The Occupy Wall Street Movement in the American Radical Tradition

Ronald Mendel

Abstract

Occupy Wall Street (OWS) was well placed in the American radical tradition. As did many of its predecessors which targetted inequality, OWS offered a moral critique of political and economic institutions. Likewise, OWS's emphasis on direct action, had its precedent in earlier protest movements. In addition, OWS contained features of a "horizontal movement" that drew from feminist "consciousness raising" and "affinity" groups within the anti-nuke movement in the 1970s. OWS was fervently egalitarian and reaffirmed the practice of participatory democracy as advanced by the Students for a Democratic Society and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.

Keywords: Occupy Wall Street; Radicalism; Participatory Democracy; Horizontal Movements.

Ronald Mendel: University of Northampton (United Kingdom)
International Relations and Politics, Senior Lecturer

1   Introduction

"Liberty Square is the twenty-first century Liberty tree. It hearkens to the efforts of the revolutionaries of 1776."[1] This declaration from *The Occupied* indicates that participants in Occupy Wall Street (OWS) saw themselves in an American radical tradition and thereby sought to establish both OWS's authenticity and legitimacy as a movement for social and political change. Strikingly those who took part or otherwise supported the occupation of Zuccotti Park in downtown New York City in the vicinity of Wall Street between September and November 2011 drew inspiration from earlier movements in their conviction that they "were unstoppable [and that] another world is possible."[2]

OWS had sound reasons for identifying with previous radical movements, for it shared some fundamental characteristics. Like its predecessors it concentrated on persistent themes in American history. For one, OWS's radicalism fell within the generic tradition of questioning the exercise of both private and public power as well as the relationship between the two in a democracy. Accordingly, OWS underscored the threat posed by the power of major corporations, including financial institutions, to the common good that democratic governments were, at least, rhetorically committed to perpetuate. Concomitantly, its participants and especially its spokespersons stressed how corporate power entrenched social and economic inequality in American society.

These features found many predecessors among earlier protest movements. Similar to the late Nineteenth Century Populist movement, composed of farmers aggrieved at how the banks manipulated the credit system to the disadvantage of the 'producers of wealth,' and early Twentieth Century Progressive reformers who aimed to regulate 'big business, OWS challenged the existing structures of power which served the interests of a privileged and select few at the expense of the many, as exhibited by its rallying cry of — *"Democracy not corporatocracy".*

Perhaps because of the influence of anarchist ideas, OWS was suspicious of power—or the exercise of power—itself, be it from capitalist institutions or the state apparatus. This can be seen in the movement's official declarations, media statements and the writings of some of their most articulate spokespersons, including David Graeber, Nathan Schneider, and Michael Gould-Wartofsky, which collectively underscored the consequences of global capitalism and unaccountable government on both the material situation of citizens and their social relations.

Yet OWS's radicalism was also less generic and more historically specific. The modus operandi of OWS including its strategic and tactical orientation, its endorsement of models of direct democracy, and its anti-hierarchical ethos, drew inspiration from more recent social and protest movements. Similar to the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left in the 1960s it experimented with a more open and inclusive forms of decision making and aimed to create a society based on egalitarianism and a sense of community.

Like earlier movements that targeted racial, class and gender oppression OWS aimed not only to emancipate but to empower and thereby transform the 'victims' to free subjects. Finally, OWS adopted an approach to organising resembling that of the Anti-Nuke movement in the 1970s and the Anti-Globalisation (a.k.a. Global Justice) movement at the turn of the century which advocated direct action carried out by decentralised 'affinity' groups.

However, it must be stated clearly that OWS did not represent "old wine in new bottles" as a movement that simply duplicated the practices and parroted the principles of previous protest movements. Instead it applied the lessons of recent American radicalism, especially those movements that emerged since the 1960s, ambitiously sought to build a "movement of movements" against multiple forms of oppression, and in the process demonstrated in its day to day operations that another liberated world was possible. Accordingly, this paper aims to develop this argument by discussing OWS's populist discourse, its emphasis on direct action, the features it shared with other protest initiatives categorised as a "horizontal movements," its experimentation with direct democracy, and the influence of anarchist principles.

---

1.   "What Liberty Square Means: The Progressive Revolution," *Occupied Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 2011.

2.   Frances Chiu, "Regaining Common Sense: 275 Years Later, the Power of Tom Paine," *Occupiedmedia.us*, January 27, 2012, accessed August 10, 2015.

2   Occupy Wall Street's Populist Discourse

OWS, as exemplified by its discourse, provided a moral critique of political institutions, the economy and society. The way it portrayed the issues, the use of emotive language and more specifically the 'call to arms' exhibited a populist orientation. Occupy's self-identification as the "99 per cent against the One Per Cent" symbolises this populist persuasion in its rawest terms.[3]

Spokespersons and official declarations infuse Occupy's populism with more vigour and colour. One participant observer claimed "this is a moment for All of America. I don't see why this has to be a lefty or a righty moment, because this is a moment for us to reinvent democracy."[4] Presuming to speak on behalf of the people, OWS on the first day of the occupation proclaimed: "we want freedom for all, without regards for identity. However, this freedom has been largely taken from the people."[5] This was followed by a statement adopted by the General Assembly, the decision-making forum of OWS, on 29 September which critiqued the power of corporations which "extracted wealth from the people and the Earth" but without the "consent of the people."[6]

True to the populist heritage of OWS was its trenchant criticism of corporations and especially the banks whose business practices triggered the financial crisis that besieged most western capitalist economies in 2007 and 2008. Echoing the Peoples Party's condemnation of corporate or "monopoly" power made in 1892 (Omaha Platform of the Peoples Party July 9, 1892) placards and social media postings moaned that the "banks got bailed out, we got sold out." In demonstrations in the summer of 2011, during the formal occupation of Zuccotti Park between September 17 and November 15, 2011 and for months following the eviction of the occupiers, OWS targeted major banks and other financial institutions such as the Bank of America, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan.[7] Critics also took aim on the federal government, both the Federal Reserve Bank (a quasi-national bank, which had the power to set interest rates and influence the monetary supply in the economy) and the de-regulation of the banking industry with the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, originally enacted in 1933, which prohibited commercial banks from trading with depositors' money in the stock market.[8]

In a declaration explaining to the general public the rationale for the occupation, twenty-three examples of how the 'people' were "wronged by corporate forces of the world" were cited. The document listed the economic effects of corporate power, including mortgage foreclosures, holding university students 'hostage' with debt, denying workers the right of trade union representation, blocking generic forms of medicine at the expense of consumers, and above all perpetuating inequality, it identified the political reach of corporations over public policy, the legal system and the electoral process itself.[9]

In essence OWS was developing a systematic critique of the structures of power in American society, calling attention to the inadequacies of economic and political institutions as well as unmasking the repressive nature of the state and the biased orientation of mainstream media outlets.[10] A fundamental element of this critique was the collusion between the state and business—the "alliance of money and government"—which rigged politics, most conspicuously exemplified when some of the largest banks were bailed out by the federal government and in return donated huge sums to the

---

3. See Michael Gould-Wartofsky, *The Occupiers: The Making of the 99 Percent Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 52–55 for a discussion of the etymology of the slogan.

4. Nathan Schneider, *Thank You Anarchy: Notes from the Occupy Apocalypse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 15.

5. "A Modest Call to Action on this September 17th," *Voices From the 99 Percent: An Oral History of the Occupy Wall Street Movement*, ed. Lenny Frank (St. Petersburg, Florida: Red and Black Publishers, 2011), 21.

6. "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City," in Frank, *Voices From the 99 Percent*, 54–55.

7. See Gould-Wartofsky, *The Occupiers*, especially 14–16, 36–37, 77–78 and 167–173.

8. Todd Gitlin, *Occupy Nation* (New York: IT Books, 2012), 108.

9. "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City September 29, 2011," *Voices from the 99 Percent*, 55–57.

10. For a discussion of how the Occupy movement could anticipate an attack from an array of authorities—governmental, media and academic—to discredit it, see Yotam Marom, "Still Winning: Occupy Wall Street and the World We Want," *Beyond the Choir*, November 22, 2011, accessed June 19, 2015. http://www.beyondthechoir.org/diary/120still-winning-occupy-wall-street

election campaigns of legislators.[11]

In the process of developing a critique of what one commentator deemed, a "broken political system," OWS drew on a well spring of earlier radical movements. The populist discourse reverberated when participants proclaimed, "we are engaged in a battle over values and ideas. Our idea is that our political structures should serve us, the people—all of us, not just who have amassed great wealth and power."[12]

3 Occupy Wall Street's Strategic and Tactical Orientation: Focus On Direct Action

Occupy's emphasis on direct action, most dramatically demonstrated its lineage to earlier radical movements, both as an instrumental means to pressure or otherwise highlight unjust or illegitimate authority and institutions, as well as its intrinsic capacity to liberate its participants. Direct action, mainly non-violent, in the form of strikes, civil disobedience (such as sit-ins and sit downs), sabotage, and occupations figured prominently in the tactical tool kit of movement groups and participants, ranging from syndicalist labour unions in the second decade of the twentieth century to members of the Global Justice movement, taking a stand against the institutions of international capital in the twenty-first century.[13]

Direct action figured prominently in the tactics of the Industrial Workers of the World, which mobilised immigrant and largely unskilled workers in mass strikes in Lawrence, Massachusetts and Paterson, New Jersey. Civil rights activists within the SNCC, militant student opponents against the complicity of universities with the U.S. military intervention in Indochina, and young feminists demonstrating their intolerance of sexism stressed direct action. This tactical approach continued to be emblematic of American radical politics after the 1960s, as witnessed by the Clamshell Alliance which occupied the Seabrook, New Hampshire nuclear power plant in 1977, and participants in the Global Justice movement who took to the streets in Seattle, Washington in protest against the World Trade Organisation in 1999 and Genoa, Italy G-8 summit in 2001.[14]

Direct action did not just represent a set of tactics to OWS; it embodied an alternative form of politics. To its advocates it suggested a means of unmasking the illegitimacy of existing institutions of power and a source of personal and collective transformation, and a glimpse of what the future could look like.[15] In part, the advocates of direct action have been inspired, both by the example and extensive intellectual output of Gene Sharpe, who refused to serve in the Korean War and spent two years in federal prison, and wrote numerous books, the most notable, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. As a follower of A.J. Muste, the noted American peace activist, he identified 192 methods of "non-violent protest and persuasion," "social non-cooperation," "economic non-cooperation" and "political

11. David Graeber, "On Playing by the Rules: The Strange Success of Occupy Wall Street," *Voices from the 99 Percent*, 278–279.

12. Joe Lowndes and Dorian Warner, "Occupation Wall Street, A Twenty-First Century Populist Movement?", *Dissent*, October 21, 2011. Lowndes and Warner provocatively hold that OWS "(stood) for a humanity across borders in an alliance against global capitalism," and in the process represented a "model of open source populism." Also see Jonathan Matthew Smucker, "The Tactic of Occupation and Movement of the 99%," *Beyond the Choir*, November 11, 2011.

13. See David Graeber, an OWS participant for an acknowledgement of Occupy's debt to earlier radical movements. David Graeber, "Occupy and Anarchism's Gift to Democracy," *The Guardian*, November 15, 2011, accessed July 10, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/nov/15/occupy-anarchism-gift-democracy.

14. Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962–1968: The Great Refusal* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1989); Jennifer Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organizing and the New Left in the 1960s* (New York University, 2001); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981); Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's War Over Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Cristina Fominaya, *Social Movements and Globalization* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 54–62; and Nicholas Smaligo, *The Occupy Movement Explained* (Chicago: Open Court Press, 2014), 65–68.

15. Noel Sturgeon, "Theorizing Movements: Direct Action and Direct Theory," in *Cultural Politics and Social Movement*, eds. Marcy Darnowsky, Barbara Epstein and Richard Flacks (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 35–36.

non-cooperation." These included "symbolic public acts," street theatre, processions, boycotts, and "citizens' alternatives to obedience" to do outreach, mobilise and exert pressure on targeted institutions or authorities.[16]

OWS's tactical creativity exemplified this approach but for a different end envisioned by Sharpe. Whereas Sharpe's tutelage to activists aimed at the very least to gain concessions from governments or, in the case of in Serbia and Egypt to bring down regimes, OWS's use of non-violent direct action had no similar aims or objectives. Instead OWS was engaged in "political disobedience" whose desired end was not to obtain concessions to movement demands. In contrast, to civil disobedience which "accepted the legitimacy of existing political institutions" but "protested at particular actions of those institutions, political disobedience does not recognise nor accepts the legitimacy of political or governmental institutions," and therefore makes no policy demands on them. Political disobedience constituted a form of "resistance against old ideologies."[17] Accordingly, as did the early New Left activists who rebelled against US Cold War militarism and Soviet Communism, OWS proudly and boldly declared their independence from prevailing worldviews. OWS, as did some of its predecessors, valued direct action for its transformative potential. Participant observers such as David Graeber, Daniel Schneider and Michael Gould-Wartofsky testify to the liberating impact of a shared movement experience.[18] Others spoke of the "close and comradely relationships" that fostered a sense of community, as the shared meals, staffing the library and the countless political meetings held at Zuccotti Park led one to feel like you were "sitting on a porch where you could go and hang out."[19]

Likewise, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and other New Left activists saw direct action as nurturing a community, consisting of a 'liberated people. Mario Savio, the leader of the Free Speech Movement which erupted in Berkeley California in 1964, twenty years after the demonstrations, talked of the "feeling of the movement was human solidarity .… You discovered what's been missing in your life. Suddenly a whole world opens up and real community (emerges)."[20] In the 1970s with the rise of the anti-nuke movement similar views were expressed about how participation in protest developed a community. One member of the Livermore Action Group, centered around nuclear power facilities in California, lauded the creation of a community, forged in the "process of struggle as a very precious thing," fulfilling "a lot of needs that are not met in daily life."[21]

Moreover, direct action, whether it be practiced by radical students occupying university facilities in the 1960s, members of the Clamshell Alliance who occupied the Seabrook nuclear power plant in 1977 or occupiers of Zuccotti Park in 2011, "pre-figured" what an alternative society would look like, or in the words of one observer, a "cultural revolution" in which social relations were radically transformed.[22] Therefore, New Leftists could optimistically proclaim, "while struggling to liberate the world, we would create the liberated world in our midst,"[23] and David Graeber, a recognized OWS spokesperson, felt that direct action represented the "insistence when faced with structures of unjust authority, as if one is already free."[24]

16. Janine Giovanni, "'The Quiet American,' Gene Sharpe: Theorist of Power," *New York Times*, September 3, 2012, accessed December 22, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/09/t-magazine/gene-sharp-theorist-of-power.html; Gene Sharpe, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part Two: Methods of Non Violent Struggle* (New York: P. Sargent Publishers, 1973).

17. Bernard Harcourt, "Occupy Wall Street's 'Political Disobedience'," *New York Times*, October 13, 2011, https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/13/occupy-wall-streets-political-disobedience/.

18. David Graeber, *The Democracy Project* (New York: Random House, 2013); Nathan Schneider, *Thank You Anarchy* and Michael Gould-Wartofsky, *The Occupiers*.

19. Writers for the 99%, *Occupying Wall Street, The Inside Story of an Action that Changed America* (New York: OR Books, 2011), 9.

20. Quoted in *The Free Speech Movement*, eds. Robert Cohen and Reginold Zelnick (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 5.

21. Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution*, 8.

22. Ibid, 16.

23. Greg Calvert, "New Left Notes," November, 1965, quoted in Breines, *Community and Organization*, 45.

24. Quoted by Nicholas Smaligo, *The Occupy Movement Explained*, 67.

4 Occupation Wall Street as a 'Horizontal Movement'

OWS's *modus operandi* shared traits of a "horizontal movement," including a loosely knit organisational network, decentralized structure and anti-hierarchical orientation—all of which drew from earlier social movements, such as feminist 'consciousness raising' groups and 'affinity groups' or 'clusters' which planned and carried out militant actions by the Clamshell and Abalone Alliances in the late1970s and early 1980s.[25] OWS participants also acknowledged the influence of other movements beyond the United States, namely the Zapatistas in Mexico, the factory occupations and street protests in Argentina in 2001 that followed that country's economic crisis and the anti-austerity *Indignado* movement which organized occupations of squares in Madrid, Spain in 2010 and 2011.[26]

As a horizontal movement OWS was fervently egalitarian and committed to more direct democratic decision-making practices that rejected the model of representative democracy. For scholarly observers and participants alike Occupy's *horizontalist* approach was central to its existence, for OWS like other similar anti-austerity movements in Spain and Greece found existing political institutions lacking in 'real' democracy which did not tolerate if not stifled the expression of views that did not conform to those of the governing elites.

The horizontal decision-making process was bound up symbiotically with non-hierarchical social relations, and thereby rested on some non-conventional values. For one, it recognised, if not prized, the diversity of social groups, be it by class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and consequently stressed that any movement built on a respect for equality needed to find ways to encourage the expression from a range of diverse voices.[27]

For another, the free expression from different experiences could be best facilitated in decentralized decision-making fora, whereby group interests could be defined and articulated and eventually shared with other groups in the interest of agreeing on collective action, which in OWS's case meant the publication of a newspaper (the *Occupy Wall Street Journal*), formation of a medical clinic, library, cafeteria, not to mention marches and rallies over the course of two months.[28] A horizontal movement would offer an opportunity to develop an alternative mode of governance, simultaneously more inclusive and empowering.[29] Lastly, horizontalism would engender a greater sense of identity with the movement and commitment to its goals.

Here some commentary is necessary to assess if OWS was a 'leaderless' movement as implied by its horizontalist features. To what extent did spokespersons quoted in the mainstream media or who edited or wrote for OWS publications such as the *Occupy!: An OWS-Inspired Gazette* or the *Occupied Wall Street Journal* assume leadership positions? While it is true that these spokespersons helped define what OWS stood for, it is difficult to a argue convincingly they were leaders in the conventional sense, since the available documents from oral histories and personal reflections from participant observers do not demonstrate they exerted any considerable evidence in the decisions made through the General Assemblies or other OWS bodies.

---

25. Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution*, 3–6.

26. The respect for diversity could be found in Occupy's acknowledgement that "there are multiple kinds of justice movements and these movements should speak to each other, deal with each other without any movement on top." Immanuel Wallerstein, "Upsurge in Movements Around the Globe," *We Are Many: Reflections on Movement Strategy From Occupation to Liberation*, eds. Kate Khatib, Margaret Killjoy and Mike McGuire (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2012), 112.

27. The respect for diversity could be found in Occupy's acknowledgement that "there are multiple kinds of justice movements and these movements should speak to each other, deal with each other without any movement on top." Immanuel Wallerstein, "Upsurge in Movements Around the Globe," *We Are Many: Reflections on Movement Strategy From Occupation to Liberation*, eds. Kate Khatib, Margaret Killjoy and Mike McGuire (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2012), 112.

28. Marianne Maeckelbergh, "Occupy the U.S: Musings on Horizontal Decision-Making and Bureaucracy," *STIR*, Spring 2012, accessed December 8, 2014. http://stirtoaction.com; Rick Hampson, "Occupy Wall Street Protests Test Left's Determination," *USA Today*, October 11, 2011 and Marina Sitrin "One No! Many Yeses," Occupy!: An OWS-Inspired Gazette noted how horizontal movements changed the relationship among participants in that "the idea of 'I' changed as it related to 'we'."

29. For a provocative argument that OWS, drawing on anarchist principles, developed alternative "democratic decision-making procedures and rule-making processes," see Ruth Kinna, Alex Prichard and Thomas Swann, "Occupy and the Constitution of Anarchy," *Global Constitutionalism*, 2(2019), 357–390.

Nevertheless, Occupy's quest for a liberating decision-making process was hardly unique, for as Marianne Maeckelbergh argues, the experimentation with horizontalism, and more specifically with direct democracy, was characteristic with numerous social movements since the 1960s.[30] The most notable example of earlier advocates of alternative forms of decision making was the SDS, the major organisation in the New Left, and SNCC, formed in 1960 by young civil rights activists. SDS at its founding conference in Port Huron, Michigan, in June 1962 agreed on a statement which offered a critique of American political institutions, the economy and society, which the delegates found respectively undemocratic, insensitive to poverty and deprivation, and plagued by conformity, complacency and apathy. The statement articulated a vision of a society where freedom and equality would flourish and human relationships predicated on "fraternity and honesty" would emerge.[31]

5   The Legacy of Participatory Democracy

Crucial to the development of alternative "social system" was a concept of democracy which was governed by the principle that "the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his (sic) life." Distinguished from representative democracy "participatory democracy" hinged on civic engagement and active citizenship and based on certain core principles, which suggested that participatory democracy was both a means to an end and an end in itself.[32]

Participatory democracy, in the minds of its advocates within SDS, served as an antidote to the bureaucratic structures that predominated in the Democratic Party, labour unions and major civil rights organizations, which constituted the hub of liberal, progressive politics at the time. In the process, it would empower "ordinary citizens to make basic decisions," would supplant top-down methods of decision making and thereby demonstrate in practice how an alternative system could function.

It is in the transformative potential and value-oriented approach to politics that SDS's version of participatory democracy had the most to offer OWS. Richard Flacks, who participated in the Port Huron meetings, identified two motifs—an "existentialist humanism" which stressed the "desire to change the way individuals actually live and deal with other people" and an emphasis on a "radical transformation of the social order."[33]

The oppositional character of participatory democracy, which contested existing structures and articulated a new form of politics that "speaks of radical notions of participation, consent, and authority" as well as offers "a strategy for opposing domination, resisting the state and changing social relations," reverberated well beyond the 1960s.[34] The General Assembly, the forum in which participatory democracy of a kind was practiced in OWS, featured open discussions conducted somewhat differently from early SDS meetings but nevertheless proceeded on the similar principle that action was seen as "intrinsically valuable" and "once participatory processes were set in motion other outcomes would be determined not by pre-existing ideologies but by the dynamics of historical struggle itself."[35]

From its inception OWS echoed some of the motifs found in the Port Huron Statement. For example, the Declaration of Principles of Solidarity, issued on September 23, 2011, just six days after the occupation began, proclaimed "we have come together as individuals" to "reclaim our mortgaged future" by "crafting principles of solidarity" which included "direct and transparent participatory democracy," "exercising personal and collective responsibility," and "empowering one another against all forms

30. Maeckelbergh, "Occupy the U.S.".

31. The Port Huron Statement, June 11–15, 1962, reprinted in James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1987), 329–374.

32. Jack Newfield, *A Prophetic Minority: The American New Left* (London: Charles Anthony Blond, 1966), 126–127.

33. Richard Flacks, "Some Problems, Issues and Proposals," *The New Radicals*, eds. Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau (New York: Vintage, 1966), 163–164.

34. Richard Flacks, *Making History: The American Left and the American Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 162–163.

35. Sturgeon, "Theorizing Movement," *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*, 42–43.

of oppression"[36]—and thereby reaffirmed an entrenched element in the American radical tradition, which saw the individual and not the collective as the axis of action.

In the process OWS like their early SDS counterparts exhibited a romantic view of both the individual and society at large, holding that individuals were intrinsically yearning for freedom, but hamstrung by prevailing social conventions and structures. Accordingly, Tom Hayden, one of the authors of the Port Huron Statement, writing 50 years after the event, referred to participatory democracy as "psychologically liberating" and a means of "empowering the individual as autonomous but interdependent with other individuals and the community as a civic society."[37]

Participatory democracy also implied a "pre-figurative" form of politics in which the trajectory of the movement was not expressed in a formal set of demands or programme but within the actions—protest or otherwise—of the movement itself. Both SDS and SNCC, in the process of stressing the transformation of relations between people by tapping their creative energies and eliciting their commitment as activists, were "building the new society within the shell of the old."[38] Therefore, essentially, both organizations' endorsement of participatory democracy was principled if not practical and "oriented towards transforming values rather than towards gaining power."[39] Put another way, participatory democracy for radical social movements in the 1960s aimed to "construct a politics of experience that would prefigure a more liberatory (sic) society."[40]

If participatory democracy contained a visionary element that stressed the potential for both personal and collective transformation, it did not lack a practical dimension. For community organizers in SDS and members in SNCC participatory democracy was a means to develop activists, capable of taking on powerful institutions and officials to wrest concessions from them. Therefore, SNCC in preparation for its voting rights campaigns in the American south and SDS's community organising campaigns through its Economic Research Action Projects (ERAP) sought to "surmount differences in skills and educational background by reasoning and learning together on the basis of mutual respect."[41]

Accordingly, in recognition of the diversity of potential organisers within their ranks, both SDS and SNCC adopted a pragmatic approach to the implementation of participatory democracy. Realising that even a lone dissenting voice, let alone a vocal assertive minority could block the decision-making process, meetings did not accept the need for a consensus before a decision could be made. Consequently, while community organising meetings were relatively open-ended, unstructured and inclusive, often a formal vote by a show of hands ratified or rejected proposals.[42]

Even after the demise of SDS and SNCC the vision of participatory democracy survived. In the early 1970s the Movement for a New Society, influenced by the Quaker practice of decision making and adherence to non-violence emerged and articulated the politics of personal and collective liberation, thereby showing that a "society based on principles of solidarity is possible in practice."[43]

6   From Participatory to Direct Democracy

Although OWS was inspired by the process of participatory democracy, in practice OWS reinterpreted and reinvented it and thereby took it a different direction. While both OWS and SDS both held that

---

36. General Assembly, Principles of Solidarity September 23, 2011, https://occupywallstreet.net/policy-principles-solidarity.

37. Tom Hayden, "Participatory Democracy: From the Port Huron Statement to Occupy Wall Street," *The Nation*, March 27, 2012.

38. Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002), 6–7.

39. Ibid, 23.

40. Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution*, 48.

41. Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting*, 24, 53–54 and 74 and Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor*, 90.

42. James Miller, "Participatory Democracy and the Fate of Occupation Wall Street," *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto*, eds. Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2015), 211 and Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor*, 91–92.

43. Miller, "Participatory Democracy and the Fate of Occupation Wall Street," 207.

participatory democracy was about making decisions "in a face-to-face community of friends and not through elected representatives," OWS did so in distinct ways.[44]

For one, participatory democracy was redefined as "a direct" or "leaderless consensus-based" democracy whereby participation in meetings is governed by informal conventions based on respect for different views and a willingness to learn from others. For another, it was influenced both by the philosophy and practice of anarchism which rejects centralized, bureaucratic and otherwise hierarchical structures and institutions. The exemplars for direct democracy in OWS became the General Assembly, a meeting of the whole occupation community and a *spokes council*, consisting of activists organised in "affinity groups" each representing a spoke within the larger federation.[45]

Direct democracy, predicated on consensus decision making, virtually became an article of faith for OWS. For many of the movement's participants it fulfilled a commitment to egalitarian and non-hierarchical relations and ensured more inclusive and open discussions. In fact, decision making through consensus defined the movement, as one participant boldly asserted, "If you're going to join Occupy, you have to get on board with horizontal decision making."[46] Its attraction can be explained by its informal modus operandi, free of stodgy and restrictive procedures, associated with Robert's Rule of Order, which vested considerable authority to the chair of meetings and often left discussions susceptible to the manipulative tactics of unprincipled minority factions. Direct democracy was counter-posed to representative democracy, which was found not to be 'representative' of the citizenry at large, but unduly expressive of the interests of the wealthy and powerful, and thereby 'oligarchical.'[47]

In addition, consensus-based decision making had a rich historical pedigree, as exemplified by the Quakers and pacifist groups influenced by the Quakers, such as the Movement for a New Society, as well as feminist organisations in the 1960s and anti-nuclear affinity groups in the 1970s.[48] Yet in each of these cases consensus decision making took place within smaller groups where the participants either knew each other or shared similar religious beliefs, a common identity or a commitment to engage in direct action.

In the General Assemblies where strategic, tactical and operational discussions occurred not all of these conditions prevailed. Therefore, practical innovations had to be introduced to adapt the principle of consensus decision making to this challenge. Firstly, a 'peoples mic' was adopted whereby a speaker's comments were repeated and amplified by a series of listeners within the assembly to cascade the original contribution.[49] Secondly, the role of facilitators assumed some of the duties of a 'chair' of a more formal meeting by asking for proposals, friendly amendments, and by taking a 'temperature check' to gain a sense of the initial general response to a proposal.

The views of the assembly participants were expressed in a set of hand signals, registering agreement, disagreement, blocking consensus or endorsing consensus. In the event, following additional discussion, no consensus was reached the proposal was put to a vote, with the understanding that it would only carry with the support of 90% of those in attendance. Facilitators would recognize speakers

---

44. James Miller, "Is Democracy Still in the Streets?", *The Occupy Handbook*, ed. Janet Byrne (New York: Back Bay Books, 2012), 174–175.

45. For arguments in defense of direct democracy based on consensus, see David Graeber "Enacting the Impossible," *Occupy Wall Street*, October 9, 2011, accessed August 10, 2015, https://occupywallstreet.org/article/enacting-the-impossible; David Graeber, *The Democracy Project*. For a critical assessment, see David Runciman's Review of the Democracy Project, *The Guardian*, March 28, 2013, https://theguardian.com/democracy-project-david-graeber-review; and W.W., "Occupy Wall Street: Leaderless, consensus-based participatory democracy; and its discontents," *The Economist*, October 19, 2011 https://economist.com/democracy-in-america/2011/10/19leader-less-based-participatory-democracy-and-its-discontents and Miller, "Participatory Democracy and the Fate of Occupation Wall Street," *The Port Huron Statement*.

46. Andrew Cornell, "Consensus: What It Is, What It Isn't, Where It Comes From, and Where It Must Go," *We Are Many*, 163 and Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, 194.

47. Marina Sitrin and Dario Azzellin, *They Can't Represent US!: Reinventing Democracy From Greece to Occupy* (London: Verso, 2014), 51–59.

48. Cornell, "Consensus," *We are Many*, 166–169.

49. For a description of how the "peoples mic" worked, see Hannah Chadeyane Appel, "The Peoples' Microphone," in *Dreaming in Public: Building the Occupy Movement*, eds. Amy Schrager Lang and Daniel Lang Levitsky (Oxford: New Internationalist Publications, 2012), 260–262.

not necessarily in the order they raised their hands, but instead priority was given to those who had not spoken before and those whose voices were often drowned out in more conventional meetings—women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups. In short, a 'modified' form of consensus decision making became the means by which decisions were made in the General Assembly.[50]

This pragmatic approach through trial and error allowed the participants of OWS to remain true to the ethos of direct democracy by recognizing that consensus decision making did not follow a set of formal rules or procedures. Instead the life blood of the process involved a commitment to making decisions in "a spirit of problem-solving, mutual respect, and a refusal of coercion."[51] By stressing principles instead of rigid strictures OWS sought to avoid ritualizing decision-making process and instead remained open, flexible and experimental to "build new, temporary structures," then "let them whither away as their purposes end," and when necessary adopt "new experiments to create space for direct democracy."[52]

Circumstances indeed led to the implementation of a flexible and experimental approach, as the General Assembly was beset with numerous practical issues, emanating from a series of working groups, covering legal matters, finance, media, community relations and direct action proposals. Consequently, by the end of October, slightly more than a month after the occupation began, *spokescouncils*, modelled after the decision-making process developed in the global justice movement in 1999 and 2000, became responsible for making decisions on most issues, thereby "enabling the use of the General Assembly to consider larger ideas."[53] In the process OWS's adherence to the principles of participatory and direct democracy experienced a transition from "experiences of visionary inspiration" to "a much slower painstaking struggle of creating alternative institutions."[54]

In the meantime, the General Assembly served a purpose; it emboldened participants when they made decisions through consensus with over a thousand others. Manissa Maharawal, a young Asian woman in attending her first General Assembly meeting, observed, "knowing that a lot of people there had never been part of a consensus process and were learning about it for the first time was powerful."[55] Larisa Mann enthusiastically applauded a sensitivity among discussants when they saw "too many similar people had spoken and thereby saying I think someone else from a different background should speak instead of me."[56] In addition, participation in consensus decision making fostered personal and political development, "by learning how to speak, how to be heard in this context, and having their political horizons expanded."[57] Probably more importantly, the mere fact that people "who felt similar frustrations with the world" were discussing issues and considering bona fide "ways to recreate this world" was liberating.[58]

---

50. Gould-Wartofsky, *The Occupiers*, 48–50. For a description of the experience of the General Assembly as convivial and generally good natured, see *Writers for the 99%, Occupying Wall Street: The Inside Story of an Action that Changed America* (New York: OR Books, 2011), 25 and 32.

51. David Graeber, "Some Remarks on Consensus," *Occupy Wall Street.net*, accessed August 17, 2015.

52. Marisa Holmes, "The Center Cannot Hold: A Revolution in Process," *We Are Many*, 161.

53. Hannah Chadeyane Appel, *The Bureaucracies of Anarchy, Dreaming in Public*, 112–116; Suresh Naidu, "My Trajectory with Occupy," in *From Cairo to Wall Street: Voices from the Global Spring*, eds. Anya Schiffrin and Eamon Kircher-Allen (New York: The New Press, 2012), 204–205. Among the working groups that contributed to the General Assembly there were those which spoke for women and "People of Colour" and others which were action- oriented, such as Arts and Culture, Empowerment and Education and Alternative Banking." Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*, 60–61.

54. David Graeber, "Revolution in Reverse," in *Revolutions in Reverse: Essays in Politics, Violence, Art, and Imagination* (London: Minor Compositions, 2011), 64, as cited by Miller, "Participatory Democracy and the Fate of Occupy Wall Street," *The Port Huron Statement*, 211.

55. Manissa Maharawtal, "Standing Up," *Occupy!: An OWS-Inspired Gazette*, 6, http://nplusonemag.com/online-only/occupy/read-our-new-gazette.

56. Larisa Mann, "On Occupy Wall Street," *Dreaming in Public*, 109.

57. Ruth Milkman, *Stephen Luce and Penny Lewis, Changing the Subject: A Bottom-Up Account of Occupy Wall Street in New York City* (The Murphy Institute: The City University of New York, 2013), 30.

58. Maharawal, "Standing Up," 6.

7   The Influence of Anarchism on Occupation Wall Street

Many of Occupy's salient features suggests that anarchist principles of organization, strategy, tactics and decision making influenced the movement. The anti-authoritarian and anti-hierarchical mind set, the espousal of direct or participatory democracy, the advocacy of decentralized if not autonomous structures, the anti-statist orientation, the emphasis on direct action, and even the utopian if not romantic impulse all can be traced to anarchist movements. The fact that some of the more articulate and expressive participants in OWS who have written extensively about the movement, and in some cases have been viewed as spokespersons, including David Graeber, Nathan Schneider, Marisa Holmes, and Mark Bray, were anarchists, validates to some extent the argument about the influence of anarchism. In fact, in interviews conducted with OWS participants, Mark Bray found that 39% of OWS organizers identified themselves as anarchists and another 33% expressed anarchist views, for example, "anti-capitalist, anti-hierarchical, and direct action oriented."[59]

Indeed scholars have noted that anarchism has influenced the left in the United States, going back to the movement for an eight-hour day in the 1880s and the Industrial Workers of the World in the early twentieth century more recently in the New Left, radical feminist, anti-nuke and global justice movements. However, unlike previous protest movements where anarchism was one of different if not competing political and ideological currents, within OWS as evidenced by the declarations by the General Assembly and the statements made by its participants, anarchism appears to be more prominent. For example, on its website OWS stated explicitly that it "structured on anarchist organizing principles. This means there are no formal leaders and no formal hierarchy."[60]

Therefore, one adherent of anarchist principles could boast "at its core, Occupation Wall Street was an anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian movement run by organizers with predominantly anarchist and anarchistic politics."[61] Another cites the role played by a pamphlet entitled *Anarchist Basics* which described how small affinity groups (ranging from 5 to 20 people) could challenge top-down decision making.[62] David Graeber, who became a de facto spokesperson for OWS despite the movement's disclaimer of having leaders, boldly asserted, "the movement did not succeed despite the anarchist element. It succeeded because of it."[63]

The advocacy of direct action, as both an overarching strategy and a set of tactics, is central to anarchist thought. Whether it take the form of strikes, occupations, land seizures boycotts, street protests, civil disobedience or simply do-it-yourself initiatives, direct action took another meaning beyond its potential impact on both practitioners and the targets of the protests. Direct action provides "a glimpse into the egalitarian society of the future,"[64] an embodiment of "democracy without a government," and "ultimately, the defiant insistence on acting as if one is already free."[65] In this manner, direct action from the perspective of OWS participants took on a pre-figurative quality well beyond the strategic and tactical advantages argued by more classical early twentieth-century anarchists, such as Alexander Berkman, Voltairine de Cleyre and Max Baginski,[66] although anarchists within OWS stressed the capacity of the "collective power" within direct action "to push around politicians rather than prostrating ourselves before them."[67]

---

59. Mark Bray, *Translating Anarchy: The Anarchism of Occupy Wall Street* (Zero Books, 2013), 4.

60. The website of WOS is no longer accessible. The link was the following: http://occupywallstreet.net/learn.

61. Nathan Schneider, "What 'diversity of tactics' really means for Occupy Wall Street," *Waging Nonviolence*, https://wagingnonviolence.org/2011/10/what-diversity-of-tactics-really-means-for-occupy-wall-street/; Sarah van Gelder, *This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2011).

62. Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, 89.

63. Bray, *Translating Anarchy*, 90.

64. David Graeber as quoted by Dan Berrett, "Intellectual Roots of Wall Street Protest Lie in Academe," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 16, 2011, https://www.chronicle.com/article/Intellectual-Roots-of-Wall/129428.

65. Graeber, Democracy Project, 233.

66. See for example excerpts from Mother Earth an American anarchist magazine, edited by Emma Goldman, between 1906 and 1918, *Anarchy!*, ed. Peter Glassgold (Washington, D.C: Counterpoint, 2001).

67. Bray, *Translating Anarchy*, 89.

The immediate precursor of OWS, the Global Justice or Anti-Globalisation Movement, developed models of organisation and refined the tactic of direct action, both of which influenced OWS. The Direct Action Network (DAN) turned to affinity groups and embraced consensus decision making in organising the protests against the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund in 1999, and thereby "helped to establish a national continuity of discourse, targets and tactics," which, in the words of David Graeber contributed to the development of "small or neo-anarchism."[68]

An anti-statist orientation, or at the very least a suspicion of government and its officials—both at the heart of anarchism—reverberated within OWS. This found expression in the reluctance to put any demands upon Congress or the President, although the movement's grievances implicitly required some intervention from Washington, D.C., on the premise that would grant legitimacy to political authorities which were seen as "part of the problem."[69]

Accordingly, in an expression of disdain for traditional political action, one activist declared, "We are not pleading with Congress for electoral reform. We know electoral politics is a farce. We have found another way to be heard and exercise power."[70] This non-instrumentalist form of politics differed dramatically from Civil Rights, New Left, and Anti-Nuke groups, for while they stressed direct action and various forms of participatory democracy, they pursued their goals through a mixture of both unconventional and conventional political means, including picketing, lobbying and electoral politics.

8   Defining the Character of Occupy Wall Street

Notwithstanding the influence of anarchist principles in the activities of OWS the very makeup of OWS suggests the movement was from a historical perspective both *sui generis* and situated in a well-established broader American tradition of social and protest movements. Understood within its political, economic and cultural context, OWS emerged in the midst of economic austerity that struck not only the United States but in most European societies. Unlike most previous radical movements OWS developed a loose network with their overseas counterparts and accordingly explicitly maintained a dialogue with other post 2008 anti-austerity movements, especially in Spain and Greece.[71] This outreach and mobilization utilised new communication technologies, including the world wide web, Facebook and Twitter, creatively, and thereby developed a recognition, acceptance and following, independent of the mainstream media.[72] Therefore, not surprisingly OWS sparked similar actions across the US and in other countries by virtue of their two months *in situ* tenure and their influence extended well beyond their eviction for Zuccotti Park in November 2011.[73]

What stands out is how OWS self-consciously sought to exemplify a pre-figurative form of politics by demonstrating in practice what an alternative society in microcosm would look like through self-managed initiatives, including running a library, medical and legal clinics and a communal kitchen. Unlike earlier protest movements which demanded action, policy changes or concessions from government, OWS existed not to "exact concessions from the existing system, but to give people an idea of what the world would be like if there was no system and people were free to make their own choices."[74]

68. Blair Taylor, "Long Shadows of the New Left: From the Students for a Democratic Society to Occupy Wall Street," *Social Ecology*, http://social-ecology.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Taylor/Long-Shadows-of-the-New-Left.pdf, 10.

69. Smaligo, *The Occupy Movement Explained*, 92.

70. Quoted by Aaron Leonard, "New York Minutes: Observations and Aims in"Occupy Wall Street," *Rabble.ca*, October 13, 2011.

71. See Gitlin, *Occupy Nation* and Smaligo, *The Occupy Movement Explained*.

72. Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012) and Gould-Wartofsky, *The Occupiers*, especially pages 70–82.

73. Occupy Wall Street spurred protests in 95 cities and across 82 countries aimed at social and economic inequality and contesting austerity measures adopted by governments. See Brian Wedderburn, Skylar Lewis, Sophie Ouk et. al. "Occupy : A Social Movement for Equality and Justice," *Investigative Sociology* (Spring 2012). Reprinted in *Project Censored.org*, accessed 14 September 2015, http://www.projectcensored.org/occupy-a-social-movement-for-equality.

74. Quoted by David Runciman in book review of David Graeber's *The Democracy Project* in *The Guardian*, March 28, 2013 https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/mar/30/democracy-project-david-graeber-review.

There was more to OWS than an encampment or a community in the making. After their eviction, OWS continued to exist in a number of spin-offs: Occupy Money Cooperative, medical clinics, and free childcare centres. When hurricane Sandy savaged coastal areas of New York and New Jersey in late 2012, OWS mobilized 70,000 volunteers to help with the clean-up and other relief efforts. More ambitious OWS established the Rolling Jubilee Project which bought personal debt for pennies on the dollar and by November 2013 raised $600,000 of which $400,000 was devoted to eliminating $14.7 million worth of medical bills.[75]

These initiatives, albeit not dramatic and not as newsworthy as the marches and rallies organized by participants of OWS, nevertheless carried on another radical tradition. Rather turning to the state for assistance earlier protest movement groups created their own institutions. Anti-war groups staffed draft advice centers to council young men facing conscription during the Vietnam War, the Black Panthers organized school breakfast programmes and health clinics, and feminist groups opened up birth control clinics. Yet the initiatives of OWS differed from earlier 'self-help' initiatives, for the latter mainly aimed to provide practical assistance in areas where there was no support (for example draft counselling) or inadequately resourced (birth control clinics), while the former sought to demonstrate by example that contrary to conventional wisdom, a better world was possible.

Above all it was OWS's ability to develop a discourse that frames issues from alternative perspectives and thereby suggesting bold courses of action which reaffirm its radical nature and what excited observers of the occupy movement.[76] Accordingly, OWS is credited with developing the language to "articulate our unfreedom." The movement is praised for "clearing the way to a more mature political landscape" by beginning "to breathe in the many currents of dissatisfaction and breathe out a more radical imagination." In the process OWS's primary aim has been viewed as "essentially symbolic" in that Occupy set out "not to challenge the existing order directly but to highlight its inequalities and inequities ...."[77]

9   Some Concluding Observations

OWS enriched the tradition of American radical protest movements. Its tactical creativity refined the potential of direct action. Its adoption of Populist tropes, exemplified by the declaration 'We are the 99%' and an incisive critique of corporations and political institutions, contributed to the development of an empowering discourse. By experimenting with non-hierarchical decision-making processes, it reinvigorated the meaning of democracy, citizenship and civic engagement.

However, in doing so, OWS broke new ground. Its emphasis on pre-figurative politics opened up possibilities of conceiving alternative futures and reaffirmed there is a close affinity between the means and ends of a social movement, and thereby challenged the 'streetlight effect' whereby activists don't just look at where the light is shining but "where the actual solution to the problems is." In addition, rather than advancing a developed political programme, OWS, in the words of a participant observer, "created the space for a conversation" to determine "what the future should look like."[78] Unlike previous radical movements (anti-war, civil rights, black power and feminism) OWS moved beyond focusing on a single issue or appealing to a defined constituency and instead developed a 'big tent' for diverse movements and campaigns.

OWS squarely faced the challenge encountered by radical movements since the 1960s: how to inspire people to think and act politically, not in the traditional sense of partisan party affiliation or

75. Justin Wedes, "Occupy Wall Street, Two Years on: We're Still the 99%," *The Guardian*, September 17, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/17/occupy-wall-street-99-percent; Alex Andreu, "Occupy Wall Street's Debt Buying Strikes at the Heart of Capitalism," *The Guardian*, November 13, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/13/occupy-wall-st-debt-buying-heart-capitalism.

76. Eric Foner observes that "OWS did what radical groups throughout American history have tried to do, which is to change the political agenda" in "We are (Still) the 99 Percent," *Vox*, April 23, 2019, 5.

77. Slavoj Zisek, "Giving Occupy the Red Ink," *Occupiedmedia.us*, April 25, 2012; Visay Prashad, *We are Many*, 17–18 and Gary Younge, "Who Knows Where the Occupations are Going — It's Just Great to be Moving," *The Guardian*, November 6, 2011.

78. "We are (Still) the 99 Percent," *Vox*, April 23, 2019, 19; Martina Sitrin, "One No! Many Yeses: Occupy Wall Street and the New Horizontal Global Movements," *Occupy!: An OWS-Inspired Gazette*.

behind a program of policy proposals. Instead, OWS became an exemplar of how individuals could create a culture that fostered "something like a beloved community which became part of the project of making change" and empowered "to participate in history" and make decisions about how they collectively wanted to live, and thereby in practice fulfil the promise of an active democracy.[79]

---

79. Robin D.G. Kelley, "What a Band of 20th Century Alabama Communists Can Teach Black Lives Matter and the Offspring of Occupy," *The Nation*, August 31, 2015, accessed September, 16, 2015. http://portside.org: Richard Flacks, *Making History*, 101.

References and Further Readings

Aaron, Leonard. "New York Minutes: Observations and Aims in Occupy Wall Street." *Rabble.ca*. October 13, 2011.

Andreu, Alex. "Occupy Wall Street's Debt Buying Strikes at the Heart of Capitalism." *The Guardian*. November 13, 2013. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/13/occupy-wall-st-debt-buying-heart-capitalism.

Berrett, Dan. "Intellectual Roots of Wall Street Protest Lie in Academe." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. October 16, 2011. https://www.chronicle.com/article/Intellectual-Roots-of-Wall/129428.

Bray, Mark. *Translating Anarchy: The Anarchism of Occupy Wall Street*. Zero Books, 2013.

Breines, Wini. *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962–1968: The Great Refusal*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1989.

Bryne, Janet. ed. *The Occupy Handbook*. Little Brown and Company/Back Bay Books, 2012.

Carson, Clayborne. *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Castells, Manuel. *Networks of Outrage and Hope*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012.

Chiu, Frances. "Regaining Common Sense: 275 Years Later, the Power of Tom Paine." *Occupiedmedia.us*. January 27, 2012.

Cohen, Robert and Reginold Zelnick. eds. *The Free Speech Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Darnowsky Marcy, Barbara Epstein and Richard Flacks. eds. *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.

Dubofsky, Melvyn. *We Shall Be All*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Epstein, Barbara. *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Flacks, Richard. *Making History: The American Left and the American Mind*. New York: Columbia University, 1988.

Flacks, Richard and Nelson Lichtenstein. eds. *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

Fominaya, Cristina. *Social Movements and Globalization*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014.

Frank, Lenny. ed. *Voices From the 99 Percent: An Oral History of the Occupy Wall Street Movement*. St. Petersburg, Florida: Red and Black Publishers, 2011.

Frost, Jennifer. *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organizing and the New Left in the 1960s*. New York: New York University, 2001.

Giovanni, Janine. "The Quiet American, Gene Sharpe: The Theorist of Power." *New York Times*. September 3, 2012. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/09/t-magazine/gene-sharp-theorist-of-power.html.

Gitlin, Todd. *Occupy Nation*. New York: IT Books, 2012.

Glassgold, Peter. ed. *Anarchy!*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 2001.

Gould-Wartofsky, Michael. *The Occupiers: The Making of the 99 Percent Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Graeber, David. *The Democracy Project*. New York: Random House, 2013.

Graeber, David. "Occupy and Anarchism' art of Democracy." *The Guardian*. November 15, 2011. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/nov/15/occupy-anarchism-gift-democracy.

Hampson, Rick. "Occupy Wall Street Protests Test Left's Determination." *USA Today*. October 11, 2011.

Harcourt, Bernard. "Occupy Wall Street's 'Political Disobedience'." *New York Times*. October 13, 2011. https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/13/occupy-wall-streets-political-disobedience/.

Jacobs, Paul and Saul Landau. eds. *The New Radicals*. New York: Vintage, 1966.

Khatib, Kate, Margaret Killjoy and Mike McGuire. eds. *We are Many: Reflections on Movement Strategy From Occupation to Liberation*. Oakland, California: AK Press, 2012.

Kelley, Robin D.G. "What a Band of 20th Century Alabama Communists Can Teach Black Lives Matter and the Offspring of Occupy." *The Nation*. August 31, 2015. http://portside.org.

Kinna, Ruth, Alex Prichard and Thomas Swann. "Occupy and the Constitution of Anarchy." *Global Constitutionalism*, 2(2019), 357–390.

Lang Schrager, Amy and Daniel Lang Levitsky. eds. *Dreaming in Public: Building the Occupy Movement*. Oxford: New Internationalist Publications, 2012.

Lenny, Frank, ed. *Voices From the 99 Percent: An Oral History of the Occupy Wall Street Movement*. St. Petersburg, Florida: Red and Black Publishers, 2011.

Lowndes, Joe and Dorian Warner. "Occupation Wall Street: A Twenty-First Century Populist Movement?." *Dissent*. October 21, 2011.

Maeckelbergh, Marianne. "Occupy the US: Musings on Horizontal Decision-Making and Bureaucracy." *STIR*, (Spring 2012). http://stirtoaction.com.

Maharawtal, Manissa. "Standing Up." *Occupy!: An OWS-Inspired Gazette*.

Marom, Yotam. "Still Winning: Occupy Wall Street and the World We Want." *Beyond the Choir*. November 22, 2011. http://www.beyondthechoir.org/diary/120still-winning-occupy-wall-street.

Milkman, Ruth. Stephen Luce and Penny Lewis. *Changing the Subject: A Bottom-Up Account of Occupy Wall Street in New York City*. New York: The Murphy Institute, The City University of New York, 2013.

Miller, James. *Democracy is in the Streets*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1987.

Newfield, Jack. *A Prophetic Minority: The American New Left*. London: Charles Anthony Blond, 1966.

Polletta, Francesca. *Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Runciman, David. *Review of The Democracy Project* by David Graeber. *The Guardian*. March 28, 2013. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/mar/28/democracy-project-david-graeber-review.

Schiffrin, Anya and Eamon Kircher-Allen. eds. *From Cairo to Wal Street: Voices from the Global Spring*. New York: The New Press, 2012.

Schneider, Nathan. *Thank You Anarchy: Notes from the Occupy Apocalypse*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

Sharpe, Gene. *The Politics of Non Violent Action. Part Two*. New York: Porter Sargent Publisher, 1973.

Sitrin, Marina. "Horizontalism and the Occupy Movements." *Dissent*. Spring 2012.

Sitrin, Maina. "One No! Many Yeses." *Occupy: An OWS-Inspired Gazette*.

Sitrin, Marina and Dario Azzellin. *They Can't Represent Us!: Reinventing Democracy From Greece to Occupy*. London: Verso, 2014.

Smaligo, Nicholas. *The Occupy Movement Explained*. Chicago: Open Court Press, 2014.

Smucker, Matthew. "The Tactic of Occupation and the Movement of the 99%." *Beyond the Choir*. November 21, 2011.

Taylor, Blair. "Long Shadows of the New Left: From the Students for a Democratic Society to Occupy Wall Street." in *The Sixties: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on America's Longest Decade*, edited by Laura Bieger and Christian Lammert, 77–94. (Berlin: Campus Verlag) 2013.

"What Liberty Square Means: The Progressive Revolution." *Occupied Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 2011.

Wells, Tom. *The War Within: America's War Over Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Wedderburn, Brian, Skylar Lewis, Sophie Ouk et. al. "Occupy: A Social Movement for Equality and Justice." *Investigative Sociology*. (Spring 2012).

Wedes, Justin. "Occupy Wall Street, Two Years on: We're Still the 99%." *The Guardian*. September 17, 2013. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/17/occupy-wall-street-99-percent.

Writers for the 99%. *Occupying Wall Street, The Inside Story of an Action that Changed America*. New York: OR Books, 2011.

W.W. "Occupy Wall Street: Leaderless, consensus-based participatory democracy and itsDiscontents." *The Economist*. October 19, 2011. https://www.economist.com/democracy-in-america/2011/10/19/leaderless-consensus-based-participatory-democracy-and-its-discontents.

Younge, Gary. "Who Knows Where the Occupations are Going — It's Just Great to be Moving." *The Guardian*. November 6, 2011. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/nov/06/knows-occupations-going-great-moving.

Zisek, Slavoj. "Giving Occupy the Red Ink." *Occuupiedmedia.us*. April 25, 2012.