‘Occupying’ Anarchism and Discovering the Means for Social Justice: Interrogating the Anarchist Turn in 21st Century Social Movements

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to take the individual on a journey about what it is like to be engaged in radical anti-systemic activism in the 21st Century. Along this journey the reader will learn about the experiences of what it was like to join the Occupy movement—an anti-systemic movement that began in 2011—through an empirical analysis of learning about and practicing the anarchist(ic) characteristics of the movement—horizontal, non-hegemonic, affinity and consensus-based ways-of-being as a part of your everyday lifeworld. This journey is not only informed by my own personal experience joining the Occupy movement, but it is also informed by my simultaneous experience of maintaining the role of a radical activist-scholar throughout the process. Accordingly, I will explore how this impacted my lifeworld both within and outside of academia, which informed the very framework, analysis, and outcomes produced in this thesis. This project was thus also designed to inform social science research—particularly that on social movements—by reflecting on both social roles experienced in this journey in order to cohesively make sense of the paradoxes created by engaging in discourses about, within, and for the Occupy movement. Of most importance, from an empirical and ontological experience as an Occupier and activist-scholar, this project will help to raise key questions about the frameworks to seek social justice utilized by contemporary anti-systemic social movements in the 21st Century—social movements that are now spreading around the globe.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." -Mahatma Gandhi

In order to begin to explore the collective identity, structures, demands, and everyday practices of the Occupy movement, this thesis begins with an autoethnographic introduction about why I, along with thousand of others, decided to join the Occupy movement. Autoethnography about my personal experience as an engaged activist-scholar, along with participant observation and Internet ethnography serves as the methodological framework of this research project. As such, this project is motivated by a personal, theoretical, and practical journey that I experienced during the first-year of the movement. Introducing this paper in such a manner guides this project through a journey that not only I partook in, but thousands of others across the globe. Part one provides a critical and empirical understanding of the social, economic, and cultural experiences leading to the start of the Occupy movement on September 17, 2011. Part two highlights how I, as a student-activist, responded to and acted upon my intuition as an engaged critical scholar of contemporary Neoliberalism, which enticed me to want to radically seek justice against the ensuing and growing economic, political, cultural and spiritual inequalities. I hope to situate readers contextually and orient them methodologically in order to provide the proper framework to ultimately understand what it is like to be an Occupier and the trials, tribulations, and positive outcomes that may be experienced when individuals yearn for and radically seek social justice in the 21st Century.

What Led to the Occupy Movement?

From the perspective of a United States citizen, 2010/2011 was an extremely eventful year that continued to add fuel to the rampant financial crisis that started in 2007. By 2010, the recession
had dramatically impacted the lives of thousands of US citizens and continues to this day. As David Harvey projects in his 2012 book *Rebel Cities*, given the social and economic inequalities caused by Neoliberalism—the political and economic philosophy based on the privatization and international free-trade practices that have led to the continual and increasingly concentrated control of the political-economy by the world’s elites (the 1% according to Occupy)—the US is about to experience one of the worst urban crises since the 1970s. However, in the US (a core state within the global world system) the economy has not affected the mass of society as drastically as the peripheral and semi-peripheral countries. Everyday working citizens in Spain and Greece, for instance, have been experiencing drastic austerity cuts while the Middle East has been experiencing continual Civil wars and revolutions amidst the simultaneous bombardment of the core states and international governing bodies such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United Nations. These factors are what Harvey and others (Gitlin 2012, Katsiaficas 2012, Khatib 2012) have put forth to explain why almost every major US city now has a “dead spot of grass” in some federally “protected” patch of lawn (or cement in the case of Zuccotti) from the Occupy encampments that began in the latter months of 2011. Prior to the encampments, students, professors, and social justice activists from all walks of life witnessed several catastrophic and pivotal events that were indicative of how rampant the domineering Neoliberal political and economic institutions had become. Such catastrophic events that represent but a fraction of the apex of the United State’s power include: the US-NATO intervention of Libya in early 2011, the US led assassination of Osama Bin Laden on May 2, 2011, the continuous use of drone warfare in the Middle East, the campaign for Corporate Personhood, and the protection of and tax bailouts given to corporations during the start of the economic crisis in 2007.
However, and most importantly, a simultaneous and hopeful phenomenon was occurring alongside the destructive spread of Neoliberalism and the American Empire. With the help of social media and social networking via Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, etc. as well as the rise in Internet activism (i.e., “hacktivism”) such as the now infamous group Anonymous, for once the world was able to see how the American Empire was in fact running its course. For those more radically-minded social critics, these events, plus the governmental cables that were leaked to the public internationally by Wikileaks (another now infamous hacktivist group), showed how manipulated the majority of the population is and/or was up until that point about the reality of Empire and the ecological, social, and cultural destruction caused by Neoliberalism. The celebrations that took part following the assassination of Osama Bin Laden at major US higher education institutions\(^1\), the rampant Islamaphobia in the United States, and the continual support of the war on terrorism itself, are but a few examples of this very manipulation. However, the traumatic events that have materialized since the start of the 21st Century, will, I believe, be forever embedded in the minds of the socially conscious and critical citizens in the United States and around the globe. Individuals were also no longer willing to stand by and watch all of their hope for positive social change and justice disappear. As a young black male Occupy activist and law student at George Mason stated aggressively just minutes before being violently arrested in New York City:

I will not stand by and just watch. I will not do it. So, take me to jail. Right now! (…) After all that my parents gave me, I can do one thing for them and tell them that I would rather die than be quiet and watch everything that they worked for go away (…) I will go to jail tonight because it’s not right! (The Occupy Movie 2011).

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\(^1\) I myself witnessed parades of unconscious students celebrating the assassination of Osama Bin Laden at the university I was attending at the time and very clearly remember how quickly videos and images of similar parades occurring across the nation at other universities were posted online via Facebook and Twitter.
As a student, I have directly experienced the downfall of the economic crisis via the student debt epidemic as well as the social inequalities that have been increasingly on the rise since 2001 via increasing student tuition and the impact it has had on my own family. As such, I embody similar sentiments to this young activist-lawyer. It was finally time for the radical Left to make its appearance known once again next to the growing radical Right. The Left was finally ready to create something new in society—a space and place to unite and develop new ways to seek social justice in the 21st Century.

It was no surprise to most people involved in critical and radical activist discourses that Occupy took root. The only surprise was the way in which it materialized and the speed with which it spread around the world. Aside from the surge of anti-systemic social movements in the US that began in 1999 at the anti-World Trade Organization (WTO) riots in Seattle, Washington (Yuen et. al. 2001), the anti-systemic response to Neoliberalism was clearly already on the rise internationally. Leading up to the Seattle anti-WTO riots in 1999 and the Occupy encampments in 2011 in the US, in 1994 the indigenous peoples in Chiapas, Mexico took up arms (literally and metaphorically) against the Mexican government to protect the land and cultures of their peoples from the impact of Neoliberalism. The Zapatistas (EZLN), as they are known, are often credited for this global surge in anti-systemic activism (Franks 2007, Graeber 2002, Lynd and Grubacic 2008). However, other anti-systemic movements such as the Arab Revolutions, the Spanish Indignados, the Greek agnakismenoi, which all began in 2011 alongside Occupy, are also credited for inspiring the surge of occupations and other anti-systemic social movements that followed suit. All of these movements also took on similar characteristics through the practice of horizontalism and “people power” to fight for new forms of participatory and direct democracy. Albeit it is important to note that each organization responded to their own state and local
governments in response to the direct Neoliberal impact that each locality has had and unfortunately will continue to experience. Gross violations of human rights, widening income gaps, drastic austerity measures, Corporate Personhood (the actual lawful protection of coporatocratic practices), social and ecological destruction, as well as the Wikileaks governmental cables are but a few of the everyday concerns and discourses advocated and mobilized by individuals involved in such 21st Century social movements. Accordingly, what is of most importance to this unfolding global revolution is that not only do each of these movements stand in solidarity with the others (even though their “causes” and “demands” have manifested in different ways), all of them—from the EZLN in Mexico to the Occupy movements in the US—have used a similar framework. This structure, which is strictly anti-systemic, anti-hierarchical and egalitarian in nature, aims to achieve as best as possible a non-violent fundamental shift towards a more participatory and direct democracy where all individuals have a voice and say in the ways in which their everyday lives unfold; a system that treats everyone—including the planet—equally with dignity and respect. Accordingly Katsiaficas (2006, 2012) has noted that a global “eros effect”, which has awakened individuals to the wanting and hope for love and equality, is beginning to now unfold. This effect indicates how these “social movements are an expression of the people’s loving connectedness with each other” (2006: 221). Thus, exploring more intimately how this “eros effect” drives human beings to fight for social justice can help us to better understand these social movement and their overall characteristics.

Becoming an Occupier

My own personal journey with the Occupy movement began when I started following the events taking place shortly after September 17, 2011 via the Internet and the occasional visit to the
Occupy Portland encampment, which began shortly after Occupy Wall Street on October 6, 2011. At the start of the movement I was unfortunately unable to engage in the movement full-time as I was in graduate school. I did, however, engage in student sit-ins, walkouts, and teach-ins as I maintained my role as student-activist—a role I had begun much earlier. However, not too long after witnessing the brutal police raid of the Portland Occupy encampment as well as the many other simultaneously planned raids across the US, I felt inclined to fully join the movement. On May 1, 2012, I set out on a journey across the US to explore what had become of the Occupy movement and get to know its participants and the movement’s identity more intimately.

My first stop was Oakland for May Day where I spent several days getting to know protestors and exploring what they had been up to since the raid of their encampments in 2011. During the May Day celebrations, I joined thousands of other radical activists—feminists, labor organizers, Occupiers, Decolonizers, Longshoreman, veterans etc.—who marched throughout the city in solidarity with one another. The Decolonize Oakland movement hosted the march that I personally took part in—the “May Day March for Dignity and Resistance”. It was a family-friendly and peaceful march, but from a distance, it was obvious we were marching towards what appeared to be a warzone. Stories filled the ears of the participants of what was going on in downtown Oakland as we marched on. Walls of tear gas, injured protestors, arrests and hovering helicopters were both sights and news that day. Unfortunately, the destination of the march was indeed downtown where we were supposed to converge with other marches and activists to engage in a celebration of solidarity. However, the closer we got to downtown Oakland, the more it appeared that we were not going to make it safely without police blockades,
so the march stopped short in a public park to relax from the heat and enjoy time socializing and getting to know one another.

I spent most of my time in the park talking with an elderly man who had been engaging in radical activism in San Francisco for several decades as he had been influenced by his families engagement in labor organizing since the 1920s. He told me all about the dynamics going on in the radical activist communities in Oakland since the start of the Occupy movement. During 2011, there had been a split in the movement between Occupy Oakland and Decolonize Oakland, most of which were due to the extremely militant activists involved in Occupy Oakland as well as the attempt to change the name of the movement from “Occupy” to “Decolonize” (Occupy was an offensive name for indigenous peoples and other peoples of color). He explained how these issues had created tensions between groups regarding distinct political and social practices as well as ideologies based around violence, police brutality and organizational tactics. He also told me about Occupy the Farm (i.e., Occupy the Gill Tract) that had just begun to unfold a few weeks prior to May Day.

I ended up visiting the farm with him the next day to take a tour and learn about the work going on there. He explained to me how Occupy the Farm was birthed out of both of the movements and was a clear example of how the Occupy movement in Oakland created spaces—in fact, occupied spaces—in their communities to combat capitalism in unique ways according to their geographical contexts. The farm, through which activists occupied the last remaining farmable land in the San Francisco Bay Area was created in order to push out the planned development of a corporate owned grocery store, Whole Foods. Their agenda was to fight the privatization of the public space—in this case farmable land—that was owned by UC Berkeley, which was to sell the space to Whole Foods when the university finished the research it was
conducting on the land. However, the Oakland activists decided to express their rights and occupy the land in order to replace a potential corporatized food source with a *community space* in which the people of Oakland could fight for food sovereignty and help the disenfranchised peoples in the surrounding areas. The banner to the entrance proclaimed this message very clearly, “Whole food, not Whole Foods”. The aura and eros expressed on the farm through mutual aid and solidarity (e.g. community education for the local children, live music, free community meals, art, etc.) exemplified the love that the community had for each other, the land, and the broader communities surrounding the farm. It was a clear example of the “eros effect” in action.

While in Oakland, I also attended an Occupy Oakland General Assembly (GA). I walked to the entrance of Oscar Grant Plaza where GAs are held in Oakland and was quickly greeted by several activists. They asked me who I was, so I told them my name and where I was from and one of them yelled: “MIC CHECK!” and the entire group looked to him and yelled back “MIC CHECK!” I was about to witness my first human mic in person. Human mics are used in the Occupy Movement in order to project speakers’ voices to large crowds without actual audio equipment. “THIS IS APRIL FROM PORTLAND” (crowd repeats) “SHE IS HERE TO VISIT” (crowd repeats) “BE NICE!” (crowd repeats). I was then personally greeted by many of the activists in the area before the meeting started. However, shortly after my friendly welcome, when the meeting began and I tried to talk with Occupiers, it became clear that they were unwilling to really talk to me. I stood out too much as an outsider and, being that they were already a movement that had been repressed like all other Occupy organizations, they were not
trustful of many outsiders. Thus, I, with my analytical questions and pen and paper was not particularly welcomed. I over-confidently walked into a space that clearly had been painfully experiencing issues with co-optation of non-radicals and police brutality. Although I felt rather ostracized, I decided to stick around for the rest of the meeting to just observe. I learned about the tensions between the activists and how the “reformists” and other political organizations had either been co-opting and/or free-riding the movement, which made sense as to why these clearly more radical and anarchist activists were so weary of my presence. I left that day and knew at that moment that I had to start rethinking everything. I knew that I needed to be solely a participant observer, maintain my role as activist, and simply get to know participants and engage in the activities as one of them as I had intended from the start. Although my first fully-immersed Occupy experience did not turn out as expected, I was still able to observe a lot of the real issues (e.g. in-fighting between political organizations, co-optation by those in positions of power, and police violence) the movement had been experiencing and paid close attention to these issues as I continued on my journey.

Although the tensions between groups in Oakland were apparent, both groups still focused much of their attention on fighting for social justice in unique ways according to their community’s needs. Because Oakland is a city wrought with distinct and violent forms of structural racism and the destruction of many indigenous peoples’ lands and cultures, Occupy and Decolonize Oakland both focused much of their attention on the process of decolonization.

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2 By May 2012 most Occupy encampments and larger organizations had experienced violent police raids that ended in the arrests of hundreds of peaceful non-violent protesters across the United States. I myself witnessed the violent raid of the Portland Occupy encampment in late 2011. Since these raids, many of the encampments host General Assemblies once or twice a week and engage in larger protests less frequently such as May Day and the Anti-NATO protests in Chicago in 2012.
both mind and space\(^3\). As one gentle elderly man expressed to me on the bus back from the day of direct action, in places like Oakland where racism, crime and poverty are very high, we, as activists, must “Occupy our minds before we Occupy the world!” If we engage in radical anti-systemic activism, we must recognize how we ourselves have been impacted by Neoliberalism. If we do not decolonize our minds before engaging in anti-systemic activism, we run the risk of potentially and unconsciously making decisions and partaking in practices that uphold the systems of domination over particular individuals and groups. He was right. From day one, I had already begun to realize how structural inequalities and the conscious and unconscious upholding of these inequalities by activists and non-activists were clearly present inside the encampments as well as in the organization at large. The divisions in the radical activist organizations in Oakland are indicative of this very issue. “Occupying” space that has already been occupied for 500 years by Europeans (such as the Ohlone land that sits under the city of Oakland) makes the term “Occupy” offensive in itself.

After attending Occupy Oakland, I made my way to Occupy Los Angeles (LA) and learned of the work the organization was doing with regards to foreclosures and homelessness. Foreclosures are a distinct social issue occurring in Los Angeles County and across the United States as a direct product of the economic crisis in 2007, increasing consumer debt and fraudulent corporate banking schemes, which is why Occupy LA focused much of their attention on these issues. However, aside from successful outreach to local disenfranchised communities, fighting foreclosures, and community service, the political and social divisions of the encampment also materialized in LA. As one protestors explained to me, “Occupy is just a microcosm of society” and thus experiencing racism, sexism, classism, and other structural

\(^3\) In fact, the space that Occupy Oakland occupied was renamed Oscar Grant plaza after a victim of police brutality (Abraham 2011), which is exemplary of one of the major struggles and concerns of activists in the SF Bay Area.
inequalities when engaged in the movement clearly indicates how these practices are embedded in the activists’ everyday lifeworlds. Although combating these issues is something Occupy had worked tediously at through practicing horizontalism and direct democratic practices, these issues were still prevalent within the Occupy movement at large. When I continued on my journey to Albuquerque, Phoenix, Houston, Austin, New Orleans, the Occupy National Gathering in Philadelphia, PA, Occupy the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, NC and finally the Occupy one-year anniversary in New York City, these issues continued to become clearer. Although Occupy had begun to conduct wonderful experiments with radical activism that had successfully changed the discourses revolved around structural inequalities in the United States for those engaged and following the unfolding of the movement, the movement was beginning to break apart. Many issues related to personal differences, the co-optation of the movement by liberal reformists and unengaged intellectuals, and police brutality had manifested themselves in each encampment. Thus, when I attended the Occupy National Gathering during Fourth of July weekend 2012, it was no surprise to me to see these divisions really come to life as hundreds of Occupy activists from around the states—even activists from Los Indignados in Spain—gathered together. However, these divisions also shed a particular light on the issues that I believe will need to be addressed as the “Newest Left” begins to mobilize in the 21st Century, which we can, aside from its pitfalls, thank Occupy for.

After “leaving” the Occupy movement and concentrating solely on my personal experiences and observations as well as the social movement literature at the university, the biggest tension that helped guide my research was that between the Liberal reformists and radical activists. As one activist proclaimed at the Occupy National Gathering, “they have stolen this movement from us!” (referring to the liberal academics who clearly had planned and used the
event to conduct research and “guide” the movement in the direction they thought best). The National Gathering was a clear moment in “Occupy time” that shed a light on how intellectuals, other privileged activists, and liberal reformists had in fact co-opted the movement. Thus, after exposing themselves at the last GA by stating that the whole event had been planned by a few “leaders” and was utilized to “help” guide the movement, it didn’t shock me that soon after a counter-GA was organized by the Anarchists and other anti-systemic radical activists.

Moreover, just prior to this GA breaking out, I had to comfort an elderly Asian American women who was crying out for help as she felt betrayed by the movement and its privileged participants. When I found her she was crying by herself holding up a sign that stated: “How did we end up like this, we are dehumanized via 3D’s: 1) Divide by bigotry, class, economy; 2) Distract by TV, technology, apathy; and 3) Deceit by wars, Academia, and Banks.” I sat with her for a few hours and eventually I asked one of the “leaders” to help in cleaning up the mess they created and to apologize to the movement. Unfortunately, they refused to cooperate with me and told me they did not know what the problem could possibly be and acted as if my request was irrational.

However, eventually one man did come over to talk to us. He apologized to me for the man he was standing next to who dismissed me when I had asked for help. She explained in detail what she had witnessed and about her feelings towards what had become of the movement. She clearly and without hesitation articulated to us the issues she had with the reformists and academics within the encampment and how this specifically affected her as an elderly poor

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4 Witnessing how the issues that I had already experienced along my journey at the Occupy National Gathering was in fact, one of the defining moments that guided the remainder of my research and I will express these issues in more detail throughout this thesis.

5 After leaving the “field” that day, I did a quick online search of each of the leaders, particularly the ones who announced that they had planned the whole goings on of the National Gathering. Three were academics, one of which was from Princeton, and the others were from leadership and facilitator training type organizations.
immigrant living in the United States. The man who joined in our conversation clearly felt horrible inside, apologized and confirmed that the movement did in fact begin as a more radical and anarchist social movement. Even he himself felt it had been co-opted by skilled facilitators, leaders, and academics that of whom had planned the Occupy National Gathering.

I left shortly after our talk to take an “Occupy break” (a term used often by activists who leave the spaces where marches, GAs, or any Occupy related event to literally take a break from the goings on), only to return to see the same woman smiling and leading the talk at the radical counter-GA that had broken out. I knew from that moment on the direction that my research needed to go. After continually witnessing the divisions and the corruption that had been caused in the movement, I knew I needed to begin to explore these tensions and the politics of the different groups in order to discover what had happened to this movement. How, in less than a year, was a social movement that quickly spread across the US—whose foundation was horizontal and radical—co-opted by people in privileged positions within the social hierarchy? What implications did this have for the Newest Left and how was the movement to overcome these issues?

When I returned from the National Gathering, I reflected on what had occurred up until that moment. After seeing the destruction and dehumanizing experience of the National Gathering, I realized that the Left had clearly been divided between radicals (anarchists and Marxists, typically Leninist-Maoist sectarian Marxists) and liberal reformists. Why were some activists willing to physically fight for social justice, occupying spaces, taking back land that should be made public and fighting against police brutality, racism, sexism, and classism within their communities as well as in their camps, and others return to the comfort of their homes and workplaces after a day of GA meetings and teach-ins? My fellow activists in LA and Oakland
were right. In a society where structural inequalities are embedded in a majority of the institutions that we engage in in our everyday lives, we really have to begin to think outside the dominant and hegemonic frameworks to look for the answers to our problems. We have to “Occupy our Minds” as I continually heard from encampment to encampment. According to Katsiafikas (2006), who studies contemporary radical (specifically anarchist) social movements, decolonizing our lifeworlds is a necessary process to seek social justice in the 21st Century. This process—also referred to as liberation (Mumm 1998)—requires individuals to decolonize their life-worlds and develop a new identity (individual and collective) through which thinking, acting, imagining, and creating can be developed in order to challenge every negative and domineering aspect of the current society that we live in. As I will highlight in the remainder of this thesis, the processes used to practice anti-systemic resistance that I engaged in during my involvement in Occupy informed this research and thus, exploring these processes, discovering what went wrong and what direction we as a movement need to go became my overall focus.

Statement of the Problem

The social movements that have and will most likely continue to spread across the globe all have similar organizational frameworks and characteristics. Most of these movements, specifically the EZLN, Los Indignados, certain sectors of the Greek agnakismenoi and the Occupy movements, are strictly anti-systemic in their overall framework and strategically utilize four main organizational characteristics, which I will elaborate in more detail in the following chapters. For now, I will briefly introduce these characteristics as they have allowed for the questions under analysis in this research project to develop organically. Because the change that these social movements seek is a fundamental transformation to a more direct and participatory
democratic society, the foundations of these movements are modeled on a base structure now commonly known as horizontalism (or horizontalidad), which began in Argentina during the rise of the alter-globalization movements in 2001 (Sitrin 2006, 2012). This model, which is strictly anti-systemic (bureaucratic, hegemonic basically anti-all hierarchical oppressive social structures—cultural, economical, political and spiritual), focuses on creating new ways-of-being based on decentralized horizontal practices. Horizontalism, briefly, is the epitome of direct participatory democracy in practice. Common thematic organizational practices of horizontal social structures are consensus decision-making, autonomous direct action and most importantly, prefigurative politics, which is the idea of practicing the ends in the here and now. Of most importance to this project is that these themes also share similar characteristics to the classical social and political philosophy of Anarchism (big A) and are most in line with the contemporary forms and manifestations of anarchism (little a), which I hope to extract and analyze thoroughly in this analysis⁶.

When I started my journey and joined the Occupy movement, I was not prepared for what was to come and entered the field “tainted” (as I refer to it now) by a more social democratic and reformist framework myself. This framework, one might argue, is easily developed throughout life within the American educational institutions we engage in. Thus, until engaging in the Occupy movement I never knew, other than in my imagination and the imaginations of fiction writers such as Ursula K. Le Guin (1974) and Starhawk (1994), to think outside the state structure to seek social change. Did I agree with what the state was doing? Absolutely not, but, I also had never been taught to be an autonomous human being—to liberate myself from

⁶ For more on the old and new school differences in Anarchist social and political philosophy see “Anarchism and Political Theories: Contemporary Problems” by Uri Gordon (2007). This document is anti-copyright and can be found at (http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/uri-gordon-anarchism-and-political-theory-contemporary-problems).
dependency on the state and other bureaucratic structures and to not be afraid to literally “be the change I wish to see in the world”. But, this celebrated Ghandi quote, briefly, is exactly what prefigurative politics represents. It requires that we decolonize our minds from the stranglehold of the dominant Neoliberal frameworks—the dominant consumptionist imaginary, the dominant economist ideology, and the dominant ethos created by the state apparatus (Clark 2013).

Furthermore, the state apparatus has actually been determined to strip us of our ability to think with an “anticipatory consciousness”—a consciousness that allows us to use our own imaginations and think beyond the frameworks provided by the dominant culture (Bloch 1986, Hulme 2001). This is also where it becomes clear why the majority of the citizens in the US continually abide by the state even when the discourses about the destruction of Neoliberalism and the spread of the American Empire are running rampant. One could say that the fear of going outside of the box instilled in us provided by the dominant culture has turned us all into Neoliberal subjects (Luke 1989, Brown 2005); subjects who are unwilling to challenge the dominant culture as we have adapted to and embodied the political rationality of Neoliberalism and the already prefigured strategies of action. This rationality has disciplined the subject to think and act according to the principles—the ethos, imaginary, ideologies, and within the institutions of the state itself (Clark 2013). John P. Clark (2013) explains this through the dialectical social ecological framework he develops in his book The Impossible Community. Here he identifies “(at least) four spheres that are essential to the analysis of how social reality is generated, how it is maintained, and how it might be transformed”: the “social institutional structure”, “social ideology”, the “social imaginary” and the “social ethos” as I have already presented (p. 32). It is also important to note here that the state has also deliberately instilled fear (via police brutality, state repression and political violence, which have only been on the rise
since the Occupy movement) of reprisal and stigmatization that is publically made explicit when anybody is “disloyal” to the state structure. This too has been on the rise since 2011. Julian Assange, Bradley Manning, Aaron Swartz, the Portland Grand Jury Resistors, and the NATO-5 are but a few of the now indefinitely detained, seeking political asylum in outside of their countries of origin, or severely and publicly punished (or dead in the case of Aaron who committed suicide to escape his imprisonment) radical activists, whistle-blowers, and hacktivists.

Thus, this project is not only informed by my own personal journey and critical participant observation as I traveled across the United States engaging in one Occupy organization to the next—from West to East coast—but to also flesh out the necessary identity development process that I personally, along with thousands of others, experienced along the way. Most Occupiers will proclaim that Occupy has changed their life forever. The way in which they view the world and most importantly how they engage in the communities and institutions apart of their everyday lifeworlds has been fundamentally changed as well. As I will argue, this identity development process (or liberatory experience) is a necessary self-transformation both individually and collectively if social change is to occur in the 21st Century.

As Mumm (1998: 3) explains: “Liberation is the struggle to be fully present, to have the ability to act—to become powerful, relevant and therefore historical. Liberation through action is one of the ways in which people experience such self-actualizing transformation.” Thus, liberation can allow us to begin to develop (both individually and collectivel) a new “social ethos” and “anticipatory consciousness”; practices that aid us in the development of new ideologies and imaginations to think outside of the state apparatus. Most importantly, these practices allow us to find new and more effective answers as to how we are going to change our society and put a stop to the Neoliberal social ecological destruction of the globe.
With regards to my own personal “liberation,” during my engagement in the Occupy movement, I was able to discover a very important theme from camp to camp that I was and the majority of society is often fooled into misinterpreting. This theme, as briefly introduced above, was that Occupy took on a more anarchist—or anarchist(ic)—framework. Of course, the lack of general understanding regarding anarchism—a word whose etymological root simply means “without governance” (Bamyeh 2009, Williams 2004) or “without dominance” (Clark 2013)—is due to the fact that historically the state itself has defined this word and those associated with anarchism and/or who embody anarchist(ic) characteristics to instead represent chaos, violence and disorder. However, if the description of the horizontalist structure above in contrast to the Neoliberal social and ecological destruction (as well as the violent repression and the deliberate silencing and misrepresentation of the movement itself in the mainstream media), still seems to represent violence, chaos and destruction, then questioning our selves and decolonization might be a process we need to engage. Otherwise, we will never truly understand the movement as I have learned to and continue to do. Some regard this as a strategy—a form of bio-power used by the state and those in power themselves—to prevent and manipulate individuals from liberating themselves and discovering that they are capable of living and organizing outside of the state structure (Scott 1998); a strategy nonetheless that individuals must also recognize first in order to

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7 This etymological distinction is very important for contemporary anarchists as the lack of the intersectional analysis of the forms of domination created by the capitalist structure were not taken into consideration by the historical anarchist figures (Day 2005). As Day (2005: 100) highlights, “the difficulties later anarchists have had in appealing to workers, people of color and women are related to the lingering subterranean flow of Eurocentric masculinist rationalism and perfectionism”. However, anarchism overtime has developed a strict anti-domination of all forms framework. In fact, “anarchism-with-an-adjective” is common in the 21st Century (e.g. anarcho-feminism, anarcho-queers, anarchist people of color, anarch@indigenous etc.), which indicates how contemporary anarchist organizations recognize the importance of having a “multidimensional, interlocking analysis of oppression” (Day 2005: 179).
liberate themselves. Thus, this thesis will also reclaim anarchism by exploring whether or not the Occupy movement in fact follows an anarchist(ic) framework through understanding the strategies, tactics, and problems that the movement as well as other anti-systemic movements face when they use such a framework. By exploring these themes and reflecting upon my role as a scholar-activist, this thesis will also explain the role that scholars and researchers need to assume in order to more accurately study and develop knowledge about and for the “Newest Social Movements” that have been spreading throughout the globe (Day 2005). The methodological framework of this thesis, which was developed organically and utilized autoethnography, participant observation, and Internet ethnography will be explained more thoroughly to express to activist-scholars the strategies, tactics, and roles that we might partake in alongside our fellow activists in the pursuit for social justice.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The analytical framework of this literature review follows the changes that I personally went through engaged in the Occupy movement moving between encampments, major events, and the academy. Part one begins with an explanation of the contradictions caused by thinking within the dominant and/or hegemonic framework regarding revolutionary praxis and will explain why and how this has affected the discourses and ways we understand as well as critique these discourses within academia. This section will specifically focus on the problems that anti-systemic social movements face when they try to mobilize, express themselves, and interact within a society that lacks the very “imagination”, “ideology, “social ethos” and “social institutions” to understand their message and characteristics (Clark 2013). Informed by part one, part two will explain more in-depth the ways in which the hegemonic revolutionary discourses—how they conceive of the “relations of power” (what I will refer to as counter-power)—have been thoroughly embedded in the social movement literature and theories within sociology. In doing so, this section will explain the implications of adapting to these discourses rather than adapting theory to practice, which, as Luke (1989) has indicated, can become itself a form of bio-power over the individual. Accordingly, this section will also introduce the development of new theoretical frameworks and methodologies that are being used by anti-systemic, militant and anarchist social movement researchers and scholars within and outside academia—methods to produce knowledge that does not silence and render the individual docile, so that we may better understand the Newest Social Movements. Thus, taking into account the theoretical frameworks explored in parts one and two, part three moves on to explain more in-depth the Newest Social Movements in order to better conceptualize their general theoretical frameworks and practices.

Before I engage you, the reader, in the literature review (or genealogical analysis) about
how the “relations of power” are conceptualized within contemporary revolutionary political discourses, it is first important to understand the general discourses specifically expressed within the Occupy movement; discourses that are being put into practices around the globe, which I have also elaborated on in chapter one. I do this to set the reader up on the ‘unconventional’ route that I myself went on as an activist in the movement (how I developed this analysis), which has informed my own understandings and has unfolded throughout my research on this topic. Thus, this contemporaneous empirical analysis was developed during my own participatory engagement within the movement itself and academia. I approach this paper in such a manner because, as Deleuze (Foucault and Deleuze 1972: 105) stated, “theory requires the people involved to finally speak for themselves” and thus this framework is inherently pragmatic and the theory (praxis) developed is informed by the people involved (including myself) in the Occupy movement.

As Stammers (1999) highlights, historically, human rights—the concept not the institution—have been constructed out of the resistance of those suffering at the expense of the dominant social structures (political, economical, cultural and spiritual). Human rights, he emphasizes, are constructed out of the experiences of oppression and domination that individuals face when the state encroaches upon their very ability to survive and express themselves—their free will—autonomously and in harmony within their communities. Accordingly, my analysis is based on the “suffering of the peoples”—peoples willing to engage directly within their communities in order to emancipate themselves from the knowledge/power structures that dominate their everyday lifeworlds. They are the people finally willing to fight for their freedom and justice and stand up against what has led to their very suffering. Thus, dispensing early on of the generalized and misspecified notions about the Occupy movement is important. We must
recognize that our conception of the movement has been constructed for us by theory, critique by misspecification or the dominant mainstream discourses. Without actually engaging in the movement itself, we strip it of its spiritually liberating component and ground it abstractly. The movement becomes a *thing* rather than a peoples; peoples who happen to be crying out for help. For instance, thinking that Occupy is solely a group of “privileged college kids” must be decolonized from our minds. According to my own observations—and yes, there are still people with privilege involved in the movement as I have mentioned—this is but the least true of the assessments about Occupy. From my personal observation, majorities of individuals are: homeless, job-less, swimming in debt, people of color, indigenous, immigrants, sexual queers, feminists, a combination of the above, a multiple intersection of the above, and, of course, the list goes on. Above all, these individuals are slipping into scarcity. It doesn’t take long to realize that these activists are suffering from social, economic, culture, spiritual, and political inequalities. However, this very suffering has driven them to break free from the “Truth”, let go of their fear, and look for a way to escape the Neoliberal structures that have kept them out, assimilated, oppressed, and/or have rendered them silent throughout history.

According to Luke’s (1989) analysis, he would conceptualize these activists as the “atypical” (or “ahistorical”) individuals that have been endowed with a particular ability to “rationally” think in a very critical and radical way. This ability, he states, is developed out of resistance to domination—their every being is a form of resistance—which allows the subject of that domination to develop an inherently critical lifeworld that is opposed to the one that

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8 I want to emphasize here that although an individual is suffering from oppression in one way, it does not mean that they don’t receive privilege in another. The “interlocking systems of oppression” caused by the dominant Neoliberal framework is no doubt very complex, which, as you will see, requires a very strategic and radical dialectical approach from activists in order to positively seek social justice (Clark 2013, Collins 2000).
attempts to control them. Marcuse (1991) expresses a similar sentiment: “to the degree that the established society is irrational (...) consciousness becomes free for the higher historical rationality only in the struggle against the established society” (p. 222). However, this perspective, as Luke (1989) also addresses, can be easily co-opted, repressed, “corrected”, assimilated, etc, which is a way for the state to render the individual entirely incapable of autonomously expressing themselves. The individual becomes a “docile body” in this sense and must free themselves from the dominant culture and the different apparatuses that control their minds, bodies, and spirits, which also prevent them from fighting for their freedom. Thus, by not conceptualizing the individuals presence within Occupy as a form of resistance (to whatever be the social issue) this only silences their voices—it silences theory.

Furthermore, social movements have historically re/evolved in order to encompass new forms of resistance and techniques to combat the continually encroaching forms of power over the individual. Accordingly, Richard Day (2005) refers to contemporary social movements (such as the Occupy movement that has taken on a radical anti-systemic and non-hegemonic framework) as the “Newest Social Movements”. These movements have not only begun to re-articulate the anti-capitalist sentiments of the 19th Century labor movements (the “Old Social Movements”), but have also extended the identity-based movements of the mid-20th Century (what are known as the “New Social Movements”). Therefore, the Newest Social Movements, are not only anti-capitalist, but focus on eliminating all forms of domination—racism, classism, sexism, patriarchy, etc.—a framework that I as well as others have understood to be similar to

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9 I use “lifeworld” throughout this paper as it was developed in the work of Georgy Katsiaficas (2006), which was informed by the work of Habermas himself. The colonization of the lifeworld was the concern of Habermas, but Katsiaficas extends this analysis to understand the necessary processes of decolonization and how contemporary anti-systemic movements are articulating this process within their praxis—individually and collectively.
that of classical and contemporary anarchism. Thus, this framework has challenged the conventional notions of power, knowledge, and resistance that were common within the old and new social movements. Of course, social movements have also always (re)constructed discourses on the ground as well in order to mobilize their messages and blueprints for social justice within their communities, including the discourses within the academy and within the broader social structures in which they are engaged in. Thus, conducting a genealogical analysis of the discourses regarding the “relations of power” produced within the Occupy movement can highlight what scholars could focus more tentatively on in order to better understand how individuals are trying to seek social justice and create new lifeworlds that are absent of all forms of domination in the 21st Century.

The Legacy of Marxism and the Blind-Repression of the Anarchists

As an outcome of the rise of the social democratic left during the labor movements of the mid-19th Century and the predominant role of Marxist theories within critical academic scholarship, Marxism has also come to predominate the field of social science research in general and social movement theory in particular. However, according to the history of the revolutionary left in Europe, Marxism was not the only revolutionary politic. According to Alan Carter (2000), the rise of the Marxist Left during the 20th Century and its predominance in Western academia following WWII and the downfall of the Marxist revolutionary projects of that era, this has allowed for the continual repression of other counter-revolutionary politics—particularly that of anarchism—both within and outside of academia. Historically, with regards to anarchism, the contention between the two revolutionary anti-capitalist ideologies is that anarchists do not believe that a revolutionary take-over of the state by the working class (i.e., “the dictatorship of
the proletariat”) is the proper means to create a just and equal society (Williams 2012). They conceive of counter-power in a different way than that of the Marxists. Wayne Price (2007) articulates the two as differences in how one defines socialism.

Socialists may be divided between those who wish to create a new society by using the state—either the existing one or a new one—and those who think a new society must be built in opposition to all states. That is, socialists are either state socialists or libertarian socialists (mostly anarchists) (Price 2007: 6).

Thus, according to anarchist principles, the means or the necessary form of counter-power to “take over the state” would require a process of developing horizontal and decentralized communities and workplaces—counter-institutions based on solidarity, mutual aid, and the autonomous will of the individual and the collective, which would eventually “wither away” the state. Anarchists dismissed outright the notion of having a centralized governing body, as they believed that the “iron law” of “power-over” type politics would eventually take hold (Michels 1962). From a Foucauldian perspective, the anarchists predicted the bio-power that a centralized state would inevitably develop over the individual. However, this very contention eventually led Karl Marx himself to dismiss anarchists—specifically Bakunin and his comrades—out of the First International, which exemplifies his dependence on hegemony as a form of counter-power (Rocker 2004). International Relations theorists (Vrasti 2012) and anarchist scholars (Graeber 2004, Grubacic 2003, Williams 2012) have recently begun to re-address this historical contention and, along with classical anarchist theorists, have determined it...

10 In addition to Michels (1962) who coined the theory of the “iron law of oligarchy”, many have argued that the anarchists, specifically Bakunin and the anarchists involved in the First International, predicted the inevitable downfall of the Marxist revolutionary agenda (Day 2005, Shantz 2003, Vrasti 2012, Williams 2004, also see the Winter 2001-2003 issues of Science and Society). However, it is also important to note that Bakunin and the leading anarchists of that time were also guilty of embodying dogmatic and hegemonic tendencies themselves. This is why contemporary anarchists (“post-anarchists”/“postmodern anarchism”) are very careful when organizing and creating praxical frameworks to implement in their communities.
to be one of the reasons for the repression of anarchist thought and practice as well as other counter-revolutionary politics within Western mainstream and academic discourses.

However, I myself did not learn these facts until engaging in the Occupy movement as I had embodied these hegemonic discourses as well, which, upon recognizing, allowed me to critically understand and embody how knowledge is in fact power and thus develop a grassroots ontological analysis of counter-power. Through my own experience as a scholar-activist, I had to ask myself after my own personal epistemological breakdown: did Marxism really become a hegemonic knowledge/power regime from the start? Has the Marxian conception of counter-power, by not allowing the free autonomous will of people to develop overtime, fail in “abusing power” (as Foucault would state) and eventually become a slave to it’s “appetite for power” (Fornet-Betancourt 1987: 119)? Here, Foucault highlights that there are two options for the “conversion of power” (counter-power!): controlling and limiting. The latter, limiting, abuses power; the former, controlling, controls and balances it through the practice of the “care of the self” (i.e. decolonization and liberation) and the care of others—an ontological communitarian framework (Fornet-Betancourt 1987: 119). According to contemporary anarchist theorists, understanding this dialectic between revolutionary political discourses and exploring the history of the repression of anarchism historically and contemporarily is important to understand why and how counter-power has been co-opted into the (Neo)liberal state structure and has prevented individuals from fundamentally freeing themselves from domination.

From an anarchist perspective, power-over type politics from the start only leads to despotism and state capitalism. This is specifically why anarchists do not believe in the current manifestations of capitalist or communist states (or any centralized state) as the means to the direct democratic, equal, and just society that they hope to achieve. Anarchists believe that
without working as a collective within their local communities in particular and society in
general to develop a new social structure based on an ethical and moral praxis from the bottom-
up, then this will only create divisions and reestablish a new hierarchical and oppressive social
structure in its place. By looking to the history of Marxist revolutionary praxis, we can see that
this is in fact what has materialized most often. Thus, anarchism is rooted in the practice of
working collectively and horizontally within one’s communities in order to develop and mobilize
a vision and practice aimed at establishing a new way-of-being—a new lifeworld—that works
outside of the current state structure (Bookchin 1991, Clark 2013, Rocker 2004, Shantz 2003,
Williams 2004). There is no demand from or want to integrate into the current state and it’s
institutions, ideologies, and practices. According to an anarchist’s conceptions of counter-
power, creating affinities (Day 2005), municipals (Bookchin 1991), co-operatives (Buber 1958,
Curl 2009), developing communities of solidarity (Clark 2013) and/or other communalist
lifeworlds (Katsiaficas 2006) would eventually, as they spread throughout communities and
create networks between each autonomist group, wither away the dependence upon the state
apparatus and eventual the state itself11. Above all, classical anarchists do not believe in the
revolutionary overthrow of the state as Marxists practitioners did and do12. They believe in the

11 When practiced prefiguratively and contemporarily, anarchist(ic) movements such as Occupy have taken on the
rhetoric of direct/participatory democracy, horizontalism, syndicalism, anarcho-communism, communalism and/or
communitarian anarchism etc..

12 I recognize that there are also autonomous Marxist theories and practices such as that of the work of Antonio
Negri and Michael Hardt (2012) and John Halloway (2010) and other post-structuralist Marxists. However, the
discourses between Occupiers, anarchists, and contemporary Marxist organizations (that of which are most often
oriented towards the Maoist-Leninist variety) that I have engaged in as an activist are my main concerns here. The
mere fact that there is a disconnect between activism and knowledge production regarding Marxist revolutionary
politics is an indicator that we, as knowledge producers, are producing knowledge for knowledge sake and are
disconnected from civil society. Should, “to the Gulag!” be something contemporary activists articulate in the name
of communism? Why is there no critical engagement with history in contemporary Marxist revolutionary
organic practice of freedom of autonomous collectives of individuals to prefiguratively practice the means to develop a new and just society in the here and now. 

The prefigurative praxis of contemporary anarchism is precisely what Williams (2004) refers to as the social r/evolutionary model where praxis aimed at eliminating unjust hierarchical social structures and replacing them with new non-hierarchical counter-institutions based on solidarity and mutual aid organically develops overtime. According to this model, anarchism is viewed as a never-ending social movement—a social r/evolution that continually evolves or “infinitely demands” according to Critchley (2008)—to encompass a collective and “concrete universal” social praxis (Clark 2013). Anarchism is grounded in a moral and ethical framework based on egalitarianism, mutual aid, solidarity, and most importantly, that emphasizes the self-determination of each individual (Prichard 2010). According to contemporary anarchist-scholar and activist Richard Day: “everyday lived experiences, passions, needs and aspirations must be our guide” for social change not abstract theoretical frameworks (Day 2005: 115, 118). As he further emphasizes, Bakunin himself believed that Anarchism was/is not a desire for political revolution—“to wield state power as a weapon of the dispossessed”—it focuses rather on social r/evolution and the continual process of “breaking” with the logos of the state. “Anarchist thought has tended to privilege ‘social’ revolutions based on the construction of affinities (constituent power) over ‘political’ revolutions based on achieving hegemony (constituted power)” (Day 2004: 748, emphasis added). Anarchism is thus a social r/evolutionary praxis that infinitely demands (of self and others) an ethical and moral reconfiguration of the individuals life-worlds until all forms of domination are eliminated. Anarchists do not demand others to abide by an abstract political program. They collectively work together in the here and now to

discourses? These very questions, which are based on an empirical analysis of the discourses coming out of contemporary Marxian revolutionary organizations and practitioners, are what has informed this analysis.
create concrete practices to encourage, demonstrate, and empower others within their communities what we, the people, can do to ethically, morally and ecologically, practice our freedom.

As we can see, according to an anarchist framework, the revolutionary take-over of the state by the proletariat would only become dependent upon the same structures implemented by the state itself (e.g. bureaucracy, inequality, domination and oppression). However, as Day (2005) highlights, because Marxism has played such a predominant role in the Western thought, it has itself created a discourse and praxis revolved around the “hegemony of hegemony” (i.e., “dictatorship of the proletariat”). This in turn has embedded itself into academic and revolutionary political discourses about how to conceptualize counter-power, which has allowed for its practitioners and followers to develop a certain ethos and rationality that justifies dogmatic and coercive forms of politics. If we look to the history of Marxist revolutionary praxis, we can see that this coercive “hegemony of hegemony” leads to the wanting of the revolutionary proletariat to take control of the state and reform it according to their needs regardless of the needs of their revolutionary, reformist, or other social democratic counterparts (Day 2005). Thus, one can argue that fundamentally, Marxist revolutionary praxis lacks the very consideration and emphasis on autonomy and liberation that the anarchists so adamantly believe in and, following the downfall of the Marxist revolutions during the 20th Century, this is why many contemporary social movements have adhered to non-hegemonic horizontal frameworks.

Another Paradigm Shift?: (Re)Producing Knowledge about Anarchist Thought and Praxis

With the Neoliberal transformations of society and the ensuing social inequalities, there has been a “rediscovery of anarchism by people seeking alternatives to both capitalism and communism”
in the 21st Century (Shantz 2003: 3). During the late 1990s, anarchist social movement organizations and activists had a major presence at the “Battle in Seattle” during the anti-globalization protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Gills 2000). According to Gills (2000), with thanks to the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, the anti-globalization movements have led to a change in revolutionary political discourses and praxis by developing “ethico-political alternatives involved in a new inclusive politics of diversity” around the globe (p. 136). Accordingly, since 2010, anti-globalization movements have spread internationally as the Neoliberal economic impact has dramatically and directly altered the lives of millions of individuals. Such movements as the Arab Revolutions, the Spanish Indignados, the Occupy movement, the Greek agnakismenoi, #IdleNoMore, as well as many similar movements in other European, South American, and African countries have all embodied anti-systemic frameworks.

From London, England, to Portland, OR, the Occupy movement as well as other anti-systemic social movement organizations that stand in solidarity with Occupy, are becoming commonplace in societies around the globe. Most importantly, due to the ability for these movements to instantly communicate internationally through online communiqués, solidarity and social networking between movements on a global level has become an important phenomenon in the 21st Century (Della Porta 2006, Chomksy 2012, Gills 2000). However, within academia, contemporary theoretical models and conceptual frameworks used in the social sciences have failed to keep up with the Newest Social Movements (Day 2005). Because the social sciences in general and SMT frameworks in particular are grounded in either Marxist and/or other reformist social democratic models, which view the state as the means to achieve revolution through social policy and other reformist agendas, understanding the majority of contemporary social
movement praxis has become a rather difficult task. A framework for understanding the objectives and characteristics of these global anti-systemic social movements is needed if social movement theories (SMT) are to become an important tool for understanding social movements and collective behavior within a Neoliberal context (Bevington 2005, Kiersey 2012, Vrasti 2012), rather than silence and render the movement and its participants docile. Thus, in this section, I will focus specifically on SMTs, the impact that the legacy of Marxism has had on SMTs in particular, and most importantly, the direction that social movement theorists, activists, and researchers are and should focus on in order to properly analyze the growing trend of global anti-systemic resistance.

The main purpose of social movement research is to understand why social movements occur as well as their overall characteristics. Characteristics, according to Fitzgerald (2000: 578), are explored to understand a social movement’s “internal structures”, “ideologies”, “tactics”, communicative capabilities among activists and with the broader societies that they interact in, as well as the “assessment of their successes.” However, according to Radical Social Movement Organization (RSMO) theorists, contemporary SMTs do not provide the proper frameworks to analyze RSMOs as the social sciences in general are typically grounded in a reformist liberal or social democratic foundation. Accordingly, SMTs often critique the characteristics of social movements by analyzing how the organizations effectively “restructure the system” and demand power from—in this case Neoliberal, bureaucratic and hierarchical

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13 What promoted the development of this section and what is of most concern are the dogmatic and biased responses of academics, journalists, and overall critiques of Occupy’s use of horizontalism and lack of wanting to engage in the current political system. The common rhetoric of “what do they want” and “they have no demands” are indicative of these biased critiques.

14 This concern is not just mine alone, it is also a concern of some of the leading social movements theorists in the US themselves (See session hosted by SMT scholars at the 2012 American Sociological Association annual conference titled: “Social Movements Theory: What is to be done?”).
institutions—as opposed to challenging, deconstructing and creating alternatives to that very system (Fitzgerald 2000: 573). With regards to anarchist and other anti-systemic social movements, the current SMT frameworks and their focus on reform and integration into the state as the only means for social change has silenced the important characteristics of these social movements. By framing these movements according to a priori notions of what movements “are”, how they are “supposed” to be effective organizations for social change, and most importantly how they conceive of counter-power, SMTs run into the problem of biasly critiquing and misspecifying the movement under analysis. This very notion is parallel to the concerns of Luke (1989) within his analysis of the concept of “civil society” used within the field of political science. As Luke highlights:

For Foucault, these operations [construction of knowledge within social science research that upholds the status quo] also can become a new set of interpretations to impose another system of rules on mass behaviour; they compose the tools of registration, assessment, classification that states employ in their attempts to create docile bodies (Luke 1989: 140, emphasis added).

In turn, SMTs have masked the important role that these social movements have and are playing in the fight for social justice and freedom within the current Neoliberal context. The ability for these discourses to render individuals and collectives silent is experienced in everyday conversation about the movement itself within academia. “How can they be anti-capitalist and anti-systemic and still use iPhones?”, “They are a conservative movement”, “Dumpster diving [a common subversive tactic used by Occupiers] just upholds capitalism,” and “direct action is irrational because there isn’t enough time for self-reflection,” are but a few of the misspecified discourses about the movement that I have heard proclaimed myself within academia. By speaking about and spreading knowledge in such a way without really understanding the characteristics of the movement itself, can, as I have experienced and expressed, overshadow the
actual practices and discourses these movements are trying to articulate. It becomes a form of bio-power over the individual and, in turn, renders the movement silent and, most extremely, exposes the individuals involved to state repression and political violence.

Because the history and current trends in anarchist thought and practice have fallen victim to the improper analysis in knowledge produced by scholars and other critics, the general analyses and critiques about anti-systemic thought and practice are sparse and often misspecified. This in turn has led to the belief that such social movements—specifically those rooted in anarchism—are violent and/or chaotic ideologies and cultures within mainstream discourses. According to Shantz (2003) and Williams (2004), throughout history, anarchism has been deemed chaotic and violent simply because an anarchist framework does not abide by the state and any social structure, ideology and practice that upholds it. This very fact is why studying anarchist movements through an anarchist framework itself—or what Bevington and Dixon (2005) refer to as a movement-relevant approach—can ensure a better and more effective understanding of current trends in anarchism as well as other anti-systemic movements. By studying radical social movement organizations (RMOs) from a perspective that understands and translates the characteristics of the movement from the movements perspective, can lead to an entirely different analysis (Fitzgerald 2000). Movement-relevant research can allow for activist-scholars and social movement theorists to provide support, theoretical models, and implement an all around better understanding within the mainstream discourses regarding the movements social and political agendas.

Providentially, in addition to the anarchist turn outside of academia within contemporary social movements, this turn is now beginning to occur within academia. Activists who have grown up and/or are contemporarily engaged in radical anti-systemic activism are now finding a
place within academe. For activist-scholars who adhere to radical and revolutionary ideologies and practices, they have developed new methods of research in order to emphasize the importance of the direct and horizontal participation of activist-scholars within these social movements. This type of methodology emphasizes producing knowledge *within* and *for* the movement itself rather than *about* the movement—a truly organic way for social movement researchers to develop movement-relevant frameworks and to ensure that they do not impose power over the individual through the production of knowledge. This methodology has been further developed as a way to actually aid in the development, implementation, and mobilization of the social and political agendas of the movements under analysis (Colectivo Situaciones 2003, Shukaitis 2007). Militant research, as I will elaborate in chapter three, is a way for scholar-activists to hold true to the non-hegemonic, non-hierarchical, and anti-systemic praxis of the Newest Social Movements.

*The Newest Social Movements: Autonomy, Affinity, and Liberation*

According to Day (2005), the New Social Movements that began in the 1960s, a majority of which were heavily grounded in identity-based issues that *demanded* the rights of recognition and integration into the state, are not at all parallel to the movements going on in the 21st Century. The “Newest Social Movements” (as he refers to them) are rather an extension of these movements and the labor movements of the late 19th and early 20th century as they are strictly anti-capitalist. However, their politics also reflect the failures of the Marxist revolutions during the 20th Century. As Day (2005) highlights, the Newest Social Movements are developing a class-based movement that moves across identity borders, which, most importantly, takes into consideration the privileges awarded us in society based on our identities (race, class, gender,
sexual orientation, able-bodied, etc.) and focuses on letting go of those privileges so as to build solidarity with other communities. This framework is what Day (2005) refers to as an “ethic of infinite responsibility and solidarity”, which: “can offer an alternative to the politics of recognition and integration, [through which] apparatuses of decision can be significantly dismantled through direct, community-based action, rather than just being ameliorated—or even further entrenched—by state-based reforms” (p. 202). John P. Clark (2013) has also identified the importance of this shift as he explains in detail how we—the Newest Social Movements or the Newest Left—must begin to develop a new social ethos, ideology, imaginary and eventually counter-institutions based on the practice of forming new communities of solidarity and mutual aid. These communities, whether they are organizations, small groups, or entire neighborhoods, are, as Day (2005) highlights, a form of creating affinities (rather than hegemony) in which power is dispersed across communities in a decentralized, non-hegemonic, and non-hierarchal framework. Hegemony, as has been highlighted, is precisely the conception of counter-power that led to the downfall of the Marxist revolutionary and vanguardist movements of the 20th Century. It is also what Bakunin himself was most concerned about during the First International. Thus, the anarchist principles practiced by 21st Century social movements are an extension of classical anarchism rather than a direct extension of Marxism (or rather it is an evolved framework that embodies both politics and takes into consideration the failures and successes of both). However, as Day (2005) also highlights, most of these movements do not often identify as an anarchist social movements per se, rather their actions and overall frameworks are anarchist(ic)—meaning they emphasize the importance of autonomy, decentralization, direct democracy, non-hierarchical and social revolutionary agendas.
Yet, as Foucault has so thoroughly highlighted, power is everywhere and thus the state apparatus and knowledge/power regimes have created what Foucault and Luke (1989) refer to as a Neoliberal subject that is thoroughly and unconsciously embedded within the state; a subject who thinks and acts within what Luke (1989) refers to as a Neoliberal political rationality. Thus, the rampant individualism of the Neoliberal subject, the predominance of the social democratic and reformist frameworks within academia, as well as the Neoliberal democratization of the global South are all concerns for the revolutionary Newest Left in the 21st Century. One of the most important questions for radical social movements today is: how does one non-hegemonically mobilize such subjects and what distinguishes the mass of society from those willing to seek social change within a radical and revolutionary social framework from those who are not? Here, critical theorists such as Marcuse (1991) have clearly articulated the problems faced by these movements with regards to the one-dimensionality of the mass of society; people they need to mobilize\textsuperscript{15}. The problem is that they clearly lack the imaginary to think outside of a statist-framework to seek social change; a problem, as I witnessed along my journey in both myself as well as others, that is now haunting the Newest Social Movements. This rationality has allowed for the justification of the historical and continual persistence of forms of domination and oppression that are fundamentally embedded within the US economic and political structure. Because the Neoliberal subject embodies the rationality of recognition, integration and individualism developed vis-à-vis the statist dominant framework itself, according to John Clark (2013), in order to begin to put the necessary revolutionary strategies of

\textsuperscript{15} By mass of society, this should by no means indicate that all of the people involved in the Occupy movement are guilt-free of thinking within a neoliberal rationale. In fact, a majority of the problems that the movement faces is because some participants are lacking the proper social ethos—usually due to privilege—to think outside of the statist-framework and or have held onto a priori political identities and ideologies.
the Newest Social Movements into practice, individuals must begin to break with the dominant social ethos.

According to Clarks (2013) dialectical social ecology, individuals and collectives must engage in a constant radical dialectic that “sees the world (including the social world, the natural world, and the world of ideas) as the site of constant change and transformation that takes place through processes of mutual interaction, negation and contradiction” (p. 22). As I have highlighted, he further emphasizes that this dialectic must focus on: “(at least) four spheres that are essential to the analysis of how social reality is generated, how it is maintained, and how it might be transformed”: the “social institutional structure”, “social ideology”, the “social imaginary” and the “social ethos” as I have already presented (p.32)\textsuperscript{16}. Thus, individuals must begin to (re)develop these spheres in order to rid themselves of the Neoliberal rationale, to think collectively and horizontally, and base the premise of all of their actions on systems of mutual aid and solidarity. As Katsiaficas (2006) further highlights, the necessary objective of individuals involved in the Newest Social Movements must be to first decolonize their life-worlds of the logos of the state in order to engage in the radical dialectics presented by Clark. Through bio-politics, we embody the states very characteristics—the “dominant consumptionist imaginary”, the “dominant economist ideology”, and the “dominant ethos” and thus we must break free in order to practice our freedom and seek social justice in accordance with our communities and the broader dialectic of man and nature (Clark 2013: 30). According to Anarchist-scholars and activists such as Day, Clark and Katsiaficas, this might be the only form of counter-power that can prevent the (re)incarnation of yet another hegemonic and despotic social and political praxis.

\textsuperscript{16} From here, I will simply refer to these four spheres as the “social ethos”.
Nonetheless, how does a social movement mobilize non-hegemonically? How do we create/develop a new social ethos? According to Randall Amster (2003), there are three analytical categories informed by cultures and communities that have anarchist(ic) tendencies, which can help to inform and develop this new social ethos. These analytical categories include: indigenous cultures/communities, alternative cultures/communities, and utopian visions, which can inform contemporary movements and individuals of either life-worlds prior to capitalism, alternative life-worlds within the shell of capitalism, as well as what our life-worlds will be like after capitalism (Amster 2003). Thus, looking to our past, presents and futures for the answer to this process is of utmost importance for social change; something that Foucault exemplified in his own work and genealogical analyses. However, as I have highlighted above, the ways in which social movement scholars and contemporary activists understand counter-power has prevented them from creating the proper frameworks to engage in practical revolutionary politics. Those advocating for fundamental transformations of society are often co-opted by those in power, rendered powerless by knowledge producers who prevent their very success by misspecifying their demands and ideas and/or have aided in the disciplinary power over their bodies by ignoring their “cries out” and allowing the state to continually oppress them. Luke (1989) discusses this concern as well in his assessment of the political sciences, which leaves us asking, where do we go from here? How do we, as academics, produce knowledge that does not uphold bio-power over the individual? What practices can we engage in in order to develop a new social ethos that allows us to practice our freedom and seek social justice in the 21st Century?
Aside from the methodologies and analytical categories highlighted above, Day (2005) also highlights how these answers have taken on the form of several non-hegemonic tactics that are indicative of the practices of the Newest Social Movements. These tactics include:

*Dropping* out of existing institutions; *subversion* of existing institutions, through parody; *impeding existing* institutions, via property destruction, direct action case work’, blockades, and so on; *prefigurative alternatives* to existing institutions, often via modes of activity that otherwise fall within the purview of a hegemonic politics, for example protests; and finally, construction of alternatives to existing forms that render redundant, and thereby take power from, the neoliberal project (Day 2005: 19, emphasis in original).

These tactics are also practiced within the Occupy movement itself. According to my empirical analysis, I have developed (based on Day’s analysis) four analytical categories to encompass the practices of the Occupy movement that are indicative of the movements overall characteristics. These characteristics include: leaderlessness (i.e., horizontalism), subversive politics, direct action/democracy, and affinities/autonomous organizing. Other radical anti-systemic and anarchist scholars have also determined these analytical categories to be informative models about how activists are in fact trying to create this new social ethos and praxis. As the Newest Social Movements are prefiguratively interacting in the here and now trying to project into the future, studying the unfolding of this process can inform the Newest Left and the rest of society about praxical (theoretical and practical) frameworks for social justice (Clark 2013, Gordon 2007). Furthermore, as Katsiaficas (2006) highlights, when the above tactics are not only theoretically understood, but most importantly, when they are *experienced* in practice, they have an effect on those willing to seek new ways-of-being guided by a want for social change.

According to Katsiaficas (2006, 2012), the “global eros effect”, through which individuals and collectives respond to not only the negative changes going on around them via Neoliberalization, but most importantly, the positive changes that take place when those individuals begin to resist against the negative effects they are experiencing is a key
characteristic of the Newest Social Movements. Thus, practice within an anarchist(ic)
framework is theory rather than subsuming one into the other. We cannot theorize yet what we
have not been capable of imagining, but we can develop practices based on the three analytical
categories of anarchist(ic) cultures/communities at best. There are a lot of lessons that can be
learned when one thinks outside the statist box and when one does, the process of “liberation”—
the ability to think and act autonomously with groups of people within a structure that deprives
us of community and solidarity—can be more easily recognized and imagined. Thus, the “eros
effect” can be thought of as a liberatory experience; a revolutionary moment when the individual
comes to critical consciousness and begins to use their autonomous imaginations to seek social
change.

Accordingly, as Bloch (1986) highlights, once engaged in direct action, this allows
individuals to further develop an “anticipatory consciousness” in which the individual attains the
ability to think beyond the dominant discourses. Anticipatory consciousness is grounded in the
tenet of hope and the individual can only come to this form of consciousness when they feel that
they and their communities have the power—the People Power—to change their circumstances.
This consciousness is also indicative of the theory of mutual aid that the classical anarchist
scholar Petyr Kropotkin (1955) theorized. Mutual aid, as he argues, is an innate feature in
human beings that is grounded in the ontological experience of the ethics of care and the need for
co-dependence within ones community. However, in a society where a Neoliberal rationality is
dominant, mutual aid is something that is no longer felt as an innate experience in our everyday
lifeworlds as was more commonly experienced amongst the industrial workers of the 19th
Century. Mutual aid today has been repressed in our societies and it is a factor that more
commonly comes to life in times of disaster and scarcity when the only hope left is for
individuals to begin to work together in solidarity with one another (regardless of identity or geography) in order to survive. As Clark (2013) highlights, during “disaster anarchism”—what he and thousands of others experienced during post-Hurricane Katrina as well as Post-Superstorm Sandy in the Northeast—individuals can develop an anticipatory consciousness as well. They reinvigorate their innate need to work with one another in order to create a new community—the “Impossible Community” as he refers to it—based on solidarity, mutual aid, and co-operation. This Impossible Community, according to Clark (2013), is a community where the only option left for progress is to begin to imagine, act, and create the new world that we all know is possible. This is where Clark’s dialectical social ecology becomes an important process for both the individual and the communities s/he is engaged in. Thus, it should only make sense now that for those who are suffering enough to advocate for justice, they have or are beginning to develop this anticipatory consciousness. I can attest to the changes the individual goes through during times of crisis and, most importantly, when the individual and the collective finally resist. This is why Foucault advocated for the ontological understanding of the self as a blueprint for practicing freedom, which I hope (reflecting on what has been read thus far), can be recognized by the reader as something I have attempted to engage in this paper; something I have been practicing myself since I began my radical activist journey.
Chapter 3: Methodological Framework

As a response to the lack of efficient frameworks within current SMTs, radical social movement scholars and activists (scholar-activists) have begun to develop new methodological frameworks to better understand and analyze the movements they are studying. Such methodologies as the movement-relevant frameworks advocated by Bevington and Dixon (2005) are indicative of these frameworks. However, it is well understood by the radical activist community itself that academics “assume” positions of power within the social order; power that anarchists and other anti-systemic activists recognize as being oppressive and protective of the states agenda, which they are strictly against. It has also become clear that the anti-systemic community is very weary of academics as well, throughout my own engagement in the Occupy movement, it was no surprise to activists when an academic entered the field careless of their surroundings with their mind set on the prize of writing some grand research project. Academics have a tendency to put on a particular face that is inorganic and immediately sets off an aura that says, “hey, look, I’m just here to do my job alright and this phenomenon (meaning you and your political agenda) is interesting and I need to get something published”\textsuperscript{17}. However, it is important to note that anti-

\textsuperscript{17} This may seem like sarcasm, however, I, who, unless I knew activists well enough would not introduce myself as a researcher or sociologist, literally had an actual interaction similar to this with another sociologist in the field. This researcher unmindfully interrupted me and my comrade during the radical counter-GA at the Occupy National Gathering, so that she could ask my comrade about his experience in the Occupy movement as a queer bodied individual. Furthermore, not but twenty minutes later, this same researcher decided to call the group of radical/anarchist Occupiers who were hosting the counter-GA a “bitch fest” as she deliberately rolled her eyes and walked away. In fact, this very event is precisely why my own research has evolved to specifically address the issues of social movement theoretical research, as clearly social scientists assume a power-over position (objectively and subjectively) in society, which can be quite detrimental to the success of the movement. Most importantly, this ethos can negatively and directly effect people involved in the movement itself. If you could ask the participants of the “bitch fest” how they feel about liberal social scientific researchers and how they engage in and study the movement, they would probably be able to better express their sentiments.
systemic activists are not anti-intellectual. For the most part, they clearly understand that knowledge production is powerful and that their messages need to be heard and mobilized to the rest of society\textsuperscript{18}. Thus, fellow anarchist-scholars and militant researchers (Shukaitis 2007, Williams 2004) have begun to focus specifically on the gaps in the literature in particular in order to articulate new ways to breakdown the borders between anti-systemic activists, researchers and the academy.

*Militant Research/Investigations*

Over the last decade, different forms of scholar-activist research have been on the rise. Militant ethnography in particular, as well as other forms of critically engaged ethnographic methodologies, were designed to allow the researcher to remain explicit throughout the research process as a way to challenge conventional understandings of the particular concept under analyses. This approach is ideal to uncover the truths about current trends in anarchist(ic) thought and practice (Shukaitis 2007). Radical scholars and activists designed militant ethnography, which allows individuals to critically engage in the movements and organizations they are a part of in order to collectively develop a framework to better understand and develop praxical frameworks through engagement in direct action. This methodology also allows the researcher to directly aid fellow activists in the production of knowledge with regards to strategies and tactics in order to mobilize the message and aid in the success of the movement’s political and social agenda. According to a militant research collective in Argentina known as

\textsuperscript{18} The array of books and magazines published by the Occupy movements itself (Chomsky 2012, Khatib 2012, also see *Tidal: Occupy Theory, Occupy Strategy* at occupytheory.org) as well as fellow and individual Occupiers is indicative of this appreciation for knowledge production. Williams (2004), also offers an extensive understanding of the agendas of radical and anarchist scholars within the university.
the Colectivo Situaciones, “Militant research attempts to work under alternative conditions, created by the collective itself and by the ties to counter power in which it is inscribed, pursuing its own efficacy in the production of knowledges useful to the struggles” (Colectivo Situaciones 2003:1). Militant ethnography thus allows activist-scholars to assume a deliberate participatory role within the movement (which they would most likely have done otherwise) in order to mobilize a more accurate representation of the movement within and outside the academy.

Informed by my personal experience in the Occupy Movement, the methodological framework of this thesis was designed to analyze not only the characteristics of the Occupy movement itself, but to provide my own personal account from the standpoint of an activist-scholar. By entering the field as a full participant and engaging in all activities that are normal and common for active Occupy protesters, this allowed me to not impose a top-down framework upon the movement, which would be a direct threat against the non-hegemonic horizontal foundation of the movement. This also allowed for the voices of active participants (including myself) to be accurately heard and understood, which aided the development of this project itself as I would not have discovered these methods, theories, and practices otherwise; something that I learned to value engaging with other academics and hearing stories about them via other activists involved in the movement. As one activist stated in the counter-General Assembly, “they [meaning liberals and academics] stole the movement from us” (...) “it’s going to basically become, just again, one more interesting sociological museum piece!” Thus, by utilizing militant ethnographic methodologies, this alleviated the potential threat of misspecification, co-optation, and repression of the movement as I began to adhere to and personally value the framework they were working hard at putting into practice.
Accordingly, the autoethnographic portion of this project (as I have already introduced) was used to better understand how activist-scholars (such as myself) as well as other activists in general—through collective engagement and practice within social movements—develop new identities. Autoethnography was used to specifically express the liberatory experience of radical activism or the “eros effect” that I experienced prior to and along my journey. When I entered the field I knew a priori that I was going to go through some form of emancipatory change, but I most definitely was not prepared for what was to come. As Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. once famously wrote, “a mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions.” As I will highlight in the remainder of this thesis (which is informed by my interactions within the movement as well as the interactions I had after entering back into the academy), this journey allowed me to develop a new lifeworld with regards to how I, a radical scholar-activist, conceptualize praxical models to seek social change and justice.

In addition to autoethnography and participant observation, this project also utilized Internet ethnographic methodologies in order to provide a unique and organic exploration of what it is like to be engaged in a radical anti-systemic movement. Because the Internet in particular and advanced communication technologies in general have become very important tools for organizing and spatial networking in the 21st Century, utilizing these tools in this thesis was not only valuable, but important to understand the richness of the movement’s characteristics. During the complete participant observation and autoethnographic data collection process conducted during my experiences in the Occupy movements, I collected all field notes and data such as pictures and audio recordings with an iPhone and an array of applications offered to assure proper data collection. Such applications included: voice recording devices, a camera, a note-taker, and a hashtag follower that allowed for instant updates.
of communiqués via Twitter and Instagram (online social networking tools) from activists during protests and other Occupy related events. By using an iPhone, I was also able to receive underground communiqués via a text messaging system that the Occupy movement calls the “Celly”, which helps to communicate to activists any important information during mass events such as directions, hazards, calls for help, when dinner will be served, places to avoid, etc.

Furthermore, because the Internet is such an important space to engage in activism for the Occupy movement, Internet Ethnography is also a key element to this study. The main tools used by the Occupy movement for mobilization, organizing and networking across the states and around the globe are through social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and personalized Webpages. Although some activists use the Internet to strictly communicate, organize, and mobilize messages to the general public, the Internet is also used as a form of protest via hacking and online sit-ins that shut down major corporations and other business’ websites. Hacktivism is also used to leak important information and information that should be made public (a form of modern day whistle-blowing). Online activism has also magnified the use of “subversive politics” (which I will explain in more depth in chapter four) through meme generation. The Internet has also allowed me to remain in contact with fellow activists, especially since the police raided the encampments across the states in late 2011. It has allowed Occupiers to continue their activism in a safer “underground” type manner through which they can continue to mobilize and organize online larger events online. It is often that now—due to extreme amounts of police brutality and police repression—they only reemerge when absolutely necessary, such as what occurred when Occupiers reemerged back into the public eye following Super Storm Sandy to help out with relief efforts. Of course, it is still important to note that Occupy has continued to this day to have a presence in all of the cities that had encampments.
Most Occupy organizations still conduct General Assemblies, host free meals, participate in community service activities, as well as continue to support the victims of the growing economic and social inequalities being caused by Neoliberalism. However, in addition to the above ground presence of the movement, the Internet has allowed me to stay informed and engaged in the movement even while I am physically engaging at the university where I study and do my research. Thus, throughout this thesis, it is important to recognize that not only is the information about the movements characteristics that I will describe below accumulated from my observations at events, but has also been informed by the different discourses on Webpages and social networking sites for each Occupy organization and/or affinity.
Chapter 4: The Anarchist Roots and Practices of the Occupy movement

As I traveled across the country from Occupy to Occupy and engaged in the movement, whether online or at events, the discourses of anti-capitalism, anti-corprotocracy, and acknowledging the social and economic inequalities caused by Neoliberalism were the most prominent discourses of the movement\(^{19}\). After learning about and experiencing first hand the characteristics of the movement, it became clear that the important anarchist(ic) frameworks being put into practice were something that needed to be better understood. Thus, after exploring the movement-relevant literature above, the remainder of this thesis will focus on highlighting these characteristics and critically analyzing the implications of and directions the movement needs to focus on if it is to continue its political and social agendas. These critiques are informed by both the literature as well as engaging in conversations with activists about particular issues that I will address throughout this chapter.

How and who Started the Occupy Movement?

_Adbusters._ The first sign of the Occupy movement was in a call to action by the anarchist magazine _Adbusters_; a Canadian anarchist magazine that is known for its use of culture-jamming and meme generation of political and social issues. The call to action was made online on July 13, 2011, which stated:

> A worldwide shift in revolutionary tactics is underway right now that bodes well for the future (…) On September 17, we want to see 200,000 people flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for a few months (…)

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\(^{19}\) Anybody willing can easily engage in these discourses online. On the Internet, these discourses portray subversive political messages via Occupy groups’ Facebook, Twitter and WebPages. Messages are usually found in the form of memes as well as the documentation and mobilization of street art and guerrilla media etc.
It's time for **DEMOCRACY NOT CORPORATOCRACY**, we're doomed without it (*Adbusters* 2011, emphasis in original)\(^{20}\).

This call also contained the now infamous image of the ballerina posing atop the Wall St. bull with the image of rioters in gas masks juxtaposed in the background.

**New York City General Assembly.** According to David Graeber—the well-renowned anarchist anthropologist—the New York City General Assembly (NYCGA) started right after the call to action made by *Adbusters* in mid-July 2011 (Graeber 2011). At their first meeting, several local activists, including Graeber himself, began planning what would soon become Occupy Wall Street. By using examples from the already well-known and successful anti-capitalist movements including the occupation of Tahrir Square in Tunisia (a movement a part of the larger Arab Revolutions), the Spanish *Indignados*, the Greek *agnakismenoi*, as well as the research done by Graeber himself on anarchist(ic) communities\(^ {21}\), the NYCGA decided that occupying a space in NYC to begin to collaborate and prefiguratively develop the movement was the most praxical way to attend to the call to action made by *Adbusters*. As one NYCGA activist and local artist from NYC, Martha Rosler (2012) stated:

> Before the occupation proper, artists (including me) participated in late August of 2011 in a seminar on debt and the commons; presenters were Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis, and Graeber, who had just published his giant history of debt. Debt and theft were on everybody’s minds. The seminar was held at 16 Beaver, the artist-run discursive space in the Wall Street district. In attendance were David Harvey and some Spanish *indignados/encampados*, as well as the Greek anarchist artist Georgia Sagri, who quickly formed a tactical alliance with Graeber, and they joined up with the NYCGA on September 17, 2011, helping to introduce anarchist forms and procedures.

Thus, the horizontal anarchist(ic) framework and consensus-based decision-making process were first practiced at the NYCGA even before the occupation on September 17, 2011 finally materialized.


Autonomous, Horizontal and Subversive Organizing

When you partake in any Occupy event—especially General Assemblies—a few things are noticed immediately. The foundational characteristics of the Occupy movements are: leaderless or horizontal, anti-bureaucratic, and directly democratic (consensus-based) characteristics. These characteristics work in tandem and formulate a holistic identity of what the Occupy movement is trying to do. These characteristics should also be thought of as the original foundations, which were formulated by the NYCGA and, most importantly, must be understood as having evolved. The praxical visions that are now commonly held amongst activists who are either still involved in Occupy or who are trying to create new organizations that can pick up where Occupy left off, have been tediously (re)developed in order to better understand the successes and failures of the movement, which I also hope to shed some light on. In doing so, I will highlight four main characteristics that are indicative of the movement itself. These characteristics include: leaderlessness (i.e., horizontalism), subversive politics and direct action, and affinities.

The first characteristic of most importance to the movement is that there are no leaders. Nobody will identify as a leader and/or point out any one person in particular that is the representative of or in charge of a said event. “We are all leaders!” as is often heard proclaimed, is representative of this characteristic. However, those who do engage in more activities and who volunteer to become accountable for particular affinities are often referred to as facilitators, organizers or representatives rather than leaders. They become the main voice for the small affinities and groups that engage in the broader organizational meetings that occur (at least during encampment and the year following the raids of the encampment) every day. These meetings, also known as General Assemblies (GA) are the places in which Occupiers converge
together to decide—based on consensus—strategies, tactics, and other organizational needs (funding, actions, theory etc.).

Along with the emphasis on leaderlessness, during GAs, Occupiers practice such things as the “human mic” and “progressive stack”. Progressive stack is used so that individuals who are typically marginalized and voiceless in the representative democracy that makes up the dominant culture get to speak first and all other individuals who want to speak during GA get added to a list until all voices and ideas are heard. At GAs, Occupiers also use hand signals to indicate whether they agree, disagree, need clarification etc. (see image to the right22), so as not to interrupt those who are speaking but can still “voice” their opinions during the decision-making process. These strategies allow for all individuals involved in the movement to act and think autonomously and to represent all voices. Consensus, according to Clark (2013: 188), is a commitment that anarchists use because they recognize “that conformism, instrumentalist thinking, and power-seeking behavior, which are ever-present dangers in all decision-making bodies.” Thus, put together, these characteristics are also indicative of horinzantalism/horizontalidad (Sitrin, Dissent 2012). According to Sitrin, horizontalism was first conceptualized as such in the alter-globalization movement (specifically in Argentina):

[Horizontalidad]…implies a flat plane upon which to communicate. It entails the use of direct democracy and strives toward creating non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian structures. It is therefore a break from vertical methods of organizing and relating. Horizontalidad is a concept embodying an ever-changing experience… (Sitrin 2007).

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22 Image was created by Occupy Designs and can be found at http://occupydesign.org/gallery/designs/occupy-hand-signals.
Occupy was thus not the first to use horizontalism, but was in fact inspired by and adopted the consensus models practiced in other horizontal consensus-based movements such as the Spanish indignados and the alter-globalization movement. As such, Occupy, as a movement, is a globally informed movement, which confirms that the global “eros effect” presented by Katsiaficas (2006, 2012) is actually materializing. In fact, at the Occupy National Gathering in Philadelphia, PA in July 2012, activists from Spain joined in the event and clearly knew the process (GA and hand signals) used by the Occupiers—a very enlightening experience that I was able to witness.

A second key characteristic of Occupy is the dependence on subversive politics and direct action, which is also a characteristic commonly used around the globe and one used in past radical movements. As mentioned above, this characteristic is most noticeable as one engages in the Internet discourses of different Occupy groups, where a proliferation of “memes” that are created to mock, subvert, and challenge the dominant political and social discourses are created and sent across the Occupy networks via Facebook, Twitter, Reddit and Instagram. This form of politics is very similar (albeit now more technologically advanced) to that of the Situationist International (SI) that was a heavily influential and radical group in France during the uprisings in the late 1960s (Shukaitis 2007). In fact, the term “subversive politics” is synonymous to the tactics of Détournement practiced by the SI as well as during the rise of the punk rock DIY culture in the 1970s, which themselves also find a place in the anti-systemic and anarchist(ic) cultural canon (Shukaitis 2007).

Subversive politics is also indicative of the movements’ emphasis on participatory and direct democracy as well as its occupation of space to engage in direct democracy—a subversion of the direct response to the representative democracy in the larger political structure, which
arguable is one of the major factors as to why Occupy began in 2011. Most Occupiers are very adamant about exposing how the 1%, the bought congress, Corporate Personhood, and the lack of real democracy within the political structure are precisely why things must change. The 99%—as they so adamantly advocate—do not have a voice in the current representative democracy and they try as best as possible to subvert and challenge any dominant ideologies and characteristics of that culture itself. Thus, anti-capitalism, anti-bureaucracy, anti-all forms of domination (racism, sexism, homophobia, able-bodiedness, patriarchy, anti-homelessness, and classism), which are a subversion of the prominent structural characteristics of the dominant culture, are all indicative of the foundations of the movement.

The last characteristic (although these are not at all close to all of the characteristics of the movements) is that of the affinity group (i.e. working groups or committees) that make up the whole of Occupy. These affinities were all created by subgroups within the larger organization and work specifically on particular issues that they feel they are best at attacking. Typically, these issues relate more to that particular individuals or group of individuals everyday lives and/or they have the knowledge and cultural competence to address said issues. As Clark (2013: 161) highlights, affinities are “autonomous” in the sense that they are not under the direction of any larger organization, but rather directed according to the interests and commitments of the members.” Affinities allow activists to more effectively engage in direct action. Occupiers also view affinities as being one of the most valuable characteristics of the movement. Below, I will describe in detail some of the major affinities that I encountered along my journey—affinities that I feel are of most importance to the success of the movement.

**Media.** Media affinities are responsible for Websites, Facebook Pages, Twitter accounts, newspapers, fliers, and livestreaming. Livestreaming in particular is a very important aspect of
the Occupy movement. Livestreaming—a form of “guerilla media” or non-mainstream media—is used to film and livestream (literally project live online). Livestreaming has become very important for Occupiers when they get arrested by helping to identify arrestees and to also help lawyers via capturing the real images of the police brutality that typically takes place at major Occupy direct action events and marches. Livestreaming is also very important for activists who cannot make it to events, assemblies and rallies. It allows individuals to engage in the movement as much as possible without physically being at the events. At times, when I could not make it to an event, I would be sitting at home with homework on one screen and an Occupy march on the other all the while tweeting and engaging in the online discourses via text boxes on livestream pages and/or Twitter pages.

*Kitchen.* Kitchen is the group responsible for gathering food supplies and making breakfast, lunch and dinner. Most major Occupy encampments have working kitchens (OWS had a kitchen that had a bike-powered energy source) that served three hot meals (usually vegan due to being able to provide food to an array of individuals with different food allergies and cultural diets) a day. At major Occupy gatherings such as the National Gathering in Philadelphia, the National conventions during election season, and the NATO protests in Chicago, Food Not Bombs (FNB) served free hot meals to the activists and the public. FNB is an anarchist organization that has been operating in the US since the 1970s and now has a presence around the globe. FNB is responsible for feeding millions of people free vegan meals in many major cities in the US at least three nights a week. In addition to providing free food for the community, these services also use a subversive form of collecting food by “dumpstering” (i.e. “dumpster diving”), in which they collect “bad” food from corporatized food

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23 For more information on FNB see there website at: http://www.foodnotbombs.net.
sources (particularly major grocery stores, cafés and restaurants). A lot of food was also donated to Occupy by local businesses and other organizations indicating the support and solidarity provided to the movement by their local communities.

**Women’s and LGBTQ Affinities.** Gender-based affinities are very important to the Occupy movement as they focus specifically on women’s, sexual and gender minority issues. At the Occupy National Gathering and the Occupy One-year Anniversary, CodePink (a very prominent radical women’s activist and human rights organization) had a heavy presence throughout the week. This affinity, which is also common in many Occupy organizations, is used to create a safe space for individuals to address gender-based and sexuality issues experienced both within and outside of the movement. There are several accounts of sexual violence and rape that many women involved in Occupy have experienced inside and outside of the movement and thus creating spaces to talk about and address these issues is imperative to the success of the movement and the process of decolonization for women, men, and gender and sexual queer identified individuals.

**People of Color Affinities.** In several Occupy camps, there were also affinities formed to address racial and ethnic minority issues as well as creates safe spaces for individuals to address racism, whiteness, and privilege within and outside of the movement. Occupy the Hood in Brooklyn and Wisconsin are specific and very active race-based affinities who concentrate on mobilizing and offering assistance to low-income racially segregated neighborhoods. Some Occupations such as (un)Occupy Albuquerque, which is a city that is majority minority, make it a point to address race, racism, and privilege as one of the most important issues of the movement. In fact, the (un-) in the name was used as the name Occupy itself was considered offensive to the majority population of indigenous peoples apart of the community of
Albuquerque. Occupations such as Oakland also addressed the issue regarding the name, as I mentioned in the introduction, but settled on still calling the movement Occupy. However, this tension also caused a split in the movement, which divided it between Occupy and the Decolonize movement. However, since the repression of the Occupy Oakland encampment and the unfolding of the Occupy the Farm affinity, the movement has adhered to addressing themselves as the Oakland Commune instead of Occupy as well.

*Strike/Occupy Debt.* There are several affinities apart of the Occupy movement that are dedicated to finding ways to relieve not only students of their student debt but for many other peoples suffering from overbearing medical bills and other common debt caused by the social problems embedded in the broader state structure. Such groups as Occupy Student Debt, Strike Debt and their Rolling Jubliee project are all dedicated to these causes\(^2\). As the Strike Debt Webpage proclaims:

> As individuals, families, and communities, most of us are drowning in debt to Wall Street for the basic things we need to live, like housing, education, and health care. Even those of us who do not have personal debt are affected by predatory lending (...) We are not a loan. Strike Debt came from a coalition of Occupy groups looking to build popular resistance to all forms of debt imposed on us by the banks. Debt keeps us isolated, ashamed, and afraid. We are building a movement to challenge this system while creating alternatives and supporting each other.

Finding new and subversive ways to relieve people of their debt and allow them the space to develop their selves and communities is of utmost importance for the success of any social movement, which these Occupy affinities recognize. Strike debt is also exemplary of the ways in which direct action to fight debt and free individuals of the ensuing burden, can directly impact the broader social structures, as well as allow us to eventually establish the counter-institutions and organizations necessary to create a more equal and just society.

The People’s Library and Education. A majority of Occupy encampments also had libraries filled with hundreds of books (thousands in the case of Zuccotti park) on topics such as Marxism, anarchism, and other revolutionary politics. These libraries were free to the public to take, exchange, give and read any book contained in the library. Occupiers—especially those apart of the library affinity—understand that education is important for the success of the movement and thus creating a space in which the public is welcome to learn and be educated was an important affinity for the movement to have.

In addition to the library, many Occupy encampments also had groups dedicated to handing out free literature (or DIY informational “zines” as they are commonly called within the anarchist communities) to anybody interested. For instance, at the Occupy Wall Street one-year anniversary, several tables set up that contained free literature and information on different affinities and working groups apart of Occupy. There were also several opportunities for individuals to engage in free lectures and “classrooms” to learn about different economic systems, such as green and solidarity economies, anarcho-syndicalism, and participatory economics as well as other praxical community-based frameworks for social justice. At the Occupy National Gathering and the OWS one-year anniversary, several of the days were dedicated to learning about systemic inequalities, the history of social movements, “leadership” and facilitator training, how to protect oneself non-violently during direct actions, as well as know your rights training in case of arrest and other forms of police repression. All in all, these affinities dedicated to knowledge and education are indicative of the ways in which Occupy recognizes that information that we would not otherwise have access to, needs to be shared within and amongst the different Occupy organizations and the communities they are apart of.
In addition to the above listed affinity groups, other common affinities include: medical/health\textsuperscript{25} and legal\textsuperscript{26} working groups, and the Occupy Fights Foreclosure affinities\textsuperscript{27}. Of course, it is important to note that these affinities are not indicative of the diversity of affinities apart of Occupy as many are not active anymore and/or were not as successful and relevant for the movement at large. However, the ones listed above have a heavy influence on the broader movements success and many are still very active to this day.

Taking all of these key characteristics into consideration, it becomes clear that Occupy’s foundations are clearly in line with the non-hegemonic tactics that are indicative practices of the Newest Social Movements presented by Richard Day (2005) in his timely book \textit{Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements}. And, as Williams (2012) highlights, although Occupy may not particularly identify as an anarchist movement per se, it is very much so practicing anarchist(ic) principles. According to David Graeber (2011), the prominent anarchist-scholar and activist heavily involved in planning and working with the Occupy movement, the horizontal direct democracy and general assemblies indicative of Occupy are grounded in the classical and contemporary anarchist(ic) practices as well as the stateless

\textsuperscript{25} Occupy, especially in the major cities (New York, Chicago, Portland, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Oakland to name but a few) are known for not only having guerilla medical teams, but also providing free first aid training for anybody who wants to get involved in the medical and health working groups. At major Occupy events, it is very common to see Occupiers walking around with large red crosses tapped to their bodies to indicate who to go to in need of medical attention.

\textsuperscript{26} The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) is known for providing free legal support for Occupiers. People involved in NLG also follow Occupiers during protests—typically, they are found wearing bright neon green hats, handing out numbers to call in case of arrest, and know your rights pamphlets as well as documenting arrests as they take place—as they document police brutality and other illegal goings on of those in power.

\textsuperscript{27} Occupy Fights Foreclosure affinities, which can also be found in most major Occupy groups as home foreclosures are one of the biggest concerns and issues that Occupy has focused on due to its direct relation to the issues of corporatocracy and Neoliberalism.
communities and ways-of-being he did his anthropological research on prior to the Occupy movement. Thus, the three analytical categories presented by Amster (2003) that inform anarchist(ic) organizations and communities (indigenous cultures/communities, alternative cultures/communities, and utopian visions) are also prominent in the frameworks of Occupy—most often within the alternative cultural and utopian categories as can be observed via the major influence of punk rock, self-identified anarchist activists, as well as radical queer identified participants.

However, although the Occupy movement’s foundational framework is more in line with anarchist(ic) principles, anarchism and anarchist is not indicative of the political and social cultures of all individuals involved in Occupy. As alter- and anti-globalization movements scholars have addressed, the movements that have began since the 1990s are better conceptualized as a “movement of movements” in which participants come from many different political, social and cultural lifestyles (Cox 2007, Arnall 2012). Thus, it doesn’t take long to realize when engaged in an Occupy event that participants embody a number of different political identities. Anarchists most likely make up the majority of who are involved in Occupy (especially on the West coast in places such as Oakland and Portland where Anarchism has been most prominent over the last several decades). However, Marxists (Leninist-Maoist as well as Post-/Autonomist who also make up a big percentage), liberals, social democrats, conservative and libertarians, etc also engage in the movement. In fact, according to the data found on the

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28 To defend my observation about how the majority of Occupiers are “suffering peoples”, according to the Occupy Research Demographic and Political Participation Survey, 15.5% of Occupy activists identify as “Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Queer”. These data were collected by the Occupy Research group (another affinity group apart of Occupy) during the Occupation at Zuccotti Park in New York City. All data collected by the Occupy Research Team is public and can be found at: http://www.occupyresearch.net/2012/03/23/preliminary-findings-occupy-research-demographic-and-political-participation-survey/
Occupy Research Webpage that was collected at OWS in NYC: 38.4% of Occupy participants were self-identified as independent/did not identify with a political party; 37.9% identified as democratic; 1.1% identified as republican; and 22.6% identified as other. According to these data, it appears that Occupy is in fact a “movement of movements”, even though a majority of participants (60%) are still in fact non-bipartisan voters or non-voters\textsuperscript{29}. However, most individuals have in fact “dropped out” of existing institutions—or, in the case of the radical queer identified activists, they were never really considered a part of the broader social structure to begin with.

\textit{Mobilization and Organizing within a “Movement of Movements”}

Because the Occupy movement is an anarchist(ic) movement, mobilizing anti-systemic changes to the broader communities that they engage in becomes a difficult task. The now infamous critique of the movement as lacking in any demands of the state and interaction with the broader political structure is a good example of the difficulties that the movement faces. Furthermore, because the movement is horizontal and is made up of individuals who have their own political agendas, mobilization becomes an even more difficult task. Here is where I feel Occupy needs to begin to re-articulate and formulate stronger collective identities and agendas that more effectively embody the multicultural identities of its individual participants. As Sitrin (2012b) highlights in the Occupy magazine \textit{Tidal}:

\textsuperscript{29}This is by no means representative of the general population of Occupy encampments as I myself empirically witnessed distinct differences between West and East coast Occupy groups—the West being more radical/militant. Occupy Oakland is known for being very militant and more likely to utilize black bloc tactics, which was clearly being practiced during May Day as swarms of activists wearing all black were marching in the streets through police barricades and walls of tear gas—a very militant scene indeed. For more information on the differences between West and East coast militant and radical activism (specifically anarchism) see Dana Williams’s (2009) article: “Red vs. green: Regional variation of anarchist ideology in the United States”.

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Our open and horizontal assemblies are our strength, but they leave us vulnerable to those who disrupt or divert the agenda. Having principles of unity, base political agreements and behavioral norms, bolstered by ways to effectuate these agreements, will create open spaces with limited disruption. The argument here is not against any particular group or institution (though not in support of them either), but to address the behavior. It is not about them being bad, but us being better.

Clearly, Occupy needs to begin to utilize the tools they have put forth from the beginning into a more cohesive manner. I would also argue that for the activists who have dogmatically held onto their own political and individual agendas, decolonizing our minds is of most importance if Occupy is to become a successful movement. I will discuss this in more depth in Chapter 5, but for now I will discuss what Occupy is and will most likely continue to do to engage in their communities and create new spaces to network, produce knowledge, mobilize, and organize for social justice.

As I have mentioned, the Internet is a very important tool for Occupy. Livestreaming, Facebook, and Twitter are Internet networks and technologies that aid with mobilization and communication between activists. The Internet is also a space where activism takes place. Anonymous—a separate organization but one that supports and whose members are heavily involved in the Occupy movement—uses the Internet to share messages and engage in radical hacktivism by shutting down corporate websites as well as other organizational websites that uphold structural inequalities. An example of this type of hacktivism is when Anonymous shutdown the Westboro Baptist Church’s (a radical Right wing anti-gay organization) Website with the message that we, as radical social justice activists, will not allow for intolerance to persist in our communities. In addition to these spatial networks, Occupy also uses a collective Website to network all of the separate Occupy organizations. This Website, known as
InterOccupy, is an online hub that allows for activists to communicate, send messages, and mobilize events to the broader Occupy community. As articulated in their mission statement:

We at InterOccupy seek to foster communication between individuals, Working Groups and local General Assemblies, across the movement. We do this in the spirit of the Occupy Movement and general assemblies, which use direct democratic and horizontal decision-making processes in service to the interests of the 99%.

However, although the Internet has become an important tool for Occupy to communicate across spaces, between Occupy organizations, as well as between other anti-systemic movements around the globe, the Internet is not as effective for mobilization outside of the movements within the communities that they interact in. The Internet is not as efficient a tool for mobilization as most people when engaging in social networking online have prior agendas. Unless you are looking to engage with Occupy, most individuals will not even know that Occupy exists anymore unless the movement has a public presence in their local communities.

With regards to space, since the state and police repression of the encampments in 2011, although some Occupy organizations still conduct GAs at least once a week, finding other spaces where they can engage in direct democracy, direct action, and community service has become a difficult task. However, many Occupiers are still heavily involved in community service initiatives such as Food Not Bombs, Really Really Free Markets, Occupy Foreclosures, and Occupy the Farm. Occupiers, via their efficient networking skills can also quickly mobilize support for other radical and social justice organizations. A wonderful example of Occupy’s

30 The mission statement and other information can be found at http://interoccupy.net.
31 Really Really Free Markets are common amongst Occupy organizations. These events are used to gift free clothing, food, and other needs to their local communities. In NYC in particular, these markets have been ongoing even prior to the start of the Occupy movement. A New World In Our Hearts, an anarchist collective in NYC whom was also was heavily involved in the Occupy movement also hosts Really Really Free Markets (specifically referred to as the Brooklyn Free Store) as well as free community dinners once a week. For more information on A New World In Our Hearts you can visit their Website at http://www.inourheartsnyc.org.
ability to quickly mobilize their own participants and help in direct action was the Occupy Sandy Relief affinity that attended to the affected neighborhoods during Super Storm Sandy in 2013. Within days, Occupy Sandy Relief was capable of raising hundreds of thousands of dollars to provide food, shelter, medical attention, and any other needs for victims and their families. During these events, mutual aid, solidarity and direct action (very anarchist(ic) characteristics of the movement) helped save and aid hundreds of victims. In fact, Occupy Sandy Relief’s main slogan is “Mutual Aid, Not Charity!” Thus, one can say that direct action, mutual aid, and horizontalism are very effective characteristics for social movement organizations in a society where ecological destruction is constantly on the verge of occurring. In fact, direct action and community service (the two most unnoticed and misinterpreted characteristics), are probably the most successful outcomes of the movements. If there is a community in need, a family about to lose their home to foreclosure, people going hungry, or schools being shut down due to austerity, Occupy is guaranteed to have a presence and they will be there well prepared and ready to help out with whatever is needed.
Chapter 5: Practicing Theory: ‘Anarchizing’ Academe and the Future for Occupy

*It was like a jazz quartet more than a military band. It was multiple voices taking place unable to provide the kind of stream-lined harmony for, “what are the demands”, “we want to know what you believe?” No! We are trying to get our instruments together. We are trying to find our voices. (...) So, I ask those in this chamber to at least just give the movement a hand. Don’t miss the message by being so preoccupied with the messengers. We are talking about the concrete suffering of precious human beings in ways in which they can straighten their backs up to engage in…yes, a fundamental transformation.*

—Cornel West

We have arrived at a point in history where individuals are once again resisting—on a global level—the (Neo)liberalization of their lifeworlds. As I have mentioned, throughout history individuals have been driven to seek new frameworks for social justice in order to escape scarcity. Human rights itself must be thought of as a cry out for help—as an idea that has, throughout history, evolved alongside the will of the people. However, as we have learned, the complexity in which the state controls our bodies, minds, and spirits is something that most activists have yet to grasp within contemporary social movements, or so it seems. When engaged in these movements, a few things become clear as advocated by participants themselves. For one, the myriad in which the body is controlled within the United States in particular has manifested itself in array of different interlocking systems of oppression and domination (Collins 2000). Thus, when the individual eventually cries out—when the individual is in dire need for help—this creates an opportunity to help indicate the technologies that have created the individuals suffering. In order to resist and fundamentally escape the colonization of our everyday lifeworlds, we must engage in a radical dialectics between the four spheres through which “social reality is generated, how it is maintained, and how it might be transformed” (the “social institutional structure”, “social ideology”, the “social imaginary” and the “social ethos”) (Clark 2013: 32). However, this is a requirement of all individuals whether, scholar, activist, or...
both (for instance) because, as Foucault highlights, our freedom is bound to each other and when we have fully taken care of our selves—when we go through the process of decolonization—then we learn how we must fundamentally take care of each other. Thus, through the process of developing a new social ethos from the ground-up by encouraging a radical dialectical approach for social justice (as is practiced in contemporary anti-systemic social movements such as the Occupy movement), we can begin to engage in the discourses to develop a praxis in which we can fundamentally learn how to free our selves.

To this day critical dialectics have exposed issues of privilege and domination (whiteness, classism, racism, sexism etc.), which, throughout history, have continued to uphold the Neoliberal structure. The social ethos of the mass society (the dominant Neoliberal rationale) as I have experienced, has prevented the full development of a social movement that can fundamentally transform society. We are a “microcosm of society” and thus without “occupying our minds” of all forms of domination, then we cannot successful “Occupy the world”. In order to continue to socially r/evolve in a positive manner and to combat Neoliberalism and the ensuing social ecological destruction, we must start to focus on creating a holistic and praxical framework that fights all forms of domination and systemic inequalities. This framework, or social ethos according to Clark’s (2013) radical dialectical critique, would take on an anarchist(ic) framework that is in constant movement and practice finding ways to fight Neoliberalism in every crevice in society that it manifests itself. In doing so, by practicing prefiguratively—creating a new-way-of-being in the shell of the old—we can directly impact the dominant social structures and spawn a positive social r/evolution.

In order for Occupy to begin to really seek to impact the Neoliberal rationale that the mass of society embodies—the individualistic and consumerist ideologies—then we must create
and practice a new social ethos in order for people to begin to imagine and put into practice a new-way-of-being that believes in equality across the board. Informed by Clark’s (2013) dialectical social ecology, taking into account the Western critique of the state and its political and economic institutions, as well as the necessary the culture and spiritual aspects of society (the social ethos) as well, are important to understand how Neoliberalism has affected our lifeworlds. More specifically, those embedded in Western industrial societies must also begin to consider and critique the current ethos of their own communities and how it may have contributed the suffering of others (Is my privilege at the expense of another human being or community?). Accordingly, although Occupy tried desperately to focus on creating a horizontal movement, there were many issues caused by cultural and political differences amongst activists. While those embedded in the Western industrial frameworks are often very critical of the Neoliberal structure, some within positions of power and privilege—whether through whiteness, patriarchy, able-bodiedness, heteronormativity, social and cultural capital, class privilege, etc.—did not often critically engage in the process (direct democracy) as effectively as others. For some, not recognizing their own positions of privilege (whether consciously or unconsciously) became detrimental to their own analysis and engagement in the movement. It does not take much critique to understand why some Oakland activists were offended by the name Occupy while others were not, why (un)Occupy Albuquerque actually changed the name to take into consideration the indigenous people in their communities, and why there are many stories and personal experiences of discrimination—a form of oppression and domination!—occurring in the camps themselves (Campbell 2011, Khatib 2012). The reason why there were so many identity-based affinities in the movement was that Occupy was and had to engage in these discourses in order to effectively fight all systemic forms of domination within our communities, and, since we
are “a microcosm of society”, challenging these problems within the encampments was necessary process. Thus, one can begin to see how the Neoliberal rational is very powerful. Theoretically, if the Occupy movement was collectively and prefiguratively engaging in solidarity and mutual aid, then fundamentally they would have been tediously working at the process of decolonization and consciousness-raising as well. Although I think that a majority of Occupiers did work tentatively at doing this, it had become clear by the time that I arrived at the National Gathering that many activists and people engaged in the movement upheld systems of privilege and domination (usually via classism and individualist consumerist ideologies). These issues, as I have tried to highlight throughout, need to be taken into consideration if there is to be a successful future for the Newest Left.

As Clark (2013) highlights, focusing on what he refers to as a communitarian anarchist project, which develops a radical dialectical critique of society and, in so doing, develops a praxical framework built from the knowledges of both Western and indigenous perspectives to understand where we need to go from here can help in the development of the Newest Left. The communities of mutual aid and solidarity as was experienced in New Orleans by Clark after Hurricane Katrina as well as what occurred after Super Storm Sandy in the Northeast are wonderful examples of how anti-systemic social movement activists can and are effectively creating a new world in the shell of the old. The dominant social ethos—the consumptionist ideologies and individualism of the mass of society and even some involved in the movement—should be something that Occupiers, people involved in, interested in, and engaging in discourses about the movement engage in. How do we begin to develop ways-of-being that are not dependent any longer on the Neoliberal structure?
As André Gorz (2000) highlights, by using “non-reformist reforms” to develop counter-institutions we can help combat our conceptions of production and consumption in society to create new practices that are socially and ecologically friendly. Relocalizing our food sources, practicing organic food sovereignty and making sure that all individuals are fed healthy diets in our communities since our food sources are also stratified, is an example of how peoples practice non-reformist reform within and outside of the Occupy movement. Other examples are that of direct action, which Occupy is very successful with engaging in (especially in times of dire need and scarcity in their local communities). Occupy Foreclosures, Occupy Debt, and Occupy Sandy Relief are great examples of how the Occupy movement has engaged in direct action to mobilize their messages and political and social agendas as well as help protect their communities against the encroaching Neoliberal state structure. Living prefiguratively by developing a new social imaginary and ideology both individually and collectively is something that the Newest Left needs to consider as praxical frameworks for their social and political agendas.

Of course, in order to produce knowledge and aid in the development of this ethos that these movements are trying to create and mobilize, as scholars, we must recognize our own privileges in order to understand what it is like to suffer whether we are ourselves or not. We cannot assume anything about the collectives we study until we have felt and understood what these individuals are experiencing. Why do these Occupiers dumpster dive?\(^3\) It is not to just simply be a “punk” and “uphold the same system (capitalism)” that they are trying to combat. They dumpster so they can eat, take care of their bodies, and provide for their communities three

\(^3\) I’m posing this question because I sat in a classroom that chose to mock Occupiers for their practices such as dumpster diving. I am assuming here also that there are many similar misspecified critiques of the movement similar to this one—something we should reflect upon if we are speaking about and engaging in discourses regarding anti-systemic movements based on our a priori notions of revolutionary political praxis.
free vegan hot meals a day from a bike-powered community kitchen in the center of downtown Manhattan. They dumpster so that all bodies can be feed and well taken care of so that they can keep their space open and inclusive; so they can feed all the people providing free labor and love, medical attention, legal support, knowledge, etc. so that all voices that need to be heard can finally have a safe space to speak out. That’s why Occupiers dumpster dive.

As a militant researcher, I have taken part in all of these activities and tactics that the Occupy movement practices. Thanks to Occupy, I can say that not only have they begun to alter the discourses revolved around the corruption of Neoliberalism, but also they have highlighted that our cities are segregated and reflect the rationality of Neoliberalism as well—the commons no longer exist. Thus, communalism (or the act of “communing” as Clark (2013) explains) is a practice that has long been repressed both at home and within our workplaces, which includes how we conceptualize and engage in politics. We are disconnected from our communities and thus distant from the very apparatuses that control our bodies because, arguably, politics should begin on the local level where these changes not only directly affect our bodies, but in the spheres where we have the autonomy and power to transform them. The solidarity and mutual aid that is necessary to begin to practice our freedom and develop a new blueprint for social justice can, as I have experienced, only be practiced in spaces that allow for the boxes and borders that prevent our identities and spirits from flourishing to be deconstructed. As I have experienced and expressed in this thesis, when practicing ones freedom, an “eros effect” and “anticipatory consciousness” uplifts the individuals spirit and reinvigorates a drive to engage further in revolutionary praxis to seek social justice. Throughout my experience engaged in the movement, I would say that I now fundamentally believe, as so many anarchists also do, that if allowed to flourish autonomously within a collective of similarly engaged individuals, human
beings can and will morally and ethically practice their freedom. This praxis is not one that requires hegemony or an abstract political program; it requires hope and faith that humanity can and does have the ability to change their everyday lifeworlds for the better of all of humanity including the earth.

Most importantly, this thesis has shown how knowledge has controlled the ways in which we conceive of the “relations to power” that we conceptualize as praxical revolutionary political discourses. The mere fact that as scholars we have yet to grasp fundamentally the actions of people practicing these politics in their everyday lives (i.e. not understanding how the people relate to power) we have failed at falling victim to our “appetites for power”. We have institutionalized how we conceive of counter-power and in doing so we have silenced the peoples cries out for help. However, as Clark expresses, a radical dialectical social ecology can help aid in developing praxical frameworks for social justice; an approach that not only interrogates the dominant institutions and ideologies as is often expressed in the work of critical theorists, but must also interrogate the ways in which these constructs control the very ethos and imaginary that the individual embodies. Thus, the individual must take care of the self before engaging in revolutionary political praxis. Without doing so, as I have witnessed engaged in the Occupy movement and within academia, the individual is capable of being co-opted (albeit unknowingly) by the state through their actions that impose power over others, which in turn imposes power upon their selves. In order to practice our freedom, we must decolonize our everyday lifeworlds (take care of ourselves) from a power-over ethos and begin practicing decentralized non-hegemonic ways-of-being within and outside of academia. Conceptualizing counter-power as a praxis that infinitely distributes power evenly throughout our communities can effectively help individuals seek freedom and justice. As critical and militant scholars and
activists, we must be prepared to listen and help in practical ways to deconstruct the technologies that have caused the suffering of these peoples and help them implement practical frameworks to, as Cornel West expressed, seek a fundamental transformation of society.
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