Seven months after the beginning of the occupation of Zuccotti Park, the birthplace of the Occupy movement is welcoming the spring season with a new round of gatherings and direct actions. Since mid-March, organisers in New York have been carrying the Occupy spirit into the streets of Manhattan and online in anticipation of May Day and the Global Spring of protests. The message: We’re here to change the world. And we’re committed to staying.

To mark the six-month anniversary of Occupy Wall Street, protesters re-occupied Zuccotti Park on March 17th. Over 70 people were arrested as New York police cleared out the park, and at least one protester was seriously injured after having his head slammed into a glass door by a police officer.

Occupy responded // PAGE 04 >>

MARTIN EIERMANN

OCCUPY FOR ALL OF MAY

US/UK
Celebration of the international labour movement across the globe has taken on many different moods depending upon the political context of the time, sometimes celebratory, at other times volatile. Today, the stakes are high, and the struggle is of vital importance.

May Day originated as a commemoration of the Haymarket Massacre of 1886, which took place in Chicago during a general strike for the eight hour day. As the police marched on the demonstration in order to disperse it, an unknown person threw dynamite at them. The police opened fire in return, killing several demonstrators as well as some police in ‘friendly fire’.

Since then, the 1st of May has seen many significant historical events and attempts by right-wing governments to subvert or silence the message of worker solidarity. One such move last year was the current government’s proposal to scrap the bank holiday.

This year, May Day takes on a different dimension, with the Occupy movement and groups like UK Uncut joining the workers, students and more traditional bodies. The need for international solidarity is greater than ever. Fiscal cleansing, ruthlessly imposed on the Greek people by leaders with no democratic mandate, has slashed wages by 30 - 45% for government employees. Spain, Italy, Ireland and Portugal are deep in crisis, while youth unemployment and recession continue to blight the UK.

The past month has seen some interesting developments across western Europe. The Dutch coalition government collapsed after the far-right minority party withdrew its support for austerity measures. In France, Nicolas Sarkozy lost the first round of voting to François Hollande, who opposes Germany’s austerity agenda for the Eurozone. Here in the UK, George Galloway pulled off a stunning victory in the Bradford by-election, also running on an anti-austerity, anti-establishment ticket. Could it be that after four years of failure since the crash in 2008, leftist politicians are finally articulating alternatives to austerity?

As encouraging as it is to see shifts away from the Panzi-scheme economics that have dominated Europe for several years, the devil, as ever, is in the detail. The results of the French vote showed a worrying increase for the Front National candidate Marine Le Pen - and Hollande’s victory came partly at the expense of the genuine leftist candidate, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who was soundly beaten by Le Pen on an anti-immigration platform, despite encouraging pro-election polls. Hollande might yet turn out to be France’s answer to Nick Clegg.

Voting trends away from a colourless, technocratic centre imply growing disquiet with economic globalisation. If properly channelled, this discontent could be directed towards building a radically progressive and more equal social contract throughout Europe. The danger, however, today as in the past, is when people are drawn instead to populist and reactionary voices capitalising on uncertainty, using the politics of demonisation, nationalism and militarism.

Periods of crisis always offer an opportunity to a range of ideologues and demagogues. We’ve already witnessed the scapegoating of students, the disabled and OAPS. As austerity measures deepen, will British politicians follow the scapegoating of workers, students and the disabled? The past month has seen some interesting developments across western Europe. The Dutch coalition government collapsed after the far-right minority party withdrew its support for austerity measures. In France, Nicolas Sarkozy lost the first round of voting to François Hollande, who opposes Germany’s austerity agenda for the Eurozone. Here in the UK, George Galloway pulled off a stunning victory in the Bradford by-election, also running on an anti-austerity, anti-establishment ticket. Could it be that after four years of failure since the crash in 2008, leftist politicians are finally articulating alternatives to austerity?

That doesn’t mean, however, that we should be uncritical of union leadership, or exchange revolutionary energy for reformist compromise. Since Thatcher not only crushed the unions but also set about destroying the environment within which they could operate, union leaderships have largely come to resemble the classic out of touch managerial class of neoliberal capitalism. Times are changing, and unions must change with them.

Union leaders should be bold enough to move beyond defensively protecting their members’ rights within a power dynamic where they cannot win. They should seize the opportunity a crumbling status quo presents them to advocate alternatives to reshape society as a whole, rather than just getting the best deals for their members. Solidarity among unions demands that there be no unilateral deals close ties with unions and other activist organisations. If the Occupy movement is to be sustained, these kinds of alliances will be fundamental.

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In recent weeks the local residents’ battle to save Leyton Marsh has shifted from trying to stop the development altogether through peaceful resistance, to defending apparently escalating actions in the courts under a system of laws which subordinate communities to corporate rights and the state.

By way of background, the “Save the Leyton Marsh” community group has been organising and meeting weekly since January, when planning permission was granted by Waltham Forest Council to the Olympic Development Authority (ODA) for Leyton Marsh to be turned into a private three storey basketball training facility for Olympic athletes. The marsh is Metropolitan Open Land which has the same status as Green Belt land and may still not be developed given the circumstances. Waltham Forest has designated the Olympics as such an exceptional case.

There have been various ‘irregularities’ in the planning process – including the consultation process taking place over the Christmas holiday period (which gave locals hardly any time to lodge objections), flagrant breaches of the planning conditions (including the removal of soil up to 50cm deep, according to the ODA, when planning permission was granted for 15cm only), and the omission of an Environmental Impact Assessment which would have been required in the planning conditions (including rare bird and insect species harmful to the community. By contrast, the community group has to rely largely on pro bono legal support and is constantly on the back-foot by having to respond to obscure processes and an endlessly complicated legal situation. The legal system is not designed to give power to the people. It’s structured so as to subordinate communities and to be adversarial, pitting communities against the corporate state and against each other. The legal process is stressful, saps time, is potentially financially devastating and fosters ‘you should have run this argument differently’ in-fighting. Fortunately, this has not happened with the “Save the Leyton Marsh” group.

A better system of governance is possible. Communities need to assert their rights. A Community Bill of Rights might have given the locality more power in a situation like this. Community Bills of Rights have been adopted in the US and are successful in preventing unwanted developments and activities harmful to the community. They elevate communities vis-à-vis the rights of companies and the state. In the case of Leyton Marsh the community could have, with a Community Bill of Rights, assert their inherent rights to determine the future of their neighbourhood and could act on behalf of the rights of nature (including rare bird and insect species) whose habitats are being destroyed by this development.

If our present government was genuinely concerned about creating a ‘Big Society’ and was committed to the localism agenda, it would support the concept of a Community Bill of Rights. Unfortunately, this government is taking strides in exactly the opposite direction. The Olympic and ever-present threat of terrorism provide a useful cloak for the corporatisation of our world, but there is a need for new legal frameworks underprivileged and homeless, but they are self-reliant, dynamic and politically motivated. They have been an integral part of the End camp, Obi, explained that “We are living there again – just without what the judge described as ‘sleeping apparatus’.

Exchange is that they’d be within their rights to begin an occupancy. That is the period where the Information Tent of the camp used to be. With the legal system not designed to give power to the people, it’s structured so as to subordinate communities and to be adversarial, pitting communities against the corporate state and against each other. The legal process is stressful, saps time, is potentially financially devastating and fosters ‘you should have run this argument differently’ in-fighting. Fortunately, this has not happened with the “Save the Leyton Marsh” group.

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US. UK. OCCUPY FOR ALL OF MAY.

As one occupier said, “We’re still sick of Wall Street. We can handle it in small doses, but now we’re back on Wall Street, I kind of think of if like we’re a tumor and we’re going to keep growing and growing, in a cancerous sense... Of course, capitalism’s the real cancer.”

Within days, their ranks had swelled to 70 overnight-campers before police forcibly removed the demonstrators so that, according to New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, the sidewalk could be cleaned.

Since the eviction of the camp from Zuccotti Park, activists have experimented with new tactics and spawned campaigns that have addressed issues as far-ranging as corporate malpractice, tax injustice, evictions of poor and marginalised families, and the upcoming US presidential election. Instead of maintaining the centralised structure of the camp, the movement has decentralised and diversified, often resembling temporary autonomous zones from which individual actions and campaigns can develop.

As the occupiers have stated, “The corporate media claims that Occupy’s strength is waning, but they are merely in denial. During the coldest months of this year, the United States has already seen more revolutionary momentum than it has in decades.”

Organisers hope that the momentum that has been sustained over the cold winter months can blossom again as the world celebrates May Day; the International Workers’ Day and a remembrance of the 1886 Haymarket Massacre in Chicago – where police fired live bullets on workers who went on strike for the eight-hour workday.

Since March 16th protesters have held weekly marches originating at Zuccotti Park, activists have already seen more revolutionary momentum than it has in decades.

On April 25th Occupy teamed up with ACT UP to celebrate the group’s 25th anniversary of AIDS activism and direct action, and for May 1st, Occupy Wall Street is ringing in the American variant of the “Global Spring” by calling for a general strike in support of economic justice and true democracy: “No Work, No School, No Housing, No Banking - and most importantly, TAKE THE STREETS!” The day of protest will feature rallies, concerts and workshops. Similar strikes are planned in 115 American cities and are supported by a broad coalition of activists, student groups and unions. The “Global Spring” demonstrations on May 12th will be the culmination of public dissent, as protesters around the world take to the streets once more.

DARK MATTERS

ravinity, they say, is a natural consequence of the presence of matter. What matters to us all, was occupying the London Stock Exchange; and greater than all we did. With society cast adrift on the rising tides of austerity, a dialogue born of civil disobedience would counter the current. What began as a protest of expression against economic injustice soon took physical manifestation in the camps and in the spaces we occupied, with an emerging point of focus, coalescing both from within and outside of the movement, as ‘Occupy London’,...
THAT THINE ALMS MAY BE IN SECRET...

THE IRREVERENT REVEREND NEMU

Making another charitable assumption, that this was not economic warfare but good intentions gone bad, it illustrates the complexities of humanitarian intervention, even in noble aims. In 1982, the World Health Organisation began its Global Malaria Eradication Programme, using the recently developed chloroquine and DDT, nearly wiping out malaria in Sri Lanka, but not quite. As any GSCE student could have predicted, a generation grew up without developing immunity, and the resulting resurgence claims 11,000 victims per year today. The programme has, however, helped wipe out half of the Nepalese jungle and 20% of the Amazon, along with various creatures great and small. Previous attempts to develop the rainforests had been doomed to feverish failure, but “charity” rendered this defense impotent. Whilst admitting that eradication is impossible, Westerners launched another $2bn per year campaign in 2008. Until they abandon it, your taxes will fund the spraying of toxic insecticides throughout the tropics, killing all manner of insects along with mosquitoes, and starving and poisoning the animals above them in the food chain. As well as disastrously stupid dis-godlessness amongst aid organisations, there is also Machiavellian scheming: “When thou abidest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth” (Matthew 6:3). Before the invention of the toilet roll, ancient cultures differentiated between a private and a public hand, a right hand for giving and a left hand for taking. While the dexterous right hand gives aid, what does the sinister left hand take? 70% of US aid is tied to US goods and services. Most of the $3bn given to Israel is military credits, and African AIDS relief funds stipulate that the drugs be US-made, rather than generic alternatives. Then there is the diplomatic game. In 2003 various UN member states including Guinea and Angola were threatened with losing aid if they opposed the Iraq War. Pacific nations are calling a more charitable explanation.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, but the greatest of these is charity.” (1 Corinthians 13:12-13)

Through the dark glass of international politics, witness a curious spectacle. Indian politicians are calling for India to refuse British aid, whilst Britain is pleading with them to continue accepting it. Disenting voices were also heard in the UK in February, when India chose 126 French fighter jets over British, despite our International Development Secretary making it clear during a diplomatic visit that this was just not cricket. Referring to the £2.3 billion project, he said: “The focus is also [sic] about seeking to sell Typhoon.”

Of course, anyone visiting the world’s 13th fastest growing economy must be prepared to haggle, but whilst this looks for all the world like the cynical machinations of arms dealers and morally bankrupt politicians, let us consider a more charitable explanation. The whole problem, brothers and sisters in revolt and rapture, arises from a mistranslation of scripture. Charity is the “bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14), the “end of the commandment” (1 Timothy 1:5) and the final sainthood virtue (II Peter 1:5-7), but the Greek word o革ge does not refer to coins in a can. It means selfless love, and more specifically tolerance for other perspectives. In English also, “unchartable” can mean narrow-minded rather than stingy, and “charity begins at home” is not about sponsoring your sister’s parachute jump, but respecting the opinions of those around you. On the international scale, it might mean respecting the right of other countries to decide their fiscal policies.

The distribution of alms (not arms, brother Cameron, alms) is a more delicate affair: “Therefore when thou dost alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.” (Matthew 6:2)

Hark the herald bureaucrats sing, and how the UN trumpet blasted out to the tune of $10 billion from member states in the wake of the Haitian earthquake. After six months, however, only 2% had been spent on relief, and not a penny of the $1.5bn from the US arrived before the anniversary of the disaster. Until today, less than 1% has been channelled through the Haitian government, and only 25 out of 1,499 reconstruction contracts have gone to Haitian companies.

Compare this tardiness with the 13 months it took for the US Agency for International Development to completely exterminate the Haitian creole pig when African swine fever hit the Dominican Republic (not Haiti). Charitable pig-killers even went onto isolated islands, not to test, but to kill these hardy and humble little pigs, which were the basis of the barter economy. The fat, frail American pigs sent in their stead died, unsuited to life outside of agro-business, and Haiti has never recovered.

For India to refuse British aid is not about sponsoring your love, and more specifically tolerance to coins in a can. It means selfless agape “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 12:31).

In today’s multicultural Benetton ad of a world, you might be forgiven for thinking that your neighbour lives in Kathmandu, but hark ye: Your neighbour lives in your neighbourhood, and that is where you should raise a stink! If your government robs local pensioners and closes your local library whilst funding war, ecocide and land-grabs on other continents, it is neither charity, nor alms, nor love. It is nothing more than greed.

More wrath and righteousness from Rev. Nemu at www.nemusend.co.uk
It wasn’t more than a few years ago that proponents of healthcare reform would point out that the United States was the only developed nation without a universal healthcare system. Right-wing electoral victories and several IMF interventions later, a number of European nations have joined the United States on the list of developed nations that base healthcare access on ability to pay rather than need.

The most unforgiving attack on universal healthcare has been felt in Greece, where democratic norms have been suspended to accommodate the demands of international lenders. The austerity program that imposed severe public spending cuts in Greece and Portugal has been replicated in Spain and Italy. Right-wing governments have taken upon themselves the task of gutting their healthcare systems. The Spanish People’s Party is initiating a nationwide program to privatize healthcare spending and subsidies for the elderly. In the United Kingdom, private insurance companies are piling on the pressure for even higher fees.

The assault on public healthcare places Europe on a trajectory toward the model currently maintained by the United States. Whether it’s the UK, Portugal, Greece or Spain, weakening public healthcare sets the stage for such services to be filled by the private sector. With significant NHS staff cuts, users will rightfully complain about its reduced quality. To this, the free-market fundamentalists in British government will provide a false cure in the form of privatizations.

The sad irony is that in this age of austerity and prejudicial belt-tightening, Europe is in the process of shedding the relatively inexpensive public healthcare model for the overpriced American model. The US spends nearly 40% more on health care than its GDP would predict, with 85% of this linked to the private insurance system the country employs. This figure should be no surprise. Private insurance companies post profits in the billions, while civil servants in Europe merely demand a living wage and a respectable pension. But this profit extracted from America’s failing healthcare system is the very motivation to slowly advance the U.S. model in Europe. With functional public healthcare systems in Europe, these crucial social services are closed to market speculation. Dismantle them and suddenly a public good is a commodity ripe for market speculation.

Those who cherish their public healthcare systems in Europe must not be reduced to inaction by claims that the reforms are modest. True reform would entail the improvement of service, a feat hardly achieved with fewer nurses, doctors and facilities. Instead, the drive in Europe is to leave public healthcare mutilated and deformed. At this moment, public healthcare is in an untenable situation calls for.

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The numbers are known. In January 2012 unemployment figures in Spain passed the five million mark, which paints to an incredibly high and growing number of families without any source of income. Civil servants’ salaries were frozen, and have now been cut. Such measures are being sold to many active workers as a solution to keep their jobs. Wages, already below the European average, continue to drop. The “milieuismo” - salaries of a thousand euros - are long ago fell to 800 euros for hundreds of thousands of workers, especially the young. If they want keep their jobs, people are expected to accept longer hours in poor conditions, without their jobs, people are expected to accept longer hours in poor conditions, without...
ONE is an expression of power relations. The current financial crisis reflects a much deeper crisis, which has to do with the exhaustion of the late twentieth century model of development. By model of development I mean a combination of technology, patterns of production, consumption, communication, infrastructure, and a specific set of political institutions. The nineteenth century model of development, often known as Fordism, was based on the intensive use of oil. It is characterised by mass production, high levels of consumption and military spending, the spread of the automobile and the aeroplane, as well as radio and television, the growth of suburbs and a consensus state intervention. This period also crucially saw the emergence of American hegemony, which has undermined the role of the dollar as the world’s reserve currency. Capitalism has evolved through several models of development, starting with the introduction of the factory system and the production of textiles led by Britain, then the increasing role of coal, iron and railways, followed by the introduction of steel, electricity, colonialism, and the rise of Germany and America.

At some point, the model of development is institutionalised and it becomes increasingly difficult to innovate and also to increase productivity and therefore profits. This began to happen with the Fordist model in the 1970s, productivity growth slowed down, oil became more expensive, the US started running trade deficits, and so on. At the time, neoliberalism was seen as the answer to sluggish economic growth. Liberalisation and deregulation did free up capital to invest in a future model of largely IT-based development. The so-called new economy spawned huge new companies like Apple, Microsoft, Google and Facebook, but the full diffusion of the new technologies was blocked by the political institutions and patterns of consumption typical of Fordism. Because of the difficulty in continuing to make profits in the productive sector, finance switched to investment in assets and developed new speculative tools – hence the rise in private debt and asset inflation that was bound to collapse at some point. It is important to understand, therefore, that this is an economic, social, environmental and political crisis, not just a financial crisis.

In moments of transition from one model of development to another, the role of social movements is critical. The labour movement was crucial in creating the conditions for the Fordist model of development by pushing for a greater role for the state in welfare provision and pressing for higher wages, so that workers could then buy consumer goods. By the 1960s disaffection with the paternalistic male dominated ‘old left’ as well as the inflexibility of the state led to the rise of new movements both on the right (the neoliberalists) and of a more emancipatory kind (peace, green, human rights, feminist). The 1980s and the 1990s were the highpoint of neoliberalism, but these were also decades associated with the spread of ideas about freedom, human rights, and greater tolerance towards minorities. A new set of movements began to develop in the late 1990s in response to social justice, the anti-globalisation movement, the movement for climate change action, and protest against the ‘War on Terror’. These were the precursors to the current wave of mobilisation, of which Occupy is such an important part.

So can the new social movements offer a way out of the crisis? What is needed is a shift away from finance and a move towards massive public investment in green technologies and in a range of public goods like education, health, or poverty reduction. Under Fordism productivity gains were labour-saving. The IT revolution offers the possibility for resource-saving innovations. In other words, we need a new green economic paradigm not only because of the risk of climate change and resource depletion, but also to solve current economic problems. To achieve this, I believe we will need a greater role for local (municipal or sub-regional), regional (European) and global governance because of the institutional blockage at national levels. We will need a shift away from American dominance to a more cooperative world system. Above all, we need to reinvent democracy on a multi-scala basis.

The big concern is the risk of war. In previous transitions, war played a crucial role (for example, the Napoleonic wars, or the wars of the mid-nineteenth centuries). War was both a response to crisis situations and a way of crushing protest. This period is much like the period before World War I when syndicalists, suffragettes and others were campaigning for more democracy, more rights and more social justice. They were sidelined by the wars and their demands were only finally and partially fulfilled after the most terrible slaughter the world has ever witnessed. I worry about growing conflict in the Middle East and about the rise of populist and xenophobic movements. While increased awareness as a result of the new forms of communication may make us less vulnerable to violence on the scale of the twentieth century, everyone who is currently politically active both at the top and at the bottom has a big responsibility to find ways to steer a peaceful and democratic transition to a green, socially just global economy.

Mary Kaldor is a former peace activist and professor at LSE, where she directs the research group on global civil society and human security.
IN SEARCH OF A NEW ECONOMIC MODEL

JAYATI GHOSH

The slogan of the World Social Forum, which for a brief time had become one form of articulation of global people’s resistance to the current oppressive system, is “another world is possible”. The writing on the wall is now clear: another world is not just possible but inevitable, as this system cannot survive in its current form. Shaping it in more desirable directions, towards socialism in its original sense, is therefore the task.

Jayati Ghosh is Professor of Economics at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.
Shadow Banking 101

John Aziz

Everything you wanted to know about the terrible shadow banking system but were afraid to ask. By John Aziz, an independent financial writer from England.

Meet James. James bought a house. It cost him £150,000, of which £30,000 had come from his own savings, leaving him with a £120,000 20-year fixed-rate mortgage from the WTH Bank, with a final cost (after 30 years of interest) of £200,000. Now, up until the ’80s, a mortgage was just a mortgage. Banks would lend the funds and profit from interest as the mortgage was paid back.

Not so today. James’s £200,000 mortgage was packaged up with 1,000 other mortgages into a single £18 billion MBS (mortgage backed security), and sold for an immediate gain by WTH Bank to Privet Asset Management, a hedge fund. Privet then placed this MBS with Sacks of Gold, an investment bank, in return for a £18 billion short-term collateralised (‘hypothecated’) loan.

Two days later Sacks of Gold faced a margin call, and so re-hypothecated this collateral for another short-term collateralised £18 billion loan with J.P. Morecocaine, another investment bank. Three weeks later, a huge stock market crash resulted in a liquidity panic, resulting in more margin calls, more forced selling, which left Privet Asset Management — who had already lost a lot of money in the crash — with no money to survive, or not survive.

And because of the problems with a particular type of mortgage called a mortgage-backed security (MBS), shadow banking institutions that were hypothecating and re-hypothecating had to sell collateral to meet demands.

Think back to the MBS bundle containing James’s mortgage: if 90% of the mortgages in the MBS were defaulted upon, that MBS would yield a huge loss for whoever was currently holding it. If that MBS had been posted as collateral against further lending, those collateral would be called in. For shadow banking institutions that were highly leveraged this turned out to be a huge problem. To raise capital, they started selling just about anything that wasn’t bolted down. This meant that prices — even of securities that weren’t fundamentally weak — plummeted. And because of the problems with a lot of existing securities, the funding source for a huge part of global lending completely dried up, worsening the economic contraction.

The risk — that debtors would default upon their loans — rather than being confined to a single bank, came to be spread about the entire economy, with bad debts that had been securitised, hypothecated and re-hypothecated coming to sit on the balance sheets of tens or even hundreds of financial institutions.

Pseudo-Money

This entire system creates another problem. Securities came to be a kind of pseudo-money. In other words, they became a unit of exchange and a means of payment between banking institutions. With the 2008 shadow banking implosion, this meant that many prices, including prices of products like equities that are essentially the same; securitisation and re-hypothecation, a mortgage, and re-hypothecation is essentially the same: securitisation is a way of creating products with an exchange value, and bringing money into the shadow banking system; so much money that the shadow banking system in 2008 was much larger than the traditional banking system.

Confused?

You should be. This is of course a fictitious story. But the really freaky thing is that this kind of scenario — the packaging up of fairly ordinary debt into exotic financial products, which are then traded by billions of even thousands of different parties, has occurred millions and millions of times. And it is extremely dangerous. When everybody is in debt to everybody else through a complex web of debt one small shock could blow up the entire system. The £18 billion debt that Privet owed to Sacks of Gold could be the difference between the world having enough money to survive, or not survive. And if they didn’t survive, then all the money that they lent, and the assets like J.P. Morecocaine, would go unpaid, thus threatening those parties with insolvency, and so on. This is called systemic risk, and shadow banking has done for systemic risk what did the Beatles did for rock & roll. Now it up, and spread it everywhere.
PREOCCUPYING:  
Paul Mason  
"The Old World is on Life Support"

Paul Mason is economics editor of BBC Newsnight and the author of several books including Meltdown and Why It’s Kicking Off Everywhere. The OT caught up with Paul to get his views on the trajectory of the financial crisis and the unrest it has helped spawn, the Occupy movement’s successes and failures — and the role of the media in society.

The Occupied Times: The Occupy movement saw protestors initially gather, en masse, at significant financial centres across the globe, but the movement received heavy criticism — with claims that protestors failed to present an alternative to what the Financial Times later conceded was “capitalism in crisis.” Undaunted by this criticism, many thousands will be mobilising throughout May to further challenge economic injustice. Do you believe that movements such as Occupy bear the seeds for a sustained challenge to an economic status quo?

Paul Mason: No. For the simple reason that Occupy doesn’t yet have either the means or the intention to “overthrow” the economic order. It’s striking that while the present system — free market unregulated capitalism — is facing a crisis of sustainability and belief, the so-called anti-capitalist movement still can’t answer the questions: what do you want, what would you do if you could decide things?

It looks a lot like a new form of utopian socialism, or utopian anarchism. I do not believe that, of course — my job is to study these movements in real time but as far as I can see it remains a critique of capitalism “within capitalism,” destined to create small islands of alternative lifestyle or alternative economics, not a systemic overthrow.

At the same time I do believe Occupy has created a new zeitgeist, and that it reflects a wider discontent, and that it’s a product of something that is going on objectively, which is a new inter-personal and psychological revolution, and a revolution in human expectations combined with a rejection of the old economic order and the old power elite.

This year is the 200th anniversary of Luddism, which prefigured other, more successful organised labour battles. Somebody inside the movement said to me: “Maybe we’re like the Luddites, we’re a prefigurative movement for something else.”

In America you can already see Occupy forming with other more local and deep-rooted movements — the Trayvon Martin protests, with protests against abortion and contraception rights.

Whatever else happens, Occupy is now a meme that won’t go away and I would expect it to influence subsequent waves of struggle and resistance.

OT: You recently told the Guardian’s Comment is Free site that the global revolts of 2011 have signalled the end of Mark Fisher’s concept of Capitalist Realism, whereby it seemed easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. These revolts could be seen as a global rejection of long-standing neoliberal economics. So if we are to believe that “the old is dying and the new cannot be born” are we now in Gramsci’s “interregnum” — experiencing “a great variety of morbid symptoms”?

PM: Well that Gramsci quote gets rolled out a lot. I would see it as having a lot of relevance in Britain: old newspapers and media business models dying; the media obsessed with an agenda dreamed up in the surreal bubbles we call political parties; the voice of the gentleman’s club and the public school still ubiquitous; our “alternative” culture dominated by ageing standup comedians and millionaire concept artists.

I think Lehman was the moment where the fatalism the capitalist realism concept describes did die; but I also think you have to admit there is quite a lot of “the new” actually being born. The iPhone has conquered the world since Lehman; six out of seven Arab Facebook users joined after the revolution started. There is rapid uptake of technological change going on, and the rapid creation of alternative forms of media. Likewise if you look at the Rio+20 summit, the UN has suddenly become obsessed with “transition” projects.

So I would rephrase Gramsci: the old world is on life support because too few people want the chaos that an attempt to create a new world might bring. Instead of “morbid symptoms” you’ve got zombified symptoms.

OT: There seems to be an inability on the part of both those in the financial industry and among many financial journalists to fully understand the complexities of the economic system. It sometimes feels like we’re speeding along in a driverless car and when you ask around what’s wrong, everyone shrugs their shoulders.

What does this situation mean for the potential success of policy responses — and can we ever wish to comprehend what is going wrong before the shit really hits the fan?

PM: I dispute this: there are many journalists and economists who get what’s gone wrong: at least 12 significant academic economists predicted one or another aspect of the credit crunch.

Incidentally there’s a default counter-crisis policy coalescing: you saw it in Berlin in April at George Soros’s INET conference and New Economic Thinking conference: it’s basically repress finance, rebalance western consumption towards production and hi-tech through state intervention, and upskill the western workforce. If it’s actually the same person, once the answer to every question is not “the market” you need experts, strategists, planners; “competitiveness.” becomes not about “getting fit” but “winning the race by putting your spikes into the knee of your opponent”.

I’ve said before that the big unsung question is protectionism: how much of the rebalancing can you hope to achieve without protecting your domestic market and restricting the supply of unorganised cheap labour. I think it’s coming back — in both left and right wing forms.

If you look at the French elections, it’s the candidates to the left and right — Le Pen and Melenchon — who’ve been prepared to breach these taboos.

The challenge for people around Occupy, which tends to shy away from “demands,” still less harsh demands that actually inflict pain on one section of society by wielding political power on behalf of another, is that we might be entering a decade of demand-based radical politics. So what are you going to do if politics and economics enters a world of class vs class, nation vs nation?

OT: A look back at the lead-up to the current global economic crisis reveals that a number of marginalised voices were accurately forecasting a crash well ahead of the collapse of Lehman Brothers. What changes can we hope to make to economic reportage in order to accommodate input from the likes of critical commentators such as Steve Keen, Nouriel Roubini, David Harvey and Nicholas Taleb?

PM: Each of the figures you mention are big figures who pick and choose their interventions carefully. I’ve hosted most of them on BBC outlets.

For me, economics reporting is not about theory anyway; it’s about bringing in the granularity and unexpected details of real life into the world of theory. It’s about reporting before it’s about economics — such as when I got in a car and drove across most of the southern USA, looking at poverty and displacement. It taught me a lot more about effective demand, and real labour market, than the monthly stats could.

OT: You write in your new book, Why It’s Kicking Off Everywhere (WIKOE), of an “almost mystical determination by protestors to occupy a symbolic space and create within it an experimental, shared community.” You also mention that this creation of “instant liberated spaces” is the most important theme linking the global revolt. Does this mean that you wouldn’t subscribe to the meme that is popular with some in the Occupy movement that you “can’t evict an idea?” Is holding onto a Tahrir, a Zuccotti Park or a St. Paul’s crucial to the success of the movement?

PM: I was reporting in Zuccotti myself two weeks ago and got physically evicted, despite my BBC press pass. Then the place got swamped with cops and tourists in equal numbers. Then one slightly deranged guy started to meander through the space shouting “Occupy Wall Street,” which echoed off the office blocks and completely defined the situation.

So I suppose that’s a good illustration of the idea being impossible to evict. However, if you look back at the history of opposition movements in, say, France, you would say ideas, eventually, can get evicted. Entire generations of radical French workers clung to the idea of the social republic, despite it being
“evicted” physically twice, in 1851 and 1871. Eventually they gave up on it. the character of opposition politics transformed as a result. After a while then, an idea gets ground to pieces by repeated failure. How to avoid failure? Social history tells us it’s numbers and relevance. If you contrast Zucotti to Tahrir: in Tahrir there are still tens of thousands of ordinary people prepared to risk life, injury and careers to be in Tahrir, even more than a year on, to expand the democratic rights they won in February 2011. I think it’s an open question whether Occupy in the USA and UK will revive as the weather gets better, or whether it dissolves into whatever is coming next. Certainly, if you look at Spain and Greece, the indignado movements have moved on to a more worker and politics oriented agenda, as you’ve moved into general strikes and election campaigns. OT: In WIKO are you keen to draw historical parallels between our times and the Edwardian Age or “Belle Epoque” at the turn of the 20th century rather than the more common comparisons most people make with the economic turmoil of the 1930s or the youthful protests of the 1960s. Why is this? PM: We’re not yet in a 1930s situation because the main economies in the world chose to bail out the banks instead of letting them go bust. Students are poor; young workers are low paid. But go into any bar or shop and you will see them still spending money: that money they are spending is some of the trillions of dollars, euros and pounds that’s been created to stave off crisis. By contrast my grandfather’s generation literally spent their last penny and starved. And even then it took the threat of fascism to rouse them from sporadic strikes and protests to really transformative mass action. The 1960s do have a resonance: but as I say in the book, back then the revolution in individual lifestyles and freedom ran into very powerful forces linked to the Cold War, to the resilience of the economic system, which could still deliver life improvements to ordinary people. The parallel with the pre-1914 days for me comes from the fact that you’ve had this revolution in individual lifestyles that is congruent with a technological revolution and, until 2008, growth - but it’s a cultural parallel I am drawing. And I do so to raise a question: don’t know the answer to: if it all gets really ugly, economically and socially, could the powers that be really roll back all the personal freedom we’ve gained? We have to remember that Berlin went from the gay nightclub capital of the world to a Wagnerian cultural desert in the space of two or three years. It happened then. OT: We’re interested in the ability of mainstream media outlets to be a check on political and corporate power. Are organisations like the BBC doing their job properly? Or have we reached a situation where the real speaking of truth to power comes out of movements like Occupy, UK Uncut or from independent sources? PM: I think all the mass and mainstream media knows it’s facing a huge challenge as social media empowers ordinary people. And I don’t see the first job of the media as “speaking truth to power”; it is much simpler – it is telling the truth. Finding it, uncovering it, testing out claims, creating a coherent picture of what’s going on and then publishing it. What I say to people who get riled at reporting they don’t like in the mainstream media is: in the end of the day it’s not as important as it was. If you don’t like it; do your own reporting and disseminate it yourself. What unites activists and bloggers on the right and left – in the USA and increasingly here – is how little they trust or care about what the mainstream media says. OT: Given that the PR industry has grown at an almost directly proportional rate to which newsrooms have shrunk in recent decades, how do you feel this has changed reporting, and is it causing serious problems? PM: No. The only serious problem it causes me is RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury) as I methodically delete press releases from my email in-box. I cannot say it has really changed my reporting. More of a problem is the relentless legal guerilla warfare corporations engage in with the media: and that endless complaints and lobbying efforts outsourced to the public affairs industry. But my philosophy is: if you are straight, and play fairly with everybody, most of it is like water off a duck’s back. OT: A lack of representation of working-class people in politics is obviously problematic for democracy, but what is the impact on society of a Fourth Estate disproportionately populated by people from white, privileged backgrounds? What advice would you give to young working-class people keen to become journalists? PM: Marry somebody who owns a ski lodge in Verbier and a 60ft yacht! Seriously you put your finger on a problem. In the media in general wages for the producers, young reporters, internet writers etc are so low they’re impossible to live on unless your dad is rich. I regularly look at adverts for research fellowships in Higher Education, or entry level school teaching, and think, heck, that’s way more than people earn in TV and newspapers. So a lot of working class would-be journalists simply give up, or can’t survive in the “prestige jobs” – so they move to the more lucrative edges of the media – which tend to be less altruistic, or they go into PR. Going back to the advice: I would say start a blog now, start producing video now, start posting your pictures on Tumblr or somewhere now. Start reporting, even if its only for an audience of a few hundred. You may already be out-performing your local newspaper in terms of readership. And a specialism; I started on a magazine covering “heavy plant” – ie digging machines. But this problem of low wages, and too few entry level jobs that pay, also reflects the rise of social media and the crisis of mainstream business models. OT: A hero of yours, George Orwell, masterfully depicted tyranny and hierarchy in 1984 and the nature of power in Animal Farm but he wasn’t to know how new technology would herald the explosion of networks now connecting people across the globe; networks that you say will invariably defeat hierarchies. We think the important question is: would George have been a keen Twitterer or more of a Facebook fan? PM: Orwell would have closed his Facebook account the moment they started messing around with the privacy options. He would have been tweeting Anglo-Saxon epithets but getting trolled by a combination of right wingers and Stalinists, as he was in 1937 when he wrote Homage to Catalonia. Also, maybe, he would have sold more books by self-publishing on Kindle than he ever did with Victor Gollancz. Also he would have ripped the “****” mercilessly out of Defoe’s heckling. The subscription of two ILP (Independent Labour Party) members getting onto a bus in Letchworth dressed for a socialist summer camp to see why.
PREOCCUPYING:
MARK FISHER
“THESE ARE THE SIGNS OF A SYSTEM VERGING ON COLLAPSE”

MARK FISHER IS AN AUTHOR, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL THEORIST AND A VISITING FELLOW AT GOLDSMITHS. THE OT ASKED MARK ABOUT THE CONCEPT BEHIND HIS BOOK ‘CAPITALIST REALISM’, HIS THOUGHTS ON THE CULTURE OF NEOLIBERALISM AND HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE GLOBAL UNREST THAT HAS SPRUNG UP OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS.

THE OCCUPIED TIMES: Paul Mason recently commented that the uprisings of 2011-12 have brought the curtain down on capitalist realism. Can you briefly outline what you mean by the term ‘capitalist realism’? And do you believe that the financial crisis and the subsequent popular fightback have signaled a new beginning?

MARK FISHER: Capitalist realism can be seen as a belief - that there is no alternative to capitalism, that, as Fredric Jameson put it, “it’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.” Other systems might be preferable to capitalism, but capitalism is the only one that is realistic. Or it can be seen as an attitude of resignation and fatalism in the face of this - a sense that all we can do is accommodate ourselves to the dominance of capitalism, and limit our hopes to contain its worst excesses. Fundamentally, then, it’s a pathology of the left, nowhere better exemplified than in the case of New Labour. Ultimately, what capitalist realism amounts to is the elimination of left wing politics and the naturalisation of neoliberalism. I think it’s too quick to talk about the end of capitalist realism, though what we have been seeing for the past couple of years is a challenge to this naturalisation of neoliberal concepts. In some ways, the austerity measures that have been implemented have constituted an intensification of capitalist realism. Those measures couldn’t have been introduced unless there was still a widespread sense that there is no alternative to neoliberal capitalism. The various struggles that have blown up since the financial crisis show a growing discontent with the panic neoliberalism that has been put in place since 2008, but they have yet to propose any concrete alternative to the dominant economic model. Capitalist realism is about a corrosion of social imagination, and in some ways, that remains the problem. After thirty years of neoliberal domination, we are only just beginning to be able to imagine alternatives to capitalism. But at least now we can imagine imagining such alternatives.

OT: What have you made of the global Occupy movement’s role as part of the mass mobilisation against the politics and economics of austerity, and how have you reacted to what you’ve seen can Occupy and other movements mount a sustained opposition to the ruling status quo, continuing with the global actions planned throughout May?

MF: The short answer is that this remains to be seen. There’s no doubt the Occupy movement has played a major role in the shifting of ideological atmosphere that has happened in the last year or so. You’re right that the question of sustainability is crucial. In Capitalist Realism, I argued that the anti-capitalist movement had become background noise to capitalist business as usual - something that it was by and large easy for capitalism to ignore. The question is, can Occupy provide the basis for a sustainable antagonism? The broad problem we’re facing here is, how can this antagonism be sustained now that the Communist Party has disappeared and trade unions have for the most part become quiescent? The party and the union structure provided sustainability, continuity and institutional memory. Now, it’s not that these are the only institutions that could provide such things, or that those older institutions would be fit for purpose, even if they had survived into the 21st century. But a genuinely new force that is capable of struggling against 21st century capitalism must be able to fulfil those functions. I think we also need to recognise the importance of building hegemony - and this means stepping outside the activist universe. There’s a danger of the activist world become very self-contained. We need to reach beyond those intensely engaged with politics to those who don’t look to politics at all to explain the misery of their lives. It’s those people who have been most affected by capitalist realism, and who could be mobilised against it, if they could be reached.

OT: What was your reading of the riots last August? The epitome of neoliberal materialism or further evidence of a system built on speed-breaking down?

MF: I think those involved in the riots were largely exactly the kind of people I was just talking about - those for whom ‘politics’ means absolutely nothing. I’m not saying that the riots weren’t ‘political’, that they were an inexplicable upsurge of criminality, as the right did. The riots were political, but in a negative sense - they were a massive symptom of a failure of politics, an expression of discontent which lacked political goals or strategy. These are the signs of a system verging on collapse; people took part because they felt radically excluded. The invisible wall that prevents people from acting like this had collapsed - there was so little on offer that there was almost no incentive not to riot. It’s to be hoped that the discontent that exploded so powerfully, and, in many cases so tragically, in the riots, can be harnessed. Shortly after the riots, I went to a screening of the Black Audio Film Collective’s 1986 film Hardworth Songs, an essay film about the 1980s riots. The film’s director, John Akomfrah, said that, if these riots can bring the British state to its knees for three days, they will also be able to organise themselves. That is my hope.

OT: In the sections of the book where you cover the culture of work, you describe the combination of marketisation and maddening bureaucracy as “Market Stalinism.” This evokes the excellent US television series The Wire where the police, the politicians, the teachers, etc. are all shown to be focused, above all else, on “juking the stats.” Can you describe how Market Stalinism works and how we can hope to get rid of it?

MF: I hadn’t actually seen The Wire at the time I wrote Capitalist Realism, which is why there’s no mention of it in the book. But you’re right, The Wire exemplifies so much of what I wanted to say in Capitalist Realism. In fact, if you want to know what capitalist realism is, watch The Wire! Market Stalinism was my term for the kind of bureaucracy which was typical of Blairism, but which, as The Wire demonstrates, was by no means confined to Blairism, or to Britain. The neoliberal clam was that marketisation obviates the need for the state and for bureaucracy. But the result of imposing ‘marketization’ on public services is always a crazed proliferation of bureaucracy, via target setting, league tables, performance reviews etc. Just as under Stalinism, everything becomes geared towards the production of appearance. In these conditions, gaming the system is inevitable. How to get rid of Market Stalinism? We need to expose one of the biggest lies in neoliberalism: the idea that it is an anti-bureaucratic force. This will involve a struggle against managerialism, and towards a workplace based on the collective autonomy of workers.

OT: You write in Capitalist Realism “This battery of bureaucratic procedures is by no means confined to universities, nor to education other public services, such as the NHS and the police, find themselves ensnared in similar bureaucratic metastases.” Now that the police want to strike, do you think they should be seen as just another public service, or does their role of enforcing the government’s agenda mean we shouldn’t oppose cuts to the police force in the same way we do the NHS, education or welfare?

MF: It’s a difficult question, but one that should be answered pragmatically and strategically. If we are involved in fighting the
ANDREA BAKAC

The principal ways in which it has changed is the globalization of markets, which has both subdued the forces acting against it - most obviously, it has capitalised on building a patchwork of heterogeneous groups, often with different, even conflicting agendas. OT: The book ends very optimistically, saying that there is a sense that something was possible that didn't exist just two or three years ago now. Still optimistic? More or less than before?

MF: Well, I think that the optimism of what has been borne out by what's happened since I wrote the book. As I said, I think it's going too far to say that capitalist realism is over, but the fact that Paul Mason could make such a claim shows how much has changed over the past couple of years. Just before the student migration blow up in UK at the end of 2010, I spoke at a conference, making the - in retrospect - mild claim that there would be plus of public anger against austerity, and it was accused of "revolutionary nostalgia". The point is, that it was my accuser that seemed to have the most (false) realistic handle on things then. But surely there's not anyone now who thinks that public discontent in the UK is at an end. Things have got better and worse since 2009 worse, in that part neoliberalism has further attacked the welfare state, NHS education etc, better in that opposition is coalescing, and the ideological climate has shifted.

OT: You've written a lot about how popular culture has reinforced Capitalist Realism. You show how culture is anti-capitalist, that a politicisation of much more common disorders. Indeed, it is a denaturalisation (and consequent politicisation) of depression, as well as an increase efficiency, but their effect is to cause the influence of managerialism grows, and the status of the teacher is eroded. This isn't an accident: it's the real aim of these measures. Education has been spread anxiety and erode the autonomy of the teacher. This isn't an accident; it's what's happened under capitalist realism. It's what I've called business ontology: the idea that only outcomes recognised as useful are valued, and the principal - if not the only - role of education is to turn out the kind of compliant individuals which 'business' wants. As systems from the private sector are increasingly introduced into education, the influence of managerialism grows, and the status of the teacher is downgraded. The pretext for the battery of bureaucratic and self-surveillance techniques that have been implemented by successive governments is that they 'increase efficiency', but their effect is to spread anxiety and erode the autonomy of the teacher. This isn't an accident: it's the real aim of these measures. Education has been corralled into naturalising and intensifying capitalist competition; it's easy to forget, for example, that league tables were only introduced relatively recently. League tables produce the kind of Market Stalinst distortions I was talking about earlier. Teaching becomes a matter of training students for examinations; anything else is a luxury. Contrast this with the much-praised education system in Finland, which is fully comprehensive, has no league tables or inspectorate, and is based on trust in teachers.

MF: A predominant theme of the book is the issue of mental illness in capitalist societies. You write, "what is needed now is a politicisation of much more common disorders. Indeed, it is a denaturalisation (and consequent politicisation) of depression, as well as an increase in the number of people who recognise their illness, and who see themselves as victims of a system that has caused it."

OT: This is a crucial question. The way in which social and political problems are converted into individual pathologies, to be explained via chemical imbalances or family history, neatly sums up so much of what has happened under capitalist realism. It's what I've called the privatisation of depression. Depression has been described as a pathology of responsibility: you feel intensely responsible for the state that you're in. The exculpating paradox is that, while you feel that only you can get yourself out of depression, the condition consists precisely in your inability to act. There's more than an analogy with the political hopelessness and fatalism that have characterised capitalist realism. Depression, after all, is a pathology which inherently involves a sense of realisation (indeed, there's a phenomenon called depressive realism): the depressive thesis that they are being realistic, that anti-capitalism at the level of a film's message does nothing in itself to disrupt the super-hegemony of capital. Anti-capitalism - or at least anti-capitalism. A necessity for social change, but this increase in depression and anxiety, it's alarmist hysteria has been democratised, neurotised and commodified over the past thirty years. Instead of looking to unions when our workplace becomes unbearable, we're invited to look for a medical solution. Stressed by too many working hours? Take this medication, which will restore the balance of your brain chemistry. Worried about losing your job? Tell me about your mother. This is a major example of the naturalisation process I talked of earlier. What we need is a denaturalisation (and consequent politicisation) of mental illness. I think the formation of a dedicated pressure group could restore the balance of your brain chemistry. Worried about losing your job? Tell me about your mother. This is a major example of the naturalisation process I talked of earlier. What we need is a denaturalisation (and consequent politicisation) of mental illness.

MF: oxider economics being so globalised, so strongly enforced by powerful entities on a national, international and supranational level, this does not in any state to adopt a new economic paradigm. Would there be credit-rating downgrades from the 'objective' agencies who missed the Enron and sub-prime scandals, a hysterical frenzy among the corporate media, veiled threats from the IMF and OECD and, quite possibly, stampeding capital flight? Couldn't there even, depending on the extent of the country's departure from the consensus, be hostility from the other neoliberal countries?

OT: Of course, that would happen, and this kind of threat plays a large part in the current mode of capitalist realism. In fact, this is pretty much a statement of what capitalist realism is at this time. But it presupposes that capital is the most powerful force on earth, and it's this presupposition which needs to be undermined. How? By constituting a counter-force capable of disciplining capital. We've become used to a world in which workers fear
**Reaping the Whirlwind: Nigel Lawson and the ‘80s Roots of the Economic Crisis**

**Occupied Times:** If you were to pick one event from recent history to help make sense of the current crisis, what would it be?

**Robin Ramsay:** One is hard. Here’s a couple of starting points. The budget of 1980 (the real intellectual author of which was Nigel Lawson) set the bankers free to move money and lend as much as they wanted to it. It tends to be forgotten that this move happened in the UK before it did in America. In a very real sense, the present shambles is Maggie’s great legacy. Not that she had any idea of what was going on; but she was in charge, at least formally.

A second event would be the decision by those around Neil Kinnock in 1988 to give up on their anti-banker economic policy and begin kissing butt in the City; that was the moment when personal careers override intellect and concern about this country.

**The OT is given a Tour of Britain’s Political Ruins by Robin Ramsay, Editor and Publisher of Lobster Magazine and Author of the Rise of New Labour.**

**OT:** These days, Nigel Lawson has been calling for a new Glass-Steagall Act, “a complete separation between classic commercial banking and investment banking.” He says the crucial “discipline of the marketplace” is being eroded by too-big-to-fail institutions...

**RR:** He’s an old man and has probably (and conveniently) forgotten that he’s the primary creator of the present mess. He should stick to writing about dishing. However, yes, he’s basically right in part—in his account of the problem—and wrong in his prescription that the free market can solve the problem itself. As soon as someone writes or talks about “the discipline of the market place” you are hearing ideology taking the place of thought.

**OT:** Back in 1999, you wrote: “The City of London has had complete control over British economic policy, and most British economic thinking, for over twenty years.” Is the City’s control as strong today?

**RR:** Even stronger, if anything. The events of 2008/9 demonstrated that bankers free to move money and lend as much as they wanted to it to henry Kissinger. (indeed, i have it to be revealed that the motives people...)

**OT:** Can democracy find its way back from this?

**RR:** Truthfully, I don’t know. Did we ever have democracy? The range of things tolerated by the powers-that-be has shrunk since 1980s, as the money-men established intellectual hegemony. I am thinking of civil liberties, basically: the right to protest and the response of the state to protests. These days, go on a demo and you might get ‘kettled’ by the police for six hours for your trouble. Even worse if you are trade unionists: months of notice and ballots before it is possible to strike. And GCHQ and the NSA are recording and analysing every form of electronic emission from baby monitors upwards.

**OT:** This is boom time for the surveillance industry, for the privatized demolition of privacy. What would you say to someone working in this sector?

**RR:** To an ordinary Joe making a living with a mortgage to pay, I would say nothing. To managers, tech innovators, who were stampeded by the bankers...

**OT:** What does it mean to be a cynic?

**RR:** In Labour Party terms, I supported the views of Bryan Gould MP, who stood against John Smith in 1992 for the leadership of the party and lost. Gould saw very clearly that the EU was rubbish, and that the City was the enemy of the British people. More recently, the Conservative David Davis is an interesting figure and might do something one day.

**OT:** In 2009, Bryan Gould wrote: "There have been no more enthusiastic cheerleaders for the culture of greed and excess than New Labour ministers", in a government which ‘celebrated the excesses of the City’. Do you agree?

**RR:** Absolutely. And I would say: “no more enthusiastic and ignorant cheerleaders”.

**OT:** Liberals have run the country...

**RR:** The Parliamentary Labour Party knew nothing; its leaders knew nothing. All they saw was big buildings filled with clever people making money, in the new ‘knowledge economy’. Funny how ‘knowledge economy’ has disappeared from the political discourse of today...

**OT:** You once described the rhetoric of the City as: “Leave everything to us; we know what we are doing. We are the success story of the British economy.” Nowadays, in Europe, we are leaving it to the technocrats, trusting the bankers to save us...

**RR:** It’s clear that all over Europe (i.e. EU Europe), the Czech Republic, the ideology of pre-WW2 classical liberalism is the prevailing view; and quite a few ex-members of Goldman Sachs have been parachuted into positions at or close to the top of EU members governments – Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, France and Greece – to make sure there is no default on Goldman Sachs loans.

**OT:** Is the really striking thing that none of Europe’s left-wing terror groups – e.g. those in Spain, Ireland and Greece – have started knocking off the bankers and Eurocrats. The cynic in me says that this may suggest that such groups were being run by their states...

**RR:** It’s clear that all over Europe (i.e. EU Europe), the Czech Republic, the ideology of pre-WW2 classical liberalism is the prevailing view; and quite a few ex-members of Goldman Sachs have been parachuted into positions at or close to the top of EU members governments – Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, France and Greece – to make sure there is no default on Goldman Sachs loans.

**OT:** What does it mean to be a cynic? Is it a mode of constant questioning?

**RR:** Good question and very difficult to answer. I guess it’s something like this: I expect things to go wrong, and I expect it to be revealed that the motives people profess and those they really have are not the same.

**OT:** What’s the biggest lie Britain’s been sold?

**RR:** In my lifetime there have been several. Obviously WMDs in Iraq is on the list. But I would add (a) public bad, private good. (b) the unions were to blame for the inflation of the 1970s; (c) there is no alternative (THA) – a phrase often used by Thatcher to justify her economic liberalism. In other words, the entire edifice of Thatcherism / Blairism was built on lies.

**OT:** Do you think the anti-war lobby will ever recover from being so ignored over Iraq and the WMDs?

**RR:** The anti-war lobby is always ignored. But, as I say: you have to proceed without hope. If you need hope to continue, you are screwed. If people believed that big marches against the Iraq war were going to persuade Tony Blair to go against American foreign policy, they knew nothing about the British political system or our post-war history.

**OT:** The west seems intent on fighting, in Larkin’s words, “the savage wars of peace”.

**RR:** Giving Obama the Nobel Peace Prize was nearly as funny as giving it to Henry Kissinger. (indeed, i have forgotten why Obama did get it). Obama was bought-and-paid-for long before his election. Anyone who didn’t know this wasn’t paying attention, or didn’t want to know.

**OT:** Are we humans are too believing for our own good?

**RR:** Do we really believe? Turnout at elections keeps falling; party memberships keeps falling. We are stuck: the state is too powerful to organise against; many of us are too comfortable to be bothered doing anything; huge swathes of those under thirty are merely consumers who still think stuff is more important than anything else. The internet is rewiring our brains, diminishing our attention spans, addicting many of us.

If globalisation has failed, then we return to the nation state. Do you see anyone on the left thinking about this? I don’t. And no wonder: nation seiges into nationalism, and this is the territory of the right and far right. So there’s the big necessary project: how to detoxify the notion of the nation state and make it acceptable to the left.

Robin Ramsay is the editor and publisher of Lobster Magazine (lobster-magazine.co.uk)
VALUE: THE REALITY

Three sources of value exist: 1) Location – i.e. three dimensional space; 2) Energy – in material or static and immaterial or dynamic forms; and 3) Intellect – in subjective form (knowledge) and objective form (knowledge). While the factors of location and non-renewable energy are finite, and subject to enclosure and dominance by elites, the emerging factor of intellectual value is subject to the direct instant connectivity of the Internet.

“The Internet” as John Gilmore has said, “interprets censorship as damage and routes around it” and it’s already routing around governments and rent-seekers to prevent them from capturing and enclosing knowledge and knowhow. The great theme of the 21st Century will be the exchange of intellectual value – firstly for the value of infinite renewable energy (MegaWatts); and secondly for the value of non-renewable energy saved (Negawatts and Negabarrels – units of unused energy).

CO-OPERATIVE ADVANTAGE

I believe we will see – probably more rapidly than many will believe possible – a transition from a profit-centred dollar economy to a people-centred energy economy. The adoption of a networked collaborative model has a ‘co-operative advantage’ – the freedom from paying something for nothing to rent-seekers. Networked financial systems spread the risk and are more resilient – from enclosure, for example.

There is a useful tool of credit which I call a ‘nondominium’ agreement: a consensual framework agreement between stakeholders such as asset users, managers, and investors which brings them together collectively and individually in such a way that none has a dominant right over another, but each has negative rights to protect their interests. In this new economy, absolute rights of ownership would be replaced by rights of ‘stewardship’.

COLLABORATIVE INVESTMENT

By finding consensus solutions through the formation of community partnerships we shall see a viral spread of networked community projects. Such collaboration to a common purpose and the equitable sharing of value will eventually out-compete profit-based economies. As a research fellow at the Institute for Security and Resilience Studies at UCL, I am engaged in action-based research to simplify and localise the way in which people may interact creatively using unconventional legal entities and agreements. This enables stakeholders to participate in mutually agreed a common purpose of creating productive assets of all kinds. Within such reality-based projects participants come together without

VALUE: THE MYTHS

This time, the violent conflict and disruption which has historically resolved such wealth imbalances – at least since debt jubilees went out of fashion – will not take place, despite the gloomy view of many. To understand why not, we have to understand what “value” is – because underpinning every school of economics, explicit or explicitly, are certain foundational assumptions as to the basis of value.

Almost invariably there is an anthropocentric assumption that it is the individual’s labour which is the source of all value, and that the use of other factors of production – lumped together as ‘capital’ – simply makes labour more ‘productive’. So a nurse in public service is an unproductive burden on the taxpayer, but in the private sector she magically becomes ‘productive’. Or when a factory is automated, the person who switches it on and off is almost infinitely productive, while the capital embedded in the factory is not.

This is pure ideology – but it is of course convenient, since it justifies the imposition of taxes only on individuals, rather than upon the productive assets they may own.

There are two additional myths we need to leave behind for good: firstly, the banking myth, which is that banks take in deposits and lend them out again; and secondly the ‘tax and spend’ myth – that Treasuries collect taxes and then spend the proceeds.

The truth is very different: banks and treasuries are simply credit middlemen who provide a framework of trust for the credit they create out of nothing as money. The value which underpins this credit is in fact only in small part that of the bank, but is actually based upon the capacity of productive people to meet their obligations; and it is usually backed by the value of productive assets, particularly land.

NEW ETHICS OF BUSINESS

These new participatory models share risk and reward whilst circumventing the current banking model, in which you pay money for the use of money. The Limited Company structure is often toxic – particularly in its public limited company (PLC) form – instead we need cooperatives of cooperatives and to remove ‘money for nothing rent seekers’ from the equation. We need to understand that deficit-based modern money has come to the end of the road. Instead of allowing banks to issue our credit for us based on nothing, we could base credit on productive assets such as Land and Energy. A currency unit based upon land rentals could be instrumental in resolving unsustainable property debt, while energy-based currency units could be instrumental in the transition to a low carbon economy.

In doing so perhaps the most essential safeguard against corruption and abuse is transparency. For example, in Norway, Finland and Sweden all tax returns are accessible to the public. In fact, under cooperative-based finance, it is in everyone’s own interest to be transparent: sunshine is the best disinfectant. In other words: Ethical is Optimal.

Chris Cook is a former director of the International Petroleum Exchange. He is now a strategic market consultant, entrepreneur and commentator.
Activists involved with UK Uncut, Occupy, community organisations and trade unions are about to launch a nationwide campaign – called PAY UP against highly profitable UK companies that pay some of their staff only the bare minimum. CEO pay, and the focus on big business, has a long tradition. In 2011, but 2012 needs to focus on the 99%, or rather about the low and stagnating pay for the bottom 10-20%. Here are some reasons why:

**WAGE TRENDS: 1945 - 1979**

Let’s take ourselves back to 1978. In the 30-odd years since the end of the Second World War Britain saw an unprecedented decline in inequality. This didn’t simply come about because that period saw the modern day welfare state created, it also saw the labour movement take home a steadily increasing proportion of national income. In 1910, the richest 0.1% of the population took home a whopping 10% of all national income. By 1978, that figure had dropped to a mere 1%.

A year later, in 1979, Margaret Thatcher rose to power and began her radical programme of neoliberal market deregulation that came to define global economic policy for the next 30 years. The financial markets were freed up, tax rates for the richest plummeted, stringent anti-union laws were put in place, and business was shed of a variety of ‘red tape’ regulation. Thatcher believed that Britain’s economic problems were in part down to the increasing strength of the labour movement. The flightback by those at the top was on.

**WAGE TRENDS: 1980 - 2012**

Now fast forward to 2012. Over the past 30 years, top wages in the UK, as well as other major European and North American economies, have rocketed away. Last year the High Pay Commission detailed examples of how some FTSE 100 CEOs’ pay and bonuses have risen by 4,000%. Even in 2010, the average CEO pay was £700k.

The rise of credit, debt and government wage subsidies

The real crisis in the UK is at the bottom end of the pay scale. When the Tories stand up and say ‘work must pay’ they are criticising a system where some households can receive more in benefits than in wages. The scandal is not an over generous welfare state, it is that work itself does not pay. People are going to work and not even earning enough just to feed their children, to pay their rent and bills, let alone having a disposable income. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has shown how the number of children living in ‘in work poverty’ has risen to 2 million.

While wages have been stagnant, we’ve seen energy and food prices soar, as well as the decline of a welfare system, and the rise of market rates in the housing sector.

The past 30 years has seen wage rises replaced with credit cards, Isans and rising household debt. Some economists have analysed how the US housing crash in 2007 rested on the issue of low wages which creates the need for workers to borrow money to make ends meet or to maintain living standards. The banks then turned these debt packages into complex ‘sub-prime’ financial debt packages to trade and make tidy profit off. In 2007/08 that debt bubble went pop.

A flagship New Labour policy was the Working Tax Credit (WTC). This is money given to those in work, on low pay, to top-up their wages in order to make ends meet. Some figures suggest that £18bn a year is currently spent on WTC. WTC has provided a vital lifeline to millions of people on low pay, but in the cases where individuals work for a private company, WTC mean the government is subsidising the profits of the private sector. Ironically it is such a policy that has actually freed up the need for workers to borrow money to provide a living for people that creates the need for a strong welfare state.

**PAY UP**

A lot has been said over the past four years about how the banks and business Rock collapsed about the unfairness, greed and inequality of financial capitalism. This anger should not just be reserved for the banks, but extended into the wider economy and back towards a more fundamental discussion about the relationship between labour and capital, workers and bosses.

At the end of 2011 a light was shone onto the bumpy pay packets of FTSE100 bosses, and the disgust about bankers’ pay and bonuses is well known. However, an even sharper light now needs to be shone onto low, poverty wages. If a CEO receives a million pounds less this year, this will not actually result in any benefit for most people.

Big business in particular can afford high wages. Profits are booming, and some economists estimate that the cash reserves that have been built up by the private sector stands at an eye watering £700bn. Pay rises should be one of the many steps towards fighting the inequality of capitalism. We hope to build an effective alliance between social movements and workplace organisations that can achieve some concrete action on pay. And we want to popularise wages as an issue, alongside Here’s the story of inequality.
The Christian anarchists Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin founded the Catholic Worker movement in the midst of the Great Depression in 1933. They rejected war and pledged support for workers and the dispossessed, maintaining these views even in the face of growing persecution from a state that wanted to destroy what it perceived as a red menace. The Catholic Workers branded the profit motive immoral. They condemned capitalism because it led to grotesque inequality. They worked with some faith groups. The Catholic Worker movement, founded in the constant fight for greatness of spirit. We commonly describe acts of cruelty by others as inhumane because we find it hard to accept that humanity includes the capacity for such malevolence. Likewise some ascribe the value of the human desires and dreams expressed through religious faith. For this reason alone, however challenging, those of us who wish to build a better world should embrace people of faith in solidarity and defence of freedom. The gospels from which she derived call for charity, for justice and in compassion for those in need. Whether or not we believe in the Christian faith. Your Christians are so unlikely to be your friends. When you listen to Prime Minister David Cameron justifying selling arms to tyrants or former Scotland Yard undercover cops to making it more difficult for you to get a space to meet in. FIT does not just collect details of people who have done something wrong. If you are an organiser who was not straight or cis-gendered the woodwork. The right-wing papers, the divide and conquer tactics of those who are intending to commit crime. It should be for all of us at any time that we are engaged in political protest and the FIT teams are out. I'm on a database, should I be afraid to attend protests? Fear of being on a police database definitely shouldn't stop you from being active and participating in the politics you believe in. But being 'known' can present some challenges. Cops you've never met before may call you by name. You might find your car gets stopped on the way to protest, or that you become the target of more intrusive surveillance methods. You may be more likely to be arrested. It's not as if you are going to be 'disappeared' - but it is unpleasant, intimidating, and best avoided. It's also unclear as to what happens to these details but it is unpleasant, intimidating, and best avoided. The Catholic Church still stands unrepentant, against humanity is capable of such malevolence. Likewise some ascribe forgiveness and unconditional love to divine powers because they cannot accept humanity is capable of such greatness of spirit. They call it 'intelligence gathering'. Some of this is done by murky methods, with undercover police and informants, but a lot of it is open, obvious and in-your-face. The Forward Intelligence Teams (FIT) and their methods of intelligence gathering should not be tolerated by anyone who genuinely wants to see any form of social change. FIT's function is to gather data, and then use this information to disrupt, intimidate and harass those involved in political dissent. There are some key things which everyone should know: for starters, how to recognise the FIT. Don't make it easy for them to take your photograph. Look away, keep your head down (literally!), block the cameras, wear a mask, do whatever you need to do, but try to keep your picture out of their image database. Don't give them your name and address. They can insist on it if they wish. I have committed an offence, caused harassment, alarm or distress, or are driving a car, but can't otherwise. Don't give it. Say no. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: "Why should I stop them taking my picture or having my name and address?" FIT does not just collect details of people who have done something wrong. If you are an organiser who has any information on an ethnic group or nation. They then use this information to organise further surveillance and 'disruption', which could be anything from sending in undercover cops to making it more difficult for you to get a space to meet in. If you are already on a database, it is still very much in your interests - and it is vital to your safety that you don't give them any more information than they already have. They don't want to just know who you are, they want to know how involved you are in protest - and you are put on a database. You will have your own police file and may even be designated as a 'domestic extremist'. Resisting theFIT is doing so is for just people who are intending to commit crime. It should be far all of us at any time that we are engaged in political protest and the FIT teams are out. I'm on a database, should i be afraid to attend protest?" 17
after the (so far) successful opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline, attention has shifted to the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline, which would carry 500,000 barrels of tar sands crude per day across hundreds of British Columbia rivers and coastal waters. The latter’s attention is the already operational Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline that has been carrying 330,000 barrels of tar sands oil per day to Vancouver’s harbour for many years now.

The campaign to keep oil flowing and contain environmentalists is in full swing, labelling them as fringe “radicals” and “foreign interests” hell-bent on ruining Canada’s economy. Consider the following:

First, the federal government is presently reviewing the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, supposedly to “modernize” the assessment process and “speed up approvals of projects,” as reported in The Vancouver Sun. The article goes on to cite Michelle Rempel, a Calgary-Mountain View Conservative MP, suggesting that revisions to the process “could not only help the country avoid losing economic opportunities to lengthy reviews that need to be more efficient and effective.”

Nothing too surprising here for a government that steadfastly denies global warming and has recently pulled out of the Kyoto Accord.

Second, noted commentator and CBC regular Rick Mercer recently suggested in The National Post that those who criticize tar sands “bite the hand that feeds us.”

“Environment” has become a narrow, bitterly focused word turning exclusively on threats or despoliations (sic) of nature, magnifying the slightest alteration or disturbance of “the natural” as an unspeakable transgression.

There is another, wider, humane dimension to the environment — larger and more vital than any reference to landscape. That is the human and social element. In my view, this is the first and deepest dimension to the environment — larger and more vital than any reference to landscape.

“Mr chairman, we’ve already heard of the iceberg when it comes to public opposition to the Keystone XL opposition to the pipeline has been carried in the New Internationalist. At www.newint.org

BP’s 2010 Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster, which has still not been cleaned up. Their statements were followed by a challenge from Clayton Thomass-Muller of the Indigenous Environmental Network, about the dubious legality of BP’s tar sands leases on First Nations territory in Canada. In response, the Board just reeled out some prepared statements that completely ignored the questions.

This isn’t really surprising. They don’t have answers to these questions. All pretence at being a “sustainable” oil company and going “Beyond Petroleum” has now been dropped, and their entire focus is on short-term profitability. That’s why we might as well ask them about their interplanetary escape plans – we’re just as likely to get a sensible answer to that as to anything else.

The combination of all of this – the questions from frontline communities and campaigns, our die-in and dramatic ejection, plus shareholder uproar about the CEO’s ever-generous multi-million pay bonus – led to blanket press coverage the next day, from the Guardian to the New York Times to the Financial Times and even the Sun.

These kinds of actions won’t bring down the fossil fuel industry by themselves, but they help to chip away at the veneer of social responsibility these companies hide behind to expose the brutal profit-driven reality beneath. They’re also an important reminder of just how powerful we can be. When “ordinary people” are organised, determined and with right on their side, they can beat the corporate PR machines. Plus, I was in the Wall Street Journal asking BP about a spaceship, so that’s another personal life goal achieved.

The BP-AGM action was coordinated by the UK Tar Sands Network (www.no-tar-sands.org) for more information and to get involved.

A longer version of this article was first published with images by New Internationalist, at www.newint.org
Genetically Modified Profits

Remember ‘Frankenstein foods’? From time to time the Daily Mail veers eccentrically into the side of environmentalists and hippies to rail against Genetically Modified Organisms and their appearance on our dinner plates. Tony Blair tried to woo the bio-tech companies behind GMOs despite widespread distrust for eating tomatoes with fish anti-freeze genes in them. He failed, because the public and the tabloids were against him. Activists destroyed GM crop trials. consumers left GM produce on the supermarket shelves and journalists of all persuasions (and one royal) shrieked about the impudence of tampering with nature.

While the Tories were in opposition they were largely anti-GM, so the Mail’s stance made sense. However, in 2010 Caroline Spelman became Conservation environment minister. Despite what some might consider a blatant conflict of interest (recently worked as a bio-tech lobbyist), she decided to turn the Tories around and get into bed with Monsanto.

Monsanto is a multinational biotech company, one of the largest producers of genetically engineered seed and of the herbicide glyphosate (marketed as ‘Roundup’). If we believe their PR rhetoric, it would seem that GM foods are about to save humanity from starvation and the ravages of climate change. By inventing drought-resistant crops, they think they can cheat their way out of the mess that profit-driven mega-corporations (like Monsanto) have gotten us into. By producing herbicide-resistant crops, they claim to be able to stop weeding and to be sprayed with chemicals that would kill conventional crops, but which will in turn increase the efficiency of food production.

The trouble is that many of these GM crops simply won’t grow well for us; they will be better for the environment, better for our health, better for delivering nutrition to the hungry. There is little evidence that GM crops help to address other evident issues, such as the growing problem of irregular rainfall. A US trial of GM rice contaminated the global supply chain in 2004, destroying export markets for years. In 2009, GM flax from Canada contaminated supplies worldwide. GM crops are genies and the bottle-stoppers are nowhere near tight enough. They can’t be. And, just maybe, Monsanto and Co don’t care. Once the genie is everywhere, there’ll be no point in us complaining and trying to thwart their plans.

For now, there is reason to complain. GM crops have the potential to cause massive social, economic and environmental damage worldwide, yet they are poorly tested and regulations are weak. Loss of biodiversity, soil degradation, health problems and poverty traps are just some of the reasons to resist the pressure to switch to GM agriculture. Research suggests that organic methods are best suited to solving many of the problems that bio-tech apparently seeks to address. The research and cash being poured into techno-fixes could be well spent trialling low-tech agricultural solutions and helping to introduce them appropriately to growers worldwide.

As yet, GM is not rampant. In Britain, strong consumer distaste combined with well-organised ‘deconstruction’ actions at trial sites have largely kept GM crops out of our fields and GM foods off our shelves. The fightback against profiteering agrochemical companies is going on around the world - but they are persistent. In some kind of back-scratching exercise disguised as philanthropy, organisations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have been pouring funding into agriculture projects in Africa with one hand while acquiring Monsanto - which is aggressively trying to capture the seed market in Africa with corporate-owned seeds and pesticides – with the other hand.

In September 2011, the UK Government ignored corporate-owned seeds and pesticides – with the other hand. The endearing children ‘pray every night’ to stop the oil still leaking into the sea today, and are accompanied by a beautifully melodic anti-BP song, giving a palpable connection to the repercussions of deep water drilling. At the Tate Modern, ‘Drilling the Dirt (a temporary difficulty),’ is the most devastating indictment of BP’s sponsorship. It is the most informative of the three tours, with upsetting statistics and revelations pumped into our ears throughout. Designed to hammer home the worldwide destruction caused by BP, the tour tells us about the countries they are draining, such as Iraq and Azerbaijan. Established authors cite proof of meetings attended by BP and UK government representatives in which they planned to exploit recent wars. There is a heartfelt speech by the mother of a young man killed when the Deepwater Horizon rig erupted, with a plea to acknowledge the obvious risks of oil drilling. Of all the tours, it is the third that moves me the most, leaving me in no doubt that BP’s sponsorship needs to be challenged.

BP is desperate for good publicity following the oil spill which damaged businesses, killed wildlife, and left many with respiratory problems and what has now been dubbed ‘The BP Cough’, after cleaning agents used after the explosion caused oil particles to become airborne and stick in the lungs of nearby residents. If BP is simply donating to the arts in order to share their wealth, why then does their logo so prominently adorn the signs of the institutions they support? A logo which will soon be seen around the world as they play sustainable partner to the greenest Olympics ever. Among the other anti-BP campaigns is Greenwash Gold, who are conducting a vote for the worst Olympic sponsorship 2012 on their website www.greenwashgold.org. It’s important that money does not continue to drown out the growing number of voices speaking out. These tours are downloadable at TateModern.co.uk, and for those further afield, can be enjoyed from the comfort of your own home.

Sitting around three miles apart, on opposite banks of the Thames, Tate Britain and Tate Modern sprang from humble beginnings as Millbank’s Paxtonian Prison and Bankside Power Station respectively. Until 1990, Tate Britain’s location facilitated the movement of those destined for transportation to Australia, whilst Tate Modern’s imposing structure was an inefficient power station (40% burnt was wasted), closed in 1981 and re-opening as Tate Modern almost 20 years later in May 2000. Since then more than 40 million people have passed through Tate Modern’s doors, with an annual average of five million. This has proved to be a very successful use of dereit buildings, providing a unique, often exclusive tourist attractions in the UK. It is also a marketing manager’s dream.

In an arts and activism workshop commissioned by Tate itself, participants were told they would be censured from making interventions against Tate sponsors, despite no plans to do so at the time. Incensed by the audacity of this censorship, Liberate Tate was formed to protest in new and inventive ways against unethical sponsorship and the ramifications of BP’s contributions. Their most recent creations are three audio tours. One for Tate Britain, another for the boat crossing, and a third at Tate Modern. One Tuesday afternoon, a friend and I begin at the Tate Britain with ‘Panaudicon.’ Over somewhat distracting background music and a computerised vocal interlude, gentle voices narrate the story of how oil drilling is advancing and the origins of the building in which we stood. The information gleaned was relevant, interesting and in some places poetic, though it was easy for one’s mind to wander. The 45 minute tour lacked a physical connection with the art or the building around us, and was awkward at times.

We are accompanied by ‘This is not an Oil Tanker,’ on the boat to Tate Modern. The second audio tour focuses on British Columbia and the desperate attempts of BP to get at the crude oil in the tar sands, which ultimately led to the disastrous oil spill of 2010. A family narrates an informative piece, highlighting the human and animal habitats destroyed and polluted as BP endorses its endless tendencies to stuff the ship out the sea today, and are accompanied by a beautifully melodic anti-BP song, giving a palpable connection to the repercussions of deep water drilling.

Our World is Our Biggest Canvas

Our climate change is set to make hurricanes and monsoons more frequent and more intense. The world’s climate is changing. The polar caps are melting. How will our cities cope with flooding? How will our farms cope with drought?

Our human and animal habitats destroyed and polluted as BP endorses its endless tendencies to stuff the ship out the sea today, and are accompanied by a beautifully melodic anti-BP song, giving a palpable connection to the repercussions of deep water drilling. At the Tate Modern, ‘Drilling the Dirt (a temporary difficulty),’ is the most devastating indictment of BP’s sponsorship. It is the most informative of the three tours, with upsetting statistics and revelations pumped into our ears throughout. Designed to hammer home the worldwide destruction caused by BP, the tour tells us about the countries they are draining, such as Iraq and Azerbaijan. Established authors cite proof of meetings attended by BP and UK government representatives in which they planned to exploit recent wars. There is a heartfelt speech by the mother of a young man killed when the Deepwater Horizon rig erupted, with a plea to acknowledge the obvious risks of oil drilling. Of all the tours, it is the third that moves me the most, leaving me in no doubt that BP’s sponsorship needs to be challenged.

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One huge problem with GM crops which is consistently underestimated by the bio-tech companies is the risk of cross-pollination with conventional plants. Accidental spread of GM seed to neighbouring fields and contamination of non-GM foodstuffs within the food supply chain are all too common. A US trial of GM rice contaminated the global supply chain in 2004, destroying export markets for years. In 2009, GM flax from Canada contaminated supplies worldwide. GM crops are genies and the bottle-stoppers are nowhere near tight enough. They can’t be. And, just maybe, Monsanto and Co don’t care. Once the genie is everywhere, there’ll be no point in us complaining and trying to thwart their plans.

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In September 2011, the UK Government ignored
WHY DEMOCRACY MOVEMENTS SHOULD STICK TO CONSENSUS IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?

The appeal of the model? Should we stick to consensus, use a modified version, or adopt alternative or even more traditional decision-making processes?

When encountering the consensus model for the first time, most participants leave with a very positive impression. Many members of social movements are seeking the maximum degree of freedom and are used to anarcho and ideas, and so at first glance, the consensus approach seems to offer an ideal alternative to traditional forms of decision-making. By seeking consensus that works for everybody, everybody should feel good about the group's decisions.

I would argue that this point of view is dangerous, as it ignores important aspects of decision-making, namely: social power, tactics and time. I will briefly explain these points and their role in the consensus process. Naturally, they are all intertwined.

Even in groups without defined structures, there will always be people with a better standing than others. Some reasons for this can be found in our socialization, but I'm not an expert in social hierarchies and power relationships. Nevertheless, it might be the case that proposals which generate consent are often proposed or suggested by very few people. Another problem is that these proposals often lack real discussion and ideas about possible alternatives, as this would be too consuming. A minority could still use their better standing in contentious debates to strengthen weak arguments, which leads us to consensus discussion tactics.

From my point of view, the main argument against consensus-based decision-making is that the ending of a discussion is not clearly defined. Arguments can be repeated over and over in various combinations, and stubborn or ambitious people can bring up strange arguments to support positions that do not necessarily relate to the topic of the debate - the so-called "cheechwamba defense". The aim of this strategy is to insist for so long that a "consensus" is finally reached, though actually only one person wanted it. Processes like this are likely to consume an immense amount of time and energy for all participants. It is not only necessary to explain a proposal and its arguments, proponents are also forced to dissolve every single objection that might evolve during the debate. This not only denies arguments against those who do not want or are not able to invest into these resources. It also excludes their input from the sphere of accessible ideas of the movement. Moreover, it empowers those with good rhetorical skills and/or strategy, and disempowers others. At the end of the day, decisions are produced which are propagated by a few key players, a process which is essentially undemocratic (and I hope you, dear reader, share this point of view with me).

Another key argument against consensus-based decision-making is its conservative outcome. Groups should judge their results in the same way as people have to, but important and progressive choices tend to be divisive ones. If real democracy movements stick to the consensus model, they sacrifice their agility and speed of movement for these formal processes. I believe it is better to try alternative concepts of direct democracy, like liquid democracy for example, to enable social movements to come to decisions.

PRO/ LINDA M.

Whether a movement should use consensus-based decision-making depends on its goals and common values. When non-hierarchical consensus models work well in coordinating political actions like local assemblies and single direct actions, they might be less useful for decisions on a more international level or for more heterogeneous groups. Having said that, consensus models are interesting because they are about trust and democracy. They are less about power, non-collaborative processes, which usually enhance group relationship dynamics. They can be used for decision implementation. A cooperative group atmosphere that respects all parties, generating as much agreement as possible, and sharing scarce resources, includes connections between individuals and strengthens solidarity within a movement. If these connections are strong, the model can even work for globally spread out groups. Interestingly, the world has its origin in the Latin word "consentire", meaning "feel together". When people joined Occupy in October last year, many were using the term that meant social and political practice, in particular how it was visually expressed at General Assembly. I believe that this movement stood for. For many people who were in a non-hierarchical, alternative democratic model, their first experience of actually being heard, and fascinated to watch and participate in decision-making processes like this, was a breakthrough. Most of the time this is not much of a departure from the initial concept. As a specific ritual of activist culture, the consensus model has always been a form of absorbing and diffusing a directly democratic model of organizing. Like within the global justice movement, non-hierarchical structures can be a way of mobilizing, always trying to convert people to a specific belief system. This is not a new concept in networks and organizations, from the Quakers to the US anti-nuclear movement to the climate change movement. It has successfully employing consensus since around the 1970s. In this way, it is much as it is important to understand why certain groups stick to consensus, it is important to understand in which conditions, it can fail. Consensus does not do away with power relations. It seeks to transform or modify power structures of majority-decisions, and very often, these relations emerge when process is slow and exhausting. Sometimes we put so much energy into reinventing internal processes, just to get a rudimentary idea of what direct democracy might look like. However, by adapting the model, we seek to ensure group cohesion, to create horizontal networks and to improve the quality of our work together on the basis of agreement about our activities. New forms of communication can reinvent our daily lives, as many full-term activists have experienced.

There are many different forms of modified consensus systems. We need to discuss what they actually mean in which context and particularly how the version was chosen, and how we can challenge individualistic behaviour or all too slow process in favour of substantive principles. Although we might disagree more than in the early stages of the movement, (it is sometimes easier to define common enemy than a common goal), using modified consensus and elements of direct democracy is not impossible, and alternative elements can be integrated. Discussion of these modifications and variations is important, but will - as the consensus model itself - require respect for each other, time, and a common gage of how the disadvantages.

CON / DANIEL SCHMEITZOFER

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PROPOSAL: PROPOSING STORIES

BACKGROUND

If the World is a book, it is written by power. If the political movements of the poors are so far incomherent, it is because they are responding to an incomherent world. If the world has become incomcarent, it is because the kind of power that rules tends to corrupt, and that poverty and despair thus still holds sway. Even so, the story of writing a coherent world has already begun. A coherent world can be written by proposing stories that may take up; there is a different kind of power in merely proposing stories. Still, pages are missing, chapters are botched. Of course, "We object!" Such objections are becoming increasingly common. All that is needed for the world to become coherent is for the poors to become increasingly able to tell their story. Fictions narrate virtual worlds of the past, present, and future. Non-fictional stories cannot replace them. Between fact and fiction, a different kind of story can be found: a story of the future written by poors; stories for life the poors will play out. The endless script whose narrative threads include continuing to write the book of the World. Together.

Too many stories have been declared with an expectation that others will take them up as their habits, too many orders have been given to change things. As if people related to each other, do not think about the present and the past. Everyone is living in a world of stories that are written by poors; stories for life the poors have been. A world that is full of stories that work.

But without knowing which outcomes a story was supposed to obtain, a story can seem better or worse. And rather than seeing in a better story. And rather than believing in stories without knowing what they are for, the desired outcomes of a story can instead be made known. Stories that are proposed with outcomes that are known can be improved in a constructive way. By involving the audience. Stories are contested, and under which conditions, it can fail. Consensus does not do away with power relations. It seeks to transform or modify power structures of majority-decisions, and very often, these relations emerge when process is slow and exhausting. Sometimes we put so much energy into reinventing internal processes, just to get a rudimentary idea of what direct democracy might look like. However, by adapting the model, we seek to ensure group cohesion, to create horizontal networks and to improve the quality of our work together on the basis of agreement about our activities. New forms of communication can reinvent our daily lives, as many full-term activists have experienced.

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OUTCOME

Proposals for stories can be tested by asking the following questions: 1. Does the proposal have a name, a background, an outcome, and a story? 2. Does the name indicate the activity of the story? 3. Does the background contain objections that the outcomes resolve? 4. Do the outcomes contain tests for the story? 5. Does the story describe how to obtain the outcomes that are desired? 6. Does the story proposal make the collection of story proposals more coherent?

7. Is the proposal published openly?

STORY Method One

Create a blank document and add three headings: background, outcome, story. Write the background as a situation that is objectionable. Write down the tests that have led to the objectionable situations. Write down a more desirable outcome with a series of tests. Write down the simplest story that could possibly make possible the tests pass. Think of a name for the story and use it as the title of the document. Mention other stories which follow or precede or are refined by the story proposal, so that the overall coherence of the web of story proposals is improved.

Publish the proposal openly.

Method Two

What concerns you? What is objectionable? Vacillate, and notice your objections. What might actually work instead? Vacillate, and think of some tests. Ask how could things actually work instead? Vacillate again, and fashion a story. Vacillate again, and name your concern. Take a break. Take it to others? Write down a more desirable outcome. Resolve your objections. Try to repeat? Take yourself for a walk. Be merely objective. Write it all down. Rearrange the words until they make more sense. Call it a diagram? Call it whatever seems best. Call it a name! Call it a story! Run it past somebody, or run others through it. Does it work, how can you tell? Do it over again, how do you test it? Does it pull you along, will they remember it? Call it a joy, or call it a day. Perhaps make it available sometime.

Publicize the proposal openly. Others can try them, they can tell you what’s wrong. Play with proposals, keep them in play. The background of story proposals, the tests for the outcome, the diagram of the story, and the practiced habit can be forever in process. Proposals are only ever tried out. Proposals can remain open for objections, it's how we resolve the objections that counts.

BY HORATIO DURANDY

This proposal is being developed with a view to improving the processes of both Occupy London’s General Assembly, and the wider world. While the processes surrounding the 6A were originally recorded as a list of activities of the 6A and A6A, this proposal seeks to rewrite and then continuously improve these activities as a collection of story proposals. The 6A is continuing to develop these ideas at meetings held each Saturday at 4pm on the steps of St Paul’s.
I haven’t seen a lot of my house recently. For most of the last four months I’ve been on the road (or rather the rails) visiting different towns and cities to run workshops and seminars looking at the methods adopted by movements for change. I tend to begin by asking people about the tactics they see as central in ousting Mubarak in Egypt. The differences in responses have been remarkable.

For a group of students in Manchester, social media was the deciding factor. At a national conference of community organisers the first suggestion was that the relationships between different social groups was most important. A sociologist in Leeds cited the economic conditions that helped determine the shape of the struggle, while a group of trade unionists in London named the threat of a general strike. Every Occupy Camp I visited quickly named the occupation of Tahrir Square before any other tactic. A number of activists in Bristol suggested the importance of physical resistance to the police on the streets, while a Quaker in Hastings pointed to the role of spiritual consciousness for a number of activists.

They are all, of course, right. It is also only natural for us to identify with people in other contexts with whom we share something in common. I am no different. As an activist trainer, I am fascinated by the preparation that preceded the revolt in Egypt that led to all of those tactics being deployed – by some reports, as many as 15,000 people received mass action training in the three years before the uprising. But what time is right for what support? There are countless stages models of social movements to give guidance, but the one that applies best to the cases I have studied isn’t really a model at all, it is the maxim usually attributed to Gandhi: “First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.”

Despite its applicability, it is not without its flaws. For a start, not all movements win. But more importantly, it is somewhat passive – what about the actions of the movement when the power elite are ignoring, laughing at, and fighting against the movement?

Yet insert the logical actions of the movement between the predictable succession of actions by power elites, and an order begins to emerge. When they ignore you, the movement must work to raise the consciousness of the masses. When they laugh at you, the movement must coordinate to show its strength. When they fight you, the movement must confront likewise, while still coordinating and raising consciousness. And when you win, the movement must consolidate gains and start the cycle again.

When populations actively withdraw their consent from oppressive systems in sufficient numbers to have an effect, it rarely comes from nowhere. It represents the third act of a longer narrative. It is the stage at which the government is fighting the people, and the movement is faced with the decision to make or break, fight or flee. Central to success at this stage is the recognition that any regime is propped up only by the power of ideas, finance and physical force. If these pillars can be seriously challenged, concessions can be won, or on occasion, regimes can collapse altogether.

The story of the struggle in Egypt fits these stages well. Consciousness-raising began in the 2000s against a backdrop of rising prices and protests against Mubarak’s perceived unaccountability on matters of foreign policy. On the biogasphere, in cafés, in slums, universities and nascent political organisations, dissent began to be felt. The coordination stage began with new anti-war groups and independent trade unions being formed. And it was following the pre-emptive confrontation of a brutally repressed strike in 2008 that the April 6 Youth Movement was formed and engaged in their project of training and preparation. The story of the confrontation stage that began in earnest on 25 January 2011 has been told many times, and claimed the scalp of a president once thought to be unshakeable. The consolidation stage will be the most difficult, as the movement struggles to keep its gains and prevent new unaccountable elites from taking hold.

So where are we in our global movement against the 1%? My view is that the struggle is still at the early stages. Both the financial crisis of 2008 and the present austerity crisis are making people question the status quo which once lay unquestioned. Mass marches, new organisations and occasional strikes are all in evidence. In the shape of the Occupy movement and – and the debate it has set off – a new process of co-learning and discussion has emerged. And so the time has arrived to move to the second stage – to build the networked infrastructure that a mass movement will need to it is to reach the third stage of seriously challenging the interests of the power elite. It can be done. But only in the naıve reports it is quick or easy. But there is reason for hope. As the responses given to my opening question show, the ingredients that fuelled the Egyptian rebellion are not exclusive to the Middle East. Thanks to our globalized economy, they are present across the world. In Britain the escalation began in 2010 when students occupied the ruling Conservative Party’s offices. And the first line of the first text of the first person to reach the roof remains true today: this is just the beginning.

I bought Love and scoured it, but jobs failed to materialise. It was with some relief then that the health people eventually called, and I made the long trek from Wood Green to Ealing. They liked me. I could tell: they phoned me back that day and told me the job was mine. Whoo! £1,100 a year! I’d hit paydirt!

Astonishingly I was paid handsomely my first month. I thought I’d hit the big time. Unbeknown to me, £1,100 a year isn’t a significant amount of money. It’s a pittance, but I wasn’t into square ideas like calculating how much I’d actually get per annum after tax. It would appear nor were the people in the accounting department. Come my second month it became clear the first month’s pay had been an anomaly.

The wage reduction I could just about cope with, but the officious manager who told me to take out my earring, despite my protestations about sexual discrimination, was getting on my nerves. Then there were the Sunday 6.30am starts. Was I really being paid so little to travel all the way from North London to open up the club without a soul around? One morning I cooked up a story that I’d been “attacked by a gang who imitated the Village People” (I used those very words), in order to get out of going in with a booze-induced thumper. My flatmates were impressed by my outlandish lie, but suggested my bosses might suspect something when I turn up without a mark on me. You know your job isn’t right for you when you have to punch yourself in the face.

When I thought things couldn’t get any worse, month five arrived, and opening the envelope to look at my wage-slip was like a kick to the throat. As it turned out, the anomaly had never been addressed, and so with a jolt, I discovered I’d been paid barely £350 for the entire month. That barely covered the rent. What was I to do? Starve? Jump trains. And drink Ouzo during working hours. If the Man was sticking it to me, well then I’d stick it to the Man. I resigned in protest at the ineptitude of the accountants, but things would get worse. Way behind on the rent, I had to move out of my flat. I was homeless.

As my landlady gave me the marching orders, the words of the Village People filled my brain: “Young man, there’s a place you can go, I said, young man, when you’re short on your dough, you can stay there, and I’m sure you will find many ways to have a good time... it’s fun to stay at the YMCA.”

The irony wasn’t lost on me. Do you have a tale from your ‘Daily Grind’? Email us at occupiedtimes@gmail.com with your absurd and hilarious stories from the world of working life.

And for the record, I’m so sick of all this banker bashing. Nearly all my mates are bankers and the most generous people I know. I do my part and buy Big Issue every week when it’s ‘up’. That’s a philosophy I can get behind: tough love, help you help yourself. None of this pissing and moaning about cuts and hardships. Frankly, I can’t see what the issue is. It seems like you are all jealous because bankers get paid big bonuses, but aren’t all jobs the same? If you work in a restaurant don’t you give you lunch? All this talk of the credit crunch and financial crisis is blown all out of proportion. It can’t be that bad, I’ve got even richer over the last few years!

While we’re at it, if you have a problem with shops like Primark or Tesco, don’t shop there! It’s really that simple! That way everyone wins: Primark and Tesco can keep making their amazing and affordable products and you can sit there all smug paying double elsewhere for the same stuff I just bought. Why should I care if the jumper I’m wearing is made by Vietnamese children? And don’t go and get in your little heads to occupy a Primark, at least not on the last Thursday of the month when I go and restock my sock drawer.

Like I said I’ll be just thrilled when Occupy is over and I can get on with my life. You lot sure haven’t helped me one bit and are a constant pain in my ass. And I know I’m not the only one. I can’t help but think of the poor workers that had to clean up Zuccotti Park in New York or Zypsa square in Athens. Unlike all of you they have real jobs. And I’m sure they get lunch breaks, just like me.
**The OT Horoscope**

**Oppressors**
- Recent events could have you yearning to join those you’ve Anarchy, in the wake of. (5, 10)
- Deriving yourself or feeling guilty, use it as an opportunity to grow. You often feel empowered, but are you really as strong as you think? The summer will see your services in great demand, but are you serving society, or are you getting served?

**Protesters**
- Anonymous
  - Your machoish personality is at its height this month but an external barrier hides the true you within. You are the epitome of contradictions - praise and attention-seeking by turns - and can disguise your truly profound contours. Try leaving the house to brighten your mood, and remember, people in glass houses...
- Pacifist
  - Violent rhetoric in the media is an unwelcome melody, but do not let this recent cacophony become the soundtrack of May - for this month’s music is your own. As the song goes “there may be trouble ahead,” but look not outward to moonlight for the answers; Illumination comes from within. This insight will find you in solitude when “that” song gets stuck in your head.
- Anarchist
  - Misunderstood? Protesting what’s Infringement? Let not these paranoia suspicions doom the month ahead, for a clear mind is needed. When the “authorities” attempt to quell mid-month rebellion, let this clarity guide your response. Be ready to testify and poeticise the response, but should eyes then turn to you for the truth, you have a good eye for where others are going wrong, but don’t always hold yourself to the same lofty standards - do that, and you will gain respect.

**Politicians**
- Nell Liberal
  - After a long period of feeling satisfied, things have recently taken a turn for the worse - for the rest of society, that is. Let not the ‘voices’ of the 99% slow your fine progress towards the liberation of new markets. There are plenty more ‘moochers’ to catch the blessing of the old-time ‘trickle down’ trick if romance is your thing, just remember: everyone has a price.

**Citizens**
- Worker
  - You may still have a job, and after your efforts you deserve it, but that means that your taxes are funding bombs and bailouts. If you have any salary left after paying your exorbitant rent, fuel and energy bills as well as for food and clothing then treat yourself to a few well-earned beverages at a local hostel. Remember: work is the curse of the drinking classes!

**Direct Action Crossword**

**Across**
- 4. It is conveniently forgotten by people in the present day who reject any effective forms of protest, that some of these women engaged in window-breaking, hunger strikes and one famously threw herself in front of the King’s horse. (12)
- 6. Also known as “delay and annoy.” (2, 4)
- 8. The preferred tactic of Anonymous which doesn’t involve masks. (11)
- 10. Tommi Smith and John Carlos went shoeless to collect their medals at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. When standing on the podium both performed this form of salute during the American national anthem to protest the historical and continuing oppression of African American people in the US. (5, 9)
- 13. The single largest waste of perfectly good tea in American History. (6, 13)
- 15. Bansky isn’t the only one who does this you know? (8)
- 17. Tactic used by Bobby Sands and other IRA prisoners. Tended to get messy. (5, 7)
- 18. Was having a nice, relaxing swim, minding his own business, when two great big boats tried to kill him. (7, 9)
- 20. Longtime enviro-activists, often found ‘offshore.’ (10)
- 21. Sometimes you’re just got to break stuff. Penury to direct sport, (anagram) (8, 11)

**Down**
- 1. Refused to give up her seat to a white man, sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycotts. (6, 5)
- 2. 1960s name for ‘occupation’. (3, 2)
- 3. A rather extreme form of DA. A sim is so Satan. (anagram) (11)
- 5. The Symbionese Liberation Army did this to Patty Hearst and she ended up joining their cause. (5)
- 7. American philosopher who wrote “Civil Disobedience” and was himself imprisoned for his refusal to pay his taxes. (5, 5, 7)
- 9. Modern name for a Sin it. (10)
- 11. Picky department store where UK Uncut took place in an ‘interminable’ fashion. (7, 3, 12)
- 13. Shouting form of protest used by Buddhist monks during the Vietnam War and by Mohamed Bouazizi and others during the Arab Spring. Hit out by withstanding arrest. (4, 10)
- 16. Sick name still used to describe some people who have murdered doctors in the US who perform abortions. Better known as ‘anti-choice’. (3, 4)
- 19. As Jello Biafra said, “the unbeatable high”. Or as David Cameron described some recent ones, “criminality, pure and simple.”

**DiMo Dates**

1st: Worldwide General Strike - all day
2nd: Against Workfare - 11am
March by Occupy / Solidarity Federation Assembly, Clerkenwell Green Ec1
3rd: The Big Six Energy Bash - 11am
Mass actions by Climate Justice Collective Undisclosed locations in Central London TBA online
9th: Giant Twister Game & Fun Day - 11am
Mass meeting about with Occupy London St Paul’s
6th: The Big Six Energy Bash - 11am
Mass actions by Climate Justice Collective The Grange Hotel
9th: Solidarity With South Korea - 2pm
Protest U.S. Base in Gangseng Outside Korean Embassy, SW1
10th: Let’s Kettle the Bastards - 10.30am
Show your love for the boys in blue Follow and see!
12th: Meet the 1% Global Spring - 2pm
Artists by Occupy London Location TBA online
12th: Protest Against Ethnic Cleansing in Palestine - 1pm
Opposite Downing St, SW1
12th – 25th: Caravan for Climate Jobs Traveling around the country, arrives in London on 20th
13th: Protest for Vietnamese Prisoners of Conscience - 11am
By Amnesty International Vietnamese Embassy, W1
15th: Global Strike - all day
Drought of Democracy: Plead the British Bankers’ Association! - 10.30am, Central London then the British Bankers Association
16th: Anti Academies Alliance Protest - 9am. Protest against fat cats in our schools. Outside “The Academies Show” Conference at Olympia 2, W1, 10.30am
18th: Get the Shell Out! - 7.30pm
Meeting in advance of Shell AGM, by UK Tar Sands Network, Greenerpeace and others, Toohey Hall, Commercial Street, E1
19th: Stop the War Coalition - 1pm
Protest coinciding with Chicago protests Outside US Embassy, W1
23rd: People’s History of London (ideas & struggle) - 7.30pm
Talk by Stop the War speakers Bishophgate Institute, EC2
25th: Don’t Attack Iran Cultural Event - 7.30pm, Actors & Musicians against War St. James’s Church, W1
26th: UK Uncut’s Great British Street Party - 11.00. Celebrate resistance All over London