

# Appendix. Case Study in Networked Resistance: From Wikileaks to Occupy—and Beyond

## Introduction: On the Post-1994 Wave of Horizontal Movements

David Graeber, an anarchist who played a major part in the formation of the Occupy movement, puts the networked movements of the 1990s and 2000s in context:

In recent years we have seen a kind of continual series of tiny '68s.... After the Zapatista world revolution—they called it the Fourth World War—began in '94, such mini-'68s began happening so thick and fast the process almost seemed to have become institutionalized: Seattle, Genoa, Cancun, Quebec, Hong Kong... And insofar as it was indeed institutionalized, by global networks the Zapatistas had helped set up, it was on the basis of a kind of small-a anarchism based on principles of decentralized direct democracy and direct action. The prospect of facing a genuine global democratic movement seems to have so frightened the US authorities, in particular, that they went into veritable panic mode. There is of course a traditional antidote to the threat of mass mobilization from below. You start a war. It doesn't really matter who the war is against. The point is just to have one; preferably, on as wide a scale as possible. In this case the US government had the extraordinary advantage of a genuine pretext – a ragtag crew of hitherto largely ineffective right-wing Islamists who, for once in history, had attempted a wildly ambitious terrorist scheme and actually pulled it off. Rather than simply track down those responsible, the US began throwing billions of dollars of armament at anything in sight. Ten years later, the resulting paroxysm of imperial overstretch appears to have undermined the very basis of the American Empire. What we are now witnessing is the process of that empire's collapse.<sup>1</sup>

Immanuel Wallerstein, similarly, calls the 1994 EZLN uprising “the beginning of the counteroffensive of the world left against the relatively short-lived successes of the world right between the 1970s and 1994.... What the Zapatistas did was to remind them (and the world left) that there was indeed an alternative....” The uprising “paved the way to the successful protests at Seattle in 1999 and then elsewhere....”<sup>2</sup>

The rise of networked, horizontal resistance movements has given rise to a growing dichotomy between the old-line, verticalist Institutional Left and the new autonomous Left. As described by Cristina Flesher Fominaya,

[t]he classic organizational model of the Institutional Left is *representative*, with vertical structures..., decision-making through a voting system or through negotiations between representatives, and a clear division of labour....

...The Institutional Left model defends the transformation of society through its institutions, either by controlling them or by influencing them....

The autonomous model, for its part rejects representative democracy and majority rule; instead, it defends a participatory model, based on direct democracy and self-governance, with horizontal (non-hierarchical structures, decision-making through consensus....

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1 David Graeber, "Situating Occupy Lessons From the Revolutionary Past," InterActivist Info Exchange, December 4, 2011 <<http://interactivist.autonomedia.org/node/36685>>.

2 Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Neo-Zapatistas: Twenty Years After," *Immanuel Wallerstein*, May 1, 2014 <<http://www.iwallerstein.com/neozapatistas-twenty-years/>>.

The network form of organization and communication allows for the integration and interaction of multiple issues and identities.... The networks are 'biodegradable', dissolving and regenerating into new forms of organization and action....<sup>3</sup>

The horizontal movements of the last few decades differ from the revolutionary movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, among other ways, in that the methods of struggle are becoming more and more prefigurative—in Marina Sitrin's words, movements

that are creating the future in their present social relationships. Unlike past movements, social change isn't deferred to a later date by demanding reform from the state, or by taking state power and eventually, instituting these reforms.... [T]heir strategy for the creation of a new society is not grounded in either state dependency or the taking of power to create another state. Their intention is, to borrow John Holloway's phrase, to change the world without taking power.<sup>4</sup>

As Molly Sauter says of DDoS attacks in particular, one of the functions of prefigurative activity is constitutive. To the extent that the networked resistance movements of the past twenty years are prefigurative, their mode of organization is as important for the ways it creates a sense of subjective identity and habitual ways of doing things that prefigure the successor society—the ways it constitutes the successor society as a self-conscious force—as for the influence it has on the institutions of the existing society. Sauter, borrowing a James Scott quote on "hidden transcripts" from *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, writes that DDoS attacks create a common medium in which participants "recognize the full extent to which their claims, their dreams, their anger is shared by other subordinates with whom they have not been in direct touch."<sup>5</sup>

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in an extended passage, explain that the purpose of today's movements is not to the conquest of power but exodus from it:

We should note... that some of the basic traditional models of political activism, class struggle, and revolutionary organization have today become outdated and useless.... [T]he more important cause of their demise is the transformation of the multitude itself. The current global recomposition of social classes, the hegemony of immaterial labor, and the forms of decision-making based on network structures all radically change the conditions of any revolutionary process. The traditional modern conception of insurrection, for example, which was defined primarily in the numerous episodes from the Paris Commune to the October Revolution, was characterized by a movement from the insurrectional activity of the masses to the creation of political vanguards, from civil war to the building of a revolutionary government, from the construction of organizations of counterpower to the conquest of state power, and from opening the constituent process to establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such sequences of revolutionary activity are unimaginable today, and instead the experience of insurrection is being re-discovered, so to speak, in the flesh of the multitude.... [R]esistance, exodus, the emptying out of the enemy's power, and the multitude's construction of a new society are one and the same process.<sup>6</sup>

After 1968, the year in which a long cycle of struggles culminated in both the dominant and subordinated parts of the world, the form of resistance and liberation movements began to change radically—a change that corresponded with the changes in the labor force and the forms of social production. We can recognize this shift first of all in the transformation of the nature of guerrilla warfare. The most obvious change was that guerrilla movements began to shift from the countryside to the city, from open spaces to closed ones. The techniques of guerrilla warfare began to be adapted to the new conditions of

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3 Cristina Flesher Fominaya, *Social Movements and Globalization: How Protests, Occupations and Uprisings are Changing the World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 67, 69.

4 Marina Sitrin, *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006), p. 4.

5 Molly Sauter, *The Coming Swarm: DDoS Actions, Hacktivism, and Civil Disobedience on the Internet* (New York, London, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 72.

6 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 68-69.

post-Fordist production, in line with information systems and network structures. Finally as guerrilla warfare increasingly adopted the characteristics of biopolitical production and spread throughout the entire fabric of society, it more directly posed as its goal the production of subjectivity—economic and cultural subjectivity, both material and immaterial. It was not just a matter of “winning hearts and minds,” in other words, but rather of creating new hearts and minds through the construction of new circuits of communication, new forms of social collaboration, and new modes of interaction. In this process we can discern a tendency toward moving beyond the modern guerrilla model toward more democratic network forms of organization....

The real transformation of guerrilla movements during this period...has little to do with urban or rural terrain.... The small mobile units and flexible structures of post-Fordist production correspond to a certain degree to the polycentric guerrilla model, but the guerrilla model is immediately transformed by the technologies of post-Fordism. The networks of information, communication, and cooperation—the primary axes of post-Fordist production—begin to define the new guerrilla movements. Not only do the movements employ technologies such as the Internet as organizing tools, they also begin to adapt these technologies as models for their own organizational structures.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike the old revolutionary movements, the new horizontal movements aren't fighting to *capture* anything. The following description refers specifically to Occupy, but applies more generally to all the horizontalist movements of the past two decades:

What specific difference” – so goes the familiar litany – “has the Occupy movement made?” Our response to such criticism is that Occupy is not to be assessed strictly in terms of... its effect upon government policy. It is to be assessed, firstly, in terms of the alternative public space that it creates and the mutual recognition between individuals that... it brings into existence....

One of the most telling formulations regarding the Occupy movement comes from Yotam Marom, when he writes that, ‘Occupation in general, as a tactic, is a really brilliant form of dual-power struggle because the occupation is both a home where we get to practice the alternative – by practicing a participatory democracy, by having our radical libraries, by having a medical tent where anybody can get treatment, that kind of thing on a small level – and it’s also a staging ground for struggle outwards’.<sup>8</sup>

The EZLN (the Zapatista National Liberation Army) was perhaps the first movement with both feet—or at least one and a half—firmly planted in the networked world.

The Zapatistas, which were born and primarily remain a peasant and indigenous movement, use the Internet and communications technologies not only as a means of distributing their communiqués to the outside world but also... as a structural element inside their organization.... Communication is central to the Zapatistas' notion of revolution, and they continually emphasize the need to create horizontal network organizations rather than vertical centralized structures.

Despite some hat tipping to the old guerrilla army model in their nomenclature, “their goal has never been to defeat the state and claim sovereign authority but rather to change the world without taking power.”<sup>9</sup>

To the extent that the EZLN has carried out governance functions in liberated portions of Chiapas, it has done so in a prefigurative manner, including—much like the Black Panthers in Oakland—a robust program of counter-institution building.

Comandante Hortensia went on to explain how over the past two decades, they have constructed their own autonomous government, complete with their own health and education system, based in the in-

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7 *Ibid.* pp. 81-82.

8 Richard Gunn and Adrian Wilding, “Alternative horizons – understanding Occupy’s politics,” Heathwood Press, January 27, 2014 <<http://www.heathwoodpress.com/alternative-horizons-understanding-occupys-politics/>>.

9 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 85.

indigenous traditions of their ancestors. Despite the continual efforts of the "neoliberal bad government" to displace them from their land, the Zapatistas have successfully recuperated thousands of acres of land on which they have constructed communities that are governed "from the bottom up." Community members participate in rotating government positions that operate under the democratic principle of "*mandar obedeciendo*" (commanding by obeying).<sup>10</sup>

And Graeber argues that the cycle of struggles from 1994 to the present had its origins in anarchist praxis.

The very notion of direct action, with its rejection of a politics which appeals to governments to modify their behaviour, in favour of physical intervention against state power in a form that itself prefigures an alternative—all of this emerges directly from the libertarian tradition. Anarchism is the heart of the movement, its soul; the source of most of what's new and hopeful about it.

It was an international network called People's Global Action, for example, that put out... the original call for protest against the 1999 WTO meetings in Seattle. And PGA in turn owes its origins to the famous International Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, which took place knee-deep in the jungle mud of rainy-season Chiapas, in August 1996.... People from over 50 countries came streaming into the Zapatista-held village of La Realidad. The vision for an 'intercontinental network of resistance' was laid out in the Second Declaration of La Realidad: 'We declare that we will make a collective network of all our particular struggles and resistances, an intercontinental network of resistance against neoliberalism, an intercontinental network of resistance for humanity'....

This, the Declaration made clear, was 'not an organizing structure; it has no central head or decision maker; it has no central command or hierarchies. We are the network, all of us who resist.'<sup>11</sup>

Sitrin, in the Introduction to her book of the same name, says *horizontalidad* was a word coined to reflect the principles of the new social movements in Argentina, "a break with vertical ways of organizing and relating" based on "democratic communication on a level plane." Movements based on "horizontalism" are

prefigurative revolutionary movements; movements, that create the future in the present. These new movements are not creating party platforms or programs....

The autonomous social movements in Argentina are one part of this global phenomenon. Within Argentina, they are also a "movement of movements." They are working class people taking over factories and running them collectively. They are the urban middle class, many recently declassed, working to meet their needs in solidarity with those around them. They are the unemployed, like so many unemployed around the globe, facing the prospect of never finding regular work, yet collectively finding ways to survive and become self-sufficient, using mutual-aid and love. They are autonomous indigenous communities struggling to liberate stolen land.

In Argentina, these active movements are now communicating, assisting, and learning from one another, and thus constructing new types of networks that reject the hierarchical template bequeathed to them by established politics.<sup>12</sup>

And like many of the prefigurative movements that came after it (notably the alternative economy experiments arising out of Syntagma in Greece), Argentine horizontalism included lots of grass-roots projects in building a counter-economy to support some degree of secession and pursuit of livelihoods independent of the capitalist economy. "Projects range from bakeries and organic gardens, to alternative medicine clinics,

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10 Andalusia Knoll and Itandehui Reyes, "From Fire to Autonomy: Zapatistas, 20 Years of Walking Slowly," *Truthout*, January 25, 2014 <<http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/21427-from-fire-to-autonomy-zapatistas-20-years-of-walking-slowly>>.

11 Graeber, "The New Anarchists," *New Left Review* 13 (January-February 2002) <<http://newleftreview.org/II/13/david-graeber-the-new-anarchists>>.

12 Sitrin, *Horizontalism*, pp. 2-3.

education and schools, to raising animals and taking over land for housing and food production. Many of the hundreds of recuperated factories and other workplaces formed horizontal linkages to barter their respective outputs with one another (for example, a cooperative clinic providing free healthcare to printing factory workers in return for free printing of all their material).<sup>13</sup> As my friend Katherine Gallagher put it:

We won't be encircled by "them," but woven through their antiquated structures, impossible to quarantine off and finish. I'm not a pacifist. I'm not at all against defensive violence. That's a separate question to me of overthrow. But to oversimplify, when it comes to violence, I want it to be the last stand of a disintegrating order against an emerging order that has already done much of the hard work of building its ideals/structures. Not violent revolutionaries sure that their society will be viable, ready to build it, but a society defending itself against masters that no longer rule it. Build the society and defend it, don't go forth with the guns and attempt to bring anarchy about in the rubble. I think technology is increasingly putting the possibility of meaningful resistance and worker independence within the realm of a meaningful future. So much of the means of our oppression is now more susceptible to being duplicated on a human scale....

And I think we should be working on how we plan to create a parallel industry that is not held only by those few. More and more the means to keep that industry held only by the few are held in the realm of patent law. It is no longer true that the few own the "lathe" so to speak, nearly as much as they own the patent to it. So we truly could achieve more by creating real alternative manufacture than seizing that built. Yes, there will be protective violence, but it's not as true as it was in the past that there is real necessary means of production in the hands of the few. What they control more now is access to the methods of production and try to prevent those methods being used outside of their watch. Again, I'm not saying that the "last days" of the state won't be marked by violence. But I am saying we now have real tactical options beyond confronting them directly until they come to us.<sup>14</sup>

There's been a fundamental shift, in the post-1994 wave of movements, from what Gramsci called a "war of maneuver" (contesting control of the "commanding heights" of political and economic institutions) to a "war of position" within civil society. But there's a major difference even with Gramsci's formulation. Gramsci intended the war of position only to be a Long March undertaken as a prelude, a period of preparation, for eventually staging a final war of maneuver and storming the bastions of political control. The new movements, rather, see the modes of production and social organization facilitated by new technologies as opening the possibility for seceding and building a new society within the interstices of the old one, without ever attempting a seizure of power.

In modern networked organizations—perhaps better called networked *counter-societies*—the attacks and resistance against the enemy are primarily aimed at defending the internal space for self-organization against attempts at suppression.

And as suggested by all the commentators who refer to a post-1994 wave of global struggle, such networked struggles tend to reproduce themselves from one geographical location to another. Note that the following extended passage was written after the Seattle movement, but before the Arab Spring:

Extensively, the common is mobilized in communication from one local struggle to another. Traditionally... the geographical expansion of movements takes the form of an *international cycle of struggles* in which revolts spread from one local context to another like a contagious disease through the communication of common practices and desires.... In each of these cycles of struggles, the common that is mobilized extensively and communicates across the globe is not only the commonly recognized enemy—

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13 *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 15.

14 Katherine Gallagher (Tweeting as @zhinxy), July 2012. Paragraph divisions mine.

such as slavery, industrial capital, or colonial regimes—but also common methods of combat, common ways of living, and common desires for a better world....

A new international cycle finally emerged around the issues of globalization in the late 1990s. The coming-out party of the new cycle of struggles were the protests at the WTO summit in Seattle in 1999.... Suddenly the riots against IMF austerity programs in one country, protests against a World Bank project in another, and demonstrations against NAFTA in a third were all revealed to be elements of a common cycle of struggles. The cycle of struggles has been consolidated in a certain sense at the annual meetings of the World Social Forum and the various regional social forums. At each of these social forums activists, NGOs, and intellectuals meet to exchange views on the problems of the present form of globalization and the possibilities for an alternative form. Each social forum also functions as a celebration of the commonality that extends throughout the various movements and revolts across the globe that form this cycle.... We should emphasize, once again, that what the forces mobilized in this new global cycle have is not just a common enemy—whether it be called neoliberalism, U.S. hegemony, or global Empire—but also common practices, languages, conduct, habits, forms of life, and desires for a better future. The cycle, in other words, is not only reactive but also active and creative....

The global mobilization of the common in this new cycle of struggle does not negate or even overshadow the local nature or singularity of each struggle. The communication with other struggles, in fact, reinforces the power and augments the wealth of each single one....

The global cycle of struggles develops in the form of distributed network. Each local struggle functions as a node that communicates with all the other nodes without any hub or center of intelligence. Each struggle remains singular and tied to its local conditions but at the same time is immersed in the common web. This form of organization is the most fully realized example we have of the multitude.<sup>15</sup>

S. Tormey's description of the global movement against the Iraq war in early 2003 sounds a lot like the networked movements that have arisen since:

What they (virtual networks) fostered was a form of interaction that preserved the autonomy and integrity of the constituent parts. No group was subject to the will of another. No group had to recognize one as a leading group or as the 'vanguard' of the movement. There was no need for bureaucracy, permanent staffs, officials, 'leadership', or even premises, beyond somewhere to house a server. Here was a form of interaction that denied the need for the very institutional and logistical framework that had for a century defined the terms and conditions of political activism.<sup>16</sup>

Writing in retrospect about the post-Seattle anti-globalization movement in 2005, Michel Bauwens anticipated many of the most remarked-on features of the Arab Spring and Occupy:

A key underlying philosophy of the movement is the paradigm of non-representationality. In classic modern political ideology, participating members elect representatives, and delegate their authority to them. Decisions taken by councils of such representatives then can take binding decisions, and are allowed to speak 'for the movement'. But such a feature is totally absent from the alterglobalisation movement. No one... can speak for anyone else, though they can speak in their own name. Another distinguishing feature, is that we can no longer speak of 'permanent organizations'. While unions, political movements, and international environmental and human rights NGO's do participate, and have an important role, the movement innovates by mobilizing many unaffiliated individuals, as well as all kinds of temporary ad hoc groups created within or without the internet....

A commonly heard criticism is that 'they have no alternative', but this in fact reflects their new approach to politics. The main demand is not for specifics, though that can occasionally be part of a consensus platform (such as 'abandoning the debt for developing countries'), more importantly is the un-

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15 Negri and Hardt, *Multitude*, pp. 213-217.

16 S. Tormey, *Anti-Capitalism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2004) p. 65, in Athina Karatzogianni, "The Impact of the Internet during the Iraq war on the peace movement, war coverage and war-related cyberattacks," *Cultural Technology and Policy Journal* vol. 4 no. 1 (2004) <[https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cdrg/Downloads/iraq\\_war.pdf](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cdrg/Downloads/iraq_war.pdf)> p. 5.

derlying philosophy, that ‘another world is possible’, but that what is most important is not asking for specific alternative, but rather for an open process of world governance that is not governed by the power politics and private interests of the elite, but determined by all the people in an autonomous fashion that recognized the wide diversity of desired futures.<sup>17</sup>

The networked resistance movements of recent years have been governed by the same stigmergic principles of organization we considered in Chapter One. As W. Lance Bennett, Alexandra Segerberg and Shawn Walker note, peer production includes not only open-source software and Wikipedia but

collaborative activist projects such as the network of Independent Media Centers (IMCs) of the global justice movement. Such projects may involve vast numbers of dispersed and differently engaged individuals that come together to create a common good – be it protest or software – around which further collective action will revolve. Despite the open-ended nature of such participation, peer-produced projects involve self-motivated production and self-organization: participants ideally contribute to the project in modular and granular ways and help shape the conditions of the action so that the projects build on self-selection and decentralization rather than coercion and hierarchically assigned tasks.<sup>18</sup>

## I. Wikileaks

Although Wikileaks first appeared on the mainstream media radar in 2010 with the release of the “Collateral Murder” video and the State Department classified document dump, it had been around four years before that. Yochai Benkler summarizes its activities starting with its founding in 2006.

In December of 2006 the site released a copy of a decision by the rebel leader in Somalia to assassinate Somali government officials. In August of 2007, it released another document identifying corruption by Kenyan leader Daniel Arap Moi. November of 2007 was the first time that Wikileaks published information relating to the U.S.: a copy of Standard Operating Procedures for Camp Delta, exposing a formal source outlining the details of how the Guantanamo Bay detention camp was run. In 2008 Wikileaks released a wide range of activities relating to illegal activities of public and private bodies. On the private side, these included a Swiss Bank's Cayman Islands account; internal documents of the Church of Scientology, and Apple's iPhone application developer contract, which had included an agreement not to discuss the restrictive terms. On the public side, it included U.S. military rules of engagement in Iraq permitting cross-border pursuit of former members of Saddam Hussein's government across the border into Iran and Syria, an early draft of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), emails from Sarah Palin's Yahoo accounts while she was candidate for Vice President, and a membership list of the far right British National Party. Most prominently, Wikileaks released documents pertaining to extra-judicial killings and disappearances in Kenya, for which it won Amnesty International's New Media award in 2009. Wikileaks also received the Freedom of Expression Award from the British magazine, Index of Censorship in the category of new media. Its activity increased in 2009. The pattern of releasing information relating to a range of very different countries, and of potential corruption, malfeasance, or ineptitude continued, including oil related corruption in Peru, banking abuses in Iceland, and a nuclear accident in Iran. Most prominent that year was Wikileaks's release of copies of e-mail correspondence between climate scientists, which was the basis of what right wing U.S. media tried to turn into “Climategate.”<sup>19</sup>

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17 Michel Bauwens, “P2P and Human Evolution: Peer to peer as the premise of a new mode of civilization ” (The essay is an emanation of the Foundation for P2P Alternative, Draft 1.1, March 1, 2005 ), p. 33.

18 W. Lance Bennett, Alexandra Segerberg and Shawn Walker, “Organization in the crowd: peer production in large-scale networked protests,” *Information, Communication & Society*, 17:2 (2014), p. 6.

19 Yochai Benkler, “A Free Irresponsible Press: Wikileaks and the Battle Over the Soul of the Networked Fourth Estate” (Working Draft, 2011) <[http://benkler.org/Benkler\\_Wikileaks\\_current.pdf](http://benkler.org/Benkler_Wikileaks_current.pdf)> pp. 4-5.

Wikileaks first came to significant attention in American national security circles in 2007. An attempt by a Swiss bank to suppress information on the hosting site resulted in public relations disaster.

**...[I]nstead of the information disappearing, it rocketed through cyberspace,** landing on other Web sites and Wikileaks' own "mirror" sites outside the U.S...<sup>20</sup>

A 2008 Pentagon report in the aftermath (leaked by Wikileaks in March 2010) expressed considerable alarm over the site's potential for harming U.S. "national security interests."<sup>21</sup>

Although it figured in the press in 2010 primarily insofar as it exposed the secrets of the American national security state, Wikileaks started out as a whistleblowing site oriented at least as much toward corporate leaks. And according to a late 2010 interview with *Forbes* magazine, Wikileaks founder Julian Assange stated that "about fifty percent" of all documents uploaded to the site came from private sector institutions.

The Wikileaks Cables leaked in 2010 included embarrassing revelations about the process by which the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) was negotiated.<sup>22</sup> In August 2011, Wikileaks released another 23,000 diplomatic cables, including documents on American construction companies receiving billions of dollars in contracts thanks to their close political relations with the Libyan government.<sup>23</sup>

And of course the 2010 leaks caused all hell to break out from official circles. Under pressure from the U.S. government, Wikileaks was refused web-hosting and domain services<sup>24</sup>, and a number of major banks and online payment services put Wikileaks under blockade and refused to transfer donations to the site.<sup>25</sup>

As Benkler observes, two things are notable about the concerted attack on Wikileaks in 2010. First, its failure. And second, its motivation as a panicked official response to the novel nature of a Networked Fourth Estate operating outside the incentive system of the "responsible" press.

The response also highlights the challenges that a radically decentralized global networked public sphere poses for those systems of control that developed in the second half of the twentieth century to tame the fourth estate, to make the press not only "free," but also "responsible." Doing so allows us to understand that the threat represented by Wikileaks was not any single cable, but the fraying of the relatively loyal and safe relationship between the United States Government and its watchdog.<sup>26</sup>

Wikileaks also released a series of "insurance" files, the most recent of them in August 2013 a 400 GB trove of documents, that was mirrored by supporters around the world, to be decrypted on a "dead man switch" basis.<sup>27</sup>

The saga over the rape allegations and arrest of Assange has largely overshadowed the significance of Wikileaks as an institution. The debate seems to be polarized between those who equate supporting the victim to considering him a rapist without regard to any procedural justice, and those who dismiss the women's accusations as trumped-up in collusion with the U.S. security state and think feminists should just ignore the issue "for the good of the cause."

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20 "PR disaster, Wikileaks and the Streisand Effect" PRdisasters.com, March 3, 2007 <<http://prdisasters.com/pr-disaster-via-wikileaks-and-the-streisand-effect/>>.

21 Benkler, pp. 5-6.

22 "Wikileaks Cables Shine Light on ACTA History," *La Quadrature du Net*, February 3, 2011 <<http://www.laquadrature.net/en/wikileaks-cables-shine-light-on-acta-history>>.

23 Rob Beschizza, "Wikileaks releases new batch of diplomatic cables," *Boing Boing*, August 23, 2011 <<http://boingboing.net/2011/08/23/wikileaks-releases-new-batch-of-diplomatic-cables.html>>.

24 Benkler, p. 24.

25 "The Banking Blockade," Wikileaks.org. Accessed May 26, 2013 <<http://wikileaks.org/Banking-Blockade>>.

26 Benkler, pp. 15-16.

27 Paul Szoldra, "Wikileaks Just Released A Massive 'Insurance' File That No One Can Open," *Business Insider*, August 17, 2013 <<http://www.businessinsider.com/wikileaks-insurance-file-2013-8>>.

To me the idea that solidarity with victims requires an automatic assumption of guilt upon accusation is abhorrent. But I find myself even more turned off by the dismissive attitude of Assange's supporters, and the growing tendency of Wikileaks' public information efforts to become a 24/7 public relations campaign on Assange's behalf. Even before the rape allegations, Wikileaks showed a disturbing tendency toward being constrained by the Assange personality cult. Whether or not Assange is guilty of rape, his accusers' charges should be judged on their own merit. When one person becomes so vitally important to the success or failure of a cause that the true believers consider it necessary to exempt him from the consequences of his own actions, it's a clear sign the cause is in an unhealthy state of dependence. And whether or not Assange is guilty, the fact that the issue has become such a handicap to the mission of Wikileaks indicates that the project's dependence on Assange is a serious bottleneck and a vulnerable central node.

Wikileaks needs to grow beyond the Assange personality cult, for the same reasons that—as we shall see below—LulzSec needed to grow beyond Sabu. Jemima Khan expressed a similar viewpoint in *The New Statesman*:

WikiLeaks – whose mission statement was “to produce a more just society based upon truth” – has been guilty of the same obfuscation and misinformation as those it sought to expose, while its supporters are expected to follow, unquestioningly, in blinkered, cultish devotion....

It may well be that the serious allegations of sexual assault and rape are not substantiated in court, but I have come to the conclusion that these are all matters for Swedish due process and that Assange is undermining both himself and his own transparency agenda – as well as doing the US department of justice a favour – by making his refusal to answer questions in Sweden into a human rights issue....<sup>28</sup>

Wikileaks needs to eliminate another, physical bottleneck. The file-sharing movement reduced its vulnerability by becoming more and more decentralized, adopting a horizontal P2P architecture, and eventually abandoning its dependence on particular websites and moving to the Cloud. In addition to its vulnerability, Wikileaks is an organizational bottleneck in the sense that the processing of large-scale document dumps like Manning's 2010 State Department cables has been limited by the resources of a small staff around Assange.

One of the projects Aaron Swartz was working on at the time of his death was a secure platform for whistleblowers to safely drop leaked documents.

SecureDrop is an open-source whistleblower support system, originally written by Aaron Swartz and now run by the Freedom of the Press Foundation. The first instance of this system was named StrongBox and is being run by the *New Yorker*. To further add to the naming confusion, Aaron Swartz called the system DeadDrop when he wrote the code.

I participated in a detailed security audit of the StrongBox implementation, along with some great researchers from the University of Washington and Jake Applebaum. The problems we found were largely procedural, and things that the Freedom of the Press Foundation are working to fix.<sup>29</sup>

In October 2013 the project was taken over by the Freedom of the Press Foundation, an offshoot of the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

Freedom of the Press Foundation is not running any instances of SecureDrop. It has about a half dozen major news organization lined up, and will be helping them install their own starting the first week of

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28 “Jemima Khan on Julian Assange: How the Wikileaks founder alienated his allies,” *New Statesman*, February 6, 2013 <<http://www.newstatesman.com/2013/02/jemima-khan-inside-story-how-julian-assange-alienated-his-allies>>.

29 Bruce Schneier, “SecureDrop,” *Schneier on Security*, October 17, 2013 <<https://www.schneier.com/blog/archives/2013/10/securedrop.html>>.

November. So hopefully any would-be whistleblowers will soon have their choice of news organizations to securely communicate with.<sup>30</sup>

## II. The Arab Spring

Perhaps the most important effect of Wikileaks—and the 2010 document dump—was its role in instigating the arc of protests from Tunisia and Tahrir Square, to Libya, to Spain, to Madison, to Greece and Israel, to Occupy Wall Street, and outward back outward to the rest of the world again.

These networked, horizontal movements, and their predecessors kicked off a decade ago by the Seattle anti-WTO demonstrations, are another example of the phenomenon we saw Tom Coates describe: work that once required large institutions, that now can be produced with equal quality in the home. As Pirate Bay co-founder Rick Falkvinge writes:

A Swarm is a new kind of organization, made possible by available and affordable mass communication. Where it used to take hundreds of full-time employees to organize 100,000 people, today that can be done—and is done—by somebody in their spare time from their kitchen.<sup>31</sup>

A swarm is run by the same stigmergic model of cooperation and division of tasks as Eric Raymond's Bazaar:

If you want leadership in a Swarm, you stand up and say “I’m going to do X, because I think it will accomplish Y. Anybody who wants to join me in doing X is more than welcome.” Anybody in the Swarm can stand up and say this, and everybody is encouraged to. This quickly creates an informal but tremendously strong leadership structure where people seek out roles that maximize their impact in furthering the Swarm’s goals—all happening organically without central planning and organization charts.<sup>32</sup>

We argued earlier that networked or stigmergic organizations undergo generational innovations with the speed of replicating yeast, because members are free to innovate on a modular basis and their contributions are immediately free to anyone in the network who wants to adopt them. Falkvinge applies this general rule to the networked protest movements that began in January 2011:

At the bottom line, what sets a Swarm apart from traditional organizations is its blinding speed of operation, its next-to-nothing operating costs, and its large number of very devoted volunteers. Traditional corporations and democratic institutions appear to work at glacial speeds from the inside of a Swarm. That’s also why a Swarm can change the world: it runs in circles around traditional organizations, in terms of quality and quantity of work, as well as in resource efficiency.<sup>33</sup>

The first such movement began in Tunisia, with loose networks of college students outraged by revelations in leaked U.S. State Department cables about the corruption of the Tunisian ruling elites. The immediate cause of the demonstrations was the self-immolation of Mohamed Bousazizi, in protest against the seizure of his unlicensed vegetable cart. By January 14, President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali was driven from power.<sup>34</sup>

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30 *Ibid.*

31 Rick Falkvinge, “Swarmwise: What Is A Swarm?” *Falkvinge on Infopolicy*, August 8, 2011 <<http://falkvinge.net/2011/08/01/swarmwise-what-is-a-swarm/?>>.

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

34 Rania Abouzeid, “Tunisia: How Mohammed Bouazizi Sparked a Revolution,” *Time*, January 21, 2011

The Egyptian uprising likewise started with the martyrdom of Khaled Said.

One day last year, after apparently hacking a police officer's cell phone and lifting a video of officers displaying drugs and stacks of cash, he was arrested and beaten to death. Wael Ghonim, then a 29-year-old Google executive, created a Facebook page called We Are All Khaled Said to memorialize him. It went viral, and in January, Ghonim returned from Dubai to Egypt to help plan a protest set for Jan. 25: a "day of rage" in Tahrir Square.<sup>35</sup>

Steven Colatrella depicts the lessons of Tahrir Square against the background of the previous thirty years. The real Iranian revolution was suppressed by the Ayatollahs. The Reagan administration, between the PATCO strikes and Volker's interest rate hikes, broke the back of the American labor movement. The neoliberals emasculated Solidarity and the ANC. The Tiananmen Square massacre left the Chinese state a free hand for neoliberal policy. The entire global working class has lived under the shadow of these defeats, with the exception of Hugo Chavez's defeat of the U.S.-backed coup attempt in 2002. Tahrir Square undermined this narrative and established a counter-narrative of empowerment.

So, three of the pillars are in danger at once—control of oil, global governance imposition of austerity and neoliberalism in the Third World, and the horror of Tiananmen Square for any working class ready to challenge its fate as cheap labor in the global economy. That is the meaning of Tahrir Square – it is the end of the era of Tiananmen Square that has already begun with the strikes and labor organizing in China itself. It is a threat to the world capitalist order.<sup>36</sup>

Even after the new Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party regime began its own cycle of repression, the Tahrir Square Movement's shadow remained a permanent presence in Egyptian politics. Finally, fed up with the excesses of the new regime, a new protest movement—even bigger than the one of 2011—began on Tahrir Square in Summer 2013 (albeit with more ambiguous results than the previous uprising).

The Egyptian military seized on the second Tahrir Square uprising as an opportunity to remove the Muslim Brotherhood from power, in what amounted to a military coup under cover of reformism. After the demonstrators issued a public demand for Morsi to step down within 24 hours, the army quickly backed them up with a 48-hour ultimatum to “comply with the people's demands.”<sup>37</sup> The military assumed direct power when he resigned in August, with the promise of “free and fair elections” in the future. But they quickly shifted toward counter-revolution and authoritarian consolidation of control, with attacks on protesters and strikers, in much the same way Morsi had.<sup>38</sup>

Jerome Roos characterized the entire revolutionary period of 2011-2013 as a series of attempts by the military to maintain itself as the power behind the government by sacrificing governments to the uprising.

When the people of Egypt initially rose up in January 2011, they rebelled against a deeply entrenched and profoundly repressive military dictatorship that had deprived them of “bread, freedom and social justice” for as long as most people could remember. The main slogan in the first wave of protests unsurprisingly became: **الشعب يريد إسقاط النظام** — the people demand the fall of the regime. Note

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<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2044723,00.html>>.

35 Kurt Andersen, “The Protester—TIME's People Who Mattered in 2011,” *Time*, December 14, 2011

<[http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101745\\_2102132\\_2102373,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101745_2102132_2102373,00.html)>.

36 Steven Colatrella, “From Tiananmen to Tahrir Square,” *Counterpunch*, February 8, 2011 <<http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/02/08/from-tiananmen-to-tahrir-square/>>.

37 Jerome Roos, “Egypt's revolution: between the streets and the army,” *ROAR Magazine*, July 2, 2013

<<http://roarmag.org/2013/07/egypt-morsi-revolution-army-protests/>>.

38 “Tahrir-ICN statement on events in Egypt,” *Tahrir-ICN*, August 15, 2013

<<https://tahriricn.wordpress.com/2013/08/15/tahrir-icn-statement-on-events-in-egypt/>>.

the important point that the Arabic word for “regime” (*nizam*) is perhaps better translated as *system*, which indicates that this is not just about a specific group of privileged people but about a whole set of oppressive social structures. The people demand the downfall of this system.

In this sense, the system’s initial reaction was every bit as brutal as it was predictable: it simply tried to quash the revolt. But when it became self-evident that this approach wasn’t quite working, the true ruling class shifted strategies. The army’s top-brass recognized that to perpetuate its rule, or at least secure its economic interests and privileged political position, it would have to appease the masses. And so the military command, led by Field Marshal Mohamed Tantawi — Mubarak’s long-time Defense Minister and personal confidant, known in ruling circles as “Mubarak’s poodle” — simply turned on their former master and pushed him from power.

This led to the 15-month rule of the SCAF, which was supposed to be a transition period giving way to Egypt’s first democratic elections, but which was marked by continued mass mobilizations to save the revolution from the army’s incessant attempts to stall the revolutionary process and repress the ongoing protests. Belying its own pro-democratic rhetoric, the SCAF brutally cracked down on the protesters, killing hundreds and imprisoning, torturing and maiming thousands. During the second wave of revolt, as hundreds of thousands again amassed in Tahrir Square, the main slogan of the revolutionaries simply became: “down with military rule.”

By early 2012, the SCAF realized that its direct rule over society was badly affecting its carefully crafted mythology as a patriotic institution aligned with the goals of the revolution, potentially endangering its economic interests. At that point, it was happy to just leave politics behind and let some eager civilians take the blame. It was clear, however, that the only social force organized enough to take on such a responsibility was the Muslim Brotherhood. And so the army called elections, knowing full well that the Islamists would win, but recognizing just as well that it was in its own best interests to retreat to the wings and let elected politicians solve their mess. In fact, the army ascertained that the Brotherhood would win the elections, allowing its members to man the polling stations, count the ballots and beat up “troublemakers”.

And yet, even if it successfully managed to change the face of the regime by organizing the drafting of a new constitution and the country’s first “free and fair” elections, the military command never truly left power. Even before Morsi was elected president with 51% of the vote, both the army and the Muslim Brotherhood realized that they would have to make some kind of pact whereby the army would be allowed to preserve its economic empire and its privileged political position, while the Muslim Brotherhood would be allowed to fill the regime’s gaping vacuum of legitimacy by trying to establish an Islamist “cultural hegemony” in order to entrench the system ideologically....

This brings us to the second point: this was not a military coup d’état. At least not in the ordinary sense of the word. After all, even if the Muslim Brotherhood did at times seek to directly confront the military’s political influence, the military’s top command remained one of the dominant political and economic players even after Egypt’s first free and fair elections. It never took over state power because it never truly relinquished it: after burning its fingers on a disastrous year of military rule, it deliberately entered into a coalition with the country’s biggest and oldest organized political force. The moment that force imploded, as a result of its own incompetence and arrogance, the army simply dumped it and replaced it with someone more of their liking — piggybacking off a wave of grassroots protest and some of the largest mobilizations in world history to further entrench its hegemony....

So if this is neither a coup nor a second revolution, then what is it? Perhaps we should see the overthrow of Morsi as the third phase in an ongoing revolutionary process; a wave of rebellion that once again forced the army to make an extremely awkward move it would otherwise not have made. In that sense, it is both an affirmation of people power *and* a simultaneous co-optation of that people power by the constituted powers-that-be. If anything, this is yet another attempt to hijack the revolutionary process: the army already controlled the state, now it controls much of the streets too. After manoeuvring itself into virtually every imaginable position — from the revolution’s ultimate oppressor to its

heroic savior — the military command now seems to be getting away with it. The question is: how much longer?<sup>39</sup>

Social media drastically reduced the transaction costs of aggregating isolated and atomized popular discontent into a coherent movement,

Take Khaled Said, an honest man beaten to death by police he refused to bribe. Egyptians are outraged, but what can they do? Nothing. A Facebook page is created in his memory. Malcolm Gladwell can tell you how irrelevant and inconsequential an act that is.

...Six months later, that Facebook page has accumulated more than half a million followers, and has become an online gathering place for activists....

The great paradox of tyranny is that a very small group of people brutalizes, tortures and steals from millions who, if they rose en masse, could shake off their oppressors. Revolution is simply the realization of this fact. Why did the protestors march to Tahrir Square? To show their strength in numbers. They already knew beforehand, despite the Egyptian's government's ongoing attempt to divide and blindfold its people, that the numbers were on their side. They only had to look at the sidebar and comment counts of Khaled Said's memorial page.

The Internet... lets oppressed people join in outrage, in shared fury and humiliation, in the sense of being part of a single mass of people with a single intent. Where else can you get that, in a blindfolded, fragmented nation?... How else can you look beyond your own life and your own cramped horizon, and realize that you're part of a movement?... Simply by linking the oppressed and creating connections, Twitter and Facebook help to stoke the fires of change everywhere....

...[The] lesson of Egypt is that dictators can no longer rely on their victims' fatalism and despair. Untrammelled Internet access... will make blatant tyranny impossible, by revealing the simple frailty of tyrants.<sup>40</sup>

Zeynep Tufekci argued, against the dismissals of theorists like Evgeny Morozov:

1- The capacities of the Internet that are most threatening to authoritarian regimes are not necessarily those pertaining to spreading of censored information but rather its ability to support the formation of a counter-public that is outside the control of the state. In other words, it is not that people are waiting for that key piece of information to start their revolt—and that information just happens to be behind the wall of censorship—but that they are isolated, unsure of the power of the regime, unsure of their position and potential.

2- Dissent is not just about knowing what you think but about the formation of a public. A public is not just about what you know. Publics form through knowing that other people know what you know—and also knowing that you know what they know.... Yes, all those parts of the Web that are ridiculed by some of the critics of Internet's potential—the LOLcats, Facebook, the three million baby pictures, the slapstick, talking about the weather, the food and the trials and tribulations of life—are exactly the backbone of community, and ultimately the creation of public(s).

3- Thus, social media can be the most threatening part of the Internet to an authoritarian regime through its capacity to create a public(ish) sphere that is integrated into everyday life of millions of people and is outside the direct control of the state partly because it is so widespread and partly because it is not solely focused on politics....<sup>41</sup>

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39 Jerome Roos, "In Egypt, the real regime still has to fall," *ROAR Magazine*, July 5, 2013 <<http://roarmag.org/2013/07/in-egypt-the-real-regime-still-has-to-fall/>>.

40 Jon Evans, "The End of History, Part II," *TechCrunch*, February 13, 2011 <<http://techcrunch.com/2011/02/13/the-end-of-history-part-ii/>>.

41 Zeynep Tufekci, "As Egypt Shuts off the Net: Seven Theses on Dictator's Dilemma," *technosociology*, January 28, 2011 <<http://technosociology.org/?p=286>>.

As Nicholas Kulish argued in a later article written after the beginning of Occupy Wall Street, the series of movements from the Arab Spring to the Occupy movement reflected a different youth consciousness about the value of electoral politics and pressure campaigns, coupled with the availability of new networked communications technologies:

Hundreds of thousands of disillusioned Indians cheer a rural activist on a hunger strike. Israel reels before the largest street demonstrations in its history. Enraged young people in Spain and Greece take over public squares across their countries.

Their complaints range from corruption to lack of affordable housing and joblessness, common grievances the world over. But from South Asia to the heartland of Europe and now even to Wall Street, these protesters share something else: wariness, even contempt, toward traditional politicians and the democratic political process they preside over.

They are taking to the streets, in part, because they have little faith in the ballot box.

“Our parents are grateful because they’re voting,” said Marta Solanas, 27, referring to older Spaniards’ decades spent under the Franco dictatorship. “We’re the first generation to say that voting is worthless.”...

Increasingly, citizens of all ages, but particularly the young, are rejecting conventional structures like parties and trade unions in favor of a less hierarchical, more participatory system modeled in many ways on the culture of the Web.

In that sense, the protest movements in democracies are not altogether unlike those that have rocked authoritarian governments this year, toppling longtime leaders in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Protesters have created their own political space online that is chilly, sometimes openly hostile, toward traditional institutions of the elite.

The critical mass of wiki and mapping tools, video and social networking sites, the communal news wire of Twitter and the ease of donations afforded by sites like PayPal makes coalitions of like-minded individuals instantly viable.

“You’re looking at a generation of 20- and 30-year-olds who are used to self-organizing,” said Yochai Benkler, a director of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University. “They believe life can be more participatory, more decentralized, less dependent on the traditional models of organization, either in the state or the big company. Those were the dominant ways of doing things in the industrial economy, and they aren’t anymore.”<sup>42</sup>

The Tahrir Square uprising was the opening shot in a long chain of national and global movements organized on a similar pattern. The common thread running through them was the new potential of horizontally linked communications technology, which continued the global immediacy of information CNN had pioneered thirty years before—but without cable television’s one-way hub-and-spoke architecture.

Since Mubarak’s ouster, hand-held devices armed with Internet access, video cameras, and social media software have challenged the status quo from Beijing to Yangon, from the pre-election streets of Moscow to the battered Syrian city of Homs.

In instance after instance, technologies designed for daily communication or research have adapted to a new task—exposing the malfeasance and incompetence of governments and the increasing irrelevance of traditional media to the average person....

But the technological challenge to modern government—repressive or otherwise—became clear during the Arab Spring, when in December 2010, the release by WikiLeaks of secret U.S. diplomatic cables confirmed the depths of corruption in Tunisia’s regime. It took only a few well-placed tweets to fill the streets thereafter.

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42 Nicholas Kulish, “As Scorn for Vote Grows, Protests Surge Around Globe,” *New York Times*, September 27, 2011 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/28/world/as-scorn-for-vote-grows-protests-surge-around-globe.html>>.

These events occurred in vastly different countries with a variety of political and economic systems. Yet all these governments found suddenly that the old rules that had allowed them to leverage journalistic access to power or remote disaster zones had suddenly changed. The indomitable power of information flowing straight from an eyewitness source to a mass audience has undone centuries of government news management (or, in some cases, censorship) capabilities, not to mention the traditional media outlets....

As recently as the late 1990s..., mobilizing thousands of people to oppose an autocratic government involved months of furtive meetings, any one of which might be penetrated by the regime's security services and lead to sweeping arrests; the loss of jobs; or in the most brutal cases, jail, torture, and death. Even if you successfully brought demonstrators into the street, there was considerable risk that the protests would be crushed without the outside world ever knowing....

Beginning in the late 1980s, the widespread adoption of satellite broadcasts by news networks changed this a bit, but only if the network had sophisticated equipment based in the country and access to the event in question. When CNN beamed back live images of the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 and the first Gulf War in 1991, it profoundly changed the way the public, governments, the military, and the media approached global crises.... They didn't always get it right, but CNN—and later the BBC World Service, Al Jazeera, and others—changed the dynamics of international events. For those attempting to challenge a tyranny, it was essential that the images be seen via satellite.

Still, television broadcasters represented a single, unidirectional node: their cameras showed live images in real time, but the audience was a passive spectator. Also, the networks still had to kowtow to authorities, lest they lose satellite uplinks or have their visas revoked. Ultimately, the world's governments and military commanders learned to manage the problem—throwing CNN and Al Jazeera out as soon as trouble started in some cases, jamming their signals, or, more subtly, insisting on “embedding journalists,” as in the case of the US military in Iraq, a practice meant to provide some access while preventing them from roaming all over the battlefield.

Compare this approach to the avalanche of information that now quickly accompanies any major international event. Since roughly the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, major events... were all captured instantaneously in eyewitness video and text accounts that were rushed to the world via cellphone, Internet, and social networks. Every person with a phone becomes the world's witness, if not a journalist. From one node in the Gulf War, the number now hits the millions. And unlike television, radio, and print reports, which still flow mostly toward the mass audience, filtered through editors and producers, the new template elevates the “conversation” above the level of information. Viewers and readers now see the raw data as it streams in and can engage in conversation with those sending it, cheering them on or arguing against them.<sup>43</sup>

To quote Kevin Kelly, it was inevitable that “decentralized socialism on the net would spill over into the other realms of life. You can't spend all day in an open-sourced, all-sharing, peer-to-peer network and not begin to think that the rest of your world should also operate in the same way.”<sup>44</sup>

Orsan Senalp sees this as a Global P2P Revolution taking place from Tahrir Square on, but with its roots in the first networked activism of the 1990s:

The peer to peer processes are at the core of this rising revolutionary agency, as well as to the structural changes we have been experiencing since the late 60s. These two dialectically shape each other within the process. Against this backdrop the precariat, peer labour and immaterial labour [including social justice activists working for the NGO sector] are forming a constellation of alter forces, towards a grand alliance without the consciousness of a class. The formation of this new global historic bloc of alter forces can be indicating the rise of a New Transnational Labour Class [so in formation].<sup>45</sup>

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43 Michael Moran, “From Short Waves to Flash Mobs.”

44 Kevin Kelly, “The Technology of Global Unrest,” *The Technium*, September 28, 2011 <[http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2011/09/the\\_technology.php](http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2011/09/the_technology.php)>.

45 Orsan Senalp: Global Class Warfare,” *WilliamBowles.info*, September 29, 2011 <<http://williambowles.info/2011/09/29/>>

Michael Gurstein, in an argument which would be developed further in regard to Occupy Wall Street, made a case that the methods of struggle in the Arab Spring foreshadowed the model of organization in the successor society. Not only do such network technologies enable resistance to the existing regime, but they also offer new weapons for undermining the kinds of neoliberal “reform” regimes that succeeded “Color Revolutions” in the past. In Egypt, for example, the Tahrir Square movement has shown no signs of intent to conveniently pack up and go home under post-Mubarak military regimes. And in addition, the horizontalism of the resistance movement prefigures the horizontalism in organizing the successor society.

It may be more useful... to look forward rather than back; to identify what, from the experience of these revolutions and interwoven as they were... by social media and information technology, might be of value as these countries go forward....

Once the dust settles, and perhaps even before, Egypt and Tunisia and whichever other countries achieve a degree of regime change, will suffer an invasion of think tankers, foundation funded consultants, World Bank and IMF analysts and so on all offering “solutions” to the country’s problems. These offers will be presented without irony even though it was the formulations of these same consultants, analysts etc. etc. who, reporting to the previous regimes, in many cases bear primary responsibility for creating the problems which brought so many out onto the streets.

...The revolts in Egypt and Tunis... are as much renunciations of the neo-liberal solutions which underpinned the rapacious crony capitalism of the regimes, as they are renunciations of the tyrants who rather passively oversaw the implementation of these policies by their western elite educated sons and their similarly western educated and ideologically imbibed cronies.

The revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia will have very great challenges in finding alternative paths to replace the discredited ideologies... in order to satisfy the large but not unreasonable expectations of their populations for decent health care, decent education, employment for skilled and trained young people and living wages for working people.... Given the evident bankruptcy of the existing solutions..., the need for the social movement to find ways to address the outstanding national issues will mean that they will need to look inward to themselves for the resources and the approaches that can provide the basis for moving forward.

In this, I think that the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia have access to skills and resources which were unavailable to earlier movements that is—the Internet, social networking, mobile telephony and perhaps most important, the experience and knowledge of how to use these in support of collective social ends....

The use of the technologies—cell phones, Facebook, twitter, the Internet—all made a contribution to the success of the movements although the amount of contribution is the subject of considerable dispute. Certain lessons were no doubt learned from this. The challenge is to take those lessons and apply them to the much more intransigent but equally important issues of rebuilding Egypt with a success similar to that achieved in the removal of the despot.

...[P]erhaps one could anticipate some of those lessons:

- Enabling solidarity. The technology enabled processes of creating and maintaining solidarity—as a combination of trust, ascribed legitimacy, and a sense of unity and common purpose. It allowed for solidarity to be developed and maintained over time, to be extended over space and between those who had only very limited or in some cases no physical interaction. Translating this into a sense of common purpose going forward is not a given but however much it can be maintained... will allow the movement to avoid the multiple costs and risks of simply assigning the mandate and future of the revolution to a party or to existing administrative structures and elites ala the Russian Revolution or the overthrow of Apartheid in South Africa.
- Aggregating social action. To accomplish what it did the movements in Tunisia and Egypt had to aggregate and consolidate the actions of multiple individuals and as time went on,

the actions of multiple groups with divergent interests towards a common purpose. ..[P]arallel processes of group sourcing and open development in a variety of spheres, suggests that these techniques may be carried over into aggregating social actions towards collaborative problem solving at the local level going from local clean-up campaigns to self-help groups for responding to social needs to building local economic processes through self-sufficiency and small enterprise development serving local needs.

- Global communication—global reach—compared to earlier similar revolutions this one was wired not only internally but externally to the world. This means that the movement is able to access the world and its range of expertise and knowledge resources.... Equally, the movement will be in a position to link into whatever external resources it chooses and need not simply follow existing lines or traditional paths out of expediency (as for example those prescribed by party, religion or ethnicity) as it moves forward.
- Overcoming distance.... The difficulties of communication and of maintaining solidarity and trust precipitate processes of centralization of decision making, concentration of leadership, and the related formation of hierarchical structures of authority. The now available capacities for flexible and content intensive two way communication at a distance relieves the necessity for these processes by allowing for alternatives of peer to peer, horizontal and place independent processes.
- Enabling transparency—the communication media allow for the transparency of operation, of financial transactions, and of decision making from which new forms of accountability and democratic participation may be created.
- Operational flexibility and immediacy of response—the speed of communications and the facility in establishing and modifying communications and information management structures means that the new institutions which need to be established in post-revolutionary Egypt and Tunisia can be structured so as to avoid the rigidification and tendencies towards authoritarianism which traditional processes of institutionalization have almost universally exhibited.
- Enabling decentralized structures and localized decision making—social media enabled processes within the movement demonstrated the capacity for and the strength of ICT-enabled decentralization and localization of decision making and facilitating of local responses to local conditions. These community informatics processes could prove extremely useful in designing, developing and maintaining the range of appropriate public services... which will need to be designed and established in the immediate post-movement period in response to the expressed popular demand. A community approach to enabling and building these services utilizing electronic platforms and leveraging localized social processes will allow for the flexibility, responses to localized conditions, and amplification and leveraging of scarce specialized skills that proved so powerful in the democracy movements. It would facilitate the necessary process of the movement being incorporated into new institutional responses....

The challenge and the opportunity now is to translate all of this into de-institutionalized institutions, structured decision making without structures, and dynamic frameworks of accountability that work over time and through space while avoiding Robert Michel's "Iron Law" (of Oligarchy).<sup>46</sup>

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46 Michael Gurstein, "Egypt: From the Iron Rule of Tyranny to the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Can the ICT Change the Rules?" *Gurstein's Community Informatics*, February 23, 2011 <<http://gurstein.wordpress.com/2011/02/23/applying-the-ict-lessons-of-revolt-to-the-institutional-challenges-of-reconstruction-they-overthrew-hosni-mubarek-now-can-they-overthrow-robert-michels/>>.

### III. The European Revolution: Spain, Greece and Points Beyond

**The Spanish 15M, or Indignado Movement.** The 15M (May 15), or Indignado movement began May 15, 2011, as 150,000 demonstrators assembled in sixty towns all over Spain, taking over public squares and setting up campsites. A powerful theme in the movement was growing disaffection with the political system and a growing perception of the worthlessness of voting and participating in the political process.<sup>47</sup>

The general pattern of organization in the 15M camps and assemblies was much like—and probably inspired—that later taken by Occupy Wall Street:

In Sol, the organizers... quickly started organizing a community by dividing the workload into different commissions (all made up of volunteers): cleaning, security, legal advice, infrastructure, food, external and internal communications. This last one set up a speaker in the middle of the square, so as to communicate between each other and to deliver important messages to the community. The infrastructure commission built large tents, made for shelter and to house each group's "office", food and blankets were provided, people brought mattresses and sofas from their homes, as well as sleeping bags, tents and cardboard boxes to coat the floor. The legal team held a brief meeting and afterwards communicated basic advice just in case the police were to crackdown on the campers. Meanwhile, external communications organized workshops to prepare volunteers for talking to the media, arranged teams of translators who would start working on social media sites and went about promoting the event on the web. The result was that in a few hours a totally self-governed mass of people, without any visible leaders, was fully functional and able to sustain the main reason behind the whole movement: the formation of public assemblies that were to enunciate the feelings and ideas of everyone present and turn them into proper policies.<sup>48</sup>

The writer, foreshadowing traditional Leftist critiques of Occupy, also complained about the assemblies' inability to deal with the "real issue" of agreeing on "a real manifesto or proposals for reform." Michel Bauwens of the Foundation for P2P Alternatives argued in response that "the relative indeterminacy of the Spanish movement is not a bug, but a feature."<sup>49</sup>

A week later, and in the aftermath of the ruling Socialist coalition's heavy losses to the Conservatives in the May 22 elections, the M15 movement took further steps toward creating its own prefigurative institutions. Amaia Arcos writes:

The movement quickly adopted free participatory public assemblies in "occupied" squares. Creating neighbourhood assemblies in order to give shape and sustain the protest movement quickly took centre stage....

Decentralising the movement and establishing networks of neighbourhood assemblies has been this past week's objective. The original idea was to dismantle the camps.... Yesterday was particularly important: the freshly created neighbourhood and town assemblies in Madrid met, for the first time, during the day in Plaza del Sol in order to coordinate. Later on that evening, the movement was to collectively decide (every main square in the country held a vote) whether to dismantle the camps or continue for a few more days. Friday had seen the first, for now, of serious dislodging attempts on the part of Catalan regional police using disproportionate force against Barcelona protestors. Last night, most people felt, and voted, the camps should continue for a few days in order to make a statement of purpose, reject violence against peaceful protestors and have a meeting place until neighbourhood assemblies are properly functioning.

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47 Michel Bauwens, "Analysis of the May 15 movement in Spain," P2P Foundation Blog, May 22, 2011 <<http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/analysis-of-the-may-15-movement-in-spain/2011/05/22>>.

48 "The #Spanishrevolution starts in Madrid as an experiment in participatory democracy #acampadasol #yeswecamp #democraciarealya," WL Central, May 19, 2011 <<http://wlcentral.org/node/1786>>.

49 Michel Bauwens, "Spain is Ground Zero for the P2P Revolution," P2P Foundation Blog, May 29, 2011 <<http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/spain-is-ground-zero-for-the-p2p-revolution/2011/05/29>>.

Assemblies have been enjoying mass success.... Many other cities in Spain have held similarly packed looking assemblies....

A website has been created to coordinate Madrid's assemblies and it is expected other regional assemblies will organise similarly. Madrid is where the movement originated and it has since been considered the referent for the rest of Spain. Barcelona is also networking and compiling freshly created neighbourhood assemblies....

Given the origin of the protests and its close relationship with the Internet, Spain's "geek" community is closely involved. A working group of engineers and programmers is looking to design participatory democracy technical infrastructure in order to aid organisational, voting and consulting processes....<sup>50</sup>

As the first anniversary approached, the media consensus was that the Indignados had peaked in the previous year and begun fading away with the dismantling of the Puerta del Sol camp. Marta Sanchez argues, rather, that the movement metamorphosed into a different form by decentralizing into society at large:

When May 2011 came to an end, the recently born 15-M movement had to find out how to survive beyond the camp at Puerta del Sol (acampadasol). Thus arose the idea of decentralizing the movement towards the neighborhoods: the 'toma los barrios', or take the neighborhoods, initiative supported and encouraged the creation of assemblies in every neighborhood of Madrid. In this way, the movement went local: since the creation of the neighborhood assemblies on May 28, 2011, around 120 assemblies have been set up, and they coordinate through the Asamblea Popular de Madrid, the popular assembly of Madrid, also known as Asamblea Interbarrios (the inter-neighborhood assembly). As there were many thematic working groups in the original Sol camp, working groups with similar interests were created in most of the neighborhood assemblies, which since then collaborate and coordinate with the general groups from acampadasol.

The objectives of such decentralization aimed, in the first place, to promote direct and participatory democracy in the local sphere, based on an understanding of politics as the art of collectively creating an alternative pattern of social relations, thereby bringing people out of isolation and into a community. A second objective aimed to retake the public sphere... as a place in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk, the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs....<sup>51</sup>

And as Occupy at least made abortive attempts to do after the shutdown of the camps, the Indignados shifted to carrying out social justice and economic democracy initiatives at the local level. This took the form not only of developing toolkits for alternative, DIY economics, but also of direct action campaigns against injustice.

The neighborhood assemblies usually meet once a week and they constitute public spaces for debate, where neighbors exchange ideas and visions about general topics (the economy, unemployment, housing, the financial system, education, social security), but also about local problems that particularly affect their neighborhood. A large number of activities have been organised within these assemblies, one of the most interesting of which is the creation of so-called 'time banks', or *bancos de tiempo*. Time banking is a pattern of non-monetary reciprocal service, which seeks to address requirements outside of the market sphere.... In this way, time banks seek to provide incentives and rewards for work usually done on a volunteer basis.... The neighbors can create an online profile where they share information about the services they can provide, and they can get in touch with people who offer services they are

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50 Amaia Arcos, quoted in Chris Pinchen, "Background to #spanishrevolution #asambleabarrios #europeanrevolution," P2P Foundation Blog, May 30, 2011 <<http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/background-to-spanishrevolution-asambleabarrios-europeanrevolution/2011/05/30>>.

51 Marta Sanchez, "Losing Strength? An Alternative Vision of Spain's Indignados," *Social Network Unionism*, July 3, 2012 <<http://snuproject.wordpress.com/2012/07/03/losing-strength-an-alternative-vision-of-spains-indignados/>>.

interested in. They conclude the transaction between one another, and a mediation commission is planned in case any problems come up.

Other initiatives that originated within the assemblies include the creation of organic vegetable gardens in empty neighborhood spaces, aiming to reduce food dependency, and the constitution of co-operatives of agro-ecological consumption, which seek to shorten the commercialization circuits and establish closer relationships to producers....

One of the most successful actions of the 15-M movement that the neighborhoods have helped to coordinate is the 'stop forced evictions' campaign.... Around 200 evictions have been stopped since last year. Since the beginning, a working group on housing rights was constituted inside of the *indignados* movement... The Platform of Those Affected by a Mortgage..., an association that was created in 2009 to try to find a solution to the drama of forced evictions, tightly connected to the 15-M movement, was able to provide its people-gathering strength and visibility to the stop evictions. The neighborhoods were a key actor in this process: they started collecting information of the evictions planned in their area, and organized the mobilization of activists on eviction dates. Through the celebration of mutual assemblies and the sharing of information through social networks, housing has become one of the main targets for the neighborhood assemblies to work on and mobilize around.

Under the slogan 'No human being is illegal', the Neighborhood Brigades for Human Rights Monitoring... have been formed within some popular assemblies in Madrid, mostly in those neighborhoods with big immigrant collectives, with the goal of rendering visible the police raids on the immigrant population, as well as denouncing the xenophobic and racist bias that they usually display. The neighborhood assemblies, with their Human Rights Monitoring Brigades, have also been the cradle of protest against immigration detention centres..., advocating for their closure and the improvement of detainee's human rights guarantees.

The *indignados* have revitalized the neighborhood movement: new forms of cooperation coexist with the old neighborhood associations, and they are coordinating and sharing a large number of initiatives and joint actions. The neighborhood associations, which appeared in Madrid in the late sixties, had gradually moderated their demands and plunged into a light sleep. The 15-M movement has reawakened local politics and boosted community-based mobilization: we are witnessing how old and new forms of neighborhood organization are coexisting, coordinating and mutually learning from one another.<sup>52</sup>

According to Bernardo Gutierrez, the Indignados also developed new systems of networked P2P governance that added a new layer of meaning to the initiatives above:

During the eruption of the 15M movement in May 2011, when the streets of Spain were filled with 'indignados', a technological innovation took place that went almost unnoticed: the Tweetómetro Yes We Camp. The collective Platóniq, specializing in technologies for the commons, devised this tool that allows for activism on the streets and the Internet to merge. Any Internet user could vote via Twitter on the proposals discussed at the citizen assemblies on the squares. Anyone could tweet (yes) or (no) with a hashtag to cast a vote. The Tweetómetro bore two powerful innovations for the future of democracy. First, political participation can be governed by the real-time feeds that signify social media. Second, public space can become a revised, more participatory and open version of the ancient Greek polis. Networks of citizens are enabled to coordinate spaces of power provided by the institutions of this new P2Polis.

This novel model of collective participation has turned Spain into one of the countries closest to the P2P society. The 15M have kick-started initiatives such as Goteo, a crowdfunding platform, Nockin, a search engine for P2P services, Kune, a platform facilitating cooperation, or Nolotiro, a platform for the exchange of used goods....<sup>53</sup>

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52 *Ibid.*

53 Bernardo Gutierrez, "15M—Towards Real-Time Democracy," OpenDemocracy.net, May 7, 2012 <<http://www.opendemocracy.net/bernardo-guti%C3%A9rez/15m-towards-real-time-democracy>>.

In April 2012, M15 threw its support behind a nationwide general strike called by the CNT labor federation, that included 91% of all employees of large enterprises

Spain's General Strike could not have come at a more significant moment from the perspective of the global people's movement. As ROAR magazine points out, Spain's General Strike was initially called for by the anarcho-syndicalist CNT union but it was ultimately a success because the call was taken up and powered by the youthful militancy of the indignados...<sup>54</sup>

**Greece: The Syntagma Movement.** From Spain, the movement spread quickly to Syntagma Square in Athens, with crowds eventually growing to half a million.

The leaderless organization of the Greek movement, its lack of official demands or statements, and its self-organized administration of the camps, followed the Spanish pattern:

The open, egalitarian and participatory character of the procedures and ways of organising derives from the will to find such procedures that can unite all who are affected by the crisis and dissatisfied with the current political system. The pacifist and non-party character of the original call-out was the condition that shaped a common public sphere where everyone would meet without any badges to co-decide by discussing at the same level.

The refusal to assign or elect representatives does not only cause unease to the forces of the state who do not know how to deal with this, as it overturns their tactic of manoeuvring, of libelling and destroying popular expressions of rage. More than that, this "facelessness"... is the best way for the movement to safeguard transparency in its organising, as well as the will for whatever is created to express everyone — not just its most so-called "vanguard" or "politicised" part.

And so, the matter of procedures is not simply a matter of organising but a key issue regarding its political essence.... This understanding that rejects any kind of representation or mediation, is safeguarded by the constant circulation of revocable positions and runs through all structures and functions born by this movement.

In this spirit, the stance of the movement toward Mass Media is also differentiated, with the refusal to engage with them, not even by way of issuing press releases. With the screening of what part of its procedures and organising is photographed or taped, and most importantly, with the creation of the movement's own channels of communication — with its main website [www.real-democracy.gr](http://www.real-democracy.gr), being the only medium-voice of its decisions.

The daily people's assembly of Syntagma square..., like the corresponding ones in other cities, is the only one that holds the right to decision-making. The topics in each popular assembly are defined according to discussion, the demands and the proposals submitted in previous assemblies....

The final resolutions are shaped during the assembly according to the comments of the speakers and are put up for approval, always before midnight, in order not to exclude those who work and those who have to use public transportation to return to their neighbourhoods.

Everyone has a right to speak and in the beginning of each assembly, after reading out and approving its topics, tickets are distributed to everyone who wishes to do so; speakers are selected by draw during the assembly. Usually speakers range between 80 and 100 in their number, while more than 2000 people take part in the assembly on a daily basis. Despite this element of chance, experience so far has proven this to be the best way to avoid any phenomena of imposition of specific agendas or the influencing of the assembly's decisions by organised interventions....

At the moment, there are more than 15 working groups and 12 thematic ones. The working groups comprise the cornerstone of life at the square and their contribution so far has been priceless. Not only because they offer practical solutions and because so far they have responded, despite many problems

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54 "GENERAL STRIKE! Spain's indignados inspire Occupy.| Adbusters," Social Network Unionism, April 13, 2012 <<http://snuproject.wordpress.com/2012/04/13/general-strike-spains-indignados-inspire-occupy-adbusters/>>.

and delays, to the ever-increasing needs for the shaping, the functionality and the procedures at the square, but most importantly because these groups themselves comprise the spirit of contribution of the people, their will to take life into their own hands and the capacities of their self-organising, without experts and capital, based on their own capacities....

Until now, functioning groups include those of technical support, material supply, artists, cleaning, administrative support, canteen-nutrition, translation, respect (patrol), communication/multimedia, legal support, neighbourhood outreach, health, time bank and service exchange, composure and messengers.<sup>55</sup>

The Syntagma Square movement, like the Plaza del Sol movement before it and the Occupy movement after, was consciously anti-political and anti-party in nature.

For the people gathered in Syntagma, the intense political manoeuvring in the corridors of parliament seems to matter little. There is a mass mobilisation that draws a distinction between representational and grassroots politics.... [The legacy political system] is a system of beliefs, values, expectations and political roles and identities that cannot be abolished simply by replacing the head or members of the government....

By now, the distance between the people and their representatives might seem unbridgeable; as the old system of government crumbles under the burden of sovereign debt, a new, grassroots system of politics is starting to make itself heard from the ground.<sup>56</sup>

This protest marks in many ways a turning point. Apart from the use of social media as a vehicle for social mobilisation... the most obvious new factor is the persistence, the large numbers and the synthesis of the participants. Demonstrators have [until now] participated in such great numbers only in rallies of political parties and only after extensive organisation and costs by parties' structures.... Even more surprising is perhaps the tenacity of the demonstrators; ...such a steady flow of large numbers of people for so long is utterly new in recent Greek history. Most importantly though the synthesis of the crowds gathering in Syntagma Square is also refreshingly new. The mosaic of Syntagma comprises individuals, of all ages, social and professional backgrounds, with different demands, concerns, professional, social and economic backgrounds, personal aims, or political convictions....

Despite their vast differences, what unites them all is a deep disappointment of their representatives and more broadly of the political staff....

Yet the triggers that brought thousands to the streets have been the recent unquestionable deterioration of the quality of life and, most importantly, the clear lack of future prospects for improvement....

...The protesters have loudly, clearly and repeatedly claimed their independence from any kind of representative body. They have voiced their disapproval for all political parties.... The change in this regard is monumental. The tradition in Greece has been, for too long, to demonstrate after a call by and under the auspices of some organisation or representative body. This form of social mobilisation of individuals, without the control or guardianship of any formal body is entirely new for Greece....<sup>57</sup>

**Electoral Offshoots of M15 and Syntagma.** Although the occupation efforts of M15 and Syntagma died down, their activist networks gave rise to closely associated political parties (Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece, respectively).

Podemos, founded in early 2014, grew rapidly; it garnered 8% of the vote in the May elections, and was polled at 27% public support in November. To a large extent, Podemos follows a stigmergic model of organization similar to that of the Indignados, based on the free formation of new nodes with little

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55 "Democracy is Born in the Square," *People's Assemblies Network*, June 12, 2011

<<http://www.peoplesassemblies.org/2011/06/greece-democracy-is-born-in-the-squares/>>.

56 Hara Kouki and Antonis Vradis, quoted in Michel Bauwens, "Short history of the recent events in Greece, and what they portend," P2P Foundation Blog, June 19, 2011 <<http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/short-history-of-the-recent-events-in-greece-and-what-they-portend/2011/06/19>>.

57 Thalia Tzanetti, quoted in Bauwens, "Short history of the events in Greece."

entry cost. The party has around 1,000 "branches" (or nodes) with about 200,000 members, and has grown according to a "hacker logic" of free replication.

To do this... you need a low cost of entry in relation to both tools and knowledge. This is precisely what Podemos ensured, with remarkable results: 'To create a branch you only need a Facebook account, an email and a meeting. No membership, no fees. So, in the first two months we got more than 300 branches, not only in different places but also branches that had to do with specific fields, like education, culture, the environment.' The number of branches has since more than tripled and includes ones focused on feminism, psychology, a basic income and even music – in other words, whatever the participants want them to be....

To continue the tech-speak, Podemos in effect operates an open-source development model in which access to and redistribution of the Podemos 'blueprint' are universal, but the 'licence agreement' also includes the right of redesign and improvement. Consequently, since its inception, Podemos's internal development and political trajectory have been shaped by the input of its members – and, indeed, non-members.<sup>58</sup>

It includes a broader base—older, and with a larger working class component—than the Indignado protestors of 2011.<sup>59</sup> And its political message is a departure from the workerism of the conventional parties of the Left, reflecting the expansion of the precariat and fragmentation of the traditional working class under neoliberalism, and a reduced willingness of the majority to identify with their roles in the production process.<sup>60</sup> Although it is in a broad sense an offshoot or outgrowth of M15, it has to some extent evolved beyond it and developed an institutional logic of its own; the party's agenda and leading figures, representing a broader mass base, are no longer responsible to the activist network of 2011—a fact which incurs some resentment.<sup>61</sup>

In Greece the Syriza party, which similarly emerged from Syntagma's activist networks and associated civil society organizations, managed to take political power in early 2015 after winning a plurality in the national elections. In Greece, more than Spain, the activist networks of 2011 largely went dormant after the Syriza victory. And in an object lesson on the futility of electoral strategies as anything but an auxiliary, administration of a government carried a logic of its own and resulted in a considerable moderation and watering down of its agenda compared to that of the Syntagma movement. It ended in a full-scale capitulation to the European Central Bank's demands.

**Conclusion.** This first wave of activism from the Arab Spring, which eventually spread to Europe, as well as the tent cities in Israel and the Madison protests against Scott Walker's austerity regime, dwarfed the post-Seattle anti-globalization movement, and rivaled the global protests of 1968. And, as Pankaj Mishra argued, the common denominator in this unprecedented wave of activism was global opposition to neoliberalism by the working and middle classes, exacerbated by the global economic downturn since 2007.<sup>62</sup>

Joel Kotkin saw the London riots of early August as part of a looming global class war, "a growing global class chasm that threatens to undermine capitalism itself." Among its root causes are "globalization, which has taken jobs from blue-collar and now even white-collar employees; [and] technology, which has allowed the fleetest and richest companies and individuals to shift operations at rapid speed to any locale..."

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58 Andrew Dolan, "Podemos: Politics by the people," Red Pepper (February 2015) <<http://www.redpepper.org.uk/podemos-politics-by-the-people/>>.

59 Carlos Delclos, "Podemos: the political upstart taking Spain by force," *ROAR Magazine*, December 9, 2014 <<http://roarmag.org/2014/12/podemos-the-political-upstart-taking-spain-by-force/>>.

60 Dolan, "Podemos."

61 Delclos, "Podemos."

62 Pankaj Mishra, "The dead end of globalisation looms before our youth," *The Guardian*, August 25, 2011 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/aug/25/dead-end-globalisation-youth-rage>>.

Members of both the Tea Parties and the Left share a perception that “the power structure, corporate and government, work together to screw the broad middle class.”<sup>63</sup>

#### IV. Occupy Wall Street

In September 2011, Occupy Wall Street and the global Occupy movement it sparked emerged as a second wave of activism on the same scale as the first wave of global activism associated with the Arab Spring.

Until it actually got underway, Occupy showed every sign of being just another top-down protest. In fact it came very close at the beginning to being coopted by the Workers' World Party, the organization behind the International A.N.S.W.E.R. coalition that dominated the earlier movement against the Iraq War.<sup>64</sup>

That it wasn't is in considerable part thanks to David Graeber, an anarchist professor of sociology who teaches at Goldsmiths, University of London.

On July 13, 2011 *Adbusters* magazine put out a call—really more of a trial balloon—for an occupation of Wall Street two months later, on September 17.

Alright you 90,000 redeemers, rebels and radicals out there,

A worldwide shift in revolutionary tactics is underway right now that bodes well for the future. The spirit of this fresh tactic, a fusion of Tahrir with the acampadas of Spain, is captured in this quote:

"The antiglobalization movement was the first step on the road. Back then our model was to attack the system like a pack of wolves. There was an alpha male, a wolf who led the pack, and those who followed behind. Now the model has evolved. Today we are one big swarm of people."

— Raimundo Viejo, Pompeu Fabra University  
Barcelona, Spain

The beauty of this new formula, and what makes this novel tactic exciting, is its pragmatic simplicity: we talk to each other in various physical gatherings and virtual people's assemblies ... we zero in on what our one demand will be, a demand that awakens the imagination and, if achieved, would propel us toward the radical democracy of the future ... and then we go out and seize a square of singular symbolic significance and put our asses on the line to make it happen.

The time has come to deploy this emerging stratagem against the greatest corrupter of our democracy: Wall Street, the financial Gomorrah of America.

On September 17, we want to see 20,000 people flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for a few months. Once there, we shall incessantly repeat one simple demand in a plurality of voices.

Tahrir succeeded in large part because the people of Egypt made a straightforward ultimatum – that Mubarak must go – over and over again until they won. Following this model, what is our equally uncomplicated demand?

The most exciting candidate that we've heard so far is one that gets at the core of why the American political establishment is currently unworthy of being called a democracy: we demand that Barack Obama ordain a Presidential Commission tasked with ending the influence money has over our repre-

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63 Joel Kotkin, “The U.K. Riots and the Coming Global Class War,” *Forbes*, August 15, 2011 <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/joelkotkin/2011/08/15/u-k-riots-global-class-war/>>.

64 The WWP was “almost a caricature” of Old Left Stalinist authoritarianism, according to Graeber. It continues to justify the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Chinese suppression of the Tienanmen protesters in 1989. The millions of people who participate in WWP-organized protests like the ANSWER anti-war protests have little idea that all the decisions are made by a handful of mostly white party cadres, hiding behind black and Latino front men. Graeber, *The Democracy Project: A History, A Crisis, A Movement* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), p. 25.

sentatives in Washington. It's time for DEMOCRACY NOT CORPORATOCRACY, we're doomed without it.

This demand seems to capture the current national mood because cleaning up corruption in Washington is something all Americans, right and left, yearn for and can stand behind. If we hang in there, 20,000-strong, week after week against every police and National Guard effort to expel us from Wall Street, it would be impossible for Obama to ignore us. Our government would be forced to choose publicly between the will of the people and the lucre of the corporations.

...Beginning from one simple demand—a presidential commission to separate money from politics—we start setting the agenda for a new America.<sup>65</sup>

The magazine's involvement began and ended with that action.

The first steps toward implementation were taken by New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts—a coalition of student activists and community leaders—who had camped out across from City Hall to protest city budget cuts. They found the idea of a similar occupation of Wall Street appealing, and attempted to take charge of planning for the September event. They called a “General Assembly,” to be held on August 2 at Bowling Green Park, to plan the occupation. But despite the “general assembly” language, what they had in mind was a lot closer to the conventional verticalist model.

A “general assembly” means something specific and special to an anarchist. In a way, it's the central concept of contemporary anarchist activism, which is premised on the idea that revolutionary movements relying on coercion of any kind only result in repressive societies. A “GA” is a carefully facilitated group discussion through which decisions are made—not by a few leaders, or even by majority rule, but by consensus. Unresolved questions are referred to working groups within the assembly, but eventually everyone has to agree, even in assemblies that swell into the thousands....

When Graeber and his friends showed up on Aug. 2, however, they found out that the event wasn't, in fact, a general assembly, but a traditional rally, to be followed by a short meeting and a march to Wall Street to deliver a set of predetermined demands (“A massive public-private jobs program” was one, “An end to oppression and war!” was another). In anarchist argot, the event was being run by “verticals”—top-down organizations—rather than “horizontals” such as Graeber and his friends. [Georgia] Sagri and Graeber felt they'd been had, and they were angry.<sup>66</sup>

As Graeber recalled, the movement as it had evolved to that point gave every indication of being a conventional protest that would fizzle out with little notice.

...[A] local anti-budget cut coalition top-heavy with NGOs, unions, and socialist groups had tried to take possession of the process and called for a “General Assembly” at Bowling Green. The title proved extremely misleading. When I arrived, I found the event had been effectively taken over by a veteran protest group called the Worker's World Party, most famous for having patched together ANSWER one of the two great anti-war coalitions, back in 2003. They had already set up their banners, megaphones, and were making speeches—after which, someone explained, they were planning on leading the 80-odd assembled people in a march past the Stock Exchange itself.<sup>67</sup>

But Graeber, noticing that most of the people who showed up weren't all that happy with the professional activists' self-appointed leadership (“the sort of people who actually like marching around with pre-issued

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65 “#Occupy Wall Street: A Shift in Revolutionary Tactics,” *Adbusters blog*, July 13, 2011 <<http://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>>.

66 Drake Bennet, “David Graeber, the Anti-Leader of Occupy Wall Street,” *BusinessWeek*, October 26, 2011 <<http://www.businessweek.com/printer/magazine/david-graeber-the-antileader-of-occupy-wall-street-10262011.html>>.

67 Graeber, “On Playing By The Rules—The Strange Success of OccupyWallStreet,” *Countercurrents.org*, October 23, 2011 <<http://www.countercurrents.org/graeber241011l.htm>>.

signs and listening to spokesmen from somebody's central committee"<sup>68</sup>), provided the alternative horizontalist model the movement crystallized around. The demonstration instead emerged as a leaderless, horizontal movement.

But as I paced about the Green, I noticed something. ...[T]his wasn't really a crowds of verticals.... They were mostly pretty obviously horizontals: people more sympathetic with anarchist principles of organization, non-hierarchical forms of direct democracy, and direct action. I quickly spotted at least one Wobbly, a young Korean activist I remembered from some Food Not Bomb event, some college students wearing Zapatista paraphernalia, a Spanish couple who'd been involved with the indignados in Madrid... I found my Greek friends, an American I knew from street battles in Quebec during the Summit of the Americas in 2001, now turned labor organizer in Manhattan, a Japanese activist intellectual I'd known for years... My Greek friend looked at me and I looked at her and we both instantly realized the other was thinking the same thing: "Why are we so complacent? Why is it that every time we see something like this happening, we just mutter things and go home?"—though I think the way we put it was more like, "You know something? Fuck this shit. They advertised a general assembly. Let's hold one."

So we gathered up a few obvious horizontals and formed a circle, and tried to get everyone else to join us.... We created a decision-making process (we would operate by modified consensus) broke out into working groups (outreach, action, facilitation) and then reassembled to allow each group to report its collective decisions, and set up times for new meetings of both the smaller and larger groups. It was difficult to figure out what to do since we only had six weeks, not nearly enough time to plan a major action, let alone bus in the thousands of people that would be required to actually shut down Wall Street—and anyway we couldn't shut down Wall Street on the appointed day, since September 17, the day Adbusters had been advertising, was a Saturday. We also had no money of any kind.

Two days later, at the Outreach meeting we were brainstorming what to put on our first flyer. Adbusters' idea had been that we focus on "one key demand." This was a brilliant idea from a marketing perspective, but from an organizing perspective, it made no sense at all. We put that one aside almost immediately. There were much more fundamental questions to be hashed out. Like: who were we? Who did we want to appeal to? Who did we represent? Someone... suggested, "well, why not call ourselves 'the 99%'? If 1% of the population have ended up with all the benefits of the last 10 years of economic growth, control the wealth, own the politicians... why not just say we're everybody else?" The Spanish couple quickly began to lay out a "We Are the 99%" pamphlet, and we started brainstorming ways to print and distribute it for free.

Over the next few weeks a plan began to take shape.... We quickly decided that what we really wanted to do was something like had already been accomplished in Athens, Barcelona, or Madrid: occupy a public space to create a New York General Assembly, a body that could act as a model of genuine, direct democracy to contrapose to the corrupt charade presented to us as "democracy" by the US government. The Wall Street action would be a stepping-stone. Still, it was almost impossible to predict what would really happen on the 17th. There were supposed to be 90,000 people following us on the internet. Adbusters had called for 20,000 to fill the streets. That obviously wasn't going to happen. But how many would really show up? What's more, we were keenly aware that the NYPD numbered close to 40,000; Wall Street was, in fact, probably the single most heavily policed public space on the face of Planet Earth. To be perfectly honest, as one of the old-timers scrambling to organize medical and legal trainings, lessons on how to organize affinity groups and do non-violent civil disobedience, seminars on how to facilitate meetings and the like, for most of us, the greatest concern during those hectic weeks was how to ensure the initial event wouldn't turn out a total fiasco, with all the enthusiastic young people immediately beaten, arrested, and psychologically traumatized as the media, as usual, simply looked the other way.

...On September 17th itself, I was troubled at first by the fact that only a few hundred people seemed to have shown up. What's more the spot we'd chosen for our General Assembly, a plaza outside

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68 Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, p. 27.

Citibank, had been shut down by the city and surrounded by high fences. The tactical committee however had scouted out other possible locations, and distributed maps: around 3 PM, word went around we were moving to location #5—Zuccotti Park—and by the time we got there, I realized we were surrounded by at least two thousand people.

The real credit for what happened after that—within a matter of weeks, a movement that had spread to 800 different cities, with outpourings of support from radical opposition groups as far away as China—belongs mainly to the students and other young people who simply dug themselves and refused to leave, despite the endless (and in many cases, obviously illegal) acts of police repression designed to intimidate....<sup>69</sup>

One reason for the totally unexpected success of the Occupy movement, Graeber suspects, is the collapse of so many people's hopes for change through the political system:

After all, how could there have been a more perfect alignment of the stars than happened in 2008? That year saw a wave election that left Democrats in control of both houses of congress, a Democratic president elected on a platform of “Change” coming to power at a moment of economic crisis so profound that radical measures of some sort were unavoidable, and at a time when popular rage against the nation’s financial elites was so intense that most Americans would have supported almost anything. If it was not possible to enact any real progressive policies or legislation at such a moment, clearly, it would never be. Yet none were enacted.... Clearly, if progressive change was not possible through electoral means in 2008, it simply isn’t going to be possible at all. And that is exactly what very large numbers of Americans appear to have concluded.<sup>70</sup>

One of the most disillusioned demographics, not coincidentally, was also the central demographic in the Occupy movement: the Millennials who had voted for Obama in droves in 2008. They were college graduates unemployed high into the double digits, working unpaid internships, living in their parents' houses again—basically an analog of the Japanese “lost generation” who had discovered that all the propaganda promises about working hard, getting an education and the rest of it were lies and betrayals.

So in civic affairs as in economic ones, a generation of young people had every reason to feel they'd done exactly what they were supposed to do according to the rulebook—and got worse than nothing. What Obama had robbed them of was precisely the thing he so famously promised: Hope—hope of any meaningful change via institutional means in their lifetimes. If they wanted to see their actual problems addressed, if they wanted to see any sort of democratic transformation of America, it was going to have to be through other means.<sup>71</sup>

So those on the traditional Left who call on Occupy to “do it right” are really missing the point. As Graeber pointed out, the movement very nearly started out that way—and had it done so, it would have failed.

Asking why OWS refuses to create a leadership structure, and asking why we don't come up with concrete policy statements, is of course two ways of asking the same thing: Why don't we engage with the existing political structure so as to ultimately become a part of it?

If one were compiling a scrapbook of worst advice ever given, this sort of thing might well merit an honorable place. Since the financial crash of 2008, there have been endless attempts to kick off a national movement against the depredations of America's financial elites taking the approach such journalists recommended. All failed. Most failed miserably. It was only when a movement appeared that resolutely refused to take the traditional path, that rejected the existing political order entirely as inher-

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69 Graeber, “On Playing By the Rules.”

70 *Ibid.*

71 Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, p. 98.

ently corrupt, that called for the complete reinvention of American democracy, that occupations immediately began to blossom across the country.<sup>72</sup>

From its beginning, Occupy Wall Street was heavily influenced by the “horizontalism” of the Spanish Indignados, and before that of the Argentinian movements of 2001. Graeber, in an interview with Ezra Klein, referred to it as an example of prefigurative politics:

DG: ...It’s pre-figurative, so to speak. You’re creating a vision of the sort of society you want to have in miniature. And it’s a way of juxtaposing yourself against these powerful, undemocratic forces you’re protesting. If you make demands, you’re saying, in a way, that you’re asking the people in power and the existing institutions to do something different. And one reason people have been hesitant to do that is they see these institutions as the problem.

EK: So if you say, for instance, that you want a tax on Wall Street and then you’ll be happy, you’re implicitly saying that you’re willing to be happy with a slightly modified version of the current system.

DG: Right. The tax on Wall Street will go to people controlled by Wall Street.

EK: By which you mean government.

DG: Yes. So we are keeping it open-ended. In a way, what we want is to create spaces where people can think about questions like that. In New York, according to law, any unpermitted assembly of more than 12 people is illegal in New York. Space itself is not an openly available resource. But the one resource that isn’t scarce is smart people with ideas. So we’re trying to reframe things away from the rhetoric of demands to a questions of visions and solutions. Now how that translates into actual social change is an interesting question. One way this has been done elsewhere is you have local initiatives that come out of the local assemblies.<sup>73</sup>

Graeber also spoke favorably of the “Buenos Aires strategy” from the Argentine meltdown as a model for Occupy:

Essentially, the strategy is to create alternative institutions, based on horizontal principles, that have nothing to do with the government, and declare the entire political system to be absolutely corrupt... Hence after the popular economic collapse in Argentina in 2001, a popular uprising that ousted three different governments in a matter of months settled into a strategy of creating alternative institutions based on the strategy of creating alternative institutions based on the principles of what they themselves called ‘horizontality’; popular assemblies to govern urban neighborhoods, recuperated factories and other workplaces..., self-organized unemployed associations..., even, for a while, an alternative currency system.<sup>74</sup>

John Holloway argued, in similar terms, that Occupy shouldn’t be concerned with influencing state policy or taking control of the present system—which is becoming increasingly impossible—but with seceding from the system and telling capital to go to hell.

...[P]erhaps we can hope that non-state oriented politics will become more and more common and more widespread throughout society...

*As a refusal?*

Yes, as a refusal. As a kind of total breakdown of the old way of doing things, which might bring a few little benefits but really it didn’t take anybody very far. And I think that more and more people are being forced to reinvent their politics or reinvent their ideas about politics, both in terms of protests – but also I think in terms of creating alternatives. If the system has no room for us, if the system simply

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72 *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

73 Ezra Klein, “You’re creating a vision of the sort of society you want to have in miniature,” *The Washington Post*, October 3, 2011 <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/youre-creating-a-vision-of-the-sort-of-society-you-want-to-have-in-miniature/2011/08/25/gIQAXVg7HL\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/youre-creating-a-vision-of-the-sort-of-society-you-want-to-have-in-miniature/2011/08/25/gIQAXVg7HL_blog.html)>.

74 Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, p. 267.

leaves 50% of young people unemployed, if state benefits are cut back, if the state absolutely refuses to negotiate, if the police become more repressive, then I think we are forced not only to think of creative forms of protest but also ways of how we actually survive and how we actually create alternative ways of living.... But I think what the crisis is also telling us is that *that's* the way to go, but that we haven't gone far enough yet. We're not yet in a situation where we can just tell capital to go to hell and survive without it.... But I think that's the direction we have to go in.<sup>75</sup>

Tiberius Brastaviceanu of the Multitude Project describes the Occupy camps as “embryos of the new world”:

The camps are incubators for new systems of governance..., for open and decentralized economical systems with alternative channels of value exchange (currencies), for a new culture, for new education systems... These new institutions are taking shape in these spaces and are now starting to diffuse throughout society. It is a global phenomenon. The world is going through a profound metamorphosis process.

Yes,... some people may think that we can't apply this to the entire society. They are dead wrong. The new technology enables the scaling of these systems, this is in fact the essence of what we've been saying from the beginning.<sup>76</sup>

The Occupy movement has functioned as a teach-in, with speakers like Michel Bauwens and Juliet Schor appearing at Zuccotti Park. Michel Bauwens of the Foundation for Peer-to-Peer Alternatives appeared on November 2:

To succeed in social change, you need 3 things.

- a genuine mass movement. As the first native movement and great hope of the digital age that is what #ows is all about.
- concrete alternatives that can change our lives and allow us to live our values right now. This is what commons-based peer production provides – a new way of producing value.
- the ability to be able to stop bad policies, and propose new ones that allow alternatives to survive and thrive, for which we need true democratic processes.

A ‘commons’ rather than ‘market state’ orientation is a fruitful way to think about solving humanity's problems in a new way.<sup>77</sup>

And Schor spoke November 4 on the principles of Plenitude.<sup>78</sup>

At the time of the nationwide wave of Occupy camp shutdowns in November 2011, many observers thought it removed an impediment to this new phase of the revolution—marking, not the dissolution of the movement, but a phase transition laying the ground for the next wave.

We've witnessed surface waves in the past [Arab Spring, M15, etc.]... Is the #occupy everywhere the last wave able to tip the establishment over? I don't think so. But every one of these waves leaves permanent marks, which will affect the next wave, and the way the establishment will react to it. If we are not at the tipping point yet, it doesn't mean that change will not happen. The transformative forces introduced by the new technology are extremely powerful. Change will eventually happen, but when and how?

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75 Jerome Roos, “Talking About a Revolution With John Holloway,” *John Holloway*, April 13, 2013 <<http://www.johnholloway.com.mx/2013/05/01/talking-about-a-revolution-with-john-holloway/>>.

76 Tiberius Brastaviceanu, “What are the #occupy camps?” *Multitude Project*, October 18, 2011 <<http://multitudeproject.blogspot.com/2011/10/what-are-occupation-camps.html>>.

77 “Michael [sic] Bauwens on peer to Peer,” New York City General Assembly <<http://www.nycga.net/events/event/michael-bauwens-on-peer-to-peer/>>.

78 “Juliet Schor at Occupy Wall Street on Vimeo” <<http://vimeo.com/31842979>>.

Almost all occupation camps around the world have been dismantled. The energy they had concentrated within them is now diffusing into society, operating these permanent changes that will pave the way for the next wave to come. Neighborhoods are now organizing using new methods that emerged during the occupation. New economical initiatives are taking shape, establishing open and decentralized means of production and distribution of value, establishing new institutions based on a new paradigm, almost entirely outside of the system.<sup>79</sup>

Marina Sitrin and Luis Mareno-Caballud made a comparison to the Spanish Indignado movement:

This phase is characterized by the gradual shift from a focus on acts of protest... to instituting the type of change that the movements actually want to see happen in society as a whole. The capacity to create solutions grows as the movements expand in all directions, first through the appearance of multiple occupations connected among themselves, and then through the creation of—or collaboration with—groups or networks that are able to solve problems on a local level through cooperation and the sharing of skills and resources. For example, Occupy Harlem is using direct action to prevent heat from being shut off in a building in the neighborhood....

In the case of Spain, this expansion began in June, when the movement decided to focus its energy more on the assemblies and the working groups than on maintaining the encampments themselves. To maintain the miniature models of a society that the movement wished to create did not necessarily contribute to the actual changes that were needed in the populations that needed them the most. Which is why the decision to move away from the encampments was nothing more than another impulse in the constructive aims of the movement: the real encampment that has to be reconstructed is the world.<sup>80</sup>

From the outset, the Occupy movement generated innovations using the same Bazaar model ("open source protest") John Robb has noted in Al Qaeda and the file-sharing movement.

Essential rules of open source protest include:

- A promise. A simple goal/idea that nearly everyone can get behind. Adbusters did pretty good with "occupy wall street." Why? Nearly everyone hates the pervasive corruption of banks and Wall Street. It's an easy target.
- A plausible promise. Prove that the promise can work. They did. They actually occupied Wall Street and set up camp. They then got the message out.
- A big tent and an open invitation. It doesn't matter what your reason for protesting is as long as you hate/dislike Wall Street. The big tent is already in place (notice the diversity of the signage)....
- Let everyone innovate. Don't create a leadership group. The general assembly approach appears to work.
- Support anyone in a leadership role that either a) grows the movement or b) advances the movement closer to its goal. Oppose (ignore) anybody that proposes a larger, more complex agenda or those that claim ownership over the movement.
- If a new technique works, document it, use it again, and share it with everyone else. Copy everything that works.
- Spread the word of the movement as widely as possible.

That's the gist of it....

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79 Tiberius Brastaviceanu, "The multitude movement limited by the pace of cultural change and of general understanding of open movements," *The Multitude Project*, December 7, 2011 <<http://multitudeproject.blogspot.com/2011/12/multitude-movement-limited-by-pace-of.html>>.

80 Marina Sitrin and Luis Mareno-Caballud, "Occupy Wall Street, Beyond Encampments," *Yes!*, November 21, 2011 <<http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/occupy-wall-street-beyond-encampments>>.

What's the big picture? Global guerrillas are getting better at building open source protests. We are going to see more and they are likely to become a prominent feature of the geopolitical landscape....<sup>81</sup>

The beauty of the lack of any specific demands—aside from a general sentiment against Wall Street, corporate corruption and the concentration of wealth—is that it leaves the movement open to issue-oriented activism by component movements in a stigmergic, DIY basis. As Graeber put it, “keeping things open-ended lets you provide a forum for a discontent that everyone feels, but haven't found a way to express yet.”<sup>82</sup> Occupy as a common platform energizes all the sub-movements, empowering them to promote more specific anti-Wall Street agendas in their own constituencies. Robb writes:

Open source protest is usually focused on a single overarching goal. In most recent cases, it's a call for a government that isn't corrupt.

"No corruption" is the type of goal everyone can get behind....

However, the motivations that actually get people to show up in the street *day after day* are more specific. Every individual or group that turns up has a very specific gripe/goal for protesting (some elements are often violent, but that's to be expected since there is so much diversity of motive). Yet, despite that diversity, everyone is still onboard with the simple overarching goal of the protest.

This diversity of motive makes it very hard for a government to tailor a response/action that will diffuse the protest.

It also make it nearly impossible for any single group or individual to sieze control of the protest and use it to advance their own agenda.<sup>83</sup>

What's more, it's modular: a “self-organizing, self-replicating nodal network.”

Self-organizing, replicating movements have the ability to spread very fast, because they tap into the ability of everyone to participate and organize. There isn't a hierarchical bottleneck that the movement has to go through....

The Occupy movement has a been a protest movement so far. It could also become a movement which builds a new socio-economic-political system. It could model what a new system would look like. If it did that then it would become autopoetic/self-creating.

A virus replicates by tapping into the DNA of another cell. The Occupy movement is operating like a virus in the sense that its tapping into the dissatisfaction with the current system. A virus replicates but it is not autopoetic.

For the Occupy movement to become autopoetic it needs to model new socio-economic-political methods which it itself uses to run itself....

The Occupy movement so far knows what it is against, there is a great opportunity for it to create what is for. That can happen at Occupy nodes if there is room for facilitated discussion of what are the best solutions. These solutions can then be modeled there. And replicated elsewhere.<sup>84</sup>

Shlok Vaidya describes the modular/stigmergic principles of the Occupy movement quite well:

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81 John Robb, “OCCUPY WALL STREET (the theory),” *Global Guerrillas*, October 3, 2011 <<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-the-theory.html>>.

82 Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, p. 22.

83 John Robb, “Protests Everywhere (here's why),” *Global Guerrillas*, July 7, 2013 <<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2013/07/protests-everywhere-heres-why.html>>.

84 “Occupy as Self-Organizing, Self-Replicating Node,” *Open Collaboration*, October 13, 2011 <<http://opencollaboration.wordpress.com/2011/10/13/occupy-as-self-organizing-self-replicating-nodet>>; taken down, but quoted at “Occupy as Self-Organizing, Self-Replicating Node,” Networked Activism and Asymmetric Conflict Study Group, LinkedIn <<http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Occupy-as-selforganizing-replicating-node-4129775.S.79291616>>.

OWS currently consists of thousands/millions/hundreds of millions of cognitive nodes:

- Connecting/infecting new nodes. As part of this, the organization is generating memes, testing against live audiences, and dropped if counterproductive. Trying to build sufficient capacity before...
- Probing attack vectors. A botnet, like a storm, emphasizes growth of its own capacity before attacking (or raining). Mild DDoS on the Brooklyn bridge or around the Bank of America in SF. Anonymous phishing for corruption, etc. This is enabled by...
- Decentralized command and control. Perhaps more specifically, modular design. Each protest in each city is led by independent affiliates (if not further broken down). Crashing a protest in Ohio has no impact on the rest of the network.<sup>85</sup>

Alexis Madrigal compares the platform/module architecture of OWS to Twitter's Application Programming Interface:

Local organizers can choose from the menu of options modeled in Zuccotti, and adapt them for local use. Occupy Wall Street was designed to be mined and recombined, not simply copied.

...Occupy Wall Street today can be seen like the early days of Twitter.com. Nearly everyone accessed Twitter information through clients developed by people outside the Twitter HQ. These co-developers made Twitter vastly more useful by adding their own ideas to the basic functionality of the social network. These developers don't have to take in all of OWS data or use all of the strategies developed at OWS. Instead, they can choose the most useful information streams for their own individual applications (i.e. occupations, memes, websites, essays, policy papers).<sup>86</sup>

Those who criticize Occupy for its lack of structure and clear demands, Douglas Rushkoff writes, are unable "to comprehend a 21st century movement from the perspective of the 20th century politics, media, and economics in which we are still steeped."

Yes, there are a wide array of complaints, demands, and goals from the Wall Street protesters: the collapsing environment, labor standards, housing policy, government corruption, World Bank lending practices, unemployment, increasing wealth disparity and so on. Different people have been affected by different aspects of the same system—and they believe they are symptoms of the same core problem....

Anyone who says he has no idea what these folks are protesting is not being truthful. Whether we agree with them or not, we all know what they are upset about, and we all know that there are investment bankers working on Wall Street getting richer while things for most of the rest of us are getting tougher. What upsets banking's defenders and politicians alike is the refusal of this movement to state its terms or set its goals in the traditional language of campaigns.

That's because, unlike a political campaign designed to get some person in office and then close up shop..., this is not a movement with a traditional narrative arc. As the product of the decentralized networked-era culture, it is less about victory than sustainability. It is not about one-pointedness, but inclusion and groping toward consensus. It is not like a book; it is like the Internet.

Occupy Wall Street is meant more as a way of life that spreads through contagion...<sup>87</sup>

Occupy Wall Street didn't *have* a platform. It was a platform. Their lack of specific demands gave them strength. It was hard to miss what their main focus was: hatred for Wall Street, for the concentration of wealth, for the unholy alliance between Big Business and the state. That common set of values was the ba-

85 Shlok Vaidya, "Occupy Wall Street, Botnets, and Thousand-Year Storms," *Shlok Vaidya*, October 5, 2011 <<http://shloky.com/?p=3609>>.

86 Alexis Madrigal, "Guide to the Occupy Wall Street API, Or Why the Nerdiest Way to Think About OWS is So Useful," *The Atlantic*, November 16, 2011 <<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/11/a-guide-to-the-occupy-wall-street-api-or-why-the-nerdiest-way-to-think-about-ows-is-so-useful/248562/>>.

87 Douglas Rushkoff, "Think Occupy Wall St. is a phase? You don't get it," *Rushkoff*, October 5, 2011 <<http://www.rushkoff.com/blog/2011/10/5/think-occupy-wall-st-is-a-phase-you-dont-get-it.html>>.

sic operating platform of the movement. Beyond that, the specific agendas built on that platform were potentially unlimited. And the common platform was a source of strength for all those individual agendas. The loosely allied subgroups were modules operating on a common platform. There were as many sub-movements piggybacked on Occupy as there were reasons for hating Wall Street, ways of being affected by it, and walks of life among the Occupiers. There was a shared perception of the evil, but as many emphases and agendas as there were people who'd subjectively experienced it.

In networked protest movements, like other stigmergically organized projects ranging from Linux and Wikipedia to al Qaeda, nobody needs "permission" from "leadership" to try out ideas. And whatever idea works for one node instantly becomes property of the whole network. "Occupy Our Homes," which sprang up almost overnight, was one example of such stigmergic innovation. As they used to say in the civics textbooks, Occupy was a "laboratory of democracy."

In the cities outside New York, the protests were less about occupying symbolic targets related to the national banking system, to occupying targets of significance to the daily lives of people in those communities. For example Aaron Bady of Occupy Oakland observed that the movement in Oakland was asserting ordinary people's control of the city:

But Oakland is not a center of finance and power or a locus of political privilege. There is a "here" here. No one really lives in Wall Street, but those who "Occupy Oakland" do so because they already did. As a result, when we "Occupy Oakland," we are engaged much less in a symbolic protest against "the banks" or "the 1%"—political actions which are given their shape by the political terrain of protesting abstractions—and much more in a very concrete struggle for a right to the city.

After all, the police who dispersed occupiers with tear gas were only doing the sort of thing they had long been accustomed to doing to the poor, transient, and/or communities of color that make up a great majority of Oakland's humanity. They used inhuman means of regulating human bodies—the declaration of "unlawful assembly"—because the city is accustomed to having the power to do so, the effective right to assemble and disassemble Oakland as they see fit. It's that power that's being contested. When a body calling itself the Oakland Commune renames the front yard of city hall after a police shooting victim, sets out to feed and house anyone who stands in line, and refuses to allow the state's purveyors of violence to police them, the challenge is quite direct and legible, a peaceful revolution...

This is why putting up tents in Oakland was not a symbolic protest, not a part of the movement that can be allowed to die. To put up a tent and sleep in it, in violation of city ordinances, is a tiny way to claim the right *to make the city ourselves*....<sup>88</sup>

What the "appoint leaders and set an agenda" people have never understood is that there's no way to do this without destroying the agility that characterizes stigmergic organization. The vertical approach "generally leads to heavy, slow, expensive, and high-maintenance structures."<sup>89</sup>

As noted earlier, the networked resistance movement's lack of interest in seizing state power reflected a realistic assessment of the results of conventional revolutionary strategy.

...[T]he traditional aim of revolutionary movements to take over the state is not a solution but part of the problem, as the state "concentrates power in the hands of the few at the apex of its hierarchy, and defends the system that benefits a ruling class of capitalists, landlords, and state managers. It cannot be used for revolution, since it only creates ruling elites..."<sup>90</sup>

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88 Aaron Bady, "The Oakland Commune," *Possible Futures*, December 5, 2011 <<http://www.possible-futures.org/2011/12/05/oakland-commune/>>.

89 Madrilonia/@PinkNoiseRev, "Protest Analysis (5): Towards a new style of political organization for commons-oriented mobilizations?" *P2P Foundation Blog*, July 14, 2013 <<http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/unity-without-convergenacetowards-a-new-style-of-political-organization-for-commons-oriented-mobilizations/2013/07/14>>.

90 Jerome Roos, "We Are Everywhere! The Autonomous Roots of the Real Democracy Movement," Paper delivered at 7th

For anarchists, this is the key difference between direct action and protest: “protest, however militant, is an appeal to the authorities to behave differently; direct action ... is a matter of proceeding as one would if the existing structure of power did not exist”.... In the final analysis, therefore, “direct action is the defiant insistence on acting as if one is already free.”<sup>91</sup>

Activists committed to prefigurative politics tend to be less interested in making claims on existing authorities than in creating – in the here and now – the type of social relations in which they actually wish to live and work.<sup>92</sup>

A certain kind of verticalist is as fond of pulling out Jo Freeman's "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," as a certain kind of right-libertarian is of Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons." Although Freeman's essay is commonly drawn on as a critique of consensus process, consensus process was originally developed *in response to* the problems she described (i.e. informal cliques emerging, controlling information and setting agendas, as feminist groups grew to over twenty people or so).

...almost everyone who is not emerging from an explicitly anti-authoritarian position... completely mis-read Freeman's essay, and interpret it not as a plea for formal mechanisms to ensure equality, but as a plea for more transparent hierarchy. Leninists are notorious for this sort of thing, but Liberals are just as bad.... First, Freeman's argument about the formation of cliques and invisible power structures is taken as an argument that any group of over twenty people will always have to have cliques, power structures, and people in authority. The next step is to insist that if you want to minimize the power of such cliques, or any deleterious effects those power structures might have, the only way to do so is to institutionalize them: to take the de facto cabal and turn them into a central committee.... One needs to get power out of the shadows—to formalize the process, make up rules, hold elections, specify exactly what the cabal is allowed to do and what it is not. In this way, at least, power will be made transparent and "accountable."....

From a practical, activist perspective, this prescription is obviously ridiculous. It is far easier to limit the degree to which informal cliques can wield effective power by granting them no formal status at all, and therefore no legitimacy; whatever "formal accountability structures" it is imagined will contain the cliques-now-turned-committees can only be far less effective in this regard, not least because they end up legitimating and hence massively increasing the differential access to information which allows some in otherwise egalitarian groups to have greater power to begin with.... [S]tructures of transparently inevitably... begin to become structures of stupidity as soon as that takes place.<sup>93</sup>

Comparing the Occupy movement to the Populist movement of the late 19th century, Les Leopold distills its lessons down into these bullet points:

**1. Shared Movement Experiences:** The populist cooperatives provided the day-to-day shared experiences that bound the movement together on a local, state, and national level. People worked together and struggled together against powerful opponents, often having to suffer vigilante violence to protect their budding cooperatives that stored produce and livestock, and that sold food, supplies, and farm implements. These shared experiences built up the courage and self-respect of millions of participants. They felt part of something big and important. They shared the common identity of populism.

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annual ECPR general conference: ‘Comparative Perspectives on the New Politics of Dissent’ Democracy of the Squares: Visions and Practices of Democracy from Egypt to the US Sciences Po Bordeaux, September 4-7, 2013, p. 9. The quote is from Lucien Van der Walt and M. Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009).

91 *Ibid.*, p. 18. Quote is from Graeber, *The Democracy Project*.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

93 Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* (Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2015), pp. 202-203.

And today? While there are thousands of cooperatives and progressive nonprofit organizations in the country today, they are not linked in substantial ways. It's also not clear if they are creating the common experiences necessary for movement building.

The Occupy Wall Street encampments certainly are (or were) creating such communities, but as currently conceived and constructed, they just aren't suitable for those who don't want to encamp. Also it's not clear if the encampments will survive the current round of evictions....

**2. Systematic Education:** The populist lecturing system also was key to movement building as it developed a dialogue with everyday farmers about how the economic system really worked and what the movement should stand for. The base of the movement, not just the leadership, became financially literate as it debated and understood the need for a radical restructuring of the financial system based on the "sub-treasury plan."

And today? We don't as yet have anything like a "lecturer" system to engage the American public in an educational discussion. But one could be built in a hurry. There are plenty of us who could link together to build a "Economics for the 99 Percent" program. But it may need something larger to get it going and give it purpose.

**3. Independent Media:** The populist movement was well-supported with a rag-tag collection of small, but vital newspapers and journals—about 100 of them—throughout the country. These media outlets provided continual news about the key economic and political issues of the day. Its editors ran their journals on a shoestring in order to maintain their independence and the clarity of their message.

And today? We do indeed have our rag-tag newsletters, journals, and thousands of websites, with Altnet.org being one of the best. Running on a shoestring is nothing new to them. But at the moment, there is little coordination or shared identity. But that could come as a movement grows.<sup>94</sup>

His reference to systematic education is tantalizing; it reminds me of Thomas Hodgskin's lectures at the London Mechanics Institute, compiled in his book *Popular Political Economy*.

One early example of stigmergic innovation occurred during the first eviction threat from New York City Mayor Bloomberg. Robb speculated on new methods the movement might adopt, if they were severed from Zuccotti Park as a base.

Let's start off with an assumption. This is Bloomberg vs. Occupy. One mind vs. many minds. The goal is to coerce him into changing his mind. Dissuade him. Get inside his OODA loop.

- Go straight for him. Maximize the eviction's taint on Bloomberg's personal brand. Personalize the protest/eviction by attaching the blame to him personally. Pierce his shield of bureaucratic impersonality. Brand the eviction with the name: Bloomberg. This is/will be a global stage, use it.
- Confuse him. Lots and lots of Flash Mobs. Shut down bridges and major streets. Overwhelm with volume/speed. Non-violent disruption. As soon as police arrive in force, disperse and reassemble at new location. Bikes + Kids. Disrupt, disrupt, disrupt. More flash-mobs = more disruption. As long as the square is under attack, keep the city tied in knots....
- Connect with more people than him. Best way to do this: Eyes in the sky. Get a camera/cameras above Liberty Square. Stream the feed. The better the quality the more impact it will have. It will play across the world....<sup>95</sup>

In the midst of the same standoff, Daniel Denvir offered a similar prescription: "funnel the mass movement and zeal for direct action into ongoing and roving occupations of 1 'percent' targets to win victories and sustain the movement through the winter."

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94 Les Leopold, "Don't 'Occupy the Democratic Party'—Four Lessons From the Populist Movement," *Altnet*, December 13, 2011 <[http://www.altnet.org/story/153354/don%27t\\_%27occupy\\_the\\_democratic\\_party%27\\_--\\_four\\_lessons\\_from\\_the\\_populist\\_movement](http://www.altnet.org/story/153354/don%27t_%27occupy_the_democratic_party%27_--_four_lessons_from_the_populist_movement)>.

95 John Robb, "Bloomberg vs. Occupy," *Global Guerrillas*, October 13, 2011 <<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2011/10/bloomberg-vs-occupy.htm>>.

Imagine if there were a new major action every month, in every major American city, targeting a greedy Wall Street bank or defending a family fighting foreclosure?

Why not occupy everything, as need be, and on a roving basis?...

Hypothetically, the movement could:

- Occupy one of the many troublemaking banks, whether it be Bank of America, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan or whichever, until it agrees to let people fighting foreclosure stay in their homes and offer meaningful debt forgiveness....
- Occupy a home where a family is fighting eviction....
- ...[L]ink up with a labor struggle like that of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) against Verizon's attempt to roll back benefits and retirement....
- Occupy where the 1 percent "live, work and play." The super rich all belong to country clubs and other exclusive institutions. If the movement is targeting a specific bank, a picket of the CEO's country club will hit them one place it hurts: their easy comfort amongst high society.<sup>96</sup>

So Bloomberg's first threat to shut down the Liberty Square encampment coincided with the first wave of proposals for transitioning from static geographical bases to swarming. As it was, that first eviction crisis was defused—in part by Occupy's preemptive resort to a variant of the very "take it to the enemy" approach Robb recommended. Occupy

goes on the offensive. It personalizes the eviction move (already inside Bloomberg's OODA). It finds Bloomberg. He's at a gala dinner at Ciprianis (a Wall Street restaurant). They surround the restaurant and try to enter it to deliver a petition with 310,000 signatures. Bloomberg hides, departs from the rear.<sup>97</sup>

In response to a later eviction crisis, Occupy Oakland responded with a General Strike—again, a form of swarming supplanting the static encampment model.

We propose a city wide general strike and we propose we invite all students to walk out of school. Instead of workers going to work and students going to school, the people will converge on downtown Oakland to shut down the city.

All banks and corporations should close down for the day or we will march on them.

While we are calling for a general strike, we are also calling for much more. People who organize out of their neighborhoods, schools, community organizations, affinity groups, workplaces and families are encouraged to self organize in a way that allows them to participate in shutting down the city in whatever manner they are comfortable with and capable of.

The whole world is watching Oakland. Let's show them what is possible.<sup>98</sup>

Other swarming tactics the Occupy movement experimented with included creating a demonstration effect by squatting vacant buildings and occupying foreclosed homes, and encouraging others to do the same. At the outset of the occupation, on September 17, OccupyWallStreet.org issued a "Modest Call to Action" that included this plank:

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96 Daniel Denvir, "6 Places to Occupy Next: Protest the 1% Where They Live, Work and Play," *Alternet*, October 13, 2011 <[http://www.alternet.org/economy/152721/6\\_places\\_to\\_occupy\\_next:\\_protest\\_the\\_1\\_where\\_they\\_live,\\_work\\_and\\_play](http://www.alternet.org/economy/152721/6_places_to_occupy_next:_protest_the_1_where_they_live,_work_and_play)>.

97 Robb, "BLOOMBERG VS. OCCUPY: Round I Occupy #ows," *Global Guerrillas*, October 14, 2011 <<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2011/10/bloomberg-vs-occupy-a-knock-out-decision-ows.html>>.

98 "Occupy Oakland Calls for a General Strike, Wednesday, November 2," *amor mundi*, October 27 2011 <<http://amormundi.blogspot.com/2011/10/occupy-oakland-calls-for-general-strike.html>>.

We call for the seizure and use of abandoned buildings, of abandoned land, of every property seized and abandoned by speculators, for the people, for every group that will organize them.<sup>99</sup>

This was first actually attempted, so far as I know, by Occupy Oakland, toward the tail end of their General Strike in response to the police attack on their camp. Some participants entered a vacant office building near the occupation site and issued an announcement encouraging the homeless to occupy vacant offices and homes all across Oakland and across the country as well. Unfortunately they did so in a clumsy and ill-advised manner—occupying the building rather abruptly and without warning, and building a bonfire in the middle of the street—and provoked brutal repression by the police.

Business Insider discussed this decision in an article entitled “The Inevitable Has Happened.”

We are well aware that such an action is illegal.... Still, the ferocity of the police response surprised us. Once again, they mobilized hundreds of police officers, armed to the hilt with bean bag guns, tear gas and flashbang grenades.... The city spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to protect one landlord's right to earn a few thousand every month. Why is this? Whereas the blockade of the port—an action which caused millions of dollars of losses—met with no resistance, the attempt to take one single building, a building that was unused, met with the most brutal and swift response.

The answer: they fear this logical next step from the movement more than anything else. They fear it because they know how much appeal it will have. All across the US thousands upon thousands of commercial and residential spaces sit empty while more and more people are forced to sleep in the streets, or driven deep into poverty while trying to pay their rent despite unemployment or poverty wages. We understand that capitalism is a system that has no care for human needs. It is a system which produces hundreds of thousands of empty houses at the same time as it produces hundreds of thousands of homeless people. The police are the line between these people and these houses. They say: you can stay in your rat-infested park. You can camp out here as long as we want. But the moment that you threaten property rights, we will come at you with everything we have.<sup>100</sup>

This “logical next step,” seemingly abortive, was later revived in the aftermath of the national wave of evictions, which spurred Occupy into a new (albeit sporadic and abortive) phase of activism.

After the wave of evictions had passed, according to Jules Lobel, there was a great deal of internal discussion about the future course of the movement. One alternative would be

to create what essentially would be a non-violent guerrilla movement in American cities. For example, Kalle Lasn, the *Adbuster* magazine publisher and originator of the Wall Street encampment idea, reportedly urged a new “swarming strategy of surprise attacks against business as usual.” The Chicago occupiers have resolved to have an event a day throughout the winter, such as defending foreclosed homes, sit-ins, banner drops, building parks, providing supplies to the homeless, or guerrilla theater and art. In the same vein, longtime social movement scholar and activist Francis Fox Piven foresaw some time ago that the movement would develop new phases, utilizing “other forms of disruptive protests that are punchier than occupying a square,” or “rolling occupations of public space.”

This article suggests another alternative, one that focuses on creating sustainable alternative decentralized institutions that reflect in microcosm the egalitarian, democratic vision of society that the Occupy Movement has put forth....

Perhaps the most critical component of OWS is its creation of alternative communities which reflect the egalitarian, democratic world that its activists seek for the future. ...[T]his perspective seeks to create in microcosm the alternative models that reflect the future world that the activists support, while at the same time using those institutions to engage in direct action to change the current reality....

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99 “A Modest Call to Action on this September 17<sup>th</sup>,” OccupyWallSt.org, September 17, 2011<[http://occupywallst.org/article/September\\_Revolution/](http://occupywallst.org/article/September_Revolution/)>.

100 “Statement on the Occupation of the former Traveler's Aid Society at 520 16<sup>th</sup> Street,” Indybay.org, November 3, 2011 <<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2011/11/03/18697018.php>>.

To me, the long term viability of the OWS movement as a transformative movement lies in the creation of these communities, which not only directly practice what they believe, but seek to reach out and effect the public consciousness through direct action...

There are many groups which are trying to create alternative models in microcosm: food co-ops, farmer markets, cooperative renewable energy projects. Indeed many of these groups have united in an umbrella formation known as the solidarity economy. But none of these groups have captivated the public as has OWS, and very few combine direct action with community building....<sup>101</sup>

Before it fizzled out as a nationwide movement, Occupy mainly took the second course, but combining the second with the third would have had far more powerful an effect. Occupy groups might have networked with local micromanufacturing movements—hackerspaces and Fab Labs—and other forms of decentralist economics like local currencies and mutual aid institutions, on ways of integrating such tools into local neighborhood economies, building the horizontal framework of a resilient economy that could provide for members' subsistence needs outside the wage system and reduce precarity for the unemployed.

The Occupy Wall Street Sustainability project in early 2012 offered workshops on alternative energy, rooftop gardening, composting, permaculture, and the capital assets for putting them into practice.

Occupy Wall Street Sustainability will be undertaking a number of ventures in Spring 2012, including a mobile education lab, monthly skillshare and workshop events, an Eco-Summit, and a rooftop farm!!! We support projects in sustainability, environmental awareness, food justice, permaculture, alternative energy & much more!!!...

Contributions will be invested in our programming, as well as the construction of our newest venture, ROOFTOP FARMING!!! At two locations in Brooklyn, NY we will be establishing Rooftop Farms, as a platform to expand rooftop farming in NYC. We seek to reach under served communities, who have been traditionally labeled as food deserts, to provide fresh, nutritious produce!!!<sup>102</sup>

During its brief period of innovation after the evictions, Occupy made several promising (if abortive) ventures. On December 1, 2011 OccupyWallSt.org announced plans to re-occupy a foreclosed home on the 6<sup>th</sup>, as “a national kick-off for a new frontier for the occupy movement: the liberation of vacant bank-owned homes for those in need.”<sup>103</sup> The re-occupation was intended as part of a national day of action, “including eviction defense at foreclosed properties, takeovers of vacant properties by homeless families, and foreclosure action disruptions, ...in more than 25 cities across the country.” The day of action on December 6 saw real estate occupations in more than twenty cities.<sup>104</sup>

David Ronfeldt wrote this at the outset of the campaign:

So far, the Occupy movement has generated no major incidents that fully manifest swarming. But a lot of statements... speak to its attractiveness; and swarming is implicit in the efforts at multiple occupations — a swarm of occupations. By some accounts, the swarming phase of the Occupy movement is just beginning; if so, it may take the movement in new directions against new targets, perhaps especially if the physical occupations of parks and other sites are ended.<sup>105</sup>

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101 Jules Lobel, “The Future of the Occupy Movement,” *The Future of Occupy*, December 6, 2011 <<http://thefutureofoccupy.org/2011/12/15/the-future-of-the-occupy-movement/>>.

102 “Occupy Wall Street Sustainability,” WePay <[https://www.wepay.com/x2e7mcl/donations/occupy\\_wall\\_street\\_sustainability/](https://www.wepay.com/x2e7mcl/donations/occupy_wall_street_sustainability/)>.

103 “Occupy Wall Street Goes Home,” OccupyWallStreet.org, December 1, 2011 <<http://occupywallst.org/article/occupy-wall-street-goes-home/>>.

104 David Edwards, “Occupy’ protesters reclaiming foreclosed homes in 20 cities,” *The Raw Story*, December 5, 2011 <<http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2011/12/06/occupy-protesters-reclaiming-foreclosed-homes-in-20-cities/>>.

105 David Ronfeldt, “What the Occupy Protests Mean: A TIMN Interpretation (Part Two),” *Visions from Two Theories*, December 6, 2011 <<http://twotheories.blogspot.com/2011/12/what-occupy-protests-mean-timn.html>>.

And in the aftermath of Occupy Our Homes, Nathan Schneider wrote, “this is our best glimpse yet of what Occupy Phase II will look like.” In fact "Phase II" fizzled out, but for a brief period autonomous local groups introduced another wave of stigmergic innovation on the common platform, independently taking up the idea of occupying independent real estate for the use of the evicted and homeless.

Occupy Homes remained active, in fits and starts, in communities all over the United States through 2012.<sup>106</sup> OH groups around the country commemorated the project's one-year anniversary in December 2012 with a rash of occupations in places like Minneapolis, Buffalo, Atlanta and Woodland CA.

Although Occupy Homes never operated on anywhere near that scale, there are precedents for much larger-scale action on the same model during the Great Depression.

The scale of housing organizing during the early 1930s, however, dwarfs what we have seen so far today. Crowds of hundreds, and sometimes even thousands of people, mobilized to stop evictions in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Gary, Youngstown, Toledo and other urban centers, mostly under the direction of the Communist Party. As in much of current housing organizing, women were often on the front lines. Masses of these women filled the streets as others climbed to the roofs and poured buckets of water on the police below. Women beat back the police officers' horses by sticking them with long hat pins or pouring marbles into the streets. If the police were successful in moving the family's furniture out to the curb, the crowd simply broke down the door and moved the family's belongings back inside after the police had left.

“There were times that landlords were saying, ‘You can’t evict anymore in the Bronx. These people control the streets,’” says Mark Naison, a professor at Fordham University and one of the nation’s leading researchers about housing organizing during the Depression.<sup>107</sup>

Another promising development was the Occupy movement's action to shut down major ports along the West Coast. The overall size of the actions was smaller than that of November 2 in Oakland, but managed to shut down several terminals. Two months after the initial port shutdown, undertaken in response to the police assault on Oscar Grant Plaza, Occupy Oakland again marched on the city's port. On December 13, companies operating the 26 berths at the port told employees not to show up for work—before the march had even started.<sup>108</sup> Occupy LA protestors tried unsuccessfully to shut down Terminal J at the Long beach port (“because it houses shipping agent SSA Marine, which is partially owned by investment bank Goldman Sachs”), but were cleared away when they attempted to obstruct truck access to the terminal.<sup>109</sup> Although the official longshoremen's union leadership did not endorse the shutdowns, many members stayed home in support of the occupiers. And an ad hoc committee elected by port truck drivers serving the major ports of the West Coast endorsed Occupy port shutdowns.<sup>110</sup>

Although the port shutdowns—again—fizzled out, their precedent added to the permanent toolkit and social capital available to be taken up by subsequent waves of the post-1994 global movement. They were

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106 Han Shan, “Occupy Homes Wins Crucial Victories for Struggling Homeowners Against Big Banks,” *Alternet*, June 20, 2012 <[http://www.alternet.org/print/story/155964/occupy\\_homes\\_wins\\_crucial\\_victories\\_for\\_struggling\\_homeowners\\_against\\_big\\_banks](http://www.alternet.org/print/story/155964/occupy_homes_wins_crucial_victories_for_struggling_homeowners_against_big_banks)>.

107 Laura Gottesdiener, “Occupy Homes, One Year On And Growing Daily,” *Z Communications*, December 26, 2012 <<http://www.zcommunications.org/occupy-homes-one-year-on-and-growing-daily-by-laura-gottesdiener>>.

108 Justin Berton, Kevin Fagan, Demian Bulwa, “Oakland port workers stay home as protestors rally,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 13, 2011 <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/12/12/BAJK1MBE5E.DTL&tsp=1>>.

109 “Occupy Ports: 'Occupy' Protesters Demonstrate at Port of Los Angeles,” *KTLA.com*, December 12, 2011 <<http://www.ktla.com/news/landing/ktla-occupy-ports,0,2198544.story>>.

110 “An Open Letter from America's Port Truck Drivers on Occupy the Ports,” Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports, December 12, 2011 <<http://cleanandsafeports.org/blog/2011/12/12/an-open-letter-from-america%E2%80%99s-port-truck-drivers-on-occupy-the-ports/>>.

later applied, on a much larger scale and much more effectively, in the Block the Boat campaign of 2014 in response to Israel's assault on Gaza—causing the Israeli merchant shipping giant Zim to abandon attempts to ship Israeli goods to the West Coast.

Occupy the Farm and Strike Debt were two other Occupy spinoffs that persisted for some time after the shutdown of the camps. Occupy the Farm attempted to stop farm evictions, protect irregular neighborhood gardens against shutdowns by land owners, and build ties with the community-supported agriculture movement. Strike Debt, organized around the first anniversary of Occupy in September 2012, was just what its name implied—an attempt to coordinate mass default on debt, and thereby destroy the systemic power of debt. Like occupations of foreclosed and vacant housing, the potential effect on capitalism would have been devastating had it taken off. And Occupy Sandy was a hugely successful networked relief effort, organized by people with backgrounds in the Occupy movement, for victims of Hurricane Sandy on the eastern seaboard.

Another promising innovation came out of Oakland after the camp shutdowns—the discovery of how to capitalize on the lightness and agility of protesters compared to the cops:

This evolution in tactics was spontaneous, and went unreported in the media. On December 3rd, we took a park and were driven out of it by riot police; that much made the news. What the media didn't report is that we re-took the park later that same evening, and the police realized that it would be senseless to attempt to clear it again, so they packed up their military weaponry and left. Occupy Portland has developed a tactic to keep a park when the police decide to enforce an eviction.

The tactical evolution that evolved relies on two military tactics that are thousands of years old- the tactical superiority of light infantry over heavy infantry, and the tactical superiority of the retreat over the advance....

The lack of weaponry on the part of the protesters grants them the luxury of opposing riot cops at close quarters, or remaining at long range in a refusal to engage the heavy infantry riot police at all. They have the advantage of the retreat, they can quickly move away, or in any direction, and the heavy infantry riot cops lack the swiftness to respond.

So far, all the occupations have, in a grave tactical error, agreed to engage the riot cops when they march in to clear parks. This has been a show of bravado that has the tactical benefits of providing media coverage of the brutal methods of police and the benefit of draining the resources of the oppressor by forcing them to incur the expense of arresting and prosecuting people for trivial offenses.

Now, to move on to the actual application of these tactical principles..., we can take the example of Shemanski park on the 3rd. We occupied the park and set up a few tents and facilities to serve food and coffee. The police soon declared an emergency closure of the park and came out in force, with full riot gear and all the weaponry. The line of riot cops soon forced us out of the park, so someone decided that we ought to march to City Hall.... Once there, the riot cops once again lined up to disperse the crowd. However, since City Hall was closed and there was no point in staying there anyway, someone had the idea to march down to the area of town where all the clubs were, so we took off marching again. The riot cops were trailing behind us, as was the truck with the giant speakers on the top repeatedly announcing "This street is open to traffic, individuals blocking traffic will be subject to arrest." Announcing this repeatedly was useless. One principle of non-violent resistance is this: one person has to walk on the sidewalk, 500 people can walk wherever they please. The riot cops had no place to form a line, so they were crippled.

Since we had no clear destination, the police were unable to get ahead of us and set up roadblocks. They were helpless to do anything but trail along as an escort to the march....

After marching for 3-4 hours, we eventually found ourselves a block away from the park that we'd been forced out of, so we took it again. The riot police lined up and prepared to take the park again, but the attempt was called off and the police just left. They realized that they would have to go through the

standard military procedure of clearing the park inch by inch, only to have us go back out into the streets and march again while they, one more time, trailed along helplessly....

In summary: when the cops come to clear the park, don't resist. As they are preparing for their military maneuver and use of force that the Occupiers cannot reasonably be expected to resist, the occupiers should be packing up their tents and baggage and loading them into wagons, bicycles, backpacks, etc.

Force the cops to clear the park inch by inch, but try to avoid arrest in so doing. Once they have cleared the park, rouse the crowd through loud amplification announcing that you intend to march (any destination will do). Get the music blaring and then march aimlessly, blocking traffic the whole way, for hours....

The police will eventually trim down their entourage because they realize that they are helpless. Eventually, work your way back to the park. Or, if the police have fenced off the park, head to another park. If the police force you out, march again and they will be forced to follow. Eventually, they will inevitably come to the conclusion that they would rather have you in a park than disrupting traffic.<sup>111</sup>

When discussing the nature of Occupy as a fair or school, we can't go without mentioning the way the stigmergic organization of the movement itself facilitated collaboration with innovators, and the rapid adoption of new skills and technology. For example the New York City General Assembly Technology Operations Group

supports the online communication and organization needs of OWS and the New York City General Assembly. We seek to provide online tools that promote participation among occupiers and beyond by extending communication streams and promoting the exchange of information.... Although we promote the use of Open Source solutions, we intend to use whatever technology will best meet the needs of the communities we serve.<sup>112</sup>

...[The group] seeks to bring the Occupy and Free/Libre/Open Source movements together through the development, deployment and documentation of the tools and techniques people need to create the world they want.<sup>113</sup>

There were equally significant forms of innovation other than secure communications systems. Vinay Gupta, designer of the Hexayurt refugee and disaster housing unit, designed a set of cheap protective gear to protect protestors from punitive chemical assault by police.<sup>114</sup>

John Robb analyzes Occupy in terms of John Boyd's thought on the isolation and internal cohesion of elites:

It appears that Occupy's extreme non-violence/passivity has finally generated a social system disruption. Videos and pictures showing policemen using violence against passive protesters have gone viral (UC Berkeley students, Grandma, and open mouth were the leading examples). Stories about this violence are now sweeping the media (7,910 news stories over the last 24 hours). Is this going to have a strategic effect?

Let's look at this from the late, great American strategist John Boyd's perspective. The dynamic of Boyd's strategy is to isolate your enemy across three essential vectors (physical, mental, and moral),

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111 Lester MacGurdy, "Occupy Portland Outsmarts Police Creating Blueprint for Other Occupations," *Portland Occupier*, December 15, 2011 <<http://www.portlandoccupier.org/2011/12/15/occupy-portland-outsmarts-police-creating-blueprint-for-other-occupations/>>.

112 "Technology Operations Group," *Occupy.Net wiki* <[http://wiki.occupy.net/wiki/Technology\\_Operations\\_Group](http://wiki.occupy.net/wiki/Technology_Operations_Group)>.

113 Main Page," *Occupy.Net wiki* <[http://wiki.occupy.net/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://wiki.occupy.net/wiki/Main_Page)>.

114 Vinay Gupta, "Protecting democratic protest from suppression by use of sublethal chemical weapons," *The Bucky-Gandhi Design Institution*, December 11, 2011 <<http://vinay.howtolivewiki.com/blog/other/protecting-democratic-protest-from-suppression-using-sublethal-chemical-weapons-2918>>.

while at the same time improving your connectivity across those same vectors. It's very network centric for a pre-Internet theoretician. Here's more detail what disconnection looks like:

- Physical isolation is accomplished by severing communications both to the outside world (ie. allies) and internal audiences (ie. between branches of command and between the command organization and its supporters).
- Mental isolation is done through the introduction of ambiguous information, novel situations, and by operating at a tempo an enemy cannot keep up with. A lack of solid information impedes decision making.
- Moral isolation is achieved when an enemy improves its well being at the expense of others (allies) or violates rules of behavior they profess to uphold (standards of conduct). Moral rules are a very important reference point in times of uncertainty. When these are violated, it is very hard to recover.

Was it effective?

Using John Boyd's framework as a guide, this media disruption did have an effect across all three vectors:

- Physical. No isolation was achieved. The physical connections of police forces remained intact. However, these incidents provided confirmation to protesters that physical filming/imaging of the protests is valuable. Given how compelling this media is, it will radically increase the professional media's coverage of events AND increase the number of protesters recording incidents.
- Mental. These incidents will cause confusion within police forces. If leaders (Mayors and college administrators) back down or vacillate over these tactics due to media pressure, it will confuse policemen in the field. In short, it will create uncertainty and doubt over what the rules of engagement actually are. IN contrast, these media events have clarified how to turn police violence into useful tools for Occupy protesters.
- Moral. This is the area of connection that was damaged the most. Most people watching these videos feel that this violence is both a) illegitimate and b) excessive. Watch this video UC Davis Chancellor Katehi walking from her building after the incident. The silence is eerie.<sup>115</sup>

From the beginning, the threat of cooptation was a problem: there were fears the Occupy movement would be hijacked by an influx of "allies," professional activists from the Institutional Left. No doubt a lot of center-left Democrats would have loved to turn Occupy into a mass base for Obama's jobs program, or an arm of the Coffee Party movement. Van Jones' Rebuild the Dream movement and MoveOn.org both attempted to do this. In the spring of 2012 Jones' hobby-horse "The 99% Spring" dominated public perceptions of the Occupy Movement.<sup>116</sup>

But that's pretty hard to do with a leaderless movement. As John Robb pointed out,

the Occupy movement is organized in a way that makes taking control difficult...:

- Consensus decision making (blocks leadership...).
- Geographic Decentralization. Not many people in any one location.
- No hierarchy or bureaucracy. A coup d'etat requires a bureaucratic hierarchy.... Occupy doesn't have a bureaucracy to seize control of.
- No behind the scenes space. Everything is out in the open/transparent. How do you cut a deal in a smoke filled room when there isn't one?<sup>117</sup>

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115 John Robb, "OCCUPY NOTE 11/20/11: The HIDDEN logic of the Occupy Movement," *Global Guerrillas*, November 20, 2011 <<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2011/11/occupy-note-112011-boyd-pepper-spray-and-tools-of-compliance-ows.html>>.

116 The Insider, "MoveOn's 99 Percent Spring, Obama and the Dems March in Lock-Step," *Counterpunch*, April 12, 2012 <<http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/04/12/moveons-99-percent-spring-obama-and-the-dems-march-in-lock-step/>>.

117 Robb, "LEADERSHIP & OPEN SOURCE PROTEST," *Global Guerrillas*, October 11, 2011

According to Ken Knabb, the shutdown of Occupy encampments in cities around the United States

simply had the effect of forcing the participants onto other, more diverse terrains of struggle. Countless people all over the country continue to meet regularly, to network with each other and to carry out all sorts of actions — picketing banks, disrupting corporate board meetings, blocking home foreclosures, protesting environmental policies (Monsanto, Tar Sands Pipeline, fracking, etc.), in addition to more specifically “occupy” type actions such as attempting to take over and reopen schools and libraries that have been closed and abandoned, or “Homes Not Jails” attempted takeovers of vacant housing to provide dwellings for homeless people.<sup>118</sup>

**The Real Lessons of Occupy's "Death."** The focus on Occupy's "death," I think, misses the point. Even asking “What happened to Occupy?” or “What happened to M15?” as though they were discrete entities with a beginning and an end reflects a misconception as to their nature. It makes more sense to think of the whole trajectory of movements including the Arab Spring, M15 and Syntagma, Madison, Occupy, and its successors, as one loose global network of associated networked movements. This networked movement is always throwing up new avatars, with new names, which appear to decline after a while. But when something new arises—and it always does, whether in the same country or halfway around the world—it's built on the same infrastructure and foundations, and the same social capital, as its predecessors. Here's how Nathan Schneider described the phenomenon in an interview:

**What did Occupy Wall Street succeed at? What did it fail at?**

It very powerfully succeeded at introducing activists from around the country to one another and turned a lot of people into activists that weren't before. **It produced a tremendous number of networks, both online and offline**, which continue to mobilize people on a number of fronts, though few are still called Occupy.

It also won a ton of disparate victories in communities across the country, from small and large labor disputes, a dramatic reduction in stop and frisks in New York, to the overturning of regulations concerning the policing of the homeless in various cities. It strengthened and encouraged various types of political organization as well as turned movements into international networks around the world that didn't exist before.

**Do you feel any sense of shared vision or hope from other places on the globe affected by Wall Street's shortcomings?**

Occupy Wall Street organizers are constantly discussing what other related movements around the world are doing, both on social media and in their own planning meetings. They are closely in touch with activists on the ground in many of these places. Every time Occupy Wall Street quiets down for a period time in the U.S., the organizers watch closely (and travel to) places where things are flaring up....

**What innovation in this area do you think is in store for us in the future? What should we be getting excited about?**

It's hard to say what is going to blow up next. Certainly right now Occupy Sandy and Strike Debt are the fights to watch, in addition to the Walmart labor struggle. This is a movement that has an endless number of clever ideas appearing all the time, but it's never clear which ones are going to rise above the rest until it happens. The next big idea might very well not be called “Occupy”, which may be a good thing — but the chances are high that, even so, it will be the result of networks that were forged during the Occupy movement.<sup>119</sup>

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<<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2011/10/leadership-open-source-protest-ows.html>>.

118 “Looking Back on Occupy,” *Bureau of Public Secrets*, October 2012 <<http://www.bopsecrets.org/recent/occupy-looking-back.htm>>.

119 Joel Dietz, ““Occupy Wall Street turned movements into international networks that didn't exist before,” *OuiShare*, January 7, 2013 <<http://ouishare.net/2013/01/nathan-schneider-occupy-wall-street/>>.

John Holloway dismisses concerns about the institutional continuity or persistence of any particular movement.

*Before we can break with capital altogether, you suggest we begin by ‘cracking’ it in different places and times. Yet these ‘cracks’, as you call them, seem to flourish particularly in times of crisis. We saw this in the popular uprising in Argentina in 2001-’02..., and we’re seeing it in Southern Europe today. Do you think there is a way to perpetuate such cracks beyond these economic ‘hard times’? Or is this type of autonomous popular self-organization bound to be something that flourishes in times of crisis and then secedes back into... state capitalist populism?*

I don’t know, first I don’t think times necessarily get better and secondly I’m not sure that we should worry too much about perpetuation. If you look at Argentina, there was clearly a sense that things did get better. Like the economy, rates of profit recovered, in which a lot of the movements of 2001 and 2002 became sucked in into the state. But the problems have obviously reappeared somewhere else. If you look at Spain and Greece, firstly there are no short-term perspectives of things getting substantially better. Secondly, if they did get better, then the crisis would move on somewhere else. And the search for alternative ways of living moves on.

I think there is an accumulation of experience, and also an accumulation of growing awareness that spreads from one country to another, that capitalism just isn’t working and that it is in serious problems... There is a growing confidence perhaps that the cracks we create or the crazinesses we create may really be the basis for a new world and a new society, and may really be the only way forward.

What I don’t like about the idea of perpetuation is that it has to be a smooth upward progress. I don’t think it works like that. I think it’s more like a social flow of rebellion, something that moves throughout the world, with eruptions in one place and then in another place. But there are continuities below the discontinuities. We have to think in terms of disrupting bubbling movements rather than thinking that it all depends on whether we can perpetuate the movement in one place. If we think in terms of perpetuation in one place, I think at times it can lead us into either an institutionalization, which I think is not much help, or it can lead us into a sense of defeat, perhaps, which I don’t think is right.<sup>120</sup>

The various iterations of this networked movement since Occupy have consciously viewed themselves as manifestations of a single global movement.

**all revolts are connected somehow. The fact that a Brazilian flag was flying in Istanbul’s Taksim Square, or that the slogan “Brazil will be another Turkey” was used during Brazil’s demonstrations, are examples. The Interagentes study [Es] of digital networks mentioned that when the first protests were called in Sao Paulo on June 6, there were two Turkish Facebook pages among the ten most influential in Brazil on that day....<sup>121</sup>**

The most important thing to remember, as Graeber pointed out, is that “once people’s political horizons have been broadened, the change is permanent.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans (and not only Americans, of course, but Greeks, Spaniards, and Tunisians) now have direct experience of self-organization, collective action, and human solidarity. This makes it almost impossible to go back to one’s previous life and see things the same way. While the world’s financial and political elites skate blindly toward the next 2008-scale crisis, we’re continuing to carry out occupations of buildings, farms, foreclosed homes, and workplaces—temporary or permanent—organizing rent strikes, seminars, and debtors’ assemblies, and in doing so, laying the ground-

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120 Jerome Roos, “Talking About a Revolution With John Holloway,” *John Holloway*, April 13, 2013 <<http://www.johnholloway.com.mx/2013/05/01/talking-about-a-revolution-with-john-holloway/>>.

121 Bernardo Gutierrez, “What do Brazil, Turkey, Peru and Bulgaria have in common?” *Al Jazeera*, September 7, 2013 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/09/20139572247949239.html>>.

work for a genuinely democratic culture, and introducing the skills, habits, and experience that would make an entirely new conception of politics come to life.<sup>122</sup>

**Globalization of the Occupy Movement.** Like the Arab Spring before it, the Occupy movement went global—returning, in fact, to many of the same countries whose earlier protest movements had provided its inspiration. According to Francesca Rheannon, it spread to 1500 cities in 82 countries.<sup>123</sup> And, Marcia Stepanik writes,

the #OWS movement had its largest single day of protests Saturday not in New York but far from Wall Street. Writes blogger Nate Silver: "In Europe, crowds in cities like Rome, Barcelona, and Madrid were estimated at 200,000 to 500,000 per city—more, probably, than the protests in the U.S. combined."<sup>124</sup>

**Networked Uprisings After Occupy.** As suggested above, Occupy didn't really "die." In China in 2011 an uprising against a corrupt land deal became a global news event when people blockaded entrances into their village to protest local officials' giveaway of common land to a private developer—an all-too-common event in that country—and used social media to take their protest viral. Quebec student uprisings began in February 2012 over a tuition increase, leading to protests by hundreds of thousands all over the province—including demonstrations that continued in Montreal for months. Demonstrations in Chiapas launched a resurgence of the Zapatista movement in December 2012.

In Turkey the Taksim Square movement was launched in May 2013, in immediate response to a decision to hand over the Gezi Park to developers, and quickly exploded into a massive nationwide protest against neoliberalism in general. It quickly spread to include protests by hundreds of thousands in major cities all over Turkey, and gained a worldwide support network with the help of social media. In Brazil, also in mid-2013, a protest over increased public transit fares—a significant burden on precarious workers who had to commute to work from the *favelas*—similarly grew into a massive nationwide uprising against neoliberalism in general.

The situation has been complicated by some movements on the Right—neoliberal opponents of the Bolivarian regime in Venezuela with apparent support from the American state, and right-populists and neo-fascists in Ukraine—who have adopted the same networked protest model.

## V. Anonymous and Other Hacktivists.

**Anonymous.** The Anonymous group originally grew out of the 4chan/b/ discussion community. Given the common quality of discussion among its membership of hackers and anime enthusiasts—discussion ranging from deliberately offensive (constant references to “n\*\*\*\*\*s” and “f\*\*s”) to the apparently socio-pathic—it's not the sort of venue from which you'd ordinarily expect social justice activism to emerge. You can get a pretty good feel for the culture just by looking at *Encyclopedia Dramatica*, whose content comes mainly from 4chan participants.

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122 Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, xix-xx.

123 Francesca Rheannon, "Occupy Goes Global: Is Another World Possible?" *CSRwire*, October 18, 2011 <<http://www.csrwire.com/blog/posts/178-occupy-goes-global-is-another-world-possible>>.

124 Marcia Stepanek, "Wirearchy," *Cause Global: Social Media for Social Change*, October 17, 2011 <[http://causeglobal.blogspot.com/2011/10/wirearchy\\_17.html](http://causeglobal.blogspot.com/2011/10/wirearchy_17.html)>.

Anonymous itself is simply a brand, a common label under which self-organized projects operate. Operations under the Anonymous brand are organized virally, often spurred by something as random as an individual tweet that inspires others to get up to devilry.<sup>125</sup>

Anonymous originally arose as a group of 4chan participants organizing pranks within the 4chan message board community entirely for the "lulz"—4chan slang for mindless laughter at the stupidity or misfortune of others. The name “Anonymous” derived from the 4chan website's practice of automatically assigning the username “Anonymous” to anyone who didn't register an individual nickname on signing up. Since most users never bothered to register nicknames, the majority of channers simply appeared on the message boards as “Anonymous.” This became the source of a common sense of identity.<sup>126</sup>

Anonymous's first prominent appearance in the news, and for all intents and purposes its emergence as a movement with a social conscience, was the Anonymous attack on the Church of Scientology. Before then, its attacks were capricious and seemingly unmotivated by any coherent ideology.

...Anonymous had a vigilante streak, and it could be downright mean. They'd dox someone who abused a cat. In particular they went after abusers of cats, because Anonymous loves cats and pictures of cats. They blocked the pool at the online kid's game Habbo Hotel with black, generously fro'd avatars declaring “Pool is closed due to AIDS” as a protest to perceived racism on the part of Habbo's admins.

But Anonymous was never particularly focused. Raids could be devastating or funny, but either way they came and went quickly, the net's own little tornado system. Anonymous was never anyone's personal army, and never stayed on any one topic for very long.

It took Tom Cruise to change all that and give Anonymous a political consciousness....

A video of a disturbingly manic Cruise leaked out of Scientology in January 2008, and the notably litigious church tried to force hosting services and Gawker to take it down with legal nastygrams.

But the video contained some truly epic lulz, and Anonymous wouldn't let it die. The church's effort to kill it off so enraged Anons they decided to destroy the church itself.... For Anonymous being mad meant wanting to troll the church very hard, but it was never to get serious, because getting serious for Anons meant losing.

To accomplish this op (short for operation), Anons created Project Chanology, which arguably marked both the birth of political consciousness for Anonymous, and the development of its methods of taking mass action.<sup>127</sup>

From the very beginning, Anonymous was defined by its swarming tactics and lack of an official hierarchy:

The collectives deliberately have no leaders, and reject the principle of representation in favour of individuals directly participating in concrete actions. Their diversity means decisions can be made quickly, by the participants coming together on a specific issue, rather than by getting an official majority. The political establishment cannot understand such forms of organisation or their lack of concrete demands.

These temporary collectives, or “swarms”, consist of independent individuals using simple tools and rules to organise themselves horizontally. As the founder of the Swedish Pirate Party, Rick Falkvinge, put it: “As all the people in the swarm are volunteers ... the only way to lead is by inspiring others through action”....

A collective starts with an appeal, accompanied by the resources to carry out an immediate action. Clay Shirky, an expert in social media, has identified three key elements in this supple form of coopera-

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125 Meghan Kelly, “Anonymous is all about privacy,” *VentureBeat*, August 18, 2011 <<http://venturebeat.com/2011/08/18/anonymous-is-all-about-privacy/>>.

126 Max Halupka, “The Evolution of Anonymous as a Political Actor” (Honors thesis in fulfillment of B.A. Requirements, 2011), pp. 33-34.

127 Quinn Norton, “Anonymous 101: Introduction to the Lulz,” *Wired.com*, November 8, 2011 <<http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2011/11/anonymous-101/all/1>>.

tion: a promise, a tool, and a bargain. The promise lies in the appeal, which must interest enough activists and seem achievable. It might involve attacking a government website in response to censorship. Tools available online, such as the Low Orbit Ion Cannon (LOIC) programme (named in reference to the *Star Wars* films), allows scattered volunteers to coordinate their actions. The bargain refers to the conditions everyone agrees to when they take part in the collective action.

Over time these three aspects can evolve, and the collective can grow, change direction or break up. To make sure it does not disappear as quickly as it appeared, a fourth element is needed, a common horizon, which “allows the scattered members of a network to recognise each other as existing within a shared referential and imaginary universe,” explains the essayist Brian Holmes. This is where the Anonymous mask — the Guy Fawkes mask worn by the hero of *V for Vendetta*, a graphic novel by Alan Moore and David Lloyd set in a totalitarian world — comes in....<sup>128</sup>

As Norton argues, Anonymous was in one sense a major departure from the /b/ ethos. That ethos was captured by the phrase “getting serious for Anons meant losing.” Anon was originally in it for the lulz; those who acted out of serious motivations like social justice were dismissed as “moralf\*\*s.”

But Anons caring about doing the right thing is about morality, and morality, at least straight morality, is not the lulz. Many veterans saw this as a corruption of the purity of Anonymous....

On February 10, 2008, the “moralfags” took the whole thing to a new level....

Anons left the internet by the thousands and showed up in front of church locations and Scientology centers around the world, many wearing their new Guy Fawkes masks, *V for Vendetta* movie merchandise sold by Warner Brothers, to obscure their identities.

They played music and walked around with signs that both accused Scientology of crimes and referenced obscure internet memes. They met each other in meat space for the first time. They partied with their own in front of aghast Scientologists in more than 90 cities.<sup>129</sup>

Adherents of the traditionalist Lulz ethos—or “Purists”—within Anonymous who had participated in Operation Chanology were dismayed by an influx of new “Moralist” members inspired by the activist vision of Anonymous that had arisen from Chanology. The new blood further shifted the community into an ideological orientation toward fighting injustice as a matter of principle rather than simply for the lulz.

At the same time, the 4chan administrator banned the organization of raids using the 4chan message board, causing Anonymous members to leave 4chan for other venues—and actually launch a DDoS attack on 4chan itself in retaliation. At this point Anonymous ceased to be dependent on any central infrastructure and became a genuinely decentralized, cell-based p2p organization.<sup>130</sup>

So in a sense, Anonymous after Chanology became a sort of heretical moralf\*\* offshoot of 4chan/b/.

In the beginning, there were lulz, pranks and a culture of trolling just to get a rise out of anyone. But despite many original Anons best efforts, Anonymous has grown up to become the net’s immune system, striking back whenever the hive mind perceived that the institutions that run the world crossed the line into hypocrisy.

...But this immune response changed Anonymous as well. The lulz had to make room for righteous indignation, and not even a pretend indignation.

The empowerment anons felt from vigilantism had swung the movement to moralfagotry permanently, and many anons liked it that way.<sup>131</sup>

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128 Felix Stalder, “Anonymous Power,” *Social Network Unionism*, February 22, 2012 <<http://snuproject.wordpress.com/2012/02/22/anonymous-power-by-felix-stalder-via-viewpoint/>>.

129 Norton, “Anonymous 101.”

130 Halupka, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-49.

131 Norton, “Anonymous 101 Part Deux: Morals Triumph Over Lulz,” *Wired.com*, December 30, 2011 <<http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2011/12/anonymous-101-part-deux/all/1>>.

Since then Anonymous has gravitated into an activist movement centered on combating Internet censorship and other aspects of the police state, as well as randomly motivated action on behalf of perceived underdogs.

The relationship between Anonymous and 4chan is still quite complicated, and the mainstream press—as you might expect—has trouble grasping the complexity of the situation.

In 2009, denizens of 4chan were still using the name Anonymous for notorious trolling escapades. Trolling began to wane in 2010, when Anonymous' political portfolio diversified considerably. At the time of this writing, pure trolling under the name Anonymous had largely ceased. There is, however, nothing preventing its resurrection.<sup>132</sup>

And it has in fact been resurrected, as evidenced by 4chan trolling campaigns to sabotage various “social justice” hashtags on Twitter, and the brutal campaign of harassment and threats of rape and murder against Anita Sarkeesian and Zoe Quinn in 2014.

The same is true of the relationship between various self-organized swarming groups using the Anonymous label.

While Anonymous had initially deployed DDoS attacks during their first trolling raid against the Church of Scientology, Project Chanology abandoned this tactic. It never approved of nor relied much on hacking. To this day, Project Chanology opposes the use of DDoS attacks and tends to dismiss the networks that deploy them. To acknowledge its internal feuds and sectarianism, Anonymous eventually adopted the refrain “Anonymous is not unanimous.” This message has yet to penetrate public consciousness — the mainstream media still tends to describe participants only as hackers, technological actors already freighted with simplistic and pejorative associations.<sup>133</sup>

And in the atmosphere of moral panics over “cyberwar” since the Wikileaks cable dump, the media has reported their activities in increasingly alarmist terms.

From Chanology on, Anonymous continued to refine its arsenal of tactics. From then til now, its operations have become increasingly more sophisticated and more devastating to the organizations targeted. The first wave of major attacks, using the “Low Orbit Ion Cannon” (a distributed denial of service attack to shut down websites with swarms of traffic their servers couldn't handle) had more of an effect on public consciousness, through a technologically illiterate mainstream media, than on the organizations targeted.<sup>134</sup>

One of the first prominent uses of the LOIC was the February 2010 “Operation TITstorm,” a DDoS attack on Australian government websites to protest legislation which required Internet service providers to use porn filters.<sup>135</sup>

In September 2010, with Operation Payback, Anonymous turned its attention to a new target: copyright law—and more particularly the maximalist versions of copyright law being promoted by content industry lobbyists. Operation Payback was, specifically, retaliation for MPAA/RIAA actions against The Pirate Bay.

Organizing in the name of Internet freedom, a group of Anons had set their eyes on protesting the multilateral Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) through legal channels alone. A handful of the group clamoured for direct action tactics, which included “black fax, emails, phone calls, pizzas called to the office, a full on classic Anon assault,” as one participant described it to me. In the minority, they were banned from a particular Internet Relay Chat (IRC) server, but naturally could still use the name.

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132 Coleman, “Anonymous in Context,” p. 6.

133 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

134 Norton, “Anonymous 101 Part Deux.”

135 Gabriella Coleman. *Anonymous in Context: The Politics and Power behind the Mask*. Internet Governance Papers No. 3 (Centre for International Governance Innovation, September 2013), p. 6.

So they did, and proceeded to “blitz these guys [copyright industry] into paying attention” by DDoSing pro-copyright associations such as the Motion Picture Association of America in defence of piracy and file sharing

This group eventually managed to attract a sizable street team of participants and supporters. After roaming from one IRC network to another, these participants eventually established a dedicated IRC server named AnonOps in November 2010. This network, known by the name of its IRC server, would come to boldly embrace DDoS tactics and eventually endorse hacking as a political weapon, thus becoming one of the biggest and most controversial media sensations.<sup>136</sup>

The result of these high-profile attacks, with targets that resonated with a large information freedom movement on the Internet, was dramatic.

...[T]housands of people who had never considered themselves Anonymous... joined in and became a new generation of moralfag. Though they didn’t care about the Church of Scientology or 4chan’s history of shenanigans, they shared one important quality with their raiding 4chan predecessors.

They saw acting as Anonymous, taking up the iconography, and joining the op, as a path to empowerment. They could finally do something more than sign an online petition and give money to the EFF.

They took down AiPlex immediately, and the MPAA shortly after, and expanded the attack to the RIAA and rightsholders and enforcement groups around the world. They wrote manifestos and released videos, but more than anything, they got a lot of media coverage. The coverage brought in more people.

Anonymous swelled to a crowd of moralfags that likely dwarfed whatever had been in the “legion” before.<sup>137</sup>

Unfortunately the large influx of enthusiastic new members occurred as the attack on the entertainment industry was running its course. “By early December 2010..., AnonOps IRC chat rooms, once bustling with life, had come to a standstill. Core AnonOps participants — system administrators, organizers, media makers and hackers — were concerned by its dwindling number of supporters.”<sup>138</sup>

This was the background in December 9, 2010, when Anonymous began the second phase of Operation Payback—a major operation in defense of Wikileaks.

Just when it looked like Anonymous would take a breather in December 2010, the government started an extra-legal crackdown on WikiLeaks in response to the release of hundreds of thousands of diplomatic cables allegedly leaked to the site by Bradley [sic] Manning. Senator Joe Lieberman called Amazon to pressure them, successfully, to stop hosting WikiLeaks files, despite no charges being filed against WikiLeaks or its public face, Julian Assange. Mastercard, Visa, and Paypal all blocked payments to WikiLeaks for alleged terms of service violations and Assange’s Swiss bank froze his account.<sup>139</sup>

The Wikileaks support campaign was the first real upward ratcheting in the severity of Anonymous attacks.<sup>140</sup>

AnonOps managed to tap into, channel and thus render visible the collective furor over what its supporters deemed to be a wholly inappropriate act of censorship against the whistle-blowing organization WikiLeaks.... Anonymous, specifically AnonOps, launched a DDoS campaign aimed at PayPal, Mas-

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136 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

137 Norton, “Anonymous 101 Part Deux.”

138 Coleman, *Anonymous in Context*, pp. 6-7.

139 Norton, “Anonymous 101 Part Deux.”

140 Halupka, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

terCard and Visa in response to their refusal to accept donations for WikiLeaks' front man, Julian Assange....

This gathering was also one of the first large-scale spontaneous online demonstrations. The outpouring of support even surprised AnonOps. Numbers on the IRC channel jumped from 70 individuals to 7,000 in a couple of days.... The targeting of WikiLeaks was yet another catalyst for politicizing Anonymous; some key participants and organizers active today jumped aboard at a momentous time.<sup>141</sup>

Although DDoS actions were pioneered by groups like EDT and the electrohippies—e.g. EDT's campaign of "digital storms" supporting the Zapatistas in the late '90s—Operation Payback was a major generational improvement in technical sophistication.<sup>142</sup>

During this action, the high level of quotable, embed-able graphic and video artifacts produced by the group allowed them a level of control over the media narrative that, for example, the EDT had never enjoyed.... By pushing the peer production and distribution of these artifacts, which include video manifestos, graphical calls to action, and solidarity images, Anonymous was able, to a certain extent, dictate the visual tools and language used in the media's coverage of Operation Payback.<sup>143</sup>

This tendency was even more pronounced given the media's confusion over Anonymous's leaderless structure and who to talk to, the convenience of simply reprinting Anonymous press releases, and the tendency of media outlets everywhere to circulate the same material once one outlet had "legitimized" it.<sup>144</sup>

AnonOps was also the first appearance of an operation organized by what Halupka calls a "dedicated cell" or "phantom cell"—a node of like-minded Anonymous members engaged in coordinated missions reflecting their own agenda.<sup>145</sup>

On January 2, 2011, in response to the Tunisian government's blocking of Wikileaks, AnonOps announced the launch of OpTunisia with an online video. "A technical team of hackers attacked Tunisian government websites and undermined software the dictatorial regime was using to spy on citizens. Many others aided by translating information, writing manifestos and crafting publicity videos."<sup>146</sup>

As one might expect, the increasing scale and audacity of attacks by Anonymous and its offshoots, and its alliance with an official enemy like Wikileaks, did not go unnoticed by the security-industrial complex. Sacramento-based security firm HBGary Federal formulated an online attack plan against Wikileaks supporters like Glenn Greenwald; HBGary CEO Aaron Barr boasted to the *Financial Times* that he'd "pwned" Anonymous. HBGary

put together proposals for Hunton & Williams—which represents conservative corporations like Bank of America, the Chamber of Commerce and Koch Industries—that would scrape the internet, including social networking outlets like Facebook, LinkedIn and Classmates.com, for informational dirt that could be distilled into disinformation attacks that could potentially bring down supporters of Anonymous and Wikileaks....<sup>147</sup>

AnonOps' response, as Gabriella Coleman puts it, "fundamentally and dramatically reconfigured the political culture of AnonOps."

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141 Coleman, *Anonymous in Context*, pp. 6-7.

142 Sauter, *The Coming Swarm*, p. 60.

143 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

144 *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

145 Halupka, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

146 Coleman, *Anonymous in Context*, p. 7.

147 Scott Thill, "Anonymous' Hacker Group Teaches Shady Cyber-Security Companies a Lesson They'll Never Forget," *AlterNet*, February 11, 2011 <<http://www.alternet.org/module/printversion/149943>>.

Participants transitioned from covert to public forms of hacking, such as web defacing. Hacking, always a tool but often used more clandestinely, became a public act, wielded for multiple purposes: vengeance, turf protection, technological assistance, theatrics, exposing security vulnerabilities, searching for information to leak and for the lulz.<sup>148</sup>

With the campaign against HBGary, AnonOps launched its first large-scale doxxing attack. And to be sure, the damage was massive. AnonOps raided the company's drives,

releasing 40,000 HBGary Federal emails, remotely wiping [Barr's] iPad and engendering a scathing public disconnection from those who have known and employed him....

"Rarely in the history of the cybersecurity industry has a company become so toxic so quickly as HBGary Federal," Andy Greenberg blogged Feb. 15 for Forbes' Firewall column. "Over the last week, many of the firm's closest partners and largest clients have cut ties with the Sacramento start-up. And now it's canceled all public appearances by its executives at the industry's biggest conference in the hopes of ducking a scandal that seems to grow daily as more of its questionable practices come to light.

HBGary planned to tag-team Wikileaks and Anonymous with Palantir Technologies and Berico Technologies, which has publicly admitted that it was asked to develop a proposal analyzing internal security and public relations problems for a law firm, without naming names. Palantir quickly apologized, explaining that the "right to free speech and the right to privacy are critical to a flourishing democracy" and personally apologizing to pro-Wikileaks supporters like Glenn Greenwald, who it was planning to personally discredit. For its part, Hunton & Williams hasn't publicly commented on the clusterfuck, although Anonymous' data dump featured emails between Barr and Hunton & Williams' partner and corporate investigator John W. Woods. Not so with the much better-known Bank of America, which openly derided HBGary's PowerPoint presentation to Hunton & Williams: "We've never seen the presentation, never evaluated it, and have no interest in it."

That categorical denial rings hollow, given Bank of America's itinerant controversy, which includes inhaling bailout billions in taxpayer cash, purchasing toxic mortgage scammers like Countrywide Financial, nailing loyal customers with skyrocketing interest rates, robo-signing foreclosures and even shutting down payment transfers to Wikileaks, lamely claiming "reasonable belief that WikiLeaks may be engaged in activities that are, among other things, inconsistent with our internal policies for processing payments." Add it together with the shady "competitive intelligence" practices of the Chamber of Commerce—which solicited Palantir, Berico and HBGary to scrape the Internet for personal data on Chamber opponents like Brad Blog, Change to Win, CodePink and others—and what is immediately apparent is that all of the included parties are sorry for mostly one thing: Getting caught with their pants down.<sup>149</sup>

The doxxing of HBGary, which foreshadowed a later attack on Stratfor—another quasi-private firm in the security-industrial complex—exposed internal documents which horrified many Americans.

In the course of the trolling and doxxing, an enormous amount of detail uncovered in the emails centered on the way HBGary Federal and its affiliates proposed to act as agent provocateurs: hired thugs for the purposes of disruption. Some of the leaked emails included a Power Point presentation outlining how HBGary Federal and other companies could help discredit WikiLeaks by submitting fake documents to the site which, when revealed as false, would presumably discredit the organization. They also devised plans to undermine the careers of various figures seen as ideological supporters of WikiLeaks, such as Glenn Greenwald, a writer for Salon.com. The inner workings of a privatized COINTELPRO-type proposal were exposed for the world to see; these details were so shocking, some Congressmen even called for an investigative committee to look into these actions.<sup>150</sup>

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148 Coleman, *Anonymous in Context*, p. 8.

149 Thill, *op. cit.*

150 Michael Ralph and Gabriella Coleman, "Is it a Crime? The Transgressive Politics of Hacking in Anonymous," *OWNI.eu News, Augmented*, September 29, 2011 <<http://owni.eu/2011/09/29/is-it-a-crime-the-transgressive-politics-of->

The HBGary hackers had so much fun they were eventually inspired to spin off as an independent organization, LulzSec, which carried out its own prominent exploits in mid-2011.<sup>151</sup>

Meanwhile, AnonOps continued its own attacks, in March 2011 releasing a cache of Bank of America emails which it alleged to show wrongdoing. The significance of the documents, which Anonymous posted to BankofAmericaSucks.com, was stated by the leaker:

For the last 7 years, I worked in the Insurance/Mortgage industry for a company called Balboa Insurance. Many of you do not know who Balboa Insurance Group... is, but if you've ever had a loan for an automobile, farm equipment, mobile home, or residential or commercial property, we knew you. In fact, we probably charged you money...a lot of money...for insurance you didn't even need...

How is Balboa able to charge such inflated premiums and get away with it?...

First, when you call in to customer service, for say, GMAC, you're not actually speaking to a GMAC employee. You're actually speaking to a Bank of America associate working for Balboa Insurance who is required by their business to business contract with GMAC to state that they are, in fact, an employee of GMAC. The reasoning is that if you do not realize you're speaking to a Bank of America/Balboa Insurance employee, you have no reason to question the validity of the information you are receiving from them. If you call your insurance agent and ask them for the lienholder information for your GMAC/Wells Fargo/etc lien (home or auto) you will be provided with their name, but the mailing address will be a PO Box at one of Balboa's 3 main tracking locations (Moon Township/Coreapolis, PA, Dallas/Ft Worth, TX, or Phoenix/Chandler, AZ)<sup>152</sup>

In May 2011 LulzSec launched a two-month spree of attacks, announcing to the press in no uncertain terms that it was an independent operation, and not AnonOps or any other subgroup of Anonymous.<sup>153</sup>

LulzSec took Anonymous's DOS attacks, which for the most part have failed to take down websites like that of Amazon and PayPal, a step further. It launched a wave of six attacks against in which it "dumped internal code." Following the U.S. government's declaration of war on "cyberterrorism," LulzSec launched "Fuck FBI Friday" and hacked the FBI affiliate InfraGard, culminating in "the anonymous hacking group's publication of InfraGard e-mails, passwords and personal contact information for about 180 members..."<sup>154</sup>

Although LulzSec retired on June 25, many of its members regrouped under the name "AntiSec."

Unlike LulzSec, Antisec loudly and proudly branded itself as an Anonymous operation. While not forsaking deviant humour... Antisec adopted a more militant tone. This was largely attributable to two hackers: Jeremy Hammond, a political radical who is currently in jail awaiting sentencing, and Hector Xavier Monsegur, known as "Sabu," who worked with Anonymous, LulzSec and Antisec.<sup>155</sup>

Sabu was briefly arrested on June 7—the beginning, as it later became known, of a stint as an FBI informer that culminated in the arrest of a number of leading LulzSec veterans in early 2012. Nevertheless, he was a key participant in several extremely high profile AntiSec operations in late 2011; "he became the public face of Antisec through his popular Twitter account, where he specialized in 140-character tirades against the group's main targets: the government, security firms, the police and corporations."<sup>156</sup>

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hacking-in-anonymous/>.

151 Coleman, *Anonymous in Context*, pp. 8-9.

152 Lauren Kelley, "'Anonymous' Hackers Release Bank of America Emails, Allegedly Showing 'Corruption and Fraud,'" *Alternet*, March 14, 2011 <<http://www.alternet.org/module/printversion/newsandviews/527928>>.

153 Coleman, *Anonymous in Context*, p. 9.

154 CovOps, "HA—Ha! 'Fuck FBI Friday'—Hackers LulzSec Strike FBI Affiliate InfraGard," *Ancaps Super-Forum*, June 4, 2011 <<http://ancaps.super-forum.net/t20193-ha-ha-fuck-fbi-friday-hackers-lulzsec-strike-fbi-affiliate-infragard>>.

155 Coleman, *Anonymous in Context*, p. 9.

156 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

In August 2011 Bay Area Rapid Transit Authority shut down wireless communications in the BART system to thwart attempts to organize protests—against recent police shootings on the system—via social media. AntiSec responded by hacking BART's computers and releasing public data.<sup>157</sup>

The organization's next big hack was the publication, in response to a major arrest of Anonymous suspects, of a large cache of Texas law enforcement emails.

Thousands of documents are available on tor hidden services / bittorrent and include several dozen FBI, Border Patrol, and counter-terrorism documents classified as "law enforcement sensitive" and "for official use only". The emails also included police records, internal affairs investigations, meeting notes, training materials, officer rosters, security audits, and live password information to government systems. The private chief emails also included several racist and sexist chain email forwards and personal details sure to embarrass, discredit, and incriminate several of these so-called "community leaders".<sup>158</sup>

Anonymous intersected with the course of the Occupy movement in an amusing way, as recounted by David Graeber. Apparently one reason for the NYPD's hesitancy to shut down the Occupy encampment in the early days of the protest was

the presence of Guy Fawkes-masked members of the hackers collective Anonymous in Zuccotti Park. Most, he said, were genuinely worried that if they attacked the camp and expelled the protestors, Anonymous would hack their bank and credit card accounts, and the fear of this played a major role in their decision to hold off from doing so.<sup>159</sup>

December was the beginning of another upsurge in AntiSec activity, sparked by a series of controversial bills in Congress like the National Defense Authorization Act's indefinite detention provisions and the content industry's latest proposals for more stringent copyright legislation. In response to the passage of the NDAA, AntiSec launched an attack on its supporters in Congress.

Upon discussion of routes to take to show their opposition to the overwhelming number of politicians who voted in favor of NDAA, Anonymous members agreed to begin with Senator Robert J Portman, a Republican lawmaker from the state of Ohio.

By Thursday morning, an Anonymous operative released personal information pertaining to the lawmaker, and revealed that not only was Sen. Portman among the politicians to vote "aye" on the legislation, but it has also been revealed that the senator had good reason to do so.

According to a OpenCongress.org, Sen. Portman received \$272,853 from special interest groups that have shown support for NDAA.

"Robert J. Portman, we plan to make an example of you," writes an Anonymous operative. The hacktivist has also released personal data including the senator's home address, phone number and social networking accounts in an attempt to further an infiltration from the Internet to show the opposition to the bill that colossally impacts the constitutional rights of Americans.

According to the information posted by the operative, the nearly \$300,000 in special interest monies lobbied at Portman could have helped him purchase around \$1.7 million in real estate in Ohio.

The next lawmaker to receive anywhere near as much as Sen. Portman is Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Democrat from Nevada and third-ranked official in Congress, who pulled in more than \$100,000 less than his Ohio counterpart with \$172,635.<sup>160</sup>

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157 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

158 "Antisecc Messes with Texas, Attacks Dozens of Police Systems and Chief Emails," *Infoshop News*, September 23, 2011 <<http://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=20110903133206459>>.

159 Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, p. 253.

160 Don Allen, "Anonymous attacking creators of indefinite detention bill," *The Wings of Lyra*, December 15, 2011 <<http://wingsoflyra.blogspot.com/2011/12/anonymous-attacking-creators-of.html>>; RJ, "Anonymous Retaliates: Massive

Also in December 2011, AntiSec launched an attack—even more severe than that on HBGary—on “private” components of the security-industrial complex. They included Stratfor, a think tanks that provides independent strategic analysis of world affairs for both private corporations and the state “national security” apparatus, and a firm that sells military-grade equipment for police work.

Anonymous hackers broke into web servers of Stratfor and copied 200 gigabytes worth of data. Thus far, it appears that the hackers have details only about Stratfor customers who purchased Stratfor’s newsletter, but the hackers could easily have more than that. Several reports indicate Anonymous will next release more than 3.3 million client e-mails.

An independent analysis by data loss and identity theft prevention service Identity Finder says that, so far, 9,651 active credit cards, 47,680 unique e-mail addresses, 25,680 unique phone numbers and 44,188 encrypted passwords were hacked from the A through M name list. More details will be released in the coming days as Anonymous publishes the N through Z list of names....

Using various Twitter accounts, including @AnonymousIRC and @YourAnonNews, and the site Pastebin, Anonymous has published names, credit card numbers, and encrypted password information. None of what has been posted so far jeopardizes companies or government agencies, but that doesn’t mean other types of sensitive data won’t be posted in the near future....

So far, nothing that has been released that will compromise military operations or national security. Stolen credit cards will cause headaches for a lot of people but not endanger them.

However, if Anonymous releases the 3.3 million client e-mails it claims to have, there’s no telling the damage it could cause. When companies and governments provide off-the-record information to Stratfor, they could easily be issuing confidential data. Anonymous has said it is now in possession of a “smoking gun for a number of crimes,” but we will see in the next days if they are just spouting hot air or have something substantial....

Anonymous has thus far published the credit card numbers of Stratfor customers starting with the letter A an ending with M, and it still plans on publishing customers N through Z. It also plans to release the aforementioned client e-mails to shed “some light on just how clueless this company really is when it comes to database security.” These e-mail spools may have already hit the web, but preliminarily through the “darknet” or a network originally intended for those who want extra privacy. Those who want to read the exchanges through the “darknet” need special permissions to gain access.<sup>161</sup>

In the wake of the Internet blackout in protest of SOPA, and in direct reaction to the Kim Dotcom shutdown,

Anonymous coordinated its largest DDoS campaign to date. This time, it did not reach out to the public at large to take part; it relied on its own (or rented) botnets. Anonymous targeted a slew of websites, including the homepages of Universal Music, the FBI, the US Copyright Office, the Recording Industry Association of America and the Motion Picture Association of America, all of which experienced downtime.<sup>162</sup>

In early February, in response to a Wylie, Texas policeman being placed on administrative leave for a kiddie porn offense, Anonymous breached the Texas Police Association's website and published the email and snail mail addresses of hundreds of officers.<sup>163</sup> Around the same time, Anonymous publicized a cache

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Information dump released on Senators who Passed NDAA," *The Daily Attack*, December 19, 2011

<<http://thedailyattack.com/2011/12/19/anonymous-retaliates-massive-information-dump-released-on-senators-who-passed-ndaa/>>.

161 Sean Ludwig, “10 things you need to know about Anonymous' Stratfor hack,” *VentureBeat*, December 28, 2011

<<http://venturebeat.com/2011/12/28/anonymous-stratfor-hack-10-things-to-know/>>.

162 Coleman, *Anonymous in Context*, p. 11.

163 Jason Whiteley, “Hackers publish names, addresses of hundreds of Texas police officers,” *wfaa.com Dallas-Fort Worth*, February 2, 2012 <<http://www.wfaa.com/news/local/Hackers-publish-names-address-of-hundreds-of-Texas-police->

of emails from the website of the military law firm that represented accused American war criminals from the Haditha massacre, in response to their acquittal. A spokesman for the firm, Puckett & Faraj, complained that the attack might “completely destroy” it.<sup>164</sup>

Unfortunately later AntiSec operations like the Stratfor doxing attack, in retrospect, fall under the shadow of LulzSec/AntiSec hacker Sabu's arrest in March 2012, followed by reports of earlier collaboration with the FBI. In an earlier draft of this section, just before the news broke, I wrote this:

Anonymous' new methods of attacking large-scale institutions—as demonstrated in HBGary, Stratfor, and the neo-Nazis—make the Low Orbit Ion Cannon look like the Model-T. Indeed, doxing seems to be becoming as much a part of the standard Anonymous toolkit as LOIC was. At this rate, we can probably expect the equivalent of an Enron or Diebold email release every week before long.

This triumphalist perspective hit hard against the reality of the FBI's infiltration of LulzSec. Sabu (aka Hector Xavier Monsegur) was quietly arrested by the FBI in Summer 2011 as a result of sloppy information security. After a couple of months of keeping a low profile, Sabu re-emerged in September 2011 and—blackmailed with the prospect of punitive sentencing and removal from his dependent children—worked as a mole inside LulzSec. The information he provided led in March 2012 to the arrest of several leading figures in LulzSec.<sup>165</sup>

According to the FBI, the Stratfor attack was actually carried out on U.S. government computers—perhaps with the government's knowledge.

A second document shows that Monsegur... provided an FBI-owned computer to facilitate the release of 5m emails taken from US security consultancy Stratfor... That suggests the FBI may have had an inside track on discussions between Julian Assange of WikiLeaks, and Anonymous, another hacking group, about the leaking of thousands of confidential emails and documents.<sup>166</sup>

But subsequent comments from FBI officials denied this possibility:

“That’s patently false,” said one F.B.I. official, who would speak only on anonymity because the investigation was continuing. “We would not have let this attack happen for the purpose of collecting more evidence.”

F.B.I. officials said they learned of the Stratfor breach on Dec. 6, after hackers had already infiltrated the company’s network and were knee-deep in Stratfor’s confidential files. On that date, F.B.I. officials said, Jeremy Hammond, suspected as the attack’s ringleader, informed Mr. Monsegur he had found a way into Stratfor’s network and was already working to decrypt its data.

The F.B.I. said that it immediately notified Stratfor, but said that at that point it was too late. Over the next several weeks, hackers rummaged through Stratfor’s financial information, e-mail correspondence and subscribers’ personal and financial information, occasionally deleting its most valuable data — all in full view of F.B.I. agents.

In addition to monitoring hackers’ chat logs, the F.B.I. managed, with Mr. Monsegur’s help, to persuade Mr. Hammond and Stratfor’s other attackers to use one of the agency’s own computers to store data stolen from Stratfor...

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officers-138620174.html>.

164 Sam Biddle, “Anonymous May Have Completely Destroyed This Military Law Firm,” Gizmodo.com, February 6, 2012 <<http://gizmodo.com/5882717/anonymous-may-have-completely-destroyed-military-law-firm>>.

165 Kim Zetter, “LulzSec Leader Was Snitch Who Helped Snag Fellow Hackers,” *Threat Level (Wired)*, March 6, 2012 <<http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2012/03/lulzsec-snitch/>>.

166 Xenj Jardin, “Stratfor docs to Wikileaks from an FBI-owned computer,” *Boing Boing*, March 7, 2012 <<http://boingboing.net/2012/03/07/lulzsec-frontman-sabu-was-fbi.html>>.

In an interview, F.B.I. officials clarified that they were able to salvage the Stratfor data that hackers transferred to its servers. Officials said this included some, but not all, of Stratfor's data. As for why the F.B.I. was not able to stop hackers from siphoning five million Stratfor e-mails to Wikileaks later on, the F.B.I. said hackers had also stored data on their own servers.<sup>167</sup>

Online security experts at the time expected the long-term effect of Sabu's arrest to be minimal.

"Anonymous is a huge sprawling octopus, and Sabu and his buddies are just a few suckers," said Graham Cluley, a senior technology consultant with online security company Sophos.

Cut those off and the creature will continue to function — and if anything it will only be even more cross than before.

There's no real estimate about how many people are involved with the group, but the kinds of attacks that have marked Anonymous' work recently, DDoS attacks, rely on big networks of users operating in unison, "like a sledgehammer," said Cluley.

Unlike other cases like Megaupload, where the central repository of information shut down, or the LulzSec arrests, which went after specific hackers who broke down firewalls, all these Anonymous networks need to do is follow a little light organization and they can continue to function. Anonymous' supporters have said as much themselves: "Anonymous has grown beyond LulzSec and Sabu," it noted earlier today, quoting the title of an article written on the Death + Taxes blog on the arrests.<sup>168</sup>

Quinn Norton similarly anticipated limited damage from the arrests:

Depending on what frame you look at Anonymous through, this may be true. While these arrests are devastating for the mediagenic hacking wing of Anonymous, other parts of the collective that more involved in traditional activism remain largely untouched. Anonymous activity against SOPA and other legislation in the USA, like the recent HR 347, and ACTA in Europe, are gaining steam. And the freedom ops involved with supporting protesters in the Middle East continue unphased.<sup>169</sup>

Unfortunately, despite all this optimism, there has been no subsequent return to major doxxing attacks on the scale of HBGary and Stratfor. There have, however, been some significant smaller-scale attacks by Anonymous offshoots, like Operation Last Resort (which included the publication in February 2013 of private information on 4,000 bank executives).

One attack associated with Operation Last Resort, in early February 2013, resulted in the publication of the logins, IP addresses and contact information on 4,000 bank executives which it collected from a Federal Reserve website.<sup>170</sup>

The Par:AnoIA group, or "Anonymous Intelligence Agency," claimed three weeks later to have

leaked sensitive information related to Bank of America executives and the company's alleged effort to "spy and collect information on private citizens."

Par:AnoIA, a group that identifies itself as the Anonymous Intelligence Agency, said in a press release yesterday that it had released 14 gigabytes of data on hundreds of thousands of executives at com-

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167 Nicole Perlroth, "Inside the Stratfor Attack," *Bits (NYT)*, March 12, 2012 <<http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/12/inside-the-stratfor-attack/>>.

168 Ingrid Lunden, "Too Big To Fail: Why Anonymous And Hacktivism Will Go On After Sabu," *TechCrunch*, March 6, 2012 <<http://techcrunch.com/2012/03/06/too-big-to-fail-why-anonymous-and-hacktivism-will-go-on-after-sabu/>>.

169 Quinn Norton, "Anonymous Rocked by News That Top Hacker Snitched to Feds," *Threat Level (Wired)*, March 7, 2012 <<http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2012/03/anonymous-sabu-reaction/>>.

170 Violet Blue, "Anonymous posts over 4000 U.S. bank executive credentials," *ZDNet*, February 4, 2013 <<http://www.zdnet.com/anonymous-posts-over-4000-u-s-bank-executive-credentials-7000010740/>>; Reuters, "Federal Reserve Hacked," *The Guardian*, February 6, 2013 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2013/feb/06/federal-reserve-anonymous>>.

panies around the world, including Bloomberg, Thomson Reuters, and TEKSystems, which the hacktivist collective claims was hired last year to spy on hackers and social activists.

The group says the data was not acquired during a hack but rather was retrieved from an unsecured server in Israel.

"The source of this release has confirmed that the data was not acquired by a hack but because it was stored on a misconfigured server and basically open for grabs," Par:AnoIA said. "Looking at the data it becomes clear that Bank of America, TEKSystems, and others (see origins of reports) gathered information on Anonymous and other activists' movement on various social-media platforms and public Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channels."

The documents leaked by Anonymous include "intelligence" reports allegedly compiled by TEKSystems on "daily cyber threats" from around the world and Internet activity related to the Occupy Wall Street movement....<sup>171</sup>

The operation also published a large cache of information from the FBI's Regional Forensics Computer—much of which could be used for social engineering and phishing attacks to gain further information.<sup>172</sup>

In the meantime, Anonymous celebrated President's Day by hacking into U.S. State Department computers, doxing the agency, and

leaking what appeared to be work email addresses for more than 170 U.S. State Department employees. In a separate attack, Anonymous also said it had doxed the investment banking firm George K. Baum & Company, and released what appeared to be 150 customer records via ZeroBin.<sup>173</sup>

Although there's been no attack on the HBGary/Stratfor scale by any self-identified Anonymous offshoot, the so-called Sony Hack of 2014 was a cyberattack of unprecedented scale, carried out by an unknown group of hackers. Some of the group's demands referenced the film *The Interview*, which included the assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un. The U.S. government alleged that the hackers were connected with the North Korean government, although that is by no means clear. At any rate the attack was not particularly innovative in technical terms,<sup>174</sup> and would probably have been within the material capacity of any anti-corporate hacker group with the technical capabilities of LulzSec or AntiSec in 2011.

The Sony Hack not only accessed and distributed extremely private information of all Sony employees, but basically destroyed the corporate intranet using "viper malware." Computer systems were down for days, all content files were destroyed or rendered inaccessible, and employees were reduced to using their private email accounts and working with pencil and paper. Even Sony's payroll system was destroyed. According to Assistant FBI Director James Demarest, 90% of corporate systems would have been unable to withstand a similar attack—even though it did not, to repeat, require any extraordinary level of technical expertise.<sup>175</sup>

What's interesting about the attack, and had far more to do with its effectiveness than the malware attacks on internal systems, according to John Robb, is that it "pierced the corporate veil." It targeted Sony employees as individuals, drove a wedge between the targeted workers and the company, and demoralized them by showing them the company was unable to protect them.

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171 Steven Musil, "Anonymous leaks alleged data on BofA execs, surveillance," *CNet*, February 28, 2013 <[http://news.cnet.com/8301-1009\\_3-57571955-83/anonymous-leaks-alleged-data-on-bofa-execs-surveillance/](http://news.cnet.com/8301-1009_3-57571955-83/anonymous-leaks-alleged-data-on-bofa-execs-surveillance/)>.

172 Boone, *op. cit.*

173 *Ibid.*

174 David Auerbach, "The Sony Hackers Are Terrorists," *Slate*, December 14, 2014 <[http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/bitwise/2014/12/sony\\_pictures\\_hack\\_why\\_its\\_perpetrators\\_should\\_be\\_called\\_cyberterrorists.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/bitwise/2014/12/sony_pictures_hack_why_its_perpetrators_should_be_called_cyberterrorists.html)>.

175 *Ibid.*

The corporate veil is a fictive barrier that protects employees, as individuals, from what they do as employees for the corporations they work for. While the veil is primarily used as a legal term (when determining liability for example), it's also useful in thinking about what happens when corporations go to war.<sup>176</sup>

Regarding that last reference, it's instructive to compare the cyber-attack on Sony to the physical assaults on the employees of Halliburton and other Western corporations in Iraq and caused some contractors to withdraw from the country in an utter state of demoralization because nobody would work for them.<sup>177</sup>

**Conclusion.** For all the promise of Wikileaks and Anonymous, and the arc of uprisings beginning with the Arab Spring, and the unprecedented scale and scope of the latter, they demonstrated a rapid growth curve followed by levelling off and decline, just like the Seattle movement before them. And like the Seattle movement, they left as much unfulfilled promise as achievements behind them.

Even so, their aftershocks continue to jar entire nations almost five years since the uprising in Tunisia.

And to repeat, while movements like the Arab Spring, M15 and Occupy all have ends as well as beginnings, the grand post-1994 wave of which they are a part shows no sign of even leveling off yet. Each major cluster of movements, like the post-Seattle globalization movement and the cluster that included the Arab Spring and Occupy, is on a larger scale than its predecessor. This cluster of movements, from 2011 to the present, was associated with the 2008 economic downturn and the neoliberal austerity programs adopted in response to it. So while this wasn't the terminal crisis of the system, it probably won't be the last such wave of networked risings; and it's probably not much of a stretch to guess that the next cluster of networked movements to emerge in reaction to a new crisis will be even larger and more disruptive than this one.

Finally, we can expect the unfulfilled promise of this wave of movements to become part of the basic toolkit of the next one. Occupy failed to seize on all the possibilities for neighborhood self-governance, economic counter-institution building, mobile swarming and projects like Occupy Our Homes and Strike Debt after the closure of the camps. And Anonymous and its offshoots failed to continue corporate doxxings on the scale of HBGary and Stratfor. These are all possibilities that were experimented with and never developed to their full potential in the last round, but promise to do major structural damage to the system if and when they ever are fully implemented.

So let's see what happens next time. Better yet, let's *make* it happen.

[Last modified December 5, 2015]

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176 John Robb, "Why the Sony Hack Worked," *Global Guerrillas*, December 22, 2014

<<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2014/12/sony-and-how-corporations-go-to-war.html>>.

177 Robb, "Piercing the Corporate Veil," *Global Guerrillas*, April 22, 2005 <[http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2005/04/piercing\\_the\\_co.html](http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2005/04/piercing_the_co.html)>; "Target: Corporate Psychology," December 22, 2004

<[http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/12/target\\_corporat.html](http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/12/target_corporat.html)>; "Global Guerrilla Target: halliburton," *Global Guerrillas*, July 25, 2004 <[http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/07/target\\_outsourc.html](http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/07/target_outsourc.html)>.