The Anarchism of the Occupy Movement

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Abstract

Occupy has been criticised for a lack of organisation and ideological direction, its persistent failure to articulate practical reforms and its anarchism. Occupy's extensive influence calls for scholarly analysis of its underlying ideas and its praxis. This article develops a conceptual understanding of the movement and argues that the criticisms above overlook both how the movement's participants rationalise its praxis and the consistently anarchist forms of this praxis. The article draws on recent scholarship that distinguishes between ideological anarchism and anarchical forms of praxis inspired by anarchist principles. It argues that Occupy's praxis is anarchical. Though not ideologically anarchist, Occupy expresses a commitment to anarchist ideals. The article develops a particular conception of anarchism and in this context, discusses Occupy's anti-capitalist position, reflected in its catchcry 'we are the 99 per cent'. It concludes by explicating the anarchical elements of Occupy's praxis.

Introduction

The Occupy movement emerged in September 2011 as thousands marched on Wall Street, New York City, to protest against the policymaking dominance of capital and the extreme wealth disparities in the United States (US). The protest quickly snowballed into a physical occupation of New York's Zuccotti Park, where a live-in community developed which sought to confront the social, economic and political dominance of the so-called '1 per cent'. This confrontational occupation of prominent public spaces eventually spread to more than 100 cities in the US and 1,500 encampments in 25 countries worldwide (Voigt 2011). Occupy polarised public opinion, with attitudes ranging from derision and contempt, through to enthusiastic support for the movement's democratisation of civil society (Brown 2011) and its development of class consciousness in opposition to the social dominance of capital (Chomsky 2012). The movement was initially met with widespread derision, but as its impact reverberated globally, it became increasingly difficult to dismiss. Apart from vituperative and politically motivated detractors, Occupy has been criticised for a number of interrelated problems, from its apparent lack of organisation, leadership and ideological direction (Friedman 2011), through to an ostensible failure to articulate practical reforms, its incoherence (O'Meara 2011) and its anarchism (McRae 2011).

This article argues that such criticisms overlook both the ideas articulated by the movement's participants in rationalising its praxis and the consistent, though varied, forms it has taken, forms that are fundamentally anarchist. It has been acknowledged that Occupy draws much from anarchism in developing its praxis (see Graeber 2011), but there has been little explication, particularly within scholarly literature, of those features that characterise Occupy as an anarchist movement.

Throughout this article, I differentiate between ideological anarchism and anarchical forms of political practice. This distinction draws on scholarship which distinguishes between ideologically motivated, card-carrying anarchists and anarchical forms of political praxis inspired by anarchist analyses and principles. Neal's (1997) differentiation between 'small a' and 'capital A' (that is, ideological) anarchism hinted at this distinction. Epstein (2001) distinguished, similarly, between anarchism itself and the increasingly central influence of anarchist sensibilities on anti-systemic praxis. Graeber (2002) included a comparable distinction in his conception of the 'new anarchists' in the alter-globalisation movement. Finally, Curran (2006) developed the notion of a

post-ideological anarchism that distinguishes between anarchical political actors and those motivated and bound by the fundamental principles of anarchism as an ideology. Anarchical political actors, though inspired by and drawing from anarchist principles, reject doctrinaire positions and sectarianism in constructing their politics. This article argues that Occupy's praxis, though not ideologically anarchist, expresses and reflects a commitment to anarchist ideals.

Conceptualising Occupy's praxis through this particular anarchist lens is important for a number of reasons. First, it explains those elements of the movement that have confounded observers, notably, the pursuit of a qualitatively different form of politics that pursues a radical democratic praxis independent of capital and the state, rather than engaging with existing institutions or participating in party-political contest. Second, this analysis situates Occupy historically as the most recent in a tradition of anti-systemic social movements, following the emergence of the New Left, that are inspired by anarchist analysis and principles. As Epstein (1991) showed, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the politics of direct action was central in the formation of the ecology movement and protests against nuclear power. It spread, from there, to sections of the peace, feminist and queer movements, the radical wings of which shared an anarchist sensibility, manifesting in adherence to participatory democracy and a multifaceted opposition to hierarchy (Epstein 1991, 1). An anarchical praxis also formed the basis of the alter-globalisation movement (Curran 2006; Graeber 2002), which emerged in the 1990s, reached its zenith at the 1999 anti-World Trade Organization protests in Seattle and slowly petered out after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11).

Explicating Occupy's basis in anarchism and situating it within this genealogy of social movements serves to affirm Graeber's (2002, 61) observation that 'most of the creative energy for radical politics is now coming from anarchism – a tradition … hitherto mostly dismissed'. Occupy reminds us that understanding contemporary anti-systemic praxis demands engagement with anarchist theory. Exploring Occupy's anarchism also shows that anarchism is not mere idealism, existing only in the minds of a few practitioners and theorists, but has manifested as a living force in the practice of radical politics.

In order to explicate the movement's anarchism, this article is divided into three main sections. The first section explores the historical context and theoretical foundations of Occupy. It initially focuses on neoliberalism, as this has been the principal ideological program since the 1970s (see Harvey 2007) and has therefore largely determined lived experience under late capitalism. Neoliberalism is also the principal political force that Occupy opposes and, as such, it demands analysis. The second section examines anarchist political theory and praxis by way of an exegetical reconstruction of anarchism based on the texts of central anarchist theorists. This task is undertaken to develop criteria and principles by which to characterise Occupy's anarchism. In particular, this article develops a conception of anarchism that draws on what Bookchin (1995) called social anarchism; that is, anarchism's classical tradition, initially developed between the 1860s and 1940s (Levy 2011, 265) and associated with key figures such as Proudhon, Kropotkin, Rocker and Bakunin. This section explores the anarchist rejection of externally imposed hierarchy (inclusive of the state and capital), anarchism's embrace of non-hierarchical and participatory decision-making forms and its pursuit of an emancipatory politics that prefigures the goal of a non-hierarchical society.

The third section engages with participant accounts and self-understandings in order to develop a rigorous understanding of Occupy's praxis. The primary method used is a content analysis of the movement's self-produced documents. The chief criticism of using primary sources is

that these sources, and any interpretation of them, may provide partial and biased accounts of the experiences of participants. In order to minimise this risk, I corroborate these sources with secondary literature. This article considers material produced by the movement's Wall Street iteration, which is justified in two ways. First, the Wall Street occupation was the initial development of what eventually became a global movement. Second, though the movement's branches are diverse, they nonetheless share common practices and goals, and the initial Wall Street occupation provided much of the inspiration for the movement's subsequent global explosion (see Smith and Glidden 2012, 288).

I also investigate Occupy's praxis more specifically, exploring those elements that render it an anarchist movement: its refusal to engage with the state in seeking social change, its pursuit of a prefigurative, living politics and, related to this, its commitment to non-hierarchical, directly democratic organisational forms that reject both the state and capital. The content analysis focuses on documents, media releases and statements produced by Occupy Wall Street at general assemblies and other participatory forums and disseminated as media releases or via websites connected with the movement.

Occupy, Capitalism and Neoliberalism

Since the 1970s, economic and social life under capitalism has undergone profound shifts. Globally, the pursuit of neoliberal policies has promoted trade liberalisation in areas conducive to corporate interests, increased the centrality of markets to social and economic life and, above all, advanced the interests of monopoly capital (Reitan 2007, 2). Broadly speaking, neoliberalism represents the 'deepening penetration of capitalism into political and social institutions as well as cultural consciousness itself' (Thompson 2005, 23). Neoliberalism increases the dominance of capital over everyday life. Consequently, capitalism becomes an explicit cultural logic, advanced through political worldviews that place the market at the centre of social life. Harvey argued that neoliberalism aims to restore 'class power' (2007, 16) and characterised it as a 'political project' that seeks to 're-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites' (2007, 19).

Neoliberalism has exerted significant international influence. Harvey (2007, 1) argued that '[f]uture historians may well look upon the years 1978–80 as a revolutionary turning point in the world's social and economic history'. From Deng Xiaoping's embrace of capitalism in China, to the policies of the Reagan administration in the US and the Thatcher government in the United Kingdom, nation-states sought to curb the power of labour, promote the dominance of supply-side economics and liberate the power of finance globally while attempting simultaneously to roll back social spending and the welfare state (Harvey 2007, 1). Despite exponential increases in productivity between 1970 and 2000, average wages remained stagnant and inequality significantly increased between a small, very rich proportion of the population and the large majority (see Harvey 2007, 25). In addition, as neoliberalism further subsumes life under the dictates of capital, individuals necessarily shape themselves to its contours, compelled to participate in the capitalist economy. Capitalist social relations are organised unconsciously 'behind the backs' of social agents so that life under neoliberalism becomes ever more disciplined and compatible with capital's systemic imperatives (Marx [1867] 1977, 135).

'We are the 99 per cent'

Chomsky (2012, 54) saw Occupy as a long-awaited (North American) response to neoliberalism:

> [Occupy] should be regarded as … the first major public response …to about thirty years of a really quite bitter class war that has led to social, economic and political arrangements in which the system of democracy has been shredded …

The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City, formulated by the New York City General Assembly (NYCGA), the Assembly of Occupy Wall Street, announced that Occupy comes 'at a time when corporations … place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality', a time when capital dictates how power is exercised (NYCGA 2011a). Occupy rejects a 'government controlled by monied interests' and the 'rampant criminality' of corporations and Wall Street in destroying the environment and directing the way in which the government functions (OccupyWallStreet 2011a). Occupy is an 'international people's movement fighting for economic justice … [the] 99% trying to wrestle control of government' from the 'hands of the 1%' (OccupyWallStreet 2011b).

Occupy rejects the basic notion, central to the spread of neoliberalism, that economic and social policy that works in the interests of capital ultimately works in the interests of humanity. The movement's famous expression, 'we are the 99 per cent', reflects both Occupy's rejection of the ideological legitimations of neoliberalism, and its assertion of the interests of the majority in opposition to the social dominance of capital. The expression politicises a statistic that exemplifies how capitalism is reliant and constructed upon mass inequality and exploitation:

> We are the 99 percent. We are getting kicked out of our homes. We are forced to choose between groceries and rent … We are suffering from environmental pollution. We are working long hours for little pay and no rights, if we're working at all. We are getting nothing while the 1 percent is getting everything. We are the 99 percent. (We are the 99 Percent 2011)

In declaring 'we are the 99 per cent', Occupy asserts a capacity to speak for the collective and recognises the fundamental disjuncture between the monied power elite (the 1 per cent), who use their power and wealth to control decision-making and the character of social life, and the 'we' (the 99 per cent), the majority who live at the dictates of money and power.

The phrase 'we are the 99 per cent' also transcends individualist liberal ontology. It negates the differences – individuated and partial – that fragment and polarise the majority and obscure the fundamental reality of exploitation, alienation, oppression and marginalisation experienced under capitalism. As Dean (2011, 88) argued, '[a]gainst capital's constant attempts to pulverise and decompose the collective people, the claim of the 99% responds with the force of a belonging that not only cannot be erased, but that capital's own methods of accounting produce'. 'We are the 99 per cent' subjectivises the wealth disparity between the 1 per cent and the alienated, exploited majority. The disparity between the power elite and the overwhelming majority becomes a vehicle for the assertion of the interests of the majority in transforming the existing order and creating a 'new socio-political and economic alternative that offers greater possibility of equality' (NYCGA 2011c). Occupy thus seeks the creation of an 'open, participatory and horizontally

organized process' that builds the movement's capacity to constitute itself as an autonomous collective force 'within and against the constant crises of our times' (NYCGA 2011e).

Anarchism and an Anarchical Praxis

In the popular imagination, anarchism is typically associated with chaos. Various self-appointed anarchists have affirmed such associations (see Bey 2003). At times, anarchists have advocated violence in the form of propaganda of the deed (Fleming 1988, 156–69) or bloody revolution (Bakunin 1972) as instrumental in achieving liberation. Nonetheless, affirmation of violence for its own sake constitutes a minority position in the anarchist tradition.

Anarchism is a sophisticated ideology premised on opposition to externally imposed hierarchy. Central to anarchism is the primacy of the individual, who is seen to possess intrinsic moral worth, forming the existential core of anarchism as the teleological pursuit of individual freedom. This view is expressed most clearly by Mikhail Bakunin ([1871] 2008, 76), a Russian anarchist who considered himself a 'fanatical lover of liberty', claiming it to be the 'unique condition under which intelligence, dignity and human happiness can develop and grow'. This conception of liberty, however, differs from the conception central to bourgeois liberalism, that is, a 'formal liberty which is dispensed, measured out and regulated by the State … a perennial lie that represents nothing, but the privilege of a few, based upon the servitude of the remainder' (Bakunin [1871] 2008, 76). According to anarchist thought, all forms of coercive imposition from without violate individual liberty. As Chomsky (1970, xi) identified, the central notions of anarchism grew out of the Enlightenment. Their roots are found in Rousseau's ([1755] 1984) *Discourse on Inequality*, von Humboldt's ([1854] 1969) *The Limits of State Action* and Kant's (1996, 429) formulation that one should 'act in such a way' as to 'always treat humanity … never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end'. These works share an insistence that freedom cannot be legitimately withheld from without and that arbitrary authority should be dismantled if found to lack justification.

Anarchists regard the state as the primary perpetrator of coercion and the most egregious example of externally imposed hierarchy. Government is seen as the operationalisation of state power. Consequently, anarchism is anti-state and anti-government. As Proudhon ([1851] 2004, 294) argued:

> To be governed is to be … spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right nor the wisdom nor the virtue to do so. To be governed is to be… repressed, fined, vilified, harassed, hunted down, abused, clubbed, disarmed, bound, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed … That is government; that is its justice; that is its morality.

The state institutionalises domination, constituting 'the greatest hindrance to the birth of a society based on equality and liberty, as well as the historic means designed to prevent this blossoming' (Kropotkin [1897] 1997, 1).

Anarchism, Socialism and Capitalism

Engels ([1872] 2001, 75), acknowledging this rejection of the state, speciously asked why anarchists 'confine themselves to crying out against the political authority of the state' while ignoring the principal source of tyranny: capitalism. Contrary to this persistent characterisation (see also Draper 1970), the anarchist objection to externally imposed hierarchy entails more than mere opposition to the state. It demands a rejection of arbitrary and coercive social relations in all forms. Indeed, there are consistencies between the anarchist denunciation of externally imposed hierarchy and Marx's (1956, 159–60) discussion of alienation insofar as both proclaim a vision of society in which coercive social relations are replaced by the free formation of social bonds.

Anarcho-capitalists and libertarians of the right have, in recent intellectual history, asserted the non-negotiability of property rights, as well as the view that the market can actualise freedom (see Nozick 1974). Yet, anarchism, particularly in its social strands, has also traditionally denounced capitalism as conducive to exploitation, alienation and anomie. The competitive bourgeois egoism engendered by capitalism constantly threatens social atomism and fragmentation, and the imposition of hierarchy fundamental to capitalist social relations constitutes a form of arbitrary domination (see Bookchin 2004, 161–62). Compelling workers to sell their labour power on the market, capitalism engenders hierarchy by ensuring concentrated, private control over the means of production, and hence fundamental control of the terms of employment and material income of the majority. In addition, capitalism largely precludes other social forms by forcing the worker into the realm of market relations.

According to social anarchists, capitalist social relations are inherently oppressive and exploitative. This view culminates in Proudhon's ([1840] 2007) famous declaration that 'property is theft!', promoting hierarchy and domination. For anarchists, the state is complicit in this insofar as it enforces laws, maintains systemic stability and panders to the interests of capital. Capitalism is ultimately supported by the violence of the state. Even Hayek ([1944] 1994, 45), the libertarian champion of unregulated capitalism, conceded that 'in no [market] system that could be rationally defended would the state just do nothing'. The state plays a significant role in maintaining the status quo.

As Rocker (1938, 16) claimed, anarchism is 'the confluence of the two great currents which … since the French Revolution have found such characteristic expression in the intellectual life of Europe: socialism and liberalism'. Anarchism, in this view, opposes the 'exploitation of man *by* man [*sic*]' characteristic of capitalism (Rocker 1938, 16). Yet, it also opposes 'the domination of man *over* man [*sic*]' (Rocker 1938, 28) endemic to statist formulations of socialism. Anarchism aims at a critical sublation of the two, insisting that socialism possess a libertarian spirit, or it will not be at all (Foner 1977, 81). Therefore, anarchists not only oppose alienated labour in anticipation of a future in which capital is appropriated by the mass of workers, but also argue that this appropriation must be direct rather than managed by ostensibly representative vanguards or hierarchies imposed from outside. For anarchists, emancipation can only be realised by people *liberating themselves* from externally imposed hierarchy.

An Anarchical Praxis

Liberation does not entail a rejection of organisation. Anarchists maintain that in pursuit of anarchical social forms, individuals and communities should simultaneously decide upon and

live (prefigure) social arrangements, rather than having them imposed from without or after a revolutionary moment. This is consistent with the view of various anarchists, including Chomsky (2005, 191–94), Graeber (2004, 7–8) and Rocker (1938), that it would be arrogant and profoundly undemocratic to declare how anarchist social forms should be organised or how they would function. Instead, it is more important to pursue participatory organisational forms and strive for the development of non-hierarchical social structures towards an emancipated future.

Central to anarchism's revolutionary praxis is the conflation of means and ends (Franks 2006, 99). Anarchists hold that the means of struggle and revolution cannot be separated from the ends of a liberated society. As Bookchin (2004, 11) observed, the historical failure of anti-systemic forces has shown that revolutionary processes (the means) cannot be separated from revolutionary goals (the ends). This emphasis on means and ends has shaped anarchism's rejection of the Marxian dictatorship of the proletariat. Anarchists have long warned of the domination promoted by statist forms of socialism, with Bakunin (1972, 329) cautioning that a 'red bureaucracy' would produce a tyranny worse than any yet experienced. This rejection of state socialism is explained by the conviction that an instrument of domination – the state – cannot be used to achieve liberation; that ends cannot be separated from means:

> [The Marxists say] this [proletarian] dictatorship, is a necessary transitional device for achieving the total liberation of the people … freedom, is the goal, and the state, or dictatorship, the means. Thus, for the masses to be liberated they must first be enslaved. (Bakunin [1873] 2005, 179)

In the practical exercise of collective decision-making, anarchists advocate decentralisation to suppress the emergence of hierarchy (Bakunin 1972, [1873] 2005; Bookchin 1991). The construction of an emancipated society is only possible when people are able to participate directly in decision-making processes. This demands that collective decision-making, where necessary, must take the form of participatory practices independent from the state. Decentralisation dissolves centralised units into smaller localities, obviating the need for a centralised state (see Bookchin 1991; Kropotkin [1912] 1992). Anarchists advocate the creation of autonomous, directly democratic social institutions in the realm of civil society, and strengthening those institutions until they exist alongside, and can replace, existing hierarchies. A participatory praxis also entails the grassroots collectivisation of political and economic organisations in order to produce alliances that are able to resist and oppose the power of state and capital.

Anarchism demands that emancipatory struggle should prefigure the liberated society it seeks. The means and ends of political struggle cannot be differentiated, lest the means supplant the ends. Non-hierarchical social structures must be derived from within the revolutionary process; their construction is both the means and ends of this process, necessarily occurring alongside the dissolution of hierarchy and exploitation. This is known as dual power or counter-power and concerns building 'the structure of the new society in the shell of the old' (Industrial Workers of the World 2010) to the point at which the shell can be discarded.

The new anarchist structure would be predicated not on compulsion and violence, but spontaneity and the human impulse towards mutual aid. According to Kropotkin ([1902] 2008, 162–64), the state and capitalism alienate people from one another. They undermine sociable instincts – inherent, Kropotkin ([1902] 2008) thought, to human speciation – and discourage the development of community by mediating social relations through money and the commodity

form, as well as rationalising social relations through bureaucratisation and rules-based control. Kropotkin argued that in the absence of the state and capital, multifarious, non-hierarchical social forms based on mutual aid would spring spontaneously from the needs of the masses.[1] It is not possible to know precisely how such institutions would look or function. In practice, their realisation entails the creation of local citizen assemblies in which the majority of decisions are made, confederalism for decisions requiring large-scale input, and the promotion of self-management rather than economic management that is dictated by capitalist or state bosses (Bookchin 1999, 151–52).

The Organisational Praxis of Occupy and its Anarchist Nature

Inspired by personal revulsion at 'the blatant injustices of our times', Occupy emerged to contest the social and economic vandalism 'perpetuated by the [world's] economic and political elites' (NYCGA 2011c). Targeting the symbolic centre of monopoly capital, Wall Street, the movement sought to highlight the 'corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process', as well as the role of the economic elite in creating 'an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations' (OccupyWallStreet 2011a). The decision to confront this power elite through public occupation found inspiration in antecedent movements such as the Spanish Indignados and the Arab Spring (see OccupyWallStreet 2011a), both of which occupied prominent public spaces in pursuit of emancipatory social change. The success of these movements in confronting the status quo and promoting a new political subjectivity, particularly the occupation of Tahrir Square during the Egyptian Revolution (see Kerton 2012), encouraged *Adbusters (2011)*, a Canadian anti-consumerist publication, to call for aggrieved citizens to 'flood into lower Manhattan' and 'Occupy Wall Street'. *Adbusters (2011)*, asking '[a]re you ready for a Tahrir moment?', urged participants to formulate 'one simple demand' of the US political system through directly democratic processes, hoping to precipitate change such as occurred in Egypt. This strategy, however, was quickly abandoned since it conflicted with the democratic ethos of the movement. Occupy's participatory processes revealed the multiplicity of positions in opposition to the status quo. Reducing the multitude of grievances to one simple demand would have betrayed the democratic foundations of the movement.

Occupy, in constructing participatory and non-hierarchical social forms, pursued a prefigurative politics that anticipates an emancipated society in its own praxis. Simultaneously, this form of politics rejects the legitimacy of existing political institutions, the legal order and the capitalist status quo. As Occupy Wall Street claims, '[t]hrough consensual, non-hierarchical, and participatory self-governance, we are literally laying the framework for a new world by building it here and now' (OccupyWallStreet 2012).

Occupy has been criticised variously as immature or naive due to its refusal to engage with or participate in existing institutions in pursuit of transformative change (see Friedman 2011). This refusal to make demands of existing social institutions, however, indicates Occupy's profoundly anarchical character. Given the movement's aims of direct democracy, democratic praxis and eliminating hierarchy, engagement with either representative institutions or a hierarchical and impenetrable system is antithetical to its principles and transformative goals.

[1] For example, non-hierarchical institutions and relations of mutual aid 'naturally' emerged in reaction to the de facto collapse of the Argentine economy and state in 2001 (see Sitrin 2011, 10).

Occupy pursues a complex form of consensus in the promotion of direct democracy, rejecting representative and hierarchical decision-making. Consensus has a long history in anarchist praxis and finds expression in movements as diverse as the alter-globalisation movement and the Zapatistas of Mexico, who, against neoliberalism and the perceived domination of capital, sought a directly democratic politics independent from and in opposition to the state (Holloway 1998). Advocates of consensus argue that it is intrinsically more democratic than other directly democratic methods because it cultivates radically different forms of social relations within, and in relation to other, movements. Consensus, it is claimed, best offers 'a cooperative model of reaching group unity', and represents an essential step in advancing a culture that values cooperation over competition (Kauffman 2011, 47).

In practice, consensus aims to prevent the development of institutionalised hierarchies and permanent leadership. Rather than voting for or against particular proposals or options, consensus decision-making seeks to function so that groups work on and refine a proposal until all involved find the decision acceptable or at least do not object to it. As the NYCGA (2011b) explained: '[c]onsensus is a creative thinking process: When we vote, we decide between two alternatives. With consensus, we take an issue, hear the range of enthusiasm, ideas and concerns about it, and synthesise a proposal that best serves everybody's vision.' This preoccupation with participatory decision-making is grounded in a desire to circumvent the hazards and prevent the perpetuation of externally imposed hierarchy and, hence, of administrative political power.

Nonetheless, consensus is not without critics, even among the broader libertarian left. As Bookchin (1994) argued, consensus can be undemocratic and promote insidious authoritarianism. In practice, dissenters may be coerced, perhaps through intimidation, into withdrawing from decision-making processes. On a theoretical level, consensus has the potential to silence dissensus. Consensus can produce conformity and groupthink rather than promoting the creative and valuable role of dissent in fostering new ideas and improving old ones through conflict, debate and struggle. Finally, critics argue that consensus, where it allows even minorities of one to block decisions, is fundamentally undemocratic, mutating into a 'Rousseauean "general will" … of intellectual and psychic conformity' (Bookchin 1994).

Consistent with these criticisms, Occupy recognises that consensus can be cumbersome, requiring much effort for continual maintenance. Thus, consensus is reserved for 'important decisions' since '[d]emocracy is not served by trying to get a large group to do a full consensus process on every detail of a meeting – people who have limited time and energy will leave' or, for other reasons, will be unable to contribute, denied the opportunity to participate in decision-making (NYCGA 2011b). Beyond general assemblies, where consensus is pursued as far as is practicable, Occupy organises in 'decentralised, but connected, working groups' (Sitrin 2011, 8). Working groups focus on a multiplicity of concerns, from practical matters such as food and medicine, to considerations of art, women's needs and education. Working groups confederate, that is, though they are autonomous from others, they bring proposals back to the general assembly where necessary so that decisions are made as democratically as possible by those affected.[2]

[2] The new social media played an important facilitating role in spreading the Occupy movement. As Mason (2012, 127) argued, the ability to communicate with and report to others instantaneously through social networks like Twitter, Facebook and Livestream affords contemporary social movements with new possibilities, enabling them to circumvent the mass media as a source of news and information, and encouraging participatory, 'horizontalist' forms of organisation. This was no different for Occupy. The new social media (see Juris 2012) precipitated the rise of the

Occupy's implementation of these participatory structures is compatible with the anarchist principles explored above. Rejecting the distinction between leaders and followers, Occupy has exhibited a sophisticated appreciation of and dedication to the anarchical understanding of the confluence of means and ends. In demanding that participants 'speak with us, not for us' (NYCGA 2011d), Occupy seeks to undermine the hierarchies inherent in representative democracy by consciously conflating, in its own praxis, relations between leaders and the led. Hence, it has adopted participatory decision-making in regular general assemblies.

The movement's commitment to the notion 'speak with us, not for us' places responsibility on participants to involve themselves in decision-making processes rather than relying on leadership figures or vanguards imposing an ideological vision or driving praxis towards predetermined teleological goals. Liberation is thus dependent on participants collectively taking responsibility for transformative social change. Occupy Wall Street's Statement of Autonomy outlines the movement's explicit rejection of hierarchical praxiological forms. It declares that: 'Occupy … is party-less, leaderless, by the people and for the people', urging participants to question the 'institutional frameworks of work and hierarchy' of the existing social order and to replace them with directly democratic, libertarian social forms (NYCGA 2011d). Conforming with anarchist conceptions of political power, Occupy does not seek to engage with the state or make demands of it in pursuit of social transformation. As Graeber (2011) observed, the movement's broader refusal to issue concrete demands developed from the idea that 'issuing demands means recognising the legitimacy … of those of whom the demands are made'. Consequently, Occupy rejects participation in existing electoral processes and the formation of coalitions with political parties to capture state power. As Occupy Wall Street explains, though organisations are 'welcome to support the movement', Occupy 'is not and never has been affiliated with any established political party, candidate or organization, our only affiliation is with the people' (NYCGA 2011d).

Instead of bargaining with the state for piecemeal reform that subsequently legitimises the status quo, Occupy sought the development of institutions based on counter-power, institutions that embody and prefigure an emancipated society. Occupy encampments worldwide sought to move beyond the mere protestation of existing inequities and social hierarchies, instead becoming experimental spaces for the development of living democratic institutions. Directly democratic general assemblies, though significant, constitute only a part of this. In order to meet the needs of subsistence, Occupy encampments adopted mutualistic organisational practices. At encampments worldwide, cooperative libraries, healthcare clinics, media centres, childcare centres and collective kitchens, among other institutions, developed, operating on anarchical principles of collective self-organisation and mutualism (see Pickerill and Krinsky 2012, 283). Furthermore, these mutualistic practices were conducted through methods of production and exchange that rejected and attempted to transcend capitalistic hierarchies of property ownership and wage slavery. These practices aimed to develop an 'economy of care, a network of mutual aid' (Penny 2012, 27). Encampments effectively became prefigurative political alternatives to the status quo in which participants engaged in genuine attempts to build the institutions of a liberated society in the shell of the old. Such practices are consistent with anarchist visions of self-management, reciprocity and mutualism. Rather than make demands of an obdurate system, Occupy hopes to develop new social structures in order to create public spaces that are as open, participatory and

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movement and broadened opportunities for participation. Substantial analysis of the role of social media in both the rise and practice of Occupy demands more research than is possible here.

democratic as possible so that ‘if there are enough of us, we may one day only make demands of ourselves’ (Sitrin 2011, 8).

Conclusion

This article has identified significant consistencies between the core principles and practices of anarchism and the praxis of the Occupy movement. Occupy rejects labels in explicating the movement’s means and ends, but analysis of Occupy’s formative ideas, and their practical application in its politics, reveals the fundamentally anarchical character of the movement, even if this conception of anarchism differs substantially from the conception relied upon by critics. Though Occupy embraces anarchical ideas, it has not adopted anarchism as a term to describe its politics. This is consistent with both Occupy’s persistent rejection of labels and recent scholarship on anarchism that distinguishes between ideologically motivated anarchists and political actors who are influenced by anarchist values and practices (see Curran and Gibson 2013; Epstein 2001).

Occupy refuses to formulate a predetermined program for social change or make reformist demands of the status quo. This is not indicative of incoherence or lack of ideological and organisational direction, but rather authenticates Occupy’s significant commitment to anarchist principles and the pursuit of direct democracy. If Occupy seeks the development of a directly democratic praxis and democratic, non-hierarchical social relations, then predetermined ends or engagement with a hierarchical and undemocratic system is antithetical to the movement’s foundational principles. Occupy strives to develop open, participatory structures, hoping to prefigure a genuinely emancipated society. It endeavours to create democratic public spaces so that in the future, the collective polis can truly determine how social life functions.

The state has demolished encampments worldwide,[3] but Occupy’s impact reverberates. The movement’s adoption of anarchical principles, expressed particularly in its pursuit of direct democracy and refusal to engage with state-capitalist institutions, has been successful in confronting and delegitimising the status quo. The movement has revealed the hollowness of the (state-capitalist) system’s claims of democracy, demonstrating that it is dominated by a capitalist power elite, the 1 per cent. Furthermore, Occupy’s now famous phrase ‘we are the 99 per cent’ has subjectivised wealth disparities, injustice and inequality under capitalism, fostering opposition to the dominance of the 1 per cent. The phrase has also been crucial in attempts to renew a critical public, encouraging public reflection on topics long marginalised, such as economic injustice and inequality, and the social and political domination of capital (see Pickerill and Krinsky 2012, 280–83). Though this article has been unable to explore it here, the (re-)emergence of a critical public in tandem with the rise of Occupy may be a worthwhile area for future inquiry. Above all, however, Occupy has shown those suffering due to neoliberalism and the injustices it generates that another world is possible. The rise of Occupy has given hope that a new society is possible based on opposition to hierarchy and on principles of direct democracy, liberty and equality, and that such a society is immanent within existing society. The struggle for emancipation through an anarchical politics holds the promise of developing a different understanding of the social world and new prospects for its reorganisation.

[3] For instance, in a 24-hour period, US municipal authorities, including those in Denver, Salt Lake, Portland, Oakland and New York, disbanded Occupy encampments (see Deprez and Vekshin 2011).

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