

# The Occupied Times

~ OF LONDON ~

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MARK KAURI

## OCCUPY EVERYWHERE: GOING VIVAL

This week, coinciding with the two-month anniversary of the emergence of Occupy London, calls have been made for a national day of creative, non-violent action to highlight economic and social injustice. Occupy Everywhere (December 15th) is an invitation for concerned citizens and communities across the UK to engage with the global dialogue on the changes and re-imaginings our society desperately requires.

The invitation comes on the heels of concerns of further instability in the markets and the continuing drive by the government to proceed with extensive cuts to public services, the perpetuation of neoliberal economic

policies and corporate rule, and a blind eye-turned attitude towards the ecological devastation entailed by this agenda. In short: the same formula to have run amok in the build-up and consequent come-down of the recent global financial crisis is being re-bottled, re-branded - and sold at a higher price [rolling out at coffee shops this festive season: the Neoliberalatte!]. Occupy Everywhere may represent the latest batch of antidote attempting to remedy this poison, but this action - together with the wider initiative of the Occupy movement - is also representative of an historic and intertwined domino chain of social reform.

In the seventeenth century, it took a dissolved parliament more than a decade to reform and stand up to the tyrannical reign of King Charles I - and longer still for the ensuing civil war to see the autocratic rule of monarchs ousted from the British Isles altogether. This period of turmoil gave rise to the actions of dissenting groups, including the Levellers and the Diggers, who occupied themselves with efforts towards economic equality.

A century later, against the backdrop of the industrial revolution that would propel our society into the late modern age, the trade union movement saw those outside of the aristocracy take social reform into

their own hands. Workers formed unions to stand in solidarity against injustices and exploitation. It was from this front that 'occupy' as terminology can find its origin - with workers' industrial action having included moves to occupy factories to prevent lock-outs by their employers.

With the kindling of reform set down for future generations, the 20th century saw the fire of change stoked like never before: with direct action from feminists leading to the civil right to vote, the post-world war years giving rise to the welfare state and a national health service and the 1960s playing host to a plethora of social reforms, civil rights movements and revolutionary general strikes >>



# Editorial

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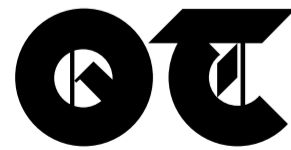
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Tomorrow marks two months since the start of the global Occupy movement, and already a tremendous amount has been achieved.

Those of us who have been part of the occupations since October the 15th weren't even sure we would make it through the first night - and in a sense, we didn't.

The original plan to occupy the London Stock Exchange never came into fruition, but did that ever really matter?

A movement is called such because of its fluidity; it must navigate obstacles that are inevitably placed in its path, extracting whatever value and impetus it can from each given scenario.

The skirmish with St Paul's could be viewed as a distraction, but from it came widespread support, even from devout Christians. In the event, St Paul's was subjected to a more thorough critique than the occupation on its steps, with any moral discrepancies exposed. Clash with Occupy, and you will be scrutinised. It isn't a bad reputation to have.

But to avoid petering out or becoming irrelevant, a movement must retain its mobile advance, rather than resting on its laurels. So the occupation of Finsbury Square and then the Bank of Ideas quickly followed. With each new chapter

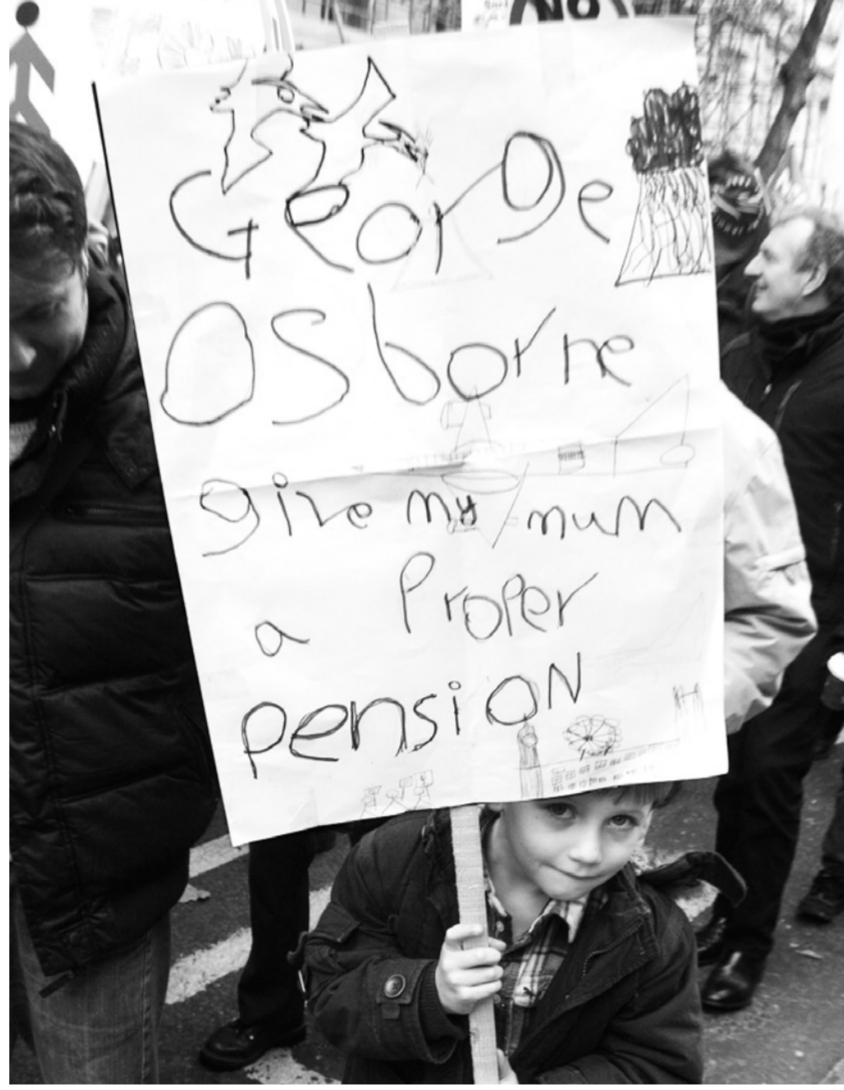
come new problems to negotiate. In our path are two legal disputes and the remaining cold of winter.

Christmas might seem an obvious point to wrap things up, but while there would be no disgrace in retreating from the cold, the festive season could be the perfect time for Occupy to escalate further still. While London is lit up and corporations throw lavish Christmas parties, poverty isn't suspended for those who know it well, and for many families gifts will be less plentiful than in past years, for reasons not of their doing.

In 'A Christmas Carol' Dickens poured scorn over 19th century industrial capitalism, and 150 years on Occupy is offering its own non-fictional critique of the modern day equivalent.

Just as Jacob Marley visited Ebenezer Scrooge, the financial sector's past transactions and the political elite's neoliberal policies must come back to haunt them. We've learned how past events caused this crisis and who was responsible, and at present, we are taking action against those same people who still own the means to shape our futures.

Tomorrow we occupy everywhere; but everywhere, occupying tomorrow is the real challenge.



>> across the globe. More recently, culture jammers and activists involved in projects such as Reclaim The Streets have engaged in direct action to challenge the injustices of spectacular media and the continuing eradication of public, non-commercial space in our society.

Today, at Occupy London, less than two months since its emergence as part of the global occupy movement, participants have formed dozens of working groups, with successful results to date including direct action and union outreach; established a diverse media presence in print, broadcast and online; formed connections with other UK and global occupations; given rise to a free public civic center founded on reclaimed corporate space; played host to talks and events from a diverse range of speakers; made moves towards environmental sustainability on-site with eco-friendly power upgrades; and served a rebuttal to many critics by reaching consensus on a statement with demands for feasible moves

towards economic and social reform.

Occupy Everywhere is the most recent initiative to emerge from the ever-increasing domino cascade of this movement, and from its wider historic roots, with a view to engage the so-called '99%' of wider society in the dialogue of change - in the workplace, at universities and in everyday life. Occupy London invites potential participants to think creatively about the action and dialogue they could hope to engage through channels such as social media, local public spaces, schools or universities. Participants are invited to "Do something bold and make a statement, work through existing channels if you like - it's the fact of doing something that's important". The initiative is a chance for all of us to engage in an historic dialogue of social and economic reform, beyond the confines of commercial, professional and spectacular space, and within the scope of an everywhere we may yet hope to occupy completely.

## TENTCITY UNI CALENDAR FOR THE WEEK

### THURSDAY 15TH

**11.00-12.00/**Boycott A Bank-open discussion about direct action against banks-Bank of Ideas.**11.00-12.00/Social Dreaming-Mannie Sher-Finsbury Sq. 14.00-15.00/Dr. Deep- Sharing understandings on first aid-Bank of Ideas. 15.00-16.00/Ten Commitments-/ Leon Redler. 18.00-19.00** PROUT-alternative economic model Progressive Utilisation Theory- St. Paul's.**18.00-19.00/** 2nd Free University Discussion-Bank of Ideas.

### FRIDAY 16TH

**12.00-13.00/**William Morris: Art and Socialism- Lucy Johnson-St. Paul's.**14.00-15.00/** What happens Next-Lin Donaldson-St. Paul's.**15.00-16.00/Social enterprise-Rodney Schwartz-St. Paul's. 16.00-17.00/** Gender, Sexuality and Society-multiple speakers-St. Paul's.**17.00-18.00/Social Dreaming-Mannie Sher-Finsbury Sq. 17.30-19.00/Free Trade and resistance-John Hilary-St. Paul's. 17.30-20.30/** WTO Panel Discussion-speakers like John Hilary of War on Want, Rebecca Varghese-Bucchoz of Traidcraft, Aurelie Walker of the Fairtrade Foundation, Martin Wolf of the Financial Times and Ruth Bergan of the Trade Justice Movement will answer the main topic-"Should the World Trade Organisation be scrapped?"-Bank of Ideas.**18.00-19.00/**Community without money-a talk about how people can live and work together without money saving more than 50% of human resources-Bank of Ideas.**18.00-23.00/**The obstacles to truth-this event will be a combination of debates, question forums, presentations, plus a showcase of young performers exercising their freedom of speech and expression through music and poetry-Bank of Ideas.**20.30-23.59/**Bill Hicks 50th birthday-a tribute to comedy by Gerry Bernstein-Bank of Ideas.

### SATURDAY 17TH

**11.00-12.00/**Yoga-Bank of Ideas.**11.00-12.00/** Social Dreaming-Mannie Sher-Finsbury Sq.**14.00-15.00/** The misery of job insecurity-a catalyst for resistance-Alex Wood-Bank of Ideas.**14.00-15.30/**Open discussion initiated by TCU about the occupation.Results will be published in the South Atlantic Quarterly-St. Paul's.**15.00-16.00/**Squatting workshop-Phoenix-Bank of Ideas.**15.00-17.30/**Theatre as Social Resistance-Bank of Ideas.**17.30-20.30/** Screening of "Prison?" followed by Q&A with Director Charlie Ryder-Bank of Ideas.

### SUNDAY 18TH

**10.00-17.00/** Green Day at OLSX. Speakers: Polly Higgins on Ecocide, Tamsin Omond of Climate Rush and Donnacadh McCarthy on living green and avoiding the corporate 1%. A range of workshops on Biofuels, Fracking Tar Sand and Solar Energy are planned throughout the day-St. Paul's.**12.00-15.33/** Circle The City with Peace: Peace Walk-starting at Bank of Ideas and finishing in Parliament Square.**14.00-16.00/**An exploration into Alienation-workshop by Naomi Green-Bank of Ideas.**14.00-16.00/**Make,build and create together-Bank of Ideas.**17.00-18.00/**Social Dreaming-Mannie Sher-Finsbury Sq.**MONDAY 19TH 11.00-12.00/**Social Dreaming-Mannie Sher-Finsbury Sq. **14.00-15.30/**The Sacred Circle, Shamanic Drumming Circle-Bank of Ideas. **14.30-15.30/**Occupy your minds/Occupy your hands-a drawing workshop with Badaude (Metro/ Times cartoonist)-St. Paul's.**15.30-17.30/** Clown Workshop-Bank of Ideas.**16.00-17.30/**Shamanic Drumming and Journeying Circle-Amber's Circle-St. Paul's.**18.00-19.00/**Decriminalise prostitution for safety's sake-meet New Zealand MP who introduced decriminalisation there-Tim Barnett-St. Paul's.**18.00-19.30/** The Levenson Inquiry:Why Media Reform Matters-Dave Boyle (Cooperatives UK) and Richard Peppiatt (fresh from giving evidence to Leveson, ex-Daily Star reporter),Natalie Fenton and Des Freedman (both from Goldsmith University)-Bank of Ideas.

### TUESDAY 20TH

**15.00-16.00/**Breast Cancer awareness session for women-Carly Bond (Social Action for Health)-Bank of Ideas. **17.00-18.00/**Social Dreaming-Mannie Sher-Finsbury Sq. **19.00-20.30/**Capital Reading Group-Jane Cheadle-Bank of Ideas.

### WEDNESDAY 21ST

**11.00-12.00/**Social Dreaming-Mannie Sher-Finsbury Sq.**12.00/** Free Film Cut Pro Editing and Training Session-Bank of Ideas.**18.00-19.00/** Resistance behind bars-Nicki Jameson-St. Paul's.

### THURSDAY 22ND

**17.00-18.00/** Social Dreaming-Mannie Sher-Finsbury Sq. **18.00-19.00/**Communism-not just a "nice idea"-Alan Ward-St. Paul's.**18.00-19.00/** How to steal money from poor countries-Aders Lustgarten. \*Events are subject to change. Updates on hours and lectures can be found online at: [HY http://www.bankofideas.org.uk/events/](http://www.bankofideas.org.uk/events/)

# OCCUPY LONDON'S FINANCIAL 'CRISIS'

EMMA FORDHAM



certain sections of the mainstream media would have us believe that Occupy London is as bankrupt - monetarily and morally - as the financial sector on our doorstep. The money has been lost! Donations have been siphoned off into individual bank accounts and shady eco-activist charities! We've spent thousands of pounds on fags and dog-food!

Well, no. What happened was that an assortment of people passionate about changing the world for the better set up camp in the city. They had no collective money and initially they didn't have much of a plan beyond making themselves heard, raising their voices in protest at injustice and demanding a fairer future. Their voices resonated. Members of the 99% who couldn't camp out showed their support in other ways and cash donations trickled in.

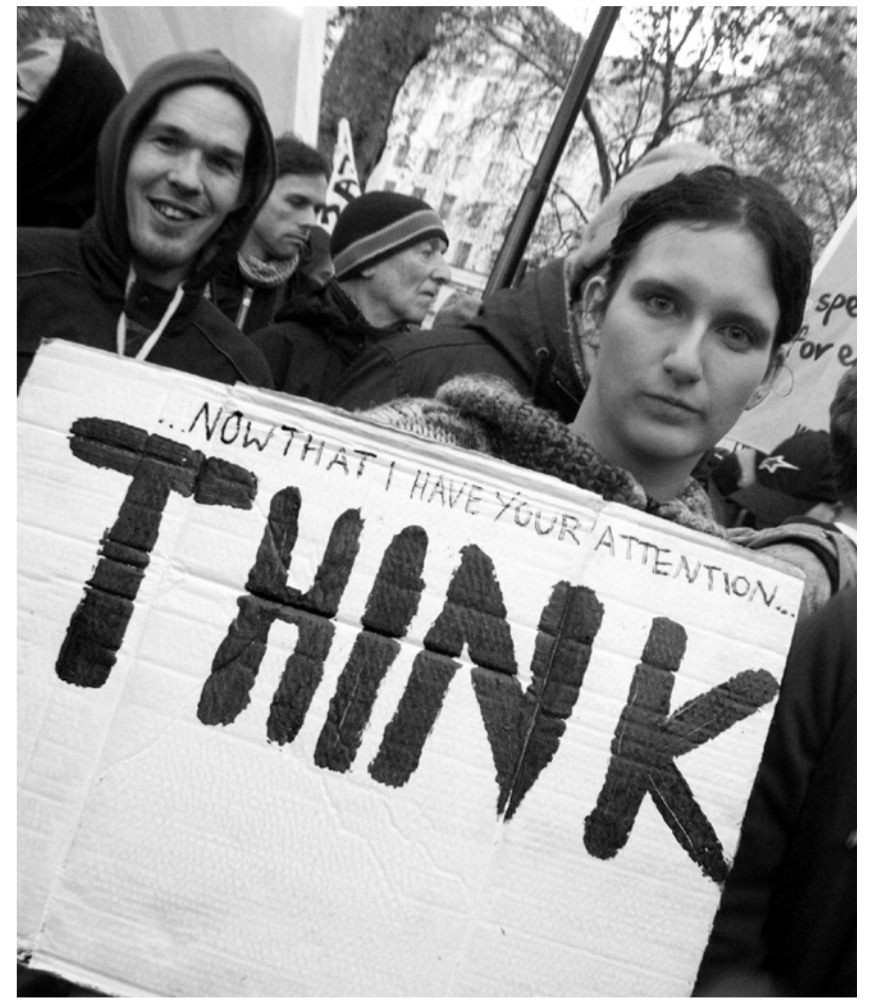
The money was put in a tin and used to buy food, teabags, stationery and to print Occupy leaflets. People were clamouring to donate online, so an unused

Climate Camp bank account was adopted as a temporary repository for electronic funds. Meanwhile, the fledgling OLSX Finance Working Group sought advice on whether a motley assortment of unincorporated radicals could legally accept donations and open a bank account. The answer was yes. The irony was not lost on the Occupiers; nevertheless, it was decided funds could help us spread the Occupy message and so should not be rejected. A Co-operative bank account was deemed the 'least evil' option.

OccupyLSX began to save and then to spend. Swept up in the excitement of media scrums, church resignations, secondary Occupations and national strikes, we didn't sit down and thrash out spending priorities and financial policies for the outset. This inevitably led to instances of conflict - what's more important, political Direct Action or weatherproof tents? Is feeding the homeless part of the Occupy remit? Do we need to chain down our cash-box? Should we form a not-for-profit company?

Occupations worldwide have struggled with similar issues. OccupyLSX initiated a temporary

spending freeze during which issues of transparency, accountability, spending priorities and creative use of resources were discussed. After an intense week of debate, during which a few people became frustrated and stamped their feet, a proposal was put to and accepted by the sovereign body of OLSX - the General Assembly. From now on budgets will be set weekly; spending will not exceed donations received in any given week barring exceptional circumstances; priorities will be discussed and reviewed regularly; all working groups will keep clear and transparent records; the movement will aim to source materials via Freecycle and similar schemes where possible; and all decisions regarding spending will be made by the General Assembly. As for the bank account, the paperwork is at the Co-op bank and there is a short-list of potential signatories. If this was a financial crisis, it was a microscopic one; nipped in the bud before it festered, unsustainable systems recognised and replaced within the space of six weeks. Perhaps the Financial Services Authority and its new offspring would like to learn a thing or two from us?



# NATURE TAKES THE TOLL WHY LINKING THE ECONOMY TO THE ENVIRONMENT IN OCCUPY MATTERS

JUDITH SCHOSSBOECH

To many, Occupy is primarily a movement that fights economic inequality. "I am all against bankers, but not an environmentalist!" - this quote of a man passing by the Environment Info Tent last week seemed to sum up the reservations some people have against linking economic critiques to environmental critiques within the movement. If bankers are seen as the "scum of the world" (Anonymous), should climate change deniers be as well?

Generally, environmental concerns do not seem to be at the centre of (mass) media attention although they

are already playing a significant role in the global Occupy movement. But even if you don't identify as green campaigner, environmentalist or geohippie and are "just" sympathizing with the Occupy movement's concern about socio-economic justice, you might have a greener heart than you thought. Here is why:

- The 99% pay for the 1%'s accumulation of wealth - but nature pays, too. As grassroots activist Chip Ward points out, the needs of ecosystems are as easy to disregard as the needs of the young for debt-free education or meaningful jobs. In the

name of profit, both nature and workers are expendable.

- An economy of maximum growth is not leading to better lives for the 99%, or to sustainable innovation. If we produce twice as many gadgets, but they only last half as long, the only benefactors are the manufacturers. The ever-increasing demand on our finite natural resource base is not sustainable. Infinite economic growth is just not possible on a finite planet. - Why are governments refusing to cut subsidies to the fossil fuel industry while cutting jobs, public services and social welfare programmes? Alternative economies can be enabled by a shift of priorities and decision-making paradigms. By making the right investment we can create a million climate jobs and an economy that is fit for the future.

- Green living can be quite a powerful way of disempowering the 1%. - Like wealth and economic disparities, polluters, poverty and economic greed are strongly interlinked. The poorest half of the population account for just 7% of the world's climate-changing emissions, whilst the richest 7% produce 50%. Yet the rich generally do not live next to polluted areas or the waste dumps of our planet. The degradation of our planet goes hand in hand with the accumulation of wealth and power.

- Denying climate change can be advantageous to businesses and large corporations who have made a fortune

in destroying the planet (from Exxon Mobil to the Koch Industries). Financial contributions influencing political and scientific decisions can furthermore be seen as a form of corruption and control by the elites.

- Likewise, industries based on fossil fuels often contrast environmental policies with the ability to create jobs. The facts show that investing in clean energy creates more jobs. - Occupy calls for a more human, sustainable and fair economic system that benefits and respects future generations. Environmental concerns express the wish to balance the relations between humanity and their broader milieu. We all depend on a healthy environment.

These are only some of the reasons why Occupy needs to support actions for both economic and environmental justice and to explore the opportunities for injecting these concerns into its general policies. Others revolve around more personal values: the virtues of simple living, a sense of self-reliance, the respect for nature and spirituality. Or, as Jason Brox, an associate professor of geography and atmospheric sciences at Ohio State University puts it, the Occupy Movement and environmentalism go together because these are both justice movements: "It's both economic justice and environmental justice."

Environmental justice is premised on the simple notion that everyone is entitled to a healthy environment. The Occupy

movement has the power to articulate that vision. With debates on green living, ethical capitalism and alternative energy sources on site, Occupy London seeks to model alternative versions of society and calls for changes in public policy and individual behaviour. Green events have also been organised elsewhere, e.g. by the Environmentalist Solidarity Group of Occupy Wall Street and their Climate Justice Day. And many other Occupy protests focus on issues like hydraulic fracking, tar sands, or the lack of green jobs.

You don't have to identify as an environmentalist to take action - there are many ways to act on your concerns. One approach is to educate ourselves on the linkages between economic and environmental issues. The initial statement of Occupy London already reflects that commitment:

"The present economic system pollutes land, sea and air, is causing massive "loss of natural species and environments, and is accelerating humanity towards irreversible climate change. We call for a positive, sustainable economic system that benefits present and future generations."

If you would like to dig deeper into the subject, you are invited to join the Environment group at St. Paul's on the 18th December for Occupy London's Big Green Day. Participate in a day of talks, workshops, art, music and activities showing the link between economy and environment!

# WE HAVE A WEAPON WHOSE NAME IS TAHRIR SQUARE

STEFAN SIMANOWITZ



## STEFAN SIMANOWITZ REFLECTS ON HIS TIME SPENT IN TAHRIR SQUARE OVER THE ELECTION PERIOD

For an activist like myself the sensation of walking across Egypt's 6th October Bridge and into Tahrir Square, at the height of last month's "second revolution", was equivalent to how an Elvis fan must feel arriving in Graceland for the first time. I had followed the unfolding of the country's first revolution from afar at the start of the year, reading with equal levels of excitement and jealousy the breathless tweets and status updates of friends on the ground. I was fortunate enough to spend an inspiring week at the Wall Street occupation at the time of the Brooklyn Bridge arrests and was back in London for the start of occupation activity at the Stock Exchange. Fluttering Egyptian flags could be seen in both Zuccotti Park and St Paul's, paying tribute to a key source of inspiration, but to actually be in a packed Tahrir Square - one of the birthplaces of the Arab Spring and the spiritual home of the Occupy movement - was something very special indeed.

I was in Egypt for the run up to the first stage of Egypt's first parliamentary elections in the post-Mubarak era, arriving in Cairo just as five days of violence between the military and protesters in Tahrir Square were drawing to a close. After bloody battles on Wednesday, an order was given for the soldiers to



stop their attempts to clear the square. Although the crowd gathered in the square on Thursday was large, there was a sense of nervousness in the air. Rumours circulated about the gas used over the previous days - not the tear gas but an invisible odourless gas that had caused painful rashes, temporary blindness and seizures. Was it a form of nerve gas? Had it been pumped into the square through the subway ventilation shafts? What might be the long-term effects?

Streets around the square were still littered with burnt out cars, piles of rubble and blackened shop fronts. The army had blocked off Mohamed Mahmoud Street - the route to the Ministry of the Interior - with razor wire. Protesters had hung a banner across the entrance to the street which read "Eyes of Freedom Street" in commemoration to the 49 protesters who had lost their eyes during the course of the previous week after being targeted with birdshot. Indeed, it was striking to see how many people in Tahrir Square wore patches over one eye, with their resolve undiminished by partial blinding.

The mood on Friday was much more buoyant. As people streamed into Tahrir Square, the crowd grew to a size the likes of which had not been witnessed since the days of the first revolution in February. Young men climbed on top of lamp-posts to wave flags, as continuous rhythmic chanting echoed off the buildings. At lunchtime, in an unprecedented move, the grand Imam of Al-Azhar - Sunni Islam's highest authority - arrived in the square to lead tens of thousands in prayer.

Later that afternoon, in a move reminiscent of OLSX's occupation of Finsbury Square and the attempts by US protesters to occupy Wall Street on October the 5th, a breakaway group of around a hundred protesters walked half a kilometre to the Egyptian Parliament and Cabinet and occupied the street between the two buildings. By evening the number of protesters grew to more than 500. A handful of soldiers looked on as they set up tents, laid out blankets and painted graffiti on the walls outside

Parliament. Volunteers weaved through the crowd passing out water, dates and other food as well as blankets for those who were planning to stay.

Back in Tahrir Square the crowd remained large but the mood had become more tense. There was talk of thugs mingling with the crowd, harassing people, robbing and starting fights. I left the square after midnight only to return the next morning to news that one of the protesters I had been with on the previous night outside Parliament and the Cabinet - 19 year old Ahmed Sayd Sonour - had been killed, crushed beneath the wheels of a Ministry of Interior armoured personnel carrier. Someone had traced the outline of his blood on the tarmac with chalk.

The death of Ahmed followed the deaths of over forty people across the country at the hands of the security forces in the course of that week. Protesters had originally come out on to the streets to oppose proposed constitutional amendments by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) which would limit the authority of future governments over the army. They were also expressing anger at SCAF's slow timetable for implementing civilian rule and a lack of respect for human rights over the previous nine months.

The clashes had succeeded in persuading SCAF to make some limited concessions. Essam Sharaf's unpopular civilian cabinet resigned and Kamel el-Ganzoury was appointed Prime Minister and charged with forming a so-called

dozens of volunteers used buckets and brooms to clear the lakes of water in a frenzied hour of activity that was greeted with cheers from the crowd.

Despite calls from some quarters for an electoral boycott, polling day saw a high turn out with queues of people outside polling stations before doors had opened. Many Egyptians had clear hopes that the elections would take the country a little closer towards the establishment of a civilian government. During the elections the crowd in Tahrir Square was much smaller than it had been on preceding days. There were still groups chanting and flags waving as well as clusters of people engaged in heated debate. One of the main discussions amongst activists in Tahrir centered on whether voting would lend legitimacy to an election that, regardless of the outcome, would see the military regime retain ultimate power. Other groups in Tahrir Square discussed the merits and composition of the proposed government of national salvation and the way forward for the Tahrir-appointed civil presidential council.

Feelings ran high but despite differences of opinion all agreed that military rule must end, with the majority reaching consensus on the fact that the Tahrir Square occupation should continue until the hour that it does. "To dismantle our tents before then would be to dismantle our hopes for a better future," Mourad Haikal told me. "Whatever happens in the elections the important thing is that Tahrir should stay."

of votes won by the ultraconservative Salafist Nour Party that caused the greatest surprise. The FJP advocates the application of some aspects of Sharia law, but the party has made efforts to position itself as a moderate, democratic and inclusive party. The Salafists, by contrast, take a more hard line approach rejecting the very concept of democracy which they believe allows man-made law to take ascendance over God's law. "The extremist Islamic parties would attempt to kill democracy by democracy," political analyst Ahmed Abdel Maksood told me. "If they were to win a Parliamentary majority they would amend the constitution and bring in an Islamic State."

Maksood is nevertheless optimistic about Egypt's future. Last month's return to Tahrir Square not only succeeded in reawakening the spirit of defiance in Egypt and achieving some significant political gains, but also cemented the position of the square as a permanent, practical and symbolic heart of the freedom movement in Egypt. Tahrir Square is a place where people can always return and whose very existence will help shape Egyptian politics for generations to come. As Ahmed Abdel Maksood said: "The January revolution gave us the path. It showed us the way. We now have a weapon and that weapon is called Tahrir Square."

Before leaving Cairo I made one final visit to Tahrir Square. The tents were still there but the crowds had dwindled significantly and many of the traders had



National Salvation Government. The date for presidential elections was shifted from early 2013 to June 2012. For the protesters in Tahrir Square, these concessions fell far short of their demand for an end to military rule. "Ganzoury is a puppet and I don't trust SCAF to hand over power," political activist Salma Hegazy told me. "They will use these elections to give the impression of backing democracy whilst doing everything they can [to] keep the influence and privileges."

On Sunday night, the eve of the elections, a heavy downpour washed the blood from the streets but also created large pools of water in Tahrir Square and at the occupation outside Parliament and the Cabinet. When the rain stopped,

As polling stations closed their doors that night, the mood in Cairo was far from celebratory. Despite a 62% turnout and widespread relief that the two days of voting had not been marred by violence, the elections had left many far from satisfied. Beyond the concerns at voting irregularities and overly complicated ballot papers, many felt that the election process lacked legitimacy.

The results, released the following Sunday, saw Islamic parties take a total 65% of the vote, pushing the coalition of liberal parties into third place. Whilst the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) performed as expected - winning the largest share of votes with 36.6% - it was the 24.4%

moved on. "We must be patient," a young woman told me, "this stage of the revolution will not be over in eighteen days." Her nostrils were clogged with tissue to soak up the blood from a nosebleed caused by tear gas some days earlier. Beside the young woman, a vendor was selling gas masks. Nearby, in the field hospital beside the Mosque, donors were giving blood. In the distance, a young girl sat on her father's shoulders, chanting: "Be strong my country. Your labour may be painful but the child you will bear will be called freedom."

Stefan Simanowitz is a writer, journalist, photographer and broadcaster. Visit [www.simanowitz.ning.com](http://www.simanowitz.ning.com) Twitter @StefSimanowitz



## SANTA ROSA: A MESSAGE TO OCCUPY LONDON

MIKE RUPPERT

What excites me about Occupy Santa Rosa (OSR) is watching the speed with which learning and awareness occurs and seeing all of the things sprouting from the sacred space that #Occupy is holding open for all humans.

What worries me most is its openly-stated openness to all comers without even the barest guidelines for community conduct aside from non-violence. In Santa Rosa, as in almost every one of the #Occupy locations I'm aware of, we're having serious problems with criminals, addicts and the mentally challenged. In many cases authorities are telling these people to come to our camps and I think we are all suffering from the intended results.

The movement must mature and impose some adult conditions, backed up by teeth, to remove disrupters, for anyone who violates community agreements specifically tailored to the realities and needs of each location. Speaking for the 99% does not mandate sinking to the lowest common denominator found therein. Tribal models are by far, in my opinion, the best way to do this. After all, that's what our species used for perhaps 40,000 years and they worked! We were all tribal once.

At OSR we are moving towards a Community Supported Occupations (CSOs), in partnership with Transition activists, permaculture food growers and local businesses and interest groups that are already politically well-respected within the community. There is real power in that and even Santa Rosa City Council has come to the realisation that in a very short time the only things left capable of maintaining order and achieving anything will be local governments and the resources of each particular community.

We believe that setting and enforcing a global template beyond the barest standards is both unwise and foolish. Look at Europe. Any attempt to bind or make things bigger is doomed to fail. Systems break down, not up. OSR is deeply imbued with the core beliefs of #Occupy so does not need and is not asking for top-down hierarchical support. The possibility of useful solutions emerging decreases inversely with application of imposed global solutions. That is the antithesis of what this movement is about.

We would be extremely suspicious of any group seeking to influence or manage the entire movement. And the truth is, I think, that most #Occupy camps would just rightly ignore anything that came down to them this way.

I believe that your greatest achievement at Occupy London has been replacing violent UK riots with peaceful demonstrations, and through your moral courage, compelling the Church of England to examine itself and choose whether it serves God or Mammon. The entire movement is grateful to Occupy London for that because these are the places where something real must be changed before substantive and productive reform can take root and flourish elsewhere.

If I were to design a flag for #Occupy, our symbol would be the tent. Has anyone ever seen a mortgage on a tent? A two-car garage? A satellite dish? The tent is our symbol of our true freedom from The Matrix and it has been from the start. The tent symbolizes our inner and outer liberation from all the traps of industrial civilization. If Occupiers around the world began demonstrating that it is possible to live a happy and more fulfilling life free from all the crap of industrial civilization, we will have achieved victory. It was our tents that scared the bad guys more than anything - and I don't know if the movement ever really appreciated that. Let's bear that in mind as we all move forward together into 2012.

# OCCUPY THE NORTH

TIM GEE



When I was a child Wigan Pier was a museum with clog dancing, a mock Victorian schoolroom and a boat down the canal to a cotton mill. Last week I visited again. But this time it was empty. The one sign of life was a pub, appropriately called 'The Orwell'. "What's happened?" I ask the bartender. "Oh you know" came the reply. "Budget cuts". In Road to Wigan Pier George Orwell is an outsider looking in to The North. I am not. Going north is going home. But it now looks different. And it isn't just me that has changed.

My visit to Wigan followed a series of talks and workshops in Salford, Stockport, Manchester, Leeds, Huddersfield, Bradford, Durham, Newcastle and Liverpool. In conversation after conversation two words were to be heard again and again. Why is the Churchtown museum in Southport shut? Budget cuts. Why is the youth service in Leeds being delivered through a mobile van? Budget cuts. The only silver lining is that the shocks are inspiring people to take to the streets together to campaign for a better world.

This has manifested itself in various ways, but by far the most visible are the Occupy camps: liberated spaces that physically and psychologically defy clone town corporate high streets and sanitised financial districts. There were rarely more than 20 people at the four that I visited, but I left with no doubt that within them are the seeds of something new.

At some sites I facilitated workshops which began by asking people to name one campaign they have been involved in before. The replies were striking. There were a few experienced activists there, but for

the vast majority, Occupy was the first political thing they had ever done.

My questions as to what motivated people to get involved were answered at length. One person told me he had applied for more than 80 jobs and not got one of them. Another man dreamt of opening a cafe, but with no capital, jobs hard to come by and access to affordable education closed down, didn't see how he could do so. Another person told me he'd been consistently applying for jobs for three years. Staying full time at the camp, and visibly shivering in the Mersey wind he told me being involved in Occupy was the best thing he had ever done and he intended to see it through to the end.

There was no sense of tension here between the employed and the unemployed within the camps or beyond them. Amongst the many images that stick are lorry drivers honking their support, a photographer presenting the Newcastle camp with a picture he'd taken, and some cake decorators promising a cake. The day I arrived in Liverpool was the day of the N30 strike - the city centre alive with banners, flags, whistles, vuvuzelas and the city's Socialist Singers. By far the largest cheer of the day went to the Occupy campers braving so many challenges to make their voices heard.

Those challenges are by no means small. The first is the weather and the constant struggle to stop tents from blowing away when there is no grass to peg them in to. As I prepared to begin my workshop at Occupy Newcastle the sleeping tent almost blew away, triggering an all-hands-on-deck effort to retrieve and re-secure it with ropes, rocks and water butts. The day after my visit to Occupy Leeds a camper told me that the tent I had facilitated my workshop in hadn't survived. The night

before my visit to Occupy Liverpool everyone had got soaked in the rain. But still the protesters continue.

Another challenge is safety. The Occupy Manchester camp had to move from its first site because of the challenge of passing drunk people, some of whom sought to stay. By the time I reached them, every camp I visited had adopted a no-alcohol policy.

Another safety challenge for the camps is more political. I heard stories of fascists from the English Defence League attacking camps with bricks and threatening to burn tents. In Liverpool I encountered them myself. As the five or six men approached the site, I joined a defensive line around the camp. The EDL's strategy seemed to be to goad one of us into hitting them to give them the excuse to start a fight. A couple of them started addressing campers by name, searching for weak points. Another snatched a phone from a camper which we succeeded in retrieving. A couple of women then moved in between the lines to de-escalate the situation until the police arrived. Once they had left, a lively debate ensued. Are the police part of the 99%? What about the EDL? The violent passers by? And if they are part of the 99%, in whose interests is each of them acting?

If one thing is for sure though, it is in whose interests the government is acting. On the last day of the tour I flicked on the television to be greeted by a very different perspective. In an attempt at spin after the announcement that youth unemployment has risen to record highs, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg was on the news congratulating Starbucks for their plans to expand. I had to rub my eyes. Starbucks, frequently charged with destroying jobs and small businesses through its expansionist tactics,

was now being congratulated by the government for "creating jobs". There is a word for such a position coined in another Orwell book: doublethink.

The sense of distrust in the words of those who claim to be in authority came across strongly in every conversation. To my mind, the joy of Occupy is that it is a space for seeing beyond the doublethink that prevails in politicians' words and the mainstream media. It is a rejection of the doublethink that cutting jobs and services will create employment. It is a rejection of the doublethink that the way to stop climate change is to consume more. And it is a rejection of the doublethink that the only way to address injustices in society is to join a political party whose policies perpetuate injustice in society. Everywhere I asked campers what they would like me to include in

the article I was writing. The answer to this question was almost always the same: "This is a space to discuss and to come up with our own solutions to the problems we face".

In the 1960s the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire advocated for education and consciousness raising to be based on discussion and co-learning. What might now be called 'Freirian' methods can be seen as far back as the 1790s when workers and artisans met to debate with one another whether they should have a say in the running of their country through electoral democracy. Now in our struggle for economic democracy, people all over the country, and all over the world, are doing so again.

Tim Gee is the author of *Counterpower: Making Change Happen*. *New Internationalist*, 2011





# DIAGNOSIS COMES BEFORE A CURE

DAVID ROBINSON

The Occupy movement was borne largely out of a sense of frustration and anger at the fact that those at the top of the pile, whose out-of-control behaviour cost the global economy trillions and caused incalculable suffering around the world, are getting away with it. Many have questioned why it took so long for people to rise up against the financial institutions and why - now that they have - there are not more people on the streets. A recent YouGov poll may give us an insight into why this is the case.

The poll revealed that 44% of those surveyed blame the Eurozone crisis for low growth in the UK economy, while just 31% blame the banks. The same poll showed that more people (32%) blamed the previous Labour government for the state of the economy than the coalition (28%).

Why is it that the banks are not being held responsible by the people for the state of the economy? It was, after all, the reckless gambling of highly leveraged derivatives and other financial products between financial institutions that led to the near-collapse of the banking system, which in turn led to governments running up massive deficits in order to bail them out. The subsequent recession and debt

crisis were direct consequences of this.

To a large extent banks have been shielded from the worst of the blame by those in power. David Cameron and the coalition government have actively sought to deflect blame away from the banks and financial institutions and on to politically convenient targets. First the target fell on the Labour government. Then public spending was to blame - which provided cover for the coalition to enact their deep and wide-ranging programme of public sector cuts. Now, according to the coalition, the weak economy is the fault of the Eurozone crisis. This is despite the fact that nearly every single commentator and economist - including Mervyn King, governor of the Bank of England - have argued that the effects of the Eurozone crisis have yet to filter through to the UK economy.

Blaming Labour was politically savvy and not entirely without merit. Labour failed to provide an alternative to the neo-liberal economic consensus and allowed deregulation to continue unchecked. Blaming public spending for the financial crisis, however, is complete and utter nonsense. Aside from the fact that it is an investment in the country and pays for itself, public spending no more caused the financial crisis than Nick Clegg influenced coalition policy. No amount of British teachers, binmen or police officers

can be said to have caused the collapse of the sub-prime market in the US which led us into the global financial crisis. As for the Eurozone crisis, this development will undoubtedly have a negative impact on our economy in the coming months, but blaming it for weak growth is coalition misinformation designed to deflect attention away from their damaging economic policies. It is also disingenuous to separate the Eurozone crisis from the financial crisis - the Eurozone crisis is merely an extension of the financial crisis.

The coalition line on the causes of the crisis has been reinforced by their friends in the media. Most of Britain's best-selling newspapers are Tory-leaning, as are the political editors of both the BBC and Sky. These media powerhouses have subtly, and in some cases blatantly, helped to change the language of the debate around the financial crisis into a dialogue of debt crisis - often ignoring the fact that the debt crisis is a direct consequence of the financial crisis. A perfect example of this could be seen on the BBC's 'Your Money and How They Spend It', in which political editor Nick Robinson linked the financial crisis to public spending.

The danger of this approach is that if the correct causes of the crisis is ignored, then how are these causes to be tackled? The government, with the backing of their financiers and allies in the media, has

attempted to pull the wool over our eyes and use the crisis to launch ideological attacks on the public sector and on government spending, whilst deflecting any attempts to reform the financial sector. The reforms recommended in the Vickers report have been shelved, the banks have been given a tax cut and - aside from the bonus tax - the sector has paid nothing towards cleaning up the mess of its own creation. Meanwhile the ordinary person on the street is paying a heavy price; in particular the poor, the young, the elderly and women.

One of Occupy's most important tasks is to refocus public attention back to where it is required in order to motivate politicians into taking the necessary action required to sort out the bankers mess - and to ensure that this never happens again.



## THE DEMISE OF THE NEOLIBERAL EUROZONE PROJECT

DAVID FERREIRA

The sovereign debt crisis has put forth for all to witness the true nature of the European Project. Its banner of solidarity is pierced with the dagger of imposed austerity, and below that banner representative democracy of the nation-state is under siege. With each run on Italian, Spanish & even French bonds, another layer of legitimacy is torn away from pan-European institutions. What is to become of this European project, this supposed vanguard of peace and stability on the continent?

Under these circumstances, the predictable response from the center-left has been to suggest this is a crisis confined to the horrid leadership of Merkel and Sarkozy. When that is insufficient when scaled to the size of the crisis, the tendency is to then blame the so called "bond vigilantes", as if they're a fundamentalist group rather than an inherent part of a market economy that policymakers refuse to systemically question.

What is ignored by mainstream politics is the supremacy of the markets, regardless of whether center-right or center-left parties occupy a majority of parliaments & national assemblies. It's a market supremacy entrenched by the European Project that has removed monetary policy from the representatives of each nation and entrusted them to European bureaucrats merely appointed, not elected.

The European Project has succeeded in removing representative democracy from its contest with the markets, a contest democracy was losing to begin with. This is plain to see with technocratic governments in Greece and Italy composed of unelected cabinet ministers headed themselves by unelected prime ministers; governments whose predecessors were driven out, in the case of Italy, not by voters but by

wealthy investors spiking the interest rates Italy pays to refinance its debts.

The aversion to democracy in contemporary Europe was no better demonstrated than with the purported Greek referendum on the bailout of the country. It wasn't a matter of Merkel and Sarkozy stomping out this brief ember of democracy. The markets themselves revolted at the prospect of their affairs being influenced by such a thing as a popular vote. The markets, as we now know, got their way and are eased by the fact that Greece has a Prime Minister who was elected by no constituency in Greece. It was a profound moment of clarity, when the system could be truly observed by the public, that there was only a façade of democratic legitimacy and when democratic processes ceased to run alongside the will of the markets, there was no leading figure in Europe to be found to speak out in favor of the Greek people voting, even in an imperfect format, to decide their fate.

This is not to align with conservative euro-skeptics, however. But the path to a more tolerant Europe isn't reached by making people even more distant from the decision making they're subject to. With people across the continent unable to shape policy outcomes, the media and politicians have handed them dishonest rhetoric to hurl at one another. The roles of debtor in Greece and creditor in Germany have been simply used to initiate vicious stereotypes of both nations; stereotypes to distract from the crisis of a system neither the Greek people nor the Germans had a hand in creating.

What we face, and what we must address, is a system fully incapable of allocating vast financial resources to the benefit of the whole of society. This system is being preserved by the eurozone and



its defenders through austerity and the resulting entrenchment of recession. The escalating suffering experienced in Greece, Portugal, Ireland and soon to be felt in Spain and Italy, begs those of us on the left to provide a decisive response. Suggestions to have taxes levied on the financial sector seem awfully small under the shadow of this crisis of capitalism.

This is beyond adjusting tax rates a few percentage points. Economists like Nouriel Roubini and Paul Krugman have explained at length the enormous flaws of the eurozone. Its demise is increasingly seen as inevitable, and it leaves us a serious question:

Will the break-up of the eurozone be followed and replaced by a new concept of Europe, one that radically shakes up the economic system that caused and then reinforced the crisis? Or will the eurozone be broken up by right-wing forces eager to scapegoat the weakest in their own nations while reawakening external national rivalries? It's time we acknowledge these divergent paths before us and desperately avoid the latter.

## EURO TREATY VETO

THE GREAT DEBATE

LAST WEEK DAVID CAMERON VETOED A 'TREATY WITHIN A TREATY' DESIGNED TO SAVE THE EURO, AND IN DOING SO, LEFT BRITAIN ALIENATED FROM THE CONTINENT. THIS WEEK WE ASK: DID CAMERON DO THE RIGHT THING, EVEN IF FOR THE WRONG REASONS? OR IS BRITAIN NOW RESIGNED TO BECOMING A GLORIFIED TAX HEAVEN?

FOR /MURRAY ROBERTSON

With Cameron and his cohorts leading the charge towards even further cuts, it may be tempting to condemn his actions on all counts. However, those decrying Cameron's refusal to stand alongside Merkel and Sarkozy last Friday are missing the bigger picture: the rejected European Union treaty was in great part an attempt to legally bind nations into incredibly restrictive budgetary requirements, enforced by the European Court of Justice. Of course, Cameron's motivations had little to do with the interests of ordinary folk in the UK. His was an attempt to protect his beloved City. But it's a dangerous game playing ball with those within the EU who demand deficit spending be curtailed; the same group of people who take the removal of elected governments in Greece and Italy as necessary economic protections.

We must combat moves to enshrine into law the sacrifice of citizens to the service of financial institutions. If the EU apparatus keen on such moves were to have its way, cuts to public services, healthcare, education and the like would not just be an ideological decision by fiscally conservative governments, but legally mandated whenever a nation's books weren't balanced. Economic stimulus from any European government would be penalised, with taxation and spending powers greatly restricted; an unheard-of attack on Keynesian policy. Even The Economist, that stalwart supporter of free market ideology, has its reservations about such a political set-up, imagining on Friday the dreadful scenario of political policy being judged not by how far citizens support it, but how compatible the policy is with standards hashed out in Brussels. Such an assault on democracy contained within the rejected treaty is intolerable.

Much talk has been made of the UK being isolated, that as a nation we should have gone along with the treaty to help future interests. These interests, vaguely outlined, are of course not the interests of the most people in the UK,

but the interests of the City. Arguments over which plan is better for the Square Mile are not the arguments we need to focus on with this issue. What's important is that ordinary citizens in the UK and around Europe are not held to an enforced austerity program. Nationalistic sentiment of not being 'at the table' ignores what price we must pay for a seat.

A call to avoid being dragged into further ties of Europe-wide neoliberal fiscal policy does not amount to support for Cameron, nor does it align us with the Little Englanders who have little concern with economic justice. Healthy criticism of the EU and the powerful group of right-wing governments that dominate it is needed from those of us who oppose the call for austerity. Such criticism should not be dismissed along with the vitriolic xenophobia of UK nationalists. Some of the strongest calls in the last year or so of protest against government policy have been the demands that workers, students and others should not have to pay for the failures of the financial sector. "No ifs, no buts..." captures that demand perfectly, and has rung true from the student protests last year, through the occupations up and down the country, to the public sector strike of November 30th. Now, when governments and market actors are manoeuvring to reject the demand before it even reaches the ballot box, we must stand firm.

Thus, not only should we be thankful that the treaty was rejected, we should be going further; working together with groups across Europe to tackle the determination to enforce austerity. We need a Europe that is organised in the interests of working Europeans, not in the interests of the financial sector and their governmental allies. As a network of people standing against the notion of prosperity for the few trumping the concerns of the many, we must oppose attempts to codify such a notion into European law.



AGAINST /HAZEL LEWRY

Cameron starts and loses the second Battle of Britain, Brussels sprouts a new EU.

The EU, like the UK has a fundamental problem; it has too much money in circulation that isn't underwritten by anything. The standard solution to financial crisis' has been to have more money printed, effectively devaluing what's already out there by the percentage of "new money" they print. And this week when most banks claim they are in profit, paradoxically paying huge bonuses despite having lost billions in stress tests, they're preparing to print more. This is quantitative easing; creating more money without creating additional wealth.

For the rest of Europe, the UK's actions are unforgivable. Arguably, this is the EU's worst ever crisis and its perceived resolution held to ransom so Cameron could please his vested interests. Had the negotiations been successful, the new treaty would have imposed decade of austerity on the euro-zone. Unsurprisingly, most of the 27 EU members are ignoring Cameron's objections and are set to strike out on a separate treaty anyway.

The resultant two tier Europe, with the UK firmly on the lower level, means Cameron and future PMs will be no more influential on euro matters, than if the UK were only European Free Trade Zone members. Nevertheless, the UK will still be paying her normal membership fees!



The Brussels summit this week, with Merkel and Sarkozy, known as "Merkkozy" in the EU, proposed massive changes to the Lisbon Treaty. In its purest form, the proposals were for an unelected body of European technocrats to be in charge of every national EU budget; starting with the 17 common currency nations, but would expand to the entire EU in a relatively short time. A unanimous agreement was required to alter the Lisbon Treaty and allow the EU to grab national sovereignty across the euro-zone. Since those who control the currency supply and spending ability, control the nation.

PM David Cameron went to the summit sworn to protect his paymasters, the City of London's financial institutions, from the proposed EU levy (Tobin Tax), which will tax large interbank or financial transactions, and to quell his rebellious anti-EU back-benchers complaints about parliamentary sovereignty. He would "repatriate" powers to Westminster. Europe was on the verge of an agreement in Brussels on Thursday and Friday. However, Cameron dug in his heels, wielded his veto, placing his concessions to the City of London and his Euro-sceptic colleagues ahead of the fate of the euro.

As events emerged, they showed Cameron clearly lacking the ability, in a crisis situation, to separate or prioritise national and international requirements from those of special interest groups. He fought and lost for "The City" and his backbenchers. And he lost big.

What an absurd result for an individual who has put great emphasis on "having a voice and being able to influence policy at the top table".

Meanwhile, the euro-zone will be in a weaker fiscal situation, with a treaty which will now not be ready until March. A treaty the UK will have no say in. Moreover he has made a pariah of himself and the UK, effectively excluding the country from future negotiations concerning Europe.

Cameron could have ratified the proposals rather than vetoing them, and then held a UK referendum on EU membership. We vote to stay in the EU, the vote is ratified; we vote to leave, the vote remains ratified. The PM's behaviour can only be likened to a failed horse trading exercise undertaken by an amateur poker player. Europe didn't blink.

Despite playing his ultimate card, Cameron won nothing. No financial regulation exemptions, no concessions, and no repatriated powers. This will be remembered as the night the second battle of Britain was initiated and lost by a single man, indicating the end of the UK in Europe.

How does the world view our "top diplomat"? Possibly the best response echoing many others was from "Der Spiegel" who took the position "Bye-bye Britain" followed up with "Europe Can Work Fine without the British"

**A debate is scheduled at TentCity University after the GA on Wednesday December 14th for us to carry on this debate in person. See you there!**

# WHO GETS THE FREE LUNCHES?

CHARLES BAZLINTON



I have named the way wealth moves in our society as **The Lottery Principle**. In this system the poor create the rich: a tiny number of winners, with huge payoffs, are entirely funded by the slight impoverishment of the vast majority. This Lottery Principle is a useful summary of what happens with land wealth at the moment. The people who make the land in a good area more valuable, often end up not being able to enjoy the good area they are making: they are priced out, as the better-off cream off the benefits. The poor create the rich, and hand them the benefit of land price gain.

**Land** is the most amazing resource we have, it provides most of what we need for life, and along with human ingenuity it enables the good life to progress. Everyone should have a stake in it. Valuable land is valuable because everyone needs somewhere to live and to work. The more desirable the location of land for a home, or the more profitable the work that can be done from land in a particular location, the higher the demand for that land is – and so the greater the value of the land. The boom and bust of house prices is actually a boom and bust in land prices. The actual value of the unimproved house itself is slowly dropping in real terms, through deterioration.

But who actually gives land its value? How does the demand arise? It arises due to the many convenient facilities around – the road system, the shopping, the transport, the theatres, the offices and factories. Who makes these facilities work? Who makes them possible? The many people living or working around the location of the land create the value. The location is desirable because there is a good school nearby, well-kept roads or a nearby railway station. It may also be healthy and pleasant because there is a park nearby and because the neighbourhood is quiet. The location may give easy access to entertainment or sport.

However it is the people who run those schools, provide the local public services or funded the rail-links, who have increased the value of the land. The owner only adds a very small part as being part of that community. The Free Lunch that is land value is created by all: school teachers, entrepreneurs, café owners and workers within the nearby community.

If you are paying rent to live in your house or flat, then part of your rent pays for the building – fair enough – but part of the rent pays for the use of the land. This is a 'free lunch' for the landlord, hidden within the rent you pay. Likewise, if you are paying a mortgage, then part of the payment to the bank or building society can be seen as paying for the house or apartment, and part of it is giving the bank a 'free lunch' based on the value of the land.

It's clear that the phrase: 'there is no such thing as a free lunch' is false when it comes to our planet. The Free Lunch is a way of talking about the riches of our planet and who gets them. Who are these riches really for? And how can we share them more fairly?

Free Lunches occur in two ways: those found lying around on our bountiful planet include land, minerals, radio waves and any other natural resources. The second type of Free Lunch is created by society, arising whenever a successful society occurs. They include credit or money creation and rights of way, and they are everyday things we all need.

Everyone needs a certain minimal amount of Free Lunch benefit for survival. For example we all need a bit of land to live on and build a home, and we all need credit to fund long-term projects. The governments need credit to build the roads and bridges; firms need it for supplying water, electricity and telecoms systems. A problem arises because Free Lunches are in high demand but the supply of them is limited. You cannot just create them

anywhere, so that everyone has all the Free Lunches they need wherever they want them. So, due the usual normal human behaviour, powerful people accumulate a higher proportion of Free Lunches than weaker people.

It is fair to say that if you provide something – it is yours. If you provide your labour, if you work, you should keep the income earned, if you are creative, you should have full claim to the gain you make. You get something for something – quid pro quo. Fairness means you take reward for your effort. Unfairness happens when you work and someone else takes the reward. The community creates the value of land, so the community should use that value, a levy or tax on land values should pay for the things that give the land its value, to pay for the schools, the roads, the public services and the area's general attractiveness.

Instead we charge people tax on their work (income tax) and on the things they make (value added tax or VAT), whilst allowing homeowners who gain from land value to keep all the gain. The net effect of this is that owners of large and

owned central bank, The Bank of England create this credit for us to use? The notes and coins we use are indeed produced by the Bank of England. This is about 3% of the money needs of the economy. The remaining 97% of money is created by the commercial high street banks. And they create it out of nothing. They create it out of minimal reserves – if any at all – and then reap the rewards when they receive the interest on the loan (the actual principle, when repaid, cancels itself out and disappears).

So modern banking has nothing to do with waiting for a deposit from A before lending that deposit to B. If someone wants a loan and they are a sound risk, then the loan will be provided out of thin air by the bank and the profit from that credit creation, interest will start to be charged. A new Free Lunch has been cooked up.

So we find ourselves with banking in the same situation as with land. The normal everyday working of all of us in the community going about our normal business, enables credit to be created out of nothing. But it is not us – the community – that takes the benefit from

loans would be needed. No taxes would be needed to pay interest on loans to build motorways or railways. Now though we suffer the burden of debt as the banks are given this monopoly of creating credit and they use it to create the indebtedness of governments and thus the tax payers. Again, the poor create the rich.

Somewhere that has taken the Free Lunch concept even further is Alaska. Everyone is given a regular income provided by some of that state's oil supply sales. It is unconditional. It is not means tested. See the internet: Alaska Permanent Fund. A payment is made to every Alaskan citizen: adults and children are each receiving about \$1200 for the year 2011 just declared – about the same as last year. It has been as high as \$2000 per head per year, so a family of 4 people this year will get about \$5000. This a long-proven demonstration of sharing Free Lunches.

Any country could share the Free Lunch wealth in the same way from oil and gas wealth, from land value, from credit creation. A balance of investment needs and tax cuts could be



valuable homes or landlords of flats in costly locations are actually living tax-free, whilst people who rent their home pay the ordinary taxes, but have no counterbalancing land value gain of the house price to cash in on, ever. The Free Lunch of land value should be used for tax purposes, and tax on work should be cut.

**Credit Creation** is the second Free Lunch – because it is the community itself which provides the peaceful backdrop for the amazing artificial resource of credit to be created. A successful society, where rights are respected and law upheld, is one where credit can be safely created, used and repaid. If you were in a war zone where society had broken down, you would have difficulty borrowing and normal life ceases. Normally, it is all of us who create the essential conditions for advances in technology to bring forward improvements and human comforts and to address the challenges of raw nature. But for this to work we need credit creation. The peaceful law-abiding society enables credit creation to work. But does the government or the state-

it, is privately-owned commercial banks. The banks are, as the landowners are, taking something for nothing. They did not create the conditions for creating credit – we did – we all did.

To repeat: Fairness means you take reward due from your effort, you get something for something – quid pro quo. Unfairness, is working and someone else taking the reward. The situation where banks are taking our reward as they create the credit is unfair. The reward needs to return to us. So how could this be? The government should create the credit needed and lend it wholesale to the banks at a lower rate of interest who will then retail it to us. Thus, most of the profit currently made by banks from their monopoly of credit creation – the interest – would flow to the government as they took democratic control of credit creation. This would help to cut taxes. But could we trust the Government? Can we trust the banks ever again...?

Anyone creating credit makes it out of thin air, whether it is a bank or the government. If the government makes it for roads and bridges and education it could be entirely debt-free. No student

democratically worked out and a citizen's dividend be factored in too –

## The Citizen's Royalty

As it stands we allows certain sections of the community such as landowners and bankers to cream off wealth that only arises from the work of all of us. We lose the shared Free Lunch ourselves and we have to fund through taxes the cost of society's needs and the welfare needs of the poorest.

The state currently plans things for us. It should divert existing common wealth to pay for those common needs that it is best able to provide. Some common wealth should be diverted to each one of us, so that we are able to plan and act more for ourselves. I believe this is part of the search that is being started by the Occupy movement. This is not the socialism of Tony Blair and his Big Tent.

For me the little tents of Occupy London tell a story of the search for greater fairness – in the sharing of Free Lunches.

Charles Bazlinton is the author of *The Free Lunch – Fairness with Freedom, who can be found at: [www.the-free-lunch.blogspot.com](http://www.the-free-lunch.blogspot.com)*

# WHO SOLD THE WORLD: THE MAN

MARK KAURI

In September of next year, thousands of young people from across England will follow in the footsteps of their older siblings and previous generations by moving out of home and starting university courses. The yearly student exodus has for decades been a familiar calendar event, but 2012 will mark a break from tradition at the expense of young people – as tuition fees rocket to new heights.

Deputy PM Nick Clegg's infamous U-turn on the cost of studies has helped to give higher education institutions across England the green light to ramp up fees from the 2011/12 cap of £3,375 to up to £9,000 a year for undergraduate courses. The move will result in thousands of graduates starting their adult lives with individual debts far surpassing those of previous generations. But far from being a new development, tuition fee hikes are indicative of a wider,

questionable trend in our society to offset the payment of transactions as the debts we carry into the future.

Shortly before Lehman Brothers bit the dust and sparked concerns that would lead into the global financial crisis in 2008, the amount of money owed by UK consumers broke through the £1 trillion mark for the first time. UK property prices had climbed 200% in little more than the preceding ten-year window, ramping individuals' mortgage commitments ever higher in the process. Despite a predictable wavering in the initial crisis years, statistics from the Council of Mortgage lenders show that in the third-quarter of last year, new home-buyers were paying a gigantic 94% of their income as a deposit on their house prices alone.

Earlier this year, research revealed that credit card debt in the UK had reached £61bn, with forecasters

warning that this was only going to get worse. In October, total lending to individuals rose to £1.3bn, marking a further increase on the previous six months' lending growth rate. Today, these escalating notches on the bedpost of our debauched courtship with debt have raised the average household dues to more than £55,000.

Dreary statistics and Mills & Boon meanderings aside, there is an underlying story at play within the kind of debt-oriented transactions engulfing our lives: the extension of the role of debt commitments to both the individual and on wider society. Unlike the tangible coins and notes we pass back and forth over counters, bars and across the internet, the money involved in these transactions – mortgages, credit cards and student loans – represents an agreement by the consumer to honour these commitments throughout the course of their lives. Considered in this light, debt can be seen to be a part of the environment of our future.

Economists of the status quo pay no attention to concerns raised with this debt-heavy model, as the privatisation-friendly, laissez-faire economic agenda in the western world has remained relatively constant since the emergence of the Euromarket in the late 1950s. But despite the fact that this model has played such a dominant role in our financial lives for so long, cementing itself in the status quo as much as any contractual arrangement, the practice of debt 'offsetting' remains questionable and riddled with potential pitfalls for future generations.



# MONEY TALKS

**THE OCCUPIED TIMES:** In a nutshell, what's a tax haven?

**RICHARD MURPHY:** I call tax havens 'secrecy jurisdictions'. Secrecy jurisdictions are places that intentionally create regulation for the primary benefit and use of those not resident in their geographical domain. That regulation is designed to undermine the legislation, or regulation of another jurisdiction. To facilitate their use, secrecy jurisdictions also create a deliberate, legally backed veil of secrecy ensuring that those making use of them cannot be identified to be doing so.

Then we'd know what they were hiding and where, which would make it much harder for them to do it. I'm biased. I created the idea in 2003.

**OT:** Why is it so hard to get tax out of vast companies with huge revenues?

**RM:** Large companies can move their profits legally between locations because they are based in so many places. So by trading between companies they own in different places they can shift profits – and the evidence is that they do this, shifting billions in the process. That fact and the fact that they have vastly more resources than any tax authority means they are so far always a step ahead of tax authorities. Country-by-country reporting is designed to help tax authorities catch up.

**OT:** What particular transactions are furthest from the light?

**RM:** Transactions furthest from the light are those hidden in limited companies which are in turn owned by trusts, with no apparent connections with real people – and hidden in places like the British Virgin Islands, or the British Vampire Islands as they might be better termed. These transactions are designed to make sure they're as impenetrable as possible.

**OT:** You've become Chancellor of the Exchequer for the day – what's your first bit of legislation?

**RM:** Only one? That would be to require all UK banks to report the details of all bank accounts they open and close for companies in the UK to make sure we can track which ones are trading, but deny it. I think this abuse alone might cost the UK £16 billion a year in tax evasion.

**OT:** Why shouldn't companies be allowed to operate tax efficiently?

**RM:** They can! I have no objection to

them tax planning within the law. I object when their tax planning abuses the law. They have the choice about which to do.

**OT:** What do you feel about the practice of the big four accountancy firms: Price Waterhouse Coopers, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, Ernst and Young and KPMG?

**RM:** They are in all the world's major tax havens without exception. Why are they in the British Virgin Islands? There are only 23,000 people there, so the only reason is to service the tax abuse based from there. And as such they give that abuse credibility even if they don't do the worst forms themselves. They're culpable for lending that air of credibility to such pernicious behaviour and in the process helping to undermine democracy.

**OT:** Will the big money always dodge regulation and taxation?

**RM:** To some extent yes, it will always try. But we've laid out an agenda now that is viable that could contain it a lot. That's worth doing.

**OT:** Do you see a link between tax-dodging and poverty?

**RM:** They're inextricably linked. Poverty is both absolute and relative. Relative poverty is directly increased by tax dodging. Absolute poverty is fuelled by a lack of funding. Tax dodging is class warfare.

**OT:** What keeps you pushing for tax justice? And are you making any headway?

**RM:** I fight because of a sense of social injustice and anger that so many needs of so many people are not being met, and could be if only tax was paid: tax payment that would not seriously, if at all, harm the well-being of those who should pay. Are we winning? Yes. And we're winning with governments too. The mood is changing!



In essence, tax havens let people from one place hide their transactions in another place to avoid regulation. The most obvious regulation they avoid is tax law.

**OT:** People talk a lot about "jumbo directors" when it comes to tax havens – can you explain who these are?

**RM:** A jumbo director is someone who lends their name to maybe hundreds of companies in a tax haven, about which they really know nothing. They are just nominees helping people hide behind the front they provide.

**OT:** What financial document, audit or balance sheet would you like to see?

**RM:** I want country-by-country reporting from multinational corporations – that would require a profit and loss account from them for every country including the tax havens in which they work.



## A COMMUNITY BILL OF RIGHTS FOR OCCUPY?

MELANIE STRICKLAND

At Occupy we talk a lot about economic injustice, but less attention is paid to how our legal system legitimises and perpetuates the status quo. For example, consider the legal obligation of company directors to maximise profits for shareholders, above all other considerations. Such obligations, ingrained in the status quo of our society, can result in morally questionable outcomes. The structural injustice here is caused not just by skewed economics and big banks, it's caused by our structures of governance as a whole; which is perhaps why the initial statement issued by Occupy London refers to the unqualified 'system' as being unjust - and not simply the unjust 'economic system'.

Earlier this month, Envision Seattle and the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund

(CELDF) published a template Community Bill of Rights Ordinance for Occupy communities. The document is based on the great work by the CELDF (a US non profit) in producing community rights ordinances (i.e. local laws) which give power back to communities, strip corporates of their 'personhood' where they are in violation of the ordinance, and recognise the inalienable rights of natural communities and ecosystems to exist and flourish. These ordinances mean people can enforce the rights of natural communities and ecosystems on their behalf. (If it seems bizarre that an ecosystem such as an area of woodland might be recognised as a legal person, consider the fact that our society recognises the legal personhood of corporations - a mere legal fiction - which increasingly don't even exist on paper!).

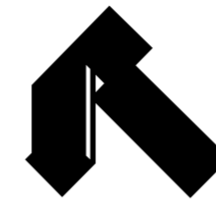
CELDF also work globally, and helped Ecuador to draft a new constitution, which, since 2008, has given legal recognition to the rights of nature. Since then, a global campaign has emerged in an effort to get the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio next year.

There is much of merit to be found in the Community Rights Ordinance for Occupy, and although it is drafted by US lawyers there is no reason why we in the UK could not adapt it and make it even more relevant to our society. The provisions regarding the right to self-governance, the right to clean government (e.g. free from corporate lobbying) and the removal of corporate personhood - where those corporates violate the rights guaranteed in the ordinance - are likely to receive a lot of support at Occupy.

# BUILDING TO WIN

## REACHING BEYOND THE INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CAPITALIST ELITE

ADAM RAMSAY



Recently had the good fortune to interview Newsnight economics editor Paul Mason at a comedy gig. His message wasn't funny. He drew analogies with the 1930s - the descent to fascism - and with Europe's failed revolutions of 1848: "When you get home, google 1849" he told us "the bourgeoisies turned on the working class and shot them".

The world order is falling apart. What comes next we don't yet know. But we do know this: The road we take in the coming months and years could well define the shape of society for much of the rest of our lives. And we also know this: the last three decades have seen an entrenchment of the power of elites. They control more of the money than they have for a century. And with this money they control the bond markets. And so they can, and do, bring down governments who stray too far from the flock. And they rarely need to - the number of lobbyists in Washington DC has gone up roughly a hundredfold since 1970. Similar statistics could be cited for capital cities across the Western world. At the same time, megacorporations have monopolised the media. With control of the means of cultural and ideological production comes an ability to manufacture consent. And with this consent, our social solidarity has been smashed. The 2011 British Social Attitudes Survey saw how our society has become atomised, how we look out for each other less and less, how we will stand together less and less.

But this is not the primary way in which the power of elites has grown. Perhaps most impressive of all has been the assault they have launched on the infrastructure through which British people traditionally organise, have traditionally secured some measure of control.

Famously of course, trade unions have faced assault. The most obvious front in this attack has been legal - the banning of secondary pickets, the attempt through the courts in recent years to make legal strike action effectively impossible. But along with these, we must remember the impact of structural unemployment - introduced in the 1970s to 'control inflation': by making people fearful of joining a union and negotiating for higher wages. And we must remember the impact of 'flexible labour markets' - if I only work for a company for two years, is it worth my while organising my colleagues to push for better conditions which will probably only be secured after I have left?

Political parties used too to be a key structure through which people could organise - local meetings provided space to discuss together what we wanted for our future. Canvassing ensured those ideas could at least to some extent be shared face to face without the mediation of media or market. But as the key decisions which impact our lives have been privatised - from what rent we pay to what type of job we are likely to have - party membership has dropped. And in the case of Labour, those who did remain were seen by elites to be too radical. And so, with fewer members or an unwillingness to trust them, much of the face to face doorstep interaction once the indivisible unit of electoral politics was replaced with Philip Gould's focus groups and Peter Mandelson's media manipulation. And so the media entrenched its role as the mediators of conversations about our collective will.

The descent of parties and unions coincided not only with the rise of the markets, but also the growth of professional activist NGOs. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Amnesty International etc - mostly founded through the 1960s and early 1970s - perhaps began to fill some of the space left on the left. Their growth

came not just from the emerging gap, but also from a combination of changes to society and new technologies: the baby-boomer's graduation from the expansion of higher education meant they didn't identify as industrial working class and instead took up the new left liberation struggles in the 60s. At the same time zip-codes (USA) and post codes (UK) were introduced, allowing direct mail marketing and recruitment.

But whilst some of these organisations have local groups on the Margaret Mead model ("never let anyone tell you that a small group of committed people can't change the world"), they could be accused of trying to sway those with power more than they organise those who need it: rather than supporting and empowering groups to mobilise their communities and workplaces around their needs, the standard NGO model involves producing a report, lobbying for its policy recommendations, and getting local groups to provide evidence of public support for these calls: compared to mass political parties tramping down our streets to knock on doors and to trade unions organising in our work places, there is little people power here.

In some corners of America, and in London to an extent, something else has risen - attempts at community organisation a la Saul Alinsky: piecing together community groups to encourage them all to stand together and face their oppressors. But as Thatcherism has ripped apart the society she claimed didn't exist, these community groups have weakened, with fewer and fewer attending any kind of local meeting, this model of organising communities becomes harder.

The last decade has seen a new flavour of political organisation. On the one hand, the generation who first took to the streets to march against the Iraq invasion - who trace our politics to the 1999 Battle of Seattle - have mostly not joined these NGOs. The need for central offices storing mass databases weakens



once an email list can do what once required a week of envelope stuffing. A generation who do not expect to live or work in the same place for more than a couple of years is unlikely to join an organisation for life. And as 'all the news stories turn into one', campaigning for life on any one of the manifestations of neo-liberal oppression seems to miss the core story.

Instead, we have graduated into self-organised direct action groups with no formal hierarchy or central office: Plane Stupid, Climate Camp, UK Uncut, Occupy London and countless autonomous affinity groups and actions have been demographically skewed towards today's twenty-somethings, the 'jilted generation'. These groups are media savvy, fleet of foot, delivering more than just an A-B march. They are increasingly providing space for media circus, and for education. Sometimes they succeed in directly confronting power. But their lack of formal hierarchy does not mean there aren't key organisers: there are - a few hundred people. The numbers who participate - thousands - are surely not yet enough to alone genuinely secure structural changes to the way our country is organised.

On the other hand, we have seen steps towards organisations who attempt mass mobilisation online - 38 Degrees, Get-up, Move-On, Avaaz. These allow hundreds of thousands to use the smallest possible interactions to 'fix' the biggest problems "click here to stop climate change". But despite some noble intentions to make themselves democratic, they cannot hand the means of campaign production to those who wish to take action for themselves.

My worry is this: our organisations are top heavy. We are attempting to influence an increasingly stratified society by mirroring it. We have little space where people can go, on a regular basis, and discuss with members of their community what they want for it and how they will get it. As the systemic walls come tumbling down, our elites will throw at us everything they have. And when they do, we must know what it is that we are fighting for. And we must be willing to stand together, to hold together, and to carry on fighting for it - as a movement not built of a media savvy anti-capitalist elite, but of millions.

The trades unions are already the true base of that movement. But we always need to organise outside our workplaces as well as in them. Local anti-cuts groups are growing, with 300 odd listed on the web-hub False Economy. But these too are not yet enough, and do not have the support they need to come together and stand together.

And if we are to win, then we will need to learn the lessons of Alinsky and of Amnesty, remember the best of the techniques of the political parties, and take advantage of the changes in technology and in learning of the last 40 years. And we need to build from the scraps of what Thatcher trashed and turn them into something new, collective, and unbeatable. Because it's not 1848, and it's not the 1930s. It's 2011. And whilst they may have smashed our organisations, we must remember the one advantage that people's movements have always had: we are many, they are few.

# THE GLOBALIZATION OF PROTEST

JOSEPH STIGLITZ

The protest movement that began in Tunisia in January, subsequently spreading to Egypt, and then to Spain, has now become global, with the protests engulfing Wall Street and cities across America. Globalization and modern technology now enables social movements to transcend borders as rapidly as ideas can. And social protest has found fertile ground everywhere: a sense that the "system" has failed, and the conviction that even in a democracy, the electoral process will not set things right - at least not without strong pressure from the street.

In May, I went to the site of the Tunisian protests; in July, I talked to Spain's indignados; from there, I went to meet the young Egyptian revolutionaries in Cairo's Tahrir Square; and, a few weeks ago, I talked with Occupy Wall Street protesters in New York. There is a common theme, expressed by the OWS movement in a simple phrase: "We are the 99%." That slogan echoes the title of an article that I recently published, entitled "Of the 1%, for the 1%, and by the 1%," describing the enormous increase in inequality in the United States: 1% of the population controls

more than 40% of the wealth and receives more than 20% of the income. And those in this rarefied stratum often are rewarded so richly not because they have contributed more to society - bonuses and bailouts neatly gutted that justification for inequality - but because they are, to put it bluntly, successful (and sometimes corrupt) rent-seekers. This is not to deny that some of the 1% have contributed a great deal. Indeed, the social benefits of many real innovations (as opposed to the novel financial "products" that ended up unleashing havoc on the world economy) typically far exceed what their innovators receive.

But, around the world, political influence and anti-competitive practices (often sustained through politics) have been central to the increase in economic inequality. And tax systems in which a billionaire like Warren Buffett pays less tax (as a percentage of his income) than his secretary, or in which speculators, who helped to bring down the global economy, are taxed at lower rates than those who work for their income, have reinforced the trend.

Research in recent years has shown how important and ingrained notions of fairness are. Spain's protesters, and those in other countries, are right to be indignant: here is a system in which the bankers got bailed out, while those whom they preyed upon have been left to fend for themselves. Worse, the bankers are now back at their desks, earning bonuses that amount to more than most workers hope to earn in a lifetime, while young people who studied hard and played by the rules see no prospects for fulfilling employment.

The rise in inequality is the product of a vicious spiral: the rich rent-seekers use their wealth to shape legislation in order to protect and increase their wealth - and their influence. The US Supreme Court, in its notorious Citizens United decision,

has given corporations free rein to use their money to influence the direction of politics. But, while the wealthy can use their money to amplify their views, back on the street, police wouldn't allow me to address the OWS protesters through a megaphone.

The contrast between overregulated democracy and unregulated bankers did not go unnoticed. But the protesters are ingenious: they echoed what I said through the crowd, so that all could hear. And, to avoid interrupting the "dialogue" by clapping, they used forceful hand signals to express their agreement.

They are right that something is wrong about our "system." Around the world, we have underutilized resources - people who want to work, machines that lie idle, buildings that are empty - and huge unmet needs: fighting poverty, promoting development, and retrofitting the economy for global warming, to name just a few. In America, after more than seven million home foreclosures in recent years, we have empty homes and homeless people.

The protesters have been criticized for not having an agenda. But this misses the point of protest movements. They are an expression of frustration with the electoral process. They are an alarm.

The anti-globalization protests in Seattle in 1999, at what was supposed to be the inauguration of a new round of trade talks, called attention to the failures of globalization and the international institutions and agreements that govern it. When the press looked into the protesters' allegations, they found that there was more than a grain of truth in them. The trade negotiations that followed were different - at least in principle, they were supposed to be a development round, to make up for some of the deficiencies highlighted by protesters - and the International Monetary Fund subsequently undertook significant reforms.



So, too, in the US, the civil-rights protesters of the 1960s called attention to pervasive institutionalized racism in American society. That legacy has not yet been overcome, but the election of President Barack Obama shows how far those protesters moved America.

On one level, today's protesters are asking for little: a chance to use their skills, the right to decent work at decent pay, a fairer economy and society. Their hope is evolutionary, not revolutionary. But, on another level, they are asking for a great deal: a democracy where people, not dollars, matter, and a market economy that delivers on what it is supposed to do.

The two are related: as we have seen, unfettered markets lead to economic and political crises. Markets work the way they should only when they operate within a framework of appropriate government regulations; and that framework can be erected only in a democracy that reflects the general interest - not the interests of the 1%. The best government that money can buy is no longer good enough. Joseph E. Stiglitz is University Professor at Columbia University, a Nobel laureate in economics, and the author of *Freefall: Free Markets and the Sinking of the Global Economy*.



# REAL DEMOCRACY NOW

LAURA ALVAREZ

**Laura Alvarez:** What is 'Real Democracy Now' (RDN)?  
**Arcadi Oliveres:** I think it is a movement that came to light on May 2011, although it probably originated a long time ago. It tries to highlight discontent towards the economic, political, labour and social situation we suffer from, in Spain, and now also in other countries that are beginning to rise up.

## THE OCCUPIED TIMES SPEAKS TO SPANISH ECONOMIST ARCADÍ OLIVERES ABOUT THE REAL DEMOCRACY NOW MOVEMENT AND THE FAILURE OF NEOLIBERALISM.

**L.A.:** Who conforms to RDN?  
**A.O.:** It is a global phenomenon that takes one shape or another depending on the society hosting it. In Spain we have two nuclei: Madrid and Barcelona. In the case of Madrid, a significant amount of people initially protested against the Sinde Law, and in the case of Barcelona the movement was highly freed up by those 'affected by the mortgage'. But obviously there is a lot more people: from NGOs to individuals.  
**L.A.:** Is it only people who have something immediate to claim then?  
**A.O.:** Not necessarily. There is a lot of people who just do not agree with the system that was set in Spain in 1977 and that ended up realising itself to be a fake democracy, lacking the most fundamental representative and participative elements. It is people

that, for one reason or another, are disappointed with this fake democracy we have now. We claim the abolition of the neoliberal establishment and call for reflection about its embedded modern value system.  
**L.A.:** What is the global context in which 'Social Democracy Now' was born, and how does RDN interact with the other ongoing social movements claiming rights and dignity?  
**A.O.:** In the case of Spain, and looking beyond the time-space coincidence, it should be said that RDN was delayed. Although the crisis started in September 2008, it was not until May 2011 that we welcomed the movement. Nevertheless, it shares the core ideology with all the other social movements ongoing in Western countries. People in Israel, Iceland, Barcelona and elsewhere realised that neoliberal economy does not work any longer because it ultimately advantages the wealthiest ones. But not only that, it does so at the expense of the poorest and limiting their possibilities to grow. Furthermore, in the case of North Africa, there was an added factor, which is that one of an absolute absence of political rights and freedoms. And I say 'added' because if there is a 45% of unemployed youth in Spain, there the rate rises up until 70 or 80%. The situation is much worse down there.  
**L.A.:** Would you then say that all these uprisings have the same point of departure, one which maybe originated decades ago?  
**A.O.:** Absolutely. Looking at the newspaper archives we see how the French were already taking the streets 7 years ago, and we also realise the recent riots in London were not newly born at all. In the case of Britain the matter finds its origins in Margaret Thatcher's annihilation of the Welfare



State, and actually the consequences of this are still ongoing. Although in Spain we have never had a comparable Welfare State, we still see social disaffection towards the lack of it as well. In North African countries they have never had such a thing, and consequently they have a society that showed a deficit. However, and regardless of these differences, we certainly see there is a common origin. This is people's unrest and grievance, people's dignity being damaged, and the

parents of the protesters have been financial speculators by, for example, creating a bank pension fund. This means we are also responsible of the economic crisis and the crisis of democracy. The scenario is radically different in those countries hosting the Arab Spring.  
**L.A.:** Do you think that people have not protested earlier because they were fine with the system?  
**A.O.:** Yes and no. The answer has come now because all social movements have a gestation process. The discontent has been going on for a while, but it is now with this huge crisis that people are driven to the edge. It is people who lost their jobs years ago and that are no longer receiving benefits, it is desperate people, and so they protest. Additionally, the fact of having general elections around the corner was decisive for the emergence of RDN as well. And of course, it also helped the fact of seeing uprisings taking place in many other countries. We saw that our frustration was not isolated, but rather empowering a global movement.

# PREOCCUPYING SALIL SHETTY

FLAMINIA GIAMBALVO

## ON THE DAY OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS, THE OCCUPIED TIMES SPEAKS TO SALIL SHETTY, GENERAL SECRETARY OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. MR. SHETTY CAME TO ST. PAUL'S LAST SATURDAY TO SPEAK ON THE CRIMINALISATION OF PROTEST BY WESTERN DEMOCRACIES & TO CELEBRATE THE DAY WITH THE OCCUPIERS.

**THE OCCUPIED TIMES:** From your perspective, what are the differences and commonalities among the Occupy movement and other movements fighting for human rights across the world?  
**SALIL SHETTY:** Amnesty believes that people in power - whether in corporations, governments or other spheres of life - cannot abuse this power and then use law to protect themselves, and this is what is being challenged everywhere across the world. The power of this is that it is almost the same issue, what is that people are fighting for in the Middle East and Syria? Their human rights. And it's exactly what people here are fighting for. How is it different? Frankly I must say, I see more similarities than differences. You could argue that one difference is that the Occupy movement has been focused in the Global North: the rich countries.  
**OT:** What impact can local actions such as this one have at an international level?  
**SS:** All actions are local in their beginning. That is the great thing about social movements; they always start from the grassroots. If the idea is powerful than it spreads and gains relevance at an international level, that's what we are witnessing through the occupy movement. I hope it serves as a wakeup call for people in the business world and governments around the world to remind them that this level of de-regulation is not sustainable. There must be greater transparency and accountability for the way in which public resources are spent. At the end of the day, even resources of corporations are in part contributed by tax payers, so the fact that there is a big push now,

highlighting the necessity of these to become more transparent I think is very important. From an Amnesty international point of view I find the fact of ordinary citizens taking action motivating and inspiring. That's really the heart of what Amnesty is about; you don't have to wait for someone else to change things, take action and that will start making change happen.  
**OT:** What do you think about the document recently released by the City of London Police, describing the occupy movement as domestic terrorists?  
**SS:** I am not a legal expert on the specific points that have been made in the document, but what I do know is that it has become habitual for those in power who do not wish to be held accountable, to respond to dissent and criticism, using words such as terrorism and national security to quell protest and stifle dissent. Amnesty International stands for the right to peaceful protest, the right to dissent, which is not negotiable. If you are expressing your opinion in a peaceful way, without infringing the rights of others, than to muzzle that is completely unacceptable.  
**OT:** Do you believe there is link between the increasing curtailment of human rights in the West such as freedom of expression, and the enforcement of austerity measures?  
**SS:** Austerity has been exacerbating an already well-known problem. Amnesty International started becoming increasingly critical of the Western democracies commitment to human rights, post September 11th, during the so-called 'war on terror', where we have witnessed an extraordinary rendition of the outsourcing of torture.



# ASKING THE OCCUPIERS: WHAT HAS OCCUPY LONDON TAUGHT YOU?

MIRCEA BARBU

**TINA, 41:** "For me, this has been an educational and inspirational introduction to the art and act of protest. OLSX is a melting pot of different nationalities and expertise, a diverse and creative mix united by a shared desire for socioeconomic justice."

**HARJEET, 21:** "I knew about capitalism. Here I've learned about the alternatives."  
**KIKI, 32:** "The idea that the bankers and the governments has stolen our money is mainstream. People are coming from all over the country to



**DANIEL, 27:** "I've learned that we need to reform our relationships to live peacefully."  
**VICA, 32:** "To listen, to reflect on what I've heard and to question my own preconceptions. I've learned a great deal about online platforms and organizing as a community through social media."  
**JEREMY, 47:** "That horizontal organization and participative democracy provides answers that no of us could come up with on our own. A people's movement is far more valuable than any politics, corporation or media organization. Another world, a better world is completely possible."  
**JULES, 23:** "People and society are redeemable and they can function without the restraints of a system based on profit that disregards human interest."

say how they support us."  
**CAROLINE, 49:** "I've definitely gained confidence. I've learned that I'm not very good at organizing things but I'm good at intuitive things and I'm good on working on my own for the benefit of others. I realized that I need to look after myself better."  
**MATTHEW, 19:** "I've learned a lot about squatting. Before I came here I never really considered it at all. I gain skills that I can use in my future employment."  
**AKIRA, 50:** "Occupy London taught me that it doesn't really matter what background you come from. If one is connected to one's passions that is all that matters. This is a journey people can make together."



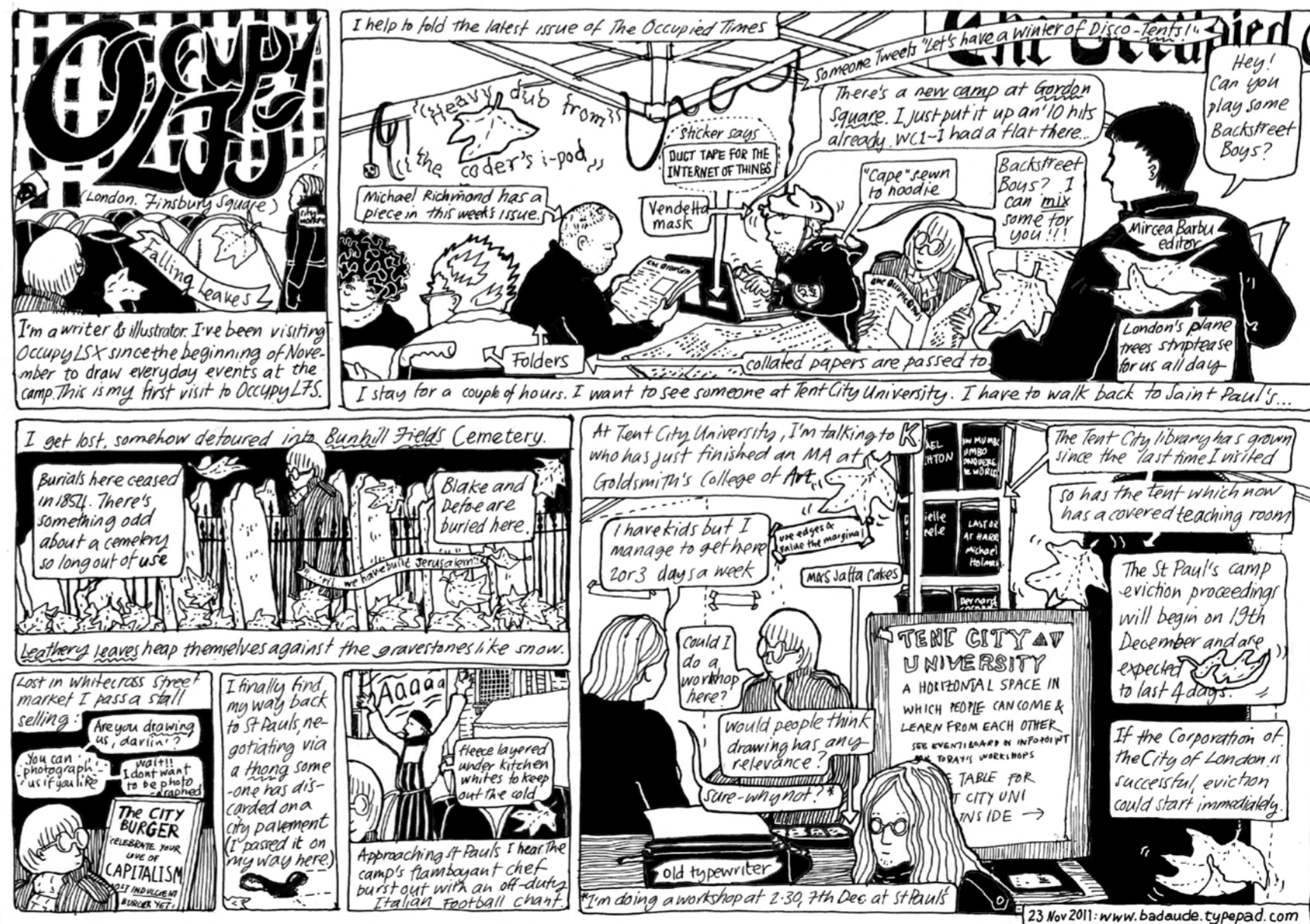
CHARLIE SKELTON

# ON THE SOAPBOX

Around the world, Occupiers sit in their small circles, exercising and evangelizing 'direct democracy', praising localism, and demanding access to power, on the stage of global finance, up where the vultures soar, the horizons of globalism have never been wider. The tentacles of the Goldman Sachs squid have never been longer; the pockets of JP Morgan have never been deeper. And as the IMF goes on its Austerity Measures world tour, the banks and corporations follow in its deathly wake, hoovering up assets and resources at pennies on the pound. The global fire sale is in full swing. Meanwhile, transnational capital sits happily offshore, and a good trillion dollars a year is thrown at the Big 4 accountancy firms to keep the taxman baffled. Angry tents have sprung up in cities round the world, and yet, with all this going on, the global goalposts have been quietly shifted. Think back a decade

or so. Remember the phrase "anti-globalization". Ring any bells? Like the word "deforestation", it's been pretty much stripped from the vocabulary of protest. All the anger at the brutal misuse of lopsided free trade agreements, all the outrage at the violence of transnational financing, has melted away. The placards have been wiped clean. Where they once railed against "globalization", now they demand "global solutions". A global movement with global aims, fighting global battles for a global future. Over the past decade or so, we've seen a seismic shift in the ideas of 'globalism' and 'globalization' from the negative into the positive. At some point between the late 90s and now, Globalization stopped being a dirty word. You can see the shift taking place in the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (2004), which declared: "Many recognize the opportunities for a better life that globalization presents... Our driving spirit has been to make globalization a positive

force for all people and countries." In March 2010, Gordon Brown said that one of the benefits of a Financial Transactions Tax would be that "the levy should support globalisation". The idea is a veritable boon. What a difference a decade makes. And it's not just the politicians who are globalists: activist website Avaaz.org promotes "a vision of globalization with a human face". The protesters in Seattle, in 1999, saw globalization very differently. Steve Schifferes of the BBC, in his end of the millennium article "Free trade did not have a good year in 1999", talks of the "mass demonstrations in Seattle" at which: "the consensus that free trade was vital to world economic growth was seriously questioned for the first time in a generation. Demonstrators in Seattle claimed that the World Trade Organisation, the body that regulates world trade, was unrepresentative and undemocratic, and did not take enough account of environmental interests and those of the world's poor." But where are the tents outside the WTO? Where are the tents outside the IMF? Occupy is keen to declare itself a "global movement", so let it be aware of the global dangers. The mantra is seductive. Global problems, global solutions, global taxes. Oxfam's "Robin Hood Tax" campaign sees itself as "turning a global crisis into a global opportunity". It's a position shared by Peer Steinbrück, the German Finance Minister, and attendee of this year's Bilderberg Group meeting in San Moritz, who said in late 2009: "In our political response to this crisis, new forms of fiscal burden-sharing will be needed. One of these is a global financial-transaction tax." It's worth remembering that James Tobin of "Tobin Tax" fame, was a staunchly pro-globalization. William H. Butler (Chief Economist, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) remarks on Tobin's pro-globalization stance: "Tobin forcefully repudiated the anti-globalization mantra of the Seattle crowd and distanced himself quite emphatically from the enemies of trade liberalisation, globalization and the open society." Certainly, the society that transnational capital wants is open: open for business. But is this the "open society" that Occupy wants? Occupy wants transparency, it wants accountability. It wants respect. The openness it demands is human and direct. It could do worse than look back at Seattle and remember why people marched and chanted against globalization. And remember: globalization is not an engine of respect. Liberalisation is not always the friend of liberty. And tax is a shackle that only the richest can slip.





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