

ment and self-determination through campaigning and training courses as well as monitoring and defending women's and girls' rights. In line with the above, Egyptian lawyer Dr. Nariman Abdel Kader overcame social prejudice in her direct surroundings, became an activist lawyer and more recently founded the *Egyptian Women's Law and Culture of Peace Organization*, aiming to reduce the amount of violence directed toward women and to train young female lawyers to specialize in cases of domestic violence. Her sword is double-edged as her approach both empowers women in civil society and relative newcomers in the legal profession.

Finally, high-profile Moroccan-American lawyer Leila Hanafi, involved with many international initiatives, is another example of how legal professionals help empowering people at an informal level: she was involved in a program tapping into the strong Moroccan tradition of mediation by empowering members of civil society, both as mediators and as beneficiaries. The first group was trained to apply sound techniques and mechanisms when involved in informal mediation whereas the second group was encouraged to effectively seek redress through mediation to solve disputes in a rapid and effective way - as opposed to lengthy court procedures. Hence, lawyers enhanced informal civil dispute mediation by transferring skills and know-how to directly affected groups in civil society.

The way forward

If the West - and in particular a rule of law minded party like D66 - wants to contribute meaningfully to the democratic developments in the Middle East, it will have to respect and work with local dynamics where formal and informal legal circles will continue to coexist and complement each other for a long time to come - perhaps forever. While maintaining its human rights agenda at all times, the West should also take a hard look at itself and admit that the many millions in development money invested in democratisation processes before the uprisings have more often than not reached others than the lawyers and activists who in the end brought and continue to bring about legal and social change. Instead

of conferences about the Arab Spring in glamorous locations and frequent formal visits by its highest representatives, the EU, its member-states, politicians, lawyers and civil activists would do well determining who are the true actors for change within the formal and informal legal circles and whether they really need vast amounts of money or perhaps completely different forms of empowerment. Only then can the West expect to help bringing about dignity, rule of law and social justice.

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Koolmees Liberal citizenship

The Berlin Wall fell when I was 12 years old. Ahold CEO Anders Moberg lowered his bonus in 2003. And the Arab Spring was two years ago. Very different events, of course, but all good examples of changes brought about because people came together and actively fought for common goals in society. Pure expressions of what I call 'liberal citizenship'. Citizens who are independent, but also feel a shared responsibility for the fate of others and for society as a whole. To me, this is a realisation of one of the pillars of D66: Trust in people's own power. The Arab Spring shows that, however repressive a state might be, and how difficult problems might seem, if the group of individuals is large enough, their power is ultimately unstoppable. As a social-liberal I would like to enable people to actually take on their responsibility.

Paul Schnabel, sociologist and Director of the Netherlands Institute for Social Research, often tells us about the state of affairs in the Netherlands. It turns out that people say: 'I am doing fine, but we are doing badly.' How is this possible? Almost everyone thinks the government is not nearly doing enough to fulfil their needs. And the secret is: the government simply cannot accomplish this. Politicians should therefore state more often: 'You yourself have abilities, capacities and possibilities!' Look for example at the Brent Spar affair. The debate about the outdated Shell oil platform that needed to be demolished, finally resulted in companies trying to take more corporate social responsibility. This is also liberal citizenship: rising up to the challenge, thinking through how things could be better and then realize those ideas. It is not the state that fixes things for us, but society itself that feels responsible.

From here it is now only a small step to the thoughts of Robert Reich, former Minister of Social Affairs and Employment under President Clinton. Reich is the author of the book *Supercapitalism*, in which he argues that people can manifest themselves in society in three different ways. As 'citizen', as 'consumer' and as 'investor'. For actual liberal citizenship, it is of great importance that the values of these three roles are neatly lined up. Take for example child labour. Someone can reject this as a citizen, but as a consumer wear clothes made by children, and as an investor buy invest in child labour via his pension fund. Here lies an opportunity for us as a social-liberal party, to let people see these imbalances, to make people aware of the role they have, and encourage their personal strengths.

The call for 'moral leadership' is heard again and again. And of course, politicians must set the right example. This is something on which also the less action oriented parties should focus more. But as a politician, I see it as my main task to ensure that people themselves can realize their own ideas and ideals about change. For example by giving them insight in and control over the investments made with their pension fund. Or by making sure that people can easily switch to another bank - without losing their personal bank account number - when they believe their bank pays too much salaries and bonuses. By doing so, we provide people with the possibilities to take matters into their own hands and actually act upon their personal ideals. It sure feels better to have put necessary changes in motion yourself, rather than to have waited passively until the government has done the job for you.

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