259 f.) that the strength of the claim that recognition is a basic human need and a condition for a person's social and moral agency is not entirely clear and unambivalent. Do the tri-party forms of recognition facilitate and enhance agency, or are they necessary? (ibid., 2021, 269) Considering the issue, I refer to them as important facilitating and enabling conditions, which relate to three important aspects of social needs of humans. However, I believe one form may also partially compensate for another—I address this compensatory aspect in sections 1.6 and 4.3.

exclusion from civil rights is often experienced as harming one's social integrity. Devaluation and discrimination, on the other hand, can be seen as an act of disrespect experienced as harming one's self-confidence (Honneth 2012, 212 ff). These actions should be seen as unjust, as they cause suffering derived from feeling ashamed or worthless, and from being arbitrarily treated, and thus dismantle one's chances to attain a positive self-relation, preventing agents from confidently joining in social coexistence and realizing their individual ambitions (Renault 2019, 182). These acts also are morally wrong as they harm the fundamental conditions necessary for reaching an autonomous and good social life. This account of ethics draws upon moral psychology's idea that humans are vulnerable beings, whose positive social identity depends on mutual assurance. Actions of disrespect are unjust insofar as they harm other's emotional well-being and effect numerous moral injuries (Zurn 2015, 39).

Hence, the institutions and actions that deny the recognition-led obligations outlined above should be seen as *unjust*: they indicate neglect of each individual's vital needs to be reassured and supported by others, dismantling the necessary interactive and institutional requirements for a free life. Actions and institutions are *unjust* if they deny that we owe each other this threefold set of moral and legal obligations (a basic level of love and care, social esteem and cooperation, and respect), as we ought to evaluatively perceive and acknowledge each other (e.g., vulnerability and uniqueness in primary relations, individual contributions in market cooperation, and each individual's equal capacity for moral autonomy). At the core of recognition theory's contribution to social and political philosophy's debate over justice is the principle that social institutions and political actions ought to be evaluated by whether or not they ensure that all individuals have equal opportunities to realize themselves in non-coercive, undistorted relations of mutual recognition (Zurn 2015, 75; Honneth 2012, 274 ff).

2.3 Injustice and Methodological Negativism

Is there a hierarchy among love, esteem, and respect? Given that both love- and esteem-recognition relate to entitlements that one must earn (e.g., not all deserve praise; it is justifiable to deny appreciation), while respect-recognition is unearned as it is necessary to assure moral autonomy for all humans, respect for equal status seems to enjoy priority in Honneth's normative framework. Is respect what truly matters, whereas love and esteem are pleasing benefits? Given that at least some degree of love and esteem is necessary in order to enable people to reach a positive social identity, it does not seem right to argue that such

recognition can only be earned. In fact, for those who suffer from permanent acts of contempt and negative judgements, being permanently denied esteem- and love-recognition constitutes a serious harm. One might argue that a bit of suffering due to others' negative judgments is justifiable, as it might provide an opportunity to correct one's exaggerated self-perception. But what is more important is that on-going experiences of a denial of recognition can become lasting threats that may utterly disrupt one's social identity. Furthermore, Honneth's theory assumes that all three recognition forms mutually complement each other, and often only the unconditional emotional support from trusted others can enable persons to develop sufficient self-confidence to enjoy life and develop a positive identity (Zurn 2015, 31). If a society is genuinely committed to enabling citizens to reach a free life, and if both love- and esteem-recognition are vital to that end, that society should be structured so that all are able to experience at least basic levels of love-recognition for emotional uniqueness and esteem-recognition for particular worth.

However, Honneth never claims that all persons are categorically *owed* equal esteem. Instead, he claims that all persons deserve the social conditions necessary for an equal opportunity to realize self-esteem and self-confidence (cf., Zurn 2015, 90). For example, one could make the case that society must have an obligation to remove barriers and offer equal opportunities so that all citizens have access to jobs with decent salaries, and thus facilitate esteem experiences. Also, one can argue in favor of institutions in which the very young and the old receive a basic level of emotional support and care, a level that they may not enjoy in their families.²⁶ Honneth's recognition theory defines esteem- and love-recognition as needs that should be facilitated—at least on a basic level—through unearned entitlements as well as each states' ascription of rights as both a preventative and a remedy for the systematic emotional suffering of some parts of any society.

However, Honneth's normative framework is abstract. Although love-, esteem-, and respect-recognition undoubtedly seem like vital needs that must be institutionally facilitated, the appropriate claims for mutual recognition in specific social contexts remain very unclear. On the one hand, we could say that recognition theory can only make substantive normative claims about social and political controversies that are decided case by case. On the other hand, what is more important is that we highlight a particular methodological component of Honneth's theory that helps clarify its normative ambitions: its underlying *methodological negativism*. The main goal of Honneth's theory is to evaluate those issues of justice that are

²⁶ For a more detailed normative discussion of the unearned entitlement to be loved, I recommend Matthew Liao's *The Right to Be Loved* (2015), in which he argues that parents should be seen as having a duty to love their children.

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

directly connected to victims of injustice and their normative claims. Thus, it addresses justice in a negative sense, in terms of social threats and obstacles to one's chances to achieve a free life. Recognition theory aims at understanding justice through injustice, to understand what it means to properly recognize others as equal, and to examine what respect, esteem, and care demand through joint expressions about injustices. It seeks to answer this question negatively by focusing on the claims and actions of social movements (Iser 2019; Renault 2019). This methodological negativism is based on the notion that human agents are reactive creatures who reject what is not working and oppose injustice, while tumbling into something new that they hope is less bad. Or in the words of Horkheimer, found in his inaugural address to the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt: "... social philosophy is confronted with the yearning for a new interpretation of a life trapped in its individual striving for happiness." (Horkheimer 1931, 7) In that regard, social movement actions do not necessarily tell us what a perfect world looks like, but they should be seen as marking injustice and providing resources to react against it, as well as inciting the hope that another social world is possible.

Therefore, the recognition-based approach to social movements which I propose here is particularly attentive to the morally guided claims of agents that are oppressed: those who usually formulate their grievances in terms of experienced social disrespect, dishonor, and violated expectation in their everyday lives (cf., Honneth 2000, 115). Such an approach also focuses on epistemic injustices. Instead of privileging demands that are in accordance with analytic reasoning, theoretical abstraction, and a form of oral argumentation that finds preeminent manifestation in philosophy departments and courts of law—but not in other spheres—recognition theory respects that protesters might not be trained in formulating actions in accordance with coherent concepts of injustice. Rather, recognition theory aims to identify forms of harm by linking them to experiences of disrespect and reconstructing the expectations of agents who are acting as beings embedded in institutions that are essential to reproduction, cooperation, and socialization. Recognition theory reveals a moral grammar of interpersonal, institutional, and market relations, providing an analytical tool for explicating the morally-guided claims underlying actual conflict actions and inherent demands (e.g., rights, security, or reward) of agents. As such, it follows a modest ethical realism, reflecting normative principles that are widely accepted, valid, and established in the various spheres of society, in the sense that these spheres embody ethical values (e.g., legal rights in liberal democracies, social esteem in collaborative endeavors, or love in intimate relationships) (Honneth 2014, 10). If stability and consensus are expected, recognition theory examines

whether the normative promises in these institutional spheres have been fulfilled, or whether justified claims have not yet found appropriate recognition (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 186).

Whereas the mainstream forms of normative critique and political philosophy typically focus on distributional goods (e.g. liberties, opportunities, resources, and the social conditions of respect), and provide abstract normative guidance (Iser 2019) for an idealized intra-societal contract situation—in which self-interested individuals under the veil of ignorance regarding their future social position agree upon a basic set of guiding principles for coexistence (i.e. equal liberty and the difference principle)—recognition theory follows a Marxian-Hegelian path. It aims to provide normative guidance for a non-idealized world by relating to actual protests and related claims about injustice and demands for change. In fact, recognition theory aims to provide normative guidance for a polarized world of conflict and deep disagreement, in which we seek for answers as to what to do and whom to support after the veil of ignorance is lifted, when agreements acceptable to all are not within reach (e.g., Rawls 1971; Shapiro 2012; Kymlicka 2002; 53 ff.).

Therefore, recognition theory is particularly valuable for its application to concrete activities of movements. While using methodological negativism and a reconstructive path, it provides a useful framework with regard to issues in which groups express injustices through moral outrage, assuming that their collective claim-making can be examined as joint reactions to experiences of recognition or the lack of it:

...[it is the] basic conviction that the ‘struggle’ for recognition is provoked by a particular kind of moral experience: the tendency to challenge established forms of mutual recognition stems from the historically fuelled feeling that others unjustly fail to recognize certain aspects of who one is. [This] thesis [...] appeals [...] to the moral vulnerability of humans, who turn to protest and rebellion only when faced with certain experiences. (Honneth 2002, 504)

The theory locates the core upon which concepts of social injustice rest in the feeling of violation of what are taken to be legitimate expectations of recognition and related hopes to develop a positive social identity in coexistence.

Lastly, the understanding I propose of the relationship between recognition and justice provides a starting-point to dive deeper into recognition theory’s normative framework and its application. Following Honneth’s broad approach, recognition theory concerns the integrity of personal relations and universal respect, as well as esteem and care, proposing a formal concept of ethical life and outlining key conditions for social freedom (Honneth 1991, 20). In the following section, I will focus on the important question as to how we should separate justifiable from unjustifiable movements’ activities, applying such an evaluative approach.

2.4 Justifiable and Unjustifiable Claims

Thus far, I have shown that we are able to conceive of principles of justice and injustice, explicating recognition theory's underlying normative framework. I have argued that we should make use of this framework to evaluate movements. Also, I have called for applying recognition theory's explanatory approach to examine the meaning of their activities. These two approaches should be seen as complementing each other for the purpose of understanding and evaluating social movements. In this section, I further discuss how we should apply recognition theory for critically evaluating social movements, focusing on the justifiability of their normative claims, i.e., on the question of which reasons favor and justify them.

Whereas social movements are often discredited in our public debates because of their allegedly inappropriate activities of civil disobedience, I think that we should start evaluating them from a different angle: that of the movements' *joint normative claim-making*. Instead of focusing only on the impact of their activities, we should start assessing their justifiability with regard to those values on which they are founded. We should focus on the values comprising a movement's *joint negative-evaluative* and *positive-prescriptive claims* that are inherent in their slogans, actions, and demands. The values underlying their activities are a promising starting point to assess movements' justifiability for three reasons: (i) for taking the political agency of protesters seriously, instead of stepping into the trap of epistemic injustice, (ii) for holding movements responsible for their conflict activities, instead of reducing them to helpless victims of social circumstances, (iii) and finally, for being able to evaluate them before we know the effects or efficiency of their actions. In such an evaluation, I follow the principle that both social relations and institutions are justifiable only to the extent that they aim to facilitate, promote, or secure the realization of free agency and self-integrity for all through a threefold set of mutual recognitions. This normative framework, I believe, offers strong grounds for assessing political actions in general and the activities of social movements in particular.

How, then, should we separate justifiable from unjustifiable movements based on the values underlying their claims? Honneth follows a Hegelian path: While engaging in descriptive or—more adequately—reconstructive ethics, he says that the societal spheres in which subjects live already provide them with the normative resources needed to criticize and go beyond such spheres (Iser 2019). He analyses current institutions of recognition (e.g., the family, the market, and democratic states) as already partly embodying and promoting *universal normative values* (e.g., equal rights for all). However, the *implicit validity surplus* of

these universal norms constantly collides with their merely *insufficient factual realizations* (e.g., rights for men only), and has the potential to trigger protest initiatives in favor of the greater realization. This assumes that disadvantaged groups attempt to appeal to social norms that are valid (i.e., institutionalized) but that are being interpreted and applied in a deficient manner, or have a wrong scope, and to turn these norms against exclusions and hierarchies by relying on them for the justification of their needs (Honneth 2017, 914). This seems to suggest that movements are justifiable insofar as they claim a greater realization of universal justice.

However, Honneth has been accused of following an account that is too optimistic in regard to social movements' normative claims. His critics have emphasized that speaking of recognition as a vital need cannot mean that struggles for recognition are automatically justified (Alexander and Pia Lara 1996). One reason is that it cannot be solely up to the self-described victims of misrecognition to determine that they have been misrecognized. While victims' testimony is important in bringing to light denials of recognition and epistemic injustices that would remain otherwise ignored, complaints from those who feel maltreated cannot be purely self-validating; they might reflect partiality, narcissism, attention-seeking, or manipulateness and insincerity. Those who fight for more recognition surely think that they deserve it, but this does not mean that they have good reasons to rise up and their claims are justified, and that they are striving for a greater fulfilment of free agency and self-integrity for all. For instance, nationalist movements usually fight for improvements only on behalf of an ethnic or language group. Anti-immigration movements demand a limitation of equal civil rights and thus despise universalism. Unfortunately, Honneth's position concerning these cases remains unclear, as he has bypassed related issues by focusing on liberal movements that match his approach (Honneth 2015c, 209): this seems to undermine the applicability of his twofold approach.

Yet, in his defense, one could argue that Honneth's main normative interest lies on an institutional rather than on an interactional level. He does not advise what protesters should do, but focusses on examining the conflictual dynamics of social change in liberal societies (Honneth 2012, 270). Against this background, he proposes both *egalitarian inclusion* and *individualization* as important normative standards for critically assessing societal change in terms of progress and regress (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 299). To put it simply, societies are seen as better (*progressive*) when they lessen discrimination and exclusion on one hand as well as acknowledge the distinctiveness of individuals across more dimensions of their personality on the other (Zurn 2015, 7). This improvement is actualized if each new struggle of movements is able to improve existing recognition relations and states of affairs ("the

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

moral level of social integration”), thereby improving the chances of each person to identify with skills and achieve greater autonomy in societal coexistence (Honneth 2010, 115 ff.).

It is not difficult to see how this normative framework can also be used to evaluate the claims of various movements. However, the following ambiguities disrupt a direct application and should be addressed before doing so. First, Honneth’s work is too strongly bound to *liberal* struggles. Although he has awareness of harmful group dynamics, bad uprising, and authoritarian tendencies in modern-day politics (Honneth 2011; *ibid.*, 2014, 86 f; or 2010, 106 f; 261 ff), he never applied his recognition theory to illiberal movements. In his main works—*Struggle for Recognition* (Honneth 2012) and *Freedom’s Rights* (Honneth 2014)—he does not even sufficiently address the age of German Fascism. Including such cases is important to a full account of social movements and would surely create a more complex story. Second, Honneth focusses too much on the long-term societal impact of movement struggles. Since he evaluates conflictual processes of change in current liberal societies, claiming to detect an underlying historical logic of progress enforced through recognition struggles, his evaluative approach seems largely based on a retrospective assessment of a movement’s impacts on society and institutions, rather than clearly contributing to contemporary normative debates about whether their claims and actions are justifiable. Given these ambiguities, it seems beneficial to go beyond Honneth’s underlying optimism and his emphasis on long-term change enforced through liberal movements. We should instead extend the phenomenological horizon of movement conflicts; first, we should examine why they rise up and what they aim at, and only then start assessing them in light of criteria that separate legitimate from illegitimate struggles (Iser 2019). Instead of being tempted to assume that social movements in general push for a greater realization of universal justice, we should assess their justifiability with reference to the values on which they are founded in light of recognition theory’s underlying normative framework (i.e., whether they work towards free agency and self-integrity for all and aim to lessen discrimination as well as acknowledge the distinctiveness of individuals across more dimensions of their personality).

Following these arguments, we can make use of the unexploited potential of Honneth’s theory. We can say that egalitarian inclusion in current societal institutions of recognition, and the facilitating of autonomy and strengthening of individualization therein, are useful criteria for detecting well-founded claims put forward by movements. Applying these criteria, the protests of movements are *justifiable if they strive for the societal inclusion* and further realization of universal entitlements and problematize inequality or outdated privileges within an institution that purports to promote equal rights and treatment. Also, we

can justify those who problematize situations where valid norms are not enforced, disregarded, and violated, thus *striving for a correction* (e.g., of human rights violations). Furthermore, we can justify those who criticize imbalances between spheres, *striving for a transformation* of social norms in order to actualize assured claims (e.g., claiming social rights to assure individual freedom in the context of market competition) (Iser 2008, 194 ff).

But this proposed normative scheme also reveals new issues. While strengthening and facilitating equal autonomy looks clearly like an important value in modern societies, it is much less controversial than positively reacting to a person's individual specificities across the three dimensions of self-confidence, respect, and esteem. For instance, what about the justifiability of cases that include affirmative action and forms of positive discrimination? Or what about the problem of sheltering protected communal spaces for persons of oppressed groups? When we face these questions, it becomes apparent that the proposed criteria for distinguishing between justifiable and non-justifiable movements lean too heavily on an egalitarian normative scheme. This is perhaps one of the most disputed concepts of justice, as it seems to ignore structural, group-based oppression. Exactly how institutions should recognize and support distinct groups is a contested issue. In response to these problems, I want to re-emphasize that the recognition-based approach, which I propose to adopt, endorses the notion that *universal respect frequently requires differential, individualized treatment*. As outlined in section 2.2.2, I resist the conventional wisdom that viciously accuses the "politics of identity" of damaging the normative superiority of universal equality (e.g., Fukuyama 2018; Lilla 2017). Instead, I agree with theorists of multiculturalism that giving particular rights and granting affirmative action to marginalized groups is often the best method to dismantle oppression and guarantee equal participation (Young 2011, 122 ff).

In fact, by applying recognition theory it is possible to discern that humans have two distinct yet overlapping forms of needs for esteem in their social identities, and that both forms are necessary if those needs are not to be distorted and misrepresented in the practices and discourses that envelope them. These are, first, the need for terms of *acceptance* that allow us to live as we are, rather than requiring us to maintain inauthentic personae. And second, the need to *be positively valued* by our fellows, our presences welcomed rather than deplored and our contributions appreciated rather than belittled. Considering the importance of these types of needs for social esteem, the fights of feminists and of anti-racist movements in particular should be assessed as victories of democratic activism. Societal changes brought about by these social movements aimed at addressing deep-rooted sources of domination and drawing attention to the systematic marginalization of vulnerable groups. This is why I see

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

such movements and their related *politics of difference* as voicing justified claims, as they addressed (and continue to address) unjust privilege and persistent cultures of discrimination in our societies, struggling for inclusion and equal civil rights. I will return to these specific cases in chapter 7, in which I criticize the popular concern that a movements' politics of difference may destabilize liberal society and effect group Balkanization (Fukuyama 2018).

Another serious challenge to the theory of recognition was notably voiced by Nancy Fraser. She has doubted that applying it would properly account for social movements' claims in general and offer sound normative resources to evaluate them. Instead, she has reasoned that recent movements in particular draw attention to issues associated with *global injustice*, arguing that these issues are not primarily due to misrecognition but stem from systemic features of globalized capitalism, such as when multinational enterprises relocate factories and lay off workers in order to increase profit and benefit shareholders (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 122 ff). Subsequently, there have been debates as to whether it is desirable to analyze all movements—from riots over poor laborer struggles, to protests against factory farming—in terms of social (mis)recognition (Ingram 2018, 74), and, more specifically, to what extent global injustices and protests against them can actually be evaluated in these terms (Heins 2012; cf., Zurn *et al.*, 2010, 241–318). Fraser has voiced the concern that the *moralization of social conflicts* through recognition theory threatens to replace the urgent matter of *economic distribution* on the political agenda (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 242). She has insisted against Honneth that only a politics of recognition taken together with a politics of redistribution allows for the right kind of justice that guarantees to each an “equal participation” in public life. While redistribution would secure the material conditions of such an ideal, recognition safeguards its intersubjective conditions (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 264 ff).

In light of this *critique*, Honneth has replied (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 177 ff) that recognition should be seen as a key tool to assess both capitalist societies and the global economy. He has insisted that the recognition concept is applicable to questions of *distributive justice*, but that we must differentiate between *status respect*, seen as the universal condition for a life of dignity, and *esteem*, seen as the appreciation of personal worth in light of common goods. What counts as an injustice, then, depends on the normative expectations of recognition (cf., Fraser and Honneth 2003, 148 ff). Only if one understands redistribution in this way, as an issue of recognition, can one—according to Honneth (Honneth 2012, 230 ff; 2003, 129 ff)—examine why protesters rise up: namely, they deem their social identity to be threatened by experienced injustice and thus feel outrage. (see also Zurn 2003) I will return to this issue again in chapter 5 by looking at concrete cases, proposing to examine the Western

square occupation movements' claims about economic injustice as struggles for transforming (i.e., socially embedding and democratizing) the normative order of the market economy.

Lastly, I want to address another question: what normative resources does recognition theory provide for *discerning between unjustifiable social movement claims*? The current rise of populist, fascist, and religious fundamentalist movements makes such discernment urgent. Although Honneth's account seems strongly bonded to liberal movement struggles, I contend that his theory provides valuable normative resources for evaluating these cases as well.

In the course of my thesis, I will argue that movements' claims are unjustifiable, for instance if they aim at a *restriction or withdrawal of legal respect for equal status* (e.g., taking away the civil rights from citizens such as a withdrawal of religious freedom, or of the right to vote). Anti-Immigration Movements are a case in point here, since they claim that refugees do not deserve equal civil rights and often want to strip them of any legal recognition (e.g., respect for their human rights) through pushing them into a position of statelessness. Another example is limiting the right to marry exclusively to heterosexuals, as promoted by numerous conservative movements. These cases appear to deny equal status respect due to irrelevant differences (e.g., desire, creed, and national origin), while what actually counts is equal protection for individual political agency and each family's social unity. Such protest movements portray other people—to themselves as well as to society as a whole—as merely second-class and inferior persons.

In addition, these joint claims are unjustifiable when they *defend unjust privilege* (e.g., unequal pay despite equal work, or the restriction of equal opportunities for career advancement primarily to white men) against the claims made by the excluded to be included in institutions. One example are Masculinist Movements, which aim at strengthening male pride and male-only networks. Even though they do not directly violate rights, such social movements promote attitudes and structures that *hinder the realization of equal opportunities for all* (e.g., regarding salary and occupation-based esteem). They create a social and cultural environment of unearned privilege based upon irrelevant differences (e.g., gender), while what we should actually promote is fair esteem for a person's merit regardless of her gender expression or bodily appearance.²⁷

Finally, a protest claim of movements is not justifiable if it *dehumanizes others and promotes ideas of natural inequality and status inferiority between humans* due to distinct

²⁷ Another case in point of a harmful social environment reinforced by such masculinist movements is the persistent and vast underpayment of people who do caregiving work for their families, in and out of the home—a crucial form of reproductive work that is, nevertheless, not yet appropriately recognized by society.

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

cultural backgrounds, identities, or skin colors. A case in point are Neo-Nazi Movements, who aim for global white-supremacy and want to strip any respect-recognition from those they view as inferior. Such claims, and all claims made by social movements, are unjustifiable if they aim at the continuation of unjust exclusion from recognition spheres, limiting distribution of basic civil rights, and thus intentionally harming others' well-being and thereby *solidifying status inequality, outdated privileges, and oppression* (Biletzki 2020, 7f).

Concerning these cases, one could say more generally that movements are *unjustified*, when they aim in their claims at increasing discrimination and exclusion, as well as worsening the chances of each individual to identify with skills, or to receive regard for distinctiveness across more dimensions of their personality, and also when they impair social conditions to achieve greater autonomy in coexistence. In other words, a movement struggle for recognition can only be seen as justifiable if it does not produce even greater recognition denials. (Renault 2019, 64) I will come back to the issue of unjustifiable social movements' claims in chapter 7, debating, for instance, the question as to whether Anti-Immigration movements should be seen as struggles for recognition. There, I will argue that though recognition theory is able to make a persuasive case for explicating the moral grammar of these movements, it cannot justify them. Although it can be shown that Anti-Immigration Movements are often motivated by perceived injustices (e.g., a denial of cultural esteem), I will argue that their protests oppose the principle of equality and a greater realization of freedom through respect for all.

2.5 Concluding Remarks: Applying a Twofold Approach

The cases described provide a first impression of what a normative evaluation of movements may look like when applying recognition theory's evaluative approach and underlying criteria for justice. Using these, I say we can distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate struggles. I argue for emphasizing the values underlying protesters' joint normative claims as favorable starting-points for a critical evaluation of movements when applying my proposed approach.

Focusing on the claims of social movements offers several advantages: we can take their political agency seriously, and also we are able to evaluate their activities before we can fully assess their societal effects. Moreover, we are able to hold them responsible for their activities. Another advantage is that we are able to assess them from diverse angles. From one perspective, we can assess movements with regard to *negative-evaluative claims*, which point at experiences of injustices and can be seen as sources of information about the social causes of their uprising. From another perspective, we can assess movements with regard to *positive-*

prescriptive claims that voice demands and remedies for future recognition. While the first type of claims expresses that something is unjust, the second type expresses that (and the ways that) injustices must end and what future justice may require. This distinction enables us to evaluate the justifiability of movements in a much more differentiated manner. For example, when evaluating concrete cases, we might find that protesters rightly complain about injustice (i.e., we focus on their negative-evaluative claims), for instance, if individuals have experienced severe social harm (e.g., workers that were brutally misused and exploited by their employers). Yet, while evaluating protestor's proposed remedies and demands we might still see that their positive-prescriptive claims are unjustifiable (e.g., workers might demand that all managers be hanged). Another case might be the collective outrage of white men from rural areas for being stigmatized in public as uneducated rednecks. Yet, despite rightly refusing their humiliation, they can still be utterly wrong in their additional claims to be entitled to special deference as white men that would be superior that accorded to women or people of color. Recognition theory's emphasis on distinct types of claims enables us to assess that even when agents misdiagnose their problems, protests can still contain genuine grievances. For instance, downwardly mobile white supremacists might have misunderstood the causes of their plight, but their frustration might nonetheless have a real social basis that would otherwise be ignored and misunderstood by both critical observers and the public.

In light of these examples, substantial aspects of the framework build on recognition theory become clearer. Firstly, though the framework uses claims to assess the justifiability of social movements, this does not mean that we ignore causes and contexts. Quite the opposite: my proposed twofold approach enables us to sensibly connect the social causes that trigger movements' conflict activities with the joint claims of protesters. On the one hand, *applying its explanatory approach* to their claims helps to reach an understanding of protesters' motivating reasons; an approach to make their activities intelligible. We ask which events, relations, and institutional affairs might have been experienced by people as so disrespectful, humiliating, offensive, and degrading that they equipped people with motivating reasons to fight these issues. In that sense, this approach relates to social causes of movements by offering explanations for the link between the micro and macro level of their protests, namely, reasons for collective action in the context of failed social and institutional relations.²⁸ In chapter 5, I will argue that recognition theory's causal explanations particularly highlight the negative effects of these relations on individuals and communities, offering a promising

²⁸ In that sense, recognition theory also considers incidents and related publicity, which often trigger mass protests, since these incidents can be seen as symbolically expressing failed social and institutional relations and prevailing injustice.

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

language to conceptualize the social harm and injustices experienced by agents and to which they respond with protests. This is why recognition theory's explanations should be seen as an essential part of a theory of the causes of those experiences that trigger conflict activities, and as providing an inspiring starting point for further historical, economical, sociological, and psychological analyses of social movements' uprising. *Applying its evaluative approach*, on the other hand, helps us to assess movements critically, for instance, assessing whether their normative claims reasonably relate to the social causes of their uprising, or if they merely fake harms. We focus on the question of whether they have good reasons to rise up, i.e., reasons that can justify their conflict activities using recognition theory's principles of justice.

Furthermore, the classification of distinct normative claims (i.e., negative, and positive claims) made by protesters reveals an additional, helpful doubling of my framework. Beyond the distinction between the explanatory approach on the one hand and the evaluative approach on the other, we can see a further separation within recognition theory's evaluative approach. First, we can assess negative-evaluative claims that current institutions, relations, or treatments are unjust and morally deficient (claims that can be right or wrong). This enables us to distinguish between protest in reaction to either *justified or unjustified denials of recognition* (we focus on joint claims about social causes of protest against injustice). Second, we can evaluate protesters' positive prescriptive claims to some kind of future moral treatment and entitlement (claims that can be also right or wrong). This enables us to distinguish between *justified or unjustified demands for future recognition* (we focus on demands, calls, and agendas for some type of change). Both types of claims can be evaluated separately against recognition theory's principles of justice.

This separation between protesters' negative-evaluative and prescriptive claims is a favorable starting-point to evaluate a social movement's justifiability. My proposed multifold framework for the application of recognition theory enables us, for instance, to identify the ill-intentioned claims of protestors without ignoring the possible societal injustice at the roots of their grievances and related conflict activities. Further, it helps us to spot protesters that react to obvious injustices, while also expressing reasonable demands. On the other hand, it enables us to identify those that not only voice completely exaggerated prescriptive claims but also complain about justified denials of recognition. This framework even enables us to spot those protesters that express wrongful complaints about alleged injustice, but nonetheless raise justified demands for future moral treatment or legal entitlements. Most importantly, when we use this differentiated framework regarding the claims of protesters as the starting point to evaluate the justifiability of movements, we can avoid attaching ourselves to struggles that are

merely pale imitations of progressive protest, or even those that are in deep opposition to what we really value (cf. Miller 2020, 178).

The following figure is intended to exhibit my proposed multifold framework with more clarity. It shows the division of labor between recognition theory’s *explanatory* (I) and *evaluative approaches* (II), and the separated evaluation of negative-evaluative protest claims on one side and positive-prescriptive ones on the other:

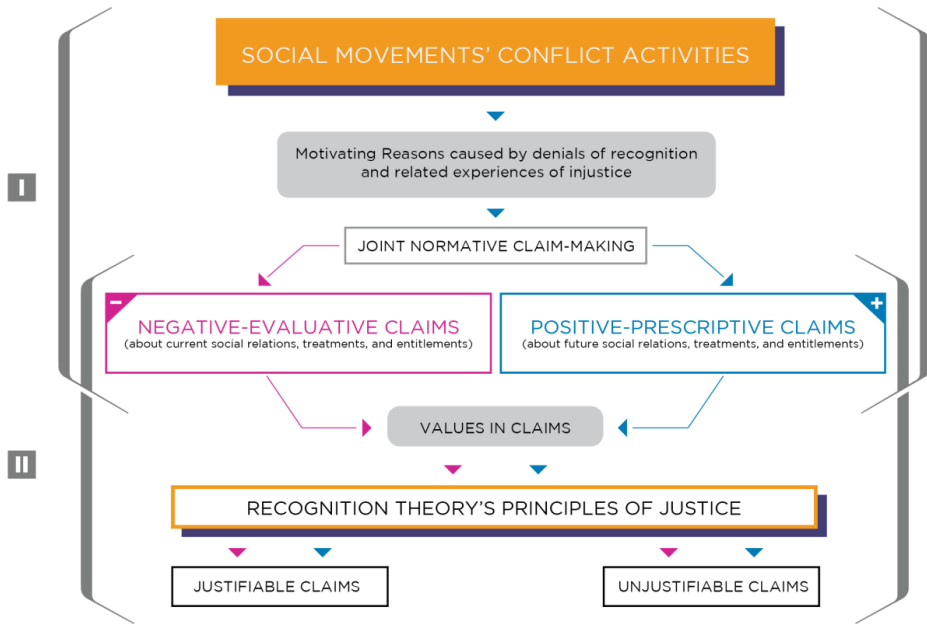


Figure 1 – Framework for the Application of Recognition Theory’s Twofold Approach

The approaches illustrated by the figure are intended to complement each other. *First*, we focus on activists’ demands, slogans, collective actions, and articulations of grievances (i.e., movements’ activities), examining them as expressing information about experienced injustices in social and institutional relations. *Second*, we trace such expressions about injustice back (i.e., reformulate them) to morally guided recognition claims, since they can be understood as caused by denials of recognition and experienced violations of normative expectations, which supply the motivational potential to rise up and combat injustices. These claims and underlying values become material for assessing movements. Complementing this explanatory approach, we *next* assess whether these claims are justifiable by evaluating them

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

against recognition theory's principles of justice. We are turning from the reasons that motivate protesters, to the issue of whether these are actually good reasons. To put it simply, when applying recognition theory's principles, the *claims of social movements are justifiable* when they aim to lessen discrimination and exclusion as well as to improve the chances of each individual to identify with skills and feel acknowledged across more dimensions of their personality, and thereby reach greater autonomy in coexistence. One could say that such movements are *progressive*, as their struggle seeks to improve existing recognition relations and states of affairs (see Chapter 8). *Vice versa*, *movements' claims are unjustifiable* when they aim to increase discrimination and exclusion as well to worsen the chances of individuals to identify with skills and feel regard for their distinctive worth, and when they impair the societal conditions necessary to reach greater autonomy for all. One could say that such movements are *regressive*, as their struggle seeks to weaken existing recognition relations and states of affairs (see Chapter 7 and 8).

This figure also displays my proposed separated evaluation of negative-evaluative claims on the one side, and positive prescriptive claims on the other. Such a separation allows us to assess the justifiability of movements in a more differentiated manner, evaluating what the protesters express about both the social causes and relations of their uprising as well as what they express regarding remedies, demands, and future entitlements and treatments.

My proposed twofold recognition theoretical approach might diverge from Honneth's original framework; but I contend that it offers clearer tools for an intelligible and philosophical analysis of contemporary movements. Whereas the first approach provides strong grounds for interpreting a social movement's conflict activities and exploring the meaning of, and the norms expressed by, this movement, the second is particularly useful for assessing a movement's claims. In that sense, Honneth's concept of *the moral grammar of social conflicts* should be understood as addressing both *explanations* of a) protesters' motivating reasons and morally-led justifications to take part in protest actions, and *evaluations* of b) movements' normative claims about (in)justice.

In contrast to this twofold approach, Emmanuel Renault favors a different approach to evaluate the justifiability of movements using recognition theory (Renault 2019, 56 ff). Rather than concentrating on joint claims, he argues that an evaluation of movements should start with the "legitimacy of their motivations" (ibid., 2019, 60)—i.e., with mental states and affections caused by feelings of injustice that give rise to actions (ibid., 2019, 50 f). As a reason for this emphasis, he argues that feelings of injustice and related ambitions to combat injustice cannot be reduced to reasons that justify such ambitions (ibid., 2019, 53). Due to the

tension between having a “moral experience” that something is wrong and not having the adequate “moral knowledge” to express these issues in terms of clear normative reasoning (ibid., 2019, 54), he places motivations at the heart of evaluating movements. To understand what is meant here by “legitimate motivations”, he specifies that “... it is always legitimate to react practically in situations of contempt and humiliations; it is always legitimate to refuse to accept a feeling of injustice when it is socially produced.” (ibid., 2019, 60) Hence, in Renault’s view, finding that the activities of protesters are based upon motivations to combat experienced injustice provides a “first degree of legitimacy” for movements. A “second degree of legitimacy” would be achieved when their demands, objectives, and means of action are assessed against recognition theory’s principles of justice and are accepted as justified (ibid., 2019, 64).

Evidently, Renault’s evaluative approach aims to avoid epistemic injustice with regard to protesters. This is clearly shown in his examples, which primarily include the struggles of structurally deprived social strata, i.e., those that suffer from injustices through generations and have often no means left for expressing grievances other than engaging in fierce riots (Renault 2019, 58—63). Here, he draws attention to an important issue. Exaggerating inappropriate ways of protest (e.g., setting cars on fire) and demands (e.g., lawlessness) can indeed cause others to unfairly ignore the ways that protesters’ grievances have a real social base and have been caused by unjustified recognition denials. In that sense, Renault rightfully aims to properly integrate the key role of feelings of injustice in his recognition theory approach. Further, I agree that it is very useful to distinguish between Renault’s two degrees of legitimacy while evaluating movements.

However, starting the evaluation of movements with motivations rather than claims is accompanied with normative and methodological issues. With regard to norms, Renault does not clarify what separates legitimate from illegitimate motivations. Though it seems noble that someone claims to resist experienced injustice, it cannot be solely up to the self-described victims to determine that they have been misrecognized. While their testimony should be taken seriously and not be silenced, complaints from those who feel maltreated cannot be purely self-validating; feelings and related expressions can reflect attention-seeking and be distorted and exaggerated. Also, testimony about feelings can be manipulative and used as a mere rhetorical tool to enforce aims.²⁹ In short, motivations to combat experienced injustice

²⁹ Authoritarian leaders often refer to collective feelings of injustice as excuses to justify atrocities. For instance, Putin referred to feelings of betrayal by the West to justify war in Eastern Europe:

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

might explain why people rise up, but they do not automatically provide legitimacy for related conflict activities. Otherwise, each and every movement would meet Renault's first degree of legitimacy when their activists testify that they feel unjustly treated and thus act. But such an approach is unsatisfactory, as it permits self-righteous outrage. Those who fight for recognition surely believe that they deserve it, but it does not mean that they have good reasons to rise up that their claims are justified, and that they are struggling for a greater fulfilment of autonomy and self-integrity for all. Unfortunately, Renault fails to introduce further criteria that can help separate legitimate from illegitimate motivations (e.g., that they should be well founded and not be based on fake stories, or that they should not aspire to produce even greater denials of recognition).

Concerning methodological problems, Renault also fails to clarify how to apply this evaluative approach to motivations. The assertion that in some cases "... protest action is only authorized by the legitimacy of its motivations (a refusal of injustice), not by a demand allowing it to assign a positive and specific content to the struggle against injustice ..." (ibid., 2019, 59), raises the question: what is the normative status of motivations? Considering that Renault conceives motivations to combat injustices as mental states—I believe he does, given his emphasis on "moral experiences" detached from normative reasons (ibid., 2019, 54)—it seems unclear how we could critically assess mental states and related protest feelings. Are there illegitimate feelings, and how could people be held accountable for them? In my view, protesters cannot be judged as 'right' or 'wrong' based on what they feel. After all, feelings are not moral or immoral in and of themselves. Feelings may arise from underlying reasons, but cannot be easily controlled in their emergence by the agents who experience them. Also, they can remain unconscious and unnoticed. For instance, a victim of injustice might believe they aspire to combat injustice but may, in fact, be driven by vicious feelings, aiming for the annihilation of all wrong-doers as well as desiring vengeance for specific harms. Again, a victim may have awareness of her vicious feelings but suppresses them and instead tries to be driven by lovingkindness in her fight. And another downside of mind-reading and moralizing other's feelings can be that we get mad at people for experiencing them, to the point that the accuser's anger is seen as somehow worse than the prejudice that inspired it. Discounting the accuser's anger protects the accused from accountability, while redirecting blame toward the victim instead of the perpetrator. The point is that it is hard to tell what the real motivational drives are when we see them as mental states. It is therefore disadvantageous to judge

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/12/russias-belief-in-nato-betrayal-and-why-it-matters-today> (last accessed July 6th, 2022).

protesters for their motivations, as these are difficult to extract, are not within their control, and cannot be reduced to testimony. Also, an evaluative approach that focusses on motivations risks reducing protesters to helpless victims of circumstances who are driven by passionate desires to overcome suffering. Clearly, it would be difficult to hold these protesters responsible for their activities.

A better way to evaluate movements' justifiability is by focusing on their joint claims, as proposed in my twofold recognition theory approach. Such an approach assesses protesters against their collective expressions in response to shared experiences of injustice. These expressions can be verbal (e.g., slogans, demands, narratives), can underlie their actions (e.g., forms and targets of protests), and can be purely symbolic (e.g., signs, flags). Instead of speculating about mental states, we are judging protesters for their activities—for what they say and do—by reconstructing how their claims and related practices are normatively grounded in disappointed recognition expectations as well as disrespect. In that way, we are holding out the prospect of understanding the protesters' introspection, taking seriously their moral and political agency, and reflecting their stories at face value as making understandable claims. Rather than focusing on motivations, we focus on observable activities—i.e., joint protest claims and actions that are not only emotional but include evaluative judgements accompanied by explanatory narratives about moral rightness and wrongness in societal coexistence, activities that protest agents are able to control, and for which they can therefore held responsible.

By adopting this approach, I believe, Renault can better satisfy his theoretical and normative goals. He would still be able to give voice to feelings of injustice at the root of movement struggles and thus avoid epistemic injustice, by focusing on protesters' negative-evaluative claims in distinction to their positive-prescriptive claims. In that way, he is enabled to state that protesters might rightly complain about unjustified recognition denials, problems that must be remedied by society, while their demands might still be harmful. Further, he could stop trying to identify illegitimate protests by revealing their allegedly illegitimate motivations, which requires him to delve into unknowable mental states. Instead, he is now enabled to reject those protests that wrongly complain about events where, for instance, denials of recognition were justified, since the criterion to assess legitimate protest is not only victims' testimony but also whether their claims relate to actual events of injustice and also meet our principles of justice.

When adopting my approach, we can also better hold on to Renault's useful distinction between a first and second degree of justifiability of social movements. Separating negative

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

from positive claims enables us to assign a *first degree of justifiability*, if we assess that protesters rightly criticize unjustified denials of recognition in social or institutional relations, i.e., rightly complain about injustice. A *second degree* can be assigned if we find that they express justified demands and prescriptions as well, that is positive claims that aim to remedy or end injustice without creating even greater denials of recognition. Such judgments can be achieved without trying to find legitimate motivations, by critically assessing joint claims and their underlying values in light of recognition theory's principles of justice. Instead, Renault's emphasis on motivations makes it difficult to clearly distinguish between justified and unjustified protests (at least with regard to the first degree of justifiability). However, in the course of my thesis, I will incorporate his sensitivity for epistemic injustices, emphasis on experiences of injustice, and his distinction between a first and second degree of justifiability for assessing movements.

Nonetheless, my proposal to use a multifold framework based on recognition theory to examine and assess movements—as laid out above—has been relatively abstract so far. There are issues that I have not yet addressed. For instance, what about the feasibility, efficiency, and sophistication of movements' claims? To give an example, Marx has continuously criticized the social democratic part of the labor movement for not addressing the deeper, capitalist causes of economic injustice and having poor demands (e.g., mere reforms), while he shared their general negative claims about exploitation of labor. (e.g., Marx, MEW 19, 18)

This raises the question of whether the justifiability of a movement also depends on its ability to address the exact social causes of injustice in their negative claims as well as voice sufficient solutions for them in their positive ones (e.g., whether it is combating both the effects and symptoms, and the deeper causes of injustice)?

In response, in section 6.2 I will argue against the idea that movements must engage in efficient policy-making and offer sufficient remedies for structural causes of injustice. Instead, throughout this work, I follow the conviction that protesters—who are often the victims of injustice—have first and foremost a moral right to resist injustice as well as to deliberate on experimental solutions for injustice, without being immediately obliged by the public to express perfect solutions. In fact, we should favor movements' negative claims in determining whether they are worth our support, our indifference, or even our opposition. Additionally, I will argue that movements have a duty (in their positive-prescriptive claims) to avoid creating scapegoats, to relate reasonably to the correct sphere in which the injustices they target are supposed to have happened, and should not create even greater misrecognition in society. In contrast to approaches that primarily focus on movements' political and legal

statements, inquiring as to whether these statements rightly address the deep, societal causes of injustice and offer policy solutions, I will show that such demanding normative approaches risk silencing protesters. Such approaches seem less than beneficial, as movements have often long-term effects and blurred morally guided demands, making it impractical to judge them simply in terms of political efficiency and sufficient policy making.

Additionally, what about the means of action used by movements? Their claims might be considered justified while the protest actions they adopt are perceived as unjustified, as in the case of violent riots. Is there, perhaps, a scale, in which unjustifiable actions outweigh justifiable claims? A justifiable claim does not, in itself, justify actions, and actions might cause an unjust impact. With regard to such issues, chapter 4 focuses on the joint practice of occupying squares and, by applying the proposed recognition theory framework, shows how to assess them as a valuable and powerful democratic activity, as well as ends in themselves for their participants. In chapter 6, I will further describe how, though recognition theory does not offer a normative theory of how one should protest, it is possible to apply its principles of justice to such mass practices and assess them as a form of justified civil disobedience.

Additionally, we might ask if deeply inhumane movements should actually be framed in terms of recognition theory at all? In response, I will show in chapter 7 that recognition theory's evaluative approach does account for various dimensions and various kinds of social movements. Applying this approach to Corona protests, anti-immigration movements, and right-wing populist movements, I will try to outline a response to the question of whether struggles for recognition can be evil. I will argue that, for instance, what makes these movements problematic is that they fail to implement recognition theory's principles of justice, in fact, the unwillingness to recognize the 'other', and emphasize national purity and downplay human's plurality. In chapter 7, I will show that various movements can fail the same test.

Obviously, additional aspects must be considered if we aim at a more comprehensive normative account as well as a clearer conceptualization of movements as recognition struggles. The best way of responding to these debatable issues and ambiguities, I believe, is by applying my twofold recognition theory approach to concrete cases, and thereby further clarifying both its explanatory and evaluative strengths. To do this, the following chapters will examine and assess the phenomenon of the *square occupation movements* with emphasis on Western offshoots like Occupy Wall Street and the European Indignados. These movements triggered broad public debates and strongly influenced policymaking in the last decade. Due to their new forms of populist protest and their associated slogans, it was often hard for

Unfolding Recognition Theory's Twofold Approach

outsiders to pinpoint what these social movements actually aimed at, and it was challenging to determine whether one ought to support them. I will attempt to demonstrate that my twofold approach is useful for addressing these issues, understanding inchoate demands, and separating a movement's justifiable and unjustifiable claims and actions. I will start by outlining the protest phenomenon of square occupation movements in general, and next focus on applying the recognition theory's explanatory approach to its Western offshoots.

PART 2
UNDERSTANDING AND JUSTIFYING
SQUARE OCCUPATION MOVEMENTS

Chapter 3

Correction Struggles for Defending Recognition

“We are the ones controlling the streets today, not the regime. I feel so free; things can’t stay the same after this.”

—Egyptian protester³⁰

On December 17th, 2010, the self-immolation of the young Tunisian greengrocer Mohammed Bouazizi—a desperate response to poverty, corruption and police harassment—triggered one of the greatest protest waves since the 1960s (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 134). His death initially sparked local protests, but ultimately evolved into the Tunisian revolution of 2011, leading to the overthrow of the decades-long rule of President Ben Ali and the establishment of the first Tunisian democracy. Moreover, these events caused a political conflagration throughout the entire region. This was the starting-point of the *Arab Spring*. Huge protest movements took place all over Northern Africa and the Middle East, fighting against authoritarian rule, claiming bread, dignity, and social justice (Kinninmont 2012). Although most of the uprisings failed due to a resurgence of authoritarianism, Islamic extremism, and the fatal dynamics of (counter) violence,³¹ they inspired millions around the world. As a ‘Kantian sign of history’ (Kant 1798), these struggles produced a general enthusiasm and sparked a wave of protest that went far beyond the region (Kerton 2012, 304). It was the beginning of a recurring global conflict phenomenon, ranging from the Spanish Indignados and the Israeli Social Justice Movement to Occupy Wall Street of 2011, the Gezi Park Protests in Turkey of 2013, the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong of 2014, and the Movement Nuit Debout in France of 2016. Occupations of central squares by tent encampments, where participants expressed demands in popular assemblies and aimed at reinventing democracy, popped up globally and initiated large public debates (Stiglitz 2012) about the causes and impact of these *square occupation movements* (e.g., Celikates and Höntzsch 2020, 5; Pleyers 2012 and 2014).

Stunning actions of mass civil disobedience carried out by Occupy, Indignados *et al.* shifted discourses towards long-ignored problems in public policy affecting many nations. Is

³⁰ Ahmed Ashraf, a 26-year-old Egyptian bank analyst and protester during the Arab Spring, quoted in the Guardian and the Mail & Guardian online News on January 28, 2011: <https://mg.co.za/article/2011-01-28-the-first-day-of-egyptian-revolution/> (last accessed August 22, 2022).

³¹ State repression and police violence triggered a fatal dynamic of violence in the entire region. Despite the initial successes of the Arab Spring uprisings, a military coup by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi took place in Egypt, ISIS rose in Iraq, and a civil war occurred in Syria. Only Tunisia could be seen as an example for positive conflict resolution and democratization (for more info see: Lynch 2013).

capitalism compatible with democracy? Is growing economic inequality undermining political equality? Who are ‘the people’ in globalized markets? To this day, these problems are far from resolved. Ongoing debates about the swelling gap between capital and labor income (cf., Piketty 2014), especially in the USA and Europe, were initially posed by activists, who expressed these issues by mobilizing citizens in public assemblies on occupied city squares (Cox *et al.*, 2013). The enormous scope of square occupation movements in the last decade should cause us to reflect upon the shared experiences of injustice that motivated millions globally to rise up. This is why I will examine the normative claims of these movements, applying my proposed recognition theory’s twofold approach. I promote a shift in focus by analyzing them—with emphasis on the Western offshoots—as *recognition-led struggles for the defense* of social-welfare rights and status, for democratic *inclusion*, and for the normative *transformation* of markets in a context of increasing economic and political inequality.

3.1 Defining Square Occupation Movements

My definition of “square occupation movements” draws on empirical research of a worldwide phenomenon developed from offshoots of local movements engaging in fierce protests as a reaction to rescue programs for banks and over-indebtedness in the population in the wake of the global economic crisis and Great Recession of 2008. Activists criticized corruption while calling for control over markets and a more genuine democracy. These are social movements in which individuals articulate demands in large popular assemblies, while occupying squares with massive tent encampments (Ishkanian and Glasius 2013). Due to the distinct cultural and economic backgrounds that shaped these protests, ranging from Northern Africa to Europe and the USA, we probably should not see them as one “unified global movement” (Glasius and Pleyers 2013, 552). However, these are not merely “similar protest moments” (Calhoun 2013). Rather, we should view them as a *global wave of protest*. This dissertation examines the rapid, cross-border expansion of movement protests that inspired each other and made use of the same repertoire of actions and slogans (Angelovici *et al.*, 2016, 21). In this context, several authors made use of new labels like “Facebook revolution” (Pleyers 2014), “Anti-austerity” (Cox *et al.*, 2013), “Anti-crisis protests” (Tilly and Tarrow 2015), and “radical democracy movements” (Lorey 2013; 2019). Even though these labels correctly emphasize important characteristics of these movements, I favor the term *square occupations movements* (Gerbaudo 2014). This term highlights shared disobedient and performative practices, rather than stressing tools of digital mobilization, or seeing these movements mainly as social- or

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

pro-democratic protests. This approach highlights the ways that all these movements occupied squares, related positively to one another in their campaigns, built cross-border networks, imitated claims made by each other, inspired each other to besiege the streets, and thereby produced an appearance of global unity. While aiming to reinvent democracy in squares, they started an enthusiastic transnational dynamic of mass mobilizations. Therefore, I view Occupy, Indignados *et al.* as parts of a *global wave of square occupation movement protests*, in which the numerous offshoots share the following key characteristics:

- a) *Shared conflict practices*: By occupying large urban squares and building illegal protest tent encampments, while experimenting with a consensus-oriented democracy in public assemblies, all these protests used a popular, participatory type of mass civil disobedience (Ishkanian and Glasius 2013, 7 ff.). The global expansion of this shared practice can be traced back to the success of its first application in the Arab Spring events. Since then, it has been adapted as a modular practice and linked to various, more regionally specific concerns (Tarrow and Tilly 2015, 49 f).
- b) *Shared conflict grievances*: All these movements focused on demands for real democracy, justice, and a life of dignity (Glasius and Pleyers 2013). Most of these abstract demands were articulated on behalf of a majority of the people contrasted with elites. Through massive meetings, protesters were eager to express an alleged general will (such as ‘The people demand the removal of the regime’, or ‘We are the 99 %’). This implied a populist strategy of group polarization and an emphasis on deep political disagreements (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 22 ff).

Demands for real democracy and justice, as well as an identical repertoire of joint action appear as the shared key characteristics of these protests. Although the square occupation movements’ transnational dynamic seems absent at present, the political claims associated with them are still alive, and they should be seen as early expressions of our ongoing struggles over transnational public policy. They connected local citizens with complex global issues that have continued to be important, such as the lack of democratic inclusion, the dismantling of social welfare, the issue of self-determination in a globalized society, and the survival of individual freedom in unchecked markets.

Also, the Western square occupation movements deserve our attention since they originated a new set of activities used by popular movements. The forms of protest and the joint claim-making they established have become the main repertoire of movements in the last decade. Activists around the globe, inspired by these actions, began gathering in squares and holding assemblies such as the *Blockupy* protest against EU austerity politics between 2012

and 2016 in Frankfurt Main, or the *Gezi Park protests* in Istanbul of 2013. Similarities between these movements and the pro-European movement *Pulse of Europe* in 2017 are also clear. Inspired by chances of effective mobilizations, many successor movements adopted an “Occupy style” set of actions, ranging from the tent encampments of the *Umbrella Movement* in Hong Kong and the *Euromaidan Revolts* in Ukraine 2014 to the mass assemblies of the social movement *Nuit Debout* in Paris 2016, and the *Occupy City Hall* protests during the US elections in 2020. In addition, it became *en vogue* to present protest demands as expressions of the general will, using a populist strategy for mobilizing people through an amplification of polarized interests. This strategy gained renown due to square occupation movements in the Arab Spring (“The people demand the removal of the regime”) and Occupy Wall Street (“We are the 99%”). Since then, debates about populism continued to be important in social and political philosophy (Cohen 2019). This analysis of the typical Western square occupation movements’ normative claims should likewise be seen as a contribution to the debate over the ethics and politics of contemporary populism.

Finally, it is useful to examine movements retrospectively, as we deal with social phenomena that normally have a lifecycle of a few months and usually only receive media attention as short-term societal spectacles. If we only pay attention to these movements during their peak times of mobilization, we end up with one-sided analyses and assessments. The transience of protests certainly applies to the Western square occupation movements. Each of their local offshoots took place only for a few months. Yet together they initiated a global wave of protests that was one of the largest transnational mobilizations in the 21st century. A retrospective examination is therefore vital to reach new critical reflections, and this work aims to contribute to a deeper analysis of these movements.

3.2 Beyond Interest, Power, and Identity

While there is overall consensus that the Western square occupation movements seem to share civil disobedience activities and the effort to reinvent democracy, social and political philosophers disagree over what concept of social conflict we should apply when we seek to comprehend their actions and illuminate the meaning of their claims (Niesen 2019). There is currently a lively debate about how to make sense of these protests, and particularly which language is best suited to comprehend their relationship to and against the fabric of global public policy and Western liberal democracies (Celikates and Höntzsch 2019; or Volk 2019, 112). Due to inchoate slogans like ‘We are the people’ and ‘Occupy everything’, there is an

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

urgent need for interpretation of and critical reflection on the protester's conflict activities. This issue applies especially to the Western square occupation movements, which were often accused of articulating neither demands, nor solutions (Deseriis and Dean 2012). A related question concerns our analytical tools: what are sound criteria for evaluating these protests? Based on philosophical examinations of square occupation movements, we can identify three influential ideal-type approaches that respond to these issues differently:

First of all, works showing that these movements take a stand against neoliberalism, conceiving square occupation movements as expressions of conflicting economic interests. These *interest-based approaches* define economic inequalities between groups and their strategic competition over scarce resources as the source of conflict, due to individuals' natural quest for self-assertion and material preservation. In this context, several theorists have rightly emphasized that square occupation movements strongly opposed an unregulated capitalist economy, which had produced severe maldistribution of wealth. Hence, they argue that the movements should be seen as "new forms of class struggle" (e.g., Dean 2014; Hardt and Negri 2012, 60), mainly striving for a just redistribution of wealth and well-controlled markets (Harvey 2013; Holloway and Susen 2013; Chomsky 2012).

Second, works that understand the joint actions of occupying squares and starting alternative processes of participatory democracy as the rise of a new form of collective identity and sovereign people-hood (Badiou *et al.*, 2016). Such *identity-based approaches* perceive hierarchical relationships between dominating, esteemed group-identities and those that are dominated and lack esteem as the source of conflict. Numerous theorists here view square occupation movements as struggles over the right to "collectively appear" (Butler 2018), highlighting that the movements aimed to perform and emerge in urban squares as a new, pluralistic type of 'a people' in deep conflict with established forms of collectivity in representative democracies (Volk 2019). In this context, other theorists highlight that the square occupation movements mobilized around deeply polarized group identities and should thus be seen as "populist protest mobilizations" (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017) that aimed to articulate an alleged general will against a corrupt establishment (Volk 2018).

Third, works that describe the square occupation movements as expressing a strategic struggle over power and hegemony. Such *power-based approaches* see a permanent 'agonistic' conflict between non-institutional, bottom-up politics and the governmental role of policy-making as the origin of conflict, showing how both sides try to enforce demands. In general, they outline a conflict of the powerless against powerful agents, in which the "moment of disruption" (Gunning and Baron 2013) and a change of established politics are

seen as the actual acts of “the political” (Ranciere 1999). In particular, these approaches see the crisis of neoliberal hegemony in contemporary policymaking as the main cause of the square occupation movements (Mouffe *et al.*, 2016), since they show how formerly powerless and excluded people tried to fill the contemporary gap of political hegemony with the aspiration of an emerging radical-democratic project (e.g., Lorey 2019; Marchart 2015).

There are serious concerns about the usefulness of all three of these approaches. For instance, both the *interest-based* and *power-based approaches* seem to underestimate the diversity of agents’ motivating reasons for participating in protests. They do not explain why people typically protest for justice, freedom, and rights instead of demanding power and wealth, nor do they provide sound criteria by which we can assess different demands. While interest-based approaches fail to provide a persuasive concept about how we can examine *ends* that do not stem from socio-economic contexts, the power-based approaches exaggerate the strategic *means* of enforcing goals against opponents, thus ignoring the morally guided claims at the root of the Western square occupation movements (Gosewinkel and Rucht 2016, 52). While these approaches are useful to analyze a movement’s political strategies and contexts, they seem unsuitable for examining and evaluating a movement’s claims and goals as long as they reduce the square occupation movements to conflicts either over the redistribution of wealth, or over positions of power in society.

In addition, the *identity-based approaches* tend to exaggerate the notion of an interaction between irreconcilable entities. They overestimate the extent to which groups position themselves through their performative actions in strict opposition to the established forms of politics, “enacting a parallel world” (Volk 2019), or as a new appearance of “the people” (Butler 2016, 58). Such approaches risk disregarding the communicative interaction between the claim-makers and those who receive that claim (e.g., activists and governments) in liberal democracies. While reducing movement activities to a clash between irreconcilable groups, they neglect the ways that movements often articulate demands towards society in general to grant rights or to expand inclusion. Thus, they neglect the dimension of a negotiation over entitlements, viewing movements only as an attempt to exercise deep dissent.

The lack of scholarship dedicated to the morally guided claims and justifications underlying square occupations movements is striking (Gosewinkel and Rucht 2016, 52). Historical research on movements shows that manifested struggles break out only under a combination of several conditions. These outbreaks require the violation of institutionalized or accepted norms, shared experiences of a moral injustice, and intense social change with consequent disruptions in daily life, accompanied by a joint intention to contest such issues

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

(E.P. Thompson 1963; Moore 1978; Dahrendorf 1993). Most square occupation movements are characterized by moralized demands for dignity, inclusion, and social justice (Lowndes and Warren 2011), rather than clear political goals (Deseriis and Dean 2012). Nevertheless, the three approaches mentioned above ignore this dimension of collective reactions against shared experiences of injustice when analyzing square occupation movements. This problem with the examination of these movements has been noted by some (Gosewinkel and Rucht 2016), who have called for a more integrative approach.

Honneth's recognition theory provides a promising ground as we seek to fill this research gap. This theory is well equipped for bridging the levels of the claims that underlie square occupation movements. It provides useful language and analytical tools to shed new light on the relationship between morally guided actions of disobedience and the onset of an economic recession, producing a new understanding of a movement's causes and moral justifications. However, even though this seems to be the kind of task for which recognition theory is well suited, until now this theory has been ignored in the research on the Western square occupation movements. While a few articles elaborate on recognition theory's conceptional relationship to transnational movements in general (Heins 2016) and Occupy Wall Street's claims in particular (Holldorf 2016, Nachtwey 2013), none of the major journal issues or edited volumes regarding philosophical analyses of these social movements (Niesen 2019; Celikates and Höntzsch 2020; Schweikard *et al.*, 2019) contain contributions from the point of view provided by recognition theory. Thus, this chapter will make use of recognition theory's unexploited potential for revealing normative claims, for examining square occupation movements as recognition struggles, and for showing how their activities embody the issues of distributive justice and democratic exclusion as key challenges to transnational public policy.

This work is centered on Occupy Wall Street in the US and Indignados in Europe, both of which emerged in 2011, building on English texts that were often collaboratively written by activists and researchers in a bottom-up procedure, such as *Writers for the 99%* (Bauer *et al.*, 2012), *The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City* (Occupy Wall Street, 2011b), and *Scenes from Occupied America* (Blumenkranz *et al.*, 2011) from the US, as well as the edited volume *Occupy! A global movement* (Pickerill *et al.*, 2016). I focus on statements about procedures, ideas, practices of real democracy, and demands for social justice, and use these texts as sources to reveal the normative claims of square occupation movements through reconstructions. Also, I consider research that compares offshoots of the square occupation movements around the globe (e.g., Ishkanian and Glasius 2013; Angelovici

et al., 2016) and provide empirical insights about these shared actions and transnational relations. In addition, I integrate works by scholars who were actively engaged in the protests, and their insights (Graeber 2012) about occupations (Butler 2018).

Finally, the following chapters (3—6) argue that square occupation movements—with a focus on their Western offshoots in Europe and the US—should be viewed as struggles for recognition, highlighting three levels of analysis: 1) as correction struggles for the defense of certified claims related to social status and esteem, 2) as struggles for political inclusion, and 3) as struggles for the transformation of normative principles in the market.

I will contend that these movements are justifiable since they push for strengthening universal values against the undermining of equal status and social freedom through economic inequality.

3.3 Struggling in Defense of Certified Recognition Norms

What does recognition theory contribute to our understanding of the Western square occupation movements? So far, it seems to offer more suitable language than some other approaches for showing which normative claims about (in)justice are implied in the demands and actions of these movements. In addition, recognition theory's twofold approach seems to be ultimately more useful for evaluating and politically locating these movements. For pursuing such an endeavor, I will draw on Mattias Iser's reading of Honneth's theory in this and the following chapters (Iser 2008, 222—234). Iser distinguishes different situations that can cause collective criticism and conflict in the social spheres of recognition, for instance, plain violations of valid recognition norms, unsatisfactorily realized or applied but valid recognition norms, as well as an inappropriate scope of these norms. Inspired by Iser's reading, I aim at exposing the Western square occupation movements' moral grammar by showing that their demands and actions can be assigned to at least three distinct recognition claims and related conflict causing situations.

First, I argue that these movements should be seen as *correction struggles in a defense of certified recognition*. What does it mean? Throughout history, we can encounter movements that articulate that valid (i.e., institutionalized or broadly accepted) norms were disregarded or violated.³² With the assumption that conflict activities embody morality, they

³² I distinguish between a norm and its institutionalization. Norms (lat., *norma*: measure of right thinking or acting) are prescriptive sentences that express an ought (e.g., political equality for all). They aid to distribute benefits and burdens in cooperation, coordinate individual actions, or secure one's social status. We can further distinguish between two forms of a norm, namely, ideas and real phenomena. A case in point for the latter are social norms that are legally stabilized and

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

thus problematize *discrepancies between the claim and social reality of a norm*. According to Iser, protests are motivated by and problematize such discrepancies when they draw attention to events, in which claims for recognition that underlie already valid social norms were violated (ibid., 2008 222). In this context, joint protests are typical, which react against a violation of civil rights like freedom of assembly, or equal treatment under the law committed by states or companies. As these protests problematize a violation of valid legal claims and related disrespect for entitlements, they take on the function of a *corrective*.³³ They aim for correcting a societal state that does not meet its own normative promises, striving to move it back to its ‘orderly place’ in light of an established standard (e.g., constitutional rights). Correction struggles are thus characterized by defending a status quo. Put differently, they are normatively and institutionally protective.³⁴ Following such a view, I argue that the concept of correction struggle in a defense of certified recognition should likewise be assigned to the Western square occupation movements, concentrating on the Indignados in Southern Europe.

In the wake of the global economic crisis of 2008 and the following Great Recession, numerous rescue programs were launched by Western nations to stabilize the financial markets. But bailing out indispensable corporations and banks and stimulating the market’s growth had a social price. In the aftermath, several countries faced rising debt in their public budgets and reacted with austerity measures, which included profound social cuts and tax increases at the expense of the lower and middle classes. Spain, Greece, Portugal, and Ireland were the prime examples of these measures (Picot and Tassinari 2017). For instance, Spain increased its retirement age and eased labor’s protections against dismissal in 2011: this contributed additional pressures to its existing economy of uncertainty, which was characterized by part-time jobs, a large number of ‘working poor,’ extreme low minimum wages, and people living off their pensioner grandparents. Similarly, in Greece, we can point to an entire period of these controversial austerity policies between 2010 and 2018. This included pension cuts, VAT increases, extensive cuts in public services, an increased retirement age, a reduction in the monthly minimum wage by a total of 22% to 585€, and

manifested in institutions (e.g., a right to vote) and other forms of collective action power (e.g., election committees). The institutional form of a norm may vary and is subject to contestation (e.g., parliamentary, or presidential democracy). The ideal form too is contestable, concerning its content and interpretation. Norms are considered *valid* as they are institutionalized and enforced, or as they are broadly accepted and seen as legitimate in society (e.g., friendship). (Koller 2008)

³³ Honneth is mentioning “corrective initiatives” of citizens that are jointly solving social problems through democratic decision-making processes (Honneth 2015b, 152). Also, there are parts in his recent works, where he refers to “efforts to collectively resist the (...) deregulation of the labor market” (Honneth 2014, 248), and the “defense of freedom that have already been won” (ibid., 2014 335), and that Hegel’s procedure also sought “to correct” practices and institutions (ibid., 2014, 8) Yet, though Honneth seems convinced that the implementation of valid recognition norms must be recurrently fought for and restabilized, he devotes little attention to the phenomena of ‘corrective conflicts’.

³⁴ I would like to thank Christopher F. Zum for bringing this helpful differentiation to my attention.

increased contributions to mandatory types of insurance. As a result of such a dismantling of welfare and the resulting growing poverty, more than one million citizens were no longer able to cover the cost of health insurances (Ishkanian and Glasius 2013, 22).

Clearly, these unpopular politics of austerity provided strong grounds for moral outrage. Enthused by the successful and globally broadcast actions of massive disobedience carried out in the Arab Spring, activists started to rise up and square occupations emerged, especially on the Iberian Peninsula and in Greece³⁵ (Morell 2012, 386). In May 2011, a large protest network occupied the central square, Puerta Del Sol, in Madrid. Hundreds of thousands of people were protesting in the Spanish capital, maintaining the occupation over months, and gathering in vast public meetings. Inside the assemblies, participants were sharing experiences of joblessness and housing eviction, and discussing visions of a more participatory or 'real' democracy (Castañeda 2012, 309 f). The movement was named after its date of foundation, 'May 15', and also 'Indignados', after its indignant participants. A short while later, analogous events occurred in Athens. Protestors started occupying Syntagma, a large square in front of the Greek parliament, likewise rallying over months against social welfare cuts and austerity policies enforced by the EU. The protests in Greece and Spain became so influential that they were able to force their governments to resign and triggered new parliament elections, buoyed by popular hopes for socially cushioned reforms and the democratization of seemingly unaccountable state institutions (Abellán *et al.*, 2012, 324).

Applying recognition theory's explanatory approach to these events of mass indignation in Southern Europe, we should examine them as correction struggles, since they implicitly express in their practices and demands resistance to a weakening of the protesters' previously assured status and related normative claims in the legal and the market spheres. In particular, protesters resisted the erosion of their existing social welfare rights and the related duty of the state to provide each citizen with a social framework that protects elementary material needs (Ishkanian and Glasius 2013, 20 ff). In this context, studies of the Indignant in Greece showed that the participants emphasized the special responsibility of the welfare state. Also, they saw social welfare cuts and privatization as threats to vulnerable groups who would be most negatively affected by them, such as pensioners, unemployed people, and migrants (*ibid.*, 2013, 21). In short, they fought against the threatening harm to their social integrity and the related disruption of their self-respect, caused by disenfranchising citizens of their

³⁵ Further elaboration of how the Arab Spring protests "enthused" the West in: Kerton, Sarah. 2012. "Tahrir, here? The influence of the Arab uprisings on the emergence of Occupy". *Social Movement Studies*. Vol. 11(3-4), London: Taylor and Francis, pp. 302-308.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

previously assured rights and weakening their welfare securities. This has all the signs of *a correction struggle over securing one's social status*.

In addition, with regard to the dismantling of labor protections and related cuts, these Indignados also struggled against the devaluation of their worth in the sphere of market collaboration. They problematized the way that lower wages and an increased age of retirement implied the devaluation of their work and life accomplishments, as opposed to those principles of esteem that were previously (e.g., legally) valid and broadly accepted. Thus, the protesters took to the streets in defense of social status, and were also protesting against the betrayal of normative promises. This sense of injustice fueled indignation against the erosion of their previously guaranteed forms of societal estimation and traditional reward (della Porta 2017, 454). The dimension of resistance against societal devaluation became particularly visible in Greece, where the quotidian was most disrupted by the financial crises and austerity policies through loss of jobs, health care, and financial security, (ibid., 2017, 463 f)—as can be seen by the high degree of union participation in the Greek movement, their focus on socio-economic demands, and the ways they problematized the negative impact of neoliberal politics for low-income classes (Kousis 2016, 155 ff). These grievances and the underlying corrective character of their protests were reflected in the famous slogan: “We are not paying for your crisis” (Tisera and Alvarenga 2012). They fought against the threatening harm to their individual worthiness and the related disruption of self-esteem triggered by unparalleled wage cuts and layoffs. Hence, it seems reasonable that these protests also should be seen as *a correction struggle over securing one's worth in societal coexistence*.

However, while defending one's wage level can surely be examined as a struggle over the social esteem of one's worth and maintaining one's lifestyle, this is significantly less controversial than examining the demands for social welfare rights as a struggle over respect for one's status. It forces us to ask: what does it mean to properly respect others as equal and autonomous? Here, we must recall that social rights and welfare are—from the perspective of recognition theory—seen as expressions of ‘respect-recognition’. They are understood as depersonalized forms of respect with regard to each human's material vulnerability, since they are intended to provide the minimal material resources needed to properly protect and sustain autonomy. These are positive rights that supplement negative liberties by the way they allocate a certain amount of material resources necessary to guarantee each citizen an equal opportunity to become an active member of society (Honneth 2012, 186). Hence, struggles over social rights and security can certainly be seen as reactions to the harm of disrespect.

A case in point is the *Indignant Citizens Movement in Greece*. On the one hand, this protest articulated the claim that one's social status should be determined only through arbitrarily negotiated labor contracts and fluctuating market cycles. On the other hand, the protesters also frequently voiced the claim that a minimum amount of work and of resources must be granted by the state (e.g., in form of minimum wages, regulation of the labor market, or a universal basic income), in order to protect citizens' material vulnerability from the harm of recurring market crises, to enable them to contribute to collaborations, to offer them the equal opportunity to feel esteemed as a valuable part of society, and to respect their social integrity. In the context of the massive public debt crisis, ballooning unemployment rate, and anti-austerity protests in Southern Europe, protesters voiced their claims as a defense of rights to housing, health, education, and employment (della Porta 2017, 462), using slogans such as "Cut Corporate Welfare not mine" (Taylor *et al.*, 2011, 145).

However, this examination of the Indignados might give the misleading impression that I downplay the social and political urgency of their protests by reducing them to a simple moral issue of not getting enough esteem in the market and wishing to defend one's societal lifestyle. Instead, we can say in a much more straightforward manner that these protests over low wages are about impoverishment and over the issue of not having enough money to materially support oneself. Instead of saying that these protests can be read as complaints about not getting praised enough for unique abilities or particular contributions to social cooperation in the market sphere, they can be read as complaints about being poor, and being upset about being hungry and threatened with homelessness. I am well aware that the struggles in Spain and Greece contain elements of that purely economic dimension, and I will return to these themes in 5.6, highlighting that the social class base of these movements is characterized by the "multitude of the precarious" (della Porta 2017, 462), who suffered the most under neoliberalism's social destabilization and financialization of modern society. Importantly, the current section attempts to demonstrate that movements also rise up against an attack on their participants' social status and the related moral shock, picking up the issue of social poverty and deprivation. Yet I am hesitant to portray them as struggles against impoverishment, on-going poverty, and, ultimately, over material self-preservation. Such a framing seems strongly related to the idea that protesters simply strove for a bigger stake in scarce resources, pursuing merely their economic interests. Instead, by highlighting their moral grammar we can see that reductions in earned income and an increasingly precarious social status are not only issues of making ends meet. Agents were also motivated to rise up as they experienced a moral shock, perceiving state-induced austerity as public disregard for

their well-being in social co-existence. From that view, it seems more important to portray their struggle against poverty as *conflicts over appropriate modes of intersubjective treatment* of persons and social status in society. I will return to that issue in chapter 5, examining these movements as ‘new types of class struggle’.

By applying recognition theory’s explanatory approach, the dimension of a correction struggle underlying the Western square occupation movements has been reconstructed. As suggested in this examination, these protests should be traced back to the protesters’ shared experiences of disregard for certified social rights and securities, as well as to the moral shock to traditional principles of esteem. Hence, the *claim to defend sanctioned and certified norms of recognition* (cf., Fraser and Honneth 2003, 153 ff) should be assigned to the Indignados in Europe. Their protest can be examined as defending then-existing legal respect and levels of esteem in order to ensure that each citizen continues to enjoy their previously guaranteed social status as well as their sense of particular worth, enabling each to participate and build self-esteem in cooperation in the ways they are accustomed to and understand. As movements directed against a violation of certified respect and esteem-recognition, they problematize a tension between the claims of and the realization of valid social norms, thus taking on the function of a corrective.

This raises a question as to whether these movements simply endorse the status quo, without showing any form of critical reflection or any innovative solutions to the problems that cause them to rise up. Such a perspective seems to conflict with the popular idea that movements are forces for a new and better future. I appreciate these concerns. Yet, I argue that the concept of a correction struggle is a vital part of the story of the Western square occupation movements, as clarified in subsequent sections.³⁶

3.4 Correction Struggles and Internal Critique

As argued earlier, by defending a status quo of legal respect and societal esteem, a social movements’ protests should be examined intending to correct misdevelopments and injustices. ‘Correction’ is here understood in a broad sense. It means preventing events from happening, or aiming to go back to a previous and preferable state of affairs. What matters is that corrective struggles express a certain type of critique that is best understood as an *internal*

³⁶ In the following sections of chapter 3, I will discuss shortcomings of alternative models to the Western square occupation movements. Although I am methodologically deeply entrenched in recognition theory, a careful reader will notice that my arguments will sometimes speak across disciplines and draw on social-theoretical or political resources that are not explicitly referring to recognition. I see the arguments as complementing recognition theory in order to criticize the alternative models.

critique (Jaeggi 2014, 261 ff). Instead of demanding that new social norms must be established, and the current ones abolished, such critiques resist endangering existing, certified norms. In that regard, they do not aim for a revolution, but rather at a defense and restoration of a functioning order, and compliance with existing norms and laws. Their societal critique refers to established and broadly accepted (i.e., internal) normative principles. Such elements should also be associated with the Western square occupation movements like Indignados. These should be seen as correction struggles, since they resist a violation of already certified recognition, and since they defend assured norms of legal respect and levels of esteem such as existing wage levels and welfare rights.

However, such an examination seems to be in stark contrast with the idea that Western square occupation movements should be seen as forms of “anarchist uprisings” (Graeber 2012; Fraser *et al.*, 2018, 180), or that these transnational protests are striving for “radical political change” (Volk 2019, 108). In fact, the concept of a correction struggle and the related internal critique it offers appears to be restricted in its applicability to Western square occupation movement activities, which seemingly seldom aimed merely at defending or returning to a status quo, but regularly claimed to strive for deep system changes, as was reflected in the famous protest slogans “Another world is possible” or “Capitalism is the crisis”.

An advocate of the argument that these movements should not be seen merely as correction struggles is Alex Demirović (2014), a prominent critical theorist from Germany. Instead of examining the Western square occupation movements’ new forms of disobedience with a reactive language, viewing them only as a veto power or counter-reaction to recurring structural injustices, Demirović contends that we should examine them as efforts to reshape institutions, striving for deep changes and promoting new forms of societal coexistence (Demirović 2014, 25). Similarly, other authors also have criticized interpretations of political theorists that often present a too-defensive picture of activists’ self-understandings and goals, instead of showing that their struggles can be innovative, can revive political-decision making processes, and can reconstitute social institutions (Niesen 2019). These are important counter-arguments and I share the emancipatory hope that accompanies these views. However, my concern is that these approaches risk ignoring the reasons why agents are motivated to rise up, organize in networks, and resist in the first place. Instead of succumbing to the tempting idea that tends to idealize each new movement as an expression of radical dissent, we should refocus on the injustices articulated by protesters in order to examine their struggles.

The massive mobilizations of the Western square occupation movements are a case in

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

point. Their gigantic protest events and their ability to force governments to resign and force new elections should not be idealized as the result of a radical or even revolutionary enthusiasm held by a majority of the participants. Instead, they should be seen, first of all, as a mass reaction to sudden mass experiences of disrespect toward citizens whose social status previously was assured. We should emphasize that people resisted injustices that occurred abruptly, such as the rapid social disenfranchisement and devaluation of a broad majority of Southern European citizens through austerity policies. These events must have been experienced by the victims as a shocking destabilization of their material lives, related to a threatening prospect of slipping into poverty and fears of feeling ashamed about losing one's accustomed social status. Their motives were fed by a situation in which the media presentation of valid social welfare rights under attack quickly led to mass awareness, and prepared the breeding-ground for the breathtaking, large-scale mobilizations of the Indignados in Southern Europe (Pleyers 2014, 107 f.). This is not to say that there was no revolutionary spirit or purpose in these movements. Rather, we can say that these events must be linked to mass experiences of the sudden dismantling of certified legal respect and societal esteem that was previously assured and appreciated by a majority. Harming these entitlements through austerity measures enforced by the Troika of the IMF, the EU, and the European central bank prepared the social ground for the Western square occupation movements. Not everyone turned into a revolutionary activist overnight, but the shared experience of injustice, intense societal changes, and disruption in daily life generated motivating reasons to rise up on a massive scale. This is why it makes sense to add the dimension of a corrective struggle for defending one's certified recognition and related entitlements to our understanding of these movements.

This can be further clarified by referring once more to the concept of *internal critique*: Well-founded social critique is a crucial condition for actors becoming motivated to strive for change. If you do not share the critique, you do not have a reason to rise up. The most successful way to produce motivating reasons for protest thus seems to be one where criticism refers to norms that are already valid (Haslanger 2020, 35) and broadly accepted in society (i.e., internal). Complaining about the violation of previously assured social norms seems to be much less controversial than aiming to overcome a status quo by referring to a utopian state of affairs (i.e., external critique). Internal societal critique makes it much more likely that many will agree and rise up (Holldorf 2016, 130). Applying these ideas to the Western square occupations movements supports the argument that one does not have to be a revolutionary to resist austerity politics or policies. It can be sufficient to see oneself as a victim of the massive

undoing of welfare principles that used to be broadly accepted in many European countries (e.g., a deeply rooted attachment to social rights) (della Porta 2017, 461 ff), in order to feel anger and develop motivating reasons for protest action.

Therefore, the Western square occupations movements should be seen as taking on the function of a corrective. They fought against a unilateral termination of a previously assured societal contract that used to provide citizens with a certain normative status of social respect and esteem; a status the majority was not willing to give up, and the protests tried to defend.

3.5 Correction Struggles and Defending Achievements

Examining the Western square occupation movements as correction struggles in a defense of certified recognition can be further illuminated by referring to the historical research of Barrington Moore, which strongly influenced Honneth's concept of a moral grammar of social conflicts. In Moore's famous work *Injustice* ([1978]1987)³⁷, he seeks to answer this question: under what circumstances do individuals decide to rise up? Moore's research on labor and fascist movements in Germany suggests that widely perceived violations of traditional notions of justice, the good communal life and merit—ideas of a decent coexistence that people were familiar with and socialized in (cf., Moore 1987, 628)—are the kind of conditions that are able to trigger moral outrage and produce joint protests. In short, *perceived injustices* are a key to understanding why agents begin to protest. Moreover, Moore's history of the labor movement in particular suggests that such struggles are often “backwards looking” (ibid., 1987, 627). They usually attempted to revive traditional social bonds and ways of living that were seen as illegitimately becoming lost through the forces of industrialization. Moore therefore concludes that movement protests usually contain a “strong defensive component” (ibid., 1987, 628). To clarify this notion, he refers to French workers' struggles in the 19th century that had aimed to protect an accustomed status as honorable artisans, instead of fighting for innovative solutions. “The French worker in the 19th century could not even imagine paid annual holidays [...] Nowadays, the sudden abolition of holidays by employers would be perceived as the peak of arbitrary injustice.” (ibid., 1987, 628) Moore therefore concludes that *defending a normative status one is accustomed to* must be considered a crucial part of the story about a movements' struggles.

A similar position is advocated by contemporary political philosopher Michal Walzer,

³⁷ The following references to Moore's work [1978] are freely translated and based on the German version of his work from 1987: *Ungerechtigkeit. Die sozialen Ursachen von Unterordnung und Widerstand*. Frankfurt am Main. Suhrkamp.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

who argues in a text “The politics of resistance” in the online version of the magazine *Dissent* (Walzer 2017) that “Long before men conceived of a plastic political order which could be refashioned at will, they had developed modes of response to oppression.” Acts of resistance carried out by movements “were not aggressive and transforming, but were rather defensive and limited: they were designed to defend natural law, traditional rights or legal order.” (ibid., 2017) Based on both Moore’s research and Walzer’s reasoning, we should not be surprised to also find ‘defense components’ in the normative claims of the Western square occupation movements. Considering the severe crises out of which the European Indignados arose and the related situation of mass unemployment, it seems crucial to examine their protest as a collective reaction to a sudden removal of entitlements. Since numerous southern European citizens had been deprived of their social-welfare rights and downgraded in their economic status by reducing their wages, our initial assessment of the Indignados’ struggle should be that these are backward-looking correction struggles to defend their previously assured status, rather than forward-looking struggles for accomplishing something new. It is appropriate to be skeptical about approaches that see these protest movements as utterly detached from any defensive components.

A good counterexample to these arguments is Christian Volk’s examination of the protests of Occupy Wall Street and Indignados (2019). The Berlin-based political theorist argues that these “... transnational movements are not concerned with minor corrections of the status quo but stand for thoroughgoing political changes, right up to revolutionizing the [...] social, economic, and political order of the transnational constellation ...” (Volk 2019, 110). Volk’s account is appealing, and I agree that we should emphasize that protesters and the movements they form should be seen as political agents that are able to create and initiate changes, often altering the parameters of what is considered possible and demandable in current institutions (ibid., 2019, 111). Yet, considering that he aims at providing a convincing language and interpretations that capture the objectives and concerns of these new movements better than others do (cf., ibid., 2019, 114), the major weakness of Volk’s account is that it remains vague. Since he deliberately distances himself from any functionalist explanation, what the movements’ radicalism is exactly about remains ambiguous. Despite platitudes about how these movements resist the current design of neoliberal economy (ibid., 2019, 107 f.), oppose current social arrangements, and demand a new world, Volk’s approach does not explain any of their claims. In fact, his closing remarks about the meaning and function of these protest movements sound radical, but remain entirely vague. For instance, he says that the protesters sought to “enact a parallel world”, “aiming to establish alternative global

institutions” (cf., *ibid.*, 2019, 112 ff.), “fight a war of position” and “realize and exercise alternative life forms, whose hour may at best come after the supposed breakdown of the system” (Volk 2019, 115). However, such an examination is unsatisfactory for making sense of the Western square occupations movements’ transnational protests, and comprehending their relationship to the fabric of global politics, the market economy, and liberal democracy.

One issue with his approach is that he ignores the dimension of a joint reaction against injustice and the related negotiations over entitlements in society, viewing new movements simply as conflicts between irreconcilable entities, and as an attempt to exercise deep dissent from the established forms of politics, “enacting a parallel world” (Volk 2019). This seems to say that, ultimately, these square occupations movements express a form of *external critique* (Jaeggi 2014, 261 ff). This societal critique is offered with regard to values that are detached from existing institutions. The problem with this approach is that it does not clarify how conflict actions emerge in our society, and why a majority actually should be motivated by a critique that merely refers to an abstract ‘ought’. Volk’s approach makes it difficult to politically locate the protests, decide whether they are justified, and determine whether one would want to support them (Holldorf 2016, 131).

In contrast, by studying the Western square occupation movements as counter reactions against experiences of disrespect, we can link their struggles to concrete issues in our society. Instead of reducing them to a clash between irreconcilable entities, and thus entangling ourselves in a dualistic world, we approach them as signals that something has gone profoundly wrong in the current world (Zurn 2015, 43). By applying recognition theory, we can treat them as *epistemological resources* that tell us something about deficits and injustice inside society. Furthermore, they could be seen as forces of society that aim at resolving these issues through joint action. This line of argument sounds less radical than Volk’s, but provides a more useful and phenomenologically accurate vocabulary about the meaning of the protesters’ normative claims. Recognition theory’s explanatory approach is more useful since it inclines us to examine the Western square occupation movements as pressing concrete claims along particular axes that relate directly to current social conditions, eventually uncovering the ways that their claims and practices are produced by a violation of valid norms, and are, in part, an attempt to defend current sources of respect and esteem.

3.6 Correction Struggles and Resisting Injustice

A typical complaint against a recognition-based examination of social movements in general and protests in particular is that such an examination may promote political conservatism,³⁸ since it would draw its resources only through revealing a moral grammar of current interpersonal, institutional and market relations (e.g., Schaub 2015). As such, recognition theory provides an analytical tool for reflecting only those claims underlying conflict actions (e.g., equal rights, security, or reward) that relate to normative principles that are already valid and established in a society (Honneth 2014, 8 ff.), evaluating whether the normative promises inherent in existing institutions or companies have been fulfilled or legitimized. (Schaub 2015, 110) One could object that this is a hidden form of conservatism, as there is a danger of endorsing a status quo social consensus merely because it exists (Zurn 2015, 19). However, examining the Western square occupation movements as correction struggles for defending recognition is not the same as saying that they are purely defensive or should be seen as reactionary political forces. We will discuss the ways in which these social movements are progressive at the end of this thesis (see Chapter 6 and 8). This section addresses the ways that recognition theory differs from theories that examine these movements primarily as conservative political forces.

For instance, as others have already pointed out, the political theorist Christopher Daase applies a rather *reactive concept* to contemporary movements (Sörensen 2020, 40). In recent articles he argues with regard to such resistance that, "... its goal is [...] all the time, to maintain or restore the good order, which got perverted by rulers. Thus, unlike the revolution, resistance is at least declaratively based on a conservative intention". (Daase 2014, 3) Manuel Castells uses a very similar argument. The famous sociologist has already argued in *The City and the Grassroots* (1983) that, besides aiming to defend or preserve a status quo, new urban movements would be collective forms of compensation in reaction to shared experiences of powerlessness in complex societies. (Castells 1983, 326)

Important here is that both Castell and Daase present a different thesis than the one described herein. They present contemporary movements solely as 'reactive agents'. By contrast, I argue that especially the Western square occupation movements had political agency and were able to enforce changes. While examining them as corrective struggles and highlighting their defense components, we also have seen that these movements intended to

³⁸ 'Conservatism' is here simply understood as advocating, or wishing to maintain things as they are, as opposed to favoring change, improvement, or reform, especially in political matters.

actively protect social structures of moral regard needed for the participants' positive identities and their freedom in coexistence. Whereas the other accounts tend to reduce protesters to passive entities and victims, recognition theory helps to point out that they engaged in these protests and articulated claims with the intention of jointly reacting to experiences of injustices, in order to improve both society as a whole and their own individual lives (Zurn 2015, 67 f).

Another way of using defensive concepts when examining contemporary transnational movements is provided by Armin Nassehi. In his work *The big no. Dynamics and tragedy of social protest* (2020), the social theorist examines movements in general as special forms of collective veto power and opposition. In an interview³⁹ about his work, he clarifies that movements should be seen as reactions to a dysfunctional opposition in an established political system, as their extra-parliamentary protests would arise if people had the general impression that the formal pathways for voicing political disagreement were failing. Applying this view to the European square occupation movements, one must admit that these protests against social cuts indeed took place in the context of a harmony between center-left and right parties that favored austerity, which in turn caused a vast decline in votes, especially for labor parties (della Porta 2017, 462 ff).

However, Nassehi's approach is flawed by ambiguities that weaken its applicability. First, he overemphasizes one causal condition for the emergence of movements: the absence of sufficient institutional means of voicing complains and of correcting injustice. As noted earlier (see section 2.2), the absence of institutional political means could be seen as one of six conditions necessary for the emergence of movements, such as the absence of suitable representation of dissenting voices through a strong opposition party in parliament. Yet, this lack is not a sufficient condition for the emergence of movements. Also, Nassehi does not address the fact that movements in general rise more often in liberal democracies due to the enlarged opportunity structures for citizen participation and the related legal protections for public criticism (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, section "Regimes and Opportunity Structures", 59 f). The extra-parliamentary opposition practiced by the Western square occupation movements is rather common and, indeed, is facilitated by institutions (e.g., the courts in the USA), and is not an exceptional sort of event.

Nassehi's explanations also risk legitimizing extreme conservative and right-wing revolts that may, at one point, seem to lack adequate representation in institutions but

³⁹ Find the illuminating interview of Nassehi here: <https://taz.de/Armin-Nassehi-im-taz-FUTURZWEI-Gespraech/!171299/> (last accessed July 6th, 2022).

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

allegedly deserve to be included. Although he does not make normative claims, I am concerned that Nassehi's functionalist approach inappropriately presents movements as merely fulfilling a social task in a subsystem of society (Volk 2019, 107), depicting activists' self-understanding, goals, and actions in an utterly reactive language, or as a type of political substitute for a dysfunctional opposition, thereby offering hidden justifications for movements that may follow harmful ends.

Concerning these ambiguities, examining the Western square occupation movements as 'correction struggles for defending recognition' is distinct from examining them using mere reactive or defensive language as veto powers. The actions of movement participants both resisted decisions that had been made, and also influenced processes of democratic decision-making and proactively pushed for solutions to urgent problems. Though, as we have seen, the protests of these movements may have been shaped by broadly accepted normative principles of liberal democracy, and also functioned to scandalize a discrepancy between democratic legitimacy and legality through symbolic acts of disobedience against state decisions (e.g., Rawls 1971; Habermas 1985, 83 ff), this is not the same as saying that these movements were purely defensive. By contrast with the reactive concept (advocated by Daase) or the veto power concept (advocated by Nassehi), recognition theory tells us that these movements should be viewed as a corrective to gain back agency and preserve social welfare protections. Instead of reducing the Western square occupation movements to collective actions by conservative agents, we can view them as intentional and proactive forms of cosmopolitan disobedience that try to bring about global solutions for global issues, though often executed and implemented by local governments.

However, since much of the attention we give to movements normally stems from their assumed ability to bring about change, one might argue that an examination of their resistance and conflict actions is unsatisfying if it only highlights proactive defense components (Niesen 2019; Sørensen 2020, 40). Many of those who criticize a focus on these defensive components in current movement theories are dissatisfied about the normative and political implications. Since we usually conceive (or wish to conceive) the social changes produced by movements both as the return to an old order, and as a motion to something new, radically altered, better, or more just (see Chapter 8), it seems alienating to approach them as a correction struggles in defense of a *status quo*. But explicating a movements' defense components does not exhaust the examination. Quite the opposite. In the following chapter, I will illustrate that recognition theory provides grounds for explicating multiple layers of claims, showing that the Western square occupation movements pressed claims along more

than one axis of recognition. I will examine them also as a fight to extend previous achievements, such as the democratic participation of all citizens. These movements should thus be seen as facilitators for a politics that goes beyond acts of correction. I will examine them next as *struggles for political inclusion* and later as *struggles for societal transformation*, able to conduct collective actions for deep change.

Chapter 4

Inclusion Struggles for Extending Recognition

“The Square was our Mecca; [...] We gathered to make revolution and stayed to talk. And how we talked [...]. Hardly a subject was left untouched by our excitement, by our passions, by our sincerity.”

—Isadore Wisotsky⁴⁰

As another dimension of recognition theory, we can examine the Western square occupation movements as *inclusion struggles for extending and deepening recognition*. What does this mean? Drawing further on Iser’s reading of Honneth, a movement’s conflict actions also can be understood as caused by *unjustified one-sidedness* (Iser 2008, 222 f.). A movement draws attention to one-sidedness when it reveals and objects to unjustified unequal treatment in a social sphere, typically by criticizing hegemonic views on who and what is considered worthy of recognition. Such movements make deficits, exclusiveness, and unjust privilege undeniably explicit. Movement actions in response to one-sidedness can therefore be examined as attempts to extend the norms, forms, and objects in existing spheres of recognition (e.g., extending the circle of the recipients of rights). These efforts initiate a *process of inclusion* for those who have been excluded previously from commonly-recognized values. Whereas correction struggles aim to defend violated but valid recognition norms and defend a societal status quo, inclusion struggles in contrast complain about the insufficient realization and application of these norms and strive for institutional social change. In other words, they are normatively protective since they invoke the content (ideal form) of valid social norms, but institutionally transformative since they complain about insufficient social structures (real form) that do not properly actualize these norms and therefore must be changed. For example, the various waves of feminist movements were strengthened as they exposed the systematic exclusion of women from social institutions (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 182 ff.). While these movements began advocating for the respect of women as equal citizens and for granting women basic liberties (such as voting, contract, and labor liberties) in the 19th century, they also problematized one-sided public esteem for male labor alone, whereas the domestic care

⁴⁰ I. Wisotsky (1895—1970) was a member of the ‘Industrial Workers of the World’, a militant labor organization in the United States, during the early 20th century. In his autobiographical notes, he portrays the Union Square in New York City as a public space of radical activity. In: Michels, Tony. 2012. *Jewish Radicals: A Documentary History*. NYU Press, 99 ff.

work of females was devalued as leisure time, voluntary work, or otherwise treated as insignificant. Through their struggles, the feminist movements initiated a cultural learning process, extending the recognition-worthy traits and values in our society, eventually resulting in the inclusion of woman in the labor market⁴¹ and in the sphere of equal legal respect (cf., Zurn 1997). Although it is most common to see the protests of formerly oppressed groups as inclusion struggles, I claim this concept also should be assigned to the Western square occupations. In particular, we should see the European Indignados and Occupy Wall Street as *struggles for enhancing democratic inclusion*.

A disclaimer in advance: Though it is not hard to see that movement struggles when converted into political pressures eventually lead to democratic reforms, there is neither a widely accepted theory of democratic recognition, nor of recognition struggles for more democracy⁴² (Hirvonen and Laitinen 2016, 7 f.). Honneth shows, on the one hand, that the relations of recognition are constitutive for democracy, since persons need to be respected in their normative status as free and equal citizens that have pluralistic beliefs—i.e., as co-authors of norms they are subjected to—by both state institutions and other citizens in order to have an active role in the democratic decision-making processes (Honneth 2012, 145; or *ibid.*, 2014; 261). On the other hand, he shows that the existence and authority of democratic state institutions is also dependent on citizens' willingness to 'vertically' recognize them (Honneth 2014, 267). Furthermore, he presents democracy as a way to organize recognition institutions and relationships, namely, as a way of jointly determining the form of societal coexistence. Democracy, one might say, should be seen as the best way of formulating and regulating the spheres of recognition and venue for peaceful and just reconciliation of struggles for recognition, as only through democracy can we arrive at broadly accepted and justified forms of recognition. These views culminate in Honneth's second major work, *Freedom's Right*, where he presents the institutional foundations of "democratic life" as well as "cooperative interaction in public will-formation"—i.e., the "free and unforced exchange of opinions" among equals—as both the means and the end of individual self-realization and, ultimately, social freedom (cf., Honneth 2014, 272). However, although the concept of recognition seems clearly tied to democracy, and though Honneth draws most of the advances in its institutional framework and civic culture back to the collective struggles of those who were previously

⁴¹ Note that there are multiple factors that helped enforce these positive changes. Besides 'active elements' like activism, one can also highlight the rise of consumerist economics, which make women a far greater force within capitalism. For further reading see for instance: Madden, Kirsten, and Robert W. Dimand, eds. 2019. *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Women's Economic Thought*. London.

⁴² Here I would like to thank Emmanuel Renault for bringing this problem to my attention.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

excluded from politics (Honneth 2014, 260 f., 294 f., and 329), the concept of a *recognition-led struggle for democracy* is not properly theorized. Hence, this chapter could also be seen as an attempt to further clarify this concept by applying it to contemporary democracy movements.

Back to the main story: The world economic crisis of 2008 and the associated austerity policies did spark protectionist struggles in defense of social rights and traditional levels of social esteem, but *the Western square occupation movements also challenged representative democracy*. With regard to the response to the crisis in Europe, touched off by the US real estate and consequent financial breakdown in 2007 f, as the EU (led by Germany and endorsed by the IMF) cracked down on public spending by its economically weaker members, protesters in Europe began to express concern that the political process was being reduced to a technocratic game⁴³ of economic utility, and favoring the financial interests of big corporate lenders at the expense of government borrowers' social welfare systems. In fact, one big normative issue with austerity policies was that they bypassed the ordinary ways of legitimate policy-making. Major global, though unelected, political institutions commanded vast social cuts and market deregulations in exchange for loans, and many of the various governments complied through decrees rather than exposing these demands to sufficient, or even any democratic decision-making.

Furthermore, since both center-left and center-right governments in most Southern European countries enacted the EU-imposed welfare cuts, and did so with the justification that there was no alternative to frugal austerity, broad skepticism spread regarding the efficacy of representative liberal democracy. Thus, protesters questioned the *capacity of politics* to enact reforms on behalf of the common good in a globalized economy, a system that forces states to compete with each other over tax benefits and market-friendly regulatory changes for attracting large enterprises. Protesters complained that political elites only feigned willingness to address social welfare issues, since they focused only on preserving power and technocratic governance, detached from any normative considerations (Holldorf 2016, 148). Two events marked the lowest points in what appeared to many as a development towards *post-democracy* (Crouch 2004). One was the convening of the technocratic financial experts from the governments of Greece and Italy imposed by the EU (cf., Kriesi 2015, 74 ff). The other was a speech of German Chancellor Angela Merkel about the significance of "market compliant" public budgets in EU countries, at a press briefing together with the former Prime

⁴³ Technocracy here simply means the political rule of experts not subject to the pressures brought to bear on elected representatives held accountable in the context of various democratic legitimacy processes.

Minister of Portugal in September 2011. The associated public impression developed from these two moments was of the impotence of democratic decision-making due to the supremacy of market logic over politics: it seemed that voting would not matter since monetary calculations had the most and final weight. This impression, along with the suffering produced by the austerity measures, eventually caused broad public discontent. These events and related grievances were underscored, for instance, by the popular protest slogans of the Greek Indignados: “I vote, you vote, he votes, she votes, we vote, they steal” (Gerbaudo 2017, 157 ff.) as well as by the famous European protest slogan of the Spanish Indignados: “You do not represent us.” (Azzelini and Sitrin 2014)

Similar concerns were soon raised in the USA, inspired by the European protest. In the epicenter of the world economic crisis, numerous big banks had been saved from bankruptcy beginning in 2008, while citizens were increasingly struggling with private debts out of control, unemployment, and the dysfunctional system of social security (Kriesi 2015, 75 ff). Growing from this fertile social ground, on September 17, 2011, square occupations began to emerge in New York City. Thousands of activists set up camp in Zuccotti Park near Wall Street, following an announcement by the magazine *Adbusters* and the hackers’ network Anonymous: “Are you ready for a Tahir moment? On September 17th, flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street.”⁴⁴

The masses of people who joined public meetings, rallies, sit-in blockades, and square occupations over several months considered themselves in line with the revolts in Europe and with the Arab Spring. Their protests were targeted against the power of “money in politics”, and also called—as did the European Indignados—for “Real Democracy” (Taylor *et al.*, 2011, 11). Studies show that protesters in Europe and the USA shared the impression that a majority were excluded from decision-making processes when elites were trying to deal with the causes and effects of the global crisis (Oikonomakis *et al.*, 2016, 227 ff). Against such perceived exclusion and the associated technocratic logic in politics, both Indignados and Occupy developed an alternative: assemblies, held in protest camps on occupied public city squares, where everyone was allowed to join in and speak up (Calhoun 2013, 4 f). These actions of mass civil disobedience were associated with slogans aimed at disassociating themselves from established politics, e.g., in Spain: “Real Democracy now. We are not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers.” (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 48)

⁴⁴ Occupy Wall Street in the US began with the above-mentioned entry on *Adbuster’s* blog: <http://occupywallst.org>. See: <https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html/> (last accessed July 11, 2022).

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

Using recognition theory's explanatory approach, we should examine these movements as *inclusion struggles*: in general, they can be seen as a collective reaction to shared experiences of systematic exclusion from established policy-making. Their demands for genuine democracy thus entail the normative claim that ordinary citizens must have more direct and equal inclusion in decision-making processes. Therefore, among themselves, the protesters enacted a new type of bottom-up democracy. Participants seemed to envision that each individual would have a real chance and an equal opportunity to actively take part in the collective processes of forming a political opinion and making choices, as well as influencing decisions (e.g., laws, and policies) that affect their private lives and their public coexistence (Szolucha 2017, 116). They opposed the reduction of politics to a perceived hegemony of mere technocratic application of financial-markets-friendly measures conducted by, but not originating with, elected representatives (even elected representatives were seen as complicit, in that they were carrying out the orders of unelected technocrats). Instead, they sought to change the entire relationship between citizens and politics, and expressed the desire to be regarded no longer as passive voters represented by a party, but to be fully and individually recognized as rational, capable, and moral agents, directly participating in debates with others in a joint effort towards finding social balance and democratic consensus. From that angle, the Western square occupation movements developed from the perception that the "elites" unjustifiably regarded ordinary citizens as politically unworthy, and that there was an underlying conflict between two constitutive elements of democracy: citizens as sovereigns and politicians as representatives. Thus, in their meetings and related social experiments with direct democracy and consensus-based decision-making, the protestors articulated the normative claim to a stronger influence for citizens (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 16 f). To put it simply, the protesters attempted to go beyond the dominant logic of democratic representation and political fractioning, since they experienced these structures as undemocratic in practice.

Thus, we should see the Western square occupation movements as inclusion struggles since they criticize the exclusivity and privileges in modern-day democratic politics and problematize the one-sided recognition of citizens as mere voters or party members. This is an *inclusion struggle for strengthening one's normative status as a political agent*; one that has the right to be equally considered, asked, and practically involved. The Western square occupation movements should therefore be conceived of as trying to broaden the sphere of legal respect, demanding an extension of political rights and a "democratization of democracy" (Azzellini 2014, 496). Above all, they seemed to aim at strengthening the

procedural justice in our real-world democracy by involving more people through participatory decision-making processes, giving everyone an equal right to speak up and be heard. To re-balance a seemingly inappropriate relationship between citizens' sovereignty and representation, they aimed to make democratic politics genuinely inclusive and broaden our formal participation rights through creating more local grassroots structures.

Both the European Indignados and Occupy Wall Street should be seen as recognition-led struggles, since their conflict actions can be conceived as collective reactions to shared experiences of disrespect for political agency in our liberal democracy, caused when citizens' voices were ignored when matters were decided concerning complex economic problems and associated political decisions that had lasting impact on citizens' social rights. Particularly, they should be seen as struggles for inclusion since they aimed at a) *deepening* the processes of political decision-making, and b) *extending* the scope of the agents involved therein. Hence, these protesters should be seen as fighting for a quantitative and qualitative enhancement of political rights—i.e., recognizing more agents as capable to join these processes (extending) and recognizing each individual as fully capable to be directly involved (deepening). They aimed to make our democracy more democratic through public assemblies, imperative mandates, surveys, plebiscites, and online options. The Western square occupation movements fought for extending the norms, forms, and objects in the legal sphere of political recognition also exposed a normative tension: the incomplete realization of key promises of liberal democracy, which is that those subjected to the law must be able to perceive themselves as its authors (Gaus *et al.*, 2020, 4 f). They remind us that normative ideals of self-governance and universal equality are worth striving for since they are still incomplete: in fact, that the realization of these values is restricted in our real-world democracy due to the hegemony of market logic and hidden forms of political privilege.

4.1 Inclusion Struggles and Radical Democracy

In contrast to the view I advocate of the Western square occupation movements as struggles for inclusion, many theorists associated with radical democracy theory (Flügel-Martinsen 2019)—despite variances, many of these thinkers oppose functionalism and juridification, while arguing against the naturalization of social orders and the related cementing of political inequality, and thus see true democratic action as antagonistic rather than consensus-oriented (e.g., Lorey 2019, 123; Mouffe 2014)—often condemn such an analysis as applying a “liberal rights-based approach” (Volk 2019, 108). For instance, Volk argues that an approach focusing

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

on inclusion would fail to grasp the “specifically political character” of these new transnational movements as it simply understands them as “struggles for rights” (e.g., enforcing and advancing rights in new ways, securing acquired ones, or extending beneficiaries). By contrast, Occupy *et al.* attempted to go beyond individual liberal rights, contesting our dominant views of what is considered political, and creating new arenas of alternative ways of living. Instead of viewing these new movements as fighting for an inclusive upgrade of current institutions, Volk sees them as deeply challenging the “neoliberal capitalistic design” of modern-day politics and our “transnational constellation” (Volk 2019, 108; and 2018, 2).

Theorists that hold a similar view likewise emphasize that these movements would “... not simply place demands for further democratization on the austerity-oriented conservative/social-democratic governments, but rather practice a new form of democracy...” (Lorey 2019, 127). Here, Isabell Lorey is separating her own approach from Hegelian ones (Lorey 2019, 120), claiming that these would downplay the value of the present and treat justice only as a future telos, “... as a principally endless expansion of participation rights that have to be fought for. The unfulfillable promise [...] of democratization endlessly postponed into the future ...” (Lorey 2019, 121). In contrast to the linear thinking of such a “liberal, bourgeois form of democracy,” Lorey sees the movements that have emerged from the Western square occupations of 2011 as voicing radical inclusion and presentist democracy (ibid., 2019,128). This form of democracy is primarily viewed as participants practicing a “... permanent unfolding of affective connections in solidarity networks and collective support ...” (ibid., 2019, 127), trying to radically extend democracy and include people by arranging ever more spheres through open assemblies. Instead of struggling for an alleged future inclusion of all, they would “arrange real democracy in the now time” through self-governed neighborhood assemblies, in small working groups in relatively closed spaces, in network meetings of delegates, up to the involvement of the population as horizontally as possible at the municipal level. Lorey, therefore, views these movements not as aiming to improve existing institutions, but as radically changing them, as well as creating new forms of democracy, and as going beyond a vertical-representative democracy, towards a horizontal and presentist democracy. In short, the Western square occupation movements are presented as utterly new types of “radical democracy movements”, where political inclusion and equality taking place in real time, and are practiced and continuously actualized in local public assemblies (ibid., 2019, 128 f).

While I agree that Occupy *et al.*, are characterized by the refusal to engage with parties and the more formal means of politics, and aim to enact horizontalist aspirations and consensual decision-making in their assembly-based democracies (e.g., Occupy Wall Street 2011a), I nonetheless want to point to one aspect that, I believe, inclines Volk and Lorey to unjustifiably condemn the concept of an inclusion struggle: the problem of affirming an existing social order. Like many other radical democratic thinkers, Lorey and Volk both implicitly argue that we should not use a language of conflict, which gives the false impression that protesters (i.e., conflict agents) see a given order (e.g., rights in liberal democracy) as principally just, one that should exist in more or less the present form, but also one that has deficits. Instead, they seem to suggest that we should use concepts that help view and treat protesters as not only affirming and adjusting, but deeply criticizing and challenging the very existence of an institution (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 174). Whereas the first carries the risk of depoliticizing social coexistence and cementing inequality, the second offers the chance to transform them and expose hidden patterns of domination (Volk 2018, 8 ff). Hence, in order to disentangle oneself from affirming *status quo* domination, the authors condemn the concept of inclusion and highlight characteristics that underline the ways that the Indignados and Occupy might “disrupt” modern-day politics.

This language of radical change is admirable. Yet, I am concerned that it is associated with serious normative and explanatory shortcomings. Regarding explanatory issues, Lorey, for instance, tries to entirely detach her analysis from conceiving of the Western square occupation movements as struggles for “an extension of democratic rights as per a politics of recognition” (Lorey 2019, 123), but ultimately says that their joint democratic actions and consensus-based decisions would “not be based on unanimity or exclusion but are rather practices of expanding inclusion” (Lorey 2019, 128). Although this is meant to signify an extension of assembly-based democracy into all areas of coexistence, she gives the impression that, after all, activists aim at making real-world democracy more accessible (democratizing it), or at least show how to do so, through the underlying promises of people’s self-governance. Lorey thus outlines a dynamic rather than an antagonistic relationship between democratic institutions and radical democratic actions, leaving room to implement the concept of inclusion in her analysis. Similarly, Volk sees the new movements as the joint action of those whose political agency would not have been recognized as legitimate by political elites, and that “depoliticized agents” would now seek to achieve an unrealized form of political equality (Ranciere 1999, 3). Using Ranciere’s concept of *disagreement*, he thus views these movements as struggling against “consolidated structures of political inequality”, and as

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

“those that have no part” fight for their “part” (Lorey 2019, 123; Ranciere 1999, 9; Volk 2019, 109f).

However, it appears contradictory that both these thinkers fail to clarify what kind of part or radical inclusion these movements—seen as genuinely democratic—fight for in particular, if their desired conflict goals should not be seen as legally assured participation rights for groups or individuals in liberal democracy (Volk 2019, 110; Lorey 2019, 126). Facing such explanatory ambiguities, the results of their examinations can be reformulated and enriched in clarity using recognition theory. On that view, the Western square occupation movements can be conceived as disadvantaged social groups that attempt to appeal to institutionalized, universal, normative principles (e.g., equal participation rights for all) that are being interpreted and applied in a deficient manner, and to turn these norms against exclusions (e.g., the marginalization of uneducated, poor, or formerly oppressed people) by relying on them for the justification of their needs. These movements struggled in favor of a greater realization of the insufficiently real, but promised, universal political equality in real-world democracy.

This examination clearly pinpoints what kind of “part” those “who do not have a part” fight for. Using recognition theory, we see that they struggle for their “part” in democratic decision-making through extending the circle of participants, deepening existing rights, creating horizontal forums for deliberation, and through applying the normative promise of political equality to all spaces of our public coexistence. In contrast, Volk’s and Lorey’s approaches seem to be constrained in their ability to illuminate these protests in a similar way, due to their pledge to not to affirm the deficit status quo of democracy. Yet, to portray these social movements as if they were in a fundamental tension with democratic institutions⁴⁵ only for the sake of non-complicity with the current societal status quo comes with disadvantages for theorists. One problem is that their examinations promote the view that we should treat movements as expressing external critique; a form of collective critique that is detached (external) from broadly accepted social norms and related institutions. As mentioned earlier, and leaving aside the issue of feasibility, such an examination does not clarify how ‘radical’ joint action arises in the first place and where the normative desires of protesters come from (cf., Holldorf 2016, 131). It gives an odd impression, as if protesters that desire more direct and inclusive forms of democracy (Lorey 2019, 127) would have nothing to do with the

⁴⁵ Mathijs van de Sande also argues that the widespread claim that the politics of the Western square occupation movements defied the logic of democratic representation—as often expressed by radical democratic theories—is unfounded. Instead, he shows how these movements typically used systems of rotating delegations and imperative mandates, and how they sought to equally distribute and decentralize political power rather than abolish representation altogether (van de Sande 2020, 402f).

promises of existing democracy. Such a view neglects how contemporary movements have usually penetrated institutions and deepened their integration forces (e.g., Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 49 ff; Martin 2015, 254 ff), instead of acting only outside of them. Such a theorization scores low on providing a “vocabulary to better comprehend” the political significance of the Western square occupation movements’ conflict practices to a broader public (Volk 2018, 2; Lorey 2013). By contrast, recognition theory links these movements to current society and the related normative promises of liberal democracy, helping us to view them as collective reactions to a violation of underlying values, and the protesters as agents that flag problems and articulate claims caused by experiences of democratic exclusion. On that view, the Western offshoots of the square occupations should rather be understood as voicing an *immanent critique*. (Jaeggi 2009, 286 ff.; *ibid.*, 2014, 277 ff) While, as discussed earlier, these protests voiced an internal critique with regard to the defense of social rights (see 3.4), I here argue—as a second dimension—that they must also be seen as aiming to *enhance an unused normative potential* with regard to struggling for more inclusive political participation rights. They express an immanent critique, drawing on a *validity surplus* of universal normative principles (e.g., Honneth 2015c, 206 ff; and *ibid.*, 2010; 114 ff), and use these norms against their merely particularistic social realizations. Using this view, we can refer productively to current institutions (without merely affirming them), showing that there is an immanent potential for more democratization (we go beyond a *status quo*, without simply rejecting it).

The concept of immanent critique voiced through inclusion struggles seems better suited for comprehending the meaning of the Western square occupation movements’ practices, and for justifying their efforts to a broader public, than does Lorey’s and Volk’s implicitly utilized concept of external critique expressed through anti-institutional radical democratic struggles. An example that supports this argument is that of the Spanish Indignados. Many of these protesters decided to use their massive movement network as a force of political power, aiming to go into and transform institutions of democracy.⁴⁶ Their strategy, called *asalto institucional* (Eng., the storming of institutions)—aimed at changing and newly positioning institutions from below, instead of just taking over political power (Sörensen 2020, 37)—was clearly expressed in a passage of a book published by a powerful movement offshoot in Barcelona⁴⁷ (2016):

⁴⁶ Many people from the *Indignados*/15M movement became engaged in the new bottom-up party Podemos (“We Can”).

⁴⁷ These are claims of the *International Committee of Barcelona en Comú*, 2016: How to win back the city en comú; <https://barcelonaencomu.cat/sites/default/files/win-the-city-guide.pdf> (last accessed July 10th, 2022).

We took the social networks, We took the streets and We took the squares. However, we found that change was being blocked from above by the institutions. [...] So, we decided that the moment had arrived to take back the institutions and put them at the service of the common good. [...] Our strategy has been to start from below [...]: our streets, our neighborhoods. The proximity of municipal governments to the people makes them the best opportunity we have to take the change from the streets to the institutions". (International Committee of *Barcelona en Comu* 2016, 4)

This case shows that the Western square occupation movements not only aimed at enacting forms of assembly-based democracy, but combined these subcultural practices with a strategy to change existing institutions from the inside. Importantly, one does not choose such a strategy if one does not see opportunities to bring about changes. If changes to existing institutions seem blocked, it seems more rational to propose an armed takeover, or a coup-like revolution. Instead, the participants of the Indignados protests seemed to share the estimate that there was a certain accessibility, permeability, and openness to improvements in the existing democracy, and thus aimed at using its institutions for promoting broader societal change. This is why such movements should be seen as expressing immanent critique. They utilized the universal resources of democracy against its deficit reality—they pushed it above its status quo and forward from inside—extending participation rights and institutions necessary to facilitate these rights in new and unexpected ways. In a way, these protests perfectly represented what the sociologists David Meyer and Sidney Tarrow called movement society, that is, the advanced opportunity structure to jointly politicize institutions and impose further democratization, guaranteed in and by the liberal democratic constitutional order as its distinctive feature (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; or Rucht 1994).

One might respond that Lorey and Volk simply aim to highlight the collective actions of a more communal-based and participatory democracy, in contrast to the complexity of supra-national institutions, power politics, and experiences of representation without accountability (other radical democratic theorists see here an ontological conflict between politics and policy). However, I am concerned that the one-sided praise of acts of resistance (as truly realizing ideals of democracy) comes with an unfortunate side effect—and here I address the normative ambiguities of Volk's and Lorey's views—of downplaying the value of present democracy (e.g., by devaluing rights, the mechanisms of representation, compromise seeking, and coalition building). Given that real-world democracy is confronting an existential threat from technocrats and authoritarians (Gaus *et al.*, 2020), critical theorists should be very clear as to whether they want to preserve or challenge democratic accomplishments. In fact, Volk addresses this issue in another article, admitting that radical democracy theories often

have two significant problems when examining movements: 1) They overemphasize one core element of democracy, the manifestation of conflict, and therefore lack criteria for how to distinguish between good and bad forms of collective protest, and 2) they fail to clarify what responsibility movements bear in a democracy (e.g., not making dispute resolutions impossible), or what they owe to the element of order in a modern society (Volk 2018, 11 f).

Here, Volk's analysis seems correct. Although radical democratic theories usually see a movement's conflict as an "equality realization activity", since they express the collective efforts of those "who have no part fight for their part" (ibid., 2018, 8), this does not address whether movements actually follow a justified cause. It is unclear whether radical democratic theories risk approaching movement protests as automatically justified, since such phenomena express the voices of the unheard, or if these theories are able to separate rightful from hateful outrage, or democratic from undemocratic protest, since they praise only those movements that promote universal equality and freedom for all (ibid., 2018, 14). These are vital questions that so far are unanswered. I will come back to these themes in chapter 7.

Concerning both the normative issues and the explanatory issues mentioned previously, the concept of (recognition led) inclusion struggles is better suited for comprehending the meaning of the Western square occupation movements and justifying their efforts to a broader public than Lorey's and Volk's concept of anti-institutional and radical democratic struggle. Although both Lorey and Volk note the normative problems mentioned above, they still lack a comprehensive theorization of the dynamic relationship between these protests and current democracy. They appear stuck in the vocabulary used by radical democratic theory, which tends to vaguely portray movement claims and actions as striving for something utterly new, due to their suspicion of affirmative politics and an implicit praise of radical disruptive action as a true moment of democratic politics.

Lastly, there is a key characteristic often assigned to the Western square occupations, not yet properly addressed, one that is also relevant in Volk's and Lorey's examination. This is the notion of directly enacting inclusion and societal progress, instead of waiting for future emancipation; of being a political agent here and now in assembly-based democracy, instead of being merely represented. Some theorists have been examining these characteristics, applying the ideas of presentist (Lorey 2019) and performative democracy (Butler 2018), or prefigurative politics (Sørensen 2020; Volk 2019). This is addressed in the next section, further debating the competing views on Occupy *et al.*, and the applicability of a recognition led inclusion struggle.

4.2 Assembly-based Democracy and Prefigurative Politics

Many have argued that the square occupation movements in Europe and the United States represent aspects of prefiguration, or more accurate, *prefigurative politics* (e.g., Raekstad and Gradin 2020). This is a mode of organization within movements that strives to reflect the society being fought for, aiming to embody the forms of decision-making processes, cultures, and/or attitudes that are the ultimate goal (Boggs 1977). It is a form of non-consequentialist action, where means and forms are supposed to match desired ends and norms; a form of politics that seeks to enact the social structures and relations of an envisioned better future society⁴⁸ (Sørensen 2020, 34).

Using this concept of prefigurative politics, some thinkers emphasized that the Western square occupation movements did not merely create visionary spaces and general assemblies in the center of US and European cities for matters of public dialog and deliberation, but also achieved some of the attributes of an envisioned future society by providing free food, open libraries, medical care, or a safe place to sleep, and so on, in accordance with values of solidarity, of the nonprofit provision of necessities, or of self-organization (Graeber 2012, 31 ff; Volk 2019, 108). In fact, the movement offshoots from New York to Madrid, Athens, Tel Aviv, Frankfurt, and London dominated global headlines due to the ways the protesters in each location set up a sizeable infrastructure for politics and daily life on occupied squares, creating “a nucleus of a future socialist society.” (Boogs 1977, 104) Protesters developed and applied new ways of consensus-based decision-making in their camps. While rejecting the logic of representation, they integrated mechanisms of inclusive political participation and principles of equality for fairer democratic deliberation that they were missing and wished to see and experience in current institutions (Holldorf 2016, 149f). Therefore, it does indeed appear sensible to apply the concept of *prefigurative politics*. This emphasizes the ways that the Western square occupation movements tried to enact forms that complied with desired norms and to illustrate the feasibility of a more just coexistence. Theorists who emphasize such a prefigurative dimension thus often argue that it “brings together refusal of domination with affirmative commitment to building new social relations” (Dixons 2014, 83); that these new social movements would turn cities into “heterotypical places of deviation” perceived as “alternatives” to the existing society (Sørensen 2020, 44);

⁴⁸ The ways in which Occupy *et al.*, are ‘progressive’ will be put aside at this point, and picked up again in chapter 6, where I argue that the Western square occupations movements are justified struggles for recognition, and at the end of the thesis in chapter 8. This section addresses the ways that recognition theory differs from theories that examine these new movements primarily as prefigurative or populist practices.

and that “... living and realizing these alternative life forms [...], clearly trumps any strategic and any organizational concessions...” (Volk 2019, 112 ff).

In many ways, the prefigurative approach resonates with David Graeber’s very popular examination of square occupations. In *Inside Occupy* (2012), he portrays Occupy *et al.* as a creation of experimental spaces, where participants would produce the “...institutions of a new society in the frame of the old one.” (Graeber 2012, 32) In contrast to Marxist theories—those that link humanity’s emancipation to a long-term history of struggles over wealth and power—Occupy’s protest is seen as a community-based effort, aimed at directly realizing the values and demands they believe in without waiting for future liberation. It is not hard to see that Graeber has a point. Occupy *et al.*’s anti-institutional norms (e.g., only individuals were allowed to join assemblies and speak) and experimental practices to realize utopian ideas of a better world (e.g., campsites based on subsistence economy, shared work, direct exchange, and the abundance of currencies) are clear features of an anarchist type of movement organization and agenda. (Occupy Wall Street 2011a)

However, others saw these same practices as a major problem of the Western square occupation movements, complaining that the absence of recognizable political leadership, lack of collective accountability, and inability to articulate claims to the rest of society doomed them to fail (e.g., Roberts 2012). Some theorists discard anarchist and prefigurative approaches altogether, arguing that these would portray the movements in merely an affirmative manner. For instance, Jaeggi and Fraser reject the strategy of effecting societal change through localized, prefigurative politics, seeing it as a “petit bourgeois” form of practice and “anarchist collectivism” that would end up—however non-hierarchical in its organization—as a new type of enterprise competing with others in the market, powerless to escape capitalist absorption (cf., Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 183). Fraser especially criticizes the “functional sustainability”—that is the criteria that a claim should be capable of institutional embodiment and create stability instead of turmoil—of such protests (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 178). She argues that if the practice of a “constant meeting” is intended to “prefigure a new form of societal organization”, it would be hard to envision “how it could be sustainable over time, given the burn-out factor” (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 180). In other words, Fraser’s—but also Jaeggi’s—criticism is that prefigurative approaches fall short on evaluating whether such experimental-communal practices are also desirable for a broader public, and provide a feasible solution for a societal problem, or are good for realizing equality. Instead, they argue that such approaches would only embody the unfortunate popularity of *neo-anarchism*, which simply glorifies movement actions as enacting protesters’ desires and ethos, but thereby

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

hampers the development of answers to vital political questions: such as, should all of a movement's offshoots coordinate efforts or emerge spontaneously, and should they have a common agenda or present diverse local demands (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 182 f)?

I agree with parts of Jaeggi's and Fraser's criticism. Given that political and social theories can be seen as forms of consultation and sense-making for political choices, or as contributions to a social movement's internal debates on what to do next or what to value, a prefigurative approach seems to take movement activities at face value, instead of critically reflecting the struggles and wishes of the time (Marx 1843a, 346). For instance, how should we assess the shortfalls of assembly-based democracy? A democracy that is only practiced on occupied squares in constant meetings is obviously associated with the deficiency that those who are not present have no say. So, what about political hierarchies or mechanisms of exclusion due to time resources and an educational background for engaging in such actions of direct democracy? It is the job of theorists to at least address these shortfalls in movement practices, instead of romanticizing them. Questioning the logic of representation is important, but it does not mean that protesters have the best remedies for ending the institutional crisis of democracy or other large-scale problems. Instead, we should acknowledge that democracy needs a certain stability and the infrastructure of institutions that guarantee equal opportunity for fair participation without unjust hierarchies; rules and mechanisms that prevent agents with the strongest manpower, and the most time resources from hijacking a forum and enforcing their views. Yet, these issues remain often unaddressed by theories that only emphasize the prefigurative, communal-based activities and anarchist aspects of Occupy or Indignados. Such theories seem unapt for critically examining the political importance of such new movements within a broader public, as they seem stuck in self-righteous rhetoric that over-emphasizes the viewpoint of the protesters (such as Sørensen 2020; Graeber 2012). I will take a closer look at such themes in chapter 6, further debating—among others—Fraser's critical view of the Western square occupation movements, and arguing that despite their low political efficacy and impact on social institutions, they were nonetheless important, support-worthy, and justified struggles.

A positive counterexample is offered by Judith Butler's current debate of contemporary street politics. In her work, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015)—I refer to the German translation from 2018—the famous critical theorist examines the square occupation movements (with a focus on Occupy Wall Street) as expressing a “plural and performative right” to collectively appear (Butler 2018, 19), and also sees them as enacting an ethos or “manifestation of ethical claims,” and as an end in itself for participants

(Butler 2018, 168). She examines Occupy's mass disobedience and experimental practice as symbolically enacting "popular sovereignty" (see also Butler 2016, 50) through and within newly-developed spaces of political deliberation, assemblies, and community on occupied squares, in contrast to imperfect forms of representative democracy (Butler 2018, 235). While echoing Hannah Arendt's view that the right to assembly goes beyond a legal entitlement guaranteed by states and should be viewed as a right for revolution (ibid., 2018, 208), Butler outlines a basic conflict between the joint enactment of popular will on the one hand and existing institutions of democratic decision-making on the other as a constant driving force of protest (ibid., 2018, 211 f). She contends that a part of the popular will remains—despite formal representation—inevitably "untranslatable." And due to this inability, there will always be new resistance. This is why Butler sees Occupy *et al.* as performing the "extra-parliamentary power" of the people and the "public appearance" of their sovereignty on city squares, in contrast to mere representation in current democracy (ibid., 2018, 210 f.).

Although her arguments display similarities with both radical democratic theories and the related concept of an "ontological conflict between politics and policy", as well as prefigurative politics and the related focus on joint enactment, Butler's *theory of assembly* does not adopt their shortcomings. First, instead of simply praising Occupy's actions as truly democratic, she argues that single assemblies—however nonhierarchical and inclusive—should not be seen as the bases for articulating the will of the majority. It would be wrong to see mass gatherings as a true embodiment of actual democracy (Butler 2018, 203) since this neglects interest pluralities within society and the conflictive character of modern democratic decision-making. In contrast to other theorists (e.g., Lorey 2019, 127), Butler's strength lies in critically evaluating the Western square occupation movements. For instance, she discusses the relevance of assembly-based protest in an undemocratic context. She points out that those who protested in Istanbul's Gezi Park were exposed to brutal state violence, and risked being imprisoned, injured, and killed (cf., Butler 2018, 239). She implicitly acknowledges that this protest had a different relevance to the practice of democracy than square occupations that took place within a functioning democracy, where protesters were protected by rights against state authorities. Following her line of thought, we should distinguish between those movements that institute democratic politics as such while occupying squares and holding assemblies (e.g., on Tahir Square in Egypt and Gezi Park in Turkey), and movements that act on the basis of the right of assembly and make democracy more dynamic through protest. The latter type of protest expresses a desire for more democracy and contributes to an existing culture of participation, but its participants bear far lesser risks than in the former type of

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

protest, which attempts to introduce democracy where little or no democracy exists.⁴⁹ In fact, by contrast with the Arab Spring, neither the protests in Greece and Spain nor those in the US aimed at the fall of a regime. They were rather expressing their sense of being denied appropriate respect as equal democratic citizens (Zurn 2022, 13). Butler addresses these important distinctions, instead of idealizing actions as enacting a better world, or asserting that a mass assembly and related protest should instantly be seen as truly (radical) democratic events (Butler 2018, 236).

At this point, another important aspect of Butler's theory becomes apparent. Butler is not tempted to argue that all protests are good and equally valuable. She wants us to pay attention to specific cases, their agents, actions, and claims, since movements that gather on squares can also be racist or anti-Semitic mobs, violent, or anti-democratic. The fact that people are rising up does not mean that they follow just causes or democratic ends. Butler stresses the weight of critically assessing protests and only supporting those that aim at promoting sustainable social conditions and equal opportunities for a good life for all, instead of those that "rush ahead" and simply aim to "disrupt a status quo" (Butler 2018, 237).

The strength of Butler's political theory is that she offers resources for evaluating the justifiability of square occupation movements. She condemns those that are violent (Butler, 2018, 242), that hinder a good life for all (ibid., 2018, 237), or that express hatred and prejudice (ibid., 2018, 20 ff), while she favors those that promote universal equality and a plurality of viewpoints (ibid., 2018, 213). Also, she encourages movements to follow the principles that they aim to realize (ibid., 2018, 278), and authentically enact envisioned values in forums and in their acts of disobedience (ibid., 2018, 248). One might disagree with components of her normative resources, but it seems more important that Butler provides a thoroughly sensible approach for evaluating square occupations than the ones mentioned above.

However, the disadvantage of Butler's *Theory of Assembly* is that it is unsatisfactory for examining the meaning of a movement's claims. On the one hand, she views the Western square occupations as expressing a "plural and performative right" to appear (Butler 2018, 19) and "enacting people's will" (ibid., 2018, 229)—which can seem to portray them as a democratic revolt or aspiration for more political participation of previously excluded agents. On the other hand, it is striking that these thoughts are not further elaborated in these sections

⁴⁹ Christian Volk also addresses this difference. While complaining about the normative deficits of other radical democratic theories, he argues that "protest in democracies does not necessarily need to be a great heroic deed [...]. This, however, is precisely what protest is in dictatorships, authoritarian and even totalitarian regimes." (Volk 2018, 16)

of her work where she addresses claims. On the contrary, her language here seems vague. She examines these movements as enacting “existential human needs of the body, rather than clear political demands” (Butler 2018, 235). She contends that a “performative enactment of ‘we, the people’” would be “prior to any specific demand for justice and equality” (Butler 2016, 58) and should be seen as bringing attention to “the basic needs of bodily survival” (Butler 2016, 60 f). This seems unsatisfactory. It is insufficient to reduce the largest social movement to arise in response to the great recession as merely an enactment of people’s sovereignty or their bodily needs. It does not adequately address the tension—often voiced by protesters—between democracy and capitalism, and the related general discontent about feeling overwhelmed by and excluded from complex political decision-making processes, in a world that seems driven by financialized growth or interdependencies among markets. Instead, Butler’s emphasis on “existential bodily needs” might even give the misleading impression that protesters were acting in a context of humanitarian crisis. She hardly addresses the context of the Western square occupation protests; thus, it is unclear if she sees these movements as caused by concrete events, or by the insoluble conflict between the people and their insufficient representation (Butler 2018, 212). These issues are particularly unhelpful given that the US Occupy Movement started to rise up with the slogan “What is our one demand?”⁵⁰ It is the job of social and political philosophers to accompany the collective process of answering such questions and help to “make the unclear clearer” until vagueness is dispelled (cf., Swift and White 2008, 64 ff). This is a particular relevant job since the goals of Occupy and its spinoffs have been elusive from the start, and clearness of message has often taken a back seat to the chaos of assembly-based democracy in action.

4.3 Square Occupations and Counter Cultures of Respect

At this point, we will return to recognition theory and suggest an alternative examination of the Western square occupation movements’ prefigurative politics. Given the explanatory and normative shortfalls of the approaches mentioned earlier, it is more illuminating to view the movements’ experimental actions as *forming a countercultural space and communal arena for experiencing alternative recognition*. What does this mean? Previously, we have viewed these movements as inclusion struggles for extending recognition: specifically, extending recognition for each individual’s political agency by facilitating much more opportunities for

⁵⁰ That was the key question on a famous poster put up by Adbusters during the initial mobilization for Occupy Wall Street. See: <https://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/8th-anniversary-of-occupywallstreet/> (last accessed March 5, 2021).

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

being directly involved in local decision-making processes, instead of individuals being represented only by someone else. Thus, occupying public squares, participating in assembly-based democracy, or jointly organizing self-governed encampments should be seen as both a protest tool to address political issues or create public pressure for change, and also as an end in itself for participants. These activities are attempts to satisfy those desires and needs that were previously experienced as disregarded by society, that remained unheard and ignored. Or as a response to the title: “Why Occupying a Square?”, these are attempts to feel a sense of direct inclusion in decision-making processes and thereby satisfy the need to be mutually regarded by fellows as an equally valuable, credible political agent in coexistence. This function of the Western square occupation movements as fights for the rapid satisfaction of collective desires for deeper political inclusion is clarified by the public announcements from these movements themselves. For instance, one Occupy Wall Street invitation flyer said: “We, the 99 %, don’t feel represented by any political party and so we call for an open general assembly.” (Holldorf 2016, 149; Graeber 2011, 37)

Given each person’s vital needs for recognition, one could say that collective protest events and related communal interactions and spaces in general function as a form of *in-group recognition*. These counter spaces and cultures of respect are able, in part, to compensate agents for harmful experiences of disrespect due to the hegemonic interactions of mainstream society. This aspect is particularly visible and politically relevant in the case of Occupy Wall Street. This protest’s mass mobilization and disobedience should be seen as an attempt to satisfy—or, more accurately, compensate—a desire seemingly disregarded by mainstream society to feel involved and to be taken seriously as political agents; not by politicians, but by fellow protesters and comrades (Zurn 2015, 42). Such an understanding resonates with the statement of one of the organizers, clarifying the protest’s experimental practices: “The plan was very simple: we wanted to create such a horizontal and democratic free space as possible—and the instrument of the General Assembly should help us.” (Holldorf 2016, 149) The participants in such General Assemblies were mutually sustaining the infrastructure of camps, debating politics in hours-long meetings, developing a common agenda, and making plans for joint action—and, in accordance with the principles of consensus-based decision-making without voting contests, but using open assemblies to form mutual understanding and best solutions with the vision of community agreement (Sitrin 2012). This is why, I believe, the Western square occupation movements functioned as so-called sub- and countercultures of

compensatory respect⁵¹ (e.g., Honneth 2010, 268 f.), able to satisfy the urgent needs of their participants to feel included in a community of mutual understanding, political equality, and alternative societal respect (Risager 2017, 715). The meaning and impact of these protests should not be assessed merely with regard to the good consequences they perhaps brought about. In fact, the communal disobedient activities of protesters might be counterproductive with regard to the goal of effecting sociopolitical change. But importantly, these protests had intrinsic value for their participants, offering forms of civic friendships, solidarity, and a new sense of political agency for those shouldering the burdens of social disenfranchisement and often associated political exclusion and structural disrespect (Delmas 2018, 50—70).

An important question arises from this analysis: What type of recognition needs are actually compensated for through assembly-based democracy and communal spaces? Is in-group esteem the same as alternative respect? We need conceptual clarity. We can say that *in-group esteem* complies with what was introduced as *esteem-recognition* (see 2.2), that is, recognition for the particular worth of an individuals' traits, character, or performance, able to gain through being regarded as praiseworthy by others. Here, the individual is valued as an agent who contributes positively to the common good; this can be achieved in work relationships but also through community activities. While this type of recognition desire is about feeling special, the need for *compensatory recognition* as expressed in Occupy's activities seems rather to be about feeling equal. This meets with respect-recognition as presented earlier (see 2.2), the universal respect for the fact that one is a rational agent and thus capable of moral and political autonomy.

Considering these distinctions, the question is, how can the social esteem achieved through Occupy's group activities compensate participants for feeling disrespected with regard to equal (political) status? Here, we can examine two aspects of respect: sufficiency or insufficiency, and the manifold nature of respect.

First, the alternative respect that participants attempt to achieve in assemblies is not sufficient for attaining an adequate level of self-respect and related equal status in our modern society. Such respect cannot substitute for the equal protection of legal rights against the

⁵¹ Honneth introduces the concept of "counterculture of compensatory respect" with reference to the work of Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1972) *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, Cambridge (Honneth 2012, 200). This concept addresses the collective practices of victims of injustice to overcome their shared experiences of societal disregard—in context of unequal distribution of esteem and respect in society—through a demonstrative stylization and appreciation of the social value of one's own group, and new forms of identity-supporting cultural practices within these groups (Honneth 2000, 127). Also, in *The I in We* (Honneth 2010, 268 f.), Honneth presents recognition as a general driving force of groups, and argues that movements are able to develop self-employed conducts, attitudes of mutual regard and assurance as a form of compensation for the experienced harm of their participants. Unfortunately, he does not further elaborate on that notion and its relevance for examining concrete movements.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

arbitrariness of the will of others. It is more important that these alternative forms of respect are *compensatory*. Instead of sufficient legal recognition, protesters experience what it means to be regarded as equally valuable, and of how it feels to be seen as an agent that has equal status, with a real chance to be heard and to be taken seriously in political debates influencing decision-making as equals. Hence, assembly-based democracies and the related joint activities and experiences of group belonging do not guarantee *respect-recognition for equal status* but rather *imitate it*. They help participants get a partial taste of what it means to feel regarded as an equal political agent, and this feeling can be seen as balancing (compensating for) harmful experiences caused by the mainstream society.

Second, alternative respect gained in assembly-based democracies and joint square occupations should be seen as able to satisfy vital needs for recognition along multiple axes. Such group activities facilitate hybrid forms of recognition, as participants are able to satisfy both the need to feel included in a community of mutual understanding, political equality, and respect, and to feel esteemed in one's individual (political) contributions to collective ends. While the latter resembles recognition for one's special traits as valuable, the former resembles recognition of one's equal status. Hence, Occupy *et al.*'s group activities and countercultural spaces do provide some—admittedly inadequate—compensation to participants for feeling politically excluded and treated unequally through equal respect for agency and esteem for contributions.

In that context, it is important to emphasize that alongside the real-world social spaces created by Occupy activists, the experience of alternative social respect and reaching mutual understanding also took place in virtual arenas created by bloggers and activists that produced alternative newscasts and dozens of social media events (cf., Martin 2015, 217). In these *virtual communal spaces*,⁵² activists also aimed at sharing experiences and satisfying needs to feel included and taken seriously as political agents with moral agency. For instance, on a Tumblr blog that was set up by Occupy Wall Street, the question was asked: 'Why will YOU occupy?'. People were encouraged to share personal thoughts and experiences, to explain why they supported Occupy's attempt to reinvent democracy on squares, and to see themselves as part of the disadvantaged 99%. To give an example of a typical entry:

⁵² Honneth himself addresses "the internet" and the related emergence of new media technology, and of advanced means of communication and of global exchange of ideas, highlighting that its consequences for transnational public debates are yet unknown. However, instead of seeing it as an alternative space of recognition, he refers to it only as new kind of "virtual forum" for the instant exchange of ideas among physically isolated individuals, and in the context of modern democratic deliberation and new means of communication (Honneth 2014, 300).

I am a 24-year-old college graduate. I have a B.A. in English. After 5 years of work to better myself, I am now working 40-50 hours a week making barely more than I did when I graduated from high school 6 years ago. I work 2 jobs and can't afford to move out of my parents [sic] house even with a roommate. I have \$33,000+ to pay in student loans. (I'm barely paying the interest.) I can't find a full-time job because I have no experience [...] no one will hire me so I can gain some! I'm stressed out and depressed. I feel trapped. The American Dream is dead for my generation. I am the 99%!!⁵³

Reading these entries—in which some topics repeatedly arise, such as loss of work and home, lack of health insurance, or the lack of prospects for college graduates burdened with high loans—underscores that Occupy's experimental real-world and virtual group activities should be understood as attempts to create communal space for sharing experiences of injustice. And, as seen in section 1.5, such communal spaces are important starting-point for overcoming individual suffering, developing political demands, and forming collective protest agency.

Examining the actions of the Western square occupation movements as attempts to achieve compensatory recognition through in-group esteem brings up the notion of prefigurative politics, in which protesters aim to enact the forms and means that comply with their desired ends and norms. However, the present examination goes beyond seeing these activities as merely following an anarchistic ethos, and/or enacting the nucleus of a socialist society. Instead, it apprehends the experimental conduct of protesters as joint counter-reactions to shared experiences of exclusion from real-world democracy, examining their reinvention of democracy on occupied squares by participation in public assemblies as satisfying the need to feel included in political practice, through engagement in new spaces of mutual understanding and alternative respect. Such a view better relates the claims and actions of participants to real-world issues, and clarifies their conflict motivations much better than the approaches previously discussed. The protesters' prefigurative actions can be viewed as voicing claims to the mainstream society and institutions for deeper and more extended political participation, and for better decision-making processes that do not exclude and underestimate citizens, but involve them and let them create and (trans)form society (Holldorf 2016, 150 f). If we apply such a view, occupying a public urban square could be understood as symbolically interrupting the overcomplexity of modern-day decision-making processes as well as public politics whose outcomes seem determined by economic imperatives.

⁵³ See the particular entry on Occupy Wall Street's Tumblr blog: <https://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/page/3/> (last accessed July 10th, 2022).

Volk emphasizes a similar dimension. Addressing transnational movements in general, he notes that: “Political protest is a communal political practice through which political arenas are established in which people experience moments of communality and solidarity and in which the democratic promise of a participatory moment in politics is reclaimed. [...] it offers an alternative to political passivity, and the picture of the citizen as a monadic, politically uninterested consumer [...] gets challenged.” (Volk 2019, 111) Also, he examines protests as counterreactions to an experienced denial of access into the relevant political decision-making processes. (cf., Volk 2019, 112) But the ways that these sensible examinations relate to Volk’s main argument that transnational movements would “enact a parallel world” (ibid., 2019, 115) remain unclear. Also, he does not link the protesters’ aim to “experience democratic political action” (ibid., 2019, 111) to vital needs for recognition and the idea of getting compensational respect.

By contrast, if using recognition theory, we understand the Western square occupation movements as joint attempts to satisfy pressing social needs, we also find some of the key theoretical components for understanding why people were willing to undergo the hardships of occupying a square, despite the clear emotional and organizational effort (Gunning and Baron 2013). Such an occupation is a collective effort both to be and to feel recognized as equally included in political decision-making processes; a struggle for inclusion in which the physical square occupation and the assembly-based democratic activities that accompany it are chosen both for political purposes and as ends in themselves for the participants. Recognition theory gives us the concepts understand why these protests arose and how they rearticulated demands related to real-world issues.

We now turn to a set of issues that have already been touched upon throughout this section on *inclusion*. Besides the relationship between institutionalized democracy and joint protest action, and between prefigurative politics and the struggle for political inclusion, we should consider the following: what defines a ‘people,’ (Badiou *et al.*, 2016); who speaks for ‘the people’ (Butler 2018, 201 ff); and how should we relate the popular will expressed in assembly-based democracy to representative democracy? These issues will be discussed in the next section, along with a discussion of whether or not we should examine square occupation movements as recognition-led struggles for democratic inclusion. In particular, we will examine the ways that Occupy *et al.* famously attempted to articulate demands on behalf of the 99% and were thus widely perceived as a large populist movement (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 26).

4.4 Inclusion Struggles and A Movement's Populist Politics

Occupy and its spinoffs were broadly perceived as “movements of the crisis”: a mass reaction against the great economic recession which itself was a result of the subprime crisis in the US housing sector (cf., della Porta *et al.*, 2014). Yet it was striking that Occupy’s expressions of outrage (though the movement contained trade unions and major left-wing parties, and could have been seen as a classic Marxist reaction to a capitalist crisis) did not draw upon a working-class imagery. Instead, these protests focused on a mood of outrage among protesters (“*los indignados*”), on the breadth of the public they claimed to represent (“the 99 percent”), and on expressing demands on behalf of the general will (“we, the people”) (Butler 2016, 49), thus employing a populist imagery instead of class and/or identity frames (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 217). This section outlines what the concept of an inclusion struggle based on recognition theory contributes to the debate over the populist politics of the Western square occupations.

The political scientists Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser define *populism* as “... a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic camps, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.” (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 6) They view *Occupy Wall Street* in the USA and *Indignados* in Spain as primary examples: “Both social movements had a clear populist tone, portraying the ‘political caste’ (*la casta*) and the business community as the ‘corrupt elite’ while defining the homogenous people (‘the 99%’) as the only source of political legitimacy.” (ibid., 2017, 48) Mudde’s and Kaltwasser’s description accords well with the self-definitions of the protesters. Consider, for instance, the opening statement on Occupy’s webpage:

Occupy Wall Street is a leaderless resistance movement with people of many colors, genders and political persuasions. The one thing we all have in common is that We Are The 99% that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%. We are using the revolutionary Arab Spring tactic to achieve our ends and encourage the use of nonviolence to maximize the safety of all participants. (Adbusters 2011a)

Most of Occupy’s abstract demands were articulated on behalf of a ‘common people’ contrasted with ‘elites’, following a strategy of dividing society into two polarized factions. Similarly, Spain’s *Indignados* presented their statements as expressions of the entirety of the citizenry (*ciudadanía*) allied against corrupt elites, and the Greek protestors presented themselves in assemblies on Syntagma as the “... majority of the people” against “the profit

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

of the few...” (Gerbaudo 2014, 11). Thus, the Western square occupation movements comply with the key hallmarks of populism outlined by Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, 22 ff).

How does recognition theory relate to this? A politics that uses populist imaginary to produce the impression of unity seems at odds with recognition theory’s focus on specific group oppression and single-issue-protest (Gerbaudo 2014, 14). Without a doubt, by deploying a discourse of “the people” the Western square occupation movements run counter to the militant and subcultural discourses that had been dominant in previous social movements (Gerbaudo 2014, 3). Instead of appealing to marginalized groups, or to a community of rebels, they appealed to the majority of a population, emphasized popular unity, and aimed to avoid sectarianism (Gerbaudo 2014, 13). However, recognition theory is valuable with regard to two aspects of these protests: 1) It sheds light on the perspectives of victims and the moral experiences of injustice expressed in these social movements and thereby avoids reducing their activities to a zero-sum power fight between the top and bottom of society; and 2) it draws attention to the ways than an emancipatory movement must be aware of the problematic ideological implications relating to populism.

Recognition theory, as developed by Honneth, was never restricted merely to struggles of previously oppressed groups. Although it is providing a particularly apt language for articulating the aspirations and distinctive moral concerns of the politics of difference, it is also applicable to struggles over labor relations that concern esteem and individual rights, and has been pertinent to the justice of political and economic relations, (cf., Zürn 2015, 127 ff) including those voiced in the concerns related to the Western square occupations. Thus, it is unfounded to argue that recognition theory’s focus on moral grammar and identity claims in movements would be at odds with such new protests (cf., Gerbaudo 2014, 13 f). Recognition theory’s strength is that it starts from victimhood. It follows the supposition that without the victims of injustice passionately attempting to tackle urgent problems and jointly fight for ending their own misery, very often there would not be a movement in the first place that can be supported, or that appeals to people (see section 1.6). Without ignoring the involvement of non-victims, this theory sees subjective experiences of injustice, experiences of those that are oppressed and disadvantaged, as a crucial part of the story about any movements’ emergence, highlighting the vantage-point of victims and their joint activism.

Unfortunately, it is precisely this dimension that is usually overlooked in the debate over the populism of the Western square occupation movement. These protests are often portrayed as simply expressing a “broad societal politics” that focuses on majority issues and aims to foster cohesion, in implicit contrast to “victim protests” that emphasize minority

issues and create societal corrosion (cf., Zurn 2004). Yet victimhood and particular group experiences of injustice also are relevant in the Western square occupation movements. We have already looked at Occupy's Tumblr blog, where, most importantly, young people shared their experiences of hopelessness about future work life and their feelings of unbearable financial pressure due to over-indebtedness. In addition, the manifesto of *Democracia Real Ya*, a leading group in Spain's *Indignados*, begins by saying:

We are ordinary people. We are like you: people, who get up every morning to study, work or find a job, people who have family and friends. People, who work hard every day to provide a better future for those around us. Some of us consider ourselves progressive, others conservative. Some of us are believers, some not. Some of us have clearly defined ideologies, others are apolitical, but we are all concerned and angry about the political, economic, and social outlook which we see around us: corruption among politicians, businessmen, bankers, leaving us helpless, without a voice. This situation has become normal, a daily suffering, without hope. But if we join forces, we can change it. It's time to change things, time to build a better society together. (Democracia Real Ya 2011)

These blog entries and self-descriptions reveal that the Western square occupation movements had a moral grammar, i.e., they voiced victimhood and particular moral experiences of injustice. Doubtless, they appealed to the people and called on them to work together across political differences. But, more importantly, they articulated a broad moral anger about real grievances and daily suffering from social injustice. In fact, to a substantial extent, people who rallied in Puerta del Sol, Syntagma Square, or in Occupy's campaign were from social groups with precarious finances and work lives such as troubled students, caregivers, the working poor, and also labor market outsiders (cf., della Porta 2017, 455). Their articulations about social vulnerability, powerlessness, and hopelessness indicate a moral anger that relates to the shared experiences of socially unsettled people feeling unheard when they try to describe the hardships they confront, feeling ignored and excluded from decision-making processes, and feeling harmed in their normative expectations of involvement in genuine democratic deliberation. To give an example: mass outrage in Spain was fueled both by the way financial crises destabilized the job market and triggered broad financial insecurity, and also by the shocking two-facedness of their government. Protesters criticized that, on the one hand, bankrupt banks were bailed out, while on the other hand, the state went into an unprecedented debt crisis and plagued its citizens with austerity politics that came along with ballooning unemployment among young people, the disruption of health care, and mass evictions from homes due to the debt burdens of their middle-class owners. While the claims of corporations were relevant to politics, claims for protection from individuals seemed

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

to be less relevant. Clearly these are strong reasons to be outraged, and to unite in the belief of unjust treatment. (cf., della Porta 2017, 463) Research among the protesters shows that the grievances protested against came from certain parts of society. While the main organizers (in the US and Europe) were educated young people in financial distress (cf., Kraushaar 2012), or so-called “graduates without a future,” these mass protests were nonetheless characterized by intergenerational heterogeneity (cf., Ishkanian and Glasius 2013, 12), mobilizing around those who could not repay their debt, the squeezed middle class, and the growing ranks of the unemployed (cf., della Porta 2017, 455ff; Gerbaudo 2014).

Protesters that gathered on squares, especially in Europe, should therefore be seen as the victims of the economic downturn and the following policies of austerity. They were young people without prospects for employment, the unemployed, those that were evicted from their homes, those who needed to support families with the little they had, overworked care-givers, those impoverished by the crash of the banking system, those that could not make ends meet, and those deeply worried about losing their status as respectable citizens. In other words, these protesters should be seen as a morally outraged multitude of the precariat (cf., Lorey 2019, 130), rallying on squares, and raising claims about inequality and the lack of real democracy. The “99% experience” they articulated can be seen as based on feelings of being denied appropriate respect their for social integrity and their equal democratic citizenship.

Protesters complained about unfulfilled normative promises. In particular, they complained about their respective governments, all of which made promises about democracy and the people’s voice, but could not make good on those promises at a time when people complained about their precarious circumstances, felt deprived of their basic needs for housing, employment, and economic security, and felt excluded and ignored in their wishes to deliberate the problems publicly and find sound political solutions (Zurn 2022, 13). Thus, the concept of a recognition struggle for inclusion in reaction to experiences of exclusion supplements the standard populist reading of the Western square occupation movements. It shows that—despite their emphasis on popular unity—the Occupy *et al.* protests were carried out by a multitude of those that felt disadvantaged and mistreated compared to the rest of society. These were protests of those that felt unprotected in daily life and work relations, deprived of a future, evicted from homes, and also those who were angry about being excluded from decision-making processes that affected their lives. My analysis views the moral grammar voiced by these movements as efforts for a more inclusive democracy and as a fight over entitlements that are not yet recognized by society.

While some theorists view the populist turn in modern day protest culture as a mostly positive development—since it would overcome problems like insularity and self-ghettoization (Fraser 2017) or even abet the development of a new popular movement party (Mouffe 2018)—I am cautious about the explanatory as well as ideological implications of such political theorizing. Those that praise Occupy *et al.*'s populism seem to risk reducing their protests to a zero-sum power struggle between the 99% ordinary people and 1% elites. Such a portrayal of movement protest depicts a false dichotomy, giving the false impression of homogeneity, social rigidity, and moral lucidity, and thus negates the fact of pluralistic interests in society (Arendt 1958, 7; Gaus *et al.*, 2020, 2 f). Also, it ignores the fact that people are never equally affected by a crisis. Even among those that do not belong to elites there are variances. Not everyone is losing jobs, feeling precarious, and becoming morally outraged. Thus, affirming a popular turn in modern-day protest culture risks ignoring the activism of victims and the experiences of those that suffer from injustice as expressed in many protests. Ignoring this dimension is problematic, as it presents a movement's protest activities as a clash between monolithic blocs, rather than as contentious negotiations among social groups organized in coalitions, who mediate their claims through conflict. In this way, such a simplified understanding locates the Western square occupation movements outside of democratic politics, presenting their conflict activities as the collective conquest of a hostile camp and abstract anger at elites who must be disempowered, rather than as intra-societal struggles over entitlements: claims that are addressed to the public, and made against those institutions and actors charged by society with dispensing justice.

Given these issues, I prefer viewing the populist dimension in Occupy and Co. rather as a specific rhetorical logic (cf., Müller 2016)—that is, as a specific way of structuring one's political pitch to the public, and an effective tool to communicate claims and mobilize people or produce broad approval and identification (Zurn 2022, 3)—instead of seeing it primarily as a form of political organization or a new type of conflict. But when we look at how recognition theory complements the populist reading of Occupy *et al.*, we must continue to be cautious about the ideological vices that accompany this rhetorical logic of populist politics. If we also bear in mind that populism is a thin ideology (cf., Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 6), and if we use a language that separates society into two antagonistic camps and urges for a politics that voices the *volonté générale*, then such a movement's politics comes with three normative issues: 1) The *issue of majoritarianism* in making claims on behalf of the people while despising the urgent needs of minorities; 2) The problem that anti-elitist sentiments often turn into *anti-Semitism* by personifying political issues in conflict between the greedy

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

rich 1% and poor 99%, and by drawing on imagery such as the defense of pure Main Street against a corrupt Wall Street; and 3) The threat of *nationalist drift* as protesters appeal to popular unity and interests, while downplaying international and cosmopolitan duties.

Although some authors thought that the Western square occupation movements in general, and Occupy in particular, would have merged a “progressive social justice agenda with populism”, leading to an inclusive interpretation of the people, (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 10) and prospects for “progressive populism” (Fraser 2017, 51f), I am doubtful if the issues outlined above can be kept in check in the long term. I am particularly concerned that the adoption and praise of popular discourse in the Western square occupation movements might constitute a major shift in protest culture and lead to an unfortunate side-effect: neglecting the needs of marginalized groups. These issues were raised by participants of these movements themselves. For instance, in the Spanish context, during the occupation on Puerta del Sol the removal of a feminist banner caused deep internal friction between feminists and other participants, as the majority wanted to keep sectional demands out of the movement. Similar events occurred during Occupy Wall Street, when the People of Color Working Group criticized the ignorance of racial and gender-based oppression in the demands of the movement. (Gerbaudo 2014, 14) Also, in the context of the Israeli (Occupy) tent protests, several activists criticized a tendency towards nationalism; namely, the focus on social justice for national citizens while international justice and human rights issues regarding Palestinians were ignored (Gordon 2012). These are recurring normative issues, reflecting a contentious negotiation among power, intersectionality, and differences within the broad grouping of ‘the 99%.’ I will come back to these issues in 6.4.1, further debating, among others, the criticism that Occupy *et al.*, were ignorant regarding intersectional forms of inequality. In that context, I will stress the positive aspect of intra-organizational learning processes in these movements.

Because of these issues, and while I understand the desire for movements to deserve broad societal support for the changes they endorse, we should be skeptical of a popular turn in protest culture and activist networks. Many of these issues relate to a strategic question: Should movements focus on articulating claims that are more likely to receive popular approval from a broad majority and in return downplay claims that produce disagreement, discontent, and rejection? Such a politics is undesirable for two reasons.

First, social movements do not have the duty to create false harmony and societal homogeneity, but should be understood as fighting injustice and drawing attention to pressing issues that must be solved. They are not political parties, which must concern themselves about approval ratings. In fact, encouraging social movements to focus on popular approval

damages their function of making politics more dynamic, of making invisible agents visible, and of acting as a seismograph for undetected issues.

Second, populism's focus on majoritarianism is not desirable, as such a politics plays universal human needs against the needs of specific groups. As we have previously discussed, two dimensions are equally important for an emancipatory politics of recognition (2.2.2): a politics of universalism that aims at protecting the autonomy and legal rights of all humans, and a politics of difference that aims at protecting the identity of particular agents by allowing them to uphold their distinct culture and uniqueness.

Instead of praising populism's underlying majoritarianism, the recognition-based approach described herein explicates and connects the diversity of normative claims about injustices underlying these movements, assuming a multileveled and intersectional struggle across multiple axes of oppression towards a more just future society. In contrast, populist thinking reduces movements to an accurate representation of the actual will of a majority of the people, instead of seeing their protest activities as a contentious contribution to complex processes of deliberative democracy, where the diverse demands and plurality of needs of "the people" are detected, negotiated, and mediated (Gaus *et al.*, 2020, 10).

To be clear, other theorists have already provided sound critiques and outlined what's wrong with the general normative theory (and practice) of any movement's populist politics (e.g., Cohen 2019; Gaus *et al.*, 2020). Here, we will focus on a critique of theories that endorse the populism concept as applied to the Western square occupations. What recognition theory adds to this debate should now be clear: it highlights that both a moral grammar and a sense of victimhood was expressed in Occupy *et al.*, and downplays the deceptively heroic portrayal of an 'entire citizenry' rising up against the 'elites'. Instead, the concept of a recognition led inclusion-struggle portrays the Western square protesters' efforts as a struggle of people whose precarious circumstances caused them to rise up and demand more respect as equal democratic citizens and more direct involvement in local political decision-making. It presents their efforts as a struggle for inclusive democratic entitlements, rather than as the conquest of a hostile camp. Hence, recognition theory seems immune to the appeal of indiscriminate populism, since society is the addressee of normative claims, and not the enemy. It reminds us that the attempt to mobilize a broad majority around real democracy and true social justice should not be articulated at the expense of neglecting intersectional oppression and the problems of marginalized groups. We should be cautious about the innate ideological facets of populism's rhetorical logic, since it might create a boost for nationalist imaginaries, foster exclusions, and indirectly aid the struggle for cultural hegemony from the

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

extreme right. The Western square movement's protest ethics and politics will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6, where we will assess their justifiability applying recognition theory's evaluative approach, and whether we should distinguish between regressive or progressive movement protests (see also Chapter 7 and 8).

To summarize, we have examined the Western square occupation movements with a focus on Occupy and Indignados as inclusion struggles for deepening the recognition of each individual's political agency (i.e., extending the circle of participants and deepening the process of democratic decision-making). This account is different from those theories that view these protests as anti-institutional and radical democratic struggles, and from those that apply the concept of prefigurative politics or populist politics. Instead, we have seen that the Western square occupation movements aimed at energizing our real-world democracy beyond deficient, formal representation, provided subcultural spaces of compensational respect for the precarious multitude, and attempted to cure democracy and actualize its normative promises by adding deliberative forums and citizen assemblies to its existing institutional setting. Rather than seeing these protests as a zero-sum power struggle between monolithic camps, or as enacting a parallel, liberated world and thus endorsing a romanticizing politics and ethics of self-referential action and revolutionary avant-gardism, the analysis presented here suggests that these movement protests embodied the prospect of 'radical reformism' and self-transformation of current liberal democracy; a development that seems already normatively required by its constitutionalized standards themselves (Habermas 1999, 153). Put differently and outlining an answer to the issue stated in the beginning of this chapter, these are *recognition struggles for enhancing democratic inclusion*, in which citizens jointly complain that they can only perceive themselves as proper participants of societal coexistence and as the co-authors of the social norms they are subjected to, through a further realization of "communicative freedom" underlying existing democracy in form of newly extended, decentralized, and inclusionary processes of "non-coercive process of will-formation", in which all citizens are equally entitled to participate (Honneth 2014, 284). In short, the concept of an *inclusion struggle that dynamizes real world democracy* is phenomenologically more accurate, provides a better language for clarifying the meaning of these protests, and thus ultimately offers a better chance to justify the ambitions of protesters to the public (is politically more useful) (Delmas 2018, 37) than other views about them.

Chapter 5

Transformation Struggles for Reordering Recognition

“...to allow the market mechanism to be sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment, indeed, even of the amount and use of purchasing power, would result in the demolition of society.”

—Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*

This section addresses the third axis along which the Western square occupation movements express recognition-led claims. Beyond their claims for *correction* (Chapter 3) and *inclusion* (Chapter 4), we should examine them as *transformation struggles for re-ordering recognition*. Further drawing on Mattias Iser’s reading (2008) of Honneth’s theory, an imbalance between spheres of recognition can be a source of social conflict. Protesters draw attention to an imbalance when they complain that the normative principles of one sphere are inappropriate to actualize legitimate recognition claims therein, and principles of other spheres must be added to assure these claims. Further, if they articulate that the principles of different spheres of recognition contradict each other. Iser views that as an issue of the setting of appropriate normative boundaries among spheres. (cf., Iser 2008, 223 f) Hence, while inclusion struggles address an insufficient realization or application of valid recognition norms and strive for institutional change within a sphere, transformational struggles contest hegemonic normative principles within one sphere, reimagine the scope and content of valid ones from other spheres, and fight for normative as well as institutional changes among spheres. Freedom of contract in the labor market is a case in point of a social conflict triggered by imbalances. Protests of the labor movement made it clear that this freedom can only be truly exercised if the material subsistence of job seekers is secured in advance (e.g., through decent minimum wages, social welfare rights, or protection against dismissal), as otherwise they would not be able to negotiate fair contracts. (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 172 f) In that sense, movement protests caused by imbalances claim that the legal sphere’s principles of unconditional social respect must intervene in the market sphere⁵⁴ (which leans on unequally distributed property rights and merit-based esteem) to support wage-dependent job seekers in their ability to

⁵⁴ The *market* is here seen as a societal institution that ought to offer self-realization for individuals through free associations and exchange of commodities. It encompasses sub-spheres (e.g., labor, consumer, or stock-markets). Also, the *capitalist market economy* is especially characterized by private ownership of the means of production, the class division of owners and producers, and the accumulation of capital premised on an orientation toward making profit instead of satisfying needs. (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 15) I further clarify these concepts in 3.5.3 ff.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

suitably negotiate contracts, enabling such agents to act more securely and autonomously in the labor market. One can argue that labors' demands aim to *embed* (Polanyi 1957) the market sphere⁵⁵ through the norms of universal respect for social status: a claim that was embodied in postwar social market economies and the Keynesian welfare states of the 20th century. In what follows, I will argue that the concept of a struggle for transforming normative principles should also be assigned to square occupation movements, understanding them as aiming to reorder recognition norms in the market sphere. This analysis will again be supported by examples from Occupy Wall Street and the European Indignados.

Alongside the corrective conflict over the *defense of social-status respect* (Ch. 3) and the inclusion conflict over the *expansion of political participation rights* (Ch. 4), the Western square occupation movements drew attention to another problem related to the world economic crisis and austerity politics: a conflict over the *role and reach of market principles* (Ch. 5). They voiced a conflict between democratic equality and capitalist-market inequality, between basic needs for multilayered recognition on one side and the market's tyranny of merit and profit-seeking on the other. The reason: The liberal-democratic state seemed unable to fulfill its intended tasks any longer. That is, the state seemed unable to offer both stabilized conditions for economic growth and satisfaction of the claims of citizens for employment, political participation, and social justice, while mitigating class cleavages and promoting the common good. (Merkel 2014) When big banks were rescued through loan guarantees and vast social welfare cuts were launched at the same time (Calhoun 2013, 2), the public impression was created that the state was easing the economic crisis by tearing apart its system of social protection, and that ordinary citizens were footing the bill for bankrupt companies that claimed to be 'too big to fail' and 'system relevant'. In reaction to these events, European protesters articulated the popular slogan "We do not pay for your crisis" (Tisera and Alvarenga 2012), labelling as scandalous those policies that ultimately enforce bottom-to-top redistribution. This link between economic and political inequality was also visible in Occupy Wall Street's protest slogan, "Cut Corporate Welfare Not Mine". (Taylor *et al.*, 2011, 145) Occupy drew upon a *Zeitgeist* of moral outrage against obvious injustices in the US. Many non-participants showed sympathy for the occupations, because they were experiencing massive unemployment and the growing indebtedness of students and the middle class, while

⁵⁵ The concept of *embedded markets* is manifold. First, it means to limit the scope of market principles in society. Markets are here seen as institutions that can be dissolved and shaped at political will (e.g., when higher education is transformed from a realm dominated by corporations that require tuitions into a public realm that is free of charge). Further, it means to *complement markets by a series of principles that exceed its exchange logic* (e.g., promoting solidarity among agents, limiting prices of crucial goods, or requiring social protection in labor contracts) in order to aid in fulfilling the promise of individual self-realization in markets. (Honneth 2014, 181 ff)

once high-flying but now failing corporations were rescued by the state. The economist Joseph Stiglitz depicted the socio-economic environment of that time as follows: “With youth unemployment in America at around 20 percent [...]; with one out of six Americans desiring a full-time job not able to get one; with one out of seven Americans on food stamps [...] there is ample evidence that something has blocked the vaunted “trickling down” from the top 1 percent to everyone else.” (Stiglitz 2011)

In this environment, the Occupy movement spread rapidly over the US, rallying around the mantra “We are the 99 percent” (Holldorf 2016, 147). Further, their protest was fanned by a landmark decision of the US Supreme Court regarding political campaign finance. In 2010, the court decided that the free speech clause of the First Amendment prohibits the government from limiting independent expenditures for political communication by companies or other associations.⁵⁶ In reaction to this easing of financial ceilings for political advertisement (Cordero-Guzman, 2011), the Occupiers’ social critique was that only citizens, and not corporations’ campaign associations, should be able to influence politics, expressing the risk that this court decision would only benefit the interest of wealthy donors and legalize the corruption of liberal democracy. (Ott 2014; Flank 2011)

Applying recognition theory to these events, the Western square occupation movements should be viewed as shedding light on the essential link between economic justice and a well-functioning democracy. They draw attention to the fact that our democratic decision-making—i.e., obtaining compromise, fair participation, and equal opportunity in public affairs, negotiating plural interests while seeking for a common good, enacting equal civic and political rights—only functions properly if the influence of wealthy agents is restricted (Azzellini 2014, 500), as the uneven distribution of wealth fosters unequal access to and unfair competition in public debate. In particular, they should be seen as recognition struggles when they aim for the transformation of the normative order of the market. They criticize the market’s ever-expanding principles of profit seeking and merit-based esteem, which are pushed into every aspect of social life. Occupy and Indignados show that market principles are inadequate for securing the common good, basic needs, equal status respect, and democratic participation, and therefore must be limited by the principles of social protection, market control, and democratic planning. In what follows, I dive deeper into these

⁵⁶ See: “Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission” (2010). In his Dewey lecture “Democracy v. Citizens United?” from May 5, 2011, Joshua Cohen is debating the negative impact of that ruling for democracy: <https://www.law.uchicago.edu/recordings/joshua-cohen-democracy-v-citizens-united/> (last accessed July 17, 2022).

issues by examining Indignados and Occupy *et al.* as a set of collective reactions to a massive denial of respect and esteem produced by both internal and external imbalances of the market.

5.1 The market's internal imbalances

First, we should highlight internal imbalances as the reason that the *market cannot actualize its claims and harms its own promises*. One can argue that the market, or, more accurately, the capitalist market economy, promises a superior social system for meeting all consumer needs, for offering merit-based esteem for individual contributions to a common good, for assuring mutual profits in businesses, and for the fair distribution of burdens and benefits in our societal cooperation, all through the invisible power of market price logic. The market is thought of as a sphere where citizens can freely satisfy desires and gather the kind of self-worth necessary to be aware of their part in a community, and to have a meaningful life. Yet, these are obviously highly idealized expectations. What we should learn from Occupy and Indignados is that the real-world capitalist market economy has not made good on these promises over the last decade, as witnessed by a global financial collapse created by a small slice of the wealthy who did not bear the full costs of their risks. In fact, during this crisis, the losses and debts of major corporations and banks were socialized by states, while profits were usually kept private. (Zurn 2022, 13) Instead of providing prosperity for all, ensuring equal opportunities, promoting social mobility, and allocating goods according to merit, in the market's crisis and the responses of Western governments we witnessed the emergence of working poverty, mass unemployment, monopolies, petrification of prosperity among the rich, and support for the morally hazardous activities of corporations that got involved in risky businesses, while knowing that governments would protect them. Furthermore, economists have shown that rising wealth and income inequality undoes social mobility and the market's promise of merit-based esteem altogether, as the wealthy's triumphs are built more and more upon accumulated market advantage (i.e., the Matthew effect) rather than merit. (e.g., Piketty 2014, 501 ff)

Following that argument, social and political philosophers also offered criticisms that a capitalist market economy—besides being incapable of assuring a decent and fairly distributed income for all through labor (Gold 2017)—scores particularly low regarding the provision of esteem-recognition, and the related satisfaction of basic necessities for solidarity, for feeling socially appreciated and valued. This is due to extremely increased competition and related atomization among people in neoliberal markets in the last decades. (Jütten 2017)

Others highlighted that the mass phenomenon of precarious work entirely undermines for many people the normative promise of self-realization in the market, and instead causes a widespread feeling of being dependent on the arbitrary will of their employers (Dejours *et al.*, 2018, 39f).

Given these issues, one dimension of the ‘99% experience’ of injustice expressed by the Western square occupation movements can be traced back to people’s shared experience that they had been denied both the social conditions of appropriate concern as a materially needy agent (in contrast to the market’s promise to meet all needs) and denial of appropriate esteem as a productive participant in the economy (in contrast to meritocratic promises). (cf., Zurn 2022, 13) Thus, these protests should be seen as a collective reaction to internal imbalances, as the market cannot actualize claims and harms its internal normative promises by shielding wealth, ignoring people’s well-being, and encouraging unfair competition. Although one can argue that capitalism has never successfully solved these issues, it is more important to note here that these experiences of injustice appear to weigh particularly heavily in the context of a world economic crisis. Given that people saw the double standard where governments bailed out big banks and businesses while ordinary citizens were left alone with indebtedness, housing evictions, and the threat of job loss (Dean 2014, 382) (which also can be seen as an imbalance, as the market bypasses its principle of individual liability for risk taking), markets seemed to fail and entirely disengaged themselves from any social responsibilities. Hence, we can understand the Western square occupation movements as a collective reaction—expressing internal critique—against the market’s own undermining of its internal values and promises to offer equal opportunity for esteem and conditions to satisfy material needs (della Porta 2017, 455). These protests criticized a rigged economic game that demoralizes ordinary citizens (Delmas 2018, 73) and undoes equal opportunities to sensibly contribute to a common good.

One might object that the features of such protests do not express radicality and that Occupy’s and Indignados’ activities merely appear as correction struggles, problematizing a violation of valid entitlements and aiming to move a social institution back to its “orderly place”, namely, towards the promised esteem, individual self-realization, and satisfaction of needs in the market sphere. Indeed, this is an important aspect, showing again the defensive elements in these movements’ protests, and thus the heterogeneity of their claims. Yet, this is only one part of the story of protester’s struggles over the role and reach of market principles. In the following sections, I primarily focus on how these movements also express immanent

critique, and the need to normatively as well as institutionally transform the capitalist-market economy due to its negative externalities.

5.2 The market's external imbalances

Second, I suggest that we should understand imbalances as the market's *negative impact on other social spheres*. In this regard, the Western square occupation movements shed light on a normative issue often ignored in democratic societies with capitalist market economies (cf., Merkel 2014), namely, the undermining of legal equality through the persistence and increase of deep economic inequality and the related maldistribution of cultural capital and power. In terms of recognition theory, the normative principles of the market, which leans on unequal merit-based esteem, economic competition, and utility maximization, is out of balance with the democratic state, which leans on providing universal respect for equal status as well as equal opportunities for esteem regardless of group identification and/or merit. In this regard, Michael Sandel also talks about the market's "tyranny of merit" that damages the common good, as visible in queue jumping or the rise of economic utility-oriented thinking in our private lives. (Sandel 2020; and *ibid.*, 2012, 11 ff) Yet Occupy and Indignados went beyond questionable moral conduct and rather tackled serious institutional issues, complaining about unfair advantages in political decision-making due to economic inequality. They voiced that wealthy agents have much better prospects for gaining influence and enforcing preferences (e.g., by advertisement, think tanks, or lobbying)—effects of capitalist markets that have too long been neglected (Tarrow and Tilly 2015, 219ff). As they gained media attention, these waves of protest changed discourses, particularly in the US and Europe (Gitlin 2012, 31). They drew attention to the issue that the monetary and network power of the wealthy structurally undermines the principle of political equality in current democratic societies—the principle stating that the subjects of laws should see themselves as their authors through involvement in deliberative processes and fair decision making. (Habermas 1985, 85f)

Therefore, claims of being unable to participate with equal opportunities in public affairs and political debates and *a shared experience of unjustified unequal treatment* due to economic status arose in the protests of Occupy *et al.* They drew attention to the undermining of political equality due to class cleavages (despite legal equal rights), with the effect that low-income agents are in practice dependent on high-income agents, while poor agents are at risk of being dominated by wealthy agents. (Pettit 2017, 115 ff) This is why they raised the claim that policies are made for the benefit of the richest 1 percent against the interests of the

99 percent. (Gitlin 2012, 31 ff) This provocative claim has some evidence behind it, which can be traced back to Stiglitz's popular article "Of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%" (Stiglitz 2011), in which the well-known economist drew attention to the alarming fact that the upper 1 percent owns almost a quarter of the US national income. Stiglitz, who can be viewed—along with Stéphan Hessel, the author of *Indignez-vous* (Hessel 2011)—as the *spiritus rector* of Occupy and Indignados, stresses the correlation between economic and political inequality:

The more divided a society becomes in terms of wealth, the more reluctant the wealthy become to spend money on common needs. [...] Much of today's inequality is due to manipulation of the financial system, enabled by changes in the rules that have been bought and paid for by the financial industry itself—one of its best investments ever. [...] And it looks as if we'll be building on this achievement for years to come, because what made it possible is self-reinforcing. Wealth begets power, which begets more wealth (Stiglitz 2011).

In light of these socioeconomic developments, Western square occupation movements should be seen as a statement that we can only have fair participation, actual political equality, and future democracy if we rethink the role and reach of the market and provide universal social protection and decent income. Also, they call for a redistribution of wealth. Occupy rigorously voiced this in the slogan: "There can be no political freedom without economic justice". (Taylor *et al.*, 2011, 1) In short, these protests should be seen as a struggle for recognition. Beyond aiming for the socioeconomic rights (Glasius and Pleyers 2013) needed to provide the minimal resources to sustain equal political agency for all, they address normative imbalances among social spheres and show that vast economic inequality and the related unequal material vulnerability among citizens is not adequately acknowledged by society as harmful to political equality and agency in our democratic decision-making.

The notion of an external imbalance of the market can be further illuminated by using Habermas' "colonization thesis" (Habermas 1981). This assumes that principles of the market sphere—Habermas assigns utility maximization and instrumental rationality rather than esteem to it—tend to corrupt, and "colonize" other areas of the society. In particular the "lifeworld" (Habermas 1981, 171 ff; *ibid.*, 1976 144 ff) is harmed—the sphere of civil-society activities that builds on principles of mutuality, common good, and cooperation. Habermas assumes that friendships, love relations, and structures of communal support are all forced to adopt the norms of profitability, exchange logic, and market utility, at the expense of solidarity, unconditional help, and the virtue of sharing. Participants in Western square occupation movements addressed the market's external imbalances (or negative externalities), as they complained about wealth-induced political inequality and how it threatens the equal

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

respect for political agency of citizens that should characterize the democratic state. As was vigorously expressed in “The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City” of the general assembly of Occupy Wall Street in Zuccotti park, New York City:

As we gather together in solidarity to express a feeling of mass injustice, we must not lose sight of what brought us together. We write so that all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world can know that we are your allies. As one people, united, we acknowledge, the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and [...] that a democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power (Occupy Wall Street, 2011b).

The protesters exposed a normative conflict between democracy and capitalism (cf., Habermas 2013); between the promise of procedural justice, political equality, and people’s self-governance on the one hand, and the principles of the capitalist market economy out of check, where “wealth begets power”, goods are unequally allocated, and class differences determine opportunities, on the other.

Thus, the Western square occupation movements did more than express negative-evaluative claims regarding market principles, their various imbalances, and their injustice. They likewise made positive claims on the market, demanding its organizational renewal to remedy the issues outlined above. They initiated a debate about the bounds and rules of the market. In fact, the protesters fought for a transformation of the market’s hegemonic normative principles, as they showed that capitalist market mechanisms both negate their own values and claims (e.g., merit- esteem) and also have negative effects on other spheres (e.g., political equality). The latter issue, for example, is seen clearly in a protest slogan in Spain: “Why do the markets rule, since I have not voted for them?”. (Gerbaudo 2017, 44) Indignados and Occupy Wall Street should be seen as fighting over a transformation of the normative boundaries between the principles of the market and the principles of universal respect in the democratic state. Their protests implied that the principles of social regulation, redistribution of wealth for basic needs satisfaction, the reduction of wealth-based political power, and public control must be applied to the market in order to protect equal political rights and liberties for all from undue economic privilege and colonizing exchange logic (e.g., “one dollar, one vote”), as well as to ensure fairness and merit-based esteem in markets. Their demands contained the claim to normatively reshape the market sphere by applying the state’s principle of unconditional social respect and by reducing its negative impact on other spheres as voiced in the protest slogan “Get corporate money out of politics”. (Taylor *et al.*, 2011, 20)

They addressed the urgent issue that the vast, unequal wealth and income allocation among citizens must be reversed and riches redistributed in order to limit the political power of the wealthy and rebalance equal opportunities for all in current democratic decision-making. In sum, the occupiers' positive and negative claims expressed that all need to enjoy a robust social status, be encouraged to participate in public affairs, and be permitted to act much more freely in markets without being at risk of dependency on wealthy agents.

Western square occupation movements should thus be understood as *struggles over the transformation of the market's hegemonic normative principles* as their claims go hand in hand with demands for socially embedding and increased legal regulating (*Verrechtlichung*) of this sphere. (cf., Fraser and Honneth 2003, 222 f.) They remind us that political equality is not merely a matter of civil rights and representation, but that political equality is tightly linked to economic justice. Rather than merely seeking to correct the market's internal shortcomings (Chapter 3), they express *immanent critique*, drawing on a validity surplus of universal normative principles of the sphere of respect-recognition. They complain about a too narrow scope of institutional application of these universal principles, showing that these should reach beyond the democratic state and into the economy, in order to socially embed market relations and securing equality and liberty for all. Put differently, they are institutionally transformative since they re-set normative boundaries among spheres (Iser 2008, 223 f) and normatively transformative since they contest the hegemonic norms in one social sphere, aiming to replace them with "subversively re-interpreted" (cf., Honneth 2017, 915) and newly applied principles of another sphere.⁵⁷

5.3 Market Imbalances and Misrecognition

New questions arise when we examine square occupation movements as *transformation struggles for reordering market principles* in the quest for adequate social recognition. *First*, how should we conceptualize the social harm and related injustice experiences of agents generated by these market imbalances? Put differently, what is wrong with the imbalances to which agents respond with protest? *Second*, what kind of normative reordering of these

⁵⁷ The concept of "normatively transformative" is distinct from Honneth's concept of "normative revolution", which he separates from "institutional revolution" (Honneth 2015c, 208—2011). Whereas he does not see the possibility of a revolution in the normative structure of modern society and argues that almost all progressive movements invoke the principles of individual freedom as they are found in current institutions, he highlights the possibility of deep institutional change for better realizing valid recognition-norms. In contrast to him, I see the extension of valid norms in new spheres and related removal of others, and the re-interpretation of their content as normatively transformative. Such a view sees valid norms as open to joint interpretations, and activists' questioning of hegemonic interpretations as a crucial part of protests.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

spheres is expressed in the Western square occupation movements' struggle to remedy harm and overcome related injustices?

Market imbalances may be perceived as harmful for the following reasons: The internal imbalances of current, neoliberal-capitalist market economies should be seen as harming many individuals' self-esteem, because these economies cannot assure a decent income for all through wage labor, while they also undermine meritocracy, thereby demoralizing non-affluent citizens who try to contribute meaningfully to the common good. Regarding this type of harm, Honneth argues in *Freedom's Right* (2014) that a mass reduction of income and precariousness of work, as is typical in neoliberalism, would be indicators of a collectively experienced loss of esteem-recognition. This captures well the spirit of our time, in which the threat of being laid off induces a common feeling of powerlessness among many contemporary workers, who also often perceive that their wages do not fairly value the great degree of flexibility expected from them. (Honneth 2014, 246) Similarly, the political scientist Donatella della Porta argues that the crash of the banking system in 2008 impoverished numerous people, many of whom could not repay their debts and were suddenly considered criminals in public (della Porta 2017, 455). From the perspective of recognition theory, such experiences may well shatter an agent's positive self-evaluation. In fact, people are harmed in more than their feelings: they are harmed in their present standard of living, future prospects, and safety in old age. We should therefore not be surprised that people feel harmed in their self-esteem on a massive scale, that they rise up and publicly express that they "feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world" (Occupy Wall Street, 2011b), as seen in the Western square occupations. I believe these protest movements express a vast tension between the idealized free marketplace of individual self-realization on the one hand, and the social reality of neoliberal-precarity on the other. The participants feel harmed by the fact that, in reality, the market sphere can apparently neither satisfy social and material needs as workers, nor their basic human needs for belonging and esteem.

How should we understand the second kind of imbalance, those "feelings of mass injustice," and conceptualize the social harm related to the fact that market principles threaten the values of the democratic state? As argued earlier, the way that current markets underlie and produce grave wealth and income inequality should be seen as a special form of disrespect, as it undermines equal respect for individuals' autonomy in democracy. Such a disrespect for equal status is not a form of direct, personal domination or disenfranchisement. It is, rather, a form of *structural disrespect*, in which respect for the equal status of citizens is systematically harmed as a side effect of income inequality and the linked inequalities of

power. But how can economic inequality undermine political equality and the related respect? To elucidate this argument, the political philosopher Thomas Christiano identifies in his article “Money in Politics” (Christiano 2012, 241—257) four mechanisms by which wealth produces inequality as we make political decisions.

First, the most obvious but least common mechanism is money for votes. This produces corruption and bribery; whereby non-affluent agents sell their votes to the affluent to earn extra income. (cf., Christiano 2012, 242) Second, he draws attention to the financial contributions of wealthy agents (e.g., campaign donations or donations to US Super Political Action Committees (PACs)). He argues that they function as gatekeepers into politics and as agenda-setters for collective decision-making, thus distorting democratic deliberation processes. Candidates for office must appeal to the affluent in order to run campaigns, with the effect that the interests of non-affluent citizens receive little attention. (ibid., 2012, 244 ff) Third, wealthy agents are able to influence and finance the broadcasting of public opinions that affect our public views on justice, political relevance, and the common good (e.g., through funding and directing think tanks, owning media companies, lobbying, advertising, or directing the work of institutions of higher learning through donations). This private ownership of the means of distributing opinion and support for media outlets produces biases that favor the viewpoints of the better off and conceals the needs of the non-affluent from the general public, thus distorting public opinion and facilitating its manipulation (ibid., 2012, 247 f). Lastly, wealthy agents and their monetary power can be seen as an independent political force⁵⁸ since they are able to respond to government rulings and pressure officials to reverse and adjust policies (e.g., layoffs of workers, investment strikes, and relocation of factories, which often have harsh social and infrastructural consequences for entire regions). In sum, Christiano argues that these four mechanisms should be seen as crucial reasons why politicians disproportionately consider the reaction of the wealthy and repeatedly adjust policies to align with those interests. (ibid., 2012, 250) In light of these wealth-induced political inequalities, we should expect *quid pro quo* arrangements in politics. These are far-reaching implications for key normative questions such as how a democratic society should be organized, and especially how we should distribute the burdens and benefits of our societal division of labor. (ibid., 2012, 251)

To underpin Christiano’s moral reasoning about the *vicious impact of money in politics*, I wish to draw attention to the study of Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page (Gilens and

⁵⁸ The market’s colonization of democracy is also visible, one could argue, in the fact that most US parliamentarians are millionaires. (cf., Delmas 2018, 83)

Page 2014), which shows that decision-making power in the US democracy is increasingly concentrated in the hands of economic elites. They argue that if corporations and wealthy agents want a law passed, there is a 60 percent chance that it passes, while a law would surely not pass if these same groups reject it. On the other hand, issues that almost all everyday voters support have merely a 30 percent chance of becoming law. Their fierce conclusion is that the preferences of average Americans appear to have only a modest impact upon public policymaking, and that wealthy agents appear to be the only political actors of any real consequence (Gilens and Page 2014, 575 f.; Reich 2016, 115; Miller 2018, 602). Shockingly, subsequent research suggests that the wealth-induced politics of inequality is likewise deeply anchored in many European states, even in those that are considered egalitarian and affluent, such as Norway. (e.g., Peters 2018; Pedersen 2019)

Since money in politics is so powerful, we must be aware of a vicious cycle in which political inequality (i.e., favoring the policy preferences of the rich) creates even more economic inequality in the future. Moreover, we should see grave wealth and income inequality as a form of *structural disrespect*, as it systemically harms the social base and spirit of democratic equality (Delmas 2018, 73). Wealth-induced political inequality can be experienced as the refusal of the state to provide appropriate societal conditions to ensure equal respect for political agency and participation regardless of economic status; the society fails to protect non-affluent agents in particular from domination by wealthy ones. Also, these conditions create fatalistic feelings of powerlessness as they enable both the marginalization of and ignorance about the interests of the non-affluent. (Delmas 2018, 246) Hence, the power of money and related wealth-induced political inequality should be conceptualized as structurally disrespecting citizens' political agency and social integrity by undermining their chances to experience themselves as coauthors of the laws they ought to obey. Unlike neoliberal pundits that see political equality fulfilled by the equal distribution of political rights alone (e.g., Friedman 1970), we have to recognize that the current markets' vast economic inequality threatens the basic value of universal respect necessary for equal autonomy in our democratic society, and thus harms individual self-respect *en masse*.

But when we examine Western square occupation movements as phenomena triggered by imbalances related to the market, we must also resolve the issue of what kind of normative reordering and organizational renewal of the market is articulated by the participants' struggles to remedy these social harms? What kind of change should be endorsed to actualize merit-based esteem and equal opportunity in the market, and importantly, what must change to guarantee that all are properly respected as free and equal in our democratic decision-

making and public affairs? For instance, Christiano proposed that, to limit the non-egalitarian effects of money in politics, we must level down the opportunities for influencing politics during elections—with special focus on restricting campaign financing. We should make sure that all citizens receive an adequate hearing during that period. Further, he proposed improving the financial limitations of the less affluent by handing out vouchers to all voters to spend on whatever political factions they wish, or, as he puts it, to “socialize the financing of politics”. (Christiano 2012, 255)

How did the protesters of the Indignados and Occupy Wall Street propose to stop the destructive effect of “money in politics”? Firstly, they claimed that all should be *provided with the minimal material resources* needed to properly protect and sustain autonomy in coexistence (e.g., by implementing positive social rights and labor protections that complement the negative liberties in markets). They called for *universal social respect* for one’s material vulnerability through unconditional forms of economic human rights and welfare regulations (e.g., through a universal basic income).⁵⁹ Further, they drew attention to the issue that social welfare policies alone are insufficient to rebalance the power inequalities between citizens of average or lower income and economic elites in politics. Although these measures would dissolve the problem of the “double freedom of the wage laborer” as outlined by Marx (1867, *Capital*, 742 f.)—the issue that workers are forced to accept contracts, as they have nothing to sell but their labor in order to make a living—they still do not end the deep power and wealth inequalities. In fact, non-affluent agents not only face a higher risk of economic instability and social vulnerability, but also face a collective action problem compared with their well-organized and affluent foes. (Christiano 2012, 243) Policies like a basic income are crucial measures that should be added to the market by nations in order to decouple people’s income from labor, to ensure a secure social status for all, and to provide real contractual freedom with regards to work. (Pettit 2008) But Indignados and Occupy *et al.* also demonstrated that we need a wider strategy to strengthen the bargaining power of ordinary citizens against wealthy goliaths and help them resist wealth-induced political inequality (especially in times of the declining integration power of unions and labor parties). Besides demanding that nations offer conditions that a) guarantee universal respect for socio-economic status, they called on local governments to “take the market out of politics” by b)

⁵⁹ Honneth’s view of the universal basic income (UBI) is skeptical. While he supports unconditional respect for all individuals’ status as material needy agents, he seems to reject the separation of labor and income as means to that end. In a lecture, he voices concern that UBI could cause exclusion of a vast majority from the labor market, and thus undoes a societal bases for solidarity, cooperation, esteem, and a realm to form collective interest: “The Working Sovereign”, *Walter-Benjamin-Lectures 2021 (3)*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gN5WdXhg_k/ (last accessed August 21, 2022).

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

drastically redistributing wealth and “taxing the rich” to rebalance power in society, and thus to actualize political equality and meritocracy.

The Western square occupation movements align with Christiano’s call to *level down on the opportunities of affluent agents*, (e.g., Occupy’s critique of party funding laws, given the worrying impact of Super PACs on US elections). Another and more concrete demand can be found in the protest of the Indignados in Spain. Here we find a broad critique of the unregulated, financialized housing market, that could not secure sufficient and adequate housing. (Christiano 2012, 321f) The claim emerged that the principles of the merit-based allocation of goods and esteem through markets must be reformed, (Abellán *et al.*, 2012, 323), as activists and citizens protested that intense competition between tenants and profit-seeking rentiers was not able to satisfy the basic need for decent housing. Their slogan of a “Right to the City” and their demands for rental price limitation, the cessation of evictions, and provisions for more social housing, can all be seen as voicing the normative claim that the market’s competitive logic must be supplemented by the principles of unconditional respect for agents’ vulnerability related to housing (cf., Iser 2008, 228), and by replacing market principles with a need-based allocation of vital goods in order to (gradually) balance out the power of money in society (e.g., one can only enjoy decent housing, if one can afford it) and push back the market’s tyranny of merit (Sandel 2012).

To be clear, activists did not voice precise political remedies (e.g., for fair party funding or progressive taxes). On the contrary, they articulated highly moralized demands on the market and on politics. But it is not necessarily the place of the victims of systemic injustice to create an efficient replacement. Instead, square occupation movements should be seen as proclaiming that growing *economic inequality is not yet recognized by society as harmful* to citizens’ equal status in democratic decision-making and as destructive for meritocracy. Given these problems and in the absence of organizations that offer a balance of class power (as was offered by unions until the 1990s), and that advocate for redistribution and give non-affluent agents a political voice (such as labor parties did in the postwar period) (Merkel 2014), Occupy and Indignados showed that the massive public actions of movements are able to symbolically outweigh the political cleavages caused by wealth inequality. One can argue that their protests against the 1% and for real democracy attempted to remedy these issues produced by markets through leveling out the collective-action power gap between the wealthy and non-affluent agents. (Christiano 2012, 246) Encounters and protests in squares can be seen as empowering people to regain a sense of political voice (della Porta 2017, 456), and to overcome the feeling of being only a spectator in an elitist democracy. (Merkel 2014)

As another dimension of normative reordering, Western square occupation movements addressed the market—though deeply overlapping with power—as a sphere that must be made fairer in its structure and more solidly based on morality by the agents who work in it. In fact, protesters addressed demands directly towards crucial market movers by occupying Wall Street, the heart of the world of finance, (Holldorf 2016, 140) and complained that these actors had entirely disengaged themselves from the promise of individual self-realization in markets paired with social responsibilities. Occupy *et al.* can therefore be seen as attempting to change the rules of the game and the attitudes of the actors, while sustaining the liberating aspects of the market, instead of abolishing it altogether, in order to rebalance political power in society and actualize democratic equality and meritocracy. This aspect is also demonstrated in the fact that the Western square occupation movements experimented in their campsites with new forms of a sharing economy, with cooperative initiatives, and with need-based distribution of goods. These practices comply with visions of a more decentralized, solidarity- and community-based, socially embedded market-economy, built on collectives and bottom-up participation, rather than on a centrally planned, socialist economy. The market is ascribed a stronger social meaning when it is seen as a place of public appearance where people can collaborate, and provide the results of real labor to each other, to make things or to do services that nurture those with whom we share bonds, or even to offer what the whole society needs for our common welfare. Such thoughts and experiments showed that the transformation of markets requires both a shift in laws and in cultural interpretations of the market sphere, away from a competitive concept and related mere financial phenomena towards a cooperative one and the notion of a social place. At this point, we return to Honneth's theory.

Examining the Western square occupation movements as transformational struggles that demand a greater level of morality and social responsibility from the market to ensure that this sphere no longer harms democracy, to actualize its inherent positive values, and to properly respect the equal political status of all, resonates well with Honneth's new conceptualization of the market as an institution of "social freedom". (Honneth 2014, 246 ff) Just as the participants of Occupy and Indignados did, Honneth envisions a 'social-democratic concept of the market'—built upon mutual satisfaction of collective interests, (ibid., 2014, 249) decent labor regulation, robust social-welfare rights, union organization, experiences of solidarity, honor for individual contributions to a common good, and cooperatively realizing shared aims (ibid., 2014, 252). However, he diagnoses our current situation as one in which markets are no longer viewed as institutions for which we all share responsibility as parts of a cooperating community, but only as a space of competition in which the goal is to maximize

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

individual utility. (Honneth 2014, 251) As Occupy *et al.* did, Honneth draws attention to the market's negative impact on other spheres. He voices concerns about the hegemony of a competitive concept of the market in contrast with a cooperative one, and rejects the ways that its logic colonizes all forms of life. (ibid., 2014, 251) He argues that due to the public faith in the efficiency of market competition in recent decades, society as whole (e.g., education, welfare, public service, or spending) was forced to adopt principles of profitability, equivalent exchange, or market utility, and that people were pressured to apply principles of self-marketing among themselves, seeing society merely as a network of actors each concerned with their own benefits.

Yet, although his thoughts mirror the concerns of square occupation movements about how market imbalances undo equality, meritocracy, and autonomy, and even though the protest took place during the period when the German edition of his work *Freedom' Rights* was published, it is surprising that Honneth never links his analyses to the claims of Occupy or Indignados, or to predecessors like the massive alter-globalization movements⁶⁰ in the 2000s. Instead, he even asserts that all "... these problems [...] which have been subjectively registered and regarded as 'unjust', have given rise to almost no collective resistance, such as the kind termed 'outrage' by Hegel. ...". (Honneth 2014, 247) He even specified the kinds of collective resistance needed against out-of-check markets, when markets are based solely on principles of competition and social utility maximizing:

It seems that an alternative to these regressive developments can only be found wherever there are organized struggles to impose constraints on the labor market at the transnational level. Considering that national governments in Western Europe have lost much of their capacity over the last few decades to use their own influence to regulate profit conditions in the sphere of production and services, only an internationalization of oppositional movements can revive the original intentions of the minimum wage, job security and even co-determination. (Honneth 2014, 253)

Given that Honneth sees transnational movements as able to create prospects for a moral re-civilization of the market economy, (cf., ibid., 2014, 253) it is even more striking that he does not refer to any of the protest events that took place during the global protest wave of square occupation movements. Although these movements did not explicitly target

⁶⁰ *Alter(native)-globalization* is a worldwide protest movement, whose followers support global cooperation and interaction, but oppose what they view as the negative effects of neoliberal globalization, considering it to harm values such as environmental protection, economic justice, labor rights, respect for indigenous cultures, peace, or civil liberties. They see their movement as an alternative to these trends. Large protests took place in Seattle 1999 against the WTO summit, and in Genoa 2001 and Rostock 2007 against G8 summits. Their name can be traced back to a popular slogan of the movement that is "*another world is possible*". (cf., Martin 2015, 222 ff)

deregulations in labor markets, and rather focused on the financial markets that they saw as mostly responsible for increasing social and political inequality, they nevertheless also complained that hyper-competition and profit seeking caused by neoliberal reforms would have re-feudalized our society, and that the capitalist market economy would have taken a form that contradicts the promise of the market as a societal sphere that assures individual freedom and the common good. (cf., Honneth 2014, 176) In fact, some philosophers describe Occupy *et al.* as the largest anti-capitalist mobilizations of the last decades. (e.g., Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 193) In addition, other theorists have noted that Occupy Wall Street's normative claims in particular correspond closely to Honneth's critique of the market (Holldorf 2016). Just as in his theory, these protest claims did not express classic demands for redistribution or demand a bigger stake in material resources. Instead, protesters questioned the legitimacy of the current market economy and its ability to offer conditions that guarantee freedom for all. (Holldorf 2016, 141) The protesters wished for a market that incorporated the values of fairness, justice, esteem, and mutual respect. (Holldorf 2016, 143) Instead of holding onto a *laissez-faire* concept of the market—as in neoliberalism, where markets are meant to reach best outcomes if they are unregulated, corporate profits trickle down to the people, and humans and the environment are regarded as exploitable resources—the Occupy activists desired a market oriented much toward principles of solidarity, corporation, social security, and autonomy. (Holldorf 2016, 146)

However, despite similarities between Honneth's vision and critique of the current state of the market-economy and the Western square occupation movements' normative claims, Honneth saw in the last two decades no increase in collective political efforts to properly resist the market's "misdevelopments". (Honneth 2014, 248) Speaking directly of Occupy Wall Street in an interview, he even mentioned that he was astounded at their emergence as there were "no presage" and that they "came out of nowhere". (Honneth, SRF 2016)⁶¹ In addition, in his recent work *The Idea of Socialism* (2015b), he implicitly refers to these movements in his introduction, acknowledging that there were never more people since World War Two that complained at the same time about the bad effects of the global capitalist market economy. Yet, he criticizes them for their lack of "future orientation" and of "utopian vision of a future society beyond capitalism". He depicts them as a "mass indignation without normative orientation", and "without historic senses for a goal of their critique"; they thus

⁶¹ See Honneth's remark during the interview in 2016 about *Socialism or Liberalism?*, In SRF Kultur (from minute 08:55): <https://www.srf.ch/play/tv/sternstunde-philosophie/video/axel-honneth-den-sozialismus-zur-vollendung-bringen?urn=urn:srf:video:f48213c2-40f3-4d3d-a3ae-5c02d9df5a51/> (last accessed August 27, 2022).

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

seem to him “mute and turned inward”. (Honneth 2015b, 15) This view seems unconvincing to me. Despite the fact that Occupy and Indignados were not transnational unions (the type of action he might have wished for), they should not be seen as offering merely a disoriented social *critique*. Such an assessment approaches movements from an intellectual ivory tower, a viewpoint and type of language that critical theorists should try to avoid.

I do not agree that these movements were without direction. Thus far, I have shown how they can be seen a) as struggles in defense of welfare rights and social status recognition, b) as inclusion struggles to build a more participatory democracy, and c) as mass struggles that resist wealth-induced political inequality and see capitalism as a threat to universal respect for equal status. Far from being directionless, they should be seen as recognition struggles that aim for the transformation of the normative order of the market, insofar as the principles of profit and merit-based esteem have negative effects on other social spheres, and as they are inadequate for securing the common good and basic needs. The movements show that markets must be limited and reshaped by the principles of social protection, solidarity, and democratic control.

It is puzzling that Honneth does not recognize the new kind of class struggle practiced by Occupy and Indignados. Originally, he saw the task of recognition theory as identifying those morally guided conflicts connected to society’s class structure that are veiled by the “integration façade of late-capitalism”. (Honneth 2000, 123 f) In fact, he aimed at analyzing class-related protests that continue to exist, but that are publicly invisible, silenced, or pushed aside, as protesters lack proper vocabulary and collective networks. (cf., Habermas 1985, 197) This raises the question of why he did not also examine Western square occupations movements as recognition struggles that resist class-based injustices but have not yet developed adequate political demands and mechanisms of collective agency. One reason for Honneth’s indifference to Occupy and Indignados seems to be that he hopes for a specific organizational form of market-related social struggle, namely, transnational labor movements (Honneth 2014, 247) that revive a vision of and fight for socialist market economies (Honneth 2015b, 15). Western square occupation movements obviously do not meet these criteria, use a different language, and, rather, appear to confirm Honneth’s negative diagnosis that current times are characterized by “privatized forms of resistance” without any clear “collective articulations of interests” (Honneth 2014, 247). Yet, in the next sections I will show that such views are problematic. They silence protests that do not correspond with standard concepts and undermine our ambition to give a voice to victims of injustice willing to rise up. I thus

show that we should update recognition theory to make better sense of, conceptualize, and assess the new protests against wealth-induced political inequality.

5.4 Recognition Theory and the Capitalist Market Economy

In response to the issues outlined above, I will first recap how Honneth applies the recognition-theory framework to markets, and then outline what is missing in his framework to examine the multilayered normative tensions and related social struggles in this sphere.

The relationship between recognition and markets, and why recognition should be seen as one of the key paradigms in debates on socio-economic justice (Celentano and Caranti 2020), was notably addressed in the famous exchange between Fraser and Honneth entitled *Redistribution or Recognition?* (Fraser and Honneth 2003). Summarizing Honneth's view, markets are seen as normative orders that primarily embody merit-based esteem—what and whom we value as a society—and that these social norms affect how we organize the allocation of goods, the division of labor, and how we distribute the burdens and benefits of cooperation. Furthermore, market interaction assumes the ideal of non-coercive exchange of goods among legally free agents that mutually benefit from exchange to satisfy needs. (Honneth 2014, 183ff) Rather than seeing markets as amoral spheres where actors are only responsible for maximizing returns to their shareholders (e.g., Friedman 1970), or as systems based only on utility maximization and instrumental rationality (Habermas 1976), Honneth highlights that implicit normative principles and values regulate the outcomes and the overall interactional functioning of market economies. (Zurn 2015, 131) He frees our thoughts from the usual mechanistic concepts in which this sphere allegedly follows only technical rules or is magically led and controlled by an invisible hand of supply and demand. (Honneth 2013)

Conceiving the market as a domain that embodies merit-based esteem suggests that what we value in markets is essentially contested, and that struggles over distribution and wages can be approached as symbolic struggles over the legitimacy and culturally hegemonic definition of what is socially necessary and perceived as a valuable activity or contribution in our division of labor and societal cooperation. (Deranty 2009, 411) Thus, protests in markets can be ascribed a moral grammar as they contest prevailing market principles, enlarging our view over conflicts in the sphere. For instance, the feminist struggle over the value of family and reproductive labor is expanded when they are viewed as market-related conflicts as well: a struggle over the degree to which such work is honored in the first place, and against hegemonic masculinist definitions of work-related merit that have led to unjust material

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

deprivations of women in contrast to men. (cf., Zurn 2015, 136) As another example, a recognition theory view of markets helps us grasp that the low average salaries of today's care and health workers do not express an adequate market price logic—its inadequacy became particularly visible during the 2020 – 2022 pandemic, where we noticed that these workers provide system-relevant labor—but rather show the public's low esteem for their work. (Honneth 2012, 216 f.) Further, recognition theory helps us to rethink the overall moral status of human labor and social needs in the market economy. It causes us to think about whether workers should be seen as mere means of production, trade, and consumption, or do they also deserve care, social protection, and unconditional respect. (Dejours *et al.*, 2018, 113 ff.)

In recognition theory, market-related protests are not reduced to expressing conflict over material subsistence, or the moves of agents that compete for a larger stake in scarce material resources while pursuing their individual economic interests. Instead, they are seen as *conflicts over social entitlements and appropriate forms of intersubjective treatment* of persons, groups, and human labor in market relations and market modes of production (Zurn 2015, 134), given that economic processes can be experienced as harmful for people's positive self-relation, self-evaluation, and social identity. In that context, the fight of people for fair pay is, in part, because they see low pay as a sign of disregard for their work and contribution when they believe they deserve better, or that they were promised better conditions. In sum, Honneth's theory is based on the idea that economic relations, contracts, market mechanisms, and market effects are all thoroughly imbued with moral content, normative expectations, and promises, and this is why they can be experienced as disrespectful, degrading, hurtful, or unfair. On this view, socio-economic justice is about the appropriate material and social bases of each market agent's threefold recognition needs. Market-related protests are understood as a struggle over offering equal opportunity for proper esteem, and an economy that satisfies material needs and offers conditions for a positive social identity and development of self-respect for all. (Zurn 2015, 135)

Nonetheless, some have criticized recognition theory for following a reductionist view, reducing the social inequalities and distributive injustices of the market economy to expressions of cultural value systems, and underlying hegemonic evaluative patterns. (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 72 ff; and *ibid.*, 2003, 242 ff) In response, others contend that this theory never aimed at providing a sufficient account of the causes of market events, but rather a basis for studying the cognitive effects created by market economies (Renault 2019, 115 ff). Honneth himself admitted that an adequate analysis of current capitalist market economies must likewise reflect the dimension of corporate profitability and utilization (Fraser and

Honneth 2003, 287 ff). Rather, the market's underlying normative order should be seen as one of several elements relevant to explaining market dynamics and effects. (Zurn 2015, 141 f) Recognition theory is, thus, a supplement to standard economic theories of markets, *explaining the market's morally guided relations and principles*—elements that are crucial if stability and popular consent is expected in markets. However, even if we accept this defense of recognition theory's view of the market, critics have pointed out that it is exactly the lack of emphasis on the functional dynamic of the capitalist-market economy—something that Honneth never intended to provide a theory for—that it is the main issue of recognition theory. Most prominently, Fraser said that new movements in particular draw attention to issues associated with global injustice, arguing that the issues stem from systemic features of global capitalism such as where and why enterprises relocate factories or lay off workers in order to increase profit and satisfy shareholder interests. Recognition-based remedies would be deficient against the global capitalist structure at the root of much injustice. (cf., Fraser and Honneth 2003, 122 ff, 256 f). As a result, some have doubted whether it is suitable to examine these new movements and protests in terms of (mis)recognition. (Zurn 2015, 143 ff) As a response to that critique, Honneth has insisted that his theory is applicable to such cases, but that we have to separate the idea of status respect, seen as universal conditions for a life of dignity, and social esteem, seen as appreciation for personal worth of individual's contribution to the common good. Only if we view global distributive injustices and economic inequalities as an issue of recognition, could we—according to Honneth (Honneth 2012, 230 ff)—grasp why people in current capitalism find motivating reasons to rise up as part of a mass movement. His argument is that they deem their social identity to be threatened by experienced injustices related to markets, and that they feel harmed by the failure of their normative expectations, and thus feel outrage. Even though this does not offer an account to explain capitalism, recognition theory offers a promising language and a tool to assess collective experiences and articulations of injustice, *and thus the negative effects of economic processes on individuals and communities* to which these agents respond with protest. (e.g., Renault 2019, 116; Zurn 2015, 146)

I argue that Honneth is right to stress the normative foundations of the market economy and market relations, and that many distributive harms and socio-economic crises are experienced by agents in recognitional terms. However, his moral (monistic) theorization of the market as a normative order raises the issue of whether using the insights of recognition theory falsely abandons the Marxian roots of a critical theory of society and conflict. In this context, it seems important to rethink to what degree insights on the operating logic of the

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

capitalist market economy continue to be relevant for better understanding the deeper meaning of movement protests. Here I agree with Zurn that Honneth has recurring difficulties in linking his theory back to new resistance actions, since his moralizing abstractions appear unable to detect structural causes and locate them within a bigger picture of global markets. (Zurn 2015, 144) Honneth's ignorance of the Western square occupation movements and alter-globalization protests are cases in point (see 5.3). One issue seems to be a misleading conceptualization of the market-sphere. Rather than reducing this sphere to a cultural value system—as some argue—the real issue is that he does not separate the different subsystems of this sphere or reconstruct the different normative principles and expectations operating therein. The problem is his one-sided focus on the *marketplace* (i.e., the realm of free exchange of commodities and collaborations among equals), while neglecting the *system of work* (i.e., the realm of productive activities and division of labor). I wish to briefly illuminate this problem and what is missing in Honneth's theory by introducing a better conceptualization of the market economy's sub-spheres, following the work of recognition-theorist Emmanuel Renault.

Drawing on Marx, Renault begins with elaborating that capitalist markets are, indeed, characterized by exchange relations that are mediated by contracts that presuppose the equality and freedom of the contractors. Or in Marxian terms, *market agents recognize each other as free and equal* representatives of economic goods, namely, *owners of commodities*. (e.g., Renault 2016, 182; Marx and Engels 2002, *Manifesto*, 61) On that view, participants in market interactions have the chance to mutually satisfy needs, to pursue their own good, to experience themselves as useful and capable of offering objects that others desire, to be free to choose with respect to consumption and investment, and to feel appreciated for their cooperative contributions. (Renault 2016, 184) Yet this is just one side of the story. Following Marx's insights, Renault emphasizes that the *marketplace* (i.e., “the sphere of circulation”) rests on a mere one-sided concept of freedom and depends on structural inequality and unfreedom in the *system of work* (i.e., “the sphere of production”). Firstly, the production of commodities is not happening in the marketplace but in the workplace, which reminds us not to identify the market with the economy as a whole; though one can talk about the market economy since the majority of goods are produced for profit-making on markets, instead of for communal subsistence or for the satisfaction of needs. Moreover, distinguishing between the marketplace and system of work helps us to grasp that capitalist market economies are not only characterized by profit-making, but also by a particular mode of production, namely, production of surplus value through the exploitation of labor. (Renault 2016, 180) Here is the

dark side of the story. The *system of work* is characterized by unequal power relations between employers and workers, and a mere negative freedom of the latter. Workers are freed from being possessed by others as economic goods (they are not slaves) and recognized by society as autonomous agents that have rights, but they are also free in the sense of being deprived of the means of production and most property. Though having the freedom of non-interference, they do not have positive freedom: they lack the resources and social protections needed to be able to truly choose freely among various lifestyles. (Renault 2016, 186) Their labor contract is a case in point. This contract is based on an exchange between agents that are formally free, but deeply unequal in a societal sense. In fact, structural socio-economic inequality underlies their relations. Those who are deprived of the means of production, do not enjoy robust welfare rights, or do not own ample assets, and whose wages are minimal, are vastly incentivized to make unequal labor contracts in order to make a living. Through selling—or, more accurately, renting—one's labor force, one subordinates oneself to another's will, so that one can make ends meet, while others make profits with the surplus value (e.g., services, goods) one produces (i.e., minus costs for salary etc.).

Hence, it is false to conceive of the market economy as a normative order alone, built upon principles of freedom of exchange, equality between contractors, and autonomy. Its sub-sphere of work and production is built upon the fact that a majority is *structurally forced* to rent out its labor force for income, for maintaining status, and for survival. Rather than citing experiences of feeling recognized as free and equal, Renault employs Marxian terminology, showing that experiences of *feeling exploited*, of *being reduced and objectified* to means of production, as well as of *being alienated* from one's work persist in the sphere of production. (Renault 2016, 188) These practices and related experiences negate the glory story about free markets.⁶² In fact, those who are selling their labor seem partially and temporarily giving up their individual autonomy in this sphere, by obeying those that employ them as well as by subordinating to other's will the question of what to produce and how to produce it. This is clear, for instance, in the hierarchical command over labor in factories, in strict regulations for breaks, and in surveillance of employees. These are instances of feeling harm in the claim to be recognized as an autonomous agent that deserves equal status respect. In fact, these are structural forms of disrespect in the sphere of production for the sake of profit-making through labor exploitation. What we should learn from Marx is that capitalist market

⁶² An example is the portrayal of capitalism by the *International Monetary Fund*, reducing it solely to an institutionalization of the principles of private property, individual freedom, self-interested exchange, and competition, and neglecting the sphere of work and labor: https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/basics/2_capitalism.htm/ (last accessed July 17, 2022).

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

economies are characterized by a deep normative divide between the marketplace—seen as the “exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham” (1867, *Capital*, 189)—and the realm of work—where the “equal exploitation of human labor is the first human right of the capital”. (1867, *Capital*, 309) These sub spheres intersect, but follow distinct principles and generate distinct experiences. While the marketplace raises expectations of individual self-realization and mutual satisfaction of needs, the system of work heavily rests upon economic hierarchy. In the latter sphere, legally free but socially unequal agents largely recognize each other as mere means to realize individual ends: either as human tools that must be used in a cost-efficient way in order to make profits in competition with others (1867, *Capital*, 286), or as representatives of riches for which one must work to make a living. These instrumental relations can be seen as *alienated forms of recognition*, where agents reduce each other to quantifiable entities for whom one does not care socially.⁶³ Such relations not only incite struggles over the monetary esteem of work and redistribution of wealth for one’s benefit but, due to their normative tension with the principle of equal respect for individuals’ autonomy, also produce fights over social entitlements and participation rights in the workplace, and the issue as to what equality and freedom of workers in the sphere of production actually requires.

Honneth indeed fails to reconstruct these normative tensions and related functioning of the capitalist market economy’s sphere of production. This is a problem for his theory as he is unable to clearly address the varied experiences of harm in that social sphere, which go further than disregard of merit. For instance, it is clear that the capitalist urge to maximize utility and related instrumental rationality of profit making does not only express a functional logic of capitalism but includes recognitive attitudes that people experience as harmful, such as feeling reduced to a mere means of production and thereby disrespected in one’s autonomy. We should reconstruct more precisely how work relations and modes of production are imbued with distinct moral content, expectations, and promises, and this is why they can be experienced as exploitative, objectifying, alienating, and as unfree. Honneth’s approach must be filled out with a theory of the social causes of such experiences and a better understanding of the mechanisms, principles, and paradoxes of capitalism. Unfortunately, he tends to identify the capitalist market economy as a whole with the marketplace, neglecting to address and assess the sphere of work and how it affects freedom, equality, and merit-based esteem in markets. Hence, it is no surprise that he ignores the whole range of new market related

⁶³ An interesting and more systematic study of the relation between recognition and alienation in Marx’ work is offered by Michael Quante (2013), “Recognition in *Capital*”, in: *Ethic Theory Moral Practice*, 16: 713—727.

struggles, as he starts from a too narrow view of what economy and market relations are normatively built upon. Honneth's theory must include a broader conceptualization of the capitalist market economy as outlined above. In that way, it would be able to bring protest analyses back down from economic structures to the peoples' experiences of capitalism. (Renault 2019, 116) By undertaking these upgrades, recognition theory would be better able to engage in an analysis of the harmful effects produced by the institutions of paid labor, or experiences of injustice caused by deregulation and automatization.

Conceiving the capitalist market economy as a societal sphere that is differentiated into two sub-systems ruled by dissimilar principles of interaction and characterized by the normative division between the marketplace (based on free exchange relations among equals) and the system of work (based on exploitative relations among the socially unequal) can also shed new light on the Western square occupation movements. For example, it might explain why their participants did not aim to end the market economy and to introduce a wholly state planned economy, as they seemingly wished to hold on to the principles of freely engaging in both cooperation and the exchange of goods, of merit-based esteem, and of freedom of choice with respect to consumption. In short, they hold on to the principles of the 'marketplace'. Moreover, their complaints about wealth-induced political inequality and related structural disrespect can be supported by addressing the 'sphere of work'. Given that deep economic inequality between groups is the basis of this sphere and supports the production of surplus value through labor exploitation therein, the undoing of equal respect due to vast maldistribution of wealth no longer seems surprising. Rather than an exceptional side-effect of market competition, wealth-induced political inequality rather seems a permanent systemic threat for democracies that accompanies capitalist market economies. Unequal access to and authority over the usage of major means of production and investment funds is the leading principle of one of the most significant spheres in our society. Decisions in the 'sphere of work' impact employment rates, economic growth, and national prosperity. It is therefore no surprise that the operating logic of this powerful sphere recurrently hits others and undermines promises of equality. Unequal economic status trumps equal voice—an institutionalized mechanism that is true for the sphere of work can be true for the political sphere and overall society. On this view, the Western square occupation movements could have voiced their critique against wealth-induced political inequality also in terms of alienation—understood as the experience of feeling powerless and dominated by alien forces. Although one may view oneself as a formally equal and free agent, one feels pre-determined (i.e., alienated) in one's choices and fate by the normative forces that stem from the dominant

sphere of work and production. Wealth-induced political inequality is then coupled with feelings of structural disrespect for unequal material vulnerability as well as feelings of inability and ineffectiveness when attempting to have an effect on social coexistence and political decision-making due to one's weak economic status. As a result, one experiences oneself as misrecognized in the sphere of production, namely, reduced to a means of production, and as an alienated in the political sphere. One feels (mis)recognized as an entity that is merely governed and not directly involved in politics. In short, including the 'sphere of work' in our analysis can reveal a deeper meaning of the new, market-related struggle of the Western square occupation movements. It reveals that wealth-induced inequality is not an exception, but is, in fact, a structural component of the institutional setting of society, a component that poses an intrinsic threat to freedom and equality and also causes a recurring desire to overcome this threat.

Finally, although we have shown that Honneth's recognition-theory framework with regard to markets must be upgraded, all these issues outlined above clearly illustrate that it is suitable to examine capitalist market economies and protests related to them in terms of (mis)recognition. His theory still provides great resources and a favorable language to assess experiences and expressions of injustice, and thus as well the negative effects of economic processes on individuals and communities to which such agents respond with joint protest. Yet, this must be filled out with insights on the operating logic of capitalism in order to uncover the meaning of ever-changing movement protests. In what follows, I wish to further elaborate how an upgraded recognition theory could be used to better identify, conceptualize, and assess the struggle of the Western square occupation movements against wealth-induced inequality. I outline a response to that issue by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of those theories that try to analyze Occupy and Indignados et al. by applying a class-struggle framework and a Marx-inspired critique of political economy.

5.5 Class Struggle Lenses and Being an 'Organ' of Protest Reflection

One attempt to re-integrate a Marx-inspired critique of political economy into modern-day critical theory is made by Albenaz Azmanova. The social and political theorist calls for an approach that can—in connection with movement protests—define a quest for a new societal well-being and provide a diagnosis of the harm engendered by the operative dynamics of contemporary global capitalism. (Azmanova 2014, 351f) In that context, she says that the social movements of the last decades would have poorly fought the injustices produced by

capitalism. In particular, progressive actors would not have been able to provide a satisfactory response to the economic crisis of 2008. As a reason for this, she points to insufficient concepts and approaches within current critical theory, which intends to provide intellectual weapons of social critique to protesters but would focus only on a relational logic of inequality and exclusion, rather than on the systemic logic of capitalism. For instance, Fraser and Honneth would both see the market economy only as a matter of interpersonal relations and the distribution of goods (e.g., of esteem, resources, and opportunities) with the aim to foster equality, but without addressing the operative logic of capitalism and how its mechanisms and structures cause broad social suffering, exploitation, or commodification. Azmanova questions whether a relational approach is useful when critically evaluating the dynamics and negative effects of the market-economy, as this approach merely offers diminished resources for addressing the “systemic domination” innate in capitalism, thus fueling political apathy. (Azmanova 2014, 355)

While outlining a crisis of contemporary critical theory and practice, Azmanova also addresses Western square occupation movements. According to her, these “global popular protests against capitalism” were not the broad coalition forces needed to defend society against unregulated market forces. Instead of being a “mass-scale revolt” (Azmanova 2014, 361), they merely voiced frustration about the poor performance of the system, and issued a “call for fixing it, making it more inclusive and performative, rather than calling for its overthrow due to defunct legitimacy”. To support this assessment, Azmanova refers to a slogan of the Spanish Indignados: “We are not against the system but the system is against us”. (ibid., 2014, 352) This is why she views the Western square occupation movements as merely a reformist appeal, demanding a decrease in income inequality between the 1 and the 99 percent (ibid., 2014, 360), and restabilizing neoliberal capitalism. (ibid., 2014, 352) Such poor forms of joint critical action would only address relational domination and maldistribution of goods (ibid., 2014, 355), without demanding the radical overhaul of the entire economic system that is actually necessary. She thus calls for a critical theory that empowers protesters to refocus on the systemic dimension of domination, helping them to see injustice as every agent’s subjection to the imperatives of capitalism. (Azmanova 2014, 353) Finally, Azmanova argues that this kind of a “(...) renewed critique of the political economy of advanced capitalism is the safeguard that our struggles against exclusion and subordination would not be co-opted, yet again, by the stratagems of capitalism reinventing itself.” (ibid., 2014, 362)

Though I sympathize with Azmanova’s aim to bring political economy back into

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

critical theory—a goal that I highlighted too, as Honneth fails to pay closer attention to the normative principles and functioning of capitalist market-economy’s sphere of production—I have several concerns about her approach. First, I oppose her analysis of the square occupation movements. Recall that she does not see any decent resistance against socio-economic injustice over the last few decades, merely the attempt of movements to make capitalism more inclusive and ethical, which she assesses as inadequate in addressing systemic domination and the structural causes of injustice. (Azmanova 2014, 362) I am not convinced by her view. One can certainly criticize Occupy and Indignados for claiming (wrongly) that they are neither left nor right and express a moralizing critique of capitalism—in fact, their criticism is silent on issues of exploitation and unfreedom in the sphere of production. However, they display their positive value by expressing other socio-economic concerns and relate well to numerous key issues that Azmanova flags. As shown throughout this work, these movements struggle to defend society’s social infrastructure from market logic; express experiences of harm induced by a finance-driven commodification of all the spheres of life; complain about suffering produced by massive over-indebtedness; and criticize the way that wealthy agents have state coverage for risks, while non-affluent agents have to deal with social uncertainty and precarity on their own. These movements can be seen as aiming to defend democracy and social-welfare rights against a rigged economic game that largely benefits just a few. The claims resonate well with Azmanova’s critique of a “extreme marketization of the economy” and “commodification of risk” (ibid., 2014, 361), as well as with her call to “redesign the welfare state” and set up a “political economy of trust” (ibid., 2014, 362) against social uncertainty and the threat of unemployment (Azmanova 2014, 359). She could have recognized these parallels, if she had paid more attention to the protesters’ normative claims. To give an example of claims that mirror the radicalism she hopes for:

Occupy Wall Street is a people-powered movement that [...]. #ows is fighting back against the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations. The movement is inspired by popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, and aims at fight back against the richest 1% of people that are writing the rules of an unfair global economy that is foreclosing on our future. (Adbusters 2011a)

This self-portrait of Occupy Wall Street describes the protesters, their aim to address a systemic dimension of suffering, and their complaints about the structural causes of democratic and social exclusion. They can be blamed for not depersonalizing these structures well enough, but it is wrong to accuse them of trying to only reconsolidate the *status quo*, as

Azmanova says (Azmanova 2014, 352). The fact that she does not address these ‘radical’ claims of the Western square occupation movements reveals the central problem of her approach. She aims to bring political economy back into critical theory by giving up the aim of being an organ of reflection for social movements (Marx, 1847, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 143). Her emphasis on systemic causes of suffering fails to address the actual grievances, complaints, wishes, and struggles of those who suffer. By describing Occupy and Indignados’ protests as inadequate, as merely a struggle against the symptoms but not the causes of suffering and thus blind to the systemic domination of capitalism (Azmanova 2014, 352 ff.; or 360), she dismisses the efforts of these novel protests to bring about positive change. In fact, she advocates a problematic view of the relationship between critical theory, struggles, and the market economy. She gives the impression that protest would be only worthy of support if protesters address the right structural causes of injustice and related suffering. Such a view is unrealistic: many issues related to the economy today are so multilayered (e.g., skyrocketing rental prices) that one often does not know exactly what the root causes are (e.g., speculation, a static housing supply, and influxes of new renters) or how they can be remedied (e.g., rent control, expropriation, building projects). If impoverished tenants always had to prove that they know the exact cause of their misery before complaining, we will soon have no more tenant protests; the same is true for workers in general and their protests. Given this undesirable scenario, it seems more important for protesters to follow and support a just cause, and to voice claims about the unresolved, pressing issues and distresses of individuals or communities, especially if they are affected themselves. These can create a dialogue between theory and practice, discovering what the roots causes of injustice may be and defining potential remedies.

Another problem is that Azmanova disregards the epistemological status of protesters. She gives the impression that their joint complaints either mirror a correct analysis of society and economy, or if not, that they are fighting for wrong objects. She presents protesters as incapable of voicing any knowledge about society that we did not already know as theorists; an unfortunate, top-down view. By contrast, one of the original ambitions of critical theory was to treat movement protests as seismographs for societal problems. In fact, the founders of critical theory aimed for a dialogical relation, and saw movements as an epistemological source of clues about what is going wrong in the society and the causes of social suffering. Based on protesters’ claims and complaints, critical theory asked what can be learned from them (e.g., issues, injustice, solutions, developments). Critical theorists thus seek to base their assessments of the complexity of societal issues on the insights derived from protests, and

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

propose normative remedies based on these insights. (Horkheimer 1937, 189) Recognition theory provides one way to stick to these roots. Assessing claims related to the injustice experiences of protesters is a better way to study the social harm engendered by the dynamics of capitalism, rather than embracing a form of “Marxian dialectical materialism”, as Azmanova seemingly suggests (Azmanova 2014, 357), that unilaterally focuses on the structures of domination along class lines and on capital’s exploitation of labor (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 166).

Further, Azmanova’s approach, it seems, does not actually resonate with Marx’ political views on how critical theory should relate to movement protests. To clarify, in a newspaper article of 1848 Marx rejects the notion of the purity of communist ideals. Addressing the link between theoretical critique and the fight for a new society, he declares: “... not communism is communist but the political economy, the bourgeois society”. (MEW 4, 512) This vocabulary surely appears timeworn applied to today’s world. Yet, if we take a second look at the slogan of the Indignados in 2011 “We are not against the system but the system is against us”, which Azmanova disqualifies as merely affirmative, we can see that it reflects a similar logic. Like Marx’ sentence, it contains the idea that the aim of overcoming an unjust status quo should not be seen as initiated by utopian ideals, but by problems within the status quo. Put differently, the critique of capitalism is not born out of systematic thoughts in the ivory tower. Instead, it arises because capitalism is harming its own normative promises and related expectations (e.g., freedom and equality), causing mass experiences of discontent, injustice, and other grievances. Eventually, these become an appeal to create a new society in which these desires are satisfied. In this view, critical (social) theorists should react to joint articulations of frustration and moral outrage about economic conditions and results with solidarity (Marx 1846, *The German Ideology* 372 ff) and normative advice, along with the hope that a mutual public dialog between critical theory and collective practices enables change, and that those who suffer are eventually enabled to resist the roots of suffering.

Such a close relation between theory and the practices of the outraged masses was encouraged by Marx, who positioned his theory as an “organ of movements”. (1847, 143) In addition, in their work *The Holy Family* (1845), Marx and Engels condemn the false view of an allegedly pure and progressive theoretical *critique* from intellectuals on one side, and the stupid outrage of masses on the other. (cf., 1845, 82) They criticize that such a view would separate critical theory from the agents of change, as:

... it addresses itself not to the empirical man but to the “innermost depths of the soul”; in order to be “truly apprehended” it does not act on his vulgar

body, which may live deep down in an English cellar or at the top of a French block of flats; it “stretches” “from end to end” through his idealistic intestines. (Marx and Engels 1845, 85)

Rather than saying that ignorance and false beliefs are the causes of the political failure of movements and of outraged activists—as Azmanova does—Marx and Engels argue that critical theory must address the “real sensuously perceptible head” and “real sensuously perceptible yoke” of people. (ibid., 1845, 87) They call for a theory that turns itself into an “essential activity of the human subject who is real and therefore lives and suffers in present-day society, sharing in its pains and pleasures.” (ibid., 1845, 169) Expressions of suffering and moral outrage are, for Marx, the empirical starting points for critical inquiries of society, economy, and politics. (Senf 2018, 79) By contrast, Azmanova seems to turn such a dialogical relation between critical theory and practice upside down. She seems to endorse an approach where protests and social change ought to start from the insights of peer reviewed theory, and where movement activists carefully listen to theorists to receive correct beliefs about capitalism and, in return, protest appropriately.

Hence, instead of rearticulating a Marx-inspired *critique* of capitalism that is sensitive to the varied experiences of domination caused by its economic base, Azmanova insists on what I called earlier an *interest-based approach* (3.2). She narrowly focuses on the economic aspects of social conflicts, and merely assesses whether protests rightly address capitalist roots and the assumed primary injustice of society, which is the capitalist exploitation of labor and its aim to produce surplus value that subjugates all. She thus advocates an unrealistic image of movements as homogenous collective agents with a high level of strategic ability (della Porta 2017, 459), who follow their real interest based on their socio-economic position in society. The fact that she narrowly focusses on economics and protests against class domination is also clear when she defines “xenophobia” and “hatred of strangers by neo-Nazi parties” as mere epiphenomena of the social uncertainty that has been created by global capitalism. (Azmanova 2014, 360) Yet, reducing racist uprisings to mere symptoms of the malaise of contemporary capitalism ignores both that racist cultures and related structures follow a unique logic, and also ignores the danger posed by its advocates. Moreover, this revives the false notion of primary (class) and secondary (race or gender) conflicts, as upheld by the devotees of orthodox Marxism. It is the notion that the economic bases of life are the overriding determinants of all social phenomena and that the revolutionary defeat of capitalism through massive class struggle is the sole way to guarantee real freedom for all (Lukács 1923), since the defeat of class-related injustice would solve any other issue. (Fraser

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

and Jaeggi 2018, 171) But capitalism is linked to multiple forms of domination. Instead of dismissing some protests as secondary, as expressions of false beliefs, or as merely troubled with relational justice and thus denying the diversity of complaints (Azmanova 2014, 355), we should rather enlarge our concepts of market-related struggles, give protesters the benefit of the doubt, and approach their actions as sources of knowledge that may reveal hidden structures of economic and political domination.

To be fair, Azmanova touches on important points when she argues that there are “unresolved paradoxes of democratic capitalism”, and that Honneth’s theory must be updated in that regard, (Azmanova 2014, 357) since it is not clear if recognition theory alone is sufficient to address the dynamics and effects of contemporary capitalism. She provides sensible analyses in saying that society is marked by “commodification pressure” and “asymmetrical distribution of economic risks [...] transferring risks to the state” (Azmanova 2014, 360). Further, she is sound in saying that that we witness “an extreme marketization of the economy”, a massive “recapitalization of financial institutions with public money”, and a vast increase of the “power of governing bodies” that bail out companies and nations, while the liability of companies for social effects and ability for distributive-regulation decreases. (Azmanova 2014, 361) I share the concern that Honneth’s theory must be matched with a theory of the economic causes of injustice experiences, thus providing us with a better understanding of the mechanisms, the principles, and the contradictions of capitalism, in order to be able to better assess the numerous harms and collective complains in that domain. However, including these dimensions in our critical theory does not mean that we should require protesters to address the exact causes of their social suffering and adequately define capitalism, so that they can be taken seriously and appear to be worthy of support. It is true that Western square occupation movements did not sufficiently distinguish between the marketplace’s promises and the sphere of work’s inequality and innate logic of exploitation. Nonetheless, their justifiability should be measured against whether they follow a just cause, and express claims about the unresolved, pressing issues of individuals or communities, and if their expressions about injustice sensibly relate to societal spheres and causes (e.g., rather than scapegoating minorities, or getting lost in conspiracy stories). Occupy and Indignados score positive in that regard, as they express harm related to market dynamics and economic relations that are unresolved. Built upon this positive potential, critical theorists could create a dialogue and empower protesters to focus on the systemic dimension of domination innate in the sphere of work. In contrast, Azmanova disempowers and disqualifies protesters by

requiring them to express an adequate critique and definition of capitalism.⁶⁴ Her overemphasis on systemic-economic causes of social suffering fails to address the actual grievances, complaints, wishes, and struggles of those who suffer.

In sum, Azmanova offers an unsatisfactory account of how critical theory should relate to political economy and social struggles, and to its ambition as an emancipatory tool. This becomes particularly clear when reviewing her unconvincing analysis of the Western square occupation movements, where she condemns their new type of class struggle against the current economic system. These lessons can be learned from her deficient account: a) A renewed focus on capitalism and the social harm engendered by it should not mean that we assess social movements in light of whether their vocabulary matches that used in our economic theories (e.g., whether they complain about systematic domination, capitalist exploitation, or define their efforts as class struggle), judging them worthy of support if they use the correct terms and inadequate if they do not. Such an approach expresses a too narrow concept of market-related conflicts and also mutes those collective protests against the harms of capitalism which do not correspond with standard models. b) If we take Marx' vision of a dialogical relation between critical theory and practice seriously, we should not disregard the epistemological status of movements. Beyond upgrading the framework of our recognition theory with a more differentiated view on the capitalist market economy's sub-spheres, our assessments of capitalism must also consider the joint expressions and claims of those who suffer and fight against its defects. Critical theorists must listen carefully to activists in order to grasp and conceptualize the harms and the everchanging effects on agents produced by the operative logics of capitalism.

In the next section, I will explore what an examination of Western square occupations movements could look like if we incorporate such lessons. I will focus on political theorist Jody Dean and movement theorist Donatella della Porta, who offer distinct approaches for describing the link between movement protests and the political economy. I continue to discuss the benefits and weaknesses of examining Occupy *et al.* as recognition struggles for transforming markets, instead of seeing their protest against money in politics as classic conflicts of economic group interest.

⁶⁴ I will come back to that issue in 3.6.2., discussing whether movement claims and proposals must be evaluated against the background of their institutional applicability and sustainability.

5.6 The Multitude's Struggle against Precarious Capitalism

Another attempt to bring political economy back into the critical theory examination of social movements—with a focus on Occupy Wall Street—was made by Jodi Dean (2014). Unlike the usual anarchistic interpretations of these protests that highlight their horizontality, prefigurative ethos, and leader-lessness, this American political theorist sees Occupy as expressing a conflict between “capitalism and the people”. She locates its “truth” in *class struggle* and “antagonism between the exploiters and the exploited, those who own and those who do not, the rich and the rest of us.” (Dean 2014, 383) Dean belongs to a group of thinkers that view Western square occupation movements as new kinds of class uprising. The group includes Chomsky (2012), who sees them as the struggle of a new generation of precarious youngsters, and Harvey (2012), who highlights their urban revolt and views the city as the new site of modern class conflicts that were formerly anchored in factories, as well as Hardt and Negri (2012), who see the movements as an uprising of the modern multitude of exploited and related “figures of the poor,” such as the indebted or the securitized. (Dean 2014, 383; or Gerbaudo 2014, 5) In contrast to Azmanova, they all argue that Occupy *et al.* “represented a key moment in anti-capitalist struggle” (Harrison 2016, 499). Dean understands these movements as a militant joint effort to “reject democratic institutions, break inane laws that benefit capital” and “disrupt public space”. (Dean 2014, 386) While Azmanova complains that the movements do not address the systemic injustices of capitalism, Dean shows how they criticize the wrong of extreme maldistribution (Dean 2014, 387), making clear the morally reprehensible nature of the one percent’s obscene wealth. (Dean 2014, 385) She also displays how the Occupy activists trace such issues back to “class division prior to and unremedied by democracy under capitalism”. (Dean 2014, 388f) She thus shows how Occupy *et al.* actually address systemic injustices as protesters draw attention to “the links between personal debt, municipal debt, austerity, and predatory capitalism”. (Dean 2014, 388) This is why her approach to the Western square occupation movements is more useful than those who demand Marxist “purity”. Instead of claiming that these movements only called for the “actualization of fair capitalism” (Zurn 2022, 13), or aimed at “consolidating” neoliberalism (Azmanova 2014, 352), Dean relates to Occupy *et al.*’s own ambition, examining them as a radical attempt to address the deep inequalities in our society by collectively occupying the symbols of capitalist power and class domination. (cf., Dean 2014, 397)

Positioning Western square occupation movements as a new kind of class struggle, since they unveil social divisions and shatter the ideology of national unity, corresponds

surprisingly well with the beliefs of businesspersons that observed them. For instance, Warren Buffet, one of ten world's richest people, admitted in a talk with *The New York Times*—about a year before the world economic crisis hit—that the rich had leveraged their wealth and political power to secure a favorable tax code, saying: “There’s class warfare, all right, but it’s my class, the rich class, that’s making war, and we’re winning.” (Stein 2006) Similarly, Larry Fink, head of the world’s largest asset manager, Blackrock, showed compassion towards Occupy Wall Street, according to Bloomberg: “The protesting is a statement the future is very clouded for a lot of people.” (Marcinek *et al.*, 2011) We may ask, therefore, if even rich agents address class division and related conflicts between Wall and Main Street in Western societies, does this prove that Dean is right and that we should use the same political vocabulary to describe and justify movement protests? Dean surely offers an interesting analysis of Occupy *et al.*, as she displays how their protests target the structural causes of the economic crisis through symbolically disrupting key places of capitalist accumulation, thus forcing the public to acknowledge a spatial dimension to exclusion and inequality. (Martin 2015, 181) Nonetheless, I am skeptical when it comes to adopting Dean’s vocabulary when examining these protests. Her class struggle concept contains the problematic tendency to reduce these uprisings to expressions of economic group interests. Like others that highlight a class struggle dimension in Occupy *et al.*—who examine these protests as workers’ struggles grounded in labor power (Hardt and Negri 2012, 60)—Dean is ignoring the social diversity that has characterized these movements (Gerbaudo 2014, 5). The participants in these movements rally in the *name* of the poor and the socially deprived, without necessarily being part of them, as Dean herself admits (Dean 2014, 387). These shortcomings are frequent when class struggle concepts are referenced in discourses without clarification, since it involves the deceptive image of the collective actors as a single social unit and reduces their political convictions to something based merely in assumed shared socio-economic status.

In sum, whereas Azmanova blames the Western square occupation movements for not being enough of a class struggle, Dean rightly addresses Occupy *et al.*’s new kind of class struggle against wealth-induced political inequality; but she reduces these struggles to a clash between monolithic economic blocks. Given the shortcomings and tricky tendencies of the class struggle concept and its implicit interest-based approach to protest, I believe both assessments are unconvincing and provide an unsatisfactory account of how critical theory should relate to new market-related struggles, to protesters’ epistemological status, and to its own ambition as an emancipatory tool. We must acknowledge the diversity of those we may casually label ‘the working class’ and of their protest concerns. Moreover, instead of seeing

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

the ‘market sphere’ as the major site where new kinds of class struggle emerge, we should see modern society as defined by multiple linked spheres where they are able to occur (Honneth 2015b,149). With this in mind, I will now focus on another hopeful way we can bring Marx-inspired economic thinking back into the analysis of the Western square occupation movements, as offered by the movement theorist Donatella della Porta.

In a special journal issue⁶⁵ that aims to lay the ground of a new critical (social) theory of contemporary movements—positioning the 2008 global economic crisis as a turning-point for refining concepts and theories (della Porta 2017, 429 ff)—della Porta offers an analysis of the *social class basis of the Western square occupation movements* (ibid., 2017, 454). She draws attention to the fact that although these movements emerged especially strongly where the economic crisis was met with social welfare cuts and mass layoffs, these protests were not characterized by typical labor movement tactics and motifs as led by unions and leftist parties (since these protesters made a special effort to avoid influences from any traditional political group). Instead, it is precisely the absence of the “usual” structures and protest repertoire as well as the social and political diversity of protesters which makes it necessary to examine these movements with new theories. Della Porta understands the Western square occupation movements as so called “countermovements” to austerity politics and against “a world system dominated by neoliberalism”. (cf., ibid., 2017, 458 f) They draw the public’s attention to the discrepancy, injustice, and harm produced by globalizing the neoliberal dogma⁶⁶ that human wellbeing can best be advanced by freeing individual entrepreneurial skills within societal institutions based primarily on robust private property rights, free markets, lean governments, and austere public spending. While addressing their social class basis, della Porta demonstrates that those who gathered on Puerta del Sol, Syntagma Square, or Zuccotti Park, were to a large extent from social groups that saw themselves as “the losers in neoliberal developments” such as precarious workers, unemployed, pensioners, indebted youths, or those “impoverished by the crash of the banking system”. (ibid., 2017, 455) Thus, protests were organized by those who suffered most from neoliberal processes, outcomes, and resulting economic crises. Della Porta therefore describes the protests as a collective uprising of “the multitude of the precariat”, those hardest hit by austerity policies (e.g., through a loss of fundamental welfare rights, healthcare, and housing; burdened by overwhelming loans or

⁶⁵ Della Porta, Donatella. 2017. “Political economy and social movement studies”, Special Issue: “Refocusing the Analysis of Mobilizations: Bringing Capitalism in Social Movement Research”, In: *Anthropological Theory* 17.4.

⁶⁶ *Neoliberalism* is here the view that market-economy should be freed from most social constraints. (Vallier 2021)

stuck in underpaid and unprotected wage labor, but all united by believing that their treatment by society was unjust). (della Porta 2017, 460 f.)

These reflections on the class basis and political-economic dimension of the Western square occupation movements cause della Porta to present them as “countermovements of those marginalized and betrayed by neoliberalism” in defense of social justice as well as against the neoliberal marketization of democracy and social welfare. Applying Polanyi’s famous concept of double movement from *The Great Transformation* (Polanyi 1957), she portrays these protests as a “moral reaction towards the cynical immorality of capitalism”. (della Porta 2017, 462) She thus adopts Polanyi’s idea that social changes in modern society are accompanied by a conflictive interactional dynamic between the people’s need for social protection and the capitalist market economy’s intrinsic tendency to deregulate and to remove obstacles to profit-making. (ibid., 2017, 461) Following that line of thought, della Porta sees the Western square occupation movements as a defensive reaction against neoliberalism’s attacks against all forms of solidarity, redistribution, and other regulations that put checks on capital accumulation: for example, union power, wealth taxation, trade limitations, public property, welfare benefits, labor rights, or price controls. Or, using the words employed by Polanyi: the evolution of market forces and its action against restraints of free trade was met by a ‘counter-movement’ that aims to intervene in and socially re-embed the market. (Polanyi 1957, 130 ff)

In the context of the social history of capitalism, della Porta here specifies that while the alter-globalization movements have protested against neoliberal capitalism’s global expansion, the Western square occupation movements should rather be seen as a response to the crisis of neoliberal capitalism. (della Porta 2017, 466) While she assumes that capitalist transformations and related structural conditions shape the forms and opportunities of expressing discontent, della Porta contends that it was no surprise when the protests were very fragmented. She draws attention to the fact that these protests dealt with hollowed-out social welfare systems, weakened unions, and the related lack of effective channels for political claim-making (as well as distrust towards labor parties that were seen as obeying neoliberalism),⁶⁷ with the limited power of nation-states in a global economy (whose spending is fully dependent on financial markets), and with precarious citizens whose everyday life was preoccupied with social uncertainty rather than rebellion. (della Porta 2017, 466 f) In short, the counter-struggles of Western square occupation movements could be seen

⁶⁷ On that view, Western square occupations, and the creation of networks of citizens via media platforms should be seen as a rational attempt of re-empowerment, building a missing collective agency, though its political effectiveness is debatable.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

as triggered by, and at the same time constrained by, the flaws and harms engendered by a neoliberal global economy in crisis. Della Porta also shows the influence of economic conditions on protests: where daily life, welfare systems, and job markets were most disrupted by the financial crises and related austerity politics, protests were often more tense and became more like traditional mass movements (e.g., Occupy in the US, or Indignados in Spain and Greece). On the other hand, in nations with a stronger social system (e.g., Portugal, Iceland), more foreign investment (e.g., Ireland), or less private debt (e.g., Italy), protests were less troublesome. (della Porta 2017, 464)

What conclusion should we draw from della Porta's examination of the Western square occupation movements as counter-struggles of those marginalized and harmed by the neoliberal transformation of the market economy? Since the ambition is to bring political economy back into a critical theorization of contemporary movement protest, I suggest the following: a) We should *highlight the social class-basis* of protesters (here the multitude of the precarious; folks threatened in their social status by austerity and neoliberal politics), instead of simply dividing society into colliding monolithic blocks that fight over stakes in resources. b) Della Porta urges us to *pay attention to the socioeconomic surroundings* of protest (here, neoliberalism at its crisis-ridden peak in the form of an unregulated, financialized, global economy), and how these affect movements' *opportunities to rise up and mobilize*, as well as the forms these protests take (here the lack of welfare security, of sufficient collective networks, and of the political channels to express grievances, as well as trends of hyper-individualization and the threat of unemployment that made protests fragile and disordered). c) We should examine movement protests as *defensive reactions* triggered by harm engendered by an unregulated economy and capitalism's urge to undo societal restraints. d) Finally, instead of seeking for class-conscious, uniform collective actors with high-level strategic abilities, and protesters motivated by insights into capitalism's operative logics, we should see movement protests as driven by people's *claims and needs for social protection* in the face of a disruption of their daily lives and future prospects.

These four aspects hint at how we might integrate Marxian-inspired reflections on the political economy into a critical theorization of Western square occupation movements, without dogmatically reducing these protests to manifestations of socio-economic interest, and without seeking for similarities with the old labor movement. Using the Polanyian framing suggested by della Porta, Occupy and Indignados can be seen as the joint counter-reactions of a multitude of the precarious against the capitalist market economy's tendency to hollow out all forms of solidarity, and as struggles for socially embedding this sphere.

Clearly, this analysis resonates well with my argument that we should see Western square occupation movements as morally guided protests for transforming the normative order of the ‘market sphere’. Instead of seeing them as “a clash between the rich and the rest”, as argued by Dean, or accusing them of being insufficiently anti-capitalist, as suggested by Azmanova, della Porta presents these *protests as a reaction to severe economic deregulation and social uncertainty*, applying Polanyi’s idea of modern society’s innate conflict between free-marketers and social protectionists. The strength of such an approach is that it may clarify under what conditions latent (class) conflicts become manifest, showing that agents must see themselves as harmed in their accustomed expectations for social protection before they are motivated to rise up and jointly defend their social status, united in their experience of unjust treatment. In fact, as I noted in the opening to this section, della Porta sees a morally guided conflict interaction underlying the Western square occupation movements. She reveals them as a collective reaction to the market sphere’s undermining of its own promises to offer equal opportunity for esteem as well as the conditions necessary to satisfy needs, and as counter-struggles against this sphere’s negative effect on other spheres. She emphasizes that modern capitalist market economies build upon an unfair economic game that shields wealth, that demoralizes ordinary people, and that weakens people’s chances to meaningfully contribute to a common good. (della Porta 2017)

Besides these similarities, my point is that recognition theory should be complemented with an analysis based on social class, as offered by della Porta. Recognition theory must take studies on market-economy transformations, on accumulation regimes, or on market ideologies seriously in order to make better sense of new movement activities, as such movements may be joint reactions to these processes. Based on such studies, recognition theory should be used as a form of theorizing and conceptualizing the harm done to social relations by market dynamics and economic processes. Recognition theorists should examine how social harm is experienced, assessed, and responded to by taking up the claims and injustice expressions of the marginalized and betrayed who resist these processes. Such a complementary approach provides a promising language to detect and make sense of these new types of class struggle against wealth-induced political inequality, understanding them not only as pushing back against the capitalist-market economies’ tendency to destabilize coexistence, but as fighting for appropriate intersubjective treatment and social entitlements in market relations: fighting for equal opportunity for merit-based esteem and an economy that must cover basic material and social needs.

However, I wish to highlight a fine distinction between della Porta's view and my own assessment of the Western square occupation movements, which is based on recognition theory. Whereas I have argued that Occupy and Indignados' fight against the market sphere's harmful imbalances should be understood as a form of transformative collective action, della Porta seems to suggest that these protests are primarily defensive. In her view, they push back against the market's invasion of the realm of welfare protection, pushing the market's logic back into its rightful place. She studies them as movements of crisis that are "weaker, (...) radical, pessimistic" (della Porta 2017, 467). But I argue that these protests are going beyond mere defensive claims for a recovery of old rights and previous welfare protections. Occupy *et al.* aim to redesign the sphere of the market-economy and its relationships with democracy and social rights. They express that the current form of market economy is deeply intertwined with injustice, as expressed in the call for action of Blockupy, the German square occupation movement:

"...We are part of the international movements who have been resisting the attacks on our life and our future, fight for social rights and alternatives, develop new forms of organization and solidararian economy for years. We oppose the authoritarian execution of austerity-measures, which stand in blatant contradiction to democratic principles, and stand up for the democratization of all aspects of life. [...] Let's practice our solidarity against the politics of austerity terror! Let us make clear: We will not permit the crisis continuously being loaded on the backs of wage-related employees, unemployed, retirees, precarious, students, refugees, and many others – neither here nor anywhere else. ..." (Blockupy 2013)⁶⁸

Protesters in these movements want to create new forms of solidarity, collective agency, and public control, with the goal of changing the market economy's role in society. They should be seen as transformation struggles that proactively try to alter the rules of the sphere. I wish to further illuminate this dimension in the next section through the concept of *boundary struggle*.

5.7 *Boundary Struggles and Transforming Markets*

In *Capitalism* (2018), contemporary critical theorists Nancy Fraser and Rahel Jaeggi offer an illuminating philosophical dialog on the key aspects of a *renewed critique of the crisis of capitalism*. Discarding a mechanistic view of society and conflict, they suggest that we should see capitalist society not only as an economic system but as an institutionalized social order

⁶⁸ See Blockupy's full call for action "Blockupy Frankfurt! Resistance in the Heart of the European Crisis Regime May 31 and June 1, 2013" here: <http://blockupy.org/en/call-for-action/> (last accessed August 21, 2022).

that encompasses distinct domains, and that conflict occurs at points where the economy hits polity, where the sphere of production hits that of reproduction, and where the human society hits non-human nature. (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 52—54) These inner institutional boundaries of capitalist society are seen as the sites and stakes of conflicts, and these conflicts are boundary struggles. Fraser and Jaeggi claim that this expanded concept of struggle better complies with the “broader account of capitalism”. (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 165 ff) When applying such a concept, non-economic struggles are no longer ignored as inferior, merely relational, or super-structural, since the capitalist society is understood as built on the gendered division between wage-based production and unpaid social reproduction, on an unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, as well as being historically founded on a colonialist and racist “primitive accumulation of capital” (Marx 1867, *Capital*, 741-791) that still badly affects human coexistence. (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 187) They claim that the concept of *boundary struggle* allows us to examine the struggles and wishes of our age in a deeper, multidimensional, and more critical way (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 168). While it allows us to view race and gender-based domination as equally linked to capitalism just as class-based domination is, this approach also encourages us to examine struggles as joint reactions to a functional crisis among spheres in society, such as when market processes damage the ecological, civic, or political base of societal coexistence. (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 171)

One may wonder if Fraser and Jaeggi provide a better explanatory model than Honneth does for why people are motivated to protest. Functional tensions among institutions alone seem insufficient to explain why people rise up, as these issues can remain unnoticed or can be ignored. Instead, collective resistance also requires the social experience and “active” acknowledgement of institutional dysfunctionality—as Marx already noted (MEGA² I/2:178), and as is also reflected in recognition theory. But more importantly, Fraser and Jaeggi provide a fresh look at how we could bring political economy back into our critical theorizations of movements while avoiding economic determinism. (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 7) In particular, they ascribe to social movement protests the power to reshape institutions and redraw lines between economy and polity, and between the state and civil society. (ibid., 2018, 173) Their model illustrates that at boundaries where, for instance, the market meets social and political life, “social actors periodically mobilize to contest or defend the institutional map of capitalist society—and sometimes they succeed in redrawing it” (ibid., 2018, 69). Also, they make a useful distinction between boundary struggles that are defensive or offensive, and affirmative or transformative. (ibid., 2018, 175) They define *transformative boundary struggles* as not

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

just questioning the location but the entire existence of a particular sphere, and as aiming to change its character and rules, “if not abolish the boundary altogether”, such as when the alter-globalization movements resisted neoliberalism’s expansion and tried to build an alternative, global civil society. (cf., Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 174) Besides stressing the ways these social movements are able to transform spheres, and in contrast to Azmanova (see 5.5), Fraser and Jaeggi appreciate protesters’ political and epistemological agency. This is made clear when they argue that critical theory must certainly suggest normative remedies, but the ultimate decisions of how to redraw lines between spheres and to design “specific features of a good society” should be left to the imaginations, deliberations, and desires of protesters. (ibid., 2018, 172)

Based on these promising critical theorizations, applying Fraser’s and Jaeggi’s concept of transformative boundary struggle to Occupy *et al.* also can strengthen my own examination of these movements. Their theorizations resonate with my argument that the Western square occupation movements are triggered by imbalances of the market-economy. Or, in the words of Fraser and Jaeggi, I have shown that these struggles emerged where the economy hit political life; where the principle of profitability weakens solidarity and democracy’s ethics of equality (i.e., external imbalances). Moreover, these struggles emerged where the market sphere eroded its own promises to provide all citizens with equal opportunities for merit-based esteem and conditions that satisfy needs, harming people’s self-esteem (i.e., internal imbalances). These theorizations are in harmony with my claim that we should view Occupy *et al.*’s activities as trying to go beyond the neoliberal *status quo*. Fraser and Jaeggi share the idea that such protests cause us to consider new alternatives that can transform the harmful institutional divisions of the capitalist society among the polity, market economy, and democracy—without undoing the freedom of the ‘market sphere’ altogether, as in many state-planned economies—through transnational social or labor rights, participatory budgeting, and new forms of market socialism. (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 173; Elson 1988; Miller 2020)

In light of these similarities, I argue that a recognition theoretical examination of the Western square occupation movements should both be *complemented with an analysis of the social class of protesters*, as provided by della Porta, and also with *the concept of transformative boundary struggles*, as provided by Fraser and Jaeggi, to better identify and evaluate such new types of class struggle against current, wealth-induced political inequality. When these three forms of analysis are used together, we can see Occupy and Indignados both as *defensive*, joint counter-reactions of the multitude of the precarious against economic

deregulations, as well as *proactive struggles that aim to reorder* the normative boundaries between economy, democracy, and polity.⁶⁹

The fact that the protests of the Western square occupation movements went beyond mere defensive claims for a recovery of old rights and social protection becomes particularly clear when we look at the protesters' demands and actions: As mentioned earlier (3.5), those in the Occupy encampments experimented with need-based forms of a solidarity economy, currency-free exchange, and direct democratic decision-making in all collective affairs. This illustrates that they aimed for a deep democratization of all spheres of coexistence, particularly in economic relations. Similarly, most of Occupy and Indignados' unofficial demands mirror the desire for a normative transformation of the market-economy: the demand for a guaranteed income independent of employment; for a large-scale forgiveness of public and private debt; for limits on corporate influence over political campaigns by removing corporations' legal status as private agents; for health care as a universal right; for free secondary education; and for stricter regulations of the finance industry. (Adbusters 2011 b; or *Democracia Real Ya* 2011) From a European point of view, these demands might appear like standard social-democratic policy goals. However, from a US perspective, they seem like a revolution of the connection between the market sphere and the polity. Most of the goods demanded (e.g., education, social welfare, health care) are broadly treated as commodities that must be purchased and invested in by agents, rather than as universal rights that must be equally allocated to all citizens. Changing the normative rules of how these goods are allocated in society, as desired by Occupy and Indignados, would thus truly socially embed markets, change the business models of entire industries, and even make some obsolete. These changes would shift the normative boundaries where profit logic is permitted to prevail.

Besides being useful for explicating this transformative dimension in the Western square occupation movements, using insights from political economy and the concept of boundary struggle as we apply recognition theory also helps us see how socioeconomic conditions affect a movement's mobilization, opportunities to rise, and forms of protest. Using these techniques, we can see that the Occupy and Indignados' protest *was itself precarious*, fragile, and incapable of efficiently maintaining the necessary political structures to achieve the desired change (della Porta 2017, 463). But instead of downplaying the influence of these protests and blaming them for not raising radical claims on the market and

⁶⁹ Unfortunately, Fraser herself is not making use of this promising concept of *transformative boundary struggles*, to identify and evaluate Occupy *et al.* as a new types of class struggle against current wealth-induced political inequality. In fact, she is even criticizing the Western square occupation movements for falling short on falling short on what justified protest should look like. I think she is wrong, and I will thus criticize her arguments in the following chapter in section 6.2.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

society (as Azmanova did), we must recognize that they dealt with weaker mobilization resources than their predecessors in the old labor union uprisings and alter-globalization protests. When we look at how neoliberalism has shaken social institutions and laborer bulwarks over the last decades, we must adjust our elevated expectations and concepts regarding market-related political resilience, since contemporary class struggles face precarious opportunity structures for sustained resistance. In light of these circumstances, and since the Western square occupation movements were often carried out by labor-market outsiders, precarious young people, and vulnerable citizens who were dealing with daily life obstacles “in the ruins of neoliberalism” (Brown 2019), I believe their forms of protest were fairly appropriate. Despite the obvious lack of sufficient organizational political power, by occupying the centers of finance-driven capital accumulation the victims of social deregulation managed to symbolically disrupt a crisis-ripped economic system. They rightly aimed to expose the irrational and unsustainable ways that our societies produce wealth and fund the common good. By occupying central squares, the protesters exposed the responsibilities of market agents (e.g., Wall Street banks, rating agencies, and insurance firms) for societal miseries, and began a public learning process to build the missing collective consciousness and agency necessary to set up ties of solidarity for the future political changes they desired. Moreover, we may say that, through the disruption of public space and the collective performance of direct democracy on occupied squares, these movements symbolically blocked an increasingly complex and unfair socio-economic machinery that had grown completely out of hand.

When we consider the insight that socio-economic surroundings affect forms of protest, we can also argue that these social movements turned the new tools of digital labor and media communication against neoliberal digital capitalism. Their so-called ‘Facebook Revolution’ aimed to overcome trends of political individualization and resisted a new phase of capitalist expansion—that is, exploiting private data on a mass scale for the marketization of all forms of life through tech companies (Harisson 2014, 505). Such market processes have pulverized older industries, metastasized private and public debt, promoted austerity policies, and demolished the previous working-class living standards in most Western societies (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 192), and it is thus no surprise that present-day market related struggles no longer have the same joint political resilience as earlier labor uprisings.

If, as we examine social movements using recognition theory, we are to incorporate each movement’s economic surroundings and integrate an analysis of protesters based on social class along with the concept of boundary struggle, we certainly must have more and

better empirical information. But making use of additional research from other fields is worth it. It offers us a valuable integrative framework for better identifying and assessing new kinds of class struggle such as the Western square occupation movements. As outlined above, it helps us to be aware of the ways that current and future protests must deal with new kinds of economic obstacles such as de-solidarization, digitalization, severe labor market flexibility, and precarity. Further, using this array of tools honors Marx' ambition to include political economy into our conceptualizations and assessments, and pursue a dialog between critical theory and new protest practices. Instead of repeating Azmanova's mistake by expecting that market-related protests voice the exact economic causes of social injustice—thereby ignoring protesters' epistemological and political agency, and their function as seismographs of societal issues—my proposed approach helps to pursue recognition theory's initial goal of spotting those “normative conflicts connected to society's class structure that are veiled by the integration façade of late-capitalism”. (Honneth 2000, 123 ff) This integrative approach helps us to “learn from the streets” (Celikates 2015a) and listen to protesters' claims as we seek to grasp the everchanging effects and harms people can suffer from in the market sphere. Thus, we are able to see the boundary struggles and wishes for social transformation contained in joint actions like occupying squares and trying to manage a diverse community through assembly-based democracy. By including insights and concepts from political economy, we also meet recognition theory's initial goal of avoiding a nostalgic looking-back at the fights of the old labor movement by acknowledging that such struggles will always take new political forms along with the everchanging market economy, and, thus, that these struggles must be always newly conceptualized.⁷⁰

In sum, expanding recognition theory with approaches and concepts from political economy offers a promising language to make sense of the Western square occupation movements. In that way, Honneth himself could have examined Occupy and Indignados, *et al.* as a new kind of class struggle against wealth-induced political inequality, rather than anchoring his expectations in transnational labor movements alone and falsely asserting that “...nowhere do we find a collective articulation of interests...” (Honneth 2014, 247). Further, instead of reducing the Western square occupations movements to mere manifestations of economic interest, or to a clash between the rich and the rest, the strength of such an expanded recognition theory lies in the tools it gives us to conceptualize the harm to social and political relations induced by market processes, and how individuals and communities experience,

⁷⁰ Honneth expresses this theoretical goal in an interesting interview with Habermas: “Dialektik der Rationalisierung”, In: Habermas, Jürgen. 1985. *Die Neue Unübersichtlichkeit, Kleine Politische Schriften V*, Frankfurt/Main.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

criticize, and respond to these harms. By taking up normative claims about injustice expressed by the victims who, betrayed and marginalized by the unregulated economy, yet resist market processes, this integrated recognition theory can show under what conditions a latent class conflict becomes manifest, illuminating the ways that social actors must see themselves as harmed in their accustomed expectations for protection and equal respect, fueling their motivations to jointly rise up.

Through such an integrative lens, we are able to see these protesters on the one hand as jointly fighting over appropriate intersubjective treatment and social entitlements in economic relations, as well as struggling to gain equal opportunity for esteem and an economy that covers basic needs of all. In particular, we are able to understand Occupy et al. as movements at a time when economic inequality and the related, unequal social vulnerability among citizens is not yet properly recognized by society as systemically harming citizen's equal status in democratic procedures, which can be experienced as a refusal by the society at large to provide appropriate conditions and guarantees for equal respect in political agency regardless of economic status, thus failing to protect the non-affluent from domination by the wealthy.

On the other hand, an integration of recognition theory with a social-class-based analysis of protesters and the conceptual tool of boundary struggles allows us to see the Western square occupation movements from another angle: as collective counter-reactions by a multitude of the precarious against the neoliberal markets' tendency to hollow out all forms of solidarity and democratic equality, and thus as transformational struggles for reordering the market sphere by socially embedding it. This picks up on Polanyi's concept of society's immanent boundary struggle between free-marketers and social protectionists; a struggle that emerges where the capitalist-market economy hits the polity, social welfare, and democracy.

However, what remains still under-examined—and was, in fact, unaddressed by Occupy and Indignados *et al.*—is the question: how should we socially embed both the 'marketplace' as well as the 'sphere of work'? How can we positively transform the latter sphere, which is built on economic inequality between groups for the sake of profit-seeking labor exploitation? The Western square occupation movements rightly address the structural disrespect inherent in liberal democracies that come with capitalist-market economies, but they do not say how to remedy the issue, nor that altering the sphere of work should be a crucial part of the solution. Rather than expressing clear answers, their experimental practices and morally led claims for more political freedom through more economic justice inspire us to think broadly about the normative transformation of the market-economy towards social

protection, democratization, public ownership, worker's individual autonomy, and equality—changes that go beyond welfare rights and redistribution. Though they do not say whether proper respect requires full economic equality between agents, they shift our attention and inspire us to reassess the structural conditions, the deeper economic and related power inequalities that underpin our market economy and its logic of extraction of surplus-value. (Renault 2016, 188) Their struggle inspires us to understand that capitalism is in a permanent crisis, and that truly, normatively transforming and embedding the market economy means to remove, not just mitigate, the economic inequality enshrined in its institutional setting if we aim to abolish wealth-induced political inequality. Yet, they also remind us that this is a task of long-term joint action and experimental solution-finding, and not only critical thought and developing the best, clearest definition of capitalism.

To conclude, in this chapter I have examined a third axis along which the Western square occupation movements expressed recognition-led claims. I have argued that these movements should be viewed as struggles for recognition when they articulated that the market-economy's principles of profit and merit-based esteem are inadequate for securing the common good or for satisfying basic social and material needs, and that these principles promote domination by the wealthy and structurally undermine democratic equality. I showed that these protests shifted the public's attention towards wealth-induced political inequality that damages respect-recognition, and towards an understanding of a rigged market game that harms esteem-recognition.

Another key point of my examination of the Western square occupation movements is that they both expressed negative claims about injustice in the market-economy, and made a positive demand for its normative renewal to remedy the related harms. They struggled for a transformation of this sphere's hegemonic normative principles. I argued that they urge us to a) guarantee universal social respect through unconditional economic rights needed to offer minimal resources to sustain equal political agency for all, and b) drastically redistribute wealth to rebalance political power in society. They should thus be viewed as aiming to shift normative boundaries between spheres, as they demanded that the democratic state's principles of social protection, respect for equal status, public control, and planning must restrict the market sphere in order to actualize political equality, meritocracy, and the satisfaction of basic needs.

I favor this approach over those that view these movement protests as expressions of a clash between two monolithic blocks of the rich and poor. Instead of advocating an unrealistic image of class-conscious collective actors with high-level strategic abilities, I argued that we

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

should understand Western square occupation movements as morally guided struggles in which those that rose up were marginalized and betrayed by the 'market sphere' and the norms therein; thus, these protests aimed to fundamentally transform the boundaries between the economy, democracy, and polity.

Chapter 6

Square Occupation Movements' Justified Struggle

“The cry of the poor is not always just, but if you don't listen to it, you will never know what justice is.”

—Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*

In the previous chapters, I have argued that we should examine the Western square occupation movements as struggles for recognition, reconstructing three axes along which they express collective normative claims 1) *as correction struggles for defending certified recognition* concerning previously assured social welfare rights and accustomed levels of esteem; 2) *as inclusion struggles for extending and deepening society's recognition* for equal political participation and agency in democratic decision making beyond mere representation, and finally; 3) *as transformation struggles for reordering the recognition rules* of the market economy, in circumstances where the principles of profitability and merit-based esteem are working against political equality, are insufficient for securing the common good and for satisfying basic needs, and therefore should be limited (or replaced) by principles of social protection, public control, universal social respect, and democratic planning.

My aim was to show that such a conceptualization of the Occupy *et al.* uprisings offers a promising vocabulary to make sense of the meaning of their new movement practices and slogans against the fabric of neoliberal markets, global policy making, and insufficiently realized democracy. It overcomes those political theorizations which reduce these protests to expressions of clashing economic group interests and wholesale rejections of representative politics and democratic institutions, or which employ the binary image of a populist uprising against elites. Such theories are unsatisfactory; they are phenomenologically inaccurate, confusing, and one-sided, and they also offer very limited political usefulness when trying to convince the public about the justifiable cause and virtue of Occupy *et al.*'s resistance. (cf., Delmas 2018, 23) Instead, we can examine the Western square occupation movements in a deeper way using the approaches provided by recognition theory. This allows us to be faithful to protesters' self-understanding and collective normative claims, revealed in the wide range of what they aim at. To illustrate, consider once again the statement of the general assembly (GA) of the Occupy Wall Street (OWC) offshoot in Ithaca, New York State:

We will not remain passive as formerly democratic institutions become the means of enforcing the will of the 1% of the population who control the

magnitude of American wealth. Occupy Wall Street is an exercise in Direct Democracy. Since we can no longer trust our elected representatives to represent us rather than their large donors, we are creating a microcosm of what democracy really looks like. We do this to inspire one another to speak up. It is a reminder to our representatives and the moneyed interests that direct them: We the people still know our power. We feel we can no longer make our voices heard as we watch our votes for change usher in the same old power structure time and time again. This is the simplest, most effective democratic exercise we have left to employ, . . . (OWC Ithaca, GA 2011c, 1)

This self-description contains most of the normative themes which I aimed at revealing through the application of recognition theory. As this analysis shows, these movements can be seen as *defensive counterreactions* to social disenfranchisement and insecurity induced by a politics of economic inequality and austerity. In fact, protesters respond to the outrageous power of money in politics (“the will of the 1%”) at the expense of non-affluent agents with *egalitarian demands* for the democratization of all social spheres. Furthermore, the Ithaca statement shows how those who feel marginalized and betrayed start creating *countercultural spaces* of alternative recognition (“a microcosm”) in order to partially enjoy the social regard that is denied to them in mainstream society, and to bring about social change through experimental practices. Lastly, they address a deep structural tension between democracy and capitalism (“We will not remain passive as [...] democratic institutions become the means of enforcing the will of the 1%”), and shift public attention towards the issue that the realization of democracy depends upon social and democratic *transformations of the market economy* as well as more equal distribution of wealth and income.

Rather than portraying Occupy *et al.* as voicing either radical antagonism (e.g., Leroy 2019) or as affirming the status quo (e.g., Azmanova 2014), an approach based on recognition theory exposes the multifaceted meaning of their claims and practices. It frees these social movements from one-sided theorizations, and displays their defensive, reformist and transformative aims. Additionally, it shows how related modes of collective social critique (i.e., internal, and immanent critique) overlap, mutually influence, and complement each other. When looking at them from the lens of recognition theory, the movements express internal social critique when defending rights; they also articulate immanent critique when calling for the democratization of society and transformation of markets. They claim recognition along multiple axes, such as for preserving a certified normative status of protection and esteem, for deepening egalitarian inclusion in modern democracy, and for altering the market economy’s principles to tackle wealth-induced inequality.

Clearly, this conceptualization of square occupation movements as recognition

struggles contains both explanatory as well as evaluative elements. I have presented their collective efforts as reasonable and sensible responses to societal problems and shared experiences of injustice. Put differently, there is reason in revolt. Through this application of recognition theory, we find implicit ideas and arguments as to why we should support these movements when they defend social achievements, deepen political equality, and protect democracy against utilitarian market logic. In the next sections, I wish to examine these evaluative ideas and arguments in detail. I will argue that we should evaluate the Western square occupation movements as a form of justifiable resistance against societal injustice, and that we should do so by applying recognition theory's evaluative approach.

6.1 Evaluating Occupy et al.'s Justifiability

Chapter 2 of this thesis suggests (2.4) that we should assess movements' justifiability with regard to the values on which they are founded. Instead of judging them only with regard to the appropriateness or the societal impact of their practices, we should start by focusing on the values underlying their normative claims. In that context, egalitarian inclusion into current institutions of recognition, and facilitating autonomy and strengthening individualization therein are suitable criteria for identifying well-founded protest claims. On that view, struggles are seen as justified when they aim to lessen discrimination and exclusion and acknowledge the distinctiveness of individuals across more dimensions of their personalities. Struggles are good if they strive to improve the chances for each individual to identify with skills and develop a positive self-relation, and thereby accomplish greater freedom for all through enhanced recognition within institutions and as part of states of affairs. (see 2.2.3)

Applying these criteria to the Western square occupation movements, we can draw at least three conclusions: 1) We should evaluate their struggles as justified insofar as they aim to *defend current levels of social status respect as well as wage-based esteem*. Implicit in the preceding chapters is the notion that we should relate positively to Occupy *et al.* protesters as they attempt to maintain their previous social welfare achievements and currently provided material resources. These "tidemarks" are necessary for all people to maintain at least their existing levels of autonomy and opportunities to become active members of society, and the protesters seek to strengthen and restore them. Therefore, protesters are justified since they modestly *aim to not be weakened in their societal status in order to build self-respect and esteem*. 2) We should evaluate Western occupation movement protests as justified when they aim to lessen exclusion in political decision-making processes, and work *for increased*

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

egalitarian inclusion of each individual in democracy. The protesters called for the further realization of universal entitlements and criticized unfair, wealth-induced privileges within social institutions that purported to promote equal political agency for all. Put differently, *they turned the validity surplus of democracy's underlying universal norms against its deficient factual realizations* (e.g., money in politics, technocracy) and called for the democratization of democracy. They went beyond mere voting rights and political representation, towards facilitating grassroots activism, community engagement and active involvement of people in decision-making processes. Therefore, they were justified as they aim at *broadening the recognition of each individual's capability for political agency.* 3) Finally, the Western square occupation movements were justified since they fought for a transformation of the normative principles of the market in order to *actualize assured claims of universal respect-recognition* for equal autonomy in societal coexistence. They were justified since they shifted the public's attention towards deep normative and structural tensions and related harms in democratic capitalism. They drew attention to the fact that the freedom of citizens is not properly fulfilled merely through equally available legal rights. Instead, they said that individual autonomy can only be properly protected and sustained, and thus social freedom can only be achieved, by equipping the market economy with a more egalitarian scheme of distribution of wealth that reduces negative effects on politics, by embedding this sphere in structures of robust social protection for all, and by making the market game democratically controlled.

Thus, the Western square occupation movements were justifiable since they strove to maintain existing respect for each individual's social status and wage-based esteem; as they aimed to lessen political exclusion and extend the chances of persons to identify as actors that have an equal political voice in coexistence, and as they tried to strengthen and facilitate autonomy in society through overcoming the tension between capitalist inequality and democratic equality. As Occupy *et al.* aimed to improve modern-day recognition relations and states of affairs ("the moral level of our social integration"), and thus the chances of people to identify with skills and thereby achieve greater autonomy in coexistence, their fight against deprivation, disenfranchisement, exclusion, and wealth-induced inequality should be seen as a good and justifiable form of political resistance that deserves public support.

However, this application of recognition theory's evaluative approach produces another question: is it enough to show that protesters have good intentions and follow right values to conclude that the Western square occupation movements are justified and worthy of support? As a way to respond to these questions, in the following subsections I will discuss arguments that offer a criticism of these movements. First, we will look at Nancy Fraser's argument that

Occupy *et al.* should not be seen as emancipatory. Then, we will examine political scientist John Ehrenberg's argument that Occupy *et al.* must be seen as a failure, since they refused to organize, engage in public debates, or challenge authority. We also will look at the common view that these movements were incoherent and counter-productive. Finally, we will focus on those that argue that the square occupations were unjustified and thus reject these movements, or criticize them for being anti-Semitic, too white, and ignorant of identity politics.

6.2 Fraser's Criteria for (Non-)Emancipatory Movements

In her political philosophy debate with Jaeggi on a renewed critique of capitalism (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018), the critical theorist Nancy Fraser provides an alternative basis for evaluating the emancipatory potential of social movements with regard to their claims. She suggests three normative criteria for separating "emancipatory from non-emancipatory movement claims": 1) functional sustainability, 2) democracy, and 3) non-domination. (ibid., 2018, 178) The *first* criterion requires—as I read it—that claims and proposals must be able to become institutions within the society (they should not trigger chaos, constant turmoil, or societal instability). The *second* criterion requires that claims and proposals must remain open and changeable, such that both participants and citizens are continuously able to deliberate and reflect on them (contra inner and outer authoritarianism). The *third* criterion rules out any claim and proposal articulated by social movements that aims at reinforcing, exacerbating, or institutionalizing the subordination of social actors (contra class-, race- and gender-based domination). In Fraser's view, these criteria provide a favorable toolkit to separate good from bad claims. To be acceptable, a social movement's claims and proposals must satisfy all three criteria.⁷¹

When applying this normative framework to the Occupy *et al.* uprisings, Fraser sketches a grim picture. She portrays them as mere neo-anarchist movements that fall short on all three criteria. (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 180) Regarding the functionality criterion, she says that their encampments and constant political meetings, intended to create better forms of democracy, are institutionally inapplicable to complex societies and unsustainable, given their chaotic social structures, the participant burn-out factor, big size and the overall inefficiency of leaderless and consensus-based decision-making processes. They would also fall short on the non-domination criterion, as their form of organizing benefits those with time and resources to engage in these practices (e.g., no children, no full-time work, and a certain educational

⁷¹ Unfortunately, Fraser is not making use of the promising concept of *transformative boundary struggles*, as provided by Fraser and Jaeggi (see 5.7), to evaluate Occupy *et al.*, as a new types of struggle against wealth-induced political inequality.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

level) and disadvantages those that cannot commit to this type of activism or decision-making. This is why Fraser argues that Occupy *et al.* also fall short on the democracy criterion, as they could not properly integrate the interest of those that cannot be at squares. Their assembly-based democracies demand presence and would therefore trigger broad democratic exclusion along the axis of time, commitment, and personal engagement.

What should we think about Fraser's normative criteria and their proposed application to the Western square occupation movements and Occupy Wall Street in particular? Does she provide a better normative framework than the one that can be found in recognition theory? In response, we should examine her criteria separately.

Let us begin with the *functionality criterion*. Is it convincing to contend that movement claims and political proposals must be evaluated against the background of their institutional applicability and sustainability? I disagree. This view implies that social movements are only justified if they engage in classic policy-making and propose suitable remedies for unresolved societal problems and injustices (e.g., new laws). Although it would be desirable for social movements to address problems and at the same time offer measures to fix them (which they indeed often try to do), it is nevertheless wrong to argue that this should be their main task. Such a requirement can too easily be used to delegitimize movements, by publicly framing activists as criminals who only want to create unrest, as naïve people who do not comprehend politics and whose proposals are unrealistic to implement, or as dreamers who falsely believe in the possibility of harmonious coexistence. The functionality criterion can be unfairly used as a way to overlook protesters' negative claims about injustices by overstating their positive claims about how to remedy issues and disqualifying those remedies as impractical.

Further, if we look at recognition theory's notion that social movements are built upon victimhood and involve networks of those that share experiences of injustice, demanding that movements are only justified if their proposals are institutionally sustainable could be seen as an additional injustice against those that try to raise their voices and shift the public's attention towards ignored issues that must be politically addressed. Such a requirement can cause epistemic injustice, as it can silence social critique with the excuse that the proposed remedies are insufficient. This deprives protesters of their agency to publicly articulate reasonable grievances. The functionality criterion can put protesters in a vicious circle, where they fight both against the injustice they have experienced and against the public's impression that they are not serious and knowledgeable political actors. By wrongly claiming that the main task of *protesters* is to engage in sustainable policy making, this criterion displays little appreciation for two crucial social functions of movements and threatens their exercise: to

offer communal space for the victims of injustice to gain political power and self-confidence, and an epistemic function to alert society about unaddressed social problems and injustices.

Doubtlessly, some protest movements have put forward claims and proposals that are undesirable, as they simply seek to trigger chaos and outrage: demands to eliminate law and order or to free all prisoners, fall into this category. Such claims and proposals surely affect the justifiability of movements. However, there is a difference between aiming to undermine the social fabric of coexistence and making deficient policy proposals. In the former case, one considers that many people would be harmed, while one aims in the latter to remedy, but fails to remedy, institutional problems. We should take the former as an important case for condemning movement claims, but the latter does not offer the same ground. Proposals can involve very technical issues, and case studies may be required to determine whether proposals are functionally sustainable. Hence, Occupy *et al.* might fall short of providing suitable policy proposals; but since they do not aim to dismantle the fabric of coexistence they should not be negatively judged as promoting the threat of chaos and turmoil, or of offering an unclear idea of functional social sustainability.

A general critique is that evaluating movements against the functionality criterion can obscure the more important question as to whether a movement is just. First, it is not clear how functionally sustainable and institutionally applicable a movement's demands actually intend to be. The demands of any movement are often abstract rather than concrete: based on moral principles rather than proposing policies, and experimentally fluid rather than continuous and consistent. Put differently, movements are often loud and specific when they identify problems, but quiet and imprecise when suggesting solutions.

It thus comes as no surprise that social movements seem insufficient when we try to assess the functional sustainability of their claims and proposals. But does that mean that most movements are unjustified? Certainly not. For instance, the historic labor movement is widely perceived as justified, although some of labor's policy proposals to nationalize industries are functionally unsustainable as they cause market inefficiencies or cut productivity. The same is true for green-environmental movements that are widely seen as justified when they raise our awareness concerning the climate crisis, though some of their demands for an instantaneous exit from fossil fuels would likely cause energy scarcity and social turmoil and are therefore functionally unsustainable. Based on these and similar examples, it appears unconvincing to argue that a movement's justifiability hinges on the functional sustainability of its claims. In fact, voicing claims and proposals that are sophisticated, sustainable, can be built into current or future institutions, *and* remedy societal issues is a complicated thing. It requires research,

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

consultation, and detailed assessment. Expecting a movement's demands to meet functional sustainability criteria is itself a possibly unreasonable demand. It also risks stripping protest movements of an important social and political function; to offer communal space for victims of injustice to expose that injustice, thereby alerting the public to problems and initiating a collective learning process to first and foremost acknowledge these problems, even if this acknowledgement does not deliver fixed remedies. Therefore, a movement's negative claims about injustice should come first in evaluating that social movement's justifiability, rather than concentrating first on their positive claims about how society should be functionally and sustainably organized. If we start by evaluating a movement's negative claims and appreciate that movement's social critique, without expecting immediate solutions from those who suffer and attempt to raise their voices, we might avoid epistemic injustice.

What about Fraser's *democracy criterion*? Is it convincing to assess a movement's claims and proposals against the background of their democratic openness and changeability? Here, I largely agree with Fraser. Movements should be evaluated in two dimensions: by how they implement democratic norms in their internal processes, and by how they relate to the democratic institutions of the larger society. We should favor movements that try to organize their networks in a participatory way and honor the equal voices of their participants through bottom-up decision-making processes. On the other hand, we should reject those that demand unreasoning commitment from activists, are built around an authoritarian leader that alone decides the movement's agenda and actions, and that makes claims of absolute obedience. A movement's form of organizing should embody respect for their activists' political agency by creating a participatory environment that invites them to contribute, debate, or socially gather, and provides real chances to deliberate, reflect on, and influence claims and actions. Further, a movement in a liberal-democratic society should pursue noncoercive (nonmilitary) strategies as they attempt to move their society to accept policy proposals (e.g., not by staging a coup or through terroristic extortion). Instead, movements should use strategies where claims function as communicative proposals to society as a whole, as a part of broad and contested democratic deliberations. I thus agree with Fraser that a movement's relation to democracy is essential in assessing its justifiability. We should reject those movements that reduce their activists to mere followers without a real chance to influence claims and practices, as well as those that aim to dismantle liberal democracy altogether or to gain power by coercing citizens.

However, Fraser may not be applying her own criterion properly to the Western square occupation movements. Recall that she criticizes the assembly-based democracy and constant meetings of Occupy *et al.* for excluding those that do not have the resources, time, or skills to

participate in these decision-making processes, ultimately claiming that these movements fall short on the democracy criterion for this reason. While I agree that “presentist democracy” would not be feasible in large-scale institutional frameworks, where we must guarantee equal participation and voice for anonymous citizens that may not have the time or confidence to join large public meetings, we need not see movements that form around presentist principles as undemocratic. One issue is that we must explain what “democratic” means in the context of a protest movement. Does it mean that movement networks and organizations must mirror the diversity of society? Or does it mean instead that they should form around principles of equal respect for the political agency of their participants? I argue in favor of the later. Most social movements create exclusion to an extent, especially in their beginnings. For example, labor movements traditionally center their collective actions on union associations in factories,⁷² while feminist movements often aim to offer safe spaces mainly for woman to empower and form collective agency, and movements after 1968 typically find their first participants among young, urban, and educated groups. Given their social base, it appears unrealistic to require that movements should include as many groups of the societal strata as possible in order to be accepted as truly democratic. It may be desirable that they are open to newcomers and welcome public debates. However, it is undesirable to require that movements be organized like major political parties which attempt to integrate folks of many different interests, mirroring and representing all the major groups of the citizenry in order to gain political power. To require total representation would likely weaken a movement’s ability to complement formal democracy by offering easy entry points into political discourses (without requiring party loyalty), by channeling the unheard grievances of victims of injustice, by offering alternative political inclusion for those “who do not have a share” (Ranciere 1999), or by facilitating a “politics of difference” (Young 2011). Therefore, it is unreasonable and undesirable to require that movements must include as many groups of the societal strata as possible in order to be considered truly democratic.

Instead, we should evaluate whether movements organize around the principle of equal respect for the political agency of participants in order to assess their justifiability against the democracy criterion. True, Fraser is also skeptical about Occupy *et al.*'s internal democracy, condemning them for the exclusion of people that cannot invest lots of time in assemblies. But I think her conclusion is premature. She should have praised these movements as they

⁷² It is worth noting here that mainstream US unions excluded Black Americans and denied these workers union membership for more than a century. For how the US National Federation of Labor shuts its doors to Black members, and critique of the omission of race from most histories of labor see the following interesting article: Hill, Herbert. 1996. “The problem of race in American labor history”. In: *Reviews in American History*, 24(2), 189-208.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

ascribed major importance to a central value of democratic decision making, namely, equality. They aimed to significantly expand the principle of equal voice and opportunity independent of economic status and group belonging within their networks and decision-making processes. They aimed for egalitarian inclusion in their political forums. A case in point is another statement of the general assembly of Occupy Wall Street (OWC) in Ithaca, New York State:

We engage in horizontal democracy. This means that we are a leaderless movement, in which every voice is equal and autonomous action is encouraged. [. . .] We try as much as we can to gain consensus because we believe everyone's experience is equally valid, every voice and opinion should be heard, and none more than any other. In order to ensure that all voices are heard and to facilitate better communication in a non-hierarchical meeting, we commit to engaging in meeting process. It is slow, requiring patience, but that makes consensus all the more empowering . . . (OWC Ithaca, GA 2011c, 1).

In light of these claims, Occupy *et al.* should be seen as an inspiring example of bottom-up democracy in practice. They tried to create a communal space of mutual respect for each individual's political agency, assured through consensus-based decision-making processes. If there was no consensus, agents were asked to revise their proposals and submit again until consensus was achieved. (ibid., 2011c, 2) Obviously, these time-consuming processes were inefficient and could not be applied to large institutions, as activists admitted themselves. How could we, as an organized society, quickly react and make urgent decisions if everything were required to be always confirmed by everyone's agreement? But this form of full-consensus organizing is not intended to facilitate a flawless machinery that creates suitable policy proposals. Instead, it is intended to embody egalitarian respect for equal voice and facilitate the joint development of maximum legitimacy and political cohesion. In the words of activists: "It is slow, but empowering".

As outlined earlier, Occupy *et al.*'s assembly-based democracies should be seen as countercultural spaces of recognition, where participants try to ensure that no one is excluded and silenced in political decision-making processes, but instead are respected, fully integrated, and welcomed. This form of political organization is not intended to be fully applicable to society as a whole, but rather is an end in itself for participants who are satisfying disregarded needs. Occupy *et al.* deserve respect for this experiment. The problem was not that they were undemocratic, but that they attempted to be too democratic. Due to these difficult deliberative processes, they found it difficult to form joint agency, make decisions, or express demands. These deliberative processes also caused the side effect of excluding those that did not have time (due to other life demands) for long negotiations, since the Western square occupations'

principle of egalitarian inclusion clearly outweighed that of efficient decision making. Yet, despite political inefficiency, the protester's deliberative processes offered their participants an increased intra-organizational experience of democratic inclusion and political agency.

Further, Fraser ignores how activists within the Western square occupations movements themselves addressed issues of efficiency by experimenting with easier forms of decision-making beyond assembly-democracy, such as working groups and delegation systems.⁷³ Also, she ignores that activists were aware of the issue of political exclusion and sought solutions. For instance, the leftist activist group FelS, a co-organizer of the German movement offshoot Blockupy, tried to solve the problem of how to integrate and keep those engaged that do not have lots of time through the rearranging of plenary sessions and assemblies. They offered self-organized child-care service during meetings, set clear time frames for meetings (so that folks could plan better), and offered online participation tools for those not able to attend in person.⁷⁴ We ought to acknowledge and appreciate these experimental solutions for a social movement's intra-organizational challenges. In fact, Fraser could have stressed that a main goal of the Western square occupation movements was to try to create new kinds of genuine democratic spaces. These are hopeful cases of consensual democracy in practice; experiments we should support, instead of condescendingly judging them as inadequate in their time. Their deficits do not outweigh their positive goals and practices.

Finally, with regard to Fraser's democracy criterion, she seems to contend that Occupy *et al.*'s assembly-based democracy is inapplicable to contemporary liberal democracy and our complex society. But this view, if intentional, is misleading. One might believe that large, in-person meetings organized around the principles of consensus-based decision-making are unworkable for some core institutions (e.g., the parliament), as this could paralyze the daily tasks of representatives making decisions regarding pressing issues. However, that does not mean that big democratic forums are generally unworkable and undesirable. Rather, drawing on Habermas' ideas of deliberative democracy (1992),⁷⁵ one can say that forms of community gatherings of citizens, neighborhood assemblies, and forums like the American tradition (New England-based) of town meetings are vital complements to the usual hierarchical structure of modern-day democracy. From a deliberative perspective, different groups and venues can play different roles in the democratic system, relieving every group and venue of deliberation

⁷³ Mathijs van de Sande offers a promising philosophical analysis of the representative aspects in Occupy *et al.*'s democratic practices: "They don't represent us? Synecdochal representation and the politics of occupy movements" (2020, 402 f).

⁷⁴ See the self-image of FelS from 2011, section *Offenheit*: <https://fels.nadir.org/whois.html/> (last accessed August 20, 2022).

⁷⁵ Habermas appeals to the ideal of public justification and advances a theory of democratic legitimacy according to which law is legitimate only if it results from a free and inclusive process of democratic will-formation.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

of doing all of the work of deliberation and fulfilling all of the conflicting demands and norms of good deliberation. On that view, forum- and assembly-based democracy should be understood as a remedy that provides actual political participation beyond mere voting rights. It is an additional tool for deliberating public policies within civil society, and to keep citizens engaged in political debate. In fact, it should be seen as a tool to activate citizens and help them learn processes of democratic decision-making, accept the outcomes of political arguments, form compromises, and build coalitions. Moreover, forum democracy should be used by political authorities to get input and feedback from civil society, or as ways to deliberate and carry out referenda on policy plans. Integrating forums and citizen assemblies in more areas of our public life and related decision-making processes could be an important step into the further democratization of our society, and a way to increase the perceived legitimacy of political decisions.

Fraser's critique of the Western square occupation movements as measured against both the democracy and functional sustainability criteria is simply misplaced. Requiring such movements to live up to the rigors of the policy-making expertise demanded of regulatory agencies, when in fact movements should be seen as seismographs of injustice, are much too stringent demands that must be dispelled. While I agree that internal and external democracy are crucial factors for the evaluation of movements, it is false to claim that Occupy *et al.* were undemocratic. On the one hand, movements have no duty to mirror the broad diversity of the societal strata—a requirement that is perhaps not met by any political organization. On the other hand, the Western square occupation movements were an inspiring case of bottom up, consensual democracy in practice. In their joint actions and community spaces, these protests showed a deep respect for participants' political agency, significantly extending the principle of egalitarian inclusion and equal voice. In fact, they aimed for a further inclusion of more people into modern day democratic decision-making through forming counter-cultural spaces (Chapter 4) of direct and egalitarian participation on squares.

What about Fraser's *non-domination criterion*? Is it sound to argue that movements should be assessed in light of both⁷⁶ the absence of arbitrary power over individuals and whether they aim at reinforcing, exacerbating, or institutionalizing the subordination of other actors along the lines of class-, race- or gender-based oppression? Yes, doubtless, Fraser's non-domination criterion is vital for any serious normative framework attempting to evaluate

⁷⁶ In my reading, Fraser's criterion includes the 'non-discrimination requirement' that has to do with the equal treatment across groups, specifically with respect to disfavored minorities and the 'non-domination' requirement that has the absence of arbitrary power over one. Thus, she connects orthogonal concerns that are not the same.

the justifiability of movements. Any claim or proposal for social change that does not meet this requirement is unacceptable. Also, the non-domination criterion seems in agreement with the idea of *respect-recognition* (2.2.1); that is, the absolute duty that each person equally deserves legal and interpersonal respect for moral autonomy. A denial of this kind of recognition can be seen as inciting domination, as it takes away one's social conditions for equal status and integrity in coexistence, and thus makes one vulnerable to dependence on another's will. This type of recognition sets itself against unjustified privilege in the legal sphere and promotes the equal status of all. This resonates well with Fraser's non-domination criterion. It urges us to discard those movements that aim to create second-class citizens, to systemically benefit agents based on morally irrelevant features (e.g., gender or race), or those that aim to generate market growth on the exploitation of disadvantaged workers. Such cases produce domination in coexistence.

Clearly, the non-domination criterion is directed against evil claimants and movements that commit hate crimes. But why does Fraser believe that the Western square occupation movements fall short of this criterion? Are they evil? Her judgement closely relates to her view that Occupy *et al.* fall short on the democracy criterion. She condemns them because she believes their social form of organizing would cause exclusion and disadvantage the interests of those that cannot commit to engage in their decision-making processes. On that view, they incite domination since those with lots of time and resources to engage in assemblies are capable of enforcing their views on those without these things. (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 180)

Though this criterion is vital, Fraser's application of it to the Western square occupation movements is deficient. Note that she does not accuse Occupy *et al.* of inflicting domination within their movement organizations. Instead, she suggests that they inflict domination over those that do not join or cannot engage. However, Fraser's assessment leaves many questions unanswered. Flawed proxy politics are not the same as oppressing those that cannot join assemblies. A movement would clearly inflict domination if its in-groups sought to reinforce, exacerbate, and institutionalize the subordination of out-groups. But this is not the case for Occupy *et al.*; rather, they are accused of being too introspective and self-centered, neglecting to engage in debates with the larger public. In addition, it does not seem obvious (as Fraser insists) (ibid., 2018, 180) that a social movement is inflicting domination on outsiders by not involving them in that movement's processes and structures. As noted earlier, a movement does not have a duty to be open to all. Instead, we might better see them as club associations, groups that can freely determine with whom and under what principles they wish to gather

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

and organize, as long as they do not deny equal status respect to others. What, then, is the point of accusing Occupy *et al.* of inflicting domination through assembly-based democracy?

As it is not persuasive to argue that the Western square occupation movements should have represented the broad diversity of external societal strata within their organizations or else they must have oppressed outsiders, I think Fraser's verdict that these movements fell short on the non-domination criterion rests upon an implicit argument. She focuses on the impact of their protests and initiatives on future social institutions. She seems to argue that if we arranged institutions of our political decision-makings like Occupy's constant meetings, we would cause wide-spread political exclusion. In such a situation, the upper classes (i.e., those with resources) are able to enforce decisions that benefit their interests against those who cannot engage (i.e., those without resources) in these processes. This view seems appealing, as society ought not adopt principles and mechanisms that do not assure equal opportunities for all to engage and see themselves as co-authors of political decisions. Yet, this implicit argument is deceptive. First, it ignores the positioning of the Western square occupation movement's forum-democracy as a grassroots supplement of formal democracy, rather than as its substitute. Second, it ignores the reality that these movements did not propose that society should simply be organized like assembly-based democracy on occupied squares. They experimented with new forms of direct participation to figure out how to improve and strengthen democracy. The movements did not aim to provide perfect solutions for how society should be organized, but rather tried to initiate a long-term learning process about how to democratize society through grassroots initiatives.

Hence, the issue is that Fraser mistakenly presents the Western square occupation movements' intra-organizational structures and of experimental practices as proposals for how society should be reformed. Based on that error, she attempts to assess how these movements might impact future social institutions. But we should be careful, both with the acceptance of this assumption and with what a just movement requires. What a just institution is, and how a social movement should be organized are separate questions. Movements and institutions are typically organized around distinct principles and have distinct capacities. Liberal state institutions, for instance, have general obligations towards their citizens and also have the capacity to guarantee equal political chances and rights for all to engage in political decision-making processes. It would be structural injustice if a formal government required that all citizens join meetings as the only way to politically engage or impact policy-making. This would trigger wide political exclusion and the domination of the "able to meet" class in coexistence. But movements function differently. Their primary duties are to participants in

their associations (Delmas 2018, 168 ff) and they have only restricted capacities in how they relate to the rest of society. Leaving out groups, parties, or persons in their associations can here be seen as a legitimate choice for activists; for example, in order to form safe spaces for marginalized groups or areas for collective experiments. While institutions are good at offering a general social framework and equal rights for all, social movements are good at integrating individuals in political debates, in promoting dynamic participation in civil society, and in offering social spaces for local communities to gather and organize around concrete issues.

Fraser ignores that we must distinguish in our assessments between a movement's way of internally organizing (e.g., how they express equal respect for activists), and their demands about how society at large should be changed (e.g., if they do or do not pursue non-coercive goals). The unsuitability of the Western square occupation movements' way of organizing when applied to society does not offer sufficient ground for judging these movements as unjustified based on the non-domination criterion. Fraser herself is addressing this mix-up between a social movement's aims and their ways of organizing, while reproving Occupy *et al.* as neo-anarchist movements: "But perhaps what I'm saying here is not fully fair. Perhaps we should distinguish anarchism as a program for restructuring social organization from anarchism as a transitional organizing modus." (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 180)

Fraser does not seem to be assessing the Western square occupation movement's claims and proposals with regard to whether they directly aim for domination. This is very puzzling. She neither condemns these movements for creating second-class citizens, nor for wanting to exploit disadvantaged workers. The reason for this is obvious. These movements score high with regard to the non-domination criterion. Once again, recall this self-description:

... we are a leaderless movement [. . .] We try as much as we can to gain consensus because we believe everyone's experience is equally valid, every voice and opinion should be heard, and none more than any other. In order to ensure that all voices are heard and to facilitate better communication in a non- hierarchical meeting, we commit to engaging in "meeting process".
(OWC Ithaca, GA 2011c, 1)

These are not the words of evil claimants that aim to create a society of hierarchy and domination. So, if it is unconvincing to portray the Western square occupation movements as aiming for domination with regard to their claims or proposals, while continuing to claim that they fell short on the non-domination criterion, this might suggest that Fraser is addressing the unintended side-effects of their protest. It causes us to question: were Occupy *et al.* uprisings unjustified because they inflicted domination as a side effect; for instance, by inciting the

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

public to adopt harmful mechanisms of their assembly-based democracy? Such an argument is difficult to make and weak once it is made. First, it is not clear how unintended side-effects relate to a movement's claims and proposals, and how we could hold activists responsible for such phenomena when the condition of intention is not met. Second, do we evaluate actual, or merely predicted, cases of domination? Regarding Occupy *et al.*, we seem to be asked to evaluate a predicted future scenario; one that, in addition, rests upon a misconception of a false normative and social-organizational tension between forum-based and institutional democracy. Assessing unintended side-effects of protest is thus a challenging enterprise, and in the case of the Western square occupation movements it leaves most normative questions unanswered. Not least, it puts the philosopher in the awkward position of portraying protesters that engage in participatory forms of politics in reaction to a crisis of liberal democracy as blameworthy agents that actually cause political exclusion.

In general, the way that Fraser is applying her normative framework is ambiguous. She initially gives the impression that she intends to evaluate movements with regard to what they aim at and the values they are founded on: namely, whether their claims are in line with principles of non-domination and democracy and whether they assure functional and social sustainability. But in reality she focuses, as we saw earlier, on evaluating their societal impact and strategies for institutionally feasible future change. She thinks these movements should have engaged in public policy-making, she rejects their assembly-based democracy as inapplicable to societal institutions, and she criticizes Occupy *et al.*'s hypothetical unintended side-effects. Hence, rather than focusing on normative claims and the values they are founded on, Fraser's framework primarily emphasizes a movement's abilities to effect suitable and sustainable social change, and to remedy problems of coexistence. This becomes particularly problematic when she requires movements to have proper organizational strategies to confront power in society and to offer an alternative societal model (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 183). While I agree that it is desirable if movements are able to turn outrage into social change, and effectively contest unjust power structures and hierarchies, I do not believe that a movement's justifiability hinges on these requirements. One reason is that evaluating movements against the background of their institutional impact, the feasibility of their demands, and their ability to counter the prevailing social powers is very demanding and might be out of touch with reality. In fact, most successful modern movements (e.g., the women's rights or civil rights movements) had long-term impacts, and their activism often began in chaos and became more effective and "professional" over decades. Hence, it might be a non-starter to evaluate a movement's short-term impacts; rather, we should evaluate their impacts in retrospect.

Moreover, a one-sided focus on societal impact and smart strategies of movement actors can distract us from evaluating the virtue of their claims and practices. In fact, movements can be worthy of support although they do not yet advance sufficient demands and organizational forms for changing society as a whole (i.e., if they score low with regard to the feasibility criteria). Thus, Fraser's argument that social movement's justifiability depends on the satisfaction of all three criteria (non-domination, democracy, and functional sustainability) is unconvincing. It seems to me that the strongest part of her argument claims that the first two criteria have normative priority. A movement is unjustifiable if it aims to introduce domination and rejects democracy but can be justifiable if it scores well on non-domination and democracy, even if it scores low on functional sustainability. Yet, if we accept the normative priority of these criteria, we should be inclined to evaluate movements with regard to what they aim at in their claims and the values they are founded on, rather than evaluating them on the impact and efficiency of their organizations and policy-making.

I believe what really matters in evaluating movements—and the perspective that Fraser disregards by overemphasizing social impact, political feasibility, power, and efficiency—is to evaluate whether they actually promote a justifiable cause. Focusing on what movements aim at and the values they are founded on—their cause—provides a better ground to assess their justifiability and emancipatory potential, rather than concentrating on the suitability and social effect of their activities and proposals. I will briefly clarify this view by discussing what it actually means for a social movement to be emancipatory.

Following Iris M. Young, one can say that emancipation is liberation from oppression (Young 2011, 163). When applied to movement struggles, one can further specify that this is the joint act or attempt of liberation from oppression (e.g., from exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, violence) (Young 2011, 48ff). In normative terms, social movements should be seen as emancipatory if they aim for liberation from oppression. This conception of emancipation resonates well with the Latin origin (*ēmancipātiō*), which means the act of liberating a child from parental authority, or sending forth a slave from a master's ownership (Sauer 2008, 264). In our context, emancipation is a practice that initiates a process in which an agent is set free (or sets herself free) from societal relations of oppression, unjust dependency, and practices of domination. This view also resonates with Marx. In the "Jewish Question" (1943b), he portrays "political-civic emancipation" as the practice of freeing oneself from "oppression" and unjust "limitation", in this case from the state's failure to grant equal civil rights regardless of religious beliefs. This concept of emancipation as an act or practical attempt of liberation from oppression is useful when applied to a movement's

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

struggle, as it emphasizes the process of resistance against injustice across the broad spectrum of political possibilities. One can understand this as the *negative concept of emancipation* that highlights the joint action of criticizing and struggling against an unjust state, the act of negating injustice. By contrast, the *positive concept of emancipation* emphasizes the state of emancipation—a positive societal state in which struggles were successful and agents have been liberated from certain or all relations of oppression.

When assessing a social movement's justifiability and emancipatory potential, I prefer the negative concept. One reason is simply that the positive concept of emancipation seems useless for assessing modern movements. Seeking and expecting a state of emancipation can prevent us from evaluating cases in our daily and political lives with an open mind as we decide whether we want to support a particular movement, especially since most movements we are asked to support have not effected any change yet. A positive concept of emancipation can wrongly urge us to either predict whether a movement has a good strategy to attain a liberation from oppression, or to wait and see whether it reaches a social state of liberation before we can really judge that it is emancipatory. Both these positive pathways are unsatisfactory. While predictions are often wrong and demand too much from movements with regard to their long-term strategic abilities, retrospective valuations are too late for us to take a position on current debates. Certainly, we can assess movements retrospectively to shed new light on their societal impact—an approach that was favored by Hegel, who argued that agents' political activities should be judged from the viewpoint of the court of world history, or in his wording: "The history of the world is the Last Judgement" (Rosen 2014)—through historical research and backwards-looking ethical assessment (as, in a sense, we are doing with the Western square occupation movements). However, such a retrospective approach has limited political usefulness. Besides its inapplicability to current debates, a positive concept of emancipation can tempt us to anticipate a movement's ends in order to justify its means. It can urge us to base our assessment on a predicted or completed state of emancipation, while we disregard the critical evaluation of actions. In fact, it can incite us to pay attention only to a movement's goals and strategies, without requiring an equal attention to their use of appropriate practices to achieve those ends (e.g., ignoring activists' terror attacks with the excuse that they allegedly aim to realize societal utopias).

Sadly, my impression is that Fraser draws heavily on a positive concept of emancipation when assessing movements. The probability as to whether a movement can attain liberation from oppression—through assessing their societal impact, their suitable policy demands, or their strategies for institutionally feasible future change—seems to be a crucial part of her

approach for judging a movement's emancipatory potential and justifiability. (cf., Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 180—183) It is her right to assess Occupy *et al.* against that background. But this limits her approach: it falls short in the area of political usefulness for assessing present movements, given that such movements often have not effected any short-term change and their impact in the future cannot, in the present, be clearly foreseen. Moreover, drawing on a positive concept of emancipation means that she must define what she means by “emancipation” (ibid., 2018, 178); an unfavorable position for coherent argument. Is she seeing a particular (e.g., political) type of emancipation, or, rather a universal emancipation (e.g., the idea that humans entirely overcome all forms of oppression)? This latter is far too demanding to use as a criterion by which to assess movements. Unfortunately, by failing to clarify her normative stance, Fraser creates additional ambiguity regarding how we should apply her approach.

Given that she aims to assess whether a movement's claims are in line with principles of non-domination and democracy, and whether they assure functional sustainability, it would be better if she were (and if we were) to draw on a negative concept of emancipation. Instead of guessing if a movement will reach a certain state of emancipation or waiting for this to occur, Fraser should begin her assessment by asking whether the movement being evaluated has a specific form of emancipation as a goal. We can then question whether this movement is clear about why this oppression is a problem, whether the movement spots and resists injustice in society, whether it honors non-domination and democratic equality in its organizations, and whether it provides a safe space for the victims of oppression to organize and deliberate.

This is a politically more useful and realistic way to evaluate the emancipatory potential of movements, since we focus on what they say, do and aim for, rather than exaggerating their (unintended) effects and the feasibility of their proposals. Instead, of asking whether their plan for future society truly assures liberation from oppression, we ask whether their societal critique is sound and whether they make use of suitable and proportionate means to fight against injustices. By contrast, requiring that movements must have a waterproof plan and a crystal-clear vision of emancipation is unrealistic; it ignores that movements often have evolving societal ideas, let alone an amorphous plan for an institutional framework. Such a requirement also damages movements' ability to collectively learn through failure and experiment, as it pressures them to voice feasible policy solutions that will remedy injustices.

Assessing social movements using positive conceptions of emancipation comes with the negative incentives, since assessments that a movement does not meet unrealistic positive requirements can be used to silence activists and delegitimize their efforts by presenting them

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

as immature political actors. Also, as outlined earlier, insisting on a positive conception of emancipation can cause us to ignore movements as an epistemological resource for spotting injustice in society, or to disregard the empowering spaces for victims of injustice that they offer; spaces that can be seen as vital to releasing the victims from oppressive relations. Such a perception of movements—as ignorable, meaningless, or objectively harmful—would be false. This is why we should draw on a negative concept of emancipation and assess those movements as emancipatory that articulate sound reasons for why they resist injustice; that value non-domination and respect-recognition through their collective actions and within their organizations; and that seek a way out from oppression. Thus, we should support movements that aim to enact a process of emancipation, instead of those that expect us to believe they know exactly where the journey is going and promise salvation at its conclusion.

In summary, Fraser's normative framework for assessing the justifiability of movements contains a mere positive concept of emancipation, which prevents her from assessing whether movements are emancipatory or not by overemphasizing the importance of their future social impact. My contrary claim is that a movement's emancipatory potential does not depend on its ability to propose suitable policies or that we can clearly predict the future positive social changes they may initiate, but instead depends on whether a movement promotes liberation in both their claims and their practices, and honors non-domination and democracy within their organization. In particular, I argue that the functionality-criterion should be taken out of Fraser's normative framework, as it falsely causes us to give too much weight to future predictions of a movement's impact when we assess its justifiability, instead of focusing on what the movement aims at and whether the participants follow a justified goal. Fraser's non-domination and democracy criteria should be used to assess the joint claims and practices of movements, instead of focusing on the effects of their practices in a hypothetical future.

All this suggests that we should view Occupy *et al.* as justified struggles, since they a) express sound societal critiques with regard to a violation of assured social-welfare rights and accustomed levels of esteem, and the structural disrespect for political status due to increasing economic inequality, b) their positive claims and proposals relate sensibly to these injustice claims in demanding the defense of welfare achievements, in experimenting with more direct and egalitarian forms of political participation, and their goal of protecting democracy against utilitarian market logic. These justifications, taken together, should incline us to see that there is reason in the Western square occupation movements' revolt, and that they follow a justified cause. Lastly, these social movements are justified as c) they make use of appropriate means

to enforce their claims, value non-domination within their organizations, and model respect recognition for equal status among citizens.

Other questions arise from these conclusions: in what ways are the means used by the Western square occupation movements appropriate? Also, should our search for justifiability assess movements on their critiques of oppression, but not evaluate how they try to overcome it? In response, I have suggested that we should begin with a movement's negative claims about injustice and focus on their positive claims later. This is different from saying that movements must efficiently remedy issues and achieve instant emancipation; I criticized this perspective as too demanding criteria for assessing their emancipatory potential. A movement's positive claims must appropriately relate to negative claims, a relationship I will examine in the next section, by debating John Ehrenberg's assessment of Occupy *et al.* I also debate how we might properly value a movement's experimental practices and joint learning processes in our normative frameworks—dimensions of assessment that are too often ignored.

6.3 The Ehrenberg Retrospection: "Occupy is a failure"

While Fraser tends to deny the emancipatory potential of Occupy *et al.* by condemning the inefficiency and unfeasibility of their policy proposals, political scientist John Ehrenberg⁷⁷ goes further, viewing them as a complete failure in his article. (2017) In this section, I take his assessment as an example of the downside of an approach that evaluates movements as fully retrospective; that is, testing whether they managed to abolish what they resisted and achieved the changes they sought. Debating his view will help us clarify the advantage of an approach that instead aims to evaluate whether a movement follows a justified cause, and whether we can support their normative claims and the values upon which they are founded. Moreover, it will help us clarify the role of negative and positive claims and the relation between them when assessing a movement's justifiability and emancipatory potential.

Ehrenberg begins his assessment by emphasizing positive aspects of the Occupy Wall Street movement. He praises their ability to change discourse as well as shift public attention towards social inequality and political corruption, urgent issues that were long ignored: "The clear threat that inequality posed to American democracy was now on everyone's lips." (*ibid.*, 2017, 2) Further, he praises the rapid spread of local Occupy movements throughout hundreds

⁷⁷ John Ehrenberg is Senior Professor of Political Science and former Chair of the Political Science Department at Long Island University. His work is devoted to research and writing on political ideologies and the history of political thought. Also, he is a keen observer of and commentator on contemporary American politics, for instance, consider his new book: *White Nationalism and the Republican Party. Toward Minority Rule in America*; Routledge, 2022.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

of American communities, providing a political voice for those that had despaired of any counter to plutocracy and hoped for an engaged movement for systemic change. (ibid., 2017, 3) Yet, despite these positive aspects, he presents Occupy *et al.* as a failure. Why?

His argument is twofold. First, he claims that their original strength became their weakness. Their horizontal decision-making structures, openness and bottom-up organizations—crucial elements that helped them to include many people and spread the word about their ambitions—eventually undermined their ability to engage in real power politics. Ehrenberg claims that the Occupy protesters were unable to achieve any of their demands (e.g., social equality or better democracy), and did not enforce the transformation they claimed to embody. The main reasons for this collapse, he thinks, were their profound refusal to engage in public debate, to voice a clear agenda, to build strategic alliances as a way to shift power relations, and to engage in those existing institutions needed to effect change (Ehrenberg 2017, 3). In short, he assesses Occupy *et al.* as a failure because of inadequate political strategies and their lack of any clear societal impact.

Second, and more damningly, Ehrenberg contends that Occupy failed not only because their refusal to engage in public debates, policy making, and institutional power struggles undermined their ability to accomplish social change, but because their related anti-statism in fact supported neoliberal ideology and politics. He says that “. . . this refusal made common cause with the same forces that it had been denouncing” (Ehrenberg 2017, 1), and that “. . . its anti-statism led Occupy into a de facto alliance with the same elements that have been systematically dismantling American democracy for a generation.” (ibid., 2017, 4) Hence, he assesses the Occupy protests as a failure both because they did not accomplish their goals and because, in his view, they contributed (at least indirectly) to injustice. One can say that Ehrenberg assesses the Occupy protests as a non-emancipatory movement that allegedly fostered oppression related to socio-economic inequality. I disagree, and say that both pillars of his argument against Occupy are problematic and unsatisfactory for assessing movements and their justifiability, as well as their emancipatory potential in general.

Concerning Ehrenberg’s first line of argument—where he views Occupy as a failure due its poor political strategies and inability and inefficiency to attain positive change—I oppose his reductive notion of a movement’s impact. He focuses narrowly on a movement’s external impact with an emphasis on institutional social change. In his words “Like it or not, existing institutions provide the only context for meaningful public action.” (Ehrenberg 2017, 1) This does not seem to be a sound concept. Why not also highlight a movement’s positive internal impact and praise its emancipatory effects on its participants? Protest actions may be socially

beneficial thought they do not lead to institutional change. In fact, a movement's goals are often to grow its base and focus on an internal audience: fellow oppressed people. (Delmas 2018, 59 f)

On that view, one could argue that the Occupy *et al.* uprisings offered counterculture spaces of alternative recognition for citizens that felt politically and socially excluded, and thereby empowered the resilience and enhanced politicization of the precarious.⁷⁸ This is one valuable impact of the Western square occupation movements, and should also be seen as an important condition that allows agents to begin to free themselves emotionally from societal relations of oppression, as they realize they are not alone and that social change is imaginable. Even if protest actions are counterproductive to the broader goal of affecting institutional change, they might still constitute “intrinsically valuable expressions of dissent, solidarity, and agency”. (Ehrenberg 2018, 67) This impact is entirely neglected in Ehrenberg's analysis.

I agree with one implication of his argument, which is the idea that institutional change needs powerful and organized collective actions, and that moral outrage is a necessary but insufficient condition to create such changes. In Ehrenberg's words: “Moral indignation is a crucial element of successful movements but must be reinforced by the application of power and the capacity to get things done. And power implies compulsion and force.” (Ehrenberg 2017, 3) Indeed, we should reflect upon how movements can turn mass outrage into change, and I agree that the willingness to enforce claims against opponents is vital. One of the best social and political theorists that can guide us here is Antonio Gramsci, who underlines the necessity to build cultural and political counter-hegemony to achieve institutional changes (Gramsci 1967). Nonetheless, I do not think this strategic lens and an approach to all change as power struggles is appropriate for assessing the justifiability of movements. If the ability to enforce institutional change and underlying power relations is our most important criterion for judging whether they are successful, worthy movements that many appreciate would fail that test. Movements frequently do not have clear or unambiguous short-term effects. It takes time, failure, and intergenerational effort to triumph. Ehrenberg ignores this aspect, especially with regard to the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), that he brings up as a positive counterexample to Occupy. He portrays them as a movement that grasped the importance of strategic thinking and the necessity of gaining government support (Ehrenberg 2017, 3). True, the CRM was successful and engaged in effective policy-making over time. What Ehrenberg ignores, though, is that the CRM as we think of it now is part of the centuries-long and

⁷⁸ A case in point is former Occupier, Yotam Marom, saying: “Occupy was a really significant psychological shift, from righteous losers—which was my experience beforehand—to contenders...”. (Milkman *et al.*, 2021)

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

ongoing struggle for racial equality, against white supremacy, and an ongoing accounting of the US slavery system. Also, the activists of CRM partly made use of uncivil disobedience,⁷⁹ at times saw institutions as the problem and not as allies with whom they wished to engage, and continuously altered their means and experimented with new practices in light of their values, successes, and failures (Delmas 2018, 23 ff). It is deceptive to argue that movements that do not engage in institutional power struggles and policy-making are simply failures. Such a view neglects the fact that even successful movements go through periods of “failure,” and exercise antagonistic forms of protest that reflect their disbelief in institutions and their willingness to symbolically defeat a related order of oppression. I wish to briefly clarify this point by referring to Marx’s view on the history of the labor movement and their fight over the working day.

In his extensive analysis of the *Struggle for the Normal Working Day* in the first volume of *Capital*, Marx depicts the century-long fight of the labor movement for social welfare rights and legal regulations, eventually leading to the reduction of working hours and socially improved conditions in factories in several industrialized countries. Yet, the unique aspect of his analysis is that he does not present a story of success. Quite the opposite. Marx focuses on failures, unintended processes, and surprising developments. He depicts the labor movement triumphing only after a long and painful period of lost struggles and the giving-up of infeasible proposals. He shows that in the course of their struggle, “feudal appendages” were overcome, false remedies for how to improve working conditions rejected, and insights into the group-related and systemic aspects of exploitation were attained. (cf., Marx 1867, *Capital*, 315 ff) He dwells on activists giving up insufficient demands and practices (e.g., swing rioters trashing industrial machinery; or artisans aiming to defend the privileges, status, and honor of their work), and instead reaching feasible legal demands and forms of joint action that help enforce the regulation of the working day (e.g., the formation of big unions; or the claim for a human right of a reduced working day). In fact, there is an unusual component in Marx’ work that appears both in the *Capital* and also in his political-historical writings, his closing sentences. Though, in his analysis, a labor struggle failed, he repetitively concludes: “The revolution is dead! Long live the revolution!” (ibid., 1850, *The Class Struggle in France*, 34). He assumes that the failure of a proletarian struggle can lead to a positive change through its learning effects. Agents would become aware of deficits and problems by failing. He presents the defeat of their struggles, in historical hindsight, as almost unavoidable since they required

⁷⁹ Principled disobedience against injustice that is nevertheless uncommunicative, violent, covert, offensive, or at times evasive. I here follow Candice Delmas in: *A Duty to Resist. When Disobedience should be uncivil* (2018).

a maturing of collective consciousness and social conditions. (e.g., *ibid.*, 1871, *The Civil War in France*, 360f.; or *ibid.*, 1850, *The Class Struggle in France*, 88) Eventually, this would lead the labor movement to improve their forms of protest and joint societal critique.

How can we apply of Marx' unusual thoughts about the success and failure of the labor movements to Occupy *et al.* as we seek to assess their emancipatory potential? First of all, they encourage us to view failure—in contrast to Ehrenberg—as a normal part of movement struggles, rather than negative exceptions. This view resonates with the internal debates conducted within movements. There is a growing literature regarding how activists should address the challenge and necessity of failing in a constructive way, attempting to learn from it for future campaigns and ways of organizing.⁸⁰ Thus, a conclusion from Marx' thoughts can be that we acknowledge failure as a vital part of organizational learning processes and grant protesters the permission to fail. This requires an attitude of epistemic humility, where we accept that we cannot know how failure will play out in the long term. Rather, we should be guided by the principle that failure can be a virtue and have advantageous effects, and that denying protesters' the possibility of failure can trigger more harm than good. We must be aware that having unrealistically high demands regarding movements and making our support dependent on whether they achieve political change can damage their willingness to engage in socio-culture experiments and their ability to collectively learn through failure.

Applying these thoughts to Occupy *et al.*, it appears more interesting to discuss what we should learn from their street politics and what type of learning processes they began, instead of emphasizing their political failure. In that regard, I want to highlight the following aspect: despite the fact that the movement was unable to alter institutions, it nonetheless changed political discourse—as mentioned earlier—and shifted public attention towards the unsolved issue of economic inequality that damages political equality. We should at least conclude that they were able to initiate an intra-societal learning process and their mass outrage and related diffusion of ideas reshaped the very language we presently use to talk about politics and economy in many Western countries. In illustration, let us focus on the instructive Vox article of Emily Stewart.⁸¹ She shows that, in the long run, Occupy invigorated ideas and people that particularly influence today's US American left and Democratic party politics. A former New York Zuccotti Park Occupier whom she interviewed tellingly replies to her question as to

⁸⁰ A case in point is an activist debate in the movement magazine *Arranca* in Berlin 2009, where it was asked: “*Scheitern. Ever tried, ever failed?*”: <https://archive.arranca.org/ausgabe/40/> (last accessed August 20, 2022).

⁸¹ Stewart, Emily. 2019. “We are (still) the 99 percent: Occupy Wall Street was seen as a failure when it ended in 2011. But it's helped transform the American left.” In: *Vox.com*, April 30.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

whether this social movement was a failure: “It’s a beginning, and if we don’t do anything else, then yeah, it’s a humongous failure. But if it’s the beginning of an era, then no, it’s just the supernova that gives rise to all these other things.” (Stewart 2019) I say this unnamed activist gives us the right perspective and helps us to grasp the learning process initiated by this movement. The supernova he is talking about relates to the political energy unleashed by Occupy as the rebirth of left-wing ideas that have since gained mainstream traction. The movement’s “99%” mantra, decrying the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the wealthy at the expense of the non-affluent, has endured. It was not only the start of influential populist campaigns for social justice in several Western countries, but started the resurgence of Democratic Socialism and the related rise of Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in US politics, and it is in part responsible for some of the most prominent ideas in the Democratic Party today such as free college, a \$15 minimum wage, debt relief for college tuition, free healthcare, or higher taxation of the wealthy. Occupy began popularizing these claims and aided the spread of ideas about redistributive justice, thus opening space for socialist campaigns and a new generation of activists that have gained traction in the US.⁸² In the words of a former participant: “Occupy [. . .] called a lot of things into question that it itself could not answer”, and “What’s happened since then is a new generation of people rushing in to answer those questions.” (Stewart 2019)

Hence, the movement did not merely raise public awareness regarding the pitfalls of economic inequality, but triggered learning processes in their participants, changing both their willingness and their abilities to engage, address urgent issues, and view themselves as political agents. These are the kinds of learning effects and unintentional processes of reorganization Marx is talking about in his political-historical analyses. I value this perspective, as it puts a single struggle into a bigger picture, elucidates hidden developments, and asks critical theorists to engage in epistemic humility. It incites us to assess that current activists may stand on Occupy *et al.*’s shoulders, and that their struggle over wealth-induced political inequality is on-going on but has changed its form and movement expression by progressing through its failures.⁸³

Thus, given that Occupy provided countercultural spaces of recognition to victims of injustice, and initiated intra-societal learning processes, I argue it is wrong to conclude that

⁸² A case in point is the retrospective view of former Occupier Sonny Singh, saying: “It was the beginning of a movement trajectory that we’re still in. Occupy being the catalyst, socialism is cool now.” (Milkman *et al.*, 2021)

⁸³ A good example is here media studies professor Nathan Schneider’s observation that “the strategy of building institutional power, electoral power, state power, has become much more widely embraced by people who during Occupy times might have been more anarchistically inclined.” (Milkman *et al.*, 2021)

this movement is a failure. Such a judgement, which highlights only Occupy's inability and refusal to engage in power politics to accomplish institutional change, relies upon a reductive concept of a movement's impact, and disregards the ways that movements can grow and gain strength through failure. Certainly, we can assess social movements against the background of short-term institutional impact—as Ehrenberg does—but I doubt that this is a good approach when assessing their justifiability or even their emancipatory potential. It causes us to focus narrowly on a movement's efficiency and to prematurely abandon protests and activists whose claims and critiques we actually value and share if they fail to be efficient. This unsatisfactory approach also has implications for Ehrenberg's second line of argument resulting in his condemnation of Occupy, and I claim that a critical political theorist should take another path.

Regarding Ehrenberg's second line of argument—where he accuses Occupy *et al.* for contributing to socio-economic injustice and backing neoliberalism because of their alleged anti-statism—I oppose this view as unfounded and as expressing an arrogant attitude. On a conceptual level, the support for this argument is unclear. Occupy's demands to split up banks and tax the rich are clearly addressed to states, and show more skepticism towards the market than towards the state. This reveals a mistrust of political power as normally exercised, but not anti-statism as such. Also, an inability to challenge the neoliberal order and the related hegemonic bloc is different from forming an alliance and making common cause with these forces, as Ehrenberg suggests in his assessment. (Ehrenberg 2017, 3) But this is not merely a conceptual mistake. His second line of argument is accompanied with problematic attitudes about how critical theorists should relate to movement protests.

First, it is unfair to accuse activists—who are often the victims of injustice and relations of oppression—of actually supporting the societal order they resist. This view not only reverses the true relationship between victimizers and victims, but puts protesters in the disempowering psychological position of seeing themselves as responsible for their own predicament. It is unfair to put protesting victims or their allies in such a position, as it can reduce their positive self-valuation and overall emotional resilience to continue their fight, and distracts them from focusing on their critique and finding better ways of resistance. If we wish to support certain struggles and causes we value, we should not make use of such an approach. It harms those who seek to enact the very societal change we hope for.

Second, it is too simple to view the Western square occupation movements as failures and point out, in retrospect, what they did wrong. In the aftermath of any event, we all seem to know why things played out as they did and can point to the mistakes of others. But what is

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

such an assessment worth? The problem of such a retrospective view is that it is accompanied by an arrogant attitude towards activists, judging their activities from the “intellectual ivory tower of the Grand Hotel Abyss.” (Jeffries 2017) Theorists who do so reveal themselves as the ones who know and ought to guide, whereas activists, in such an analysis, are the ones who failed and must be educated. It is easy for theorists to judge movements and show where they acted wrongly. We look down on them and complain about their inefficient joint actions, just as Ehrenberg does: “The problem was that it did not do much about it beyond talking about it.” (Ehrenberg 2017, 3) But this view scores low on critical theory’s claim to inspire a productive dialog between theory and practice (Horkheimer 1937, 189), and likewise totally disregards the fact that activists are the ones who really get their hands dirty while attempting to tackle urgent issues. If we use this unhelpful form of retrospective analysis,⁸⁴ we fail to address the long-term impact and positive side-effects of the Occupy protests. Most importantly, a harsh retrospective analysis provides us with no ground to answer questions about whether these movements had or have emancipatory potential and why we may want to support them. Instead, it encourages us to easily break ties with a social movement that “fails,” and thus fail ourselves to support those that deserve it. Such an analysis seems to me to be a non-starter; useless for assessing movements because it judges their success or failure simply with regard to their capability to have transformative short-term societal impacts.

To clarify this argument, let us consider again Marx’ view on the struggles of the labor movement. While Marx clearly highlights the labor movements failures and practical deficits, nonetheless he never leaves any doubts that the movement was emancipatory and support-worthy. In fact, on his view the labor movement and the related working class are the social agents that represent the universal interests of the human race (e.g., *Manifesto* 2002, 32; and Marx 1843c, “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, 390 f.). Despite the fact that they did not constantly have the best proposals to remedy injustice or the suitable means to be really capable of overcoming capitalism, Marx ascribes this significant emancipatory potential to the labor movement. Marx does not assess the justifiability and worthiness of the labor movement merely in the light of their political efficiency, strategic knowledge, or short-term ability to achieve change. Instead, what really matters to Marx is that those who suffer from social relations of oppression are engaged by the movement—we can conceive of this as the criterion of victim activism and the ambition of self-liberation. Moreover, what seems to matter to Marx is that a movement articulates a sound (not perfect) critique regarding urgent

⁸⁴ There surely is a way to do retrospective analysis that is not so harsh. In such a form, I might briefly mention failures and what might be drawn from them, but I would try to give equal or greater weight to the good things that began in a movement.

societal injustices related to exploitation, and that their positive claims sensibly relate to and try to solve (not necessarily feasibly) the issues addressed in their negative claims—we can conceive of this as the criterion of joint awareness of systemic problems and willingness to remedy them. These criteria together seem crucial for Marx when seeking to identify emancipatory movements. They must have an authentic base of agents (no proxy politics), and follow a justified goal in their claims.

Marx' view suggests that a movement's justifiability should not be assessed against its strategic ability to influence power politics and effect institutional change in the short term. Instead, he seems to suggest that what actually matters is based on a movement's principles, namely, whether we can agree to their negative claims regarding injustices in society and believe that activists in the movement follow a justified goal. If these are true and justified, he seems to argue—in contrast to Ehrenberg—then we must uphold solidarity and support their struggle through productive criticism, even though their efforts sometimes fail.

One could object and argue that Ehrenberg is not evaluating Occupy with regard to their justifiability and their desert of our support, but simply arguing that Occupy failed to achieve its goals. Fair enough. But in that case, we touch only the surface of his evaluation. We know that he is interested in emancipation as a form of overcoming wealth-induced political inequality. This is exactly why he criticizes Occupy, since they were unable to produce this change. Further, we know that he blames them for stabilizing the neoliberal order, thus implicitly portraying the movement as “non-emancipatory”. In light of these aspects, it seems reasonable to me to discuss his text as contributing to the issues surrounding how we should assess a movement's justifiability. His assessment shows us the pitfalls of an approach that evaluates them entirely in retrospect, with a one-sided focus on institutional impact. In that way, he fails to appreciate that current successor activists stand on the shoulders of Occupy *et al.*'s prior struggle against inequality, and that movements often have a long history and growth cycle, and only reach success in the long term—sometimes, after multiple generations. He seems to deny that we should grant movements space to fail, to develop better practices, to learn, and to improve. If we are to enable productive joint learning processes within movements, I believe we should abandon a normative language that discards movements as failures with regard to their institutional impact. Rather, if we believe in their justified goal and related claims, we should engage in forms of productive critique that propose better strategies for future struggles, address where protesters may violate their own principles, and, most importantly, appreciate the bravery of those who are willing to engage in resistance to oppression. A criticism of solidarity, offered as an effort to improve a

struggle, is quite different from trashing a movement as complicit with its oppressors and a mere failure, as Ehrenberg does. Instead, we should give activists the benefit of the doubt and allow them to make mistakes. Assessments from the viewpoint of the Grand Hotel Abyss, by contrast, simply disempower activists, wrongly suggest that it is only worthwhile to engage in movements if we can foresee that they can effect quick social change, and entirely disregard the internal impact on participants and the related, and valuable, collective learning processes.

Instead, as a critical theorist myself I say that we must support joint learning processes and experimental practices, allow movement protesters to fail, propose corrections instead of dismissing incomplete proposals, and engage in epistemic humility and attitudes of political distrust of “expertise.” Our assessments should begin with evaluating whether movements really articulate emancipatory negative claims as well as a sound critique concerning real injustices and relations of oppression. This evaluative approach focusses on movements’ claims and the values upon which they are founded. If we ignore these dimensions, we may do more harm than good. As mentioned earlier, I think Occupy *et al.* scored high with regard to these criteria. They expressed reasonable social critiques, engaged in activities, and proposed remedies aimed at related injustices (although these may have unfeasible and utopian with regard to institutional change), and, in particular, involved those that were economically precarious and perceived themselves as the victims of neoliberal economic policies. We must still examine whether or not Occupy’s actions were proportional, and whether their organizational structure was in line with respect-recognition. However, these are all value-based questions that reveal what actually matters: whether or not we, in fact, agree with a movement’s claims and practices and think that it seeks a justified goal. Questions concerning a movement’s strategies and efficiency should be secondary since a movement can be emancipatory in purpose but inefficient in its early actions and campaigns. Such issues are unfortunate, but they are not reasons to think that we should stop supporting a movement. Quite the opposite: problems such as these should be seen as starting-points for our support and for our focus on more critical issues. In the next section, we will discuss other critical perspectives that offer a better assessment process for movements.

6.4 Critical Views: Ignorance, Anti-Semitism, and Inappropriate Means

After having examined Nancy Fraser’s and John Ehrenberg’s assessments of Occupy *et al.*, who both seem to suggest that we should see these movements as non-emancipatory, let us turn to critical perspectives that these theorists ignore. Whereas Fraser and Ehrenberg mostly

criticize these movements for their political inefficiency and inability to achieve institutional change—which I have objected to as too narrow a perspective for evaluating the justifiability of movements and their emancipatory potential—I will now focus on criticisms that I think really matter and that addresses a movement's principles and related forms of organization. Specifically, I will examine the issue of ignorance towards other forms of oppression beyond economic inequality; implicit anti-Semitism related to shallowly blaming 'the rich'; and the inappropriate nature of square occupations.

6.4.1 "They deal with merely one form of inequality"

While its iconic call for a unity of the 99 percent and real democracy produced euphoric feelings of solidarity and helped attract massive crowds to participate in disobedience around the world, the Western square occupation movements were nonetheless often criticized for being insufficiently inclusive. One reason for that is—as mentioned earlier (see section 4.4)—their one-sided focus on forming a popular mass movement, which they assumed would deal with the concerns of the majority, the 99 percent, of society. The majoritarian politics underlying their populist appeal, however, quickly conflicted with minoritarian concerns from within the movement. For instance, in the Spanish offshoot, a feminist banner was removed during the occupation of Puerta del Sol due to a desire to keep sectional demands at bay; this caused disputes among protest participants. Some observers criticized the way that gender inequality and how it intersects with economic inequality was totally disregarded. (Gerbaudo 2014, 14) Similar critiques arose in Zuccotti Park, where reports of women being sexually assaulted, caused tense debates over safe spaces and male dominance in the camp. (cf., Milkman *et al.*, 2021) Occupy Boston was criticized for having barriers to people with disabilities. Another example is the Tel Aviv Occupy offshoot, where veteran activists condemned the nationalistic emphasis on demands of social justice for Israeli citizens, whereas international justice and human rights regarding Palestinians' statelessness were pushed aside. (Gordon 2012) In all these cases, participants criticized the square occupation movements' majoritarian politics and questioned these social movements' narrow focus on socio-economic "equality"—for whom? under what conditions?—and asked, in general "... how can you just deal with one form of inequality?"⁸⁵

These are reasonable concerns, and must be taken seriously. They reflect power

⁸⁵ I refer here and in the following sections to interviews and analyses in the instructive article of the Sarah Seltzer in *The Nation*: "Sexism and Racism on the Left: What Has and Hasn't Changed Since Occupy Wall Street" (2021).

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

inequities and social differences along class, gender, or national cleavages within these movements and among the 99 percent they intended to represent. One of the main problems that must be addressed is the square occupation movements' majoritarian populist rhetoric, that mistakenly caused them to play demands for economic equality and real democracy against the supposedly secondary concerns of marginalized groups. Progressives, however, should give up using such a language and instead acknowledge that real equality requires awareness of differences and extra support for those that suffer from multiple, intersecting forms of oppression.

In light of this criticism, should we conclude that, Occupy *et al.* are unjustified and lack emancipatory potential? I doubt this. One reason is that they did not aim to exclude others; instead, they aimed to create new egalitarian spaces for the exercise of direct democracy. In fact, these movements highly valued respect for the equal political status of their participants and also other citizens—an aspect that I see as one key requirement to justify causes. If the Occupy movements had actively aimed for and practiced exclusions along gender or nationalistic lines, they should be blamed for practicing harmful outrage. But it seems more important here that they have been blamed by the participants for unintentionally reproducing exclusion, which makes a difference. I do not say that intention is all that matters, but suggest that the more important question is how a movement deals with internal critiques such as these. I see openness to intra-organizational critique and willing and active attempts to learn and improve based upon it as an important criterion for identifying justified movement cases—and square occupations movements do not fail this criterion. I wish to clarify this with regard to Occupy Wall Street (OWC) and their activists' concerns regarding racial inequality.

In a Washington Post text from November 25, 2011, the American writer Stacey Patton was asking “Why African Americans aren't Embracing Occupy Wall Street,” (2011), pointing out that most of the OWC campsites were largely populated by white people. Activists, on the other hand, stressed that their movements were more diverse than publicly portrayed. “It's true there were a lot of white people, but in the NYC encampment there were many BIPOC people and women of color, like myself, who had very visible leadership roles . . .”, asserts former Occupier and present NYC city council member Sandy Nurse (cf., Seltzer 2021). But beyond the debates over the visibility of Occupy's diversity, a more significant criticism is that participants from marginalized groups were concerned about the naiveté and ignorance about racial inequality within the social movement. The ‘People of Color Working Group’ in Occupy Wall Street, for instance, said in criticism criticized Occupy's focus on economic injustice—its 99 percent versus 1 percent narrative—lacked a racial injustice analysis, or any

awareness of how both injustice and related forms of oppression intersect. This issue became visible in the language used when OWC attempted to call for action. When their *Declaration of the Occupation of New York City* (2013) was publicly read for democratic approval to a crowd of hundreds in the camp, many listeners were struck that it referred to the world as 'one people, united' with no mention of deep racial divisions in the US or around the globe (Seltzer 2021).

Certainly, Occupy *et al.* had political and theoretical shortcomings. One could say, with Marx, that they were accompanied with the usual ideological ballast of a left movement in its immature stage. They leaned on a one-dimensional and deterministic critique of society that mistakenly held class division as a primary reason for all issues among people in coexistence. They ignored the ways that class-based and socio-economic exploitation intersect with racial inequality—two distinct logics of oppression that can mutually influence each other. Activists who were people of color criticized that a language merely extolling 'We the people' and 'Real Democracy', combined with the one-sided focus on socio-economic inequality, not only veiled but fostered the racial inequalities that continued to exist within these movements.

This is vital criticism. A movement that fights for equality must take very seriously its participants' complaints that it is ignorant about multiple forms of inequality and oppression. How can a movement legitimately advocate the interests of the precarious, of those socially and politically excluded, while ignoring that there are vast differences inside its own societal strata, particularly along the lines of racial inequality? A case in point is the extreme racial wealth gap in the US. Black citizens represent 13% of the population, but possess merely 4% of the nation's household wealth. The net worth of an average white family, at \$171,000, is roughly ten times greater than that for a Black family (\$17,150), as of 2016 (McIntosh *et al.*, 2020). Not considering these inequalities is to ignore those who disproportionately suffer from poverty, exploitation, and social exclusion. Also, it may lead to calls for false remedies that are, in effect, only aid for some to make ends meet without really tackling this wealth gap.

Ignoring intersectional forms of inequality is particularly awkward for movements that try to practice real democracy in self-organized camps. Occupy *et al.* can here be blamed for the ways that their naïve focus on eye-level communication in an allegedly non-hierarchical space that intended to provide egalitarian opportunities for each individual to speak—initially precisely regardless of group belonging—hid and enforced existing inequalities among participants. Such a form of organizing and group communication ignores the ways that those with higher income, better educations, and greater socio-economic status are often those that have better abilities to participate, speak up, and influence the course and outcomes of

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

communal debates. Thus, creating a space of egalitarian communication without empowering in parallel those that come from disadvantaged positions (historically, women, people of color, or LGBTQ+), is most likely to simply benefit white male agents and stabilize their power in these ‘egalitarian’ spaces, given that white agents have, on average, a better economic status than others. Hence, participants from marginalized groups had good reasons to criticize the Western square occupation movements for becoming entangled in a practical contradiction of its own principles of egalitarian inclusion because they clung to a naïve concept of free individual speech and of ignorance towards inequalities beyond economics. They sensibly complained that this form of organizing, and communication unintentionally enforced racial inequality in spaces presented as being governed by real equality.

Some participants criticized Occupy *et al.*’s ignorance towards racial inequality from a distinct perspective. For instance, Emahunn Campbell argued in the article “A critique of the occupy movement from a black occupier” (2011) that the movement fought against economic injustice from an implicit standpoint of white privilege. In that context, Occupy was criticized for lacking awareness of its own whiteness, and also that it largely articulated the concerns of the white middle class (Campbell 2011, 44). He disapproved of the way that Occupy’s rather white activists and those who formed the base of their support only became concerned about social inequality when a majority of these same groups felt affected themselves—even though the wealth and income gap had already increased for decades, in particular for BIPOC people. Campbell and other critics said, and some still say, that calls for elimination of student debt, an increase of average income, or an increase in affordable purchased housing are all claims related to negative experiences of whites who felt and feel a threat to their familiar privileges. None of these issues were new, and Occupy’s injustice claims ignored the fact that people of color have historically bad chances in the housing market (e.g., due to both *de jure* and *de facto* racial discrimination on the part of banks), have suffered declining wages, have had much worse educational outcomes, and have suffered disproportionately from debt burdens for a long period prior to the Occupy movement. (cf., Campbell 2011; McIntosh et al. 2020) In short, such critics blamed these movements for ignoring a crucial insight of the ‘politics of difference’, which is that mere calls for equal treatment likely disadvantage those that are in a (historically) marginalized societal position, and that injustice claims typically reflect a certain sociopolitical standpoint of the complaining agents that at the same time may often ignore other viewpoints (Young 2011, 24 ff).

However, we must draw attention to a crucial point, one that distinguishes these internal criticisms from the ones put forward by Fraser and Ehrenberg. None of the critics mentioned

above take their concerns as grounds for arguing that Occupy *et al.* were unjustified or non-emancipatory. Quite the opposite. Campbell and Patton, for instance, presented their criticism as necessary to improve a movement that they appreciated for its powerful though one-sided centering of economic class and related injustices (a revival of this emphasis after decades of neoliberal ignorance). A case in point for such a solidarity-based call for change is the end of Patton's text: "Why African Americans aren't Embracing Occupy Wall Street":

But if the Occupy movement does not grow in solidarity with other constituencies of exploited and oppressed people, [. . .], the truth of Frederick Douglass's wisdom will hold—the powerful undertow of race and class in America will keep both blacks and whites from being free. (Patton 2011)

And another example is the statement of Black activist Campbell:

It is my hope, as a critical supporter and participant of Occupy, that this movement, ripe with revolutionary potential, can not only challenge the world and the 1 percent, but challenge itself as well. (Campbell 2011, 50)

Even though both criticize the movement for its white perspective, they believe in its emancipatory political potential. And this is true for most of these cited critics. They both complained and continued to positively engage themselves in initiatives to improve the Western square occupations movements. They joined forces to tackle these problems from within, like the aforementioned 'People of Color Working Group' in Occupy Wall Street that tried to push back on language that erased race, and called attention to police brutality against people of color. (Campbell 2011, 42) In fact, many activists, in the US and also in Europe, promoted an intersectional approach from the earliest days, and struggled to ensure that there was space for people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ to play leading roles. They confronted sexual assault in the campsites, denounced transphobia in women's spaces, and raised issues about who was doing social-reproductive work like running the kitchen and whether that work was getting proper esteem. Although the tumultuous energy of the early days of these square occupations was what drew them in, many people from historically marginalized groups quickly took on a second job: teaching their fellow protesters about racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and how such forces work together, even in the would-be utopia of a freed square (Seltzer 2021).

Most importantly, these initiatives and solidarity-based criticisms produced positive effects. They triggered learning processes. For instance, a crucial outcome of the debate over racial injustice in OWC was that the movement employed a progressive stack, a moderating tool which allowed people from marginalized groups to speak first in assemblies. Participants acknowledged power inequities in their movement and then implemented remedies. Also,

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

New York City Occupiers held a series of community dialogues about power and privilege to bring a race and gender analysis into their public-facing activism and their lives in Zuccotti Park itself. Another outcome can be highlighted: many former participants now see Occupy *et al.* as key to their own awareness of the possibilities and limitations of organizing, and that one cannot simply escape from social realities and existing forms of oppression. This is tellingly articulated in a statement of Marisa Holmes, one of the early organizers of the Zuccotti Park occupation: “It’s taxing. But you can’t have a horizontal or directly democratic movement without facilitation. I understand now that it’s a generation-long struggle. We need to build communities of care first, and dismantle the ableism and patriarchy and white supremacy that we’re bringing in.” (Seltzer 2021)

These learning effects originating in internal critique are positive and worthy of support. Occupy and its participants might have been naïve, but they did not shy away from addressing issues. Instead, through awareness groups, moderative tools, and constant (draining and time-consuming) debates they tried to tackle internal power inequities and biases. They acted as emancipatory movements should act; their structures and participants displayed an openness to recognizing issues and a willingness to learn. They attempted to create a collective space of awareness, where participants were not under the illusion that they would be immediately free from relations of oppression, but jointly tried to address intersecting forms of inequality, learn from experimental practices, and slowly create spaces in which unequal treatment is no longer accepted. They show that such practices are not useless or inefficient, but that “a lot of young activists took what we learned there about race or gender and said, ‘How do we build groups where this is the focus?’”, as former Occupier Manissa M. Maharawal asserts (Seltzer 2021).

Therefore, I say we should understand this criticism as a constructive part of an internal learning process for movements. Most of the internal critics hope that addressing issues does not diminish the importance and necessity of what the Western square occupation movements represent, but instead can be used for self-examination and the construction of a stronger, sturdier political activism and engagement in the future (e.g., Campbell 2011, 42). In general, the examples above show that the various Occupy movements exhibited a crucial degree of openness and willingness to learn together about how to overcome internal deficits and power inequities that are inescapable even in Utopian free spaces. Such openness to correction and change are characteristics of an emancipatory movement and mark Occupy *et al.* as such a movement. The following premises summarize the core reasons for this assessment:

- a) In their claims and practices, Occupy *et al.* showed a reasonably high value for respect-recognition, and aimed for the egalitarian inclusion of people into their assembly-based democracy on occupied squares.
- b) However, they acknowledged their shortcomings with regard to realizing these principles within their organizations and tried to tackle these issues and related exclusions through joint learning processes and experimental practices⁸⁶.
- c) The openness of the Occupy protesters to learning about how power inequities affected themselves, and to tackling these inequities together, combined with their justified initial cause illustrates the ongoing emancipatory potential of these movements as well as the worth of supporting them.

If Occupy *et al.* had actively aimed for, intended, or practiced exclusions along gender, racial, or other exclusionary lines, and had refused to acknowledge internal power inequities (e.g., silencing internal critics) or rejected engagement in self-critical learning processes, they might deserve to be blamed for following a harmful path. However, given that Occupy *et al.* exhibited all the characteristics of a justified struggle, activists and academics should continue to support the movements growing out of them, even if their internal negotiations and learning processes are messy. The objective of emancipation from wealth-induced political inequality is still worthy of support, as are the evolving methods of Occupy itself.

6.4.2 “Their critique internalizes the logic of Anti-Semitism”

Besides ignoring intersecting forms of inequality, Occupy *et al.* uprisings were repeatedly condemned by various groups for showing flashes of anti-Semitism.⁸⁷ Most of these groups were politically conservative; however, criticism on this issue also came from liberals and progressives (Berger 2011). Samuel Salzborn, a German political scientist, sensibly said in the newspaper *Jüdische Allgemeine* of October 2011 that these movements built on “anti-Semitic anticapitalism”. (Salzborn 2011) His view represents another important critical perspective on the Western square occupation movements—one that must be addressed when assessing the justifiability of these movements.

In his text “Monies and Myths” (2011), Salzborn provides the following arguments for his crushing assessment of Occupy *et al.* First of all, he rebuffs the language with which these

⁸⁶ Honneth also ascribes importance to experiments in his work *Socialism* (2015), with the concept of “Historical Experimentalism”. It addresses the collective, intergenerational processes of finding solutions to societal issues.

⁸⁷ *Anti-Semitism* is here understood as hostility to, prejudice towards, and discrimination against Jewish people. Anti-Semitic dog whistles are often hidden behind coded language, for instance, using the words like ‘globalist elites’ instead of ‘Jews’.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

movements called for action and complained about economic injustice caused by the turmoil of financial markets in 2007/08. Their simplifying language of a unified 99 percent majority that would be suppressed by a 1 percent minority serves the anti-Semitic narrative of a conspiracy of elitist groups. Also, he draws attention to key elements of these movements' social critique: moralization and personalization. The latter means that one reduces social systems and related functional mechanisms to the misconduct of individuals—i.e., one *personalizes* structures. A case in point is the image of greedy bankers, whose speculative businesses would suck the money out of the common people: this deliberately ignores the market's dysfunctionality or the negative consequences of unchecked derivative trading. To paraphrase Iris M. Young, the complexity of the economy and related structural injustice is reduced to immoral actions of individuals (Young 2011). Beginning from this erroneous personalization, we can grasp what is meant by moralization. Salzborn refuses a critique of injustice that does not address societal structures and the functionality of the economy, but merely blames bankers for bad outcomes of market relations or economic crisis—i.e., holding individual agents morally responsible for collective, systemic problems. He is deeply dissatisfied with a social critique that thus creates scapegoats rather than addressing the unjust effects of institutions. (Salzborn 2011)

This personalization and moralization together with stereotypical narratives about “the rich and the rest” causes Salzborn to conclude that the Western square occupation movements not only followed an insufficient critique of market economics, but also implicitly articulated anti-Semitic anticapitalism. Importantly, he argues that this is independent of the subjective intentions of protesters. Rather, he views anti-Semitism as related to the implicit ideological patterns of a movement. These patterns become apparent in language that in posits a rich, conspiratorial, greedy group standing behind capitalism, or language that voices false binaries such as speculative stock market enterprises versus family-owned industrial firms. Salzborn draws attention to the fact that these ideological patterns have for centuries been intertwined with anti-Semitic conspiracy images, often hidden behind critiques of capitalism: for example, those that say Jewish people would seek to manipulate prices, or to let markets crash in order to make a profit. His account resonates with a view that began with the first generation of the Frankfurt School's critical theory. Anti-Semitism is here understood as a form of projection of societal structures onto a group of people; this group is ascribed negative moral features and scapegoated for injustice related to these structures. (cf., Adorno and Horkheimer 1944, 177 ff). And as Salzborn sees these patterns expressed in Occupy *et al.* uprisings, he concludes: “Anyone who formulates a critique of capitalism as a critique of financial capital has already

internalized the logic of anti-Semitism . . . ”. (Salzborn 2011) It seems clear that Salzborn doubts that these movements have any emancipatory potential, portraying them rather as unjustified.

I understand Salzborn's suspicion towards social movements that use a binary narrative for criticizing “the other,” while mobilizing the general public against economic inequalities. I have expressed similar concerns about the language used by Occupy. Also, I understand his refusal of a critique that personalizes, as it encourages us to chalk up the complexities of structural injustice to bankers and to corporate greed. Yet, markets and corporations are not people. These are institutional frameworks and bundles of contracts, incapable of emotions like greed. Individuals entering these contracts follow specific functions and perform transactions on behalf of corporate interests to make profit, while they are both encouraged and restricted by institutional frames. If we want market relations to change, laws and institutional frameworks must change (e.g., taxes on big corporations must rise in order to fund public investments or economic “safety nets”). This is a vital social theoretical perspective that neither movement activists nor its supporters should ignore. Nonetheless, I disagree with Salzborn's uncharitable assessment of the Western square occupation movements. His conclusion that Occupy *et al.* uprisings are bad protests is too hasty. In what follows, I argue that these movements should still be seen as worthy of support since they do not accurately reflect Salzborn's concerns.

Let us begin with the concern that the Western square occupations movements' critique of economic injustice was personalizing. True, there were cases where such a form of critique emerged, such as when one protester in Zuccotti Park held up a sign with the words ‘Google: Jewish Billionaires’ or when protest signs at rallies in European cities said ‘Goldman Sucks’ mixed together with an evil octopus straddling the world—to name just a few. Such forms of protest lean upon anti-Semitic images and language and must be condemned. However, given that an essential part of movement protest is discussing how to protest appropriately, the more important question is how other people reacted. I here wish to emphasize that other Occupiers kicked those bad apples out of the barrel. There are several examples of occasions when the Occupy protesters denounced anti-Semitism in their midst and excluded people from events when those people blamed what they claimed were the Jewish conspiracies underlying the economic situation (Berger 2011). Undeniably, each anti-Semitic incident is one too many, but the fact that individuals voice this ideology and are then held accountable for it by others in their movement should not cause us to believe the fallacy that such an ideology is held by the movement in general. I here follow Abraham H. Foxman, former director of the US Anti-

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

Defamation League—a group that is extremely sensitive to eruptions of bigotry—who pressed the organizers of the US Occupy movement to condemn any expression of anti-Semitism, but also said: “There are manifestations in the movement of anti-Semitism, but they are not expressing or representing a larger view.” In a talk with the New York Times, he pointed out that, according to his group’s periodic polls, roughly one in six Americans believed Jews had too much power on Wall Street or in the US government, saying: “So, it’s not surprising that in a movement that deals with economic issues you’re going to get bigots that believe in this stereotype.” Foxman ultimately argued that the movement “. . . is not about Jews; it’s not about Israel. It’s about ‘the economy, stupid.’” (Berger 2011) I agree with his view and also say that anti-Semitic personalizations were, in this case, a rather unwanted side phenomenon that had to be and was rigorously addressed by activists. Occupy resisted the personalization of issues; instead, they showed how problematic it is when a market economy causes unjust outcomes and structurally undermines political equality in a democratic society.

There is another aspect ignored by Salzborn, namely, that Occupy *et al.* uprisings had, on occasion, a distinctly Jewish flavor. For instance, the camp in Zuccotti Park coincided with the Jewish High Holy Day season and witnessed in its midst a crowded *Kol Nidre* service on Yom Kippur, festive dancing with a Torah scroll on *Simchat Torah* and even the building of a sukkah for *Sukkoth* (Berger 2011). Significantly, one of the most notable square occupations occurred in Israel. Along Tel Aviv’s Rothschild boulevard more than a thousand activists set up the largest protest movement in the history of the country, expressing solidarity with the Arab Spring and other offshoots worldwide, and addressing the issues raised when economic inequality undoes social welfare and democracy (Alimi 2012; Gordon 2012). This evidence of Jewish involvement does not refute the claim that the Western square occupation movements used language indicative of anti-Semitic anticapitalism—ideological patterns and beliefs that are often independent of the intentions of participants. Fair enough. But such a criticism sheds a one-sided light on Occupy *et al.*, neglecting their intercultural dimensions and ignoring the context, stories, and collective actions of their Jewish activists.

Another argument can be made to refute the critique that the 1% narrative of Occupy *et al.* was structurally anti-Semitic in that it personalized capitalist dynamics. Yes, the emphasis on ‘the 1 %’ narrative simplifies complex economic power relations. Nevertheless, the actual numbers reflect this narrative as an economic reality. Some facts: globally, income of the top 1% of earners rose over 160% from 1979 to 2019, compared to a rise of 26% for those in the bottom 90%. And in the U.S., the share of the nation’s wealth held by the top 1% increased from 23% to nearly 32% from 1989 to 2018. (Gold 2017) In fact, one reason why Occupy *et*

al. made use of the “99 vs. 1%” narrative is—as shown in chapter 5—that the Nobel-prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz announced as a scandalous fact that the upper 1% owns a quarter of the US national income (Stiglitz 2011). A simple “1% *versus* 99% narrative might not disclose the complexity and underlying causality of an economy, but it does not draw upon false beliefs and conspiracies. Instead, it should be seen as an attempt to call out extreme economic inequalities, a set of issues often ignored in public discourse precisely due to their complexity. Movements need vigorous slogans that people can identify with and that signify what they resist; in that way they can mobilize public participation and shift attention to unsolved issues. Claims must match reality and one must refuse a language that relies on scapegoats, but given the facts, the Western square occupation movements use of simplifying statistics meet the criterion of empirical adequacy. Further, they are reasonably emphasizing the problems caused by extreme group divisions along economic lines in a society that values equality. A concern that Occupy *et al.*'s critique was personalizing is insufficiently profound.

In fact, while we seek to voice a legitimate critique against personalizing market relations, we should not be encouraged to deny that there are proponents and beneficiaries of capitalist markets. First, there are collective actors like political parties or think tanks that promote, for instance, the neoliberal conception of markets. Also, there are corporative actors that deliberately benefit from unjust taxation, and ‘market makers’ whose choices have systemic relevance for a market’s financial stability and operation. Identifying these actors is vital if we are to have a realistic picture of capitalist markets. Corporations are not only legally accountable for their actions, but also are partisan, interested parties in debates over future laws and institutions, with consequences for the equality of citizens. We must refuse a critique of any economy that is purely abstract and ignores the ways that various actors conduct actions and can foster policies—while at the same time we must reject personalizing those actions as conspiracies.

Moving on from the issue of personalization of systemic issues, we also should examine Salzborn’s concern that the Western square occupation movements’ social critique was and is moralizing—that it holds individuals (e.g., bankers) morally responsible for collective action problems such as the great recession caused by the turmoil of the financial markets 2007f. In general, we should agree that it is deceptive to reduce market mechanisms to an alleged sum of individual acts of misconduct, expecting that replacing the agents would correct the whole. Instead, what is really needed is to alter the institutional incentive structure of our market relations. However, a critique of moralization does not address the issue of how this critique applies to the Western square occupation movements. I disagree that these movements mainly

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

held individuals responsible for economic injustice. Rather, they voiced an ethical critique of capitalist market economies. What does this mean and why is it different from moralization?

Looking at these issues from the perspective of recognition theory, we can say Occupy *et al.* expressed the criticism that the capitalist market's harmful principles of profit-seeking and commodification undermine democratic equality and this market's own commitment to meritocracy, thus dismantling individuals' chances to experience respect based on equal status and proper esteem for merit. This is an ethical critique, since it addresses the normative order of spheres of interaction, where promises are violated and conditions for the good life for all (e.g., respect and esteem) are disrupted. In particular, this critique argues that deep economic inequality must be seen as a form of structural disrespect as it systemically harms the basis and spirit of democracy. Most importantly, it expresses the view that the harms of economic inequality are experienced by people when society refuses to provide appropriate conditions to assure equal respect for political agency regardless of economic status and thus fails to protect, in particular, non-affluent agents from the threats of domination by the institutions that promote and protect corporate and individual wealth. Such a normative tension between the market's inequality and democratic equality is tellingly expressed in Occupy Wall Street's "declaration of the occupation of New York City":

. . . but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power. We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments (Occupy Wall Street 2011b)

Such claims surely contain the critique that capitalism produces outcomes that destroy people's lives, that such people (and their communities) feel morally mistreated, and that they do not deserve to be poor, unemployed and, in practice, politically powerless in a society that calls itself democratic. Yet, the Occupiers did not hold individuals responsible. Rather, they addressed structures, and expressed that the political and market spheres are out of normative balance, and that no real democracy can exist under conditions of vast economic inequality. This *ethical critique* addressed the normative order of institutions and exposed a structural disrespect for the political agency of citizens. Ultimately, Occupy *et al.* held the society as a whole responsible for mass experiences of disrespect and political powerlessness.

The Occupy protests tell us that democratic societies are blameworthy and lose legitimacy if they do not rebalance inequalities of political power that arise from economic inequality. This is a significant critique. Rather than simply blaming bankers, they draw attention to principles in our social spheres that conflict with each other. They demand that

society publicly deliberate and rethink the normative principles we should value most and how we should solve crises arising from these imbalances between spheres. The square occupation protests tell us that we must negotiate about what our main normative priorities should be, and how those priorities are facilitated or repressed within our institutional incentive structures.

Besides neglecting this vital ethical dimension of Occupy's criticism, I think Salzborn's assessment contains another problematic tendency. This is the idea that one should only voice a critique of capitalism after one has a clear scientific understanding of it (Salzborn 2011). He favors a functional critique, one that shows capitalism's intrinsic contradictions and inevitable crisis. While I appreciate the idea of properly analyzing capitalism's mechanisms, this should not be a requirement for justified protests. Requiring everyone to first analyze and grasp, and only later criticize capitalism is too demanding. As outlined in my argument contra Azmanova (see 5.5), such a view disregards the moral outrage that is a crucial part of protests, and that a shared experience of injustice is a starting-point for collective action. For instance, when workers see managers getting salaries that are hundreds of times their own, along with million-dollar bonuses in times of crisis, while they themselves are working overtime to make ends meet, live in constant fear of being made redundant in the name of profitability, and are in danger of mortgage foreclosure and home loss, they rightly discern unjustified economic inequalities and wish to rise up. We should not deny the moral perspective of protesters, or their intuitions with regard to harmful experiences in market economies. Requiring protestors to voice a sound functional critique before their protest is justified is an elitist demand and denies their right to describe their experiences and related grievances; this is particularly harmful to the victims of injustice, who already struggle to be heard.

We should not neglect the fact that the economy is both a functional system within itself, and also comes alongside concrete experiences for many workers, such as exploitation, exhaustion, or the anxiety of job loss due to a market crash. People must have a chance to express grievances about such negative experiences, though they do not yet understand the systemic dimension of it. Accepting such a moral grammar of market-related protests does not contradict a functional critique. Marx, for instance, does not build his critique of capitalism on an account of moral wrongs, but nonetheless acknowledges the importance of worker's moral indignation for collective learning processes (Marx 1845, *The Holy Family*, 85).

Put differently, whether protesters each express a correct account of capitalism is not a suitable criterion for separating justified from unjustified social movements. Being too harsh in criticizing protesters that allegedly make use of a deficient language for complaining about

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

capitalism is especially an issue for dogmatic leftists, who may too often assume that protests are only worthy of support if they are founded in an informed class struggle. But I reject such a criterion and the related attitude. We should acknowledge intuitions about social injustice, not directly negate them and thus demand affect-free protest reactions. We should not require the victims of unfair market relations and the activists who support them to be highly articulate and knowledgeable before expressing negative claims about injustice. If we impose such a requirement, we will soon have no remaining forms of class struggles, and will ourselves fail to grasp why people suffer from and feel harmed in market relations. Instead, we should not make the critique of capitalism impossible by being too sophisticated. We must change our attitude and see a proper critique of capitalism not as a requirement, but as the hoped-for result of a common process. As long as protesters' core values are justified, and as long as they address factual issues and dismiss conspiracy theories, we should give them the benefit of the doubt and work alongside them as they channel their feelings, trying to reach a deeper understanding of the economy together. And as I argued, Occupy *et al.* did relate to real problems and showed how markets dismantle meritocracy, autonomy, and equality.

We must be aware of the concept and critique of anti-Semitic anticapitalism—a crucial issue in times of the rise of fascist movements. Nevertheless, I doubt that Salzborn's critique addresses the political and normative core of the Western square occupation movements. Firstly, these movements did not properly meet his criterion of personalization, since they addressed actual economic realities with their 99% narrative, instead of promoting conspiracy theories. Secondly, these movements did not meet his moralization criterion, since, rather than moralizing, they voiced a valid ethical critique, addressing the harmful normative order of the economy, which leads to wealth-induced political inequality and mass experiences of structural disrespect. Thirdly, while we must always be vigilant to oppose and critical against anti-Semitic elements of critique, I disagree that Occupy *et al.* expressed a critique based on anti-Semitism, consciously or unintentionally. Yes, these protests expressed proper negative injustice claims with regard to the market economy, without voicing proper solutions—or any solutions—about how to remedy these problems. But that is not an issue that undercuts their justified cause, or their efforts to reach emancipation from wealth induced political inequality.

6.4.3 “No one has the right to sleep in a park or take it over”

Lastly, I wish to address a critical perspective that condemns Occupy *et al.* because of their allegedly inappropriate practices. It is vital to address such criticism since my own positive

assessment focuses mainly on justifiable normative claims. But an objection to such reasoning can be that we must likewise focus on the protesters' practices and means—how they tried to realize their goals and express their claims. Protest practices might entirely contradict the positive values a movement wishes to promote, or undermine the creation of the better society activists aim to create. For instance, a fight for decent working hours does not justify the torture of managers, and would clearly raise doubts about the justifiability of this fight. In what follows, I focus on a speech of Michael Bloomberg—former mayor of New York City and its richest resident—as an example for such a critical perspective. Bloomberg ordered the eviction of the Occupy Wall Street campsite at Zuccotti Park, and later publicly justified his decision by attacking the inappropriateness of the movement's practices, saying:

No right is absolute and with every right comes responsibilities. The First Amendment gives every New Yorker the right to speak out – but it does not give anyone the right to sleep in a park or otherwise take it over to the exclusion of others – nor does it permit anyone in our society to live outside the law. There is no ambiguity in the law here – the First Amendment protects speech – it does not protect the use of tents and sleeping bags to take over a public space. Protestors have had two months to occupy the park with tents and sleeping bags. Now they will have to occupy the space with the power of their arguments (Abad-Santos 2011).

In other words, Bloomberg condemned the square occupations as lawless conduct that illegitimately excluded others. This critique can apply to any movements that blocks roads and squares, portraying their practices and related effects as undermining citizens' liberties, as disregarding equal access to public spaces, and as weakening the rule of law. Such charges were particularly challenging for movements for whom collective practices of solidarity (i.e., forming a freed, egalitarian space of respect) were their core ambitions. Bloomberg's view is thus relevant as a last critical perspective that doubts the justifiability of Occupy *et al.*

But what is the alleged inappropriateness of the Western square occupation movements? Primarily, Bloomberg seems to complain that protesters misused the freedoms of assembly and of speech granted by the US Constitution. By occupying squares, they restricted the freedoms of others, such as pedestrians who are restricted from walking through or staying in a park for pleasure. Further, he condemns such protests because activists used these practices to impose their political views on others, instead of democratically arguing for their ambitions. Thus, activists are accused of being lawless and of misusing freedom, and also of turning public places into a space where one group arbitrarily ruled without public approval, under the excuse that they were exercising their First Amendment rights.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

Bloomberg's critique is well formulated. However, I oppose his negative judgement and argue that his critique of Occupy *et al.*'s protest practices is too narrow.⁸⁸ The issue is that he sees protests only as an expression of freedom of speech, practices that are appropriate as long as protesters merely verbalize complaints in temporary assembly. But if protesters go beyond the use of words alone—e.g., if they occupy and sleep in a park—they are, in his view, misusing their rights and are no longer acting appropriately. However, the justification and the related appropriateness of such protest practices should not only be seen as stemming from the right to freedom of speech. Instead, these practices must also be seen as a way of resisting injustice, practices that can be justified since they can serve the higher good of addressing and overcoming a societal state of mass suffering from injustice. To clarify this view, let us briefly consider two examples. First, the Constitution of Germany contains a right to resist tyranny and protect the liberal democratic order:

All Germans shall have the right to resist any person [*gegen jeden*] seeking to abolish this constitutional order, if no other remedy is available (*Basic Law*, Article 20(4)).⁸⁹

And a similar idea is found in the beginning to the U.S. Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--[. . .]--That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness (*ADI*, 4 July 1776).⁹⁰

Undeniably, these are two very different texts. While the German Constitution provides a limited right to resist, the Declaration of Independence only contains the founding principles of the USA.⁹¹ The basis of laws in the United States of America is the US Constitution and its amendments, which do not contain such a right. Nonetheless, what interests me is the inspiring political and normative dimensions of these texts—one might say, documents of liberal modernity—namely, that both suggest that collective resistance is justifiable on the grounds of overcoming injustice, in order to alter or abolish unjust societal arrangements. I value such a view, as it resonates with recognition theory's idea that protests should not

⁸⁸ I am not interested in debating deeper legal arguments, but focus on normative arguments concerning the protest practices.

⁸⁹ *Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany*. In <https://www.bundestag.de/gg/> (last accessed August 27, 2022).

⁹⁰ *U.S. Declaration of Independence*. In <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript/> (last accessed August 27, 2022).

⁹¹ Also, when put in historical context and despite its emphatic language of resistance, the Declaration of Independence should be understood as promoting a right to self-government, rather than a right to resist unconstitutional tyranny.

simply be seen as an expression of opinions and speech acts in public, but as a reaction to mistreatment and shared experiences of injustice. Bloomberg neglects such a view, portraying protests only as expressions of freedom of speech by individuals—not a group that chooses collective expression—who lose their right to protest if, in addition to voicing a critique, they also try to practically resist injustice, such as when activists occupy squares in order to shift the public's attention to issues of inequality. In fact, he disregards the issue of what one should actually do if laws foster structural injustice, if formal means like elections or courts are unavailable or insufficient for urgently needed remediation. What is absent in his speech is that people often resist injustices that seem to have no other remedy but through breaking laws. This is vital to the role and mobilization of protest in civil society, and that role becomes invisible if we ask only if practices are legal and if all can speak freely. From a legalistic view, even Rosa Park's boycott of segregated seating laws on public transportation would be considered inappropriate, as this broke local and state laws regarding racial segregation.

These issues are at the heart of the debate over the justifiability of civil disobedience—widely understood as a public, non-violent, and conscientious breach of law undertaken with the aim of bringing about a change in laws or government policies. Those who engage in civil disobedience are seen to be willing to accept the legal consequences of their actions as proof of their fidelity to the rule of law (Delmas and Brownlee 2021). Following Rawls, political philosophers usually argue that citizens in reasonably just societies have a moral duty to obey laws exactly, since these societies seem to provide legal institutions that ensure all enjoy free and equal status as citizens, and complying with the laws of the society is a way of doing one's share to actualize that justice. Further, philosophers usually point out that the moral duty to obey the law also grounds political obligations to resist injustice (Delmas 2018, 48 f.). They argue that we should assist in the reparation, founding, and replacement of institutions if such arrangements do not exist (ibid., 2018, 73). Based on that reasoning, the (*pro-tanto*) duty to obey laws seen to assure freedom and equality provides justifications for joint resistance, if institutions flout that normative promise for others or for oneself, as the compliance with this *status quo* would amount to endorsing disrespect and violations of democratic equality, which is forbidden by the duty to do justice (Delmas 2018, 91). Thus, serious injustice—if sustained over time, affecting many people, systemically reproduced, inexpiable through normal means of political change or the justice system, etc.—can defeat the duty to obey laws and provides grounds to justify resistance in order to actualize the normative promises of liberal society.

In light of these arguments, even radical protest practices (those that go beyond verbally voicing complaints, and make use of illegal means) are justifiable if vital conditions are met:

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

while resisters should generally seek the least harmful course of action feasible to attain their legitimate goals (e.g., no blockades of roadways often used by ambulances getting ill people to care, or of fire exits) and should respect other's basic human interests (e.g., life and bodily integrity, each person's moral autonomy), Rawls famously raised the bar for the justified use of civil disobedience, requiring that such protest practices 1) target serious and long-standing injustice and appeal to widely accepted principles of justice, 2) be undertaken as a last resort, if no other remedy is available or seem insufficient, and 3) be done in coordination with other groups with similar grievances (Rawls 1971, 326–9). Such practices may cause trouble and costs for others (e.g., those that disagree feel threatened, bystanders experience interference in their daily lives, the affluent are forced to share their resources, or tyrants are forced to flee), but this is acceptable in this context, if resistance aims to protect or re-actualize the equal status and freedom of all (i.e., overcome or remedy serious injustice)—even against advocates of the existing, unjust order (cf., Delmas and Brownlee 2021).

Without diving into the details of this debate, I wish to highlight one more argument in favor of such special acts of resistance put forward by political philosopher Candis Delmas, underpinning the argument that Bloomberg's focus on legality and individual speech rights is too narrow when evaluating the appropriateness of square occupations. In *A Duty to Resist* (Delmas 2018), Delmas draws attention to a justification for civil disobedience that I deeply share, as it is based on the concept of self-respect, implicitly complementing the standard reasons in recognition theory as to why agents should rise up. Following Kant's concept of a duty to oneself, she argues that these protest practices are indeed justified as an effort to bring about societal change; but even if there is no hope of rectifying injustice, *a self-respecting person is compelled to resist* in order to manifest her conviction to herself and others that she has dignity and agency. Given the rational nature and related moral autonomy of humans and the many ways that oppression harms these capacities, radical protest practices should be seen as a way to assert and protect one's (self-)worth in the face of political and institutional relations that threaten or violate it (Delmas 2018, 186 f.).

One might say that this argument simply grounds the justification of civil disobedience in general beliefs among protestors. But note that these are additional lines of justification for such practices if the other conditions also are met, i.e., if formal means for remedying serious injustices of personal or institutional mistreatment are out of reach, and if there is nothing else a victim of injustice can do than to publicly assert her status as a self-respecting person

through radical, extra-legal actions.⁹² I am not offering a water-proof argument regarding the conditions under which civil disobedience is justifiable. I only wish to show that the outlined ways for justifying these protest practices—grounded as either a duty to assist justice, or to assert one's self-respect—suggest that Bloomberg's overall disapproval of practices that *conscientiously* breach law is much too narrow when assessing the appropriateness of a movement's protest. What bothers me is Bloomberg's disregard for the aspects of desperation and of radicality as a last resort of change for victims of injustice. Instead, when we apply the outlined justifications for civil disobedience to Occupy *et al.*, we can see that they met most of the related criteria (most importantly: proportionate means; other remedies are out of reach; and serious injustice), as follows.

First of all, they made use of *proportionate means*. They engaged in practices that were deliberately not harmful to the basic human interests of others and expressed deep respect for other citizens' equal status and moral agency. They typically blocked traffic, broke park rules, or ignored property laws in central city spaces (normally being used for business, tourism, and relaxation) without engaging in violent or permanently destructive activities such as breaking windows, looting, or street battles with the police. As shown in chapter 4 of this work, protesters mainly focused on prefigurative actions (4.2) and peaceful occupations that aimed at creating a better world in miniature, through assembly-based democracy, inclusive camps, and experimental spaces of respect. Their commitment to peaceful resistance was also stated in Occupy Wall Street's declaration: "Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone." (OWC 2011b) In fact, Occupy *et al.* were criticized for being too much like disorganized, clownish hippies, and for not suitably making definite claims (Ehrenberg 2017). One can almost say they were naively peaceful, as they did not engage in any significant resistance when most of their camps in the US and Europe were evicted.⁹³ Rather, they chose a harmless course of action to attain their goals and therefore score high with regard to the criterion of expressing respect for other's basic human interests; concerns about the disproportionate lawlessness of their protest are exaggerated.

Second, Occupy *et al.* had two good reasons for civil disobedience, since no other

⁹² Delmas shows that this argument can even justify *uncivil disobedience*—protest acts of principled disobedience that may or may not be communicative, and which violate one or more of the commonly accepted criteria of civility by being covert, violent, evasive, or offensive (Delmas 2018, 47f). Cases include animal rescue, sabotage, graffiti, leaks, hacktivism, guerrilla protest, or riots. All these acts must be examined and assessed on their own (Delmas and Brownlee 2021).

⁹³ A case in point for their peaceful resistance is visible in the documentary *All Day all Week*. See how Occupiers were non-violently resisting the camp eviction (from minute 1:28:50): <https://vimeo.com/172339354/> (last accessed June 13, 2022).

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

forms for remedying injustice were available or appeared sufficient. In the financial crisis of 2008 onward, most major center-left and center-right parties in Western countries aligned behind austerity politics and backed the rescue of large companies through public funding while cutting social welfare. Also, unions were too weak or too coopted by existing institutions to tackle the issues of wealth inequality and personal precariousness. As outlined in chapter 5, there seemed no relevant organization lobbying for the needs of the multitude of socially precarious people. Rising economic inequality seemed unstoppable, as did the political powerlessness of average citizens resulting from it, even when radical leftist parties were elected to office (e.g., Tsipras in Greece), since the hegemony of neoliberal parties and laws forced such electoral “winners” to accept social welfare cuts, mass unemployment, and an increasingly precarious financial state for many citizens who formerly enjoyed more security (e.g., in the EU). A lack of options that could have helped to push for more redistributive politics, accompanied by a hegemonical discourse claiming that there were no alternatives to austerity politics to end the world financial crises, must be seen as the societal background condition—or “post-democratic” setting (Crouch 2004)—that incited protesters to disbelief that formal political contestations (e.g., petitions, elections) would bring about any real and urgently necessary change. The occupation of central city squares was somewhat of a last resort to publicly resist welfare cuts and wealth-induced political inequality. A case in point is once again the statement of Occupy in Ithaca, New York State:

. . . Since we can no longer trust our elected representatives to represent us rather than their large donors, we are creating a microcosm of what democracy really looks like. [. . .] We feel we can no longer make our voices heard as we watch our votes for change usher in the same old power structure time and time again. This is the simplest, most effective democratic exercise we have left to employ . . . (OWC Ithaca, GA 2011c, 1)

Bloomberg, however, seems to have believed that protesters had better options to make their voices heard, saying after the eviction of the Zuccotti camp: “Now they will have to occupy the space with the power of their arguments.” (Abad-Santos 2011) He wanted Occupy activists to be good deliberative democrats that discuss with others about whose argument is better, and who seek for formal approval of their positions, instead of arbitrarily taking over spaces and forcing their views on others. However, this argument expresses ignorance, rather than honest worries about the appropriate means of democratic debate and protest practices. Given that non-affluent agents often suffer from insufficient collective power to efficiently lobby and call for their preferences in competition with affluent agents, requiring that they should not make use of civil disobedient practices can be seen as

preemptively depriving them of the few chances they really have left to make themselves heard politically. Considering that we live in conditions of growing economic and political inequality, in which major political decisions can increasingly not be made without the support of a substantial number of affluent people and supporting institutions (cf., Gilens and Page 2014), these arguments ideologically enforce (Haslanger 2012, 17 f) the deep structural disrespect for political equality in Western societies. Moreover, it seems inappropriate, to put it mildly, if one of the richest people in the world⁹⁴ criticizes peaceful protesters for inappropriately resisting inequality by occupying a park that is privately owned by a real estate firm and a bank.⁹⁵ Bloomberg's argument idealizes citizens' equal legal status by ignoring the political inequality made by wealth inequality. His speech forces us to ask: how can one effectively resist and realistically change anything about the power of "money in politics" (Christiano 2012) if citizens are limited to merely the power of polite and formal arguments? Given that extremely wealthy agents can be seen as the only real political agents whose preferences have influence in the machinery of institutional decision-makings (Chapter 5), arguments alone seem insufficient to bring about the necessary changes and overcome wealth-induced political inequality in Western countries. Instead, we need organization and collective action among the non-affluent that pushes for societal change, redistribution, and more strongly institutionalized social respect, even against the resistance of affluent defenders of the *status quo*. Thus, we have good reasons to think that Western square occupation protesters met the 'last resort' criterion, given that the absence of effective social-democratic distributive politics and a broad consensus in favor of austerity politics among major parties, which incited protesters to opt for more civilly disobedient interventions into the public debate over growing political and economic inequality.

This is not to say that Occupy *et al.* perfectly explained that they reliably evaluated the political system and could not find any possibility for change within it. In fact, it would seem questionably technical to insist that those who turn to civil disobedience must justify their claims to have reached a situation of last resort after assessing the likelihood of change through normal politics, as well as the feasibility of their own practices, with perfect clarity. Taken this way, the criterion is too demanding and could easily be used by opponents to postpone urgently needed remediation—possibly enforced through protests—by pointing to alleged unused internal possibilities for change. Bloomberg sets this trap with his accusations

⁹⁴ See Michael Bloomberg's, CEO, Bloomberg L.P., ranking in Forbes' daily updated list of the world's billionaires: <https://www.forbes.com/profile/michael-bloomberg/?sh=2b1760ea1417/> (last accessed June 13, 2022).

⁹⁵ More info to Zuccotti park can be found here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zuccotti_Park/ (last accessed June 13, 2022).

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

as well. The last-resort criterion should be used like this: if past actions, including those by others, have shown the majority to be immovable or apathetic, then further attempts may reasonably be thought fruitless, and the protesters may be confident civil disobedience is a last resort (Delmas and Brownlee 2021).

But what about the presence of serious and long-standing injustice that releases them from obeying laws? I argue that Occupy *et al.* also met this criterion for justifying civil disobedience. It should be clear by now that I assess and criticize our decades-old and growing societal state of grave wealth and income inequality as a severe issue of structural disrespect that systemically harms both the social base and the spirit of democratic equality. These circumstances can be experienced as the refusal of the state to provide appropriate conditions to ensure equal respect for political agency and participation regardless of economic status; the state fails to protect non-affluent agents in particular from the threat of domination by wealthy ones (see more in Chapter 5.2). Thus, Occupy *et al.* had a clear point and their civilly disobedient mass practices of taking over squares was a justifiable political action for that time. Contemporary wealth-induced political inequality and related structural disrespect for non-affluent citizens and neglect for their social vulnerability is a serious and long-standing injustice that harms the normative foundations of our liberal societies. It affects most of our public and private lives by, for instance, denying many citizens equal opportunities to socially advance through work or to make their political voices heard: but it also does harm by constraining access to affordable housing and health care—effects of growing economic inequality and an erosion of the welfare state in most Western countries.

It is unlikely that these socio-economic conditions will change any time soon, given the self-enforcing motion in which current *political* inequality (favoring the policy preferences of the rich) creates even more *economic* inequality in the future. Given this cycle of injustice, Occupy *et al.* had legitimate goals when they sought to defeat the power of the wealthy 1% in society, and called for real democracy without structural disrespect for equal political status. Protesters reasonably engaged in mass civil disobedience as they rightly assumed that they were, in most cases, politically invisible and that their individual voices would carry more weight when they joined forces and occupied city squares. By squatting and interrupting the hot spots of wealth-based political power such as Wall Street, Frankfurt's banking district, or the City of London⁹⁶, they symbolically showed that such injustice can and must be addressed

⁹⁶Note that the space that Occupy London chose was not only a center of world finance, but also the area around St. Paul's Cathedral. This was a highly symbolic choice, as this cathedral is one of the most famous sights of London and of public life

transnationally. By creating new democratic forums in these areas, they were pushing society to take political and economic inequality seriously after decades of neoliberal neglect. These movements shifted public attention to a serious societal issue that would remain unaddressed if they had merely raised their voices. Bloomberg is wrong that protesters should only make use of the power of arguments. They rightfully engaged in mass civil disobedience with regard to an urgent matter for which no remedy seemed available, and for which no remedy seems available to this day.

The Bloomberg condemnation of the Western square occupation movements thus seems unconvincing. Protesters rightfully engaged in disobedient practices because grave economic injustice effectively counters the duty to obey the law and confronts citizens with conditions of injustice that provide justifications to jointly resist in order to actualize the key normative principles of our liberal societies, such as equal respect for the political agency of citizens. By occupying the central spaces of power created through wealth-induced political inequality and forming alternative spaces of direct democracy, the movement's protesters asserted their own self-respect and dignity, and, in the short term, transformed a space that is often reserved for commercial interest, private ownership, and the display of societal power and status into one of equal citizenship and social solidarity. Their practices and means embodied the positive values these movements wished to promote, and, also involved those that were economically precarious and perceived themselves as the victims of neoliberal economic policies.

6.5 Concluding Remarks: There is no success like failure

In this chapter, I have shown why we can assess the Western square occupation movements as justified struggles for recognition. Their efforts against social disenfranchisement and wealth-induced inequality should be seen as good kinds of movement struggles, since they aimed to improve modern-day recognition relationships and states of affairs. They were justified, as they strove to maintain existing levels of respect for each's social status and wage-based esteem; as they aimed to lessen political exclusion and extend chances for people to identify as actors with equal voices; and as they tried to strengthen and facilitate greater autonomy for all in society through overcoming the tension between capitalist inequality and democratic equality.

Instead of assessing these movements only with regard to protesters' good intentions

in the city, and has resonance throughout English history. Whereas Occupy London symbolically blocked access to the financial site, they did not block access to St. Paul's. Instead, they formed a working relationship with the cathedral's clergy.

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

and the ways that their normative claims promoted the right values, I also discussed critical perspectives on Occupy *et al.*, namely, 1) Fraser's charges that these movements were unsustainable, undemocratic, and domination-enhancing, 2) Ehrenberg's judgment that they were a complete failure, as they did not achieve any changes, and 3) those views that criticized them for ignorance of additional forms of inequality, of anti-Semitism, and of using inappropriate means. In contrast to these criticisms, I argued that the Western square occupation movements were justified as their joint efforts were reasonable and sensible responses to serious societal injustices. I offered the following arguments against their criticisms, further illuminating recognition theory's evaluative approach and the criteria against which we should evaluate movements' justifiability, as follows.

First, I disagreed with Fraser that a social movement should be evaluated regarding the institutional applicability and sustainability of their political proposals—i.e., against the feasibility of their positive claims about how to remedy injustice. This criterion can be unfairly used to delegitimize movements by depicting their participants as incompetent and as troublemakers. Instead, we should start by assessing a movement's negative claims about injustice and appreciate their critique without expecting immediate solutions. In this way, we avoid epistemic injustice and the stripping away a vital function of movements: to offer space for those who suffer from injustice and attempt to raise their voices, thereby alerting the public to problems and starting a collective learning process to acknowledge these problems, even if this acknowledgement does not deliver fixed remedies. Occupy *et al.* might fall short of offering suitable policy proposals; but since they did not aim to dismantle the fabric of coexistence or endorse the threat of chaos, their justifiability should not be negatively judged as offering an unclear idea of functional sustainability. What matters more—I argued—is that they alerted society of serious injustices and expressed justified negative claims.

Second, while I agreed with Fraser that a movement's relation to democracy is vital in assessing its justifiability, I disagreed that we should require movements to include as many groups within the society as possible in order to be deemed truly democratic. Instead, I argued that we should rather evaluate whether movements organize around the principle of equal respect for the political agency of their participants. Against this criterion, the Western Square occupation movements score high, since they were an inspiring case of bottom-up, consensual democracy in practice. In activities and community spaces, they expressed a deep respect for participants' political agency, extending the principle of egalitarian inclusion and equal voice. In fact, they aimed for a further inclusion of more people into current democratic decision-making through forming counter-cultural spaces of direct participation on public squares.

Third, just as it is not persuasive to require that Occupy *et al.* represent the broad diversity of society within their organizations, I showed that it is also not convincing to depict these movements—as Fraser did—as falling short on the non-domination criterion, saying that those with lots of time and resources to engage in assemblies would be capable of enforcing their views on those without such time and resources. I criticized that it is uncharitable to portray protesters that experiment with participatory forms of politics in reaction to a crisis of liberal democracy as blameworthy agents that cause exclusion as an unintended side effect of their imperfect organizational practices. It is discouraging well-meant democratic practices that did not aim to substitute for, but to complement, existing political structures.

In general, I showed that the way that Fraser is applying her normative framework to Occupy *et al.* is unfortunate, since her reasoning suggests that these movements are unjustified since they should have engaged in public policy-making, since she rejects their assembly-democracies as inapplicable to institutions, and since she condemns their hypothetical unintended side-effects. My contrary claim is that a movement's justifiability does not depend on its ability to propose feasible policies, or its ability to clearly predict the future positive changes it may initiate, but primarily depends on whether a movement promotes liberation from injustice in both its claims and practices, and honors non-domination and democracy within its organizations.

I directed a similar criticism, *fourth*, against Ehrenberg's view that a movement should be evaluated regarding its ability to impact power politics and effect institutional change, and that Occupy *et al.* are a total failure as they did not achieve such change. I argued that we should abandon such a normative language. Instead, we should grant these movements space to fail, propose corrections instead of dismissing incomplete proposals, and facilitate joint learning processes. Most importantly, we should begin our assessments with figuring out if a movement is in line with what we really value—i.e., if a movement expresses emancipatory negative claims and sound critiques concerning real injustices. Questions concerning a movement's strategies and efficiency should be secondary, as a movement can be emancipatory in purpose but inefficient in its early actions and campaigns. Such issues are unfortunate, but they are not reasons to think that we should stop supporting a movement.

In contrast to both Fraser and Ehrenberg, I thus argued that we should still evaluate the Western square occupation movements as justified, as they a) expressed sound social critique with regard to the violation of assured welfare rights and accustomed levels of esteem, and the structural disrespect for political status due to increasing economic inequality, b) valued non-

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

domination within their organizations and modeled respect for equal status among citizens, and c) their positive claims and proposals relate sensibly to these injustice-claims in calling for the defense of welfare achievements, in experimenting with more direct and egalitarian forms of participation, and in their goal of protecting democracy against utilitarian market logic.

Fifth, I discussed critical perspectives that charged Occupy *et al.* with only addressing one form of inequality, and that their attempts within their organizations to be inclusive were unsatisfactory along class, race, and gender inequality lines. I agreed that Occupy *et al.* can be criticized for unintentionally reproducing such exclusions, considering that they attempted to create an egalitarian space for the exercise of direct democracy and more respect for the equal political status of their fellows and other citizens. Nevertheless, I argued that this does not simply negatively affect the justifiability of their struggle. More important is how a movement deals with internal critique. In that regard, I showed that Occupy *et al.* and its participants might have been naïve, but they did not shy away from addressing issues. Instead, they acted as good movements should act. Various of their offshoots and structures exhibited a crucial degree of openness to recognizing issues and a willingness to learn about how to gradually overcome internal deficits and power inequities. I showed that they tried to create a collective space of awareness, where participants were not under the illusion that they would be immediately free from relations of oppression, but attempted to address intersecting forms of inequality, learn from each other, and aimed to slowly create spaces in which unequal treatment is no longer accepted. If Occupy *et al.* had actively aimed for, intended to practice, or practiced exclusions along class, gender, racial, or other exclusionary lines, and had refused to acknowledge these inequalities (e.g., silencing internal critics) or rejected engagement in such self-critical learning processes, they clearly deserve to be blamed for following a harmful path. Yet, Occupy *et al.* exhibited openness to learning about how power inequities affected themselves, and to tackling these issues together; this, combined with their justified initial cause illustrates their ongoing emancipatory potential as well as the worth of politically supporting them.

Sixth, I also debated those that criticized these movements for showing flashes of anti-Semitism. I argued that, although we must be aware of the threat of a personalizing critique of capitalism, in fact, anti-Semitic anticapitalism—a crucial issue in times of the rise of fascist politics—we should not require victims of unfair market relations and activists who support them to be highly articulate and knowledgeable before voicing negative claims about economic injustice. We should acknowledge intuitions about injustice, and not directly negate

them and demand affect-free protest reactions. Instead, I suggested that as long as protesters' social critique and core values are justified, and as long as they address real issues and dismiss conspiracy theories, we should give them the benefit of the doubt and work alongside them as they channel their feelings, trying to reach a deeper understanding of the economy together. Occupy *et al.* did relate to real issues, and showed how markets undo meritocracy, autonomy, and equality. They neither engaged in harmfully personalizing and ethnicizing the flaws of capitalism, nor were anti-Semitic conspiracies part of their political ideologies and slogans.

Lastly, I criticized the view that the Western Square Occupation movements made use of inappropriate protest practices, and engaged in conduct that illegitimately excluded others. In contrast, I argued that protesters made use of proportionate means and had good reasons for their civil disobedient practices, as no other forms for remedying injustice were available or seemed sufficient. Protesters justifiably engaged in radical practices as they rightly assumed that they were, usually, politically invisible and that their individual voices would carry more weight when they joined forces and occupied squares. By squatting and interrupting the hot spots of wealth-based political power such as Wall Street, Frankfurt's banking district, or the City of London, they shifted public attention to serious issues that might have remained unaddressed if they had merely raised their voices. I argued that grave economic injustice effectively counters the moral duty to obey the law and confronts citizens with conditions of injustice that provide justifications to jointly resist in order to actualize the key normative principles of our liberal society, such as equal respect for the political agency of all citizens. Thus, protesters rightfully engaged in civil disobedience with regard to an urgent matter for which no remedy seemed available, and for which no remedy seems available to this day.

To conclude, although the Western square occupation movements appear naïve in their attempt to fight wealth-induced inequality through building a better world on squares and through assembly-based democracy—while at the same time retreating from most established forms of leftist oppositional politics—what actually matters is whether we can agree with their negative claims regarding injustice in society and believe these protesters follow a justified cause. We should approach them in a less demanding way, and see them primarily as a seismograph of ongoing problems, negative societal trends, and urgent attempts to resist injustices. Although they may have been utopian with regard to institutional change, Occupy *et al.* started the largest protest wave since the sixties. Their protests were carried on by offshoots around the globe, which connected local citizens with issues that have continued to be relevant, and unleashed ongoing political energy and awareness to fight ever-growing economic inequality as a main threat to social justice, democracy, and freedom. It was the

Understanding and Justifying Square Occupation Movements

beginning of a movement trajectory that we are still in: the transnational struggle against structural disrespect for each's equal political status, and over the social embedding and democratization of the market economy. If we employ such a charitable view, we will not neglect the positive value of these movements and will have better chances to convince the public about the virtue of Indignados, and Occupy *et al.*'s efforts. A recognition theory view incites us to learn from the streets and listen to protesters normative claims for understanding the social harms and everchanging effects of market forces on people's lives. It incites us to put square occupation movements into a bigger picture and understand that their struggle over wealth-induced political inequality continues. Or, in the words of Bob Dylan with which I like to end: "... there's no success like failure, ..." (*Love Minus Zero/No Limit*, 1965)

In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at bad kinds of movements, scrutinizing whether such cases should also be conceptualized as struggles for recognition.

PART 3
BACK TO THE THEORY

Chapter 7

Can Struggles for Recognition be Evil?

“... evil is never ‘radical’, [...] it is only extreme, and [...] it possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension. It can overgrow and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface. It is “thought-defying”, ...”

—Hannah Arendt, *Letter to Gerhard Scholem*

In the prior chapter, I have argued that we should see the Western square occupation movements as justifiable recognition struggles. They are worthy of support as they strive to defend existing levels of social-status respect and wage-based esteem, as they offer counter spaces of alternative recognition and fight for egalitarian inclusion into democracy, and as they try to combat wealth-induced political inequality through socializing and democratizing the market-economy. In fact, they are worthy of support as they seek to improve existing recognition relations and -states of affairs through lessening democratic exclusion and lifting everyone’s chances to build personal self-respect and esteem as well as experience greater autonomy in society’s division of labor.

However, evaluating Occupy and Indignados *et al.* as ‘good kinds’ of movements raises the question of whether recognition-led movement struggles can also be ‘bad and harmful’, and should be opposed. What about cases where protesters react to actual injustice but voice claims that blatantly disrespect others’ human rights, fight to overcome democracy, and commit hate crimes? In other words, what about ‘evil’ protests and claimants? These questions disclose a research gap in recognition theory.

Let me say something brief about *evil*. I will use this term broadly in this chapter. As I see it, ‘evil’ refers to the willful acts and deliberative negligence of protesters with regard to causing harm to others, as manifested in exclusion, disenfranchisement, increased risk of personal oppression, discrimination, and exposure to life-threatening risks, up to and including dehumanization and human rights violations. This term emphasizes ill-intentioned actions and aims at the heart of bad kinds of movements, rather than depicting their flaws as unintended side effects. Does it sound alarmist to refer to movements with the loaded concept of evil? Of course, it does! But this is needed at this moment. Given the worldwide upswing of right-wing demagogues, who are either explicitly neofascist or drawing on fascist forms of

grievance and action, growing nationalistic sentiment, the weakening of internationalist institutions like the UN and the European Union, the war against Ukraine on behalf of an illiberal petrostate, and movements of denial of climate catastrophe, we need to be alarmed—or to be panicked, as activist Greta Thunberg has expressed it—about political forces that seek change for the worse. The loaded concept of evil supplies the motivational reasons that are necessary to raise awareness of serious issues related to protest movements that are deliberately harmful and will likely continue to be so.

Although it is not hard to see that my proposed evaluative approach can be used to separate justified from unjustified protests, there are issues that often hinder us from developing this phenomenologically broader account, based in recognition theory. As mentioned earlier, one issue is that *Honneth himself never applied recognition theory to bad cases* like neofascist or authoritarian protest movements. On one occasion, Honneth interprets right-wing populist movements as anti-globalist uprisings, but without a single word about how to apply recognition theory to these uprisings.⁹⁷ Yes, there are sections in his work where he links participation in collective violence as well as the rise of regressive authoritarian groupings to people's conflictive need for in-group esteem and the longing to feel embedded in a community (Honneth 2010, 261—279). Also, there are sections where he examines male dominance in the private sphere as compensative activities for respect denied in the market sphere, and argues that women's modern liberation sparked new types of "wild" struggles of men seeking for new compensations (cf., Honneth 2011, 13). At another point, he picks up psychological explanations for the rise of fascism in Europe after World War I, linking this to the toxic effects of anxiety (Honneth 2007c, 180 ff). Additionally, he addresses a collective feeling of humiliation after the treaty of Versailles, and the misuse of love for political leaders as a tool to turn people into a controllable mass, as aspects of such an explanation (Honneth 2014, 316 ff). Lastly, there are sections where he portrays racism as an *habitus* that refuses to identify certain people as humans (cf., Honneth 2001; and 2006; 2015a, 95). However, these are just theoretical fragments, which do not point to a clear-cut explanation and critical evaluation of bad kinds of movements.

Another reason for recognition theory's peculiar silence about evil protest claimants is *Honneth's one-sided focus* on those social movements that are broadly perceived to have helped to improve modern society and make it more just (e.g., labor, feminist, or civil rights

⁹⁷ See Honneth's remark during a panel debate in 2018 about Adorno's text to right-wing radicalism (from minute 27:00): <https://www.normativeorders.net/de/component/content/article/69-veranstaltungen/7375-die-gesellschaftlichen-voraussetzungen-des-faschismus-dauern-fort-zur-aktualitaet-adornos/> (last accessed June 8, 2022).

movements). He links his analyses of these social movements to an overall history of progress in western societies (cf., Honneth 2012, 273). This phenomenological narrowness creates the misleading impression that the recognition-based approach is only applicable to good kinds of movements, i.e., those that have a justifiable cause. Instead, throughout this work I have shown that recognition theory does not apply only to a particular type of movement. This theory is accompanied by an explanatory and evaluative approach that can be applied to all kinds of movements, making sense of their motivating reasons to rise up as well as assessing the justifiability of their normative claims.

Another reason for recognition theory's silence about bad kinds of movements might be *confusion over its thick concept*.⁹⁸ Beyond being simply descriptive, the concept of a struggle for recognition comes with evaluative patterns. Given that recognition is a vital human need which all deserve to enjoy to some extent, protesters that claim to struggle for recognition appear to be following a noble cause. Their struggles do not seem driven by corrupting forces like desires for power or money, but rather seem based on dignity, asserting that they have worth that is not yet properly affirmed by society. However, it is important to not confuse recognition theory's approaches and principles of justice with its thick concept. The complaints from those who feel maltreated cannot just be self-validating (due to issues of manipulation) and their recognition-expectations can be unjustified (e.g., an exaggerated expectation of supremacy). The victims of misrecognition may fight in reaction to injustice; but if they aim, for instance, for the annihilation of another group and or for the founding of a dictatorship, it seems wrong to assess them as a justified movement that is worthy of support.

In sum, mix-ups between recognition theory's twofold approach and its thick concept, Honneth's overemphasis on societal progress, and also his phenomenological narrowness cause obscurities when analyzing harmful and bad kinds of social movements. The result is that the application of recognition theory to such cases is insufficiently theorized and conceptually unclear. Given this unsatisfying research gap, some theorists see the need for further reflection and already attempt to go beyond the bounds of Honneth's account. For instance, Christopher F. Zurn assesses right-wing populist movements with recognition theory lenses (Zurn 2022). Also, critical theorist Volker Heins examines the motivational drives of anti-immigration movements and displays their bad impact on the civil sphere (Heins *et al.*, 2019), while Francis Fukuyama argues that these movements should be seen as recognition led struggles of those suffering from precarious labor and social neglect (Fukuyama 2018).

⁹⁸ A term expresses a thick concept if it expresses a specific evaluative concept that is also substantially descriptive.

These are valuable contributions responding to the questions outlined above: How should we apply recognition theory to bad and harmful social movements? What characterizes such cases, and should they be conceptualized as struggles for recognition? Most importantly, what resources do we have to criticize evil protesters and claimants?

In this chapter, I will try to respond to these issues in two ways: by debating strengths and weaknesses of the mentioned contributions, and by applying my twofold recognition theory approach to concrete movement cases that were widely perceived in public as harmful and bad. I take advantage of the theory's evaluative approach to make judgements about the justifiability of movements and the values associated with them.

I will first address the protest against national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, then the German anti-immigrant movement PEGIDA, and lastly the rise of right-wing populist movements. In contrast to my analyses of the Western square occupation movements, these analyses will be less detailed. They are small, illustrative case studies that will point to open normative and conceptual issues in my twofold recognition theory framework. Analyses of these cases will help to update this framework, while clarifying its explanatory and evaluative strengths.

7.1 COVID-19 Protests and Justified Denials of Recognition

In August 2020, almost 40,000 people rallied in the streets of Berlin against Germany's measures to control the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a summer of relaxation and easing of measures. Yet, after many weeks of rigorous lockdown and social contact restrictions, it was also a summer of rage. The mass demonstration in the German capital was aimed against curfews, vaccinations, and the obligation to wear masks, and protesters demanded the removal of all contact restrictions. A rare social mix of vaccination opponents, pandemic deniers, esoteric groups, and those that have been laid off in the lockdown, but also Neo-fascists and *Reichsbürger* (extreme right-wing activists that see themselves as citizens of the old German Empire) took to the streets and voiced shared grievances against freedom restrictions and an alleged Corona-Dictatorship. This diffuse protest network—often also referred to as “anti-Corona” protest movement⁹⁹—struggled against Germany's pandemic control measures and for a quick return to normal life (Tagesschau 2020).

⁹⁹ Referring to them as *anti-Corona* movement sounds false, since no one can protest and direct claims against a virus, which, after all, does not care about complaints. It seems more adequate to say that people protest against preventative measures to control a pandemic, against government enforcement of those measures, and against mandatory vaccination. In fact, this is how I refer to this movement and their aims. However, a relevant part of their supporters claim the virus is a hoax and are

It is important that this movement was certainly seen by large parts of the public as a bad one, and that its practices were seen as harmful protests. Why is that? Recognition theory can help us justify this view, while making sense of the uprising of these otherwise divergent groups. In fact, COVID-19 protests against pandemic restrictions appear tailor-made for recognition theory's twofold approach. To begin with, consider that freedom of work and assembly, and to freely move in public to meet friends and family are significant personal liberties and the source of those social conditions necessary to experience a meaningful life. These entitlements are appreciated by most citizens in liberal societies and assured through a range of formal civic rights. Also, such legally-assured freedoms should be understood as society's institutionalized respect for citizens' autonomy and affirmation for each person as an accepted member of a community (cf., Honneth 2012, 127). Therefore, it is not hard to grasp that constraining such freedoms can be experienced both as a limitation of one's options for action, and also as disrespect for personal autonomy and as disenfranchisement. The sudden removal of legal entitlements one was used to, and which were previously seen as unconditionally assured and important for evolving one's agency, can be deeply destabilizing for a person's social identity and make one feel disregarded by society. Thus, pandemic-related freedom restrictions not only revealed economic divisions in society, but also emotional vulnerabilities.

Being forced to be unsociable is extremely distressing for humans. Many experienced lockdowns and coerced home office settings as huge impositions, suffering from cramped living conditions, poor homeschooling for children, and fears of bankruptcy and job loss. For some, the Covid-19 restrictions turned life upside down and were experienced as isolation and unfreedom. Unsurprisingly, such events offered a motivational base for protest. Curfews, mask mandates, vaccinations, and other measures were experienced by some as unjustified freedom restrictions, expressions of society's disrespect for one's autonomy, and an entire deprivation of one's civic rights, sparking a *struggle to defend one's formerly enjoyed liberties*. In short, we can make sense of the COVID-19 protest movement by drawing on a key insight of recognition theory: their struggle can be seen as caused by shared experiences of disrespect for citizens' personal autonomy, i.e., as a mass denial of respect-recognition.

There is another recognition dimension in these protests. In times of crisis, especially in a state of pandemic emergency when one's normal life seems to vanish, gathering with others in public space should be understood as a joint attempt to overcome a range of negative

protesting against a conspiracy. This is why I use the terms 'anti-Corona' and 'Covid-19 protest movements' interchangeably.

emotions. Meeting, debating, and protesting with like-minded people offer the chance to not feel alone and to reduce sensations of isolation, political disorientation, and powerlessness. Thus, as in the case of the Western square occupation movements, we should see these protest activities as an attempt to form a countercultural space of compensatory recognition and as an end in itself for the participants. Meeting up when public meetings are not recommended (or prohibited during a pandemic), can be seen as a disobedient way to form social space, where people seek meaning for lockdown-related trauma and jointly protest against those who appear responsible for their social misery (Döbber 2021). Such activities incite people to form collective interpretations that offer orientation and an illusion of clarity in times of crises. Also, these actions are compensatory as ways to support ingroup esteem and to overcome the experienced denial of respect by society. Further, they are an end in themselves ways to directly satisfy the goal of feeling more socially embedded and no longer isolated.

However, grasping that anti-Corona protesters in the streets of Berlin aim to overcome negative emotions caused by experienced disrespect, and that they demand suitable recognition from society for their status as autonomous agents, does not mean that they rightfully complain. My analysis above draws on recognition theory's explanatory approach, examining both social causes and protesters' motivating reasons. But we should not mistake these explanations for justifications. Although being restricted in one's freedom and feeling isolated is not desirable and can surely spark motivations to overcome such a socio-emotional state, negative experiences and related feelings alone do not provide sufficient ground for justifying movement protest. The more important issue is whether an experienced denial of respect for personal autonomy was justified or not. Rather than assuming that it is always legitimate to refuse to accept a feeling of injustice when it is socially produced (Renault 2019, 60), recognition theorists must critically assess negative claims about injustice and related experiences, as these claims can rest on wrong expectations, biases, confusions, and manipulation. Applied to this case, the justifiability and support worthiness of the anti-Corona protest also depends on the normative issue as to whether restricting citizens' liberties as a measure against the pandemic is justifiable or not.

This tricky policy issue cannot be sufficiently answered here. Instead, I wish to highlight some counter-arguments against protesters' negative claims that Germany's Covid-19 measures were unjustified limitations of citizens' freedom. First, no right is absolute. Legal entitlements come with duties towards others, and one's freedom rights must be at least limited sufficiently to permit others to have equal opportunity to practice the same. In that sense, Honneth describes real freedom in social coexistence as anchored in mutual, self-

conscious restrictions of one's aims for others (Honneth 2012, 30 ff; 125 ff). In fact, it does not seem reasonable to demand absolute freedom, but rather to demand a form of freedom that does not harm others, i.e., limited freedom. For instance, the right to freely move in public is abused if one drives like a maniac, crosses all red lights, and brings other lives into jeopardy. Moreover, personal liberties should not only be restricted by others' liberties but can be restricted based on other normative principles. For instance, the right to freely wear guns can imperil the right to bodily integrity and society's duty to protect citizens' lives by permitting vigilantism. In fact, the basic human interest in maintaining biological existence and related legal entitlements seems to normatively precede freedom rights, as one cannot exercise such rights if dead. To cite the German Constitution: the right to life is the vital basis of human dignity and prerequisite for all other fundamental rights (*Basic Law*, Article 2 (2)). Following this line of thought, we have good reasons to think that personal liberties ought also to be restricted by everyone's right to life and bodily integrity (as expressed in the duty to not physically harm or kill anyone).

I take it that the right to life, in particular, is a central normative principle for the justification of measures against the Covid-19 pandemic. The German state has the duty to protect citizens' lives, and decided in consultation with leading epidemiologists and ethicists that partial and temporary (not infinite) restrictions of personal liberties were justified as the effected decrease in societal interaction could save numerous citizens' lives. Given a lethal virus that spreads rapidly, restricting everyone's freedom was justified in light of a greater good: the safety of human lives. It was a helpful tool serving a legitimate purpose for which no other remedy was in reach at a time when vaccines were not yet available. Hence, a partial and temporary denial of respect for personal autonomy seems justifiable as a means to protect the basic human interest to survive: it recognizes citizens' right to life and bodily integrity. This conclusion fine-tunes my proposed normative framework: We now see that though respect-recognition is unconditional (it does not have to be earned), it is not absolute. In extraordinary contexts like a state of emergency, it can be justified to deny respect-recognition, as making respect-recognition primary can conflict with more important principles.

Thus, even though Germany's burdensome lockdown measures against the Covid-19 pandemic were experienced by many as serious limitations of personal liberties and came with vast relational, financial, and emotional impositions, this alone does not mean that protests against the measures was justifiable. These protests must be assessed against the justifiability of the recognition denial protesters are complaining about. Yet, given that pandemic-related freedom restrictions can be assessed as a justified denial of respect-

recognition for personal autonomy to protect citizens' lives, the negative claims of protesters about experienced injustice lose their normative grounds and seem less justifiable. Put differently, though they felt unjustly treated, their claims and outrage are not accurately tracking moral truth.¹⁰⁰

Please note that this is not a global statement. Though freedom restrictions here seem justifiable, these restrictions can intersect with issues along the lines of class, race, and gender injustices. For instance, it would be unjust to impose a curfew without securing the material subsistence of citizens. Job loss, precarity, social dependency, or hunger can here create more reasonable experiences of injustice. There are nations where poverty grew strongly in the population during lockdowns (e.g., Brazil), as governments ignored the need for social safety nets. In such cases, states violate their duty of social care, leaving people behind with two bad options: being either sick or poor; both options can put lives seriously at risk. But in the German case, the German government provided social support, business maintenance, and vast financial compensations for everyone's temporary loss of freedom and income, aiming to combat socio-economic insecurity during the lockdowns (Rucht 2020). Under the then-existing conditions—that gatherings and citizens' interaction cause the spread of a lethal virus as well as that no other remedy was in reach—the German government's freedom restrictions appear proportional, effective, temporary, and thus justifiable.

One might object and assert that COVID-19 protests were justifiable, as participants used their right to protest as a political corrective to support the development of better, more suitable means of responding to the pandemic that might ensure a more proportional response while still securing citizens' bodily integrity, economic security, and personal liberty as much as possible. But such a view is deceptive. Instead of using their legitimate right to protest positively, as might be the case if they demanded more social or gender justice in context of home office settings or demanded support for forming aid networks for the most vulnerable strata of society,¹⁰¹ the anti-Corona protests' actions were mostly destructive. In their positive claims they largely focused on the removal of restrictions, advocating for a concept of cynical, negative freedom that rejects responsibilities for others and related public constraints. From the onset of their protests, they insisted on being again able to exercise all personal liberties, although this could be on the expense of others' health and lives. Their cynical freedom was notably expressed in their protest slogan "We are the second Wave", implicitly

¹⁰⁰ I would like to thank once again Christopher F. Zurn for bringing this helpful differentiation to my attention.

¹⁰¹ A positive counter-example is the German solidarity movement "Leave no one behind", which organized support for refugees and called for a fair distribution of vaccines and financial aid during the pandemic: <https://www.campact.de/corona/> (last accessed August 23, 2022).

Back to the Theory

admitting that their exercise of freedom to assembly would probably spread the lethal virus. In that sense, they fostered ignorance regarding a key principle for justifying protests: basic respect for others' rights to life and to be bodily unharmed. One may argue that they fought to protect individual autonomy and thus met a crucial recognition norm. But their idea of freedom bluntly undercut recognition theory's inherent idea of universality and mutuality.¹⁰² Instead of assuring autonomy for all, they implicitly promoted the law of the strong and healthy, and the survival of the fittest. Rather than encouraging self-conscious restrictions of personal aims for others, they fostered ignorance, egoism, and freedom without responsibility. Their struggle in the defense of society's respect for citizens' autonomy was not only unjustifiable with regard to their negative claims about alleged experiences of disrespect, but also did not satisfy the normative principle of securing or increasing individual autonomy for everyone in society.

Another reason why the protests were unjustifiable can be found in the counter-cultural space of compensatory recognition created by the protesters. Though gathering and protesting together in public did have a socio-emotional utility for those who felt maltreated and morally injured by Covid-19 restrictions, aiding them to overcome feelings of isolation or identity collapse, such practices also had a downside. Instead of just empowering each other to better cope with a societal state of emergency, the protesters' space of mutual understanding quickly turned into a vicious sphere that amplified fake news and assigning false responsibilities. Many participants turned their anger about restrictions and feelings of powerlessness into blind rage against the government. Instead of grasping that state institutions were using precautions to fight a lethal virus, protesters saw the state as the actual enemy that was stealing their liberty and arbitrarily prohibiting them from joining forces. Many saw themselves struggling against the creation of an alleged Corona-Dictatorship or Fourth Reich. Protesters projected their anger and fear about an invisible, viral enemy that threatens society onto a visible enemy: the coercive power of the state. Further, fighting restrictions and reclaiming personal liberties led many into a general denial of the pandemic. Activists engaged in spreading anti-lockdown conspiracies and expressed the belief that the actual purpose of all measures was to oppress citizens and to enrich the wealthy by maneuvering public funding into private financial and health services. Such activities are problematic since they brutalize public discourse, producing false enemies inside society. Also, spreading false claims undermined the protesters' ability to position claims as

¹⁰² Honneth elaborates on deficient concepts of individualist freedom in his recent book *Die Armut unserer Freiheit* (2020).

communicative contributions to public policy debates. Instead, their claims appeared disconnected from a shared societal reality and aimed only at polarization. The public officials they addressed could not properly refer to and react to their claims (since they were based on deliberate misinformation), diminishing the public credibility of the protesters.

Beyond the failure to position protest as a communicative contribution to public debates and ignoring empirical adequacy, a further evil downside emerges with regard to this movement spreading false claims: many observers were concerned (e.g., Jee 2021) that, in the context of their Covid-19 conspiracy stories, anti-Semitic narratives were gaining traction and that far-right activists were working hard to convert anti-lockdown ideas to blunt anti-Semitism¹⁰³ (i.e., the ideology that a small, rich, and ethnically Jewish group seeking to control and destroy white, Christian societies is arranging a mass deception to enrich themselves). Antisemitism in the Corona protests was particularly noticeable with regard to a popular jacket patch (a yellow star of David) worn by several German protesters, with the label “Unvaccinated”, a claim that there was a parallel between the public disapproval of their protests and the prosecution of Jews by Nazis. These practices were often amplified by voicing Holocaust trivializations by seeing themselves the ‘new Jews’ and drawing invidious parallels. In fact, anti-Corona protesters were ignoring and accepting the participation of far-right groups in their movement. The highpoint of that issue was the storming of the entrance zone of the German parliament building by loads of Neo-Nazis on the fringes of the main anti-Corona demonstration in August 2020. (Hillje 2020)

The unjustifiability of the anti-Corona movement’s struggles became apparent as they incited hatred against parts of the population and were willingly hijacked by far-right activists, who utilized their mass protests to publicly damage symbols of liberal democracy and openly promote anti-Semitism. Thus, their alleged struggle in defense of respect for citizens’ freedom also does not meet recognition theory’s key principle of securing or increasing egalitarian inclusion into societal institutions. Instead, they incited discrimination and hatred, boosted attitudes of disrespect for others in society and thus reduced the chances of people in general to identify with skills and form a positive identity.

Coming back to the initial question about whether struggles for recognition can be evil, the answer now seems clear: yes, they can. I offered various arguments to assess the anti-Corona movement as an *unjustifiable struggle for recognition in the defense of accustomed respect for autonomy*. On the one hand, I showed that we can base our understanding of these

¹⁰³ Anti-Semitism here generally refers to hostility, prejudice towards, and discrimination against Jewish people. Antisemitic dog whistles are also hidden behind coded language, such as using the words ‘globalists’ or ‘cabal of elites’ instead of ‘Jews’.

protests on shared experiences of a denial of respect. On the other hand, I argued that these protests violated recognition theory's principles of justice and created harm for others by undermining citizens' equal freedom, ignoring empirical adequacy, and spreading anti-Semitic narratives, and thus increasing social exclusion (i.e., moral evils that do result from both the positive aims and negative negligence of the protesters' activities). Furthermore, these protests were characterized by a deep denial of recognition. Denying the lethal threat of the pandemic and spreading vicious conspiracies reveals a deep denial of reality within the COVID-19 protests. Many theorists have assessed this only from a cognitive view as the denial of facts or of resentment against science. But denying the pandemic serves a further objective. It offers justification for an unwillingness to restrict oneself for others. Denying the pandemic threat allows one to deny that other citizens are endangered by one's exercise of personal liberties. And this attitude is based on the denial to recognize that others are vulnerable, and that one thus must act responsibly and limit one's freedom for others. This is not only anti-science, but expresses the cynical, negative freedom mentioned above, fostering the law of the strong and the survival of the fittest. Such an attitude characterizes evil protest claimants, since they deliberately "resist to recognize reality"—to use a concept of Hasslanger (ibid., 2012, 29 f.)—and associated duties towards fellow citizens, willfully inflicting harm on others. Or in the words of Hannah Arendt, their evil conduct is "thought-defying". (Arendt 1964, 6) Despite the fact that the COVID-19 protest can be seen as collective reaction to society's denial of respect for personal autonomy due to pandemic-related restrictions, their movement is unjustifiable and not worthy of support. Their struggle rests upon experiences of a hurtful but justifiable denial of respect-recognition. The misinterpretation of such experiences guided their movement into a swamp of conspiracies, inappropriate protest means, and categorical rejection of government measures, and leaving open a perilous flank to the far right. Their thought-defying denial of the pandemic threat, accompanied by the urge to quickly restore liberties, deprived them of the grounds for justifiable protest and compassion for lockdown-related feelings of isolation and unfreedom among the participants. In light of this case, we can draw conclusions for how to identify, assess, and conceptualize bad kinds of social movements with recognition theory:

- a) Regarding recognition theory's explanatory approach, we are able to *sensibly examine bad movement protests* as anchored in shared experiences of a denial of recognition, and that such movements can likewise form spaces of compensative recognition. Yet, a reconstruction of such negative experiences and activities alone does not provide grounds for justified protest. It is crucial to separate explanations from justifications.

- b) Regarding recognition theory's evaluative approach, it is vital to assess a movement's protest against the *justifiability of the recognition denial* the protesters are complaining about. A criterion for justifiable protest is that the protesters should express complaints in reaction to an actual, unjustified denial of recognition. Further, claims should satisfy recognition theory's principles of individual autonomy and egalitarian inclusion.
- c) Additionally, it is clear that the *denial of respect-recognition* for individual autonomy can be *temporarily justifiable*: in a state of a societal emergency, for instance, in order to save human lives. This insight modifies my normative framework proposed earlier.
- d) Lastly, it is clear that a justifiable struggle for recognition should be assessed against further principles. Such movements must express *respect for others' basic interest in life* and in being bodily unharmed; they must *refuse conspiracy stories*; and they must satisfy ordinary standards of *empirical adequacy* to be able to position their protest as a communicative *contribution to public debates*.

After we have seen that recognition theory provides suitable resources to examine and evaluate bad kinds of social movements and that such cases, for instance, can be traced back to a justified denial of respect and collective reaction against it, an additional question arises: can an unjustified struggle also be motivated by other forms of recognition-related experiences? I will address this question in the next section with regard to anti-immigration movements. Analyzing this case will help me to further fine-tune my proposed twofold approach, and also will illuminate how we can identify, assess, and conceptualize bad kinds of social movements with recognition theory.

7.2 Anti-Immigration Protests and Anxiety About Loss of Status

In the summer of 2015, millions of people sought refuge in Europe—escaping from escalating civil wars in the Middle East, persecution due to political and religious beliefs, and economic and food insecurity in Northern Africa. By marching the perilous Balkan route, or crossing the Mediterranean Sea with inflatable boats, they risked their lives and savings to seek a more secure living in the wealthier states of center and northern Europe. These events were usually described as European Refugee crisis—but this language is inappropriate. We were witnessing a humanitarian crisis, in which millions were forced to escape their home countries, desperate to leave their houses, private belongings, and families, in order to seek safety and livelihood abroad. Abruptly, the destitute and homeless were not only numerous,

but also stateless and unprotected with regard to their basic human needs, socially vulnerable and entirely dependent on help, and thus threatened by various forms of domination.

In reaction to these events, the German government decided to keep their borders open, admitting refugees and assessing applications for protection and asylum. Moreover, we saw a remarkable rise of refugee supporter networks around the country, aiding newcomers with legal questions and issues of daily life; in fact, creating an unprecedented inclusionary enthusiasm in civil society quickly named the German ‘Welcome Culture’ (Heins *et al.*, 2019, 159). However, with these acts of solidarity for refugees’ human rights we also saw the rise of counter-protests against immigration. Already in 2014, the *anti-Immigration movement PEGIDA* emerged. Self-proclaimed patriotic Europeans against an Islamization of the Occident—the literal translation of their acronym—were rallying against immigration to Germany, and rejecting migrants from Arab nations in particular. Due to their hateful language and antagonistic style of protest politics, PEGIDA quickly became a symbolic stand-in for other anti-liberal grassroots movements (Heins *et al.*, 2019, 157). In this section, I will use the case of PEGIDA to further update my twofold recognition theory approach. By assessing them, we can draw new conclusions about how to identify bad kind of movements and separate them from justifiable ones.

First, let us get a better view of what PEGIDA is about. Oliver Nachtwey and Maurits Heumann (Nachtwey *et al.*, 2019) provide an overview of the central beliefs and activities of such German anti-immigrant protesters: While they may identify with a broad range of political labels from extreme right-wing to national conservative beliefs, PEGIDA protesters usually demand instant restriction of immigration, tough border controls, and, often, the stop of any influx. Many of them are active in local protests against refugee camps and in initiatives against the wearing of traditional Muslim headscarves for women (Nachtwey *et al.*, 2019, 8). In fact, PEGIDA’s demands ranged from a restrictive quota system for immigration, to strictly enforcing a duty to swiftly integrate into the German society on immigrants, rapid deportations, and persistent border controls (i.e., suspending the EU law of freedom of movement), alongside claims for defending the country’s Christian identity and for democracy that expresses the people’s general will (PEGIDA 2014).

How could recognition theory help to make sense of these anti-immigrant claims and protests? While the anti-Corona protest seemed tailor-made for recognition theory since their participants reacted to a denial of respect, PEGIDA’s protest seemed primarily directed against another group. Instead of making claims on society, criticizing their own maltreatment and denial of rights, PEGIDA saw themselves as fighting foreign others. Thus, their anti-

immigrant protests seemed largely ignited by resentment, prejudices, racism, and general attitudes against multiculturalism. Yet, although these are surely strong emotions that support the rise of these movements, recognition theory asks us to go a step further and assess the PEGIDA protests as reactions to injustice and violation of the conditions necessary for a positive social identity. On that view, a more important question is, what are the morally guided reasons for the outrage of those who feel urged to fight refugees and immigrants seeking security and livelihood? Does their struggle against foreign others, in fact, hide a struggle for recognition?

One way to assess PEGIDA's protest movement as a reaction to injustice is expressed in the argument that those who struggle for the restriction of immigration and against refugees see such phenomena as threats to a secure social life, since immigrants might overburden the system of welfare and labor market. This position is voiced among others by the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, who rejects an alleged immigrant "flooding" of Germany from a self-declared "left-conservative standpoint", which would aim at preserving the country's special interest in social cohesion (Sloterdijk 2016, 6). Similar views are expressed by anti-immigrant protesters themselves, as displayed in a study by Nachtwey *et al.* One interviewee's remark provides an excellent example: "Listen: It cannot be that the state, for example, sends millions, billions, so be it for the refugees or to any country [...]. And our old people go to collect bottles because the pension is not enough." (Nachtwey *et al.*, 2019, 5)

Both, Sloterdijk's and the interviewee's remarks hint at morally guided reasons at the roots of the PEGIDA protests: fighting foreigners may have reasons beyond resentment. These protesters can be understood as those that feel unsettled and see immigration as a threat to their secure social life and identity. They also feel that their legitimate needs are neglected by society in favor of foreign others. Put differently, the injustice expressed in the protesters' *negative claims*, is the *anticipated loss of social-status respect* in the welfare system and *loss of esteem* in the labor market supposed to be produced by immigration (i.e., a mass influx of cheap labor and new welfare dependents is seen as the cause of austerity politics and salary decline). It is tempting to agree. Resisting immigration as a way to defend social welfare and status security for a nation's citizens satisfies commonsense morality: The government ought to limit influx into one's societal unit to protect insiders, as each newcomer is an added economic competitor struggling with insiders over scarce resources. Thus, to ensure that helping outsiders does not happen at the expense of insiders, immigration should be restricted. The justifications of anti-immigrant movements like PEGIDA and their demands depend strongly on these beliefs.

But PEGIDA's related claims are not well founded. First, the claim that refugees and immigrants overburden labor markets and welfare systems was starkly disproved by empirical studies (e.g., Abizadeh *et al.*, 2015; and *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* 2021). There is no evidence that a large influx of immigrants increases unemployment, produces welfare cuts, or reduces average salaries and pensions. In fact, the opposite seems to be true. It was repeatedly shown that various forms of immigration mean a rising supply of needed workers and consumers for markets, and a rise of contributing payees into welfare systems. Germany's rapid integration of more than half a million refugees into its labor market can here be seen as a stellar example of the beneficial relationship between immigration and economic growth (e.g., Dobrodinsky 2022). Instead of burdening society, immigration usually comes with a net positive utility for both markets and welfare systems.

Additionally, the doomsday forecasts and negative claims of anti-immigrant protesters seem cynical as well as unfounded. Research examining the backgrounds of PEGIDA members and protest participants suggests that they were neither underprivileged nor poorly educated. (Koppetsch 2017, 9). Rather, this movement was a middle-class phenomenon (i.e., the participants earned more and have slightly better education than average citizens) (Heins *et al.*, 2019, 162). Instead of suffering from poverty and voicing genuine worries for citizens' welfare, their antiimmigrant protests expressed toxic national egoism, playing the needs and sentiments of deprived insiders against the human rights of outsiders seeking refuge.

Beyond empirical counter-arguments, there are conceptual flaws related to the claim that one should oppose the influx of outsiders to protect insiders from a loss of social-status respect and esteem triggered by associated socioeconomic issues. Large parts of the moral panic against immigrants and refugees draw on a misleading concept of an economy. It is assumed that a capitalist economy and market relations function like work in a household or like dividing a cake—that there is a scarce amount of goods and tasks that could be allocated among a limited number of agents. Thus, each surge of claimants would only intensify a struggle over such goods and tasks without being able to allocate more. Outsiders might be able to find work in the new country and built wealth, but all their gains would come with an equivalent loss for insiders. It is not hard to see that this view provides grounds to justify a defensive struggle of insiders over scarce resources: in the worst case, over life and death. Yet, conceptualizing the economy and market relations as a zero-sum game is a popular fallacy that can be traced back to Thomas R. Malthus' dystopian forecast (Malthus 1798) that population growth outpaces food supply, and that demographic control should be key for every government.

In our times of vastly industrialized economies, however, where there is enough food to sustain one and a half times the earth's population, humanity suffers from maldistribution rather than from a Malthusian population trap. In fact, the economy and concomitant market relations alter with demographics. Influxes of people not only bring extra needs; they also add extra labor and consumption power (e.g., as outsiders bring savings or entrepreneurial ideas, their contributions may add to a rise of national income). Hence, rather than a zero-sum game it is more suitable to conceptualize the economy and market relations as a societal network of needs and work—as a “system of needs” (Hegel 1821, § 189 ff)—that can expand as well as shrink based on demographics. Seeing it as a dynamic rather than a static sphere can help mitigate the moral panic that immigration, of necessity, comes with a loss for insiders. This moral panic and related negative claims stand on flimsy empirical and conceptual grounds and should not be nurtured—especially not as they can ignite evil spirits of a fantasized Hobbesian survival struggle of all-against-all, or, between insiders and outsiders.

Moreover, opposing an influx of outsiders to allegedly protect insiders from a loss of status-respect and social esteem is accompanied by a stark denial of recognition. Focusing on PEGIDA's *positive claims*, the demand to close borders and set up a strict quota system for refugees can be seen as an attempt to turn one's back on outsiders in trouble and on parts of the world unsettled by war or economic failure. By closing the gateways into one's societal reality and narrowing the circle of potential claimants for entitlements, the anti-immigrant protesters do not just try to protect themselves, but also to deny that there are severe problems outside one's borders, and that one has duties towards foreign others, especially towards the victims of civil wars. In particular, they deny that refugees suffer from a humanitarian crisis and need help and refuge abroad. As with all failures of recognition, this cognitive denial comes with moral attitudes and politics. What is fully disregarded is that liberal societies have duties towards those that seek asylum if their lives are threatened. These duties are grounded in the principle that all humans share equal moral agency and basic interests (e.g., the shared desire for life, liberty, and happiness), and deserve respect for such traits in the form of legal protections ensured by the world community (e.g., respect for human rights by providing shelter) (Biletzki 2019). Thus, PEGIDA's positive claims and related activities should be seen as an attempt to immunize their members from the claims of outsiders and a denial of the fact that one has humanitarian duties. Neglecting aid for refugees and refusing to assess asylum applications—main aspects of anti-immigrant protests—with the excuse that this is necessary to protect citizens' status expresses disrespect for human rights. This is a harmful way of

denying respect-recognition for outsiders' equal status as vulnerable humans, particularly in humanitarian crises (Celikates 2019).

One might object and assert that PEGIDA's anti-immigrant movement was justifiable, since participants simply used their legitimate right to protest as a political corrective to ensure that the responses to refugee crises and increased levels of immigration was both proportionate to the need and feasible for the nation, while still assuring citizens' security and a distribution of burdens among local communities that was as beneficial as possible to all. One might even say that such protests are a vital critical voice against the majority's Welcome Culture and for those that do not want to become strangers in their own countries, thus balancing the normative tension between respecting outsiders' human rights and insiders' social safety. But this view is wrong. Instead of acting as the voice of reason in the wave of humanitarian euphoria, anti-immigrant protesters "were poisoning the civic sphere" (Heins *et al.*, 2019). A disturbing case in point is the remark of a former organizer of PEGIDA, Tatjana Festerling, claiming in an interview with the Daily Mail: "... Migrants should be forced to register at police stations, and ultimately we need to look at deportation. If they keep crossing the border and you can't arrest them, shoot them. [...] F*** decency." (Simons 2017) Moreover, Akif Pirinçci, a writer and supporter of the Anti-Immigration movement, dog-whistled during a speech at one of their marches, "unfortunately, the concentration camps are out of order at the moment." (Kamann 2015)

These claims expose the unjustifiable, in fact, the evil nature of PEGIDA's anti-immigrant movement. They immunized themselves from humanitarian duties and deliberately disdained and fought foreigners. By dehumanizing refugees and other immigrants, these protesters voiced deep disrespect for other humans' equal moral agency. Instead of balancing outsiders' against insiders' rights, outsiders (in their view) were reduced to mere threats to insider's security—threats that anti-immigrant protesters try to push away to defend themselves and other Germans. Yet, these claims are unjustified since they deny the humanity in others and violate the principle that all deserve respect-recognition. In fact, their struggle in defense of citizens' secure social life violates recognition theory's principle of securing or increasing egalitarian inclusion into society. Instead, they incite hatred against foreigners, uphold the harmful exclusion of outsiders seeking refuge, and thus produce even greater experiences of recognition denial.

So far, I have shown that anti-immigrant protesters can be understood as motivated by feelings of social displacement, and that they perceive immigrants as threats to their secure life. From the perspective of recognition theory, these protests can thus be examined as

counter-reactions to a feared loss of social-status respect (e.g., welfare rights) and esteem (e.g., salary); supposed deprivations associated with any mass influx of outsiders. On the other hand, I have shown that most of the claims made by these anti-immigrant protesters are *unfounded and immoral*. Their negative claims about injustice rest on misconceptions of market relations and the economy, and their positive claims express deep disrespect for the equal moral agency of outsiders. In fact, PEGIDA views immigrants' claims as part of a zero-sum distributive struggle over scarce resources, where they aim to defend themselves against a dehumanized foreign other. Hence, while we can reconstruct a moral outrage underlying their anti-immigrant movement, this is best understood as hateful outrage. From the onset, the PEGIDA protests were harmfully directed against the basic human interests of others, particularly against the claims of refugees for humanitarian protection. They were heavily built upon the mobilization of attitudes of ignorance and disrespect, they scorned the equal value of humans, incited hatred against foreigners, advocated national superiority, and thus essentially contradicted all principles of mutual recognition and greater realization of universal rights for everyone. Hence, their hateful outrage does not offer justified grounds to fight refugees' claims for protection and immigrants' general desire for livelihood and the pursuit of happiness abroad. In fact, these anti-immigrant protests expressed another trait of unjustifiable movements: joint protest in reaction to excessive anxiety about loss of status.

To make this clear, let us turn our attention to an article of Honneth entitled "Anxiety and Politics" (Honneth 2007c)—one of the few parts of his work that reveal what he thinks about regressive types of politics. In this article, he discusses motivating reasons that can explain participation in mass uprisings like fascist movements, in which people give up their autonomy by willingly subordinating themselves to a leader and avoid their personal responsibility for actions by uncritically dissolving into a group. Following Franz Neumann's studies of political pathologies,¹⁰⁴ Honneth highlights the importance of *anxiety* for explaining these phenomena (ibid., 2007c, 180 f.). In contrast to "reasonable anxiety", where one reacts to a known and definite threat (e.g., one gets violently robbed), or to a likely harmful future event (e.g., declared corporate layoffs)—feelings that can help us to protect and motivate ourselves to avoid potential harms—he addresses the issue of "neurotic anxiety". This pathological form of anxiety is an emotional overreaction to exaggerated threats that paralyzes individuals. This hinders them from seeking sensible remedies for problems; causes them to project their anxieties onto groups and assign false responsibilities for problems to

¹⁰⁴ Franz Neumann (1900-1954) is a German-American political scientist who belongs to the first generation of Frankfurt School critical theory. His main work is *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (1942).

those groups; and makes them likely to subordinate themselves to vicious groups that promise alleged compensation for feared losses. (Honneth 2007c, 184 f) This form of anxiety can be problematic, since it incites those who have it to join movements that constrain participants' capacity for moral autonomy, reduce their creative potential, restrain their development of free subjectivity, and undermine democratic debates in public (ibid., 2007c, 190).

Although Honneth does not mention recognition in this article, his description about the cause of neurotic anxiety indicate a link to his main theory: "... I prefer to understand the idea of "neurotic" anxiety as a secondary human reaction-formation anchored in the dangers of lost intersubjective security." (Honneth 2007c, 182) This remark can be used to update our recognition theory approach. While the emergence of movements has so far been depicted as a joint reaction to actual experiences of injustice, the concept of anxiety points to a further aspect. Motivations to protest can also be traced back to feared experiences of injustice. They can be future-focused and may concern a potential loss of esteem or respect (e.g., prospects of economic deprivation) (ibid., 2007c, 187 f.). The mere threat of a future loss of accustomed recognition and the related anxiety-laden feeling of an endangerment to one's life and identity can be seen as equipping individuals with reasons to rise up and defend their status quo. Also, it increases a person's willingness to join a group that promises to compensate for a feared loss of respect and esteem, or even to resolve such a supposed threat. It is not hard to see how these thoughts can be used to assess PEGIDA's anti-immigrant movement. Rather than suffering from actual maltreatment or definite threats, PEGIDA's fight against foreigners seems primarily motivated by the *prospects of feared, future experiences of injustice*. Leaders and participants express anxiety about loss of status respect and esteem originating in an assumed possibility of something bad happening to them related to immigration and an influx of foreigners.

Yet, such fears alone do not make these protests unjustified. Labor movement protests also are often future-focused and could be seen as expressions of collective anxiety about prospects of loss of social status (e.g., uprisings in reaction to declared corporate layoffs). What makes an anti-immigrant protest bad is the unreasonable nature of protesters' anxiety. As shown, the protesters' negative claims about injustice lack objectivity and express exaggerated, unwarranted expectations of harm related to immigration. Their unjustifiability stems both from misreading danger and from recklessly drifting into moral panic, excessive fantasies of external threats, and using unfounded anxiety as their major moral compass for

political action. Neurotic anxiety is visible in fantasizing about a flood of refugees that washes over the country, or in demonizing foreigners as “cattle”, “lumps”, and “scum pack.”¹⁰⁵

By hysterically inciting hatred against vulnerable people that seek refuge and reducing foreigners to dehumanized others that must be pushed back and fended off—a reaction out of proportion to the real phenomena of immigration and an influx of refugees—these protests cruelly link unfounded negative claims with evil positive claims, presenting the denial of others’ humanity as way to overcome the anxiety of possible future status loss. PEGIDA’s movement was thus unjustifiable—one can argue with Honneth—since its participants were driven by neurotic anxiety, baselessly ascribing false responsibilities for alleged economic declines to foreigners; in a sense, protest participants projected their anxiety about loss of status respect and esteem (perhaps originating in other events¹⁰⁶) onto an entire group. Instead of helping to find good solutions for the normative tension between securing outsider’s human rights and insiders’ social safety, anti-immigrant protesters show their badness by scapegoating foreigners and thus paralyzing society’s political deliberations.

Critical theorist Volker Heins offers an additional helpful view of the assessment that PEGIDA’s anti-immigrant protests were driven by excessive anxiety. In his text “The Self-Poisoning of the Civil Sphere” (Heins *et al.*, 2019), Heins says that this movement swiftly turned from a defensive struggle over social welfare rights and status into a *war-like struggle against foreigners*. Immigrants and refugees were not only seen as threats, but also as enemies, invaders, and settlers. The primary enemy for anti-immigrant activists is the Muslim world and an alleged Islamization of the West through Arab refugees (ibid., 2019, 152 f). While Heins shows that war-like rhetoric and fantasies of annihilating demonized foreign foes are key parts of the protesters’ imagined national survival struggle (as voiced in the demand to shoot refugees at borders, or visible in the miniatures gallows erected against politicians during PEGIDA rallies) (ibid., 2019, 155), he emphasizes the subjective roots of their anti-immigrant protest. Their anger would not be fueled by experiences of deprivation, abuse, or insecurity, but “by a darker cause that resides inside the agents”. (ibid., 2019, 161 f) Anti-immigrant protesters would be motivated by *bitterness*: the feeling that a person did not get what they are entitled to and deserved, which provokes a vicious circle of emotions of impotence, powerlessness, revenge, envy, and hatred. This “self-poisoning of the mind”

¹⁰⁵ These claims were expressed by the main organizer of PEGIDA, Lutz Bachmann, 2015 (last accessed May 23, 2022): <https://web.archive.org/web/20151227062838/http://www.mdr.de/sachsen/dresden/anklage-bachmann100.html/>.

¹⁰⁶ For instance, in one interview Honneth argues that those teenagers that follow racist convictions often experienced stark disregard and humiliation themselves in their families or social environments. (see Honneth 2006)

would offer a motivational base for negative attitudes against immigrants, when nurtured and enforced by further ideologies like a) the idealization of an heroic past of national sovereignty and ethnic homogeneity; b) a sense of entitlement based on ethnic belonging; as well as c) an apocalyptic view of the future of one's country (cf., Heins *et al.*, 2019, 163). Put differently, Heins assesses PEGIDA's fight against immigrants as expressing a projection of the members' status disappointments onto another group. Frustration and bitterness paired with a cultivated lack of empathy, misperceived threats, and inflated expectations of superior entitlement, ultimately produces the goal of symbolically annihilating dehumanized foreign bogeys and their political allies (ibid., 2019, 166).

However, by depicting the minds of protesters as "self-poisoned", Heins' assessment of PEGIDA's anti-immigrant movement shares a problem with the application of Honneth's concept of "neurotic anxiety" to the same movement. The tendency of both assessments is to pathologize bad kinds of movements, making it risky to criticize participants and hold them responsible for their activities, since such activities are seen as determined by uncontrollable emotions. To avoid this risk, we should focus on the latter part of Heins' view, where he states that the vicious motivational base of these movements must be nurtured and enforced by ideology. We must complement the criticism of the PEGIDA protests as driven by bitterness and anxiety with criticism of the participants' normative beliefs that supported their activities. In that context, it is helpful to shift attention to Honneth's arguments about racism and link them with his ideas about anxiety and politics.

In the few parts of his work where Honneth reflects on *racism* (Honneth 2001; 2006), he discards views that reduce racism to an expression of economic disadvantage and contends that it should rather be seen as a distorted way of perceiving others stemming from defective socialization. It is a distorted perception (a cognitive failure), since agents unlearn or forget (ibid., 2001 163) how to relate to plurality in coexistence and fail to perceive others, regardless of origin or identity, as morally autonomous agents that, due to being human, deserve equal status-respect (resulting in moral failure). Hence, Honneth presents racism as a total absence of status-respect (ibid., 2001, 159 f.) and as an habitus that affects one's overall behavior, leading people to see themselves as superior and other groups as naturally inferior, and to treating others as if they weren't humans (Honneth 2006). That this habitus is immoral is clear, based on Honneth's text on reification (Honneth 2015a). Practices of reification (such as racist attacks or human trafficking) are assessed as morally wrong since others are disregarded in their personal traits and needs, and treated instrumentally as goods or dehumanized slaves; they are not treated as humans but as numb and dead objects, as things

(Honneth 2015a, 16f.). These practices are not just bad forms of recognition but failures of recognition (*ibid.*, 2015a, 95). As reasons for these failures Honneth points, on the one hand, to a forgetting of an elementary form of recognition—an antecedent attitude that one acquires through socialization as a form of identifying with others as needy beings, acknowledging personal actions, and uttering noncognitive sympathy or non-moralized spontaneous engagement, separate from ascribing a special value to people as agents (e.g., esteem or individuality).¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, Honneth also points to denying, fending off, and actively rejecting the recognition of others as needy humans (*ibid.*, 2015a, 71), which he says is anchored in biases, stereotypes, and ideological beliefs (*ibid.*, 2015a, 95). These remarks help us go beyond the pathologizing tendencies¹⁰⁸ of Honneth’s arguments. They show that those who act in racist ways can be held responsible, since these agents deliberately deny others the most essential forms of respect-recognition. In fact, Honneth insists that one ought to affirm the humanity of others, even if one curses or hates them (Honneth 2015a, 95).

Applying these ideas to PEGIDA’s protest, we can begin to draw conclusions. We can criticize protesters’ activities not only for the harmful effects on others stemming from the bitterness and neurotic anxiety they manifest but also for the fact that their dehumanizing of foreigners, and their inciting hatred against them, is nurtured and enforced by racist beliefs and the assumed superiority of insiders, as well as actively denying elementary forms of recognition to outsiders. We should complement the critique of protesters’ misreading of outside threats, and moral panic over welfare and status protection, with a critique of the normative affinity among these protesters in favor of social dominance orientations and preferences for inequality among groups (*cf.*, McAdam 2018, 39)—immoral convictions that encourage them to be driven by neurotic anxiety and bitterness in both practices and politics. Put differently, one will be surely outraged by outsiders seeking refuge in our midst, and by the states’ exercise of humanitarian duties and support—even if this comes without losses for insiders—if one supposes that duties towards citizens are more important than duties towards foreigners in need; if one denies human rights and sees basic respect as entitlements others have to earn; if one believes in ethnic inferiority; or if one expects to be treated as superhuman (as is the case with Neo-Nazis). It is not hard to see that such convictions of superiority and overestimation of national belonging, deep disbelief in equal moral agency,

¹⁰⁷ Chris F. Zurn provides helpful explanations to “antecedent recognition” in his book on Honneth’s work (Zurn 2015, 43 f).

¹⁰⁸ Honneth’s tendency to pathologize racist beliefs and practices is visible, for instance, when he treats racism as products of “secondary socializations” (Honneth 2001, 162 f)—negative experiences that deform primary socialization, where one learns basic recognition. I do not endorse this view, and focus on the disrespect deliberately expressed in these practices.

and delusions of expulsion, blended with the anxiety-laden and bitter mindset towards entire groups, provides a hellish ground to see oneself in a Hobbesian struggle for self-defense against nonhuman outsiders. However, these are vastly exaggerated views paired with immoral convictions do not provide justified grounds to jointly fight against the claims of refugees and immigrants (Foroutan *et al.*, 2019). The anti-immigrant protesters must be held responsible for and criticized for these activities, since they violate the duty to acknowledge others' humanity, and contradict liberal society's normative ambition to increase individual autonomy as well as egalitarian inclusion for all. One has to show at least basic forms of respect, in social coexistence and in political contests, although one hates others or feels stuck in an anxiety-driven struggle against imagined outside threats.

In light of this case study, we should draw the following conclusions regarding how to identify, conceptualize, and assess bad kinds of movement protests with recognition theory:

- a) Regarding recognition theory's explanatory approach, we saw that movement protests can be future focused. The mere *threat of a future loss of accustomed recognition*, feared experiences of injustice, and anxiety-laden feelings of an endangerment of one's social life and identity can equip agents with reasons to rise up and defend one's normative status.
- a) Regarding its evaluative approach, we saw that the claims of future-focused protest must be reasonable and objective. They should be evaluated against the criteria of *warranted expectations of harm*,¹⁰⁹ and *proportionate reactions* against actual threats.
- b) Movements are *unjustifiable if they engage in neurotic anxiety*, recklessly diving into a moral panic of unreasonable self-defense, while scapegoating and dehumanizing others and ascribing false responsibilities to "outsiders" in order to ease participants' fears of loss of status. This should be conceptualized as hateful outrage, largely and harmfully directed against other groups.
- c) Moreover, we argued that *bad kind of movements* are characterized by bitterness and Hobbesian evil spirits of an anxiety-driven zero-sum survival fight over allegedly scarce resources, in which foreigners are reduced to mere foes—motives nurtured by normative affinities in favor of natural dominance and inequality among social groups.
- d) Lastly, social movements are *unjustifiable if they incite hatred against foreigners and express racism*. Racist practices and beliefs should be conceived as denying, fending

¹⁰⁹ For instance, it seems more reasonable to fear a future loss of status due to announced social cuts, than due to the collapse of the welfare system and the labor market under the "burden" of immigration. Also, we should not assign the responsibility for actual social cuts to the immigration of foreigners, and therefore blame the immigrants. These are separate societal issues.

off, and actively rejecting recognition of others as humans. This is the total absence of basic status-respect, undermining recognition theory's universalist principle that all humans share equal moral agency and thus deserve various forms of recognition.

To conclude, while we assessed the Covid-19 protest movement as joint reactions to a justified denial of respect, we can assess PEGIDA's anti-immigrant protests as anxiety-driven reactions to a feared future loss of status, enhanced by anti-equality beliefs and exaggerated views of the protesters' entitlements. By using recognition theory's evaluative approach, both were assessed as bad kinds of movements, since they essentially deny equal respect for all (i.e., increasing exclusion from society and hindering to provide conditions for more people to build and enjoy autonomy). We should avoid attaching ourselves to their struggles as they are in deep conflict to what progressives and other people of good will should really value.

After assessing PEGIDA as another example of unjustifiable movement protests, I will draw attention to further phenomena in the last section of this chapter. I will address right-wing populist movements. Analyzing these movement phenomena will further illuminate the position that struggles for recognition can be evil, and further fine tune my twofold approach for identifying, assessing, and conceptualizing such struggles.

7.3 Right-Wing Populism and the Struggle Against Equality

In 2016, the liberal Western world held its breath because of two major electoral surprises: the UK's referendum in favor of leaving the European Union, and the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States. These events were widely seen as expressions of a broader trend in contemporary international politics: the rise of right-wing populist movements.

While populism has already been defined in an earlier chapter (4.4) as a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps—the pure people versus the corrupt elite—and which argues that politics must voice the general will of the people (Mudde *et al.*, 2017, 6), right-wing populists, in particular, considers this distinction from a moral and ethnic perspective. Their ideology is based upon a nationalistic concept of “the people,” excluding those that are not natives, and seeing the elite not only as putting their special interests above the general interests of the people, but also often as aliens themselves, or at least as agents of a foreign force. As with anti-immigrant movements, right-wing populists typically accuse the elite of breaking the welfare state to integrate immigrants—their alleged new electorate—and call for a state that serves natives first. Also, they attack elites for allegedly selling out their country to “globalist” institutions (e.g., the

EU) that are seen as only serving “cosmopolitan elites.” (Mudde *et al.*, 2017, 13f.) Obviously, as a thin-centered ideology, its concepts are flexible in its content, yet two core ideological elements seem vital to right-wing populism: authoritarianism and nativism. Authoritarianism refers to a belief in a law-and-order society that strictly enforces the general will in politics. “General will” is here narrowly seen as the common sense of native people (‘the nation’)—rather than as a deliberative process among pluralist interests. Nativism refers to the belief that the non-natives are threats to the nation-state’s homogeneity (Mudde *et al.*, 2017, 34). Thus, along with claiming that aliens pose an alleged threat to natives, and that self-serving elites need to be disempowered to neutralize this threat, right-wing populists are characterized by their promotion of the narrative of shared humiliation that justifies retaliation against internal and external enemies. A case in point for the relevance of these core ideological elements is Trump’s outline of his attainments while in office:

We stared down the unholy alliance of lobbyists and donors and special interests, who made a living, bleeding our country dry. [. . .] We broke down the doors of Washington backrooms, where deals were cut to close our companies, give away your jobs, shut down our factories, and surrender your sovereignty and your very way of life, and we’ve ended it. (Trump, 18 June 2019)¹¹⁰

Beyond Trump’s Make America Great Again movement (MAGA) and their chants of “America first,” other contemporary examples of right-wing populism are the anti-European party Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) backing right-wing president Viktor Orban, or the British Leave movement that rallied in favor of Brexit. Right-wing populist leaders that reach power tend to withdraw from international partnerships to tackle global problems, vastly spread hate speech and misogyny, weaken the check-and-balance measures in modern liberal democracy (e.g., by disrespecting courts, threatening media outlets, using state bureaucracy for their own benefits, filling the state with nepotistic appointments, and weakening parliaments in their roles as controllers of governments), or exclude large parts of the populations by reframing citizenship in ethnic terms. This negative impact of right-wing populism is hardly surprising, given that its conceptual assumptions have antecedents in the ideas of the political theorist and famous member of the German Nazi Party, Carl Schmitt (1888–1985). His core idea is that the unity and homogeneity of the people, and the clear demarcation of those who do not belong to it, in fact a differentiation between friend and enemy, are key for all politics and for a functioning social order—an idea that can ultimately

¹¹⁰ Trump expressed these claims during a political rally in Orlando, FL, 18 June 2019: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-candidacy-for-the-republican-presidential-nomination-2020/> (last accessed May 23, 2022).

legitimize illiberal attacks on anyone who (allegedly) threatens this unity, and the manifestation of the people's general will in politics (Schmitt 1927).

While right-wing populism is broadly perceived by the public as a bad kind of movement phenomena, there is a contentious debate about its underlying causes and motives, and how we ought to respond to and deal politically with its rise. This debate is between those who regard these phenomena as the byproduct of economic anxiety, and those who see them as a form of cultural backlash (Mudde 2019; Nachtwey *et al.*, 2019, 1). While the first view stresses experiences of deprivation and socio-economic uncertainty induced by neoliberal reformations, the second view (e.g., Norris and Inglehart 2019) stresses cultural experiences of devaluation of formerly privileged group identities (e.g., white, middle-class, male) as causes of right-wing populism.

What interests me is what recognition theory could contribute to this debate and how it could be applied to examine, assess, and conceptualize these movements.¹¹¹ I wish to do that by debating Stanford philosopher Francis Fukuyama, who has already applied recognition theory to these protest phenomena and argued in his bestselling book *Identity—Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition* (2018) that right-wing populist movements should be assessed as collective demands for dignity (Fukuyama 2019 b). Whereas Fukuyama takes a defensive stance, saying these movements are a reaction to ignored social problems, I will take a negative stance, arguing that he trivializes these movements and ignores the ways they harm others and oppose the calls of many people for greater equality.

Like Honneth, Fukuyama first offers a three-part concept of recognition. He gives the name *isothymia* to respect-recognition for each human's equal status and moral autonomy, and *thymos* as the name for esteem-recognition.¹¹² *Thymos* encompasses not only the desire to be seen as particularly valuable in contributions to a common goal, but also the craving for dignity and pride, which produces anger if it is not satisfied. Love-recognition for emotional uniqueness is missing from Fukuyama's list; instead, he presents another recognition concept: *megalothymia*, the desire to be recognized as superior and which aims at exceptionality. *Megalothymia* might be expressed by taking big risks, engaging in monumental struggles, and seeking large effects with the intention of being seen as the best; an exceptional person compared to others (Fukuyama 2018, xiii f.; 18).

111 To be more specific, I focus on right-wing populist movement phenomena in Western Societies, particularly in the US.

112 Fukuyama first uses these Greek terms in his work *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). However, in this chapter I am using his more recent book *Identity*, as only here does he apply recognition theory to contemporary populist movements.

Clearly, Fukuyama goes beyond Honneth's universalist recognition theory account with its focus on egalitarian inclusion and individual autonomy. Instead, he highlights *partial forms of recognition* based on nation, sect, race, ethnicity, and "individuals wanting to be recognized as superior". (Fukuyama 2018, xvi) In fact, he says that not only groups and their members, but also countries can feel disrespected, which in his view often leads to aggressive nationalism. Also, he goes beyond Honneth's positive psychology (i.e., the focus on humans' need to socially bond and feel affirmed by others) and instead highlights negative desires that seemingly aim at opposing equality and sociability, contending that the universal forms of recognition have been challenged throughout history by the partial forms.

In applying his three-part concept of recognition to right-wing populist movements, Fukuyama offers the following assessment: On the one hand, he depicts the moral outrage of the participants as a *collective reaction to economic distress and income instability*—social ills induced by austerity politics, the enhanced privatization of public goods and services, growing income inequality, and other failed measures of decades of neoliberal reform. Also, he stresses that these ills were not perceived as resource deprivations, but experienced by many as losses of status and esteem, and as the cause of a weakened social identity. Thus, he describes their protests as reaction to violated recognition-expectations of *isothymia* (disrespect for social status and equality) and *thymos* (disregard for special value). On the other hand, he argues that, rather than fighting for respect and esteem, right-wing populist movements took a different shape when nationalists were able to translate people's loss of social status and previous esteem into a loss of pride, national identity, and the status of one's country in the world (cf., Fukuyama 2018, 89). Fukuyama claims that right-wing populist movements mobilize the resentment of ordinary people—of those who feel that their country or particular cultural way of life has not been given adequate recognition (ibid., 2018, xv).

This assessment could be read in different ways: initially driven by experiences of social disrespect and esteem devaluation, right-wing populism is *either* understood as the struggle for the equal respect of one's nation, *or* for the special esteem of praiseworthy national traits and cultural heritage. Or a *third* option might be that they express *megalothymia* and a struggle for superiority. Surprisingly, Fukuyama seems to opt for the latter. Although he sees identity politics—in which he includes the struggle of marginalized groups as well as of right-wing populists—largely rooted in *thymos* (i.e., the desire for special esteem), he emphasizes that this modern-day form of politics "can easily slide over into a demand for recognition of the group's superiority". (ibid., 2018, 18; 22) His understanding of *right-wing populism as an expression of megalothymia* is particularly visible when he links

the phenomena to German fascism, whose ideologists would have aimed to reestablish “German greatness”, portrayed German people as the “victims of outside forces”, and provided clear remedies to “confused peasants and workers”, namely, the narrative that they are part of a “proud and ancient community”, related by a common language to millions of Germans across Central and Eastern Europe. In this way, deprived people would have received a clear sense of compensatory dignity, “a dignity that, [. . .] was disrespected by bad people who had somehow infiltrated [the] society”. (ibid., 2018, 65 ff.) Fukuyama ultimately depicts right-wing populism as an ideology that explains to people why they feel lonely or suffer; it peddles victimhood to them, laying the blame for their bad situation on outsiders. Most importantly, this ideology aims at restrictive recognition “not for all human beings, but for members of a particular national or religious group.” (ibid., 2018, 73)

Given these claims, I think we should draw the following preliminary conclusions about Fukuyama’s assessment of right-wing populism based on his conception of recognition theory. *First*, his assessment seems to follow those who think that such phenomena are a byproduct of economic anxiety, seeing the outrage of right-wing populists as caused by shared experiences of disrespect for social status and a devaluation of people’s worth. *Second*, though the outrage is seen as caused by a denial of universalist norms of recognition, Fukuyama argues that right-wing populist struggles take the mutated form of a nationalistic politics of partial recognition favoring superiority and *megalothymia*. *Third*, given that he rejects any “identity politics” and favors liberal politics—in the form of rights that protect the autonomy of equal individuals, combined with social protections and redistribution (Fukuyama 2018, 100 ff)—it thus seems for now that Fukuyama assesses right-wing populist movements as expressing *justified negative claims but unjustified positive claims*, thereby reminding us that an unjustified denial of recognition does not automatically lead to justified protests. Put differently, right-wing populist protests reach a first degree of justifiability, as they try to overcome real injustice at the roots of their grievances, while they do not reach a second degree, as they voice ill-intentioned demands.

A prominent thinker who is endorsing a similar view is Nancy Fraser, who argues that right-wing populism is expressing anxieties that things are out of control, that neoliberalism is not working, and that protesters seek protection—genuine grievances and needs that deserve to be validated. Yet the issue would be that they voice their grievances in false diagnoses of causes, scapegoating, and pseudo-remedies (cf., Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 197). In contrast to Fraser, though, Fukuyama seems to go one step further and argues that these movements are also justifiable and deserve to be defended, despite ill-intentioned positive claims:

I want to emphasize that, to some extent, these people's understanding of themselves as disregarded and disrespected is true. [...]. It is true that they are white people who had been dominant in their societies, and who are losing some of that dominance. They resent that loss and are trying to return to their old social position. But I think it is also important to understand that they actually have a case; that they have indeed been disrespected and disregarded by the elites. (Fukuyama 2019, 7)

Another sign that Fukuyama considers these movements to be justifiable is that he sees them as *urgent struggles in the absence of left-wing alternatives*. He contends that the justifiable negative claims of right-wing populists have not been translated into a universalist framework, since the recognition struggle drawing the attention of the left is occupied with new targets—primarily marginalized groups—rather than paying attention to the socio-economic hardship of individuals. According to Fukuyama, while progressive politics was once centered on workers, trade unions, solidarity, and those social democratic parties that sought better social protection, the modern left concentrates on ever-smaller groups who are marginalized in specific ways—a process in which their struggle for universal and equal recognition has altered into the struggle over special rights, each groups' value, and their own normative superiority (ibid., 2018, 90). Thus, Fukuyama blames the left for the rise of the right, depicting right-wing populism as a justified reaction to experiences of neglect among socially deprived people inflicted by left-wing movements and parties, whose allegedly one-sided focus on fights against the exclusion of minorities, and its praise for multiculturalism and the liberal lifestyle have left the “the old working class [...] behind”: (ibid., 2018, 113)

I think that there is a cultural snobbery of the educated, cosmopolitan, urban-dwelling, sophisticated people that make up elites in modern societies, towards people that have less education, that do not live in big cities, that have more traditional social and cultural values. There is a degree of justified resentment at that kind of disregard. (Fukuyama 2019,7)

Fukuyama uses these arguments to implicitly assess these movements as justifiable, portraying right-wing populism as the last resort of resistance for victims of injustice. He seems to say that we should not blame right-wing populists, since no one is offering an alternative that addresses the social injustices they have suffered. As long as right-wing populists react to actual injustices, they are defensible in the sense that their actions force society to address long-ignored issues.

A last reason demonstrating that Fukuyama is inclined to say that right-wing populist movements are justifiable is his critique of economic modernization and rapid socio-cultural change in most Western societies, as a cause of the nationalist defensive reaction of right-wing populists. These changes have damaged traditional forms of community and replaced

them with a confusing pluralism of alternative forms of association (Fukuyama 2018, 58). This view is escorted by the normative reason that “uncontrolled social fragmentation” is undesirable, that minority views should not easily block majority consensus (ibid., 2018, 177), and that a “weak national identity” can be a problem for societies (cf., Fukuyama 2018, 125), accompanied by a general disbelief in mass immigration, since no country could “undertake an unlimited obligation to protect people outside its jurisdiction” (ibid., 2018, 138), and since a large number of newcomers can “weaken support for generous welfare benefits on the part of native-born citizens”. (ibid., 2018, 175) This normative reasoning culminates in an outline of remedies in the final section of his book:

“Public policies that focus on the successful assimilation of foreigners might help take the wind out of the sails of the current populist upsurge both in Europe and in the United States. [...], a policy focusing on assimilation would be good for national cohesion.” (Fukuyama 2018, 177 f.)

It is revealing that Fukuyama thinks that right-wing populist movements are justifiable, since he here contradicts his initial view that social injustice and a related denial of universalist recognition is the alleged cause of right-wing populism. He now seems to be proposing partial forms of recognition (i.e., nationalist-identarian and anti-immigrant politics) as the best way to remedy the injustices afflicting right-wing populists and their related grievances. Whereas he initially criticized these movements for translating their grievances into false diagnoses and pseudo-remedies, he now seems to suggest they both express justifiable negative claims about injustice, but also express justifiable prescriptions and positive claims. Put differently, the protests of right-wing populists implicitly reach both first and second degrees of justifiability.

However, I am unconvinced by proposing nationalistic policies as remedies for injustice or for related economic inequalities, and by Fukuyama’s assessment, based on his outline of recognition theory, of these right-wing populist movements in general. In particular, I disagree with Fukuyama’s tendency to present them as justifiable and defensible. There are numerous counter-arguments to his view.

My first counter-argument is directed against Fukuyama’s mistaken way of addressing and assessing these movements. By initially arguing that right-wing populist movements fail to translate reasonable grievances and related negative claims about social disenfranchisement into correct positive demands, Fukuyama fails to take the actual claims of right-wing populist protesters seriously and therefore fails to recognize both their political and epistemic agency. By implicitly arguing that they do not really know what they want, or what they are really suffering from, he wrongs them in their capacity as knowers that can offer testimony about

their own relevant experiences. Further, he disrespects their political agency by not evaluating them against their actual protest claims and practices—political agency being understood as the ability to make free decisions about what one fights for and with whom one chooses to join political forces, and that one should be held responsible for these decisions.

Instead, it seems Fukuyama treats right-wing populists merely as puppets of their own unconscious drives and emotions. This is the opposite of what recognition theorist should do. We must hold out the prospects of understanding protesters from the inside, taking their agency seriously and—crucially—considering their political stories at face value as making cognizable claims. Since the relevant political emotions are not simply pure affect but are accompanied by explanatory narratives and evaluative judgments about the rightness and wrongness of societal life, it behooves the theorist to take these elements of self-understanding seriously and interpret them as such—rather than explaining them away as mere emanations of unacknowledged and unconscious psychological drives (Zurn 2022, 10).

Further, if Fukuyama is convinced that social injustice is the actual cause of right-wing populist protests (which can be doubted given his closing sentences), and if he has a sincere interest in finding remedies to overcome their unhappy situations, why is he not demanding that they should reasonably relate to their negative claims and address the correct social sphere in which the opposed injustice is supposed to have happened? In fact, Fukuyama fails to clarify how we should assess the relationship between the negative and positive claims of right-wing populist movements. Yes, protesters have first and foremost a moral right to resist injustice and experimentally deliberate about solutions to remedy these issues, and that they are not instantly obliged to engage in efficient policy-making and offer perfect solutions for structural causes of these injustices to the public. However, I disagree with Fukuyama's implicit argument that this gives protesters something of a *carte blanche* about how to render their grievances as they make their positive-prescriptive claims. Instead, I think they have a duty to not create scapegoats, to reasonably relate to the correct sphere and their actual claims about injustice, and, particularly, that these protesters should not try to create even greater misrecognition in society. And if any movement scores low in these areas, we should rather opt out from supporting it, even if the negative claims of participants are justifiable. Fukuyama says nothing about this issue, which is why he offers a poor normative approach for assessing right-wing populist movements.

My *second counter argument* expresses disagreement with Fukuyama's conception and negative evaluation of "identity politics"—defined loosely as a political style that centers the interests and concerns of various oppressed groups. Fukuyama advocates broad party

politics that focus on majority issues and strengthen societal homogenization, contrasting this with the current leftist movement's identity politics and their emphasis on minority issues that pull the mainstream away from a politics of equal citizenship and shared responsibility. In short, he accuses a mode of rhetoric and organizing that emphasizes the concerns of marginalized social groups to destabilize society and effect group balkanization. He claims that such an emphasis damages the normative superiority of universal equality, and would take refuge behind an anti-rationalist collectivism, for instance, when he says:

While classical liberalism sought to protect the autonomy of equal individuals, the new ideology of multiculturalism promoted equal respect for cultures, even if those cultures abridged the autonomy of the individuals who participated in them. (Fukuyama 2018, 111)

As outlined in 2.2.2, I resist this division of allegedly irreconcilable political styles, and disagree that a majority-oriented party politics is totally desirable. Fukuyama's one-sided stress on societal homogeneity risks the silencing of needed collective critique, and his downplaying of difference likely contributes to solidifying group-based oppression, as Young argued (2011). Also, we should recall that the champions of identity politics have often successfully employed two strategies simultaneously: a politics of universalism that aims at protecting the autonomy and rights of all individuals as well as a politics of difference that particularly aims to support individuals' of historically marginalized groups, and which seeks for a future social coexistence in which differences of race, sex, religion, or ethnicity no longer have a negative effect on their rights and opportunities. In that context, giving particular rights to members of these groups, or granting affirmative action, is at times the best way to promote their full participation in society and to break up structural injustices. In the last decades, great reforms benefitting the whole of society have taken place through such efforts. Feminists and anti-racist activists drew attention to unjustified unequal treatment, fighting for inclusion and equal rights and addressing lasting, systemic unjust privileges within Western societies. These are victories of democratic activism. Thus, those who base their movement actions on identity politics (or better 'politics difference') should not be required to create false harmony or promote societal homogeneity (see also Zurn 2004), but rather to maintain their focus and draw attention to unsolved injustices—stemming from racism, sexism, class structure, or discrimination of LGBTQ+ identities. On that view, their movements politics contain a universalizing impulse: a sense that all injustices are to be opposed, or to use Marx' 'categorical imperative': "... to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, abandoned, despicable essence ..." (Marx 1843c, 385).

Furthermore, my *third counter argument* is directed against the premise that right-wing populist leaders in many Western countries have stolen the old working-class with a nativist, authoritarian message due to the absence of left-wing alternatives. This seems erroneous in two ways. First, the claim that there are no leftist protests against neoliberal reforms, and the income gaps produced by these reforms is blatantly false. Square occupation movements from Occupy to Indignados are contemporary cases of left-leaning mass protests against social and political inequality (e.g., della Porta 2017; Flesher Fominaya 2017). Also, the global justice movements at the sites of summits of WTO, G8, IMF from Seattle to Prague and Genoa, which were based on a broad umbrella alliance among feminists, anti-racists, union activists, and environmental activists from around the world were one of the first mobilizations warning about the harmful impact of neoliberalism—and these were massive, left-leaning protests in the 1990s and 2000s (e.g., Martin 2015, 222 ff). Hence, Fukuyama’s claims that there are no viable left alternatives are greatly misleading, falling into the long history of scapegoating ‘the left’ as responsible for harmful developments in society. These claims are even more absurd, given that left activists are the first to protest against and draw attention to the right-wing populist threat to our democracy.

A second empirical error is underlined by Cas Mudde (2019). He shows that blaming the left for the rise of right-wing populism can be also traced back to the false assumption that those who now support the populist right are largely the white working class that allegedly used to vote reliably for (center) left parties. But correlation does not always equal causation. First, he reveals that the decline of leftist parties has mainly been caused by the transformation of an industry-based economy into a service-based economy, and not be the rise of rightist populists. Second, Mudde surprisingly shows in his research that since the emergence of the populist right in the early 1980s, a significant part of the white working class (an entire two generations of people) has always voted for parties built on right-wing populism, but these were never the most dominant component in their electorates. Instead, he argues that most successful populist right parties now are “people’s parties”, rather than “workers’ parties”, and so do not represent merely the working class. Referring to election surveys from previous parliamentary elections in Germany, Netherlands, and Italy, he argues that most of them won more voters from center-right and non-voters in society. Lastly, Mudde draws attention to research by the American political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, who demonstrated, more than 60 years ago, that a certain part of the working class is authoritarian and nativist. Decades of research have since confirmed that these nativist working-class voters—like the other voters who support the populist radical right—are first and foremost

motivated by opposition to immigration and cultural pluralization of Western societies (Mudde 2019). In other words, Fukuyama downplays a key motivational base of right populist protesters: cultural backlash in form of nationalist-identarian anti-politics.

This leads me to my *fourth counter-argument* against Fukuyama's thesis. Rather than thinking of them as a byproduct of economic anxiety, I suggest we should conceptualize right-wing populist movements as a collective reactionary response to a wave of substantial changes in the status order of most Western societies in the last decades; in fact, as *counter-struggles against equalizing and individualizing changes* therein on the part of those who feel that they have been deprived of their previously higher positions in the old status order. Following Zurn's recognition theory assessment of these phenomena in his forthcoming article (Zurn 2022) "Populism, Polarization and Misrecognition", the *old status order* in the Western societies could be loosely defined in terms of the hegemony of patriarchy and women's dependency through the family wage and legal guardianship of men, ethnic exclusion and white supremacy, and an overall suppressive, homogenous culture of expected heteronormativity and a traditional middle-class, family lifestyle, along with hostility to demands for plurality of forms of life, more individual autonomy, and experimentalism regarding personal identity. In the last decades, this old status order—justified on the grounds that people have different natures and essential traits, and that some natures are allegedly better than others—was successfully exposed as an unjust normative order and progressively changed by legal campaigns and policies, new cultural practices, and especially by social movements. Starting in the 1960's, the protests of new movements aimed at overcoming the misrecognition of previously marginalized groups and devalued individuals, and at establishing the social conditions needed for their due-self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem (Zurn 2022, 8 f.). While feminist movements enforced legal equality of woman, and the Civil Rights movement successfully demanded the abolishment of Jim Crow laws in the US, subcultures like the Hippy movements promoted tolerance of unconventional lifestyles. All these efforts transformed the meanings, symbols, values, and laws of the older status order, made society a bit more open, and pushed towards a social coexistence and *new order* in which differences of race, sex, religion, class, occupation, and ethnicity should no longer, we hope, have a negative effect on people's rights and opportunities (cf., Young 2011, 157).¹¹³ However, those who benefited from the privileges of the social status older order (i.e.,

¹¹³ In that sense, these social changes—brought about by the protests of new movements—were *equalizing* as they enforced inclusion of more people into the institutions of equal status respect assured through civil rights, and they were *individualizing* as they promoted public acceptance of plural forms of lives as long as these are not harmful for others.

predominantly white, middle class, able man) can be seen as resenting their loss of status due to the equalizing and individualizing changes effected by these movements. In fact, Zurn suggests in his article that we should understand right-wing populist politics as a nostalgic counter reaction “for a now-displaced social status order rooted in an older system of (mis-) recognition and frustration at the loss of preferential advantage”. (Zurn 2022, 9) He links the story about equalizing and individualizing societal changes with other causes that have fueled the cultural backlash of right-wing populism. In particular, he argues that these changes were accompanied with inegalitarian, neoliberal changes in the economy, and the rapid growth of inner-societal diversity due to growing immigration and internationalization in Europe and the US. Zurn concludes that the counter-reactions of those who resent their loss of social status produced by these decades-long changes in norms, cultural values and attitudes are further heightened by threatening economic and demographic changes (ibid., 2022, 9). In short, this is cultural backlash heated up by economic anxiety.

In terms of recognition theory, right-wing populist protesters can be seen as reacting to shared experiences of misrecognition and denials of previously enjoyed esteem—a form of hierarchical status esteem for morally irrelevant group belonging independent of actual merit, which came along with benefits in the unequal distribution of material burdens of society, publicly honored social roles, more rights, distinct obligations for different groups, acceptance of discrimination, or advantageous symbolic goods in cooperation (e.g., better career chances for white, middle-class men, and segregation of people of color in public spaces). Thus, right-wing populists yearn for a time in which esteem included benefits in the sphere of respect, and are defensively struggling against the withdrawal of their previous privileges, and for a return to esteem for their chosen lifestyles and group identities; an ongoing intra-societal conflict.¹¹⁴

Conceptualizing right-wing populist movements as a counter reaction to changes of the status order in the name of an older, exclusionary, patriarchal and supremacist order, and against the denial of previously enjoyed social esteem (cf., Zurn 2022, 14) matches well with the claims of the participants. Arlie Hochschild’s work *Strangers in Their Own Land* (2016a) is a major source for understanding these claims. She is providing an ethnography of supporters of the right-wing populist Tea Party movement in Louisiana (US). She studies their political emotions, and offers an understanding of those emotions from the inside by seeing how they connect their everyday life experiences with political claims. Based on her fieldwork, she drew up a ‘deep story’ that the studied subjects endorsed as their own story:

¹¹⁴ With the onset of the #metoo movement, this struggle has reached the level of social micro-interactions and how these influence undeserved privileges and an unjustified, unequal distribution of benefits and burdens in current coexistence.

You are patiently standing in a middle of a long line leading up a hill, as in a pilgrimage. Others beside you seem like you—white, older, Christian, predominantly male. Just over the brow of the hill is the American Dream, the goal of everyone in line. Then, look! Suddenly you see people cutting in line ahead of you! As they cut in, you seem to be being moved back. How can they just do that?

Who are they? Many are black. Through federal affirmative action plans, they are given preference for places in colleges and universities, apprenticeships, jobs, welfare payments, and free lunch programs. Others are cutting ahead too—uppity women seeking formerly all-male jobs, immigrants, refugees, and an expanding number of high-earning public sector workers, paid with your tax dollars. Where will it end? [...]

Then you see a black president with the middle name Hussein, waving to the line cutters. He's on their side, not yours. He's their president, not yours. And isn't he a line-cutter too? How could the son of a struggling single mother pay for Columbia and Harvard? Maybe something has gone on in secret. And aren't the president and his liberal backers using your money to help themselves? You want to turn off the machine—the federal government—which he and liberals are using to push you back in line. (Hochschild 2016b)

This deep story informs my conceptualization. While one can reconstruct complaints about unjustified, unequal treatment, and that the government is not fulfilling its promise of fairness and equal opportunities for all citizens since its affirmative action programs would allegedly violate equal respect (i.e., 'helping line-cutters while line sitters were ignored'), the more important aspect of this 'deep story' is Hochschild's respondents' expressed confusion about and resentment against others—previous outsiders, diverse social groups like people of color or immigrants, those that used to be marginalized and excluded. These later claims of her 'deep story' morally indict the newly changed, equalizing, and individualizing status order itself, registering, a strong preference for the older, patriarchal, and white supremacist order. As Hochschild puts it, right-wing populist politics—particularly Trump's MAGA movement later on—presented to "white, native-born, heterosexual men" a clear solution to the loss of esteem they had long faced since the changes of the 1960s. Right-wing populism offered "identity politics for white men". (Hochschild 2016a, 229f.) Following Hochschild's view, Zurn argues—and I agree—that the claims raised in the deep story are structured around the demand to turn back the clock to the old status order, to make the economic line 'fair' for more traditional aspirants by excluding the 'line-cutters', all the while expressing anger towards the liberal elite and their alleged clients for their sneering disrespect towards previous traditions and systems of social honor. Thus, they are not simply making a category mistake (i.e., demanding esteem- recognition when really it is respect-recognition that is appropriate), but express that they deserve proper deference from others given their assumed greater

esteem-worthiness (e.g., as men not women, as providers not dependents, as white not Black or nonwhite), harkening back to a pre-modern notion of a natural aristocracy where the better-born deserve deference from the lower people. They aim to return to an old status order that had a clear-cut hierarchy of partial recognition for persons with different ascriptive characteristics: where non-whites and women, above all, knew their “proper” social place (in a different, subordinate line altogether) and where they were kept there (Zurn 2022, 14).

It is not hard to see how this conceptualization of right-wing populist movements helps us to evaluate their struggles. First of all, we can now better understand why Fukuyama suggests a politics of national cohesion and restrictive immigration as a remedy to right-wing populism, instead of distributive policies, although he points to experiences of social disrespect at the roots of their outrage. The reason seems to be that, though social justice oriented distributive policies might mitigate the mobilization potential of those inclined to right-wing populism—cooling off their cultural backlash heated up by economic anxiety—it is unlikely that these protesters will stop engaging in ill-intentioned activities, or cease to care about immigrants, once the left offers them a better economic alternative. Economic upgrades are not equivalent to status-esteem.

Instead, it appears more compelling to argue that, to use Fukuyama’s terms, right-wing populists not only aim for *megalothymia*-recognition through their positive claims, but likewise express expectations of such a recognition through their negative claims—the experiences that their expectations to be recognized as superior are violated. In light of research on their electoral behavior (Mudde 2019), political emotions and moral attitudes (Hochschild 2016a), it seems—though such protests might be further fueled by economic instability and anxiety—that right-wing populist protests should be understood as mainly anchored in nostalgic counter-reactions against the equalizing and individualizing changes in the contemporary societal status order—a struggle in defense of previously enjoyed esteem that was accompanied with vast benefits in legal, cultural, and occupational affairs.

Fukuyama could have seen this dimension in right-wing populism, since he addresses related issues in his assessment of the debate on gay marriage (Fukuyama 2018, 19). On the one hand, he says that it was intolerable to millions of people that society had institutionalized a lower status and weaker legal protections for the civil unions of homosexual couples than for the marriage of heterosexual couples. These people wanted the society to recognize the equal dignity of gays and lesbians, and the ability to marry was a symbolic marker of that equality. On the other hand, Fukuyama says that the supporters of right-wing populism largely opposed these claims and wanted the exact opposite; that is “... the clear affirmation of the

superior dignity of a heterosexual union and therefore of the traditional family...”. (Fukuyama 2018, 19) However, he did not draw the conclusion from this assessment that right-wing populist movements—where opposition against equal marriage is, in fact, a key mobilization factor (cf., Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 222 ff)—take the form of a struggle against egalitarian and individualizing changes. Fukuyama is seemingly ignorant about that issue in his assessment of right-wing populism’s rejection of equal marriage rights, but this is a mistake. He should have evaluated the claims of right-wing populist supporters on their face value. They deserve to be taken seriously as political actors that make genuine claims, which also means they deserve to be exposed to political criticism, and must be held responsible for what they actually say, do, and aim for.

My proposed conceptualization shows a clear direction for assessing the justifiability of right-wing populist movements. By massively mobilizing attitudes of resentment and disrespect against previously marginalized strata, aiming at a persistence of intra-societal exclusion based on group differences, limiting the distribution of equal rights, solidifying arbitrary status hierarchies, and by dismantling equal opportunities for all to attain a dignified life through mutual recognition, right-wing populists fundamentally oppose the ideal of universal equality and related principles of fostering or advancing egalitarian inclusion and individual autonomy in society—a form of recognition Fukuyama allegedly favors (2018, 100 ff). This is why this movements’ struggle is unjustifiable. They might be right in complaining that they experience a recognition denial of previously enjoyed social esteem (e.g., for being white, male, and able-bodied), which beneficially influenced their status-respect, rights, and opportunities. In that sense, they rightly express a loss of status. But more importantly, they feel morally hurt because they have held unreasonable views about their abilities and merits in the first place. They *experience justified denials of esteem-recognition* since their recognition expectation was unjustified to begin with. In attempting to turn back the clock to an older status order that had a clear hierarchy of partial recognition for persons with different ascriptive characteristics, they aim to go back to “a time of darkness”—as Young said—a time of caste, class, or creed, when traditions and hierarchy decreed that each group had its place, and that “some are born to rule and others to serve”; a time when unequally distributed esteem for belonging to a particular group and related traits of gender, race, religion, or occupation wrongly determined who is eligible for respect (i.e., rights, opportunities); a time when the recognition of everyone’s equal dignity was seen as a failure to recognize the special rights of people who are allegedly superior by nature (cf., Young 2011, 157).

Yet, such recognition claims, and the accompanying ideas of a hierarchical status order should not be supported. While recognition theory sees esteem differences between groups as an essentially contested issue in the society—where agents constantly struggle over particular worth—it still requires that a contingent hierarchy of, for instance, merit-based esteem should not impact a human being’s equal rights and opportunities. Such forms of respect-recognition are nothing to be earned based on either merit or group membership. Instead, recognition theory points towards a society where differences of race, sex, religion, or ethnicity no longer have a negative effect on human being’s rights and opportunities. Claims to equal respect for each one’s moral autonomy enjoy absolute priority in the theory’s normative framework.

Unfortunately, Fukuyama is ignoring these normative elements of recognition theory, and its emphasis on respect-recognition. His fault is that he never distinguishes between the explanatory and evaluative dimensions of this theory, giving throughout his work the misleading impression that merely experiencing and expressing an evaluative emotion of misrecognition and a related denial of previously enjoyed recognition is enough to justify a claim for recognition. However, just making a claim does not automatically justify this claim. Fukuyama belittles right-wing populist movements as somewhat justifiable struggles by using an insufficiently qualified recognition theory, deceptively playing the theory’s implicit explanatory against its evaluative approach.

In contrast to him, I say right-wing populist movements are unjustifiable since they aim at defending and restoring unjust privileges in the legal sphere against the claims made by the excluded to be included in these institutions, and since they deny status respect due to morally irrelevant differences, while what really counts is equal protection for equal moral agency and social vulnerability. They are unjustifiable as they portray and treat others—among themselves and in society as a whole—as second-class and inferior citizens. Even in cases where they do not deprive others of warranted equal rights, these movements promote attitudes and structures that hinder the realization of equal opportunities for all and social conditions for an “ethical life for all” (cf., Honneth 2012, 274 ff). By doing so, right-wing populist protesters tend to create an environment of unearned entitlement, and thereby foster recognition for alleged superiority.

In light of this case study of right-wing populist movements, we can draw the following conclusions regarding the initial question of how to explain, conceptualize, and evaluate bad kinds of social movement protests with the tools of recognition-theory:

- a) Regarding recognition theory's explanatory approach, bad kinds of movements can be conceptualized as *a struggle against other's claims for universal recognition*. In fact, such movements can be seen as defensive counter-reactions to other people's struggle for more individual autonomy and egalitarian inclusion into society.
- b) Thus, these protesters can be seen as complaining about a denial of previously enjoyed esteem, and about being deprived of their previously higher positions in the old social status order; in that sense, they express a loss of status. Yet, their sense of a lost place should be assessed as anchored in *exaggerated expectations and nostalgic feelings* of a previously unmerited status in the first place. In fact, they experience *justified denials of recognition* since their recognition-expectations were unjustified to begin with.
- c) Right-wing populist movements in particular can be seen as *struggles over defending or restoring esteem-recognition* for group belonging that used to affect an unjustified, unequal distribution of respect-recognition and related benefits and burdens in society.
- d) This account not only highlights a normative conflict between older and newer values, but also shows that each claim for universal recognition appears to be accompanied by others' feeling of loss of previous partial recognition, triggering a seemingly zero-sum conflict over entitlement and the future the society's normative status order.
- e) Regarding recognition theory's evaluative approach, *unjustifiable movements* oppose in their struggle the recognition principles of mutual respect and the greater realization of freedom through equal status respect for all human beings.
- f) Moreover, *unjustifiable movements* can be assessed—as an additional dimension—as attempting to disenfranchise people from equal rights and opportunities, and to go back to a pre-modern status order that had a clear hierarchy of esteem-recognition for persons with different ascriptive characteristics, in which morally irrelevant traits determined who is eligible of respect-recognition.
- g) Lastly, I have argued that justifiable negative claims about experienced misrecognition do not release right-wing populists from *responsibly expressing positive claims*. Quite the opposite: positive claims must be also assessed against the criteria that they should reasonably relate to negative ones, should address underlying causes (e.g., economic displacement due to neoliberal economics) and should not weaken respect-recognition.

In this case study, I have shown how to identify, conceptualize, and assess right-wing populist movements using recognition theory. In the last section of this chapter, I will briefly summarize the results of my philosophical investigations of 1) 'anti-Corona' protests, 2) anti-immigrant protests, and 3) right-wing populist movements, showing how all these cases have

helped us inform and fine-tune my proposed two-fold recognition theory approach, and better answering the initial question why struggles for recognition can be evil.

7.4 Concluding Remarks: Not Innocent and Not Worthy of Support

In this chapter, I have shown how we can examine Covid-19 and anti-immigration protests, as well as right-wing populist movements—cases that were broadly seen in public as harmful and bad kinds of movement protests—from the perspective of recognition theory. Using this theory and its associated twofold approach in three case studies, I argued that we can explicate at least three explanations for the rise of the movements: We can see them as collective reactions either to 1) justifiable denials of recognition, 2) anxiety about potential loss of status, or 3) objections to the claims of others for universal recognition and equality.¹¹⁵ In these ways, these movements can be understood as recognition struggles, since they are reactions to experiences of violated recognition-expectations that provide agents with motivating reasons to rise up. While the first case was seen as a struggle over society's respect for citizens' individual autonomy, the second was seen as a defensive fight for upholding social respect for insiders against alleged prospects of future experiences of injustice, and the last one was presented as a struggle for defending or restoring people's expectations for status-esteem and superior entitlement.

Yet, my aim also was to show that such conceptualizations of these social movements as struggles for better recognition does not automatically offer justifications. Quite the opposite. In contrast to those theorists that uncritically amplify the protesters rhetoric of victimhood and humiliation by depicting them either as engaging in a zero-sum struggle for social protection against outside threats (Sloterdijk 2016), or as a struggle for redistribution in the absence of left alternatives (Fukuyama 2018 and 2019), I have shown that it is vital to evaluate movements against the justifiability of the actual or future recognition denial their protesters are complaining about. In that regard, I have argued that Covid19 protesters and right-wing populist movements express unconvincing complaints, since they react to justifiable denials of recognition (i.e., justifiable freedom restrictions in a state of emergency, as well as justifiable equalizing and individualizing changes in the societal status order), while the anti-immigrant movement PEGIDA fails to voice warranted expectations of future harm

¹¹⁵ Clearly, the three explanations can intersect, which was particularly visible in the case of right-wing populist movements, presented as a cultural backlash against claims for equality, heated up by anxiety, and anchored in unjustified recognition-expectations. All three recognition-theory explanations can simultaneously help in understanding and assessing such cases.

(i.e., they only scapegoat outsiders). Although most of these protesters might rightly express experiences of loss of status and hurt feelings, it is more important to understand that they experience justifiable denials of recognition, since they hold unreasonable views about their abilities, merits, and what they are entitled to in the first place. In fact, I have argued that all these movements *fail to reach a first degree of justifiability*, since they express unjustifiable negative claims about experiences of injustice.

Also, they fail to express justifiable positive claims (i.e., remedies or prescriptions about how to end perceived injustices). In the Corona protest, their struggle for unrestricted, personal liberty was (and is) disproportionate and unjustifiable, since they deliberately disrespect other's basic interest to life and bodily integrity, and since they propagate harmful conspiracy narratives in public debate. Further, anti-immigrant movements like PEGIDA voice unjustifiable positive claims when they irresponsibly strive to produce a moral panic, provoking joint and individual actions of unreasonable self-defense, largely directed against foreign others. Lastly, right-wing populist movements too fail the test of justification since their struggle against other's claims for equality aims at defending an unjustified unequal distribution of respect-recognition and related benefits and burdens in the society from which they culturally and materially profit.

Moreover, all these movements share a *deep rejection of universal equality* and related principles of fostering individual autonomy and egalitarian inclusion in the society, even though they may use a language of fairness, rights, and freedom. This is particularly notable with regard to anti-immigrant movements, who express unjustifiable claims when they incite hatred against foreigners and promote racism—practices and beliefs that must be seen as a form of denying, fending off, and actively rejecting the recognition of others as humans. They express a complete absence of basic status-respect, disregarding the universalist precept that all humans share equal moral agency and deserve forms of unmerited elementary recognition.

All these social movements seem to share normative affinities in favor of “natural” dominance and subordination among groups. This is especially clear with regard to the right-wing populist movements, who oppose other's claims for a greater realization of freedom through equal status respect for all. It seems clear that these movements aim to restore a societal status order with a clear hierarchy of limited esteem-recognition for people with distinct ascriptive characteristics: where people's gender, race, religion, or class defines who is eligible for different degrees of respect-recognition. I have criticized these movements as unjustified since they aim to exclude others from equal rights and opportunities due to

morally irrelevant group differences. Hence, I have argued that all three movements also *fail to reach a second degree of justifiability*.

Going back to the question that began this chapter—can recognition struggles be evil—I have shown that recognition theory can provide, on one hand, a promising vocabulary to make sense of the meaning of the three movement cases, their practices, and their claims. On the other hand, by applying this theory’s evaluative approach, I have shown that the recognition struggles of these groups are unjustifiable—in fact, *evil*. Given the moral wrongs that do result from both their aims and their negligence when engaged in protest activities, neither the Covid-19 nor the anti-immigrant protests are worthy of support. Further, right-wing-populist movements are evil, when we consider the harm they deliberately inflict or aim to inflict on others—especially on previously marginalized groups—with their disregard for equal respect and their incitement of hatred against alleged, dehumanized inside and outside enemies, I say we should actively refuse to join forces with them and criticize them for their ill-intentioned protest activities. Their flaws, moral inadequacies, and pseudo-remedies are not innocent, and mere side effects of otherwise good kinds of movements. Instead, I attempted to reveal the ill-intentioned aims at the heart of these movements and their activities, for which they must be publicly criticized and opposed.

While Fukuyama used recognition theory to call for more compassion for the complaints of these protesters, I criticized such an endeavor for assessing movements by merely adopting their own rhetoric of humiliation. But the claims about experienced misrecognition are not self-justifying, nor is each misrecognition unjustified. Claims must be critically evaluated. And even justifiable negative claims do not release protesters from the duty to responsibly voice justified positive ones. Positive claims should reasonably relate to negative claims and the social causes addressed therein, rather than blaming the wrong agents and ascribing false responsibilities. I have shown that we can evaluate PEGIDA and MAGA *et al.*, in a deeper way, applying a twofold recognition theory, focusing on protesters’ actual normative claims and their underlying values. This made it clear that these movements are unjustifiable since they aim to increase discrimination and exclusion as well as seek to worsen the chances of individuals to receive justified regard across more dimensions of their personality, and as they impair conditions to attain greater autonomy in coexistence. So, these movements engage in unjustifiable struggles for recognition since they produce even greater unjustified denials of recognition in society, and aim to weaken existing recognition relations and states of affairs, and since they are, in essence, founded on the massive mobilization of attitudes of disrespect and a shared, deep disbelief in universal human equality.

Lastly, beyond merely comparing different political foci and collective protest claims, I believe these three movement case studies brought forward distinctive elements that help informing recognition theory. Namely, regarding the anti-immigrant protests, we learned, among other things, that recognition struggles cannot only be seen as anchored in actual (past) experiences of injustice, but can also be future-oriented and produced by collective fears and preventive actions against expected experiences of injustice. In addition, we saw that a state of emergency may create powerful normative ambivalences, and permits denials of recognition that we would politically oppose under normal circumstance, and thus forces us to assess the justifiability of denials of respect-recognition more carefully in light of changing contexts—such as in the case of the Anti-Corona movement. And finally, we learned that the struggle for recognition can have a ‘particularist-exclusionary side’, and that people can fight with others over different types and norms of recognition, while profoundly opposing those that seek for inclusion and universalist-equality. If one of these case studies were left out, we have missed out on these insights in its clarity; important insights that add to and nuance recognition theory, and will continue to emerge and do so when we apply this theory to concrete cases.

Chapter 8

Progressive and Regressive Resistance?

“I don’t think we have any alternative other than remaining optimistic. Optimism is an absolute necessity, even if it’s only optimism of the will, as Gramsci said, and pessimism of the intellect.”

—Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*

In the prior chapters, I argued that we should assess the Western square occupation movements as justified struggles for recognition, while the uprisings of the anti-immigrant, Covid 19, and right-wing populist movements—with a focus on Germany and the US—should be assessed as prime examples for unjustified ones. Briefly, the former movements are justified as they strove to maintain existing levels of respect for each person’s social status and wage-based esteem; as they aimed to lessen political exclusion and extend the chances for people to identify as actors that have an equal voice; and as they tried to strengthen and facilitate greater autonomy for all through overcoming the tension between capitalist inequality and democratic equality. The latter movements are unjustified as they strove for individual autonomy at the expense of other’s basic interests for life and bodily integrity; as they failed to voice justified negative claims about experiences of injustice and expectations of future harm; as they propagated conspiracy stories, incited hatred against foreigners, or promoted racism—a form of denying and failing to respect others as humans—and lastly as they strove to defend an unjustified unequal distribution of rights and opportunities in society due to morally irrelevant group differences, from which they culturally and materially profited.

What interests me in this last chapter is whether we can draw further conclusions—i.e., evaluative, explanatory, and conceptual conclusions in recognition theory—from contrasting these cases. In the case studies, I have already made use of a certain typology, saying that these are examples of good and bad kinds of contemporary movements. But is such a comparative conceptualization really satisfactory? Maybe it is better to differentiate between righteous and unrighteous outrage. Or one might say we should adopt the classic distinction between left- and right-wing movements. While it is undeniable, for instance, that racist hate crimes and speeches practiced by movement partakers are morally wrong and should be seen as bad, or, even better, an evil type of collective protest, what is unsatisfying is

the often-too moralizing language that is used to criticize these phenomena. This leaves unaddressed the political issue of how such movements impact societal institutions. Also, the left-/right-wing binary leaves unanswered the question of what the criteria for a movement's justifiability are. Instead, I wish to show that the distinction between justified and unjustified recognition struggles offers a good model as we strive to separate progressive and regressive movements. Such a comparative conceptualization is politically useful and complements the evaluative approach I have offered thus far, to address important normative aspects of movement's struggles from a critical perspective.

Asserting that a social movement is *regressive* means more than assessing that its participants engage in unrighteous, hateful outrage and are morally wrong regarding their injustice claims. It also implies that they aim for a change of society that is a change for the worse. *Vice versa*, asserting that a movement is *progressive* means not only that they express rightful claims and promote good values, but also they aim to change society for the better (Jaeggi 2018, 5). This comparative conceptualization of movements is worthwhile. It picks up popular identifiers used in contemporary politics indicating that one advocates reform as opposed to aiming to maintain things as they are—identifiers that are often vague and need more clarification. Further, it picks up crucial aspects of the tradition of critical theory, namely, the hope for progressive change if critique is anchored in the practical force of joint action, seeing movement struggles as driving forces for such changes and their participants as actors inside society who are willing to do the work of remedying normative issues (Horkheimer 1937, 189).

The current relevance of these evaluative categories is especially visible in Amy Allen's famed book *The End of Progress* (2016) and inspired debate in social and political philosophy¹¹⁶ over the role of such categories for contemporary social critique. For instance, Fraser and Jaeggi already tried to apply them in *Capitalism* (2018), distinguishing those movement struggles that criticize capitalist society from a progressive angle, from those that do the same thing from a regressive angle (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 193 f.). Both stress that progressive movements must seek for emancipation and social protection, while Fraser, in particular, promotes the notion of "progressive populism", one that connects an egalitarian, pro-working-class distributive agenda with an inclusive, non-hierarchical vision of a just social status order (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 213). Also, Nachtwey launched the idea of "regressive rebels" (Nachtwey *et al.*, 2019), referring to right-wing activists that fight an

¹¹⁶ A case in point is the title of one of the main summer schools in critical theory, which was "Progress, Regression and Social Change", organized in July 2017 at the Humboldt University Berlin.

allegedly unjustified restriction of their participants' freedom, thus endorsing one-sided individualism while rejecting mutual responsibility and liberal democracy, inciting hatred, and being inaccessible to democratic negotiations (Nachtwey *et al.*, 2019, 6).

However, there are obvious pitfalls in this comparative conceptualization. For instance, neither Fraser and Jaeggi nor Nachtwey explain how movements should be evaluated as aiming for social change for the better or for the worse. I have already scrutinized Fraser's framework as unconvincing for assessing a movement (6.2). Jaeggi, on the other hand, clarifies in another article (2018) that she focusses more on the moral progress underlying institutional change, saying that "... it might very well be that progress then turns out to be a category that we can only use in retrospect" (Jaeggi 2018, 23; 2022), and that such changes do not rest entirely on movement struggles (cf., *ibid.*, 2018, 20). She assesses the processes and effects of societal change in the past. Yet, given that movements seldom have an instant impact on social institutions, and that there is a need for determining whether or not one wants to support movement participants before one knows the effects of their protests, a retrospective approach does not help here.¹¹⁷ Whether a movement can be judged progressive or regressive should rather be decided based on its anticipated impact—how likely it is that the movement will effect a change for the better or worse in society. This evaluation is not backward looking, but forward looking and future-oriented. Such a normative approach might have a speculative flavor, but also highlights that we focus our assessments, predictions, and reasoned anticipations on a movement's form and practices, and particularly on the normative content of its claims. In fact, rather than focusing on progress as a "fact"—an assessment about developments and learning processes that has led us up to the current social status quo—we focus on progress as an "imperative," which is action-oriented and implies a normative goal we strive to achieve (Allen 2016, 11 f.). Conceptualizing movements as progressive or regressive in such a way is useful to make sense of and critically assess them, complementing my proposed twofold-recognition theory approach. In fact, these evaluative categories are constitutive elements of most democratic protest politics, as one rises up with the hope to overcome injustice—to be better off—or to prevent things from becoming worse, through collective action. Contemporary critical theory should incorporate this hope.

To clarify this argument, I will (1) briefly look at how Honneth himself conceives social progress and regress within recognition theory. Then, I will (2) recap and debate the evaluative, explanatory, and conceptual conclusions of my analyses of both the Western

¹¹⁷ A retrospective concept of progress might wrongly encourage to political passivity and being a spectator, namely, to wait and see if a movement has the right strategy to effect progress before we can assess its progressiveness.

Square occupation movements and my illustrative case studies of evil struggles for recognition. Based on that, I will (3) outline how we can reframe justified and unjustified struggles for recognition along the lines of progressiveness and regressiveness. Also, I will talk about universalist-inclusionary and the particularist-exclusionary side of the recognition struggle, and about movement-counter-movement dynamics, as key elements for distinguishing between struggles that are progressive or regressive from a recognition theory perspective. In general, I view this chapter as a way of wrapping up key results of my thesis, and as a call to fight for social progress and resist regress.

8.1 Honneth's View on Social Progress and Regress

Let us clarify background assumptions. Assessing change as progress means rating an altered societal state—its practices or institutions—as better or superior to a previous one. Progressing not only means to move on (fr.: *progès*), but also to move away from something worse. Also, it implies the location of the improved state in an historical process, the only one through which this improvement could be achieved, as it was built on a potential that already existed. Theories that apply this concept attempt to assess if there is a chance to improve societal affairs, or if there is a risk that society falls back (lat.: *regress*) to a worse state, or if there are hurdles that hinder society from moving forward. Crucially, moral, and social progress/regress in relations among humans should be separated from technological progression/regression in the relationship between humankind and nature—the degree of our vulnerability to nature¹¹⁸ (Arndt 2011, 11 f.; Honneth and Joas 1980, 7).

This chapter focusses on a non-teleological and pragmatic concept of moral and social progress/regress (Jaeggi 2018, 1). I sympathize with theorizing progress in a “philosophy-of-history-sense”—the attempt from the early Enlightenment to Hegel to weave together historical processes and epochal transitions into a narrative, revealing a logic of transgenerational, socio-cultural, conflictive processes of societal and normative advances, thereby linking past, present and future (Saar 2017, 2). Yet rather than making generalizing claims about a grand march of truth and freedom, this chapter is concerned with what one might call, “progress in history” (Allen 2016, 228), and aims to make limited claims and

118 Many critical theorists focus on both. For instance, Marx assesses the technological progress of productive forces—processes towards more independence of humanity from the constraints of nature—as the basis for social progress—processes towards more economic justice (Marx and Engels 2002, *Manifesto*, 33). Adorno and Horkheimer, on the other hand, say that technological progress does not lead to liberation of mankind from material misery, but to advanced oppression of humans (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944, 128 ff).

“careful piecemeal assessments” (Zurn 2020, 277) about often-ambiguous improvements within particular spheres. Also, as mentioned earlier, I focus on progress as an action-orientation “imperative”, a normative goal that one is striving to achieve under the idea of overcoming injustice or preventing harmful developments. But even this pragmatic view is normatively too vague, leaving unanswered the question of how we should assess change as ‘better’ or ‘worse’ compared to previous conditions, and which principles should be used for such an endeavor. In particular, this chapter is a reflection on the perils and promises of framing a movement with the couplet of progressive/regressive. How should we assess the progressiveness or regressiveness of the content of a movement’s claims and practices, and of their anticipated impact? As shown in chapter 2, Honneth’s theory provides interesting answers to these questions, depicting movements’ morally led struggles for recognition as societal driving forces of positive change; in fact, he points to a constitutive link between shared experiences of injustice, outrage, struggle, and progress (Iser 2008, 252 ff).

In order to grasp how Honneth conceives the conceptual couplet of progress and regress, we should recall how he sees societal change effected through movement struggles. In contrast to interest- and power-based approaches, Honneth highlights the awareness-raising function of movement struggles, describing these as initiating learning processes in society (Honneth 2010, 115 ff). They shift society’s attention to problems of the disregarded claims and expectations of individuals and communities, and demand from society recognition of these things in the future. If such movements succeed, they can be seen as setting in motion a three-step, intra-societal process of learning, consisting of changing public awareness, accomplishing broad acceptance, and, finally, attaining practical validation (Honneth 2014, 107 f). In this process, practices and institutions are changed or newly made available. This should be seen as society expressing that claims and the related valuable nature of agents, previously and illegitimately disregarded, have been discovered, and better forms of recognition have been established to protect these claims from now on. In other words, society shows that it has learned to offer better conditions for the social freedom of members (Honneth 2010, 123 f.).

Chris Zurn reminds us why such processes are vital components of a convincing concept of social progress, stressing that this evaluative category should not be applied to any and every social change that we might judge to be superior,” ... but depends on some form of cognitively mediated awareness of a problem or a lack, combined with a more or less purposeful intervention that is intended to address that problem.” (Zurn 2020, 278) In short, progress should be seen as change for the better as a result of learning, following the

pragmatist idea of collective problem-solving process in coexistence (Zurn 2020, 279). However, we should add two further qualifications to this view.

Progress resulted from cognitive insight and related deliberate changes in practices and institutions promoted through struggles should not be seen as social processes that must be endorsed and approved by all members of society. Instead, we should see them as beginning with what one might call fragmented organizational learning processes and related changes in particular social domains and arrangements, where agents and groups seek for solutions for grievances and problems in coexistence. In fact, we should avoid overextending the analogy of individual learning applied to events that change societal structures. On an institutional and cooperative level, positive changes in the form of new norms and organizational structures are often the result of hard-fought compromises, which nonetheless can help people, even those that disagree with such changes, to live more freely and better protect against oppression. A case in point are decision-makings in liberal democracies initiated by the claims of protesters. New legislation (e.g., higher minimum wages, civil rights, redistributive schemes) is passed on the basis of parliamentary majorities, which may nonetheless be beneficial for the protection of most people's material vulnerability and more equal status respect. Protests do not necessarily succeed because they appeal to the morality of those in power and convince society as a whole, but because they manage to raise awareness about serious issues in major parts of the public and build new alliances of social groups who share their critique and vision, and thus effectively constrain a government's options by undermining its support in various pillars of society, such as bureaucrats, media outlets, or electoral majorities and political parties, or help to elect new a government that implements their ideas. Learning processes, initiated through struggles, often require a long-term change in cultural attitudes and political practices, reconfiguring of political alliances, and a stabilizing of these changes into new social institutions and practices.¹¹⁹ These are, nonetheless, changes for the better based on cognitive insight and deliberation, though these changes may be gradual and fragmented.

Honneth himself does not pay enough attention to these compulsive and power-struggle aspects in intra-societal learning processes. His harmonistic view (Celikates 2007, 222) stresses how social actors come to understand, through conflict, that some practices and

¹¹⁹ Another argument that protests can be successful if they pass a certain threshold is provided by political scientist Erica Chenoweth, of Harvard, whose research found that nonviolent movements require the active participation of at least 3.5 percent of a population in order to achieve serious political change. If 3.5 percent of a country's—or the world's—population backs any issue or policy proposal, that is a substantial enough voting bloc, consumer market, and workforce to get those in power to pay attention. See: Chenoweth, E., *et al.*, 2011. *Why civil resistance works*. Columbia.

institutions are inappropriate and support injustice, and that such actors need to modify them and also restrict themselves as they morally owe three-part recognition duties to others. Honneth rather follows the ideal of interpersonal learning, consisting of mutual cognitive insight, agreement, and social reconciliation enabled through conflicts, and overlooks the ways that a gradual and fragmented change of, for instance, majority relations and cultural attitudes is a condition for societal learning processes. Yet, despite this harmonistic tendency, it is important to acknowledge that Honneth's recognition theory aims to reveal the ways that moral arguments and related critiques have an impact on the development of society's practices and institutions, and that such changes are anchored in the moral outrage of victims of injustice and their struggles (Honneth 2012, 107 f.). He aims to show that progressive social change consists of a conflictive, and intra-societal learning process moving towards improved moral knowledge and extending the capacity of empathy in society, which leads to an improved institutional implementation of related moral principles to better show recognition to previously disregarded claims and expectations. (Honneth 2007b, 27)

To illustrate this model of social progress, Honneth refers in his work to, among other factors, the increasing differentiations in the democratic state of law and the granting of rights: In his view, in the last 200 years movement struggles have pressed liberal societies towards advanced regard for previously neglected social conditions important for individuals' freedom. He argues that legal innovations enforced by the historic bourgeois and labor movements, such as the introduction of basic liberties in the 18th century, political rights in the 19th century, and the introduction of social rights in the 20th century, all gradually increased equal status respect and autonomy in liberal society (Honneth 2012, 186 f.). At this point, another typical component of a theory of progress becomes apparent. In Honneth's model of change, an improved social condition can only be achieved if it was able to build on a potential that already existed. In fact, progress is a matter of doing ever-better justice to what is really meant by valid moral principles (e.g., respect, freedom, equality) and what they require, and of realizing them in an ever deeper, improved, and differentiated way in our social practices and institutions (Jaeggi 2018, 7).

In that context, he identifies the normative infrastructure of liberal society as the starting point in the search for standards of progress (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 219). Like Hegel, Marx, and Durkheim, he assumes that modern institutions are better and advanced compared to feudal predecessors. Honneth assesses liberal societies as normative orders that already express vital forms of recognition which enable and ensure the development of a positive self-relation and individual self-realization—though these societies also have

deficiencies. Sketching progress in history, he shows that our modern normative order of social status is the result of a conflictive process of gradually moving away (through bourgeois revolutions and succeeding historical struggles) from hierarchical privileges due to group belonging and towards more equal rights for all; away from exclusive systems of honor and towards more inclusive merit-based social esteem; and away from mere functional relationships towards partnerships based on mutual affection, care, and love (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 298 f.). Hence, in contrast to the feudal normative order, he treats the institutional and interactional conditions of liberal society as advancements, since they promote, facilitate, and secure a basic level of assured experiences of recognition: a) as the nuclear family and modern primary relationships enable people to contribute to coexistence based on the fearless and confident trust in the care and support of beloved persons, and to be recognized as a vulnerable subject that needs validation of emotional uniqueness (love-recognition); b) as the democratic state of law legally assures that all must be respected in their equal status as morally autonomous agents and protected against the arbitrariness of others' wills (respect-recognition); and c) as the market sphere of cooperative work enables each to enjoy the merit awarded for individual contributions to collective aims (esteem-recognition) (Honneth 2012, 278; and *ibid.*, 2010, 33 ff; 116 f.).

Thus, the normative principles against which Honneth aims to evaluate progressive and regressive changes are not contingent. Instead, he follows a Hegelian, reconstructive path: because certain of the normative principles that underly our modern societal institutions are not simply drawn out of our historical form of life, but can also be shown to result from historical learning processes whereby better standards replaced less adequate earlier ones, therefore our current normative infrastructure supplies the needed resources to criticize and evaluate arrangements (Zurn 2020, 275). Honneth's theory of progress suggests that there is an advanced institutionalized grammar of social justice and injustice—a deep repertoire of institutionalized normative principles—that is enabling and constraining the horizon of our social and political speech acts, moral feelings, and thoughts, and that deeply influences the way we believe we should struggle and resist in society (cf. Fraser and Honneth 2003, 85). This is why social changes should be evaluated in light of whether or not they contributed to the realization of mutual care and non-dominant, emotional need-satisfaction, of equal status respect concerning proper rights and opportunities, and/or of meritocracy and justified esteem. Social change in particular spheres should only be assessed as change for the better (progress), or the worse (regress) in the light of one of these three normative principles.

However, grounding the evaluation of social progress and regress immanently in the norms of current society might falsely suggest that all that exists is also reasonable, and that we should focus on preserving and deepening, instead of experimenting, putting to the test, and altering society. (cf., Schaub 2015) Also, focusing on valid norms does not seem to reflect that the concepts of progress and regress aim to capture societal dynamics, rather than a mere normative goal. Given these issues, Honneth suggests two criteria to assess these dynamics in terms of progress or regress, namely, *egalitarian inclusion* and *individualization* (Honneth 2010, 218; Iser 2008, 194 f.). Simply put, societies are seen as improving (progressive) when they lessen discrimination and exclusion on the one hand (extending the circle of recipients afforded the relevant types of justified recognition), and when they acknowledge the distinctiveness of people across more dimensions (i.e., differentiation of recognition practices considering individual traits, and increase of opportunities to legitimately express more parts of the personality) on the other (Zurn 2015, 76 f; Honneth 2012; 282 f.). This change is realized if movement struggles are able to advance existing recognition relations and states of affairs (“the moral level of social integration”), thereby improving the chances of each individual to identify with skills and achieve greater autonomy in coexistence (Honneth 2010, 115 ff.). *Vice versa*, societies are seen as worsening (regressive) when they fall behind accomplished levels, increase discrimination and exclusion, and worsen the chances of each to identify with skills, or to receive regard for distinctiveness across more dimensions of their personality, thus ultimately impairing the social conditions necessary to achieve greater autonomy in coexistence.

Thus, although Honneth stresses a deep connection between hegemonic institutions of recognition, individuals’ socialization, and normative orders that shape the ways we express social critique and moral complaints, there is an “emancipatory interest” (Honneth 2017, 909) related to his view: the undoing of unjust hierarchical forms of life, of social asymmetries and of exclusions, while encouraging more individual autonomy for all in modern society. In fact, he points to a component of his theory of progress which assures that societal change is not simply the reappearance of the ever-same thing in a new robe, but also profound change for the better. Honneth introduces an immanent dynamic of progress underlying the normative infrastructure of liberal society that time and again sets in motion societal learning processes enforced through movement struggle, leading towards improved moral insight and better institutional implementations of valid, yet always improvable normative principles.

Namely, he points to a dialectical tension between universal recognition norms and their particular expression in social reality (cf., Fraser and Honneth 2003, 296). He analyses

current institutions of recognition (e.g., the democratic state) as already partly embodying and fostering universalist principles (e.g., equal rights for all). However, the implicit *validity surplus* (Honneth 2015c, 221) of these principles always collides with their deficient, factual realizations (e.g., the non-enfranchisement of women), and thus has the potential to initiate collective critique in favor of a greater realization of universal justice. As shown in chapter 2, this assumes that disadvantaged groups attempt to appeal to norms that are valid but that are being interpreted and applied in an insufficient way, or that have a wrong scope, and to turn such norms against unjust exclusions by relying on them for the justification of their needs (Honneth 2017, 914). Given this tension between the facticity and validity of universalist principles, Honneth says that modern societies come with “directed normative developments,” in the course of which the meaning of equal respect, esteem, and love would—under the pressure of movement struggles saturated with moral experience—be steadily enriched (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 302). It is always possible to set in motion a new dialectical process of change in a sphere with reference to valid recognition norms, in the course of which a special value aspect (need, form of life, or contribution) would be addressed, which, under the hegemonic institutionalizations would not yet have been properly recognized (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 220).

Honneth is leaning towards the thought that this dialectic has enforced and will continue to enforce—although not in a linear fashion—societal changes towards instantiations of ever-more-inclusive and differentiated forms of recognition; processes towards morally advanced institutions that better facilitate the development of a positive self-relation and thus enhance each person’s chances of self-realization, and that ultimately improve the formal conditions of an ethical life for all. (Honneth 2012, 274 ff) This immanent dynamic between universal norms and particular realizations continuously reinitiates struggles that would enforce a change for the better.

However, the perils of such a concept of progress also are clear. Where should we locate evil protest claimants in this optimistic conceptualization? Further, it is still not really clear how we should apply the concept of progress to contemporary social movements in general. Honneth engages in retrospective analyses of historical movements and focusses on their positive effects; thus, he evaluates social progress generated by them as an empirical social fact. Yet the question remains: how should we assess current cases here and now as regressive or progressive, without knowing their mid- and long-term societal impacts?

To outline an answer to these questions, I will first recap and debate the explanatory, evaluative, and conceptual results of my analyses of the Western Square occupation

movements and my analyses of evil struggles for recognition. Based on that, I will outline how we could reframe their struggles by applying the conceptual couplet of “progressive and regressive.”

8.2 Progressiveness of Movements

To further elaborate on how we can assess contemporary movements as aiming for change for the better or the worse by applying concepts inspired by Honneth, we should recall the results of my assessments of movements’ justifiability. For the sake of clarity, I will first concentrate on Occupy *et al.* and draw conclusions for evaluating these movements’ progressiveness.

At the center of my work is the argument that the Western square occupation movements are justified struggles for recognition as they 1) defended accustomed levels of status respect in the form of social rights and of wage-based esteem. They reached a first degree of justifiability, as the participants expressed justified complaints about experienced social disenfranchisement when they were facing austerity politics and welfare cuts. Their correction struggles aimed at keeping (or going back to formerly) certified recognition entitlements. These protests reached a second degree of justifiability when the participants modestly expected to not be weakened in their chances to build self-respect and esteem. They sought to secure the material resources that should be equally afforded to all to protect themselves from poverty, economic dependency, and social neglect, and also to keep existing levels of opportunities to actively engage in social coexistence. Also, the protests were justified as the participants 2) aimed at expanding the circle of people who directly engage in democratic decision-making, at deepening related processes, and at extending the realm where democratic principles are applied. This axis of their struggle reaches a first degree of justifiability, as the participants expressed justified negative claims about mass experiences of political exclusion during the Western governments’ post-democratic handling of the Great Recession. Although these protests did not offer institutional repairs, they reached a second degree of justifiability, as their struggles aimed for egalitarian inclusion of each individual into democracy, by setting up consensus and assembly-based democracies on occupied squares. Through alternative practices of bottom-up deliberations, the protesters attempted to compensate for common feelings of political powerlessness and to give participants a chance to experience themselves as credible political agents, thus experimentally extending and deepening respect for equal political agency beyond mere representation. Last of all, these protesters were justified as they 3) aimed at realizing universal respect for each one’s

autonomy in civic life and politics through changing and overcoming harmful principles of the market economy. Their transformation struggles reached a first degree of justifiability, as they criticized the ways that economic inequality undoes political equality, pointing to structural disrespect and wealth-induced privileges in a society that declares it promotes equal respect for all. They reached a second degree of justifiability as they sought to better protect each person's equal status and freedom in coexistence, by equipping the market economy with a fairer scheme of wealth distribution that reduces negative externalities, by limiting this sphere with structures of social protection for all, and by adding more democratic controls to the market.

Further, the Western square occupation movements' justifiability becomes clearer if we prioritize the protesters' negative claims (i.e., the justifiability of actual and future recognition denials they complained about), rather than rigidly judging the feasibility of their positive claims about how to remedy injustice. Certainly, protesters should try their best to make use of formal political means (e.g., collaborating with unions, or influencing electoral preferences), of strategic alliances that help their justified cause, and of proportioned collective actions guided by respect for the equal status of all humans, and the basic interest of others in life and bodily integrity. But protesters should not be required to engage in professional policy-making or effective power politics. Instead, we should assess whether they express a sound social critique, and whether their positive claims reasonably relate to criticized injustice (e.g., if they refer to the correct sphere, address real issues and avoid conspiracies). Victims of injustice that have a compelling case have, first of all, a moral right to complain about their negative experiences, alerting society to serious issues, even if a rise in public awareness does not yet deliver fixed remedies. That said, Occupy *et al.* had not only a compelling case, but their justifiability was also visible in their astounding willingness to learn how to overcome internal deficiencies and power inequities. Also, their collective practices expressed the positive values they wished to promote, such as exhibiting genuine respect for the equality of their participants and that their contributions were considered valuable in political deliberations. In short, questions regarding strategies and efficiency should be secondary. Instead, Western square occupations show that we should start our evaluation of a movement's justifiability with assessing whether they offer space for those who suffer from injustice and attempt to raise their voices (i.e., countercultural spheres of recognition) and whether they express justified negative claims and alert society of serious injustices (i.e., seismograph of issues). In fact, our evaluation should focus on whether a

movement promotes liberation from injustice in its normative claims and practices, and honors non-domination and democracy within its organizations.

How can this valuation of Occupy *et al.*'s justifiability help to assess these movements' progressiveness or regressiveness? Or, put in Honnethian terms, how do their justified struggles support or prevent instantiating ever-more-inclusive and differentiated forms of recognition? Let us look more closely at the case studies.

What about the Western square occupation movements' defensive struggle? Aiming to maintain (or going back to previously) assured social recognition prior to the erosion of welfare states does not sound like forward-looking protest. It sounds like wishing to maintain things as they are, or were, as opposed to the progressive urge to seek change for the better. In fact, it is a good example of the way that justified social movement struggles may not automatically be progressive. As shown in chapter 3, a protest's defensive struggle expresses an internal critique, judging social reality against valid norms, rather than aiming to enlarge the scope of recipients and extend the scale of norm application. They are normatively and institutionally protective when defending social rights and wage levels to which participants are accustomed. Yet, on this view, a negativistic concept of progress might be applicable. For instance, Adorno is known for endorsing such a concept, saying that there are no tangible chances for the realization of a better society, and that it is actually more important to do less wrongly and prevent worse things from happening.¹²⁰ In fact, he proposes an almost fatalistic understanding of what it means to achieve social progress, that is, to resist and prevent catastrophic societal changes from taking place: „*Fortschreiten heute heißt ja wirklich nichts anderes, als die totale Katastrophe vermeiden und verhindern.*“¹²¹ This is an interesting, though ambiguous view. I agree with others (e.g., Jaeggi 2018, 23) that resistance to the perpetual danger of relapse—in view of the *Zivilisationsbruch* of the 20th century—should be a crucial part of the normative ambitions of justified struggles. Besides bringing motivations to fight antiliberal threats and defend modern society with all its flaws (seeing it as more advanced and preferable over potential change for the worse), such a view also helps us to resist social cuts, for instance, through supporting labor union campaigns. Yet, I am not convinced that defensive struggles are progressive; such a view stretches the concept of progress beyond recognition. Progressiveness includes the notion that movements engage in a forward-looking struggle for a more just society. Movements that justifiably aim to defend

¹²⁰ As an intro to this negativistic view: Freyenhagen. 2013. *Adorno's Practical Philosophy, Living less wrongly*; Cambridge.

¹²¹ Adorno, Theodor W.: *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und der Freiheit*; Vorlesung 1964/65; Berlin 2006, pp. 202.

rights or to correct disenfranchisement, by contrast, are better understood as *resisting the threat of regress*, and defending against the possibility that society changes for the worse in terms of people's social protection. The struggle of such movements might be an important condition for a fight for changes for the better in the future and might be located in an overall story of potentials of progress in the history of a society, but until then they should be simply seen as resistance against regression.

What about the inclusion struggles of the Western square occupation movements? It is not hard to see how the objective of extending the scope of those who are directly involved in democratic decision-makings and deepening the related processes and extending the scale where democratic principles are applied can be seen as progressive. To put it simply, as these protests aimed to lessen exclusion from democratic politics and give more people more frequent opportunities to deliberate the affairs and distribution of benefits and burdens of coexistence—thus increasing chances to identify as credible political agents, and as coauthors of the norms they are subjected to—their struggles can be seen as an attempt to make existing institutions of recognition more inclusive. They are progressive as they aim for, or intent to effect, a future change for the better that aligns with the criteria of inclusion in institutions of equal respect for political agency. This assessment, undoubtedly, relies on assumptions over anticipated impact and reasoned probabilities of positive societal change—speculations that might turn out to be mere wishful thinking or evaluative feelings that incite us to support them without any proven positive impact. On the other hand, this assessment might also refer to another aspect, namely, not the impact but the 'form' of a movement and the relational dynamics its struggle sets in motion. Asserting that a movement is progressive could mean that its practices already effect change for the better, though on the meso- and micro level of coexistence rather than on the macro level. Regarding Occupy *et al.*, one might say that they were progressive, as their bottom-up, assembly-based democracies not only attempted to facilitate grassroots activism and community engagement, but practiced and lived up to the universalist principles they tried to promote. In the alternative spaces Occupy *et al.* created, participants already treated each other as agents on equal footing and with a political voice of equal weight. These practices of mutual respect were progressive as they established a new culture of interaction and treatment in their networks and organizations, giving participants the chance to have positive experiences as agents who are recognized by others as those whose voices are important. On that view, Occupy *et al.* were progressive as they did not wait for change from the top down—but they themselves, through their collective actions and spaces, tried to be catalysts for changes for the better from the bottom up. They were

progressive in this “experiment” with collective problem-solving process in their own social organizations (Honneth and Nolte 2013, 14). Progressiveness seen in this way refers to a movement’s form and practices of resistance against injustice, and to its relational effects and the new forms of lives, cultural spirit, and discourses it helped to create in the short- and mid-term. This becomes a form of local progress that is evaluated against the degree to which movements support instantiating more inclusive and differentiated forms of recognition in their own social networks (e.g., if they organize around the principle of equal respect for the political agency of partakers). And if a protest movement initiated such changes, this might offer good reasons to give them the benefit of the doubt that they also aimed for, or were able to achieve, change for the better on the macro level, thus anchoring justified hopes for societal progress in their progressive practices.

However, this view is only partly satisfactory, since progressiveness here is measured by how advanced a movement’s organizations are without considering results for society. There is a risk that such a movement becomes utterly self-referential, focusing on its own inner moral purity and the progressiveness of its practices, detaching it from the bigger picture of societal progress and threats of regress. In fact, a movement might be progressive in a thinner, local sense, while society as a whole regresses.

Another dimension of progressiveness can be examined regarding the Western square occupation movements’ transformation struggle. As they scandalized deep structural disrespect in the form of wealth-induced political inequality, and sought to better assure people’s equal status and autonomy by limiting the market economy with structures of robust social protection, by making this sphere more democratically controlled, and by initiating wealth-redistribution, they rightly aimed for profound changes towards more freedom for all by lessening economic inequality. To evaluate this aspect of their fight as progressive—beyond the progressiveness of practices in alternative spaces or predictions as to institutional effects—let us recall the negative concept of *emancipation* from section 6.3. Regarding movements, this concept was described as the act or attempt of liberation, in which victims of injustice try to set themselves free from relations or institutions of oppression and dependency. This concept is useful for thinking about movements’ progressiveness, as it causes us to focus on the processes of resistance that aim to gradually overcome an unjust social condition through lengthy, forward-looking, and sustained activism, rather than just waiting for a positive state of emancipation to follow effective fights and after people had been freed from injustice, assessing these successes retrospectively as progress. Following this line of thought, one can say a movement is progressive if it expresses sound critique and

justified negative claims about serious injustices, and, importantly, if its acts can be assessed as an attempt to initiate a process of progress towards gradual liberation from these injustices, seeking for a better future coexistence. This is distinct from requiring that a movement must have a perfect plan that truly assures liberation, or a crystal-clear vision of how this progress is taking place. We recognize that movements often have evolving societal ideas, let alone amorphous plans for future institutions. Instead, we are assessing whether a movement aims for, intends to effect, and already attempts to practically initiate a process of change for the better that aligns with its justified critique of injustice, and with the criteria of instantiating more inclusive and differentiated forms of recognition. This is a useful and realistic way to assess a movement's progressiveness, since it concentrates on what they say, do, and aim for, rather than exaggerating alleged effects and the feasibility of proposals in light of ideals.

When applying such a concept, we could say that Occupy *et al.* were progressive as they initiated a societal process that helped connect local citizens with global problems that continue to be relevant. Their massive disobedient actions deliberately shifted public attention to negative externalities of out-of-check capitalist markets. They reopened a discursive structure of political opportunity after decades of neoliberal numbness, unleashing lasting energy to fight economic inequality as a major threat to justice, democracy, and freedom. Put differently, they were progressive, as they met a vital component of social progress (Zurn 2020, 278), namely, they can be evaluated as successfully assisting to induce intra-societal learning processes that raised awareness of a problem or a lack, in fact, of systemic disrespect for equal status, caused by markets. This process-based view draws on the idea that each progressive step or stage can only be achieved as it builds on institutional, practical, or normative potential. Progressiveness, one might say, could then also be measured against the extent to which a movement contributes to building a new stage, and to improving the discursive, cultural, institutional, or organizational conditions for the future fight against and liberation from injustice. This is a processual (step by step) concept of societal progress enacted by the local, committed, and long-term struggles of movements. Applying this concept, we could say Occupy *et al.* were progressive due to their processual impact, as they assisted to build up critical awareness in the public, which is a crucial societal condition and 'next step' in the long process and intergenerational struggle to overcome wealth-induced political inequality—all led by the hope to increase everyone's social chances to identify with skills, to truly choose plural paths in life, and to see themselves as free and equal coauthors of coexistence, by limiting the power of money in democracy, and by detaching political agency

and social security for all from economic status. They were progressive when they upheld the social conditions necessary to build new awareness, and to better fight injustice.

In sum, employing recognition theory as the basis for my analyses of the Western square occupations as correction, inclusion, and transformation struggles, we can reveal some aspects that allow to assess these movements in terms of progressiveness. In fact, we can see that there is nuance in what we consider as progress. First, we can assess them as resistance to the threat of regress since they tried to prevent the social disenfranchisement and exclusion of more people from existing institutions of recognition. They resisted changes for the worse, as well as the threat of diminished chances for many to grow social self-respect and esteem. Though this is not forward-looking protest, it may be a condition for future initiatives to fight for progress. Second, we can evaluate Occupy *et al.* as progressive with regard to their practices and relational effects. Occupy *et al.* exhibited inclusive forms of recognition in their own social networks and assemblies. They were progressive since they not only made use of proportionate means to fight injustice, but also lived up to the universalist values they tried to promote. Thirdly, they were progressive as they aimed for and practically initiated a process towards a future liberation from injustice. Through raising public awareness, one can say, they had positive processual impacts and improved the conditions in the intergenerational struggle to overcome wealth-induced political inequality.

These aspects taken together show why the concept of ‘progressive’ can complement an evaluation of movements. Besides assessing whether they voice justified negative or positive claims and make use of proportionate means, this concept helps us assess whether a movement also incites our hopes that a better world seems possible and that we should fight for it. In fact, we often wish to attach ourselves to a struggle that not only matches the principles we value most, and whose claims seem to us to be morally right, but that also inspires minds and hearts, and draws the victims of shared injustices and grievances to join forces. We want a movement that is progressive in a stronger sense; one that authentically lives up to the values it promotes, while being willing to learn from its deficits and invite others to learn as well; one that is not just directed inwards and tries to make participants feel good, but one that considers society at large and seeks to improve institutions for all, while exhibiting awareness of risks and trying to prevent changes for the worse. ‘Progressive’ captures all these aspects, and allows us to assess whether a movement incites justified hopes that there are agents of change, and a collective will in society that can help to initiate a long-term process to overcome injustices in the future.

On that view, the concept of ‘progressive’ seems, as Zurn puts it, an “illusionistic ideal” (Zurn 2020, 274) that is nonetheless indispensable for our assessments of and normative reasons to support a social movement struggle. Applying this concept, we make enthusiastic, forward-looking assumptions about the societal processes a movement initiates, and backward-looking comparisons to previous movements that fought similar issues and successfully contributed to improve society. And in light of the “historical consciousness” and “symbols” (Honneth 2014, 335) that it was already possible to achieve progress through struggles, and based on piecemeal assessments of a current movement’s processual progressiveness (cf., Zurn 2020, 270), we are calling those movements progressive that are not only clear and morally right about why some injustices are serious issues, and that identify, resist, and start fighting to overcome these issues, but also those that honor non-domination and democratic equality in their networks, initiate experimental learning processes in broader society and personal interactions, and that offer safe spaces for victims of injustice to become morally empowered and join forces. If a movement scores high in such regards, we have good reasons to attach ourselves to their struggle, nurturing our hopes that future emancipation of injustice is a step closer or more likely to be reached. Put differently, we may hope that social progress is on the horizon.

Hence, we used to and still have good reasons to assess the Western square occupation movements as progressive. Though not achieving clear institutional change, they have helped to initiate ongoing societal processes of emancipation from serious injustice. Current activists that fight the power of money in politics stand on their shoulders. Occupy *et al.* built a new potential for succeeding struggles, as they alerted local citizens around the globe and unleashed ongoing energy to fight economic inequality as a main threat to democracy and freedom. In retrospect, they initiated a movement trajectory that we still inhabit; the transnational fight against structural disrespect for equal political status, and for socially embedding and democratizing the market economy. If we apply this charitable view based on a pragmatic and processual concept of progress, we will not overlook the positive value of the Western square occupations, and have better chances to convince the public about the virtue of current protests that follow their footsteps. It helps to create hope and to put Occupy *et al.*’s efforts in a bigger picture and assess that their movement struggle is , though its form has changed. Or, to recall the words of former Occupier Sonny Singh: “It was the beginning of a movement trajectory that we’re still in. Occupy being the catalyst, socialism is cool now.” (Milkman *et al.*, 2021)

8.3 Regressiveness of Movements

After showing how we can evaluate the Western square occupation movements as progressive, and as seeking change for the better, while presenting progressiveness as an illusionistic ideal that refers to the justified hopes that protesters start long-term, intra-societal, learning processes to overcome serious injustices, the question now is how we can assess movements as regressive and seeking change for the worse, applying Honnethian concepts? To answer this question, I will turn to chapter 7, and draw some conclusions for how we can assess the Covid-19 protests, PEGIDA anti-immigration protests, and right-wing populist movements as regressive.

To review, I argued that these movements are unjustified struggles for recognition, as they all failed to reach a first degree of justifiability, as follows: i) They expressed unwarranted negative claims. Though they sought to defend assured legal respect for individuals' autonomy, they fought justified denials of respect in form of temporary limitations of freedom's rights in a public-health emergency. ii) They voiced unjustified beliefs about a future loss of status, while scapegoating and dehumanizing outsiders due to neurotic anxiety. iii) They sought to defend forms of societal esteem due to group belonging that caused an unjustified distribution of rights and opportunities to their benefit, anchored in exaggerated expectations and nostalgic feelings of unmerited status.

Also, they all failed to reach a second degree of justifiability, as they either i) demanded a rapid return to previous respect entitlements, and a restoration of their freedoms at the expense of others' health, bodily integrity, or basic interests in life; ii) sought to protect their status and ease anxiety by keeping outsiders seeking help away from society, up to and including inciting hatred and refusing recognition to them as humans; or iii) as they opposed other's claims for mutual respect and a greater realization of freedom through equal status respect for all, and instead tried to keep people disenfranchised from rights and opportunities, and to sustain and create a status order that has a clear hierarchy of esteem for persons with different ascriptive features, in which morally irrelevant traits determine who is eligible for respect-recognition.

Thus, the Covid-19 protests, PEGIDA, and right-wing populists engaged in unjustified movement struggles, as their social critique is not sound, does not have a compelling case for why they feel morally hurt, and as their positive claims inadequately relate to the issues they are complaining about (e.g., fixing economic inequality trough excluding foreigners). Instead of alerting society about real injustice and functioning as a seismograph of serious issues, they

poison the civic sphere by diffusing conspiracies and deliberately flouting empirical adequacy in political discourse, and divide society by fighting those who seek to end their own exclusions and disenfranchisement. Further, they are unjustified as their actions—rather than being guided by the need for liberation from injustices—are guided by ignorance or deep disrespect regarding others’ status as equally, morally-autonomous agents, seeking to perpetuate a social status-order grounded in misrecognition, ‘natural’ hierarchy, and group privileges.

How can this assessment of PEGIDA *et al.*’s unjustified struggles help us evaluate these movements as regressive? Or using Honneth’s terms, how do they prevent instantiating ever-more-inclusive and differentiated recognition? Are those regressive who wish for everything to stay the same, instead of favoring reform? Focusing on the contrast between safeguarding or changing the *status quo* does not seem to be satisfactory, as defending social rights was earlier presented as justified and positive. In addition, evil struggles also can seek change. So, are regressive movements perhaps those who seek for the reverse of progressive changes? Let us elaborate on such questions focusing on the case studies mentioned above.

To start with, let us highlight obvious distinctions between these movements and the progressive cases such as Occupy *et al.* Whereas the Western square occupation movements sought to extend the scope and scale of recognition, and to overcome normative tensions among the spheres of the *status quo* to better actualize status equality, attempting to make them more inclusive and differentiated, PEGIDA *et al.* sought to narrow the circle of recognition recipients, preserving or increasing exclusion from rights and opportunities. While the former strove for egalitarian inclusion in existing recognition and the facilitating of autonomy and strengthening of individualization therein (for the further realization of universal entitlements), addressing structural inequality in an institution that purports to promote equality and fighting for a transformation of social norms in order to actualize assured claims, the latter strove to solidify exclusions from recognition against the claims made by the excluded to be included in current institutions, and for limiting the distribution of basic civil rights or even for withdrawing legal respect for equal status. They advocated attitudes and structures that hinder the realization of equal opportunities and rights for all, creating a cultural environment of unjust privileges, and thus worsening everyone’s chances to identify with skills and feel safe “to be different without anxiety” (Adorno 1951, MM §§ 66, 184 f.), harming the conditions needed to reach greater autonomy in coexistence, and instead empowering those that threaten of oppression.

But separating progressive from regressive cases only with regard to what protesters intend to effect, and whether the related normative content aligns with increasing egalitarian inclusion and individual autonomy, is not suitable if we are looking for an assessment of regressiveness that is not just future-oriented, and that goes beyond relying on assumptions over an anticipated negative impact on institutions—speculations that can be alarmistic. This is why we should turn to those parts of Honneth's work in which he does not focus on retrospective analyses, and assess the regressiveness of political action from a different angle. This might help us to assess contemporary movements here and now as regressive, without knowing their mid- and long-term societal impacts.

For instance, in “The I in the We: Recognition as a Driving Force of Group Formation”, he talks about “regressive” and “authority-obedient” groups (Honneth 2010, 261). Following the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, he refers to regressive tendencies (*ibid.*, 2010, 264) related to an individual's desire to seek personality stabilization and growth through in-group esteem. The concept of ‘regressive’ here is of a psychological nature. It refers to the quest for “symbiotic unity” in social groups, and a wish to fall behind (regress) the formed borders of one's personal identity—similar to an idealized, affective unity experienced between mother and child (*ibid.*, 2010, 271). Supposing that each person is confronted with the lifetime task to relate and somewhat reconcile one's inner and outer world, and to learn to accept that social reality and other individuals are different and not in one's control, Honneth presents *regress* as a form of release from the mental pressure to accept the rift between inner and outer worlds through experiences of social unity and intersubjectivity in groups (*ibid.*, 2010, 273 f.). Normativity comes into play, in the moment when Honneth separates healthy from pathological forms of regression. The latter is understood as uncritically attaching and completely equating oneself to a group (*ibid.*, 2010, 275) by either willingly subjecting oneself to an idealized and omniscient leader while perceiving oneself as incompetent and immature, or surrounding oneself with persons that are aggressive due to their childhood experiences of neglect and disregard, and that push group dynamics towards resentful and paranoia-driven violence (*ibid.*, 2010, 278 f.). Another, more implicit feature is that people are more likely to lose control over their affect, rational reasoning, or accountability for claims and practices in regressive groups, through the blurring of the mind or the felt merging of oneself with a group, all the way to a denial of social reality and duties towards others (*ibid.*, 2010, 273 ff.).

This understanding of regressiveness as a form of an individual's surrendering of autonomy and moral accountability to a group that is based on obedience, leadership, and

violence in order to feel socially included, esteemed, or bonded for life with one's fellow coactors (Wegner and Sparrow 2007), and thus capable of collectively overcoming all outer restraints, can also be connected to other parts of Honneth's work that briefly refer to the "ambivalent injustice-experiences" of teenagers with low self-esteem, who seek compensatory, toxic in-group social-esteem in fascist camaraderie (*Kameradschaft*) and in "counter-cultures of violence" (Honneth, 2000, 107 f.; 2001, 164 f.), and when he talks about reification and the willful forgetting of elementary recognition for others (Honneth 2015a, 70 ff.).

The risk of applying this concept of regressiveness to movements is surely that we might inadequately psychologize them, and see regressive movements as irrational, irresponsible, and as only appealing to emotions; thus as pathological (cf., Hirvonen and Pennanen 2019)¹²², while progressive movements are psychologized as rational, exhibiting healthy bonds, appealing to reason, and orienting themselves on scientific facts. This view, and related criteria, are just as vague, and might lead us to use the presence or absence of violence as the primary criterion for judging what regressive protest is. It overlooks the ways that both justified and unjustified movements can recruit rationality, passion, anger, and even the violent choosing of sides, and that protest is often a locus of these elements together (Biletzki 2020, 2 ff.). But if we are aware of these risks, Honneth's outline can help us to shift the focus, enabling us, in particular, to assess the form of organizing and group practices of movements as regressive.

What about the protest movement against the Anti-Corona measures? Considering the concept of 'regressive' outlined above, we should focus on this movement's counter-cultural spaces. Though they empowered participants to better cope with the state of emergency, section 7.1 discussed how these supportive spaces quickly turned into a vicious sphere that amplified fake news, incited assigning false responsibility to ethnic minorities, or spread conspiracies. Resisting government measures and reclaiming liberties led many to a general denial of the pandemic threat, amplified by the echo chambers of their counterculture. While this can be seen as a collective resentment against science, we should also see it as a result of regressive group dynamics; of bad forms of socially organizing protest networks, in which participants mutually encouraged each other to deny the pandemic threat. In fact, the protests exhibited what Honneth defined as an uncritical attachment of people to a group. Excited by

¹²² I see this problematic tendency also in the work of Hirvonen, Onni, and Joonas Pennanen, who are examining populist politics by connecting recognition theory with Honneth's new concept of social pathology: "Populism as a pathological form of politics of recognition." *European Journal of Social Theory* 22.1 (2019): 27-44.

symbiotic experiences, they mutually beclouded their minds and their practical awareness that exercising personal liberties can endanger others; these group dynamics at last caused participants to feel seemingly capable to jointly overcome any outer restraint, as expressed in the collective refusal to restrict oneself for others due to health risks (Honneth 2010, 273; 276 f.). These dynamics of collective denial prevented participants from positioning their complaints as communicative contributions to public debates, and also should be seen as “instances of regress” since we can assess them as a collective “process of unlearning” (Jaeggi 2022), and as deliberately “falling back behind the problem-solving capacities” of current theories and scientific insights (Zum 2020, 280 ff.). They are regressive because their group dynamics are characterized by mutually persuading each other to “resist to recognize reality” (Hasslanger 2012, 29 f.), and by ignoring state-of-the-art research. Rather than trying to initiate intra-societal learning processes that raise awareness of serious issues among the public, or engaging in collective experimentation with remedies for complex crises, the Corona protesters were busy with inducing universal, fatalistic doubt, and mistrust in society, undoing opportunities to reflect with others on better solutions for how to act more responsibly and protect vulnerable people. Hence, they were regressive, since they worsened the conditions necessary to reach new awareness for better coexistence due to their lived ignorance regarding others’ needs, and sabotaged collective problem-solving processes that might have operated in the spirit of equal respect and with the goal to achieve fairer distributions of benefits and burdens when facing a public health threat. Instead, they engaged in what is best defined as collective processes of unlearning in their own organizations, and in their self-righteous and blaming exchange with society at large.

A similar dimension of regressiveness is visible with regard to anti-immigrant protests. by dehumanizing foreigners and inciting hatred against them, PEGIDA *et al.* undermine what Honneth defines as the “lifelong learning-process” to sensibly “relate one’s inner- with the outer world”, and to accept the social reality that others are morally autonomous, through (group) experiences of intersubjectivity and social unity (Honneth 2010, 273 f.). They are regressive, since their claims and practices contradict the goal of overcoming our naturally one-sided, deficient ascriptions of identity (*ibid.* 2010, 120 f.), and since they disrupt chances to develop more appropriate and rational forms of relating to each other in social coexistence. Instead, the PEGIDA way to relate to the outer world is characterized by neglect, ignorance, or resistance to dealing with the vital needs of others: in fact, by deliberate mis- and non-recognition. Thus, the protesters’ regressiveness is expressed in not being willing to appropriately relate to the real needs, traits, virtues, and life situations of immigrants: in

Hegel's terms, they abstract from and "annihilate every remaining human essence"¹²³ in them. Instead of offering the (mis)recognized (e.g., fleeing outsiders) any chance to relate or reply to attributions stated by the (mis)recognizer (e.g., protesting insiders), anti-immigrant activists purposefully harm the self-perception of outsiders, by ascribing terms of social valuation that take away the human agency of others (e.g., 'flood of refugees', 'social parasite', and 'rapefugees'). One can say that their movement is regressive due their violent forms of relating to the world (Honneth 2010, 120), creating a culture of interaction that disrupts the chances that either they or immigrants they encounter will make positive experiences as mutually recognizing each other as equal and valuable. From that view, their regressiveness is also characterized by squeezing others into reductive social types and negative classificatory identity frames through protest slogans and narratives (e.g., 'young, male, colored masses that seek to exploit our welfare state'), making such outsiders despicable and preventing them from creating more inclusive and differentiated forms of recognition. This view also resonates with how Honneth recently described inappropriate forms of recognizing others (Honneth 2021, 56 f.). Rather than merely a "classificatory act of an attribution of certain standardized characteristics", appropriate recognition means addressing the real traits, needs, or virtues of the recognized, and is related to the democratic practice that the recognizer "limit their own space of freedom" (ibid., 2021, 57 f.) and grant a space of normative authority to the recognized. This allows the recognized to co-deliberate and co-determine how to interpret and apply the norms and classifications governing the recognizer/recognized interaction, giving the recognized the chance to positively relate to or reject ascriptions, and see themselves as the co-authors of the identity-ascriptions to which they are subjected. (Honneth 2010, 118 ff). Thus, a movement like PEGIDA is regressive since it practices deeply undemocratic forms of relating to others, as it closes itself off, and as it exercises normative ascriptions that are entirely detached from and intended to harm the addressees.

Another dimension of regressiveness is visible in the way that anti-immigrant protesters relate to the future. In expressing anxiety-laden, unwarranted, prospects of an endangerment of their social life and identity due to suspected outside threats, PEGIDA *et al.* view the future of society as a problem, rather than as a promise or an opportunity to improve, as is usually the case with progressive thinking. Instead of being hopeful, they are pessimistic, anxious, and seek to prevent change. Surely, protective reactions can be justified: for instance, to secure the economic means needed for all to prevent deprivation and future experiences of

¹²³ Hegel saw this thinking as merely "abstract", instead of "concrete". See his illuminating reasons on how to conceptualize a "murderer". Freely translate from the German text: Hegel, G. W. F. 1807. "Wer denkt abstract?".

injustice (see section 3.3). Yet inflated anxiety regarding the future seldom helps to fix things, but may cause panic reactions to safeguard oneself against fake enemies and an allegedly ruined future standard of living.

Note here that ‘regressive,’ in contrast with ‘progressive,’ is not a self-description of activists and politicians. While some see themselves as conservatives, hardly anyone claims to seek change for the worse, but may claim that things were better in the past, to which we should return. In fact, regressive protest is well described as a politics of anxiety nurtured by future pessimism and combined with a nostalgic glorification of the past.¹²⁴ This leads to our last aspect of regressiveness: the quest to not only preserve an unjustified *status quo*, but also the quest to go back to a previous way of living that is assumed to be less complex, more secure, and to offer much better qualities than currently prevail—the quest to return to the *status quo ante*, the previous social order.

This dimension is clear with regard to right-wing populists. In section 7.3, I showed that we should theorize their movement protests as a collective, reactionary response to a decade-long wave of substantial changes in the social status order of most Western societies on the part of those who feel that they have been deprived of their previously higher positions in the older order; as struggles against equalizing and individualizing changes, and against those who fight for more individual autonomy, plurality of forms of life, experimentalism regarding personal identity, and evermore egalitarian inclusion into institutions. While the old status order can be loosely defined in terms of the hegemony of patriarchy, ethnic exclusion and white supremacy, a suppressive culture of expected heteronormativity or traditional family lifestyles, the newer order can be defined in terms of increased legal equality, openness to unconventional lifestyles, and transformed forms of social coexistence where differences of race, sex, occupation, class or ethnicity are supposed to affect people’s rights and opportunities less negatively (Zurn 2022, 14). From that angle, it is not hard to see how we can evaluate right-wing populists as regressive. While feminists, environmentalists, or civil rights activists, can be seen as having promoted the currently regnant, inclusive, anti-patriarchal, and legally more equalizing status order—at least to the extent that they sought to realize underlying universalist principles—right-wing populist protesters, by contrast, reject most of such changes and express a strong preference for the older, exclusionary, patriarchal, and white supremacist status order. To put it simply, their protests are regressive since they attempt to turn back the clock, and seek to reverse the individualizing and equalizing changes

¹²⁴ A case in point is the slogan of the Trump supporter movement ‘Make America great again’. Rather than seeking to build a fairer and more evolved society, their pledge of future change is to return to and restore the allegedly superior old order.

of the previous decades. They are regressive since they stand for a change for the worse, in the form of striving to solidify deficiencies and exclusions from recognition institutions, and also seeking to increase them and to limit the distribution of basic rights, to revise progress, and to re-withdraw legal respect for equal status from historically marginalized groups. They seek to make recognition institutions more exclusive and hierarchical, hindering the realization of equal opportunities and rights for all, by instead fostering, and re-creating a cultural environment of unjust privileges. They stand for a change for the worse, since they seek to worsen the chances for all to identify with skills and give fewer people an opportunity in the future to see themselves as co-authors of the norms they are subjected to, thus harming the conditions to reach greater autonomy in coexistence, and instead solidifying inequality as well as threats of personal and structural oppression. This regressiveness of their protests—seen as reversing heretofore equalizing and individualizing changes—is particularly manifested in cases where right-wing populists reach political power and initiate legal backlashes, quickly rearranging institutions and appointing new office holders and legislators to revise triumphant legal accomplishments of historic feminist movements.¹²⁵ They are regressive since they enact legal regress here and now.

In sum, we can reveal at least four dimensions that help us to assess the anti-immigrant, right-wing populist, and Covid-19 protests as regressive.

First, we can evaluate movements as regressive, when their group dynamics cause processes of unlearning in their own networks and in their exchanges with the larger society. Rather than initiating learning processes that raise public awareness, such movements resist recognizing reality and the needs of others, with participants mutually reassuring each other that it is right to neglect state-of-the-art science, and, thus, to fall back behind (regress) achieved collective problem-solving capacities. This is contrary to the ideal of change for the better as a result of cognitively mediated and increased collective awareness of an issue, associated with a purposeful intervention that is intended to address that issue (Zurn 2020, 278).

Second, protests are regressive if they undermine chances of jointly overcoming merely one-sided and deficient ascriptions of identity in coexistence by denying the recognized a chance to co-deliberate the ascriptions used by the recognizer and to reflect

¹²⁵ A case in point is the U.S. Supreme Court's overruling of *Roe v. Wade*—a landmark decision from 1973 in which the Court ruled that the U.S. Constitution conferred the right to have an abortion (more precisely, it extended the right to privacy implied (but not stated) by the Due Process Clause to the medical care sought by women, including abortion)—June 24, 2022, on the grounds that this right was not rooted in the Nation's history or tradition, nor seen a right when the Due Process Clause was ratified 1868 as part of the Fourteenth Amendment. This change was made possible because former President Trump appointed three conservative Justices, which means that the court is now dominated by a ultra-conservative majority.

together whether these forms relate to actual needs and traits. These political practices are regressive when they prevent other people from reaching appropriate, more inclusive and differentiated forms of recognition. Third, regressiveness is often anchored in a mindset of anxiety, seeing the future as a threat that will affect one negatively: thus, one seeks to either preserve an unjust *status quo*, or to return to a way of living that is supposedly better. Fourth, movements are regressive when they intend to turn back the clock, seeking to solidify deficiencies and exclusions in existing recognition forms, and also to worsen them and create more discriminatory forms, limiting the distribution of respect for equal status, and thus reversing the individualizing and equalizing changes of the previous decades. In short, movements are regressive that seek to return to the *status quo ante* of legalized inequality and a tolerated culture of oppression in social life.

These dimensions show why the concept of ‘regressive’ can complement assessments. Besides stressing that bad kind of movements express unjustified claims and use inappropriate means, this concept reminds us that institutions are not irreversible, and it motivates us to assess whether a movement’s collective activities ground justified fears that we risk losing cherished societal achievements, returning to a worse state that seemed long gone. While ‘progress’ is an illusionistic ideal, ‘regress’ is related to a dystopian vision and terrifying remembrances of the past; a loaded evaluative category used by those that see a risk of regress at the horizon.

Rather than enjoying an enthusiastic orientation towards the future, we anxiously look back on past states compared to current states of affairs, making alarming claims about the societal processes a movement might initiate. In light of historical awareness that it is possible to reverse progress through protest and based on piecemeal assessments of present movements, we are calling those movements regressive that are not just unsound and morally wrong, but that aim for revisions of previous individualizing and equalizing changes, and wish to go back to a more hierarchical order where they think they (or their ancestors) were in a better place. ‘Regressive’ enables us to assess whether there is a collective will in society that seeks to initiate long-term processes in service of reestablishing a past, unjust social order. It can be seen as an indispensable concept for the critical assessments of movements, as it inspires us to reflect on whether we ought to start fighting their uprising, defend the *status quo*, and prevent change for the worse—in light of regressive activities here and now.

8.4 Concluding Remarks: Discontinuity and (Counter)Movement Dynamics

In this chapter, I have shown why the application of the couplet of ‘regressive’ and ‘progressive’ can usefully complement the critical evaluation of a movement’s justifiability. While we should focus on assessing the rightness and wrongness of a movement’s negative and positive claims about injustice, and whether they make use of both appropriate and proportionate means, these additional concepts help us to place movements in a bigger societal and historical picture, and assess whether they raise either justified hopes that there are chances to collectively improve the moral level of social integration and make society more differentiated and inclusive, or whether they incite justified fears that there is a risk to move towards destruction and a loss of achievements, a state of society where we might revert to older, worse conditions, considering that some activists are trying to reset the societal floor and the cultural environment in order to recreate more disenfranchised groups in the future.

While *progressive* was loosely defined as a protest politics that seeks to lessen exclusion and discrimination, and to extend the circle of the recipients afforded relevant types of justified recognition as well as to acknowledge the distinctiveness of people and increase chances for all to legitimately express more dimensions of their personality through differentiating recognition practices regarding individuals’ real traits and needs, *regressive* was loosely defined as falling behind achieved levels of social integration, and as seeking to narrow the circle of recognition recipients and increase discrimination and exclusion, thus reducing chances to identify with skills and receive regard for distinctiveness across more aspects of one’s personality, ultimately impairing the social conditions needed to achieve greater autonomy for all in society.

Yet, the question we asked at first was how to apply these concepts to current social movement cases without speculating on their mid- and long-term effects, and without being able to retrospectively assess their impact on state institutions, or to focus only on political preferences. This chapter showed that we can focus on 1) the practices and forms of treatment within organizations, 2) on their inner group dynamics and short-term processual impact on social relations, 3) on the ways that protesters make use of available collective problem-solving capacities, and especially 4) on whether they meet the criterion of change for the better as a result of cognitively mediated and increased awareness of a societal issue, linked with a purposeful intervention against that issue.

Using these definitions, I showed that the Western square occupation movements were progressive as they extended the scope and scale of recognition, and practiced more inclusive

forms of recognition in their own networks and assemblies. They authentically lived up to the universalist values they endorsed. Their collective experimentation with democratic forums of bottom-up and consensus-based decision-making processes was progressive as such practices and related group experiences can be seen as a forum to improve our capacities for democratic authorship (Zurn 2020, 282) and further democratize democracy. Also, they were progressive as they raised public awareness about the power of money in politics, thus improving conditions in the intergenerational struggle to defeat wealth-induced political inequality in the future. *Vice versa*, I showed that PEGIDA *et al.* were regressive as they fought for solidifying exclusions from recognition forms against the claims made by the excluded to be included, often combined with seeking to narrow the circle of recipients, and thus increasing exclusions from equal rights and opportunities. Through their group activities, these protests exhibited collective processes of unlearning, closing themselves off and forming attitudes that deter the better recognition of others. They fell back behind given problem-solving capacities (Zurn 2020, 282) and disrupted social conditions for intra-societal learning processes towards greater autonomy for all and for the overcoming of one-sided or deficient ascriptions of identity in coexistence. In fact, these movements were regressive as they encouraged each other to resist the recognition both of reality and of others' needs, and deliberately disrespected others.

Thus, group dynamics and practices, short term processual effects, and initiated learning effects are suitable anchor points to evaluate whether a movement is progressive or regressive—whether it seeks to increase egalitarian inclusion and individual autonomy, or instead tries to prevent the rise of more inclusive and differentiated forms of recognition, seeking to worsen the current normative order and restore the *status quo ante*. In general, from a recognition theory perspective, the regressiveness or progressiveness of a movement is assessed against the degree to which it either increases universalist inclusivity or particularistic exclusivity with regard to respect-, esteem-, or love-recognition (Biletzki 2020, 7). Regressive movements endorse and practice particularistic forms of recognition, expressing an exclusionary vision of a status order based on attitudes and institutions that are patriarchal, ethnonational, anti-immigrant, and even fully racist; in fact, “a politics of reactionary recognition”. Progressive movements endorse and practice universalist forms of recognition, showing forth an egalitarian vision of a just status order (Fraser 2017, 5 ff) based on redistributive justice, the emancipation of women, freedom from gender-based oppression, solidarity with the poor, and seeking to increase human rights and equal civil rights as well as opportunities for all (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015, 204).

This interpretation of regressive or progressive, along the lines of a normative conflict between them and mobilizing either particularistic or universalist recognition, matches well with Honneth's recent thoughts on left- and right-wing activism. In a debate with historian Paul Nolte, he argued that what is "left" should be assessed against how activists relate to the project of progress, namely, whether they seek and how they contribute to further developing, realizing, and strengthening already institutionalized freedoms in modern social institutions, and in our democratic and economic coexistence, saying:

On the "left" side, there is always a fight for an expansion and deepening of social freedoms, i.e., either for the inclusion of evermore parts of the population in the institutions that guarantee freedom or for their further democratization, whereas on the "right" side, mostly the negative freedoms of the market or the law were made strong against [. . .] shared responsibilities. [. . .] The "Right" by contrast, [. . .], makes naturalistic and occasionally also psychoanalytic arguments, in order to be able to oppose such an opening of the institutions of social freedom.¹²⁶ (Honneth and Nolte 2013, 5)

Yet, distinguishing progressive and regressive against the 'universalism-particularism binary'—rather than against the usual economic binary between state intervention and market liberalism (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015, 202 ff.)— whether they practice either a universalist-inclusionary or particularistic-exclusionary politics of recognition and related visions of a future society, still leaves unanswered where we can locate regressive movements and their bad kind of collective uprisings in Honneth's overall positive and optimistic theory of a modern society's normative order and struggles emerging therein. In fact, if we assume that, in the main, society is a differentiated normative order that institutionalizes—though insufficiently—crucial forms of universalist recognition with the idea to increasingly facilitate social freedom for all, it is very surprising to find groups in society that are struggling for revision, for particularistic recognition, and against the claims of those that want to be included, if not for straightforward fascism and a seemingly feudal social system of bondage. Obviously, as shown in the chapters 7 and 8, there is an institutional, practical, and normative regressive potential, and incentives for such uprisings that go beyond the mere contradictions as well as collective misconceptions of insufficient universalist recognition. This is why we ought to adjust at least two aspects of Honneth's recognition theory's twofold approach to add to our conceptualization of movement struggles:

- 1) If we wish to uphold the strategy of immanent critique and reconstructive ethics, but at the same time accept that some struggles for recognition not only seek to preserve the

¹²⁶ Freely translated from the German original: Honneth, Axel and Paul Nolte. 2013. „Ich@Wir: Ein Streitgespräch über rechts und links in der globalisierten Moderne (German Edition)“, In: Kursbuch 173, *Rechte Linke*, Murmann Verlag.

status quo but also to go back to an unjustified *status quo ante*, and that such evil struggles are not merely false reactions to actual misrecognition (if we reject Honneth's pathologizing view) but are, rather, anchored in exaggerated and unjustified expectation of recognition (e.g., deep value convictions of humans' inequality, mixed with expectations of natural superiority, authority, and unmerited honor due to class, race, gender), we must reframe the story about the immanent dynamics of progress underlying the normative order of modern society. Considering the conflict between older and newer values as expressed in the uprising of right-wing-populist movements and the related struggle over utterly different visions of a just status order, we must, in particular, reframe the story of a dialectical tension between universal recognition-norms and their mere particularistic manifestations in social reality. In fact, we should tell the particularistic side of the story differently. Whereas we should keep the descriptive frame that disadvantaged groups attempt to appeal to the surplus validity of universal normative principles—those that are valid and institutionalized but interpreted and applied in an insufficient way—and to turn these norms against unjust exclusions by relying on them for a justification of people's needs, we should add that (previously) advantaged groups on the other side, are inclined to appeal to merely particularistic and deficient realizations and related institutions, to either defend or even to increase their relative benefits and privileges in the allocation of burdens, roles, rights, obligations, symbolic goods of cooperation, and opportunities in the status order of modern society. Thus, we have a tension between those people that appeal to universalist norms in order to criticize deficient social institutions and practices, and those people who, on the contrary, benefit from precisely this insufficient and particularistic normative order of society. This account does not merely address a normative conflict between groups that appeal to opposing values, but sees recognition struggles embedded in a 'movement-counter-movement' dynamic. On that view, each claim for universal recognition seems accompanied by others' feelings of loss of partial recognition—due to potential changes in the status order that might affect the allocation of burdens, benefits, roles, rights, obligations, symbolic goods of cooperation and honor to their disadvantage—setting the stage for a zero-sum conflict over normative status and entitlement on behalf of the previously advantaged against the rising disadvantaged.

If we accept this reframing of the collision between the validity surplus of universal recognition principles and their deficient realizations, accompanied by this

movement-counter movement dynamic, then we must expand our vocabulary and stress that struggles for respect-, esteem-, and for love-recognition frequently also include a conflict over hegemonic norms, in fact, by—as Celikates argued—struggles ‘about’ or over recognition (Celikates 2021, 277 ff),¹²⁷ and over norms that govern recognizability and status entitlements in society, carried out between groups that are contrarily driven by either a universalist-inclusionary or particularistic-exclusionary politics recognition, often depending on how they benefit from the reigning, unequal distributive order of recognition. In fact, what we need to acknowledge and state clearer and analyze deeper is that both, progressive and regressive protests find resources in the social practices, norms, and institutions that underlie the present state of affairs. Both good and bad sorts of movements draw on the status quo for validation. Honneth seems to have something similar in mind when he ends *Freedom’s Right* (2014), talking about societal progress and regress, and that the realizations of the institutionalized freedoms were “conflict-ridden and often violently interrupted” (Honneth 2014, 334).

- 2) If we accept that regressive protest groups are not only able to defend and increase their relative benefits and privileges in the society’s allocation of burdens, rights, obligations, opportunities, and symbolic goods of cooperation, but also to overcome most aspects of universalist recognition in the status order—that they are able to push these principles back beyond recognition, as in the case of Nazi Germany’s dismantling of the Weimar Constitution—we should soften our positive conceptualization of a reigning normative order of recognition. In fact, evil struggles that seek to regress and fall behind societal achievements remind us that the normative and institutional perils of the past remain with us today. If we wish to maintain an immanent critique to keep an objective foothold in pre-theoretical practices and institutions of social change, and at the same time accept that certain groups are on the wrong the side of history, and engage in particularistic-exclusionary recognition politics, then it appears that we need a much more pluralistic, conflictive, and perhaps negativistic conceptualization of the current normative order; an order that seemingly includes many remains of the older status order such as conventionalist honor, clerical

¹²⁷ Note that Celikates uses this concept with regard to agents’ capacity for conflict, which is to contest and put into question claims to recognition that affect them, nevertheless saying in struggles about over-recognition that the privileged usually aim to secure their social position of power. See: Celikates, Robin. 2021. “Beyond Needs: Recognition, Conflict, and the Limits of Institutionalization”. In: *Recognition and Ambivalence*. Columbia University Press, 2021. 257-292.

and secular authority, and overall regressive elements than the idealizing aspects of recognition theory might incline us to assume.

One part of such an adjusted view is that we should start from the negative, namely, from the claims about injustice expressed by protesters in order to better spot and assess what misrecognition and appropriate recognition requires, instead of using only ideals to spell out what a society would be like that fully realizes reciprocal recognition (Celikates 2021, 272)—a viewpoint of negative methodology voiced in Honneth's earlier works. Another part of an adjusted view is that, rather than conceiving the current order primarily as an imperfect instantiation of universal principles whose deficits and bad historical residues will wither away in the future, we must consider a greater possibility of discontinuity, and look for the contemporaneous nature of both regressive and progressive normative elements in our reigning societal order (McNay 2021, 75 f.). Though Honneth does not rely on a cumulative and inevitable concept of progress, we should be more attentive with regard to the structural contradictions, negative tendencies, and issues of normative conflict that characterize modern society. Being aware of the negatives and the regressive features underlying our normative infrastructure means that we adjust our understanding of the social practices and institutions of love-, esteem-, and respect-recognition. For instance, despite formal gender equality in the societal sphere of intimacy and primary relations, we must do better as we address the fact that domestic violence against women and children is still an intrinsic part of familial dynamics—one that increased during the Covid-19 pandemic—and that paternal and fraternal dominance, forms of soft domination, idealized masculinity, and deep inequality in responsibilities for emotional care work in the family are still typical parts of our private life in contemporary modernity (McNay 2021, 81 ff; or Fraser 2016). Further, despite all the recent talk in most Western societies about equal chances for merit-based esteem and the diversification of the work force, we are still dealing with stubborn racial and patriarchal networks in most parts of the marketplace, where jobs are given to one's *protégés*, and with the sheer endless attempt to overcome the racial and gender pay gaps, even in Scandinavian social-welfare economies. Also, far from being a social sphere of collective self-determination where we collaboratively work for the common good and fairly esteem one another, capitalist-markets confront us with the reality of enhanced, neoliberal competition between workers (Juetten 2015), with a tyranny of merit (Sandel 2020), a globalized division of labor that systemically exploits the poor

in the south to ensure a consumerist lifestyle to people in the north; and with inequities that often intensify already existing gender vulnerabilities (McNay 2021, 85). Lastly, what should we think about a system of legal, equal status respect from which fleeing outsiders are often systematically excluded, and which is damaged from the inside due to extreme wealth disparities and vast economic injustice? In fact, what about a normative order that systematically benefits the wealthy and affluent, and flouts actualization of equal opportunity; one that confronts us with profound structural disrespect for equal status due to wealth-induced inequality? Such normative tensions between respect and esteem, as shown in chapter 5, leave us in a much more ambiguous place than when we thought we were only dealing with insufficiently realized universal recognition. We are far from an ideal situation regarding love-, esteem-, and respect-recognition, and instead live in a time of “double (un)freedom” as assessed by Marx in *Capital*, Vol. I, (1867, 181 ff., and 742 f.). The overemphasis on the factuality-validity distinction appears unbalanced as we try to reconstruct these negative tendencies, and might distort the morally and politically relevant issues we have to address as activists and critics.

In summary, we ought to incorporate at least two adjustments into recognition theory’s twofold approach: 1) we must pay more attention to the particularistic-exclusionary side of the recognition struggle, and analyze more deeply the ways that both good and bad sorts of social movements draw on the status quo for validation; 2) we must soften our positive conceptualization of a reigning normative order of recognition, and be more attentive concerning the structural contradictions, negative tendencies, and issues of normative conflict that also characterize the present state of affairs. An awareness that regressive elements are underlying the normative infrastructure of modern society (a situation which must be outlined in more detail but which I will leave for subsequent work), and that struggles for (and over) recognition are enshrined in movement-counter-movement dynamics, has advantages when assessing contemporary movements. First, we will have a better awareness that the victims of injustice and the activists supporting them not only have to deal with experiences of deficient recognition, but also with the ghosts of the past. Namely, regressive normative counter-ideas (i.e., threats of oppression, dehumanization, exploitation, blunt discrimination) and political forces that continue to derive energy from such leftovers of “a time of darkness” (Young 2011); and that political practitioners often seek to use this existing regressive incentive-structure in order to increase their relative status advantage against others through promoting the idea that caste, class, occupations, and traditions should again strongly decree that each

group has its place, and that some are born to rule and others to serve; and that the recognition of everyone's equal dignity is a failure to recognize the rights of those who are allegedly superior by nature. On that view, we have awareness that protesters often expose themselves to threats and sometimes put their lives at risk as they fight real foes (e.g., employers, supremacists, nationalists, or masculinists), who wish that their efforts fail and instead push in the opposite direction, even as protesters try to shift society's attention towards injustices that must be fixed and voice critique in favor of a long-term, greater realization of universal justice.

Finally, if we apply such an adjusted view, we will be much less surprised that groups in society are fighting for revision, for particularistic recognition, or for a system of feudal-like bondage. If we consider that there are contradictory, negative, and regressive tendencies in current practices, institutions, and norms—a social base that supplies a structure of opportunity to evil protest claimants who seek change for the worse—we have awareness that in the course of the dialectical tension between universal recognition and particularistic realization (and their underlying negative and positive elements), institutions of equal respect, merit-based esteem, and love can be enriched and made more inclusive and differentiated—but the pendulum can swing to the other side. Societal processes can be initiated in which the circle of recognition recipients is re-narrowed and marginalized groups are further excluded, and regressive norms and practices can come to the surface of institutions where they were long gone. How this dialectic plays out is a matter of the success of long-term, collective, political practices determining whether and to what extent the universalist-inclusionary or the particularist-exclusionary side of the recognition struggle (occasionally) wins. If we apply such an adjusted view, we will be less surprised when we find that we are currently living through historic times, where just one decade ago massive square occupation movements incited hope worldwide that people can defeat dictatorships, can start real democracies, and overcome economic and political inequality, while just a few years later right-wing populists take over the power in major countries, cut taxes for the rich, and reduce the chances of equal voices for all. Also, we will be much less surprised that the US Supreme Court is overruling the Constitutional right to legal, safe abortion, though a majority of the society is in favor of reproductive rights and equal opportunities for woman, and while Germany improves the range and scope of a similar right during the same time period.

Applying the conceptual couplet of progress and regress to new movements and how they affect society helps us to make sense of and assess such turns of events, as it provides awareness about the conflictual, discontinuous dynamics of societal change, rather than

limiting us to merely evaluate the rightness of claims or practices. This conceptual couplet removes the naiveté that societal progress can be achieved for free, without counterclaims, and is automatic. It reminds us that there is a perpetual danger of relapse, but nonetheless creates justified hopes and “optimism of the will” (Davis, 2016), that we can push towards progress again—inspired by movement predecessors that managed to do same, often under worse conditions.

Conclusion
Learning from the Streets

“...[t]he crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.”

—Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*

As I write this conclusion in summer of 2022, people around the globe are again taking to squares and flooding public spaces, as they struggle for greater justice: While residents across Israel set up encampments and move into tents to protest soaring housing costs (Sommer 2022), the youth movement Fridays for Future calls for occupying schools and universities worldwide to protest climate inaction and demand an end to the fossil economy.¹²⁸ Roughly ten years after Occupy and Indignados, seizing squares with tents and assemblies is a modular practice—a set of trusted forms of joint action used for various protest ends. In the meantime, however, the 1% has all but written off the claims of square occupation movements for real democracy and control over markets. The global wave of past protests has had no noticeable impact on banking. No corporate or banking regulation, no change in laws, is directly linked to the demands of the Western square occupation movements. A decade later, Wall Street and global corporations are instead bursting at the seams with wealth. Since 2011, the S&P 500 index—the benchmark for determining the state of the stock market and global economy—has risen over 325%. The wealthiest individuals and companies have gotten robust tax breaks thanks to a sizable windfall in the Trump tax cuts of 2017. And some measures find that the world’s ten richest individuals more than doubled their fortunes to \$1.5 trillion USD during the pandemic alone—at a rate of \$15,000 per second, or \$1.3 billion a day—in a time when the incomes of 99% of humanity fell, and over 160 million more people were forced into poverty. (Oxfam 2022)

What has been done: ‘Applied Recognition Theory’

This on-going use of square occupations in the face of growing inequalities illustrates why the Western square occupation movements still matter. Their struggles over economic inequality

¹²⁸ See this movement’s global call for action: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jul/26/school-strikes-climate-protests-activists/> (last accessed August 15, 2022).

and its ever-changing effects, the harms of market forces on people's lives, ecosystems, and chances for political participation continue. This work has sought to draw attention to the positive value and function of these social movements as seismographs of serious, and now worsening, societal (in)justices—a perspective that is too often ignored—through providing an analysis based on recognition theory of the meaning of the Occupy/Indignados protest practices and slogans, and stressing the justifiability of their normative claims. Mine is a work of emancipation which hopes to encourage current activists, students, and scholars to “learn from the streets” (Celikates 2015a), and realize that we stand on the shoulders of Occupy *et al.*: we can reexamine and reassess these movements as fighting back against social disenfranchisement and insecurity produced by a politics of austerity; as responding to the outrageous power of money in politics with egalitarian demands for the democratization of all society; as a way for the marginalized to start creating occupations and assemblages, countercultural spaces of alternative recognition to partially enjoy the social regard denied them in mainstream society; and as critiques of the deep and unresolved structural tension between capitalist inequality and democratic equality. I have sought to inspire new generations with an understanding that these are the ongoing struggles and wishes of our age—yet another age of wealth-induced political inequality with higher stakes than ever.

Furthermore, this work is a contribution to three of the several areas that Chris F. Zurn—in one of the major guides into Honneth's rich work—outlined for how we ought to continue and deepen recognition theory's research paradigm (Zurn 2015). First, Zurn called for increased attention to contemporary social conflict phenomena such as the Occupy movement; second, for more focus on the continuing fury of right-wing movements that are either explicitly neofascist or drawing on fascist forms to produce fear, grief, and action. Third, he has asked more generally for additional work in what he called “applied recognition theory” (*ibid.*, 2015, 209 f.); making use of the normative and conceptual tools provided by recognition theory for examining and evaluating modern-day societal issues like the prospects for making global capitalism consistent with social democratic ideals, or the controversial debates over immigration, citizenship, and anti-globalization protest. (*ibid.*, 2015, 2011) These and related questions have not been systematically treated—in many ways, this work has been an attempt to outline answers to these vibrant research gaps.

First of all, regarding the idea of *applied recognition theory*, we have explored how this theory's tools ought to be differentiated and refined in order to be able to apply them effectively to contemporary movement cases. In fact, I have explicated recognition theory's twofold approach, thus providing a methodology for philosophically analyzing—i.e.,

Occupying a Square?

examining and assessing—movements with regard to protesters' joint claim-making and related practices. Moreover, beyond the distinction between its explanatory approach on the one hand and its evaluative approach on the other, we saw that the theory's application to distinct normative claims made by protesters (i.e., negative-evaluative claims about injustice, and positive-prescriptive claims about future justice) reveals a further helpful doubling of my proposed twofold recognition theory approach. This separation allows us to evaluate the justifiability of movements in a more differentiated manner, evaluating what the protesters express about both the social causes and relations of their protest, and what they demand regarding remedies, future entitlements, and moral treatments. Most important, when we adopt this differentiation, we can apply recognition theory to movements for assessing whether they reach both a first and a second degree of justifiability. Separating negative from positive claims enables to assign a first degree of justifiability, if we find that protesters rightly criticize unjustified denials of recognition in social or institutional relations, i.e., rightly complain about injustice. A second degree can be assigned, if we assess that they express justified prescriptions as well, that is positive claims that aim to remedy or end injustice without creating even greater denials of recognition. Such judgments can be attained by assessing separately different type of joint claims and their underlying values in light of recognition theory's principles of justice.

Secondly, I applied this qualified account to the *Western square occupation movements* and provided the first systematic, recognition-theoretical analysis of their collective claims and practices. This analysis was faithful regarding the protesters' self-understanding and slogans, allowing us to reveal the wide range of their aims. I analyzed them as correction struggles for defending valid recognition concerning welfare rights and accustomed levels of social esteem and status-respect; as inclusion struggles to build a more participatory democracy, extending and deepening chances of each individual to identify as an actor that has an equal voice beyond mere representation; and also as transformation struggles that resist the structural disrespect for equal status underlying capitalist markets and see increasing economic inequality as a major threat to democracy.

This conceptualization of Occupy *et al.* frees these contemporary movements from one-sided theorizations, and studies them in a much more differentiated way, reconstructing their defensive, reformist, and transformative political-dimensions. It offers an especially promising vocabulary to make sense of the meaning of such contemporary movement practices and slogans beyond binary images, as it illuminates how related modes of collective social critique (i.e., internal, and immanent critique) overlap, mutually influence, and

complement each other. While Occupy *et al.* expressed internal critique when defending social rights and wage levels, they expressed immanent critique when calling for democratic inclusion, and for altering markets. In fact, this work has shown that they claimed recognition along multiple axes, such as for preserving a certified normative status of protection and esteem, for deepening egalitarian inclusion in modern democracy, and for altering the market economy's principles to tackle wealth-induced political inequality. Revealing these dimensions through the application of my refined twofold-recognition theory approach also meets the ambition of Honneth's recent method of "reconstructive criticism"; a critique that—in the spirit of Hegel's philosophy—not only seeks "to affirm and reinforce current practices and institutions, but also to correct and reinforce them," reflecting on deficient embodiments of universal values (Honneth 2014, 8 f.).

Thirdly, this work has shown that the twofold recognition theory approach is also helpful for detecting, evaluating, and examining what we have called, "*evil struggles for recognition.*" Focusing on Covid-19 and anti-immigration protests, as well as right-wing populist movements, I have argued that these movements also should be seen as anchored in shared experiences of a denial of recognition, and can form spaces of compensative recognition. While the first case was examined as the struggle over society's respect for citizens' individual autonomy, the second was seen as a defensive struggle for upholding social respect for insiders against alleged prospects of future experiences of injustice, and the last was understood as a struggle for defending or restoring people's expectations for esteem and superior entitlement. By applying additional but not yet employed explanatory components of Honneth's we have shown that we can see these movements as collective reactions either to 1) justifiable denials of recognition, 2) anxiety about potential future loss of status, or 3) objections to the claims of others for universal recognition and equality. But, I have argued that a reconstruction of these protesters' negative experiences and morally guided practices alone does not offer grounds for justified protest. It is vital to separate explanations from justifications, evaluating movements against the justifiability of the actual or future recognition denial protesters are complaining about. To that end, I have argued that Covid-19 protesters and right-wing populist movements express unconvincing complaints, since they react to justifiable denials of recognition (i.e., justifiable freedom restrictions in a state of emergency, as well as justifiable equalizing and individualizing changes in the societal status order), while the anti-immigrant movement PEGIDA fails to voice warranted expectations of future harm (i.e., they only scapegoat outsiders). Although most of these protesters might rightly express experiences of loss of status and hurt feelings, it is more important to

understand that they experience justifiable denials of recognition, since they hold unreasonable views about their abilities, merits, and what they are entitled to in the first place—ultimately leading these movements into the trap of expressing neither justified negative claims nor positive ones, since they share normative affinities in favor of “natural” dominance and subordination among groups, and since they are, in essence, founded on the massive mobilization of attitudes of disrespect and a shared, deep disbelief in universal human equality. These are ill-intentioned aims at the heart of these movements and their activities, for which they must be publicly criticized, held accountable, and be politically opposed.

As its final aspect, this work also showed that systematically applying recognition theory to real-world issues and movement cases may be the single most effective way to both show the normative, evaluative, and conceptual strength of this theory, and to inform, fine-tune, and further develop a two-fold recognition theory approach. This is an ever evolving and unfinished project of “mediating critical theory and collective practice” (Celikates 2018).

What needs to be done: Transnational and Digital Activism

However, much more work is required. In particular, I consider there are at least four fields that require enhanced attention in the future of (critical) recognition theory.

First, more theorization and case studies must be undertaken to clarify the usefulness of applying the conceptual couplet of “*progressive*” and “*regressive*” to movements, and to thus inspire people to make use of that vocabulary in their political struggles. In particular, if my arguments in chapter 8 are sound, we need to further reflect how both progressive and regressive protest actors draw resources from the social norms and institutions of the status quo. As regards methodology, we need to further debate the link between moral assessment (i.e., justified/unjustified) and political assessment (i.e., progressive/regressive). These two different metrics of evaluation now accomplish different, though overlapping tasks, and we must clarify how they interact in the application of recognition. For instance, does one first assess justifiability and only then turn to the subsidiary question of progressive/regressive? Also, we need to pay much more attention to the dialectical-(counter)-movement dynamics between universalist-inclusionary and the particularist-exclusionary side of the recognition struggle, to inform and likely further re-model recognition-theory’s twofold approach (e.g., reframing of the collision between the validity surplus of universal recognition principles and their deficient realizations).

Second, more comparative work is needed at the intersection of *recognition and power*, contrasting Honneth's rather consensus-oriented theory of social movement conflicts with those theories (e.g., Lorey 2019, Mouffe 2014, Volk 2018) that emphasize deep disagreements and the attempt to disrupt political institutions expressed in movement protest. While there is plenty of attention to questions concerning the ambivalences of recognition (Lepold 2021 *et al.*)—discussing both its positive and enabling conditions for freedom, and its negative tendencies of subjecting people into roles of dependency—and the notion of power as constitutive of practical identities (van den Brink and Owen 2007), more attention must be paid to comparing distinct social conflict theories within the Western-Marxist tradition. In particular, we should look for the ways that those who are inspired by Gramsci's hegemony theory and his meso-logical approach, where the Italian philosopher focuses on issues like group demands, actions, and strategies for enforcing change through power struggles and the quest of cultural approval of a majority (Gramsci 1991, 101–113), can link up with Honneth's more micro-logical approach that focuses on protesters' motivating reasons and reconstructing their normative claims. After systematically debating their similarities and differences, it would be worthwhile to reflect on how these approaches could be linked and applied together to philosophically analyze the link between individual indignation, joint action, and struggles to enforce emancipation. Honneth paved the right path for this in his debate with Ranciere, *Recognition or Disagreement* (2016).

Third, recognition theory must go beyond its current categorical borders and scope of application. In particular, as with many other approaches to movements, Honneth's approach is anchored in a Eurocentric perspective and often associated with methodological nationalism, prioritizing the study of movements mainly within national contexts, and particular in Western state politics and debates. Even my analysis of *transnational movements* like the Western square occupations suffers from this bias—though they had been pretty successful in moving and mobilizing beyond the states, as exemplified in the Spanish Indignados, who took their cue from the Tahir Square occupation in the Arab Spring, and in which many of the activists saw themselves as part of revolutionary global vanguard, as illustrated by key activists travelling to New York to support the Occupy Wall Street movement (Gunning and Baron 2013, 272). This does not suggest that nation-states are unimportant for our analyses, but it raises the self-critical question about how our theorizations are too deeply influenced by Western concepts and focused on protests that concern “us” as well as the question about how we should we conceive local protest claims in a globalized world where we may be embedded in globalized networks of resistance (e.g., as a

Occupying a Square?

populist appeal to the nation, picking up global problems through local protest, or as “rooted cosmopolitanism” (Tarrow 2012, 183) for transnational justice)? There are attempts to answer this question (e.g., Schweiger 2012; Hayden and Schick 2016; Heins 2012; Lysakker 2021), but much more work is needed to clarify what a recognition-theoretical reconstruction of the global normative order should look like, and what global justice is when it is enforced through movements from the North and South in that context?

Fourth, square occupation movements cause us to pay more attention to the fact that spaces of protest were already significantly and are increasingly online spaces; that is, the spaces of Facebook and Twitter. This work has barely addressed the way that, over the past decade, we have witnessed astonishing protest events, with activists using social media to mobilize masses and bring about change. Occupy’s “Facebook Movement” in particular was famous for shifting the public’s attention to urgent matters, politicizing everyday life, and building dynamic democratic participation through these virtual means and spaces. This is an emerging research field for how recognition theory can be applied to current and future social movements. In fact, there is an increasing debate about the negative effects of such online forms of collective action. The ever-growing datafication (i.e., tracking, monitoring, assessing) of our media behavior for profit purposes, raises the issue about how vast, platform companies affect the ways social actors experience, discuss and resist injustice, and, ultimately, what the future of protests and political discourse in the age of digital capitalism will look like.

Gesturing towards future research, important questions include: how does it change a movement’s uprising when the business model aims at driving up engagement and growing social network interaction by using smart algorithms that, increasingly, predict and base content on what pleases the user? Also, given that movements require communal space where individuals share experiences of injustice and form collective agency, how do these virtual spaces change how protesters justify actions, reflect problems, and identify political foes? Social media platforms provide more than tools of communication for spreading information and mobilizing for action. They offer entire virtual spaces of experiences of protest, in which one can enjoy the feeling of being part of a group of like-minded people or fellow sufferers, and easily get involved to fight a just cause through tweeting or liking. One might fear that protest gradually converts into a form of individualized but shared joyful mass experience; spectacular media events that are more symbolic and short-lived but easier to consume, where feelings of injustice are monetized. Digital capitalism confronts activists and democracy itself with novel societal conditions that might entirely change what we value about movement

protest. I believe these are pressing conceptual and normative issues that we must address in the future, in the best case by bringing together philosophers, movement researchers, and media scientists, living up to critical theory's vision of being an interdisciplinary social theory with emancipatory intent. There are already promising works in this evolving field (e.g., Celikates 2015b; Davies 2021; Fuchs 2014; Milan 2013), upon which we can build to further develop "applied recognition theory" (Zurn 2015, 210).

A new '99%' must write the next Chapter

Although the internet has claimed its place as the new public sphere, it can never fully substitute for real political and communal gatherings, or satisfy vital human needs of mutual regard. During the pandemic we found out how it feels, when these needs can barely be satisfied, and what it means to live a disrupted, though deeply intertwined, coexistence. Similarly, the square occupation movements analyzed in this work expressed these social and political needs like in a magnifying glass. They showed that when we gather, we gather not only to multiply rage, but also to simply meet up, build social bonds, mutually empower ourselves and provide communal care, to jointly make sense of and deliberate solutions for a situation of crisis, in the shared hope that we can reimagine societal coexistence *together*. Yet this work also shows that the age of wealth-induced political inequality is no time to just idealize the powers of assembly without making clear which kind of assemblies we want and why. We have seen that this age is also a time of "a great variety of morbid symptoms" (Gramsci 1930, *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. 3, 275–6),¹²⁹ in which market enthusiasts still seek to impose the disastrous ideology of trickle-down economics in the ruins of neoliberalism, and evil protest claimants in various ways resist recognizing reality, ignore vulnerable others, deliberately deny equal status respect, and endorse hierarchical societies in which each group has its natural place assigned at birth, as rulers or as servants. Hence, the age of wealth-induced political inequality also forces us to deliberate more carefully about the kinds of assemblies that we wish to set in motion, and to only support those that enact the kind of democratic principles and values of the more just, better world we actually wish to see manifest throughout our intertwined, global societies. Political disruption and turmoil through protest mobilizations as an end-in-itself is not desirable. We need to reflect on the kinds of

¹²⁹ One of Gramsci's most quoted phrases that is traditionally been taken to refer to the emergence of fascism against a background of capitalist crisis. The phrase was recently picked up by Nancy Fraser in: *The old is dying and the new cannot be born: From progressive neoliberalism to Trump and beyond*. Verso Books, 2019.

Occupying a Square?

assemblies we desire. To do that, we have to know what they (should) oppose and wish to dismantle, as well as what they (should) seek to affirm and build. Recognition theory's twofold approach is an indispensable tool to that end.

After Indignados and Occupy *et al.* assisted the reinvention of progressive politics in both the US and Europe, bringing left-wing politics from the periphery and subcultures into mainstream society, a new generation, we may say, a 'new 99%' must write the next chapter. Whatever movement politics we are building now, however, must bring together the struggles and wishes the Western square occupations outlined, namely, the defense of social rights and status respect for all, the struggle to increase democratic inclusion and equal political voice through active involvement of people in bottom-up initiatives, and, importantly, the struggle against wealth-induced political inequality. Moreover, while this time we must have more sustained and even better organized activism, it must be an activism that keeps Indignados and Occupy *et al.*'s progressive and unique ideal that all participants matter, that they are part of a social and political space where people's ideas and contribution can be valued and brought into the whole in a way that helps us continue to learn what it means to be a political agent among equals, what proper mutual respect requires, and what it actually requires to socially embed the market economy and reconcile it with democratic equality—to top it all off—defending the natural foundations of social life itself.

References

- Abad-Santos, Alexander. 2011. "Mayor Bloomberg Explains Occupy Wall Street Eviction". In *The Atlantic*, November 15, 2011. <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/11/mayor-bloomberg-explain-occupy-wall-street-eviction/335480/> (last accessed October 4, 2021).
- Abellán, Jacobo, Jorge Sequera, and Michael Janoschka. 2012. "Occupying the #Hotelmadrid, A Laboratory for Urban Resistance". In *Social Movement Studies* 11, 3-4, 320–326.
- Abizadeh, A., Pandey, M., and Abizadeh, S. 2015. "Wage competition and the special-obligations challenge to more open borders". *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 14 (3), 255–269.
- Adbusters.
 ———. 2011a. "About Us, OccupyWallStreet.org". <http://occupywallst.org/about/> (last accessed August 16, 2021).
 ———. 2011b. "Open Forum, OccupyWallStreet.org". <http://occupywallst.org/forum/proposed-list-of-demands-for-occupy-wall-st-moveme/> (last accessed August 20, 2021).
- Adorno, Theodor W.
 ———. 1951. *Minima moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
 ———. 2006. *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und der Freiheit*. Vorlesung 1964/65. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Adorno Theodor W., and Horkheimer, Max. [1944] 2006. *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente [Dialectic of Enlightenment]*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C., and Maria Pia Lara. 1996. "Honneth's New Critical Theory of Recognition". *New Left Review* 126–136.
- Alimi, Eitan Y. 2012. "Occupy Israel". In *Social Movement Studies* 11, 3-4, 402–407.
- Allen, Amy. 2016. *The end of progress: Decolonizing the normative foundations of critical theory*. Columbia University Press.
- Alvarez, Maria
 ———. 2016. "Reasons for action: Justification, motivation, explanation". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/reasons-just-vs-expl/> (last accessed February 25, 2022).
 ———. 2018. "Reasons for action, acting for reasons, and rationality". *Synthese* 195 (8), 3293–3310.
- Angelovici, Marcos, Pascale Dufour, and Héloïse Nez. 2016. *Street politics in the age of austerity: from the Indignados to Occupy*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Arendt, Hannah
 ———. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 ———. [1964] 2017. *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*. At the end of a six-page letter to Scholem from early December of 1964. Marie Luise Knott (ed.), Anthony David (trans.). Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Arndt, Andreas. 2011. "Teleologie und Fortschritt". In Arndt, Andreas und Zovko, Jure (eds.). *Fortschritt?*. Hannover: Wehrhan Verlag.
- Azmanova, Albena. 2014. "Crisis? Capitalism is doing very well. How is critical theory?". *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 21.3: 351–365.
- Azzellini, Dario. 2014. "Ein Epochenbruch, Die neuen globalen Proteste zwischen Organisation und Bewegung". *PROKLA. Zeitschrift für kritische Sozialwissenschaft* 44.177 (2014): 495–512.
- Azzellini, Dario, and Sitrin, Marina. 2014. *They can't represent us, Reinventing democracy from Greece to Occupy*. Verso Books.
- Badiou, Alain, Butler, J., Didi-Huberman, G., Khiari, S., Rancière, J., and Bourdieu, P. (eds.). 2016. *What is a People?* Vol. 50. Columbia University Press.
- Bankovsky, Miriam. 2012. *Perfecting justice in Rawls, Habermas and Honneth: A deconstructive perspective*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Barry, Brian. 2002. *Culture and equality: An egalitarian critique of multiculturalism*. Harvard University Press.

References

- Bauer, A.J. *et al.*, (eds.). 2012. *Writers for the 99%, Occupying Wall Street, The inside story of an action that changed America*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Berger, Joseph. 2011. "Cries of anti-Semitism, but not at Zuccotti Park." In *New York Times*, October 21, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/22/nyregion/occupy-wall-street-criticized-for-flashes-of-anti-semitism.html/> (last accessed August 25, 2022).
- Bertram, Georg W., and Robin Celikates. 2015. "Towards a conflict theory of recognition: On the constitution of relations of recognition in conflict". In *European journal of philosophy* 23.4: 838–861.
- Biletzki, Anat
———. 2019. *Philosophy of Human Rights: A Systematic Introduction*. Routledge.
———. 2020. "Is Populism an Ideology or a Tool? Of Reason or Passions?". Proceedings of Conference "The Reason of Passions: Emotion and Rationality in the Landscape of (Contemporary) Politics". In *Nordicum Mediterraneum*. Vol 15. No. 2.
- Bird, Colin. 2018. "The Theory and Politics of Recognition". In *The Oxford Handbook of Distributive Justice*. Oxford University Press.
- Blockupy. 2013. "Blockupy Frankfurt! Resistance in the Heart of the European Crisis Regime May 31 and June 1, 2013". <http://blockupy.org/en/call-for-action/> (last accessed August 21, 2022).
- Blumenkranz, Carla *et al.*, (eds.). 2011. *Occupy!: Scenes from Occupied America*. Verso Books.
- Boggs, Carl. 1977. "Revolutionary process, political strategy, and the dilemma of power". *Theory and Society* 4.3: 359–393.
- Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. 2021. "Arbeitsmarktintegration von Geflüchteten". <https://www.bpb.de/themen/arbeit/arbeitsmarktpolitik/501977/arbeitsmarktintegration-von-gefluechteten/> (last accessed August 19, 2022).
- Brown, Wendy. 2019. *In the ruins of neoliberalism*. Columbia University Press.
- Brownlee, Kimberley
———. 2012. *Conscience and Conviction: The Case for Civil Disobedience*, *Oxford Legal Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.
———. 2013. A human right against social deprivation. *The Philosophical Quarterly*. 63(251): 199–222.
- Butler, Judith
———. 2016. "'We the people': Thoughts on Freedom of Assembly". In Badiou, Alain *et al.*, (eds.). *What is a people?*. 49–64. Columbia University Press.
———. 2018. *Anmerkungen zu einer performativen Idee der Versammlung*. Berlin: Suhrkamp. [2015. *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Harvard University Press].
- Calhoun, Craig. 2013. "Occupy Wall Street in perspective". *British Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 64, No. 1, 26–38. John Wiley & Sons.
- Campbell, Emahunn Raheem Ali. 2011. "A critique of the occupy movement from a black occupier". *The Black Scholar* 41.4: 42–51.
- Castañeda, Ernesto. 2012. "The Indignados of Spain, A Precedent to Occupy Wall Street". In *Social Movement Studies* 11, 3-4, 309–319.
- Castells, Manuel. 1983. *The city and the grassroots: A cross-cultural theory of urban social movements*. No. 7. University of California Press.
- Celentano, Denise, and Luigi Caranti. 2020. *Paradigms of Justice: Redistribution, Recognition, and Beyond*. Taylor & Francis.
- Celikates, Robin, and Höntzsch, Frauke (eds.). 2020. "Editorial der Gastherausgeber". *ZPTh—Zeitschrift für Politische Theorie*. Themenschwerpunkt: Widerstand, transnational. 10(1)-2019: 3–4.
- Celikates, Robin
———. 2007. "Nicht versöhnt. Wo bleibt der Kampf im 'Kampf um Anerkennung'?" In Georg W. Bertram, Robin Celikates, Christophe Laudou, and David Lauer (eds.). *Socialité et reconnaissance*. 213–228. L'Harmattan.
———. 2010. "Ziviler Ungehorsam und radikale Demokratie—konstituierende vs. konstituierte Macht?". In Thomas Bedorf and Kurt Röttgers (eds.). *Das Politische und die Politik*. 274–300. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

- . 2015a. "Learning from the streets: Civil disobedience in theory and practice". In Peter Weibel (ed.), *Global Activism. Art and Conflict in the 21st Century*. 65–72. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- . 2015b. "Digital Publics, Digital Contestation. A New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere?". In Robin Celikates, Regina Kreide und Tilo Wesche (eds.). *Transformations of Democracy: Crisis, Protest, and Legitimation*. 159–176. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- . 2016. "Democratizing civil disobedience". *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 42 (10): 982–94.
- . 2018. "Critical Theory and the Unfinished Project of Mediating Theory and Practice". In Axel Honneth, Peter Gordon, and Espen Hammer (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to the Frankfurt School*. 206–220. London: Routledge.
- . 2019. "Constituent Power Beyond Exceptionalism: Irregular Migration, Disobedience, and (Re)Constitution". In *Journal of International Political Theory* 15 (2019), 1, 67–81.
- . 2021. "Beyond Needs: Recognition, Conflict, and the Limits of Institutionalization". In *Recognition and Ambivalence*. 257–292. Columbia University Press.
- Chenoweth, Erica, and Stephan, Maria. 2011. *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. Columbia University Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2012. *Occupy*. London: Penguin Books.
- Christ, Julia, Kristina Lepold, Daniel Loick, and Titus Stahl (eds.). 2020. *Debating Critical Theory. Engagements with Axel Honneth*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Christiano, Thomas. 2012. "Money in politics". In *The Oxford handbook of political philosophy*. 241–257.
- Cobb, Jonathan, and Sennett, Richard. 1972. *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. London/New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Cohen, Jean L.
- . 1985. "Strategy or identity: New theoretical paradigms and contemporary social movements". *Social research*. 663–716.
- . 2019. "What's wrong with the normative theory (and the actual practice) of left populism". *Constellations* 26.3: 391–407.
- Cohen, Joshua. 2011. "Democracy v. Citizens United?". In *Dewey lecture*, May 5, 2011. <https://www.law.uchicago.edu/recordings/joshua-cohen-democracy-v-citizens-united/> (last accessed July 17, 2022).
- Cordero-Guzman, Hector. 2011. *Main Stream Support for a Mainstream Movement, The 99% Movement Comes From and Looks Like the 99%*. New York: New York University.
- Cox, Laurence, and Flesher Fominaya, Christina. 2013. *Understanding European Movements, New social Movements, Global Justice Struggles, Anti-Austerity Protest*. London: Routledge.
- Crouch, Colin. 2004. *Post-democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Daase, Christopher. 2014. "Was ist Widerstand? Zum Wandel von Opposition und Dissidenz". Edited by Bundeszentrale Politische Bildung. <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/186866/was-ist-widerstand>. (last accessed August 29, 2022).
- Dahrendorf, Ralf. 1993. *Der moderne soziale Konflikt, Essay zur Politik der Freiheit*. Munich: Nomos.
- Davies, Will. 2021. "The politics of recognition in the age of social media". *New Left Review* (128) 83–99.
- Davis, Angela Y. 2016. *Freedom is a constant struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the foundations of a movement*. Haymarket Books.
- Dean, Jodi. 2014. "Occupy wall street: Forcing division." *Constellations* 21 (3): 382–389.
- Dean, Jodi, and Deseriis, Marco. 2012. "A movement without demands". *Possible Futures* 3. <http://www.tacticalmediafiles.net/articles/3526/R/> (last accessed August 12, 2022).
- Dejours, C., Deranty, J. P., Renault, E., and Smith, N. H. 2018. *The return of work in critical theory: self, society, politics*. Vol. 55. Columbia University Press.
- della Porta, Donatella, and Diani, Mario (eds.). 2014. *The Oxford handbook of social movements*. Oxford University Press.
- della Porta, Donatella. 2017. "Political economy and social movement studies: The class basis of anti-austerity protests." *Anthropological Theory* 17.4: 453–473.
- Delmas, Candice. 2018. *A duty to resist: When disobedience should be uncivil*. Oxford University Press.

References

- Delmas, Candice and Brownlee, Kimberley. 2021. "Civil Disobedience". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/civil-disobedience/> (last accessed August 29, 2022).
- Demirović, Alex. 2014. "Eine Frage der Reife. Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Ungehorsam und Demokratie". In Burschel, Friedrich; Kahrs, Andreas; and Steinert, Lea (eds.): *Ungehorsam. Disobedience! Theorie & Praxis kollektiver Regelverstöße*. 13–30. Münster: edition assemblage.
- Democracia Real Ya. 2011. "Manifiesto". <http://www.democraciarealya.org.es/manifiesto-comun/manifiesto-english/> (last accessed August 20, 2021).
- Dempsey, Michelle Madden, and Lister, Matthew. 2017. "Applied Political and Legal Philosophy". In *The Blackwell Companion to Applied Philosophy*. Edited by Kimberley Brownlee, David Coady, and Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, Wiley. 313–328.
- Deranty, Jean-Philippe. 2009. *Beyond communication: A critical study of Axel Honneth's social philosophy*. Leiden: Brill.
- Dewey, John. 1895. "The Theory of Emotion." In *Psychological review* 2.1: 13.
- Dixon, Chris. 2014. *Another politics: Talking across today's transformative movements*. University of California Press.
- Dobrodinsky, Anja. 2022. "Studie zur Integration. Flüchtlinge machen Firmen kreativer". In *Tagesschau*, May 17, 2022. <https://www.tagesschau.de/wirtschaft/arbeitsmarkt-ukraine-fluechtlinge-101.html/> (last accessed August 19, 2022).
- Döbber, Christian. 2020. "Top-Psychologe Stephan Grünewald im Interview. Lockdown, Masken, Jobverlust: 'Corona hat uns wütend gemacht - so ticken wir jetzt'". In *Focus Magazin*, October 10, 2020. https://www.focus.de/perspektiven/gesellschaft-gestalten/top-psychologe-stephan-gruenewald-im-interview-psychologe-krise-hat-uns-wuetender-gemacht-als-je-zuvor-so-ticken-wir-jetzt_id_12115709.html/ (last accessed October 26, 2021).
- Ehrenberg, John
———. 2017. "What can we learn from Occupy's failure?". *Palgrave Communications* 3.1, 1–4.
———. 2022. *White Nationalism and the Republican Party: Toward Minority Rule in America*. Taylor & Francis.
- Elson, Diane. 1988. "Market Socialism or Socialization of the Market?". In *New Left Review* 172, 2–76.
- Fanon, Frantz. [1952] 2008. *Black skin, white masks*. Grove Press.
- Flink, Lenny Jr. 2011. *Voices from the 99 percent*. St. Petersburg, Florida: Red and Black Publishers.
- Flesher Fominaya, Christina. 2017. "European anti-austerity and pro-democracy protests in the wake of the global financial crisis". *Social Movement Studies* 16.1., 1–20.
- Flügel-Martinsen, Oliver. 2019. *Radikale Demokratietheorie. Ein Handbuch*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Foroutan, Naika, and Canan, Coşkun. 2019. "Ost-migrantische Analogien der Konkurrenz um Anerkennung und Teilhabe? Schlaglichter aus einem repräsentativen Survey." In *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 32.3, 424–429.
- Forst, Rainer. 2020. Kantian Republicanism vs. the Neo-Republican Machine: The Meaning and Practice of Political Autonomy. In Christ, J., Lepold, K., Loick, D., and Stahl, T. (eds.): *Debating Critical Theory: Engagements with Axel Honneth*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Fraser, Nancy
———. 2016. "Contradictions of capital and care". *New Left Review* 100: 99–117.
———. 2017. "From progressive neoliberalism to Trump—and beyond". *American Affairs* 1(4): 46–64.
———. 2019. *The old is dying and the new cannot be born: From progressive neoliberalism to Trump and beyond*. Verso Books.
- Fraser, Nancy and Honneth, Axel. 2003. *Umverteilung oder Anerkennung, Eine politisch-philosophische Kontroverse*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. [2004. *Redistribution or Recognition, A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. Translated by Joel Golb, James Ingram and Christina Wilke. Verso Books].
- Fraser, Nancy and Jaeggi, Rahel. 2018. *Capitalism. A Conversation in Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Freyenhagen, Fabian. 2013. *Adorno's Practical Philosophy: Living less wrongly*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press.
- Friedman, Milton. 1970. "A Friedman Doctrine: The Social Responsibility of Business." In *The New York Times*. In: <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/09/13/archives/a-friedman-doctrine-the-social-responsibility-of-business-is-to.html/> (last accessed August 25, 2022).
- Fröhlich-Gildhoff, Klaus, and Rönnau-Böse, Maïke. 2014. *Resilienz*. Utb Verlag Muenchen.
- Fuchs, Christian. 2019. *Rereading Marx in the age of digital capitalism*. Pluto Press.
- Fukuyama, Francis
 ———. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man*. Free Press.
 ———. 2018. *Identity. Contemporary identity politics and the struggle for recognition*. Profile books.
 ———. 2019. "The new identity politics. Rightwing populism and the demand for dignity." In *EUROZINE*, April 18, 2019. <https://www.eurozine.com/new-identity-politics/> (last accessed August 25, 2022).
- Gable, S. L., and Bromberg, C. 2018. "Healthy social bonds: A necessary condition for well-being." In E. Diener, S. Oishi, and L. Tay *et al.*, (eds.). *Handbook of well-being*. Salt Lake City: DEF Publishers.
- Gaus, Daniel, Claudia Landwehr, and Rainer Schmalz Bruns. 2020. "Defending democracy against technocracy and populism: Deliberative democracy's strengths and challenges." *Constellations* 27.3: 335–347.
- Gerbaudo, Paolo
 ———. 2014. "The Movements of the Squares and the Contested Resurgence of the Sovereign People in Contemporary Protest Culture". <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2439359/>.
 ———. 2017. *The Mask and the Flag*. Oxford University Press.
- Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. "Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens." *Perspectives on politics* 12.3: 564–581.
- Gitlin, Todd. 2012. *Occupy Nation*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Glasius, Marlies and Pleyers, Geoffrey. 2013. "The Global Moment of 2011, Democracy, Social Justice and Dignity". *Development & Change* 44. John Wiley & Sons.
- Gold, Howard R. 2017. "Never Mind the 1 Percent. Let's Talk About the 0.01 Percent." In *Chicago Booth Review*. <https://www.chicagobooth.edu/review/never-mind-1-percent-lets-talk-about-001-percent/> (last accessed May 27, 2022).
- Gordon, Uri. 2012. "Israel's 'Tent Protests'". In *Social Movement Studies* 11, 3-4, 349–355.
- Gosepath, Stefan. 2008. "Politische Philosophie." In Stephan Gosepath, Wilfried Hinsch, and Beate Rössler (eds.): *Handbuch der Politischen Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie*. Walter de Gruyter, 1007–1013. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Gosewinkel, Dieter, and Rucht, Dieter (eds.). 2016. *Transnational Struggles for Recognition: New Perspectives on Civil Society since the 20th Century*. Vol. 8. Berghahn Books.
- Graeber, David. 2012. *Inside occupy*. Campus Verlag.
- Gramsci, Antonio
 ———. 1991–2002. *Gefängnishefte*. Vol. 1–10. Translated and edited by Klaus Bochmann and Wolfgang Fritz Haug. Hamburg: Argument.
 ———. 1992–2007. *Prison Notebooks*. Vol. 1–3. Translated and edited by Joseph A. Buttigieg and Antonio Callari. Columbia University Press.
 ———. 1967. *Philosophie der Praxis*. Edited by Christian Riechers. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer.
- Gunning, Jeroen, and Baron, Ilan Zvi. 2013. *Why Occupy a Square: People, Protests and Movements in the Egyptian Revolution*. Oxford University Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen
 ———. 1976. *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
 ———. 1981. *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*. Band 1 und 2. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
 ———. 1985. *Die Neue Unübersichtlichkeit, Kleine politische Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
 ———. 1992. *Faktizität und Geltung. Beiträge zur Diskurstheorie des Rechts und des demokratischen Rechtsstaats*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

References

- . 1999. "From Kant to Hegel and back again—the move towards decentralization". In *European Journal of Philosophy* 7 (2): 129–157.
- . 2013. *Demokratie oder Kapitalismus*. 59–70. Berlin: Blätter.
- Haider, Asad. 2018. *Mistaken identity: race and class in the age of Trump*. Verso Books.
- Hardt, Michael, and Negri, Antonio. 2012. *Declaración*. Vol. 18. Ediciones Akal.
- Harrison, Oliver. 2016. "Occupy: 'Struggles for the common' or an 'anti-politics of dignity'?" Reflections on Hardt and Negri and John Holloway". In *Capital & Class* 40.3: 495–510.
- Harvey, David. 2013. *Rebel Cities, From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Verso Books.
- Haslanger, Sally
- . 2012. *Resisting reality: Social construction and social critique*. Oxford University Press.
- . 2020. "Taking a Stand: Second-Order Social Pathologies or First-Order Critique". In Christ, Julia et al., (eds.). *Debating Critical Theory: Engagements with Axel Honneth*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Häusermann, Silja, and Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2015. "What do voters want? Dimensions and configurations in individual-level preferences and party choice". *The politics of advanced capitalism*. 202–230.
- Hayden, Patrick, and Schick, Kate. 2016. *Recognition and global politics: critical encounters between state and world*. Manchester University Press.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich
- . [1807] 1986. "Wer denkt abstract?". In *Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807*. Werke in zwanzig Bände. Edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- . [1821] 1986. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*. Werke in zwanzig Bände. Edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Heins, Volker M.
- . 2012. "The Global Politics of Recognition". In Shane O'Neill, Nicholas H. Smith (eds.): *Recognition Theory as Social Research: Investigating the Dynamics of Social Conflict*. 213–230. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 2016. "Understanding Transnational Social Movements, Potentials and Limits of Recognition Theory". In *Transnational Struggles for Recognition: New Perspectives on Civil Society since the 20th Century*. 8, 85.
- . 2020. "Can the refugee speak? Albert Hirschman and the changing meanings of exile". *Thesis Eleven* 158(1): 42–57.
- Heins, Volker M., and Unrau, Christine. 2019. "Anti-immigrant Movements and the Self-Poisoning of the Civil Sphere". *Breaching the Civil Order: Radicalism and the Civil Sphere*. 145.
- Herzog, Lisa and Zacka, Bernardo. 2017. "Fieldwork in political theory: Five arguments for an ethnographic sensibility". *British Journal of Political Science*. 763–784.
- Hessel, Stéphane. 2011. *Empört Euch [Indignez-vous]*. Translated by Michael Kogon. Berlin: Ullstein.
- Hillje, Johannes. 2020. "Proteste vor dem Reichstag, „Spontan war diese Aktion sicher nicht“". In *Deutschlandfunk*, August 31, 2020. <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/proteste-vor-dem-reichstag-spontan-war-diese-aktion-sicher-100.html/> (last accessed August 19, 2022).
- Hirschman, Albert O. 1970. *Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states*. Vol. 25. Harvard University Press.
- Hirvonen, Onni, and Laitinen, Arto. 2016. "Recognition and democracy—An introduction". *Thesis Eleven* 134.1: 3–12.
- Hirvonen, Onni, and Pennanen, Joonas. 2019. "Populism as a pathological form of politics of recognition". *European Journal of Social Theory* 22.1: 27–44.
- Hobbes, Thomas. 1651. *Leviathan, or, the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill*. Touchstone.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell.
- . 2016a. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press.
- . 2016b. "The American right: Its deep story". In *Global Dialogue* 6.3, <https://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/articles/the-american-right-its-deep-story/> (last accessed August 19, 2022).

- Holldorf, Michael. 2016. "Rekonstruktive Gesellschaftskritik und Protest: Zur normativen Dimension der Occupy-Bewegung". In Katia Henriette Backhaus and David Roth-Isigkeit (eds.): *Praktiken der Kritik*. 129–55. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.
- Holloway, John, and Susen, Simon. 2013. "Change the world by cracking capitalism? A critical encounter between John Holloway and Simon Susen". *Sociological Analysis* 7.1: 23–42.
- Honneth, Axel
- . 1982. Moral consciousness and class domination: some problems in the analysis of hidden morality. *Praxis International* 2 (1), 12–25.
- . [1989] 2014. *Kritik der Macht, Reflexionsstufen einer kritischen Gesellschaftstheorie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. [1991. *The Critique of Power, Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*. Translated by Kenneth Baynes. Cambridge: MIT Press].
- . 1991. "The limits of liberalism: On the political-ethical discussion on communitarianism". *Thesis Eleven*. 28 (1).
- . [1992] 2012. *Kampf um Anerkennung, Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. [1995. *The struggle for recognition, The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Translated by Joel Anderson. Cambridge: MIT Press].
- . 1994. "The social dynamics of disrespect: on the location of critical theory today". *Constellations*. 1 (1).
- . 2000. *Das Andere der Gerechtigkeit, Aufsätze zur praktischen Philosophie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. [2014. *Disrespect. The normative foundations of critical theory*. John Wiley & Sons].
- . 2001. "Rassismus als Wahrnehmungsdeformation. Ueber Unsinnigkeiten der Toleranzforderung". *Neue Rundschau*. 112 (3), 159–165. ["Racism as Deformed Perception. Absurdities of Tolerance Demand". Not translated].
- . 2002. "Grounding recognition: A rejoinder to critical questions." *Inquiry*. 45 (4), 499–519.
- . 2006. "Rassismus als Sozialisationsdefekt. Ein Gespräch von Krassimir Stojanov mit Axel Honneth". *Critique & Humanism*. 22: 155–160.
- . 2007a. *Pathologien der Vernunft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. [2009. *Pathologies of reason: On the legacy of critical theory* (Vol. 23). Columbia University Press].
- . 2007b. "Die Unhintergebarkeit des Fortschritts: Kants Bestimmung des Verhältnisses von Moral und Geschichte". In *Pathologien der Vernunft*. 9–27. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. ["The irreducibility of progress: Kant's account of the relationship between morality and history". *Critical Horizons*. 8 (1): 1–17].
- . 2007c. "'Angst und Politik': Stärken und Schwächen von Franz Neumanns Pathologiediagnose". In Honneth, Axel *Pathologien der Vernunft*. 180–191. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. ["'Anxiety and Politics': The Strengths and Weaknesses of Franz Neumann's Diagnosis of a Social Pathology". *Constellations* 10.2 (2003): 247–255].
- . 2010. *Das Ich im Wir, Studien zur Anerkennungstheorie*. Berlin: Suhrkamp. [2012. *The I in WE, Studies on the Theory of Recognition*. Cambridge: Polity Press].
- . 2011. "Verwilderungen des sozialen Konflikts: Anerkennungskämpfe zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts". *MPIfG Working Paper* No. 11/4. Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies. Cologne. [2012. Brutalization of the social conflict: struggles for recognition in the early 21st century. *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 13.1: 5–19].
- . 2013. "Die Moral im Kapital, Versuch einer Korrektur der Marxschen Ökonomiekritik". Edited by Rahel Jaeggi and Daniel Loick: *Nach Marx*. 350–363. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- . 2014. *Freedom's Right, The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Translated by Joseph Ganahl, edited by Ammy Allen. Columbia University Press. [2011. *Das Recht der Freiheit, Grundriss einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*. Berlin: Suhrkamp].
- . 2015a. *Verdinglichung, Eine anerkennungstheoretische Studie*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- . 2015b. *Die Idee des Sozialismus*. Berlin: Suhrkamp. [2017. *The Idea of Socialism, Towards a Renewal*. Translated by Joseph Ganahl. Cambridge: Polity Press].
- . 2015c. "Rejoinder". *Critical Horizons*. Vol. 16, No. 2, May 2015, 204–226.
- . 2017. "Is there an emancipatory interest? An attempt to answer critical theory's most fundamental question". *European Journal of Philosophy* 25 (4): 908–920.
- . 2020. *Die Armut unserer Freiheit - Aufsätze 2012-2019*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

References

- . 2021. "Intelligibility and Authority in Recognition: A Reply". In *Recognition and Ambivalence* 55–60. Columbia University Press.
- Honneth, Axel, and Farrell, John. 1997. "Recognition and moral obligation". In *Social research*. 16–35.
- Honneth, Axel, and Joas, Hans. 1980. *Soziales Handeln und menschliche Natur, Anthropologische Grundlagen der Sozialwissenschaften*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus. [1988. *Social Action and Human Nature*. Translated by Raymond Meyer. Cambridge University Press].
- Honneth, Axel, and Nolte, Paul. 2013. "Ich@Wir". In *Kursbuch* 49(173), Rechte Linke, 1–43.
- Honneth, Axel, and Rancière, Jacques. 2016. *Recognition or disagreement: a critical encounter on the politics of freedom, equality, and identity*. Columbia University Press.
- Horkheimer, Max
- . 1931. "The Present Situation of Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research". Horkheimer's inaugural address to the Institute for Social Research. In *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*. G. Hunter, M. Kramer and J. Torpey, (trans.), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993, 1–14.
- . [1937] 1988. "Traditionelle und kritische Theorie". In Alfred Schmidt (ed.): *Gesammelte Schriften, Band 4: Schriften 1936-1941*. 162–216. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag. ["Traditional and Critical Theory." In *Critical Theory. Selected Essays*, 188–243].
- Ikäheimo, Heikki, and Laitinen, Arto. 2007. "Analyzing recognition: Identification, acknowledgement, and recognitive attitudes towards persons". *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the tradition of critical social theory*. 33–56.
- Imbusch, Peter. 2008. "Konflikt". In Stephan Gosepath, Wilfried Hinsch, and Beate Rössler (eds.): *Handbuch der Politischen Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie*. 638–641. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Ingram, David. 2018. *World Crisis and Underdevelopment: A Critical Theory of Poverty, Agency, and Coercion*. Cambridge University Press.
- International Committee of *Barcelona en Comu*. 2016. "How to win back the city *en comú*". <https://barcelonaencomu.cat/sites/default/files/win-the-city-guide.pdf> (last accessed July 10th, 2022).
- Iser, Mattias
- . 2008. *Empörung und Fortschritt, Grundlagen einer kritischen Theorie der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus. [Forthcoming: *Indignation and Progress, Foundations of a Critical Theory of Society*. Oxford University Press].
- . 2019. "Recognition". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/recognition/> (last accessed February 23, 2022).
- Ishkanian, Armine and Glasius, Marlies. 2013. *Reclaiming Democracy in the Square? Interpreting the Movements of 2011-12*. London: LSE.
- Jaeggi, Rahel
- . 2009. "Was ist Ideologiekritik." In Jaeggi, Rahel, and Wesche, Tilo (eds.). *Was ist Kritik?* 266–295. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 2013. *Kritik von lebensformen*. Berlin: Suhrkamp. [2018. "Critique of forms of life". Harvard University Press].
- . 2018. "'Resistance to the Perpetual Danger of Relapse': Moral Progress and Social Change". 1–23. In https://www.academia.edu/38267035/_Resistance_to_the_Perpetual_Danger_of_Relapse_Moral_Progress_and_Social_Change/ (last accessed August 25, 2022).
- . 2022. „Fortschritt ist weder Fakt noch Ideal“. Interview with Friedrich Weißbach. In *Philosophie Magazin*, June 22, 2022. <https://www.philomag.de/artikel/rahel-jaeggi-fortschritt-ist-weder-fakt-noch-ideal/> (last accessed August 25, 2022).
- Jee, Charlotte. 2021. "Covid conspiracy theories are driving people to anti-Semitism online". In *MIT Technology Review*, October 13, 2021. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/10/13/1037035/covid-conspiracy-theories-are-driving-people-to-antisemitism-online/> (last accessed October 25, 2021).
- Jeffries, Stuart. 2017. *Grand hotel abyss: The lives of the Frankfurt School*. Verso Books.

- Jeske, Diane. 2019. "Special Obligations", In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/special-obligations/> (last accessed August 29, 2022).
- Jütten, Timo
 ———. 2015. "Is the Market a Sphere of Social freedom?". *Critical Horizons*. 16 (2): 187–203.
 ———. 2017. "Dignity, Esteem, and Social Contribution: A Recognition-Theoretical View". In *Journal of Political Philosophy* 25 (3): 80–259.
- Kamann, Matthias. 2015. "Pirinçci provoziert mit „KZ“-Rhetorik in Asylkrise". In *WELT*, October 20, 2015. <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article147810085/Pirincci-provoziert-mit-KZ-Rhetorik-in-Asylkrise.html/> (last accessed August 19, 2022).
- Kant, Immanuel. 1798. *Der Streit der Fakultäten*. In drei Abschnitten. Nicolovius.
- Kautsky, Karl. 1924. *Marxism, revolution, and democracy*. Transaction Publishers.
- Kersting, Wolfgang. 2008. "Machiavelli, Niccolo". In Stephan Gosepath, Wilfried Hinsch, and Beate Rössler (eds.): *Handbuch der politischen Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie*. 747–51. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Kerton, Sarah. 2012. "Tahrir, here? The influence of the Arab uprisings on the emergence of occupy". *Social Movement Studies*. Vol. 11 (3–4), 302–308. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Kinninmont, Jane. 2012. *Bread, Dignity and Social Justice*. London: Chatham House.
- Kolers, Avery. 2016. "Social movements". *Philosophy Compass* 11 (10): 90–580.
- Koller, Peter. 2008. "Norm". In Stephan Gosepath, Wilfried Hinsch, and Beate Rössler (eds.): *Handbuch der Politischen Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie*. 913–918. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Koppetsch, Cornelia. 2017. "Aufstand der Etablierten? Rechtspopulismus und die gefährdete Mitte". *Soziopolis* (4/14).
- Kousis, Maria. 2016. "The Spatial Dimensions of the Greek Protest Campaign against the Troika's Memoranda and Austerity". In Angelovici, Marcos *et al.*, (eds.). *Street Politics in the Age of Austerity*. 147–173. Amsterdam University Press.
- Kraushaar, Wolfgang. 2012. *Der Aufruhr der Ausgebildeten, Vom arabischen Frühling zur Occupy Bewegung*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition HIS.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2016. "Mobilization of Protest in the Age of Austerity". In Angelovici, Marcos *et al.*, (eds.). *Street Politics in the Age of Austerity*. 67–90. Amsterdam University Press.
- Krugman, Paul. 2022. "The Perils of Plutocratic Pettiness". In *The New York Times*, April 23, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/opinion/elon-musk-jeff-bezos-social-media.html/> (last accessed August 24, 2022).
- Kymlicka, Will. 2002. *Contemporary political philosophy: An introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal. [1991] 2015. *Hegemonie und radikale Demokratie, Zur Dekonstruktion des Marxismus*. Translated by Michael Hintz and Gerd Vorwallner [*Hegemony & Socialist Strategy, Towards a radical democratic politics*]. Vienna: Passagen Verlag.
- Lepold, Kristina. 2019. "Examining Honneth's Positive Theory of Recognition". *Critical Horizons* 20: 246–261.
- Lepold, Kristina, Ikäheimo, Heikki, and Stahl, Titus (eds.). 2021. *Recognition and Ambivalence*. Columbia University Press.
- Lilla, Mark. 2017. *The once and future liberal: After identity politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Lorey, Isabell
 ———. 2013. "On democracy and occupation: Horizontality and the need for new forms of verticality". *Institutional Attitudes: Instituting Art in a Flat World*. 77–99.
 ———. 2019. "Constituent power of the multitude". *Journal of International Political Theory* 15 (1), 119–133.
- Lowndes, Joe and Warren, Dorian. 2011. "Occupy Wall Street: A twenty-first century populist movement". *Dissent* 21.
- Lukács, Georg. 1923. *History and Class Consciousness. Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lynch, Marc. 2013. *The Arab uprising: The unfinished revolutions of the new Middle East*. Hachette UK.

References

- Lysaker, Odin. 2021. "Transnational Struggle for Recognition: Axel Honneth on the Embodied Dignity of Stateless Persons". In *Migration, Recognition and Critical Theory*. 91–115. Springer.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. 1532. *The Prince*. University of Chicago Press.
- Madden, Kirsten, and Dimand, Robert W. (eds.). 2019. *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Women's Economic Thought*. London: Routledge.
- Malthus, Thomas Robert. 1798. *An Essay on the Principle of Population, as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers*. London: J. Johnson.
- Marchart, Oliver. 2015. *Die Prekarisierungsgesellschaft. Prekäre Proteste. Politik und Ökonomie im Zeichen der Prekarisierung*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.
- Marcinek, Laura and Walcoff, Matt. 2011. "BlackRock CEO Fink Defends 'Occupy Wall Street' Demonstrators". In *Bloomberg.com* from October 6, 2011. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2011-10-05/blackrock-chief-fink-defends-occupy-wall-street-protesters#xj4y7vzk/> (last accessed August, 16 2021).
- Markell, Patchen. 2003. *Bound by recognition*. Princeton University Press.
- Martin, Greg. 2015. *Understanding social movements*. London: Routledge.
- Marx, Karl
- . 1843a. (MEW 1). „Brief von Marx an Ruge“ [Letter from Marx to Arnold Ruge]. In *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher [German–French Annals]*. 1976, 337–346. Berlin: Dietz
 - . 1843b. (MEW 1). „Zur Judenfrage“ [On the Jewish Question]. In *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher [German–French Annals]*. 1976, 347–377. Berlin: Dietz.
 - . 1843c. (MEW 1). „Einleitung zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie“ [Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right]. In *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher [German–French Annals]*. 1976, 378–391. Berlin: Dietz
 - . 1845. (MEW 2). *Die Heilige Familie oder Kritik der kritischen Kritik. Gegen Bruno Bauer und Kunsorten [The Holy Family]*. Co-authored with Friedrich Engels]. 1972, 3–223. Berlin: Dietz.
 - . 1846. (MEW 3) *Die deutsche Ideologie [The German Ideology]*. 1969, 5–530. Berlin: Dietz.
 - . 1847. (MEW 4). *Das Elend der Philosophie [The Poverty of Philosophy]*. 1972, 63–182. Berlin: Dietz.
 - . 1850. (MEW 7). *Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich 1848 bis 1850 [The Class Struggle in France, 1848 to 1850]*. 1960, 9–107. Berlin: Dietz.
 - . 1852. (MEW 8). *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte [The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon]*. 1960, 111–207. Berlin: Dietz.
 - . 1871. (MEW 17). *Der Bürgerkrieg in Frankreich [The Civil War in France]*. 1962, 313–365. Berlin: Dietz.
 - . 1875. (MEW 19). "Zirkularbrief an Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke u.a." [Circular letter to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke and others]. 1982, 150–166. Berlin: Dietz.
 - . 1867. (MEW 23). *Das Kapital. Kritik der politische Ökonomien [Capital Vol. I]*. 2008. Berlin: Dietz.
- Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich
- . 1956–1990. *MEW (Marx-Engels-Werke)*. Vol. 1–43. Berlin: Dietz.
 - . 1975–2005. *MECW (Marx and Engels Collected works)*. Vol. 1–50. Translated by Richard Dixon. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
 - . 1975–2016. *MEGA (Marx und Engels Gesamtausgabe)*. Vol. 1–65. Berlin: de Gruyter.
 - . 2002. *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei [Manifesto]*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- McAdam, Doug. 2018. "Putting Donald Trump in Historical Perspective". In *The Resistance, The Dawn of the Anti-Trump Opposition Movement*. 27–53.
- McIntosh, Kriston, et al., 2020. "Examining the Black-white wealth gap". Washington DC: Brookings Institutes. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/02/27/examining-the-black-white-wealth-gap/> (last accessed September 23, 2021).
- McNay, Lois.
- . 2008. "The Trouble with Recognition: Subjectivity, Suffering, and Agency". In *Sociological theory* 26.3: 271–296.

- . 2021. "Historicizing Recognition: From Ontology to Teleology." In *Recognition and ambivalence*. 69–98. Columbia University Press.
- Mead, George Herbert. [1934] 1967. *Mind, Self, and Society*. University of Chicago.
- Merkel, Wolfgang. 2014. Is capitalism compatible with democracy? In *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 8 (2), 109–128.
- Meyer, David S., and Tarrow, Sidney. 1998. "A movement society: Contentious politics for a new century". *The social movement society: Contentious politics for a new century*. 1–28.
- Michels, Tony. 2012. *Jewish Radicals: A Documentary History*. NYU Press.
- Milan, Stefania. 2013. *Social movements and their technologies: Wiring social change*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Milkman, Ruth, Stephanie, Luce and Lewis, Penny. 2021. "Did Occupy Wall Street Make a Difference? Flash in the pan or the prelude to political organizing as we know it today?". In *The Nation*, September 17, 2021. <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/ows-occupy-zuccotti-protest/> (last accessed August 16, 2021).
- Miller, Caleb. 2018. "'What is to be done' When There is Nothing to Do: Realism and Political Inequality." *Constellations* 25.4: 602–613.
- Miller, David
 ———. 2007. "Politische Philosophie." In *Die Kleine Routledge Enzyklopädie der Philosophie*. Edited by Edward Craig and Wolfgang Sohst. Xenomoi Verlag.
 ———. 2017. "Justice". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward N. Zalta.
 ———. 2020. "Socialism and the Nation-State". In *Debating Critical Theory: Engagements with Axel Honneth*. Chapter 11.
- Moore, Barrington. 1987. Ungerechtigkeit, Die sozialen Ursachen von Unterordnung und Widerstand. [1978. *Injustice*]. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Morell, Mayo Fuster. 2012. "The Free Culture and 15M Movements in Spain: Composition, Social Networks and Synergies". In *Social Movement Studies* 11, 3-4, 386–392.
- Mouffe, Chantal
 ———. 2014. *Agonistik: die Welt politisch denken*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
 ———. 2018. *For a left populism*. Verso Books.
- Mouffe, Chantal and Errejón, Inigo. 2016. *Podemos*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Mudde, Cas. 2019. "Why copying the populist right isn't going to save the left". In *The Guardian*, May 14, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/may/14/why-copying-the-populist-right-isnt-going-to-save-the-left/> (last accessed May 2, 2022).
- Mudde, Cas, and Kaltwasser, Cristóbal Rovira. 2017. *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Müller, Jan-Werner. 2016. *What is populism?*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Nassehi, Armin
 ———. 2020. *Das große Nein. Eigendynamik und Tragik des gesellschaftlichen Protests*. Hamburg: kursbuch edition.
 ———. 2021. "Guter Protest, böser Protest?". In *taz FUTURZWEI-Gespräch*. <https://taz.de/Armin-Nassehi-im-taz-FUTURZWEI-Gespraech/!171299/> (last accessed January 13, 2021).
- Nachtwey, Oliver. 2013. "Zur Re-Moralisierung des sozialen Konflikts". *WestEnd*. 69–80. Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld Verlag.
- Nachtwey, Oliver, and Heumann, Maurits. 2019. "Regressive Rebellen und autoritäre Innovatoren". In *Große Transformation? Zur Zukunft moderner Gesellschaften*. 435–453. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Neuhäuser, Christian. 2011. *Unternehmen als moralische Akteure*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Neumann, Franz. 1942. *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*. London: Gollancz.
- Niesen, Peter. 2019. "Introduction: Resistance, disobedience or constituent power? Emerging narratives of transnational protest". In Niesen, Peter (ed.): *Resistance, Disobedience or Constituent power? Emerging Narratives of Transnational Protest*. Special Issue: Journal of International Political Theory. Vol. 15, Issue 1, February 2019. 2–10.
- Noetzel, Thomas. 2002. "Die Konflikttheorie von Thomas Hobbes". In *Sozialwissenschaftliche Konflikttheorien*. 33–46. Springer.

References

- Norris, Pippa, and Inglehart, Ronald. 2019. *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and authoritarian populism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Occupy Wall Street (OWC)
- . 2011a. *Quick Guide on Group Dynamics in Peoples Assemblies*. <https://thefutureofoccupy.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/quick-guide-2-peoples-assemblies.pdf> (last accessed August 27, 2022).
- . 2011b. *The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City—As accepted by the New York City General Assembly*. <https://sparrowmedia.net/declaration/> (last accessed August 27, 2022).
- . 2011c. "What is Occupy Wall Street?". Occupy Wall Street Ithaca General Assembly. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj_udXgks_yAhWLTN8KHVznDvkQFnoECAMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fgroups.google.com%2Fgroup%2Fithacagafacilitation%2Fattach%2F3e97ed2f9e939122%2Fithaca-ga-guide.pdf%3Fpart%3D0.3&usq=AOvVaw0VK5IjkQD0PTtVmZPR8PGj/ (last accessed August 26, 2021).
- Oikonomakis, Leonidas and E. Roos, Jérôme. 2016. "A Global Movement for Real Democracy? The resonance of anti-austerity protest from Spain and Greece to occupy wall street". In Angelovici, Marcos, Pascale Dufour, and Héloïse Nez (eds.): *Street politics in the age of austerity: from the Indignados to Occupy*. 227–249. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Ott, Julia C. 2014. *When Wall Street Met Main Street*. Harvard University Press.
- Oxfam. 2022. "Ten richest men double their fortunes in pandemic while incomes of 99 percent of humanity fall". In *Oxfam*, January 17, 2022. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/ten-richest-men-double-their-fortunes-pandemic-while-incomes-99-percent-humanity/> (last accessed August 24, 2022).
- Patton, Stacey. 2011. "Why blacks aren't embracing Occupy Wall Street." In *Washington Post*, November 25, 2011. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-blacks-arent-embracing-occupy-wall-street/2011/11/16/gIQAwc3FwN_story.html/ (last accessed May 26, 2022).
- Pedersen, Jørgen. 2019. "Money Talks—Også i norsk politikk". In *Nytt norsk tidsskrift* 36.01: 7–20.
- PEGIDA. 2014. "Positionspapier der PEGIDA". <https://www.menschen-in-dresden.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/pegida-positionspapier.pdf/> (last accessed November 15, 2021).
- Peters, Yvette. 2018. "Democratic representation and political inequality: How social differences translate into differential representation". *French Politics* 16.3: 341–357.
- Pettit, Philip
- . 2008. "A republican right to basic income?". *Basic income studies* 2.2.
- . 2017. *Gerechte Freiheit. Ein moralischer Kompass für eine komplexe Welt*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Pickerill, Jenny, John Krinsky, Graeme Hayes, Kevin Gillan, and Brian Doherty. 2016. *Occupy! A global movement*. Routledge.
- Picot, Georg, and Tassinari, Arianna. 2017. "All of one kind? Labour market reforms under austerity in Italy and Spain". *Socio-Economic Review* 15.2: 461–482.
- Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag.
- Pleyers, Geoffrey
- . 2012. "Beyond Occupy, Progressive activists in Europe. Open Democracy: free thinking for the world 21". <https://www.opendemocracy.net/geoffrey-pleyers/beyondoccupy-progressive-activists-in-europe/> (last accessed August 26, 2022).
- . 2014. "From Facebook movements to city square movements". *Open Democracy: free thinking for the world* 21. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/geoffrey-pleyers/from-facebook-movements-to-city-square-movements/> (last accessed August 26, 2022).
- Polanyi, Karl. 1957. *The Great Transformation. The political and economic origins of our time*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Pollmann, Arnd. 2008. "Anerkennung". In Stefan Gosepath *et al.*, (eds.). *Handbuch der Politischen Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie*. 28–33. Walter de Gruyter.
- Quante, Michael. 2013. "Recognition in Capital". *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 16.4: 713–727.
- Raekstad, Paul, and Gradin, Sofa Saio. 2020. *Prefigurative Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Rancière, Jacques. 1999. *Disagreement: Politics and philosophy*. University of Minnesota Press.

- Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press.
- Reich, Robert B. 2016. *Saving capitalism: For the many, not the few*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Renault, Emmanuel
 ———. 2016. "Marx's Critique of the Market". *Deutsches Jahrbuch Philosophie* 7, 177–190.
 ———. 2019. *The Experience of Injustice: A Theory of Recognition*. Columbia University Press.
- Risager, Bjarke Skærl. 2017. "The eventful places of occupy Wall Street and Tahrir square: Cosmopolitan imagination and social movements". *Globalizations* 14 (5): 714–29.
- Roberts, Alasdair. 2012. "Why the Occupy movement failed". *Public Administration Review* 72 (5): 754–762.
- Rorty, Richard. 1999. *Philosophy and Social Hope*. London: Penguin.
- Rosen, Michael. 2014. "Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht". In *Internationales Jahrbuch des deutschen Idealismus*. F. Rush (eds.). 256–72. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Rucht, Dieter
 ———. 1994. *Modernisierung und neue soziale Bewegungen, Deutschland, Frankreich und USA im Vergleich*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
 ———. 2020. "Es darf auch absurde Kritik geäußert werden". Interview with Dieter Rucht, May 13, 2020. In *Cicero, Magazin für Politische Kultur*.
<https://www.cicero.de/innenpolitik/hygienedemos-protestforscher-berlin-grundrechte-dieter-rucht-verschwörungstheorien/> (last accessed November 15, 2021).
- Saar, Martin. 2017. "Overcoming Progress (but Recovering History). A Commentary on Amy Allen's *The End of Progress*". Contribution to the Author Meets Critics Session, May 17, 2017. Villa Lanna, Prague.
- Salzborn, Samuel. 2011. "Moneten und Mythen". In *Jüdische Allgemeine*, October 25, 2011.
<https://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/moneten-und-mythen/> (last accessed August 25, 2022).
- Sandel, Michal. J.
 ———. 2012. *What money can't buy. The moral limits of markets*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
 ———. 2020. *The tyranny of merit: What's become of the common good*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Sauer, Birgit. 2008. "Emanzipation". In Gosepath, Stefan, et al., *Handbuch der Politischen Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie*. 264–268. Walter de Gruyter.
- Schaub, Jörg. 2015. "Misedevelopments, Pathologies, and Normative Revolutions: Normative Reconstruction as Method of Critical Theory". *Critical horizons* Vol. 16, 107–130. London.
- Schmid, Hans Bernhard, and Schweikard, David P. 2020. "Collective Intentionality". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2021 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.).
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/collective-intentionality/> (last accessed August 29, 2022).
- Schmitt, Carl. [1927] 2008. *The concept of the political*. Expanded edition. University of Chicago Press.
- Schweiger, Gottfried. 2012. "Globalizing recognition. Global Justice and the dialectic of recognition". *Public Reason* 4 (1-2): 78–91.
- Schweikard, David P., Mooren, Nadine, and Siep, Ludwig (eds.). 2019. *Ein Recht auf Widerstand gegen den Staat. Verteidigung und Kritik des Widerstandsrechts seit der europäischen Aufklärung*. In *Politika* 17. Tübingen: Morh Siebeck.
- Schweikard, David P. and Schmid, Hans Bernhard. 2020. "Collective Intentionality". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2021 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.).
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/collective-intentionality/> (last accessed August 29, 2022).
- Seltzer, Sarah M. 2021. "Sexism and Racism on the Left: What Has and Hasn't Changed Since Occupy Wall Street, Dozens of Zuccotti Park activists pushed the movement to confront race and gender oppression—and have continued that work in the decade since". In <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/occupy-wall-street-race-gender/> (last accessed September 22, 2021).

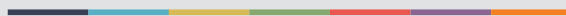
References

- Senf, Christopher. 2018. "Wissenschaft als »Organ« der Bewegung: Konflikttheoretisches Denken bei Marx." In Matthias Bohlender *et al.*, (eds.). *»Kritik im Handgemenge«: Die Marx'sche Gesellschaftskritik als politischer Einsatz*. 73–94. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Shapiro, Ian. 2012. *The moral foundations of politics*. Yale University Press.
- Simons, Jake Wallis. 2017. "EXCLUSIVE: 'Forget decency, fight the sex jihad!'" In *DailyMail*, February 2017. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3443786/Forget-decency-fight-sex-jihad-Femme-fatale-extremist-Pegida-group-accuses-Muslims-targeting-Western-women-gay-men-calls-public-grab-pitchforks.html/> (last accessed May 23, 2022).
- Singer, Peter. 1989. "All animals are equal". *Animal rights and human obligations*. 148–162.
- Sitrin, Marina. 2012. "Horizontalism and the Occupy Movements". In *Dissent* 59.2: 74–75.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. 2016. "Primitive Reflexe". In *Die Zeit*, March 3, 2016. <https://www.yumpu.com/de/document/read/56389330/peter-sloterdijk-fluchtlingsdebatte-primitive-reflexe-03-206-zeitde/> (last accessed May 23, 2022).
- Snow, David A., Sarah A. Soule, and Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2018. *The Blackwell companion to social movements*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Stein, Ben. 2006. "In class warfare, guess which class is winning". In *New York Times*, November 26, 2006. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/26/business/yourmoney/26every.html/> (last accessed August 28, 2022).
- Stemplowska, Zofia. 2016. "Non-ideal Theory." In Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, Kimberley Brownlee, and David Coody (eds.). *A Companion to Applied Philosophy*. 96–284. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Stewart, Emily. 2019. "We are (still) the 99 percent: Occupy Wall Street was seen as a failure when it ended in 2011. But it's helped transform the American left". In *Vox.com*, April 30, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/4/23/18284303/occupy-wall-street-bernie-sanders-dsa-socialism/> (last accessed May 26, 2022).
- Stiglitz, Joseph E.
———. 2011. "Of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%". In *Vanity fair* 11.64: 156–111.
———. 2012. *The price of inequality: How today's divided society endangers our future*. New York City: WW Norton & Company.
- Sommer, Allison Kaplan. 2022. "Why young israelis are pitching protest tents in the streets again". In *Haaretz*, June 20, 2022. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2022-06-20/ty-article-magazine/-premium/why-young-israelis-are-pitching-protest-tents-in-the-streets-again/00000181-817b-d1a2-a1e7-81fb76340000/> (last accessed August 15, 2022).
- Sörensen, Paul. 2020. "Widerstand findet Stadt. Präfigurative Praxis als transnationale Politik rebellischer Städte". *ZPTh—Zeitschrift für Politische Theorie* 10.1: 7–8, 29–48.
- Swift, Adam and White, Stuart. 2008. "Political theory, Social science and Real Politics." In Leopold, David and Stears, Marc (eds.). *Political theory: Methods and Approaches*. 49–69. Oxford University Press.
- Szolucha, Anna. 2017. *Real Democracy in the Occupy Movement, No stable Ground*. New York: Routledge.
- Tagesschau. 2020. "Entsetzen über Eskalation am Reichstagsgebäude". In *Tagesschau.com*, August 30, 2020. <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/corona-demo-berlin-131.html/> (last accessed November 15, 2021).
- Tanzi, Alexandre and Dorning, Mike. 2021. "Top 1% of U.S. Earners Now Hold More Wealth Than All of the Middle Class". In *BLOOMBERG.com*, October 8, 2021. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-08/top-1-earners-hold-more-wealth-than-the-u-s-middle-class#xj4y7vzkg/> (last accessed August 24, 2022).
- Tarrow, Sidney. 2012. *Strangers at the Gates: Movements and States in Contentious Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Charles. 1994. *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition*. Amy Gutman (ed.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, Astra and Cessen, Keith *et al.*, 2011. *Occupy, Scenes from occupied America*. Verso Books.
- Thompson, Edward Palmer. 1963. *The making of the English working class*. New York: Random House.

- Thompson, Simon. 2006. *The political theory of recognition: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Tilly, Charles, and Tarrow, Sidney. 2015. *Contentious politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Tisera, Feliciano and Alvarenga, Daniel. 2012. "Anti-austerity strikes sweep southern Europe". In *Reuters.com*, November 14, 2012. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-spain-portugal-strike-idUKBRE8AD00620121115/> (last accessed August 29, 2022).
- Tomalty, Jesse. 2020. "Social Rights at Work." Invited Contribution. Forthcoming.
- Tropp, Linda. 2012. *The Oxford handbook of intergroup conflict*. Oxford University Press.
- Valentini, Laura. 2012. "Ideal vs. non-ideal theory." *Philosophy Compass* 7 (9), 654–664.
- Vallier, Kevin. 2021. "Neoliberalism". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/neoliberalism/> (last accessed August 29, 2022).
- van de Sande, Mathijs. 2020. "They Don't Represent Us? Synecdochal Representation and the Politics of Occupy". In *Constellations* 27 (3): 397–411.
- van den Brink, Bert, and Owen, David. 2007. *Recognition and power: Axel Honneth and the tradition of critical social theory*. Cambridge University Press.
- van Stekelenburg, Jacqueliën, and Klandermans, Bert. 2017. "Individuals in movements: A social psychology of contention". In *Handbook of social movements across disciplines*. 103–39. Springer.
- Verdi. 2019. #WIRSINDESWERT. <https://www.oeffentlicherdienst.de/index.php/darum-ver-di/wir-sind-es-wert/> (last accessed August 24, 2022).
- Volk, Christian
 ———. 2018. "On a radical democratic theory of political protest: potentials and shortcomings". *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*. 1–23.
 ———. 2019. "Enacting a parallel world: Political protest against the transnational constellation". *Journal of International Political Theory* 15 (1): 100–18.
- Walzer, Michael. 2017. "The politics of resistance". *Dissent Magazine*.
- Wegner, Daniel M., and Sparrow. 2007. "The Puzzle of Coaction". In *Distributed Cognition and the Will: Individual Volition and Social Context*, Don Ross, David Spurrett, Harold Kincaid & G. Lynn Stephens (eds.). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Young, Iris Marion. 2011. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zinn, Howard. [1980] 2015. *A people's history of the United States: 1492-present*. Routledge.
- Zurn, Christopher F.
 ———. 1997. "The normative claims of three types of feminist struggles for recognition". *Philosophy Today* 41 (Supplement), 73–78.
 ———. 2003. "Identity or Status? Struggles over 'Recognition' in Fraser, Honneth, and Taylor". *Constellations* 10 (4): 519–37.
 ———. 2004. "Group Balkanization or Societal Homogenization: Is There a Dilemma between Recognition and Distribution Struggles?". *Public Affairs Quarterly* 18 (2), 159–186.
 ———. 2015. *Axel Honneth*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
 ———. 2022 [Forthcoming]. "Populism, Polarization and Misrecognition". Onni Hirvonen and Heikki J. Koskinen (eds.). *The Theory and Practice of Recognition*. Routledge.
 ———. 2020. "Political Progress: Piecemeal, Pragmatic, and Processual". In Christ, Julia, et al., (eds.). *Debating Critical Theory: Engagements with Axel Honneth*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Zurn, Christopher F., and Schmidt am Busch, Hans et al., (eds.). 2010. *The Philosophy of recognition: Historical and contemporary perspectives*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.



Graphic design: Communication Division, UiB / Print: Skjipes Kommunikasjon AS



uib.no

ISBN: 9788230860649 (print)
9788230866399 (PDF)