



VOX POPULI

The American "Occupy Wall Street" movement and its global expansion throughout Western Europe as well as re-unrest in the Middle East indicate that in the coming years the world will see the protests of young and dissatisfied people, or despondent, as they are called by the media.

The "Occupy Wall Street" movement is composed of demonstrators organized through social internet networks. It all started in New York on September 17 in the Wall Street financial district by spontaneous gathering of a group of people. A month later, this movement has grown into global phenomenon in the form of non-violent civil disobedience. Last weekend hundreds of thousands of people around the world have occupied the streets and places symbolic of financial power in 868 cities in 78 countries on all continents. They warned the authorities of their countries "not to overcome the economic crisis on their backs". A real war took place between demonstrators and police in Rome with burning of the Italian and European Union flags. As for South Eastern Europe is concerned, the most massive protest took place in Zagreb with about three thousand people, as well as in Sarajevo, while around hundred people gathered in Belgrade and Podgorica each.

The reasons that led to the organization of "Occupy Wall Street" are diverse, but most participants are unsatisfied with the financial system, investors' and corporate greed, and the

legal machinations on the stock market. The protesters were visited by the actress Susan Sarandon and movie director Michael Moore. As the crowd gathered in New York is not allowed to use loudspeakers, their "general assembly" is carried out by conveying further of what the speaker has said. The protest "Occupy Wall Street" is not approved, which is why the police keeps protesters away from headquarters of the New York Stock Exchange, in the park Zukoti. Their event was almost unnoticed until they decided to take the Brooklyn Bridge. On that day over 700 people from New York City were arrested by the police and they reached the headlines. From that moment on, the protest began to spread.

Who are these persistent young people who want to change the present in which they live? A renowned British newspaper The Guardian describes them as a modest working-class children who went to college, completed the studies and now are not only punished for that, but subdued, and faced with a life full of dead ends. According to the British newspaper, the resisters in the financial center of New York are those who "played by the rules".

This paper concludes that everything told in the previous ten years was a lie: markets were not able to function without supervision, the creators of the financial instruments were not infallible geniuses, and debts still had to be paid.



On the other hand, the money was only a political instrument, because billions of dollars would just disappear and appear again, if it was required by banks and governments.

The rightist, conservative America immediately saw the "communist conspiracy" in this movement. Interestingly, those right-wingers haven't described the Boston Tea Party as a conspiracy, but as an expression of democratic will of the people. Some people as Glenn Beck, a former talk show host on Fox known by the extreme right orientation, believe that this is "a global Marxist revolution". Beck called the protests a communist plan to destroy the American economy a coordinated action which aimed to completely overthrow the capitalist system. Some rightist conspiracy theorists claim the protests are organized by CIA, controversial Hungarian-born now American billionaire George Soros, and even Serbian movement RESISTANCE? That those protests may be the end of capitalism is believed by many. Even the Economist was running headlines like "Capitalism: Was it a Good Idea?"

However, the protests inspired by the occupation of Wall Street no one can ignore. Some powerful American unions started supporting the protests, which was not the case at the beginning. This means that they see the potential, strength and future in the rallies, but also that they feel that their membership supports the protests. According New York Magazine, in the coming weeks we will see more trade unions, including teachers and the carries joining the action.

In the meantime, the movement set up sub-organizations in Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Washington ...

However, the view that we are witnessing is the destruction of capitalism is excessive. The fact is that capitalism will never be the same after this crisis and protests. Capitalism as we knew by the beginning of the economic crisis in which capital is owned by only one percent of the society is the past. There will have to be found mechanisms for proper distribution of wealth, poverty reduction, and especially the gap between rich and poor countries.

That is why demonstrators say - We Are the 99 Percent! Brian Phillips, manager of communications and security of the movement "Occupy Wall Street" said: "I want to overthrow the government". Further he says that people have had enough of corporations and the elite - one percent of the population which controls everything and ruins the economy. Young people demonstrate in New York and across the United States chanting the slogan "change!". This appeal related to the necessary changes in politics, society and economy is very reminiscent of the slogan of the U.S. President Barack Obama "Change we can believe in" with which he won the elections three years ago, the U.S. and the world. Three years later, President Obama hasn't completed major changes in U.S. foreign and internal policy that he had announced. This is why protesters have objections to his work. However, unlike financial institutions, they don't see Obama as the cause of the problem - they simply believe that he had to do more.



And of course, no matter how angry they are, Obama is closer to them than the Republicans.

This fact is not irrelevant given that the presidential elections in the U.S. are next year. It is interesting that the ground of Obama's victory three years ago was the mobilization of young people who until then had rarely voted in U.S. elections. To achieve this, Obama's staff used to the maximum the advantages of the Internet and social networks to organize people.

We may say that President Obama's campaign was the first political campaign in modern history in which the Internet and social networks played an important role. Now in the same organize themselves those that brought victory to Obama, disappointed by the fact that nothing has changed.

However, for American society it's very important that this movement is mobilizes young people and forces them to think about politics and their participation in it. Even now we can say that the next elections in the United States will be marked by mobilization of the young generation that wasn't previously interested in politics. On the other hand, the growth of this movement will cause a reaction among the rightists whose supporters will be more motivated to vote. If movements of the bittered in the United States become mass, the right wing may respond with a more extreme candidate for president. But the question is – do the angry protests in the United States serve President Obama? Currently no, but they allow him to be more radical in undertaking reforms. In the future, if the right wing in the United States answers with a more radical and rhetoric candidate, it is possible the mobilization

of young middle-class and trade unions to be in his favor.

However, if he wants votes of these people, President Obama will have to make more radical changes in society.

The "Occupy Wall Street" movement resembles much the movements that have brought down many Arab dictators this spring. The objectives and the messages are different, because the political situation is not the same in the U.S. and Egypt. But the causes of dissatisfaction are however the same. Now we see that the world is facing a systemic growth in anger, protest and political instability that can last for years. The young generation, interconnected by social media, primarily the Internet, is losing faith in the traditional governmental and business structures, convinced that these have denied them chances for a normal life. Young people are being joined by the middle class, which in times of economic crisis lives harder, fearing for survival and demanding the re-start of economic growth.

Only now it shows that in the "electronic global village", as Canadian professor Marshall McLuhan called today's world, all processes are connected because the information is spread instantaneously. Therefore, it was logical that the "Arab Spring" and the struggle of young Arabs for freedom inspired similar movements in the western world. Today protests shake Greece, Spain, Italy and the UK, while in the U.S. protest against the financial oligarchy is spreading.



Srdja Popovic, one of the leaders of Serbian student movement RESISTANCE and lecturer at Columbia University in the United States indicates that 'all the protests from Cairo to Manhattan are organized in the same way - by using new media for mass mobilization. The experts for this phenomenon, Clay Shirky from the University of New York and Todd Gitlin from Columbia University see in the use of new media for a mass mobilization a 'psychological, generational and global component, a unique spirit of the times' that in the coming years could escalate into a global generational movement", said Popovic in his article for the Belgrade newspaper *Politika*.

The "Occupy Wall Street" movement is still not that massive as it was Martin Luther King's march, or the peace movement against the Vietnam War, but it has already achieved specific results: increased political pressure on the financial industry, policy makers talking about tougher regulations and targeted tax increases, the media more concerned with "tax havens" and other places where the richest hide money and avoid paying taxes. Hayat Alvi, a professor teaching Middle Eastern and national security studies at the United States Naval War College said for Reuters that the requirements of the protesters could be described in one word - "responsibility." "This is the season of demanding accountability and the application of the rule of law, especially targeting the ruling political elites and the economic elites as well," said Alvi.

Many other dissident movements around the world show increased self-confidence. In Israel, India, Chile, China and elsewhere, online or street demonstrators often succeed in winning concessions.

It is believed that the current rage against autocrats, bankers and the elite is a symptom of a fundamental change in the structure of the global population.

In the Middle East and North Africa one of the key drivers is large group of young people struggling to find work, quickly joined by the masses angry with increasing food prices. In Western countries there are layers caused by the aging of the population that increase the cost of government, reduce the growth and block the activities for young people. In western states, there are strains caused by an ageing population that is driving up government costs, reducing growth and blocking jobs from younger people. At worst, some experts warn that could produce an economic malaise that lasts for decades. "It is these demographic issues that are driving much of what we are seeing at the moment," said George Mason University's Goldstone. "It makes politics very unpredictable. You can get paralysis, but you can also see dramatic shifts in policy to left or right. You can see the rise of ideologues as we saw in the 1930s. We are very much at the beginning of this."



At this moment no one can forecast the changes resulting from these spontaneous protests. Srdja Popovic said that “regardless of religious, historical and ethnic differences between the actors of the Arab spring and angry young Americans, many more points to the world trend of youth rebellion. It is born in an atmosphere of lack of perspective, where a single act of insults to the dignity and arrogance of the elite becomes a trigger for a mass uprising. Whether it is directed against the anachronistic autocratic regime of the Arab world, whether it is caused by loss of faith in liberal capitalist economic system of Western countries, which has shown serious weaknesses since the beginning of the global crisis, youth rebellion has many common features. Young rebels are inspired by heroes like Gandhi and Mandela. The methods and tactics include the ‘occupation’ of a symbolic space - from squares to financial centers, street theater and protest marches, as well as the presence of humor and carnival atmosphere”, said Popovic.

Where is Serbia in these global events?

The media in Serbia do not address these special events around the world because the Serbian society is pretty much closed, and the Serbian political and social elites more concerned with their own enrichment rather than concern for the prosperity of society. Serbia has a lot of internal problems, of which Kosovo is perhaps the greatest, so that there’s not enough time to get involved in global processes.

Nevertheless, it may be noted that the Serbs in northern Kosovo fighting for non-recognition of Kosovo as a separate state use the same non-violent tactics with international military forces KFOR.

Concerned with solving the Kosovo problem that has unfortunately become a training ground for competition between the great powers, with delayed European integration, in dilemma whether to cooperate with the West or the East, without a clear strategy of how society should develop and what are the national goals - Serbia can only wait some global processes to happen and hope that the new solutions will be better for her. In the meantime, Serbia only voices processes that frustrate her without offering solutions, which means it has the same problem as the protesters that gather around the world. This problem is described by Srdja Popovic by raising the question: “Are the kids in Boston and Madrid going to understand that they can win only if they have a clear vision of future society and concrete proposals, not just the endless list of things that make them furious?”