

[Armine Ishkanian](#)

The Squares and Beyond: a brief introduction

Website

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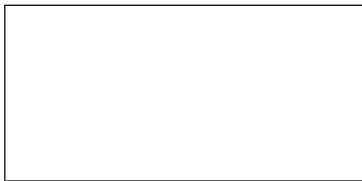
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The Squares and Beyond: a brief introduction

ARMINE ISHKANIAN 29 July 2015

Armine Ishkanian is Assistant Professor at the London School of Economics. She has expertise in civil society, democratisation, gender, and development in the post-socialist countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.



On 3 – 4 July 2015, the London School of Economics together with openDemocracy, hosted an international workshop titled *Moving on from the Squares* that brought together a wide range of actors including academics, movement activists, representatives of NGOs, foundations and think tanks along with political party activists and journalists for roundtable discussions and debates on the challenges in democratising politics; how the square movements have developed in the intervening years; and the relationship of movements with other civil society actors including NGOs, trade unions, political parties and the media.

The workshop, together with this webpage, is the outcome of an editorial partnership between myself, Armine Ishkanian (LSE – Department of Social Policy) and Rosemary Bechler, openDemocracy Editor and the *Can Europe make it?* team. This partnership builds upon and substantially extends the reach and scope of the findings from the *Reclaiming democracy in the square: interpreting the movements of 2011-2012* research project I led together with Marlies Glasius from the University of Amsterdam ([report](#)). What is distinctive about this editorial partnership is that it brings together academic rigour, depth and an already engaged network of activists with the editors who have the skills to create a wider conversation.

The workshop was organised around three roundtables. A chaired discussion between roundtable panellists was opened up to all participants. This format allowed for a lively discussion about the exceptionalism or 'newness' of these movements and their continuities with past movements; the commonalities and differences between movements across the globe; the challenges facing movements as they seek to influence wider policy and political developments; and the relationship between movement activists and NGOs, political parties and trade unions.



Antonis Vradis joins the discussion from Athens.
(Armine Ishkanian - All rights reserved).

There was wide agreement among both academics and non-academics, that academics should strive to communicate and disseminate their research more broadly.

Currently there is much public debate about "[liberating](#)" research from the publishing industry's paywalls so as to make that knowledge more freely available and although we cannot make the full articles available via openDemocracy, we hope at least to share the best ideas and debates with the oD readers.

We live in a time of deep reconfigurations and social upheaval. It has been five years since the start of a major global movements' wave when masses of people, feeling unrepresented by those who govern or claim to represent them took to the streets and squares to voice their anger, indignation, and demands for a more equal and just future. While new movements continue to emerge, many questions remain about the broader or longer term impact and achievements of the protest movements from 2010.

The issues and problems which brought people into the streets and squares in the first place, whether in Athens, Cairo, Madrid, or New York City, have not been adequately addressed let alone resolved. The anger and indignation with the lack of democracy and social justice as well as the persistent corruption and inequality which fuelled the initial demonstrations remain.

The main aim of this editorial partnership is to create a platform which will be an open, transnational space to share academic research more broadly and to encourage on-going discussion both between the movements and about them, together with the challenges they face in democratising our politics.



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