

OCCUPY TALKS

by Richard Gunn

[OCCUPY TALKS draw upon Richard Gunn and Adrian Wilding 'Occupy as Mutual Recognition' and 'Hierarchy or Horizontalism? - Critics of Occupy', published by Heathwood Institute and Press (www.heathwoodpress.com) on 12 November 2013 and 31 January 2014.]

Notes:

The texts which follow relate to talks on OCCUPY held at Word Power Books, Edinburgh, between 12 August and 15 August 2014. The meetings were introduced by Robert C. Smith and myself. In each meeting, Robert and I presented ideas – after which, discussion developed.

The meetings aimed to effect a transition from a “lecturing” mode to horizontal discussion. As the series of meetings unfolded, to-and-fro discussion became the focus.

Because the meetings sought to emphasise discussion, it was not intended to present the texts below in their entirety. The aim was to raise issues informally, and to dip in and out of the notes prepared. When you read the texts on Heathwood's website, please bear this circumstance in mind. What is presented here is an artifact, or a resource, rather than a polished and completed piece.

To the texts, two “handouts” circulated at the OCCUPY meetings are added. One is a short chronology of major Occupy events. The other is a reading list that may, perhaps, suggest ways ahead.

1. OCCUPY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

(Text relating to, and partially presented at, the first of the four OCCUPY meetings.)

First, a note concerning our – Robert's and my – objective: in the present series of meetings, we do NOT intend to give an in-detail analysis of Occupy events. (For a short chronology of the Occupy movements, see the circulated handout. The handout is for background only: its aim is to supply a reference point for conversation.) What we ARE interested in is the Occupy movement's *significance* for radical/revolutionary politics.

This *significance* has a number of aspects. A number of distinct questions are raised. The questions that I have in mind include the following:

- Why is the Occupy movement interesting?
- How (by what criteria) should the Occupy movement be assessed?
- How can the Occupy movement be followed? In other words: What Is To Be Done? Or perhaps better: What Should We Do? (I prefer the last-mentioned formulation because it includes the word 'We'. The formulation 'What Is To be Done?' makes me think of how a Centurian tank moves.)

In the meetings which follow, we will explore at least some of these questions. The present talk focuses mainly on the first ('Why is the Occupy movement of interest?'). Towards its end, the talk comments briefly on questions two and three.

(i) *Why is the Occupy movement interesting?*

I'd like to answer this question with a piece of autobiography. My first political memory was the radical summer of 1968. I did not participate directly in the events of that summer – but it was 1968 that set me on my way. When I became a university lecturer in 1974-75, political optimism reigned: a university seemed a space of freedom and exploration, and sunlight prevailed.

As my time as a university teacher unfolded, a very different mood emerged. I retired in 2011 and, during my last fifteen years as a lecturer, depression – political depression as well as personal depression – ruled. Will you believe it? I was so ground down by administrative and career-related pressures that I hardly noticed neoliberalism's emergence. I hardly realised that *neoliberalism's* marketisation of everything (including universities) was partly responsible for the pressures I felt.

And then came 2011. As I retired – as I stepped *out of* university-defined existence and *into* the world – it was as though I was refreshed. As it happened, one of the first books I turned to – suitably enough, a book I acquired at Word Power – was *The Idea of Communism* edited by Douzinas and Žižek. There I read:

The long night of the left is drawing to a close. The defeat, denunciations and despair of the 1980s and 1990s, the

triumphalist 'end of history', the unipolar world of American hegemony – all are fast becoming old news.

When I retired and looked around the world, I felt: “This applies to me!” The last 10-15 years before I retired were just that: a long and depressing night of the soul. And when I looked around the world, I saw that it was a world on fire. For the first time since 1968 and its aftermath, there was a revolutionary movement. Neoliberalism was in crisis, and the game had changed.

I'd like to say a bit more about how, in my view, the *game had changed*. What excited me when I looked around the world in 2011-2012-2013 was not merely that *the left was resurgent*. That was exciting enough! But there was more: what excited me was that there were changes *in the revolutionary left itself*. Let me explain.

In order to explain what I mean, I would like to add some more autobiography – this time, intellectual biography.

During the last previous upsurge of radical/revolutionary thinking, I used to ask myself: *why* is communism an emancipatory goal? What is it that is *valuable* in the (Marxist) idea of a communist society? To phrase the question philosophically: what is (for the left, and for myself) communism's *rationale*?

The question can be phrased in different ways: what is it that, above all, revolutionaries seek? They seek emancipation – but what *is* emancipation? What sort of society is an “emancipated” society?

When I last reflected on this question, during the 1970s and before neoliberalism set in, my best answer was: an emancipated society is a society where *mutual recognition* exists. Communism is valuable and to-be-desired because, where communism is practised, mutual recognition may obtain. Where (on the contrary) *property* exists – where *private property* exists – mutual recognition is impossible.

What is “mutual recognition”? The term comes from the philosopher G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) who influenced Marx. A society where there is mutual recognition is one where individuals are free – free, that is, not *despite* other individuals (as in scenarios of “negative” freedom) but *in and through* interaction with others. And interaction, itself, is untrammelled and unconstrained.

Where there is mutual recognition, individuals *expand* and *develop* through interaction with others. Interaction is *educative* in a deeply real and deeply informal sense.

On the basis of what I have said about mutual recognition, you can (I hope) understand what excited me about changes in the post-2011 left. Consider the following points:

- In the past, and in the 1970s, left wing (Marxist) politics tended not to ask *why* it valued communism. If an answer to the question “why?” was given, it tended to focus on issues of justice and welfare. I don't mean to say that justice and welfare are unimportant – far from it. But such questions don't capture *everything* that inspires a revolutionary gleam.

- In 2011 and afterwards, the Occupy movement *has indeed returned an (implicit) answer to the question “why?”*. Its answer is, in effect, the one to which I was drawn in the 1970s. For the Occupy movement, what was (and what is) important is *mutual recognition*. What was important for people who took part in Occupations was the sharing and commoning that mutual recognition entails. *For the very first time in history* – well, not for the *very* first time – *there was a movement which addressed directly revolution's aim*. To return to the “philosophical” version of my question: *for the first time, there was a movement which made communism's rationale a live and direct issue*.

And that, in a word, is why I regard the Occupy movement as interesting. The Occupy movement focuses directly on what radicalism seeks to achieve. It focuses not on this or that secondary goal (however important). It highlights the ultimate *purpose* of left-wing radical action.

As I have said, this “purpose” is encapsulated and summarised in the (Hegelian) term “mutual recognition”. To the best of my knowledge, the term “mutual recognition” was never mentioned in the course of Occupations. But it should have been mentioned – and *could have been* mentioned! Gunn and Wilding's 'Occupy as Mutual Recognition' (www.heathwoodpress.com) makes the Occupy-and-mutual recognition connection explicit.

The term “mutual recognition” summarises everything that is important about the Occupy movement. More: it summarises everything that is valuable about the revolutionary left. And this is why the Occupy movement is important!

If I am right, there can be no going back from Occupy. There can be no question of treating Occupy as a thing of the past. If mutual recognition is revolution's goal, and if Occupy thematizes mutual recognition, to set aside Occupy is to set aside revolution itself.

To employ a term which has featured on the Heathwood Institute and Press website: what is important about Occupy is not the events themselves but mutually recognitive *politics*. The task which confronts us is that of *understanding* such politics. And of keeping such politics alive.

Standing back: I have asked “Why is the Occupy movement interesting?”. I have answered this question – but in very general terms. A more specific answer explores

the notion of mutually recognitive *politics*; in doing so, it sheds light on what mutual recognition means. Let me, at this point, offer two suggestions:

– One suggestion concerns mutual recognition: I have stated that mutual recognition is, or involves, interaction that is untrammelled and unconstrained. In a word, it is *unstructured*. It gives its law to itself, in the sense that a good conversation is guided by where the argument leads. Such interaction *is not confined by this or that social institution*. It is *not confined by this or that set of role definitions* – role definitions and social institutions being two sides of the same alienated thing.

Summing up this suggestion: at the core of Occupy lies *unstructured interaction* – or mutual recognition, in what I take to be Hegel's sense.

– The second suggestion concerns democracy. In the Occupations of 2011-2013, democracy was practised – and not just any democracy. The democracy that was cultivated and practised was *participatory* and *consensual* democracy: in a general meeting, the aim was not to secure a majority of votes but to find a course of action on which all present could agree. (For a helpful discussion of Occupy-style participatory democracy, see David Graeber *The Democracy Project* chapters 3 and 4.) My claim, here, is that Occupy-style *participatory* and *consensual* democracy – democracy that is *horizontal* rather than *hierarchical* – is *democracy constructed on mutually recognitive principles*. If this claim is valid, Occupy-style democracy is the *form of democracy which the left (and humanity) needs*.

Occupy-style democracy is the subject matter of our second OCCUPY meeting. Here, I continue with the questions that I have raised about Occupy's significance. So far, I have considered question (i). I comment on questions (ii) and (iii) more briefly.

(ii) *How (by what criteria) should the Occupy movement be assessed?*

In the aftermath of the 2011-2013 uprisings, Occupy was criticised in numerous ways. Some of these criticisms strike me as silly – for example, the suggestion that Occupy was deflected by liberal ideas. I comment on critics of Occupy in our third meeting. Here, I refer to just one criticism – owing to the importance of issues raised.

The criticism is that Occupy lead nowhere – that Occupy “failed”, because it formulated no specific demands. One reason for this “failure” was, in the mind of critics, Occupy's principled *horizontalism* and absence of “leaders”. Without leaders (so it was felt) demands could not be pressed.

The criticism opens up a long – and in the history of Marxism, important – debate over the *problem of organisation*. (By the “problem of organisation” is understood the problem of *revolutionary* and *political* organisation.) Roughly speaking, Marxism has thought of *political organisation* in an instrumentalist (or tactics-and-strategy) way. To accuse Occupy of “failure”, and to link this accusation to its refusal to present

practical demands, is to think of political organisation in a traditionally instrumental fashion.

It is to measure Occupy against an instrumentalist criterion/yardstick.

In the case of Occupy, is an instrumental criterion/yardstick appropriate?

In the events of 2011-2013, the politics of Occupy turned on *the practice of mutual recognition*. Such politics were *prefigurative* in character – as Graeber (for example) makes clear. (By “prefigurative” politics, I understand a politics which *reaches ahead* to its idea of an emancipated future – and which sets out to *live an emancipated future* in a not-yet-emancipated present. Prefigurative politics *anticipates* – anticipates in practice – struggle's aims.)

Now to the point: a politics *that is prefigurative* and a politics *that is seen in instrumentalist terms* are (so I suggest) incompatible. They are, at any rate, *conceptually* incompatible: if an instrumental (or tactics-and-strategy) approach is adopted, there can be no point in *anticipating* a victory that is still to be won. A military example makes the point clear: if a general acts, on a battlefield, as though the enemy is defeated then, almost certainly, the battle is lost. (It is true that this point concerning *incompatibility* requires qualification: whatever is said regarding concepts, various hybrids of *instrumental* and *prefigurative* organisation exist. I do not deny the existence of such hybrids. Nor do I dismiss them out of hand – as useless or unworthy. What I do propose is that *a tension is always present* when prefiguration and instrumentalism is combined.)

Let's apply this line of thought to Occupy. To complain that the Occupy movement has “failed” is to measure it against instrumentalist criteria. But *instrumentalism is called in question by the (prefigurative) Occupy movement itself*. Occupy is a movement that attacks instrumentalism in politics – and in society as a whole. Can/should such a movement be assessed by measuring it against an instrumentalist criterion? The story of the ugly duckling (which rturned out to be a swan) comes to mind...

This said, however – can we leave the question of criteria and “failure” here?

I think we must say more.

This “more” is to the effect that the Occupy movement is less of a “failure” than its critics claim.

It altered the international political agenda: it made social *inequality* a lively and everyday theme. Of course, concern with social *inequality* has a lengthy history. However, neoliberalism encouraged us to think in terms of *absolute* wealth – and wait for this wealth to trickle down. As part of the depression induced by neoliberalism, questions about inequality started to seem *passé*. Occupy broke with this depression –

and highlighted the inequality that neoliberalism and its aftermath brings.

Further: there is a question about how social and political ideas circulate. In his *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, Manuel Castells suggests that ideas circulate (and movements succeed) through *shared experience*. Looked at from this “Castellian” angle, the Occupy movement is up and running – as, in a minor way, this meeting demonstrates.

Enlarging on this point, we may say that the Occupy movement did not merely change individuals' 'consciousness' – as traditional Marxist thinking might suggest. It changed *individuals*. It generated a world-wide population of individuals who are *less likely than heretofore* to slot into neoliberalism's slots... Can anyone who is influenced by Occupy draw a line around him or herself, and become a place-holder or job-holder? We shall see.

(iii) *How can the Occupy movement be followed?*

What happens (and what may happen) next? How can the impetus of the Occupy movement be recovered or sustained?

Here, in the first of our meetings on Occupy, I don't jump ahead of our discussion. I raise the question, but don't attempt an answer here. I offer, however, a distinction that may be of help:

- A follow-up to Occupy might take the form of further Occupy-style events: more crowd-filled parks and squares, more mass demonstrations.
- Or a follow-up to Occupy might take the form of a series of events any one of which is (relatively) small-scale. Chomsky's claim (in his *Occupy*) that opportunities for a follow-up are *everywhere* looks to initiatives of a (relatively) small-scale kind.

As a limiting case, an Occupy-style event needn't be an *occupation*.

What should we do? I don't know.

Let's see how discussion proceeds.

In the light of what has been said in this talk, there is really only one rule. A rule which should be followed with *absolute* conviction. It's this: act *only* in ways that bring mutual recognition into existence. *Instrumentalist* forms of political action and *hierarchical* forms of political action tend, overwhelmingly, to lead away from a mutually recognitive terrain. It is true that, in a given case, one can never be certain: it is *just conceivable* that an iron law of oligarchy may set itself in reverse gear. But such a reverse gear is very unlikely! It is overwhelmingly more likely that hierarchical organisation will replicate and, indeed, intensify itself. An attempt to bring mutual

recognition into existence must begin, prefiguratively, with mutual recognition. Occupy-style politics starts as it intends to go on.

2. OCCUPY AND DEMOCRACY

(Our second meeting was on Occupy and democracy. Robert was the chief introductory speaker. Here, I signal the topic – but do not discuss it fully. Instead, I suggest a relation between Occupy-style democracy and my previous talk. And I sketch a diagram illustrating ways in which 'democracy' can be seen.)

(a) *Occupy-style democracy and my previous talk*

Robert and I agree that Occupy-style democracy is *democracy that brings mutual recognition into view*. It highlights mutual recognition and is, so to say, the *political form* of mutual recognition. Gunn and Wilding's 'Occupy as Mutual Recognition' (www.heathwoodpress.com) – a paper I referred to in my first talk – attempts to give substance to this idea.

Looked at from a mutually recognitive angle, what's so special about Occupy-style democracy?

In the first place, Occupy-style democracy is *participatory*: it subsists in and through, and it focuses upon, the practice of *free interaction* or *unstructured interaction* that is mutual recognition's core. As *free* and as *unstructured*, interaction has an egalitarian and to-and-fro rhythm; the same rhythm is present, when ideas of participatory democracy are consistently carried through.

In the second place, Occupy-style democracy is *consensual*. By this I mean that an Occupy general meeting *attempts to find a course of action on which all present can agree*. The meeting *doesn't* proceed by asking: which proposal wins the majority of votes? In *majoritarian* (or *majority-seeking*) democracy, there are winners and losers – and the views of those who have lost the vote are disregarded. In a word, the losers are “overruled”. In *consensual* (or *consensus-seeking*) democracy, the terminology of “winners” and “losers” is meaningless. Every individual's view counts. In this way, mutual recognition's focus on *the freedom of each and every individual* comes into view.

(b) *Democracy: a diagram*

My diagram is (a reader or hearer will be delighted to know) utterly simple. It consists of a straight line, divided at various points:

A--B-----C-----D-----E-----F

The aim of the diagram is to range political positions along a spectrum. The spectrum runs from *hierarchy* – or, indeed, outright *verticality* – at point **A** to *horizontality* at point **F**. Let me comment, very briefly and schematically, on the letters that my diagram contains.

A stands for out-and-out, brutal, top-down dictatorship – or tyranny.

B stands for *absolute monarchy* – which is top-down, although questions about “legitimacy” may be raised. A *monarch* (however “absolute”) is supposed to be different from a *tyrant* – in that a monarch rules in a “just” and “rightful” way. If the people *over whom the king or queen rules* dispute his or her justice or rightfulness, questions about “legitimacy” start to appear.

C stands for what political theorists term *élite democracy*. On this model, parliamentary representatives are voted into office every five years or so – and then, once they have elected their representatives, citizens say or do nothing at all. It is the representatives (and not the citizens) who take political decisions. The *élite* version of democracy takes a dim view of the electorate. In the words of Joseph Schumpeter, who (writing in the 1940s) champions *élite* democracy, the individual is 'an indeterminate bundle of vague impulses loosely playing about given slogans and mistaken impressions'.

D stands for what is usually termed 'liberal democracy'. Here, representatives are elected (as in Schumpeter) – but the citizens (or in other words the electorate) are seen as having a voice. This voice is expressed in what Habermas terms a 'public sphere' - a sphere of debate where citizens (or at least some of them) have their say. The hope is that elected rulers listen to what is said.

E stands for *participatory* democracy – where interaction amongst citizens comes into focus. Active, and interactive, citizens (and not merely representatives) act politically, and take political decisions.

F stands for *participatory and consensual* democracy. Individuals meet together, and seek courses of action upon which all can agree. In models **C** and **D** and **E**, democracy is present – but in the form of *majoritarian* democracy. With **F**, the notion of *majority rule* – and, with it, the competitive notion of “winners” and “losers” – is

set aside.

The general framework of my diagram – a line ranging from *hierarchy* to *horizontality* – draws on Occupy's ideas. Within the diagram, **F** is the point where Occupy is to be found.

I stress that the diagram is highly schematic. A different diagram may dramatise different issues. Each of the positions listed has features that are not mentioned here.

Problems of schematic presentation apart, my diagram is (I suggest) helpful. It allows us to place Occupy alongside a range of different positions. And it makes clear that the term 'democracy' has a range of meanings. I should like to elaborate on this.

When (for example) U.S. foreign policy claims to favour 'democracy', and when Occupy favours 'democracy', the term *democracy* signifies two very different things. *What U.S. foreign policy favours* is democracy that clusters around the “élite” end of the spectrum: *popular* democracy or *participatory* democracy is mistrusted. (Even representatives' room for manoeuvre is harshly limited – as Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* makes clear.) *What Occupy favours* is democracy that is participatory and consensual – as I have indicated.

It is true, I think, that *any* mention of 'democracy' has emancipatory overtones. But the reality can be a disappointment. Neoliberal democracy is a lesson in ways in which popular initiatives can be circumvented, or crushed.

3. CRITICISMS OF OCCUPY

(Text relating to, and presented at, the third of our OCCUPY meetings.)

In my first talk, I stressed that Robert and I wanted to discuss the *significance* of the Occupy movement (rather than the detail of Occupy events). I suggested that this *significance* can be discussed under three headings:

- Why is the Occupy movement interesting?
- How (by what criteria) should the Occupy movement be assessed?
- How should the Occupy movement be followed? What Is To be Done? - or, better: What Should We Do Next?

In our first two meetings, we have focused mainly on the first of these questions. (In this respect, our discussion of *mutual recognition* and *democracy* addressed key

themes.) Now we come on to the second of my questions – and to related issues.

Was the Occupy movement a failure? If so, why did it fail? If it did indeed fail, by what criteria – in what set of terms – are *success* and *failure* to be measured?

Towards the end of my comments today, I return to the question of 'criteria'. I look again at some of the points which I raised towards the end of my first talk. I start, though, by commenting on (some of) Occupy's *critics*. (A note: the critics whom I mention are included in the Reading List – see below.)

(i) *Nancy Fraser* (in her 'Against Anarchism') has opposed Occupy's conception of democracy. She points out that, for Occupy, all issues – that is: all issues upon which a “democratic” decision is needed – must be decided at a (participatory and consensual) General Meeting. Fraser rejects this, arguing instead for a 'two-track' model: she wants there to be (on the one hand) what is, in effect, a parliament and (on the other hand) a public sphere – or set of public spheres.

Fraser's two-track model is closer to liberalism (or to left liberalism, or to decentralised liberalism, or – even – to multiculturalist liberalism) than it is to Occupy's “horizontal” or General-Meeting-style notion of democracy. So to say, the “tracks” of Fraser's model are (still) hierarchically arranged. Fraser doesn't say so, but *election to something resembling a parliament* seems to be implied in what she says.

Why does she prefer the two-track model? Stated simply: Fraser is worried that not everyone can get to, or participate in, a general meeting. What (she asks) about people who *are affected by what a General Meeting decides and cannot participate in the General Meeting itself*?

Fraser's question voices a familiar objection to notions of direct (or participatory) democracy. Here, I offer two points.

First: in an Occupy-style General Assembly, the aim is not to win a majority of votes but to formulate a course of action on which all present can agree. (This is why Occupy-style democracy is “consensual”: the agreed-on outcome may be a compromise or – from an individual's point of view – a second best. It is something that everyone can live with, rather than something that corresponds to a single ideal.) As part of this, a system of 'blocks' can be registered: anyone may 'block' a course of action which is, say, against his or her principles – or against what he or she takes to be incompatible with the group's mutually recognitive aims.

Second: on its own, a system of 'blocks' does not remove Fraser's worry. To repeat: what about people who are *affected by a decision* but who *cannot participate in – or be present at – the General Meeting*? It's at this point (I suggest) that internet technology comes to our assistance. What counts as *being present* at a General Meeting, if everyone who may be affected has a computer terminal? Why should

'blocks' not be registered electronically? Such a suggestion has, inevitably, unclear edges. But it points to a way in which a 'two-track' model – and the hierarchy that it entails – may be set aside.

(ii) *Jason Hickel* has argued that Occupy – especially Occupy Wall Street – was infected by (more: that it was premised on) what he regards as 'liberal' ideas. It failed, in Hickel's view, because it replaced left-wing values with 'liberal' values.

My response is that such an objection is weak. It is weak for two reasons: it is unintelligible, and it shows scant understanding of the liberal tradition.

Regarding unintelligibility: what does Hickel mean? Does he mean that we should cease to be tolerant, respectful of others, open to discussion, etc.? What sort of world does Hickel want to share?

Regarding liberalism: it is, I think easier to distinguish between Occupy and liberalism than Hickel imagines. Let me explain.

If the roots of the liberal tradition in Modern Natural Law (Grotius especially) are explored, it becomes evident that liberalism is premised on *a quite specific view of the human individual*. The *human individual* is pictured as possessing a sphere of “rights” (his or her “own” sphere) which he or she may defend against others. These rights include property rights, and the sphere itself is pictured as the individual's property – as in a bourgeois bungalow and “its” garden. Seen in this way, individuals are “free” *in spite of* (or *despite*) other individuals. For liberal freedom to be complete, an individual must be alone on the face of the earth.

I assure you that liberalism is as I have described it.

People did, and do, think in this utterly dreadful way.

Occupy, for its part, breaks with notions of *freedom in spite of others*. In its place, it projects *freedom in and through interaction with others*. It breaks with the notion of the individual as monologically isolated – and turns to mutual recognition instead.

Occupy (at its best) *has nothing in common with* 'liberal' individualism. It rejects root and branch the possessive individualism of neoliberal years.

(iii) *David Harvey*, in his *Rebel Cities*, raises what I see as the most serious objection to Occupy-style ideas. Can the Occupy-style process of arriving at a decision – General Meetings, horizontality, participation which aims at a consensus, etc. – be *generalised*, from relatively small-scale situations to large-scale issues?

Harvey (who is generally sympathetic towards Occupy) doubts that this is the case. Perhaps, in a public park or square, horizontality may be practised. But let's increase

the size of issues. What about making decisions that concern a whole *city*? What about making decisions concerning a whole *eco-system*? What about (say) decisions about global warming? Or the extinction of species? What about famine or war?

Problems of what Harvey calls 'scale' arise in connection with horizontalist thinking. Whilst I do not agree with everything that Harvey says, I do feel he puts his finger on a vital and inescapable issue.

How should an Occupy-supporter like myself respond to Harvey's objection? An honest answer is: I don't know. Well...I'm not entirely sure. But I offer two thoughts:

– My first thought concerns *flexibility*. A politics of mutual recognition is, I suggest, *flexible* in ways (and to a degree) that hierarchical politics is not. Hierarchical politics never (or almost never) generates horizontal politics. By contrast, horizontal (or mutually recognitive) politics may generate hierarchy – and, having done so, may smooth hierarchy back into horizontality. Stated differently: *institutions* do not dissolve themselves into *unstructured interaction*. But *unstructured interaction* may generate *institutions* – and then dissolve institutions back into itself. (Niccolò Machiavelli says much the same thing in his *Discourses on Livy* Book I, chapter 34 – a chapter that I have, since first discovering it, valued.) Can *flexibility* of this sort be invoked to tackle problems of 'scale' – in Harvey's sense? I suggest that it can. But I leave the suggestion without developing it here.

– My second suggestion concerns the *implications* of Harvey's objection. Should Harvey's point regarding 'scale' deter us from developing an Occupy-style politics? I suggest that it should not. My feeling is that we *should not* and *cannot* give up on the notion of mutual recognition: mutual recognition is where emancipation lies. We are emancipated insofar as we are mutually recognitive. And further: my feeling is that we *should not* and *cannot* stop linking mutual democracy to participatory, consensual democracy. This being the case: Harvey's objection is not an objection that sweeps Occupy-style participation to one side. It is a problem that must be faced up to in practical (in everyday) terms.

(iv) In the literature on Occupy, other criticisms have been raised. For example, there are criticisms which arise from Žižek's talks and texts. I do not address these further criticisms here (though see Gunn's and Wilding's various papers).

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Instead, I return to the question of 'criteria'. I have commented on the question of 'criteria' in my first talk and, in what follows, will cover much of the same ground. My reason for repeating myself is that the issue is important! Besides, I want to leave a reader/hearer thinking about *prefiguration*. From questions about 'criteria', questions

about *prefiguration* arise.

I'm not sure, in the end, which objection to Occupy is the most important. But I am pretty sure which objection is most widespread. It is that the Occupy movement *failed* and *lead nowhere*. Is there a trace of truth in this claim?

If we are to reflect on this claim, we must confront a prior (and more general) question: what is it for a political movement to *fail*? What do we mean, when we say that a movement is a *failure* (or a *success*)?

This is where questions about 'criteria' come into play. By what *criteria* – in what *set of terms* – do we impute success or failure to a movement?

In Marxist thought (which is my own background) there arose – at the start of the twentieth century, in the writings of Luxemburg and Lenin – what was referred to as the *problem of organisation*. By this was meant: the problem of revolutionary political organisation. Lenin championed the notion a revolutionary *political party*. Luxemburg (who did not oppose the notion of a revolutionary party) celebrated political *spontaneity*. I do not go into the details of this debate here – but I offer a generalisation. For Marxism, the notion of political organisation came to be seen in *instrumentalist* terms – in terms of the *strategy* and *tactics* most likely to reach a specific goal. (Think of military strategy and tactics. Think of forward planning. Think of playing chess.)

How do 'criteria' come in here? Well – if *success* and *failure* are understood as *instrumental success* and *instrumental failure*, everything is straightforward. Either we reach the goal or we don't. If we do, our actions were “successful”. If we don't, our actions (and the strategy that we employed) were a waste of time.

Now to Occupy:

The Occupy movement rejects an instrumentalist view of political organisation. (It sees instrumentalism in politics as, potentially, bound up with hierarchy and oppression.)

Instead, Occupy thinks of political organisation in a prefigurative way. As indicated in my first talk, *prefigurative* politics attempts to bring an emancipatory future *forward*, into the present; to act *prefiguratively* is to act *as though* the sought-after future is already reached. In Occupy's case, the sought-after future is mutual recognition. At the centre of neoliberal cities, Occupy (surrounded by water cannons and riot police) acted as though mutual recognition were the order of things.

How might *instrumentalist* and *prefigurative* politics be related? Can they be combined? Or are they incompatible? I have suggested that they are incompatible – conceptually. In my first talk, I illustrated this incompatibility with an example: a

general who *imagines that he has won* loses the battle. In practice, however, *instrumentalist* and *prefigurative* politics take on numerous hybrid forms. Sometimes, one and the same individual may oscillate between the forms. If, however, instrumentalism and prefiguration exist together, there is a *tension between them*.

Why act prefiguratively, or in Occupy's case mutually recognitively, in situations where repression seems certain? Why (as in the Gezi Park occupation) hold a festival when police with tear gas and water cannons are a few streets away? Why dance, knowing that dancing is *dangerous*?

In my first talk, I suggested what are, in effect, *long-term instrumentalist* reasons for acting in this fashion. The Occupations of 2011-2013 altered the international political agenda, to focus on *inequality* as an issue. The Occupations of 2011-2013 pointed towards a conception of individuality which *did not fit into* a neoliberal or “possessive individualist” mould. Occupy generated what may be termed a *common sense of the commons*.

Such *long term instrumentalist* considerations are important. In my view, they give a sufficient reason for turning to Occupy-style politics. But I end with a different consideration – one which is not (or is not merely) instrumentalist in character. It is this. If emancipation *is* mutual recognition, we *have no alternative* but to think and act in Occupy-inspired terms. And if hierarchy seldom generates free interaction, we *have no alternative* but begin as we intend to continue. We have no alternative but to start with the here and now.

The outcome of these talks is starkly simple. Prefiguration it is.

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(I do not present text relating to our fourth OCCUPY meeting, which focused on the questions “How should the Occupy movement be followed?” and “What should we do next?”. Robert was, once again, the chief introductory speaker. Discussion continued to generate fresh perspectives.)

To the above talks, I add two documents. One is a chronological listing of political events – *some* political events – which relate to the 2011-13 Occupy movement. The other is a reading list. Both documents were circulated during our OCCUPY meetings.)

CHRONOLOGY OF CHIEF EVENTS

Tunisia: Dec 2010 (self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi) – Jan 2011 (ousting of president Ben Ali).

Egypt: Jan 2011 – Feb 2011 (when Mubarak resigns from the presidency, and transfers power to the armed forces).

Syria: protests start in Jan 2011, escalating into civil war around April 2011.

Libya: Feb 2011 – Aug 2011 (when anti-Gadaffi fighters capture Tripoli, ending Gadaffi's years in power).

Spanish *Indignados* movement: May 2011 (occupations in Madrid, Barcelona and other cities) – Aug 2011; followed by protests and demonstrations lasting into the following year.

Greece: “Indignant Citizens Movement”: May 2011 – Aug 2011 (political actions in Athens and elsewhere in Greece).

U.S.A. Occupy Wall Street movement: Aug and Sept 2011 (when Zuccotti Park encampment starts) – Nov 2011 (when Zuccotti Park encampment ends); followed by protests and demonstrations lasting into the following year. Numerous further occupations, nationally and internationally.

London: Oct 2011 (Occupy London encampment starts outside St Paul's Cathedral) – Jan 2011(encampment outside St Paul's Cathedral ends).

Turkey: May 2013 – June 2013 (occupation of Gezi Park in Taksim, Istanbul; the occupation cleared by the police); further protests in Turkey.

READING LIST

Dan Hancox, ed., *Fight Back! A Reader on the Winter of Discontent* (London: OpenDemocracy 2011) (available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/ourkingdom/fight-back-reader-on-winter-of-protest>)

Susan van Gelder, ed., *This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers 2011)

Alessio Lunghi and Seth Wheeler, eds., *Occupy Everything: Reflections on Why It's Kicking off Everywhere* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions 2012) (available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/79641340/Occupy-Everything-Reflections-on-why-it-s-kicking-off-everywhere>)

David Graeber *The Democracy Project: A History. A Crisis. A Movement.* (London: Allen Lane 2013)

David Graeber 'Occupy and anarchism's gift of democracy' *The Guardian* (www.theguardian.com) 15 November 2011

Noam Chomsky *Occupy* (London: Penguin Books 2012)

Manuel Castells *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (Cambridge: Polity 2012)

David Harvey *Rebel Cities* (London: Verso 2013)

L. Oikonomakis and J.E. Roos "'Que No Nos Representa': The Crisis of Representation and the Resonance of the Real Democracy Movement from the Indignados to Occupy' [February 2013] <http://media.roarmag.org/2013/02/Resonance-Real-Democracy-Movement-Indignados-Occupy.pdf>

J.E. Roos and L. Oikonomakis "'We Are Everywhere!': The Autonomous Roots of the Real Democracy Movement' [September 2013] <http://roarmag.org/2013/08/autonomous-roots-real-democracy-movement/>

Jerome Roos 'Autonomy: An Idea whose Time Has Come' *ROAR Magazine* 23 June 2013

C. Hansen 'What would real democracy look like?' *ROAR Magazine* <http://new-compass.net/articles/what-would-real-democracy-look>

Robert C. Smith 'In defence of Occupy's emphasis on non-dominant, non-hierarchical organisation' Heathwood Institute and Press (www.heathwoodpress.com) 15 September 2013

Robert C. Smith 'In defence of Occupy's politics' Heathwood Institute and Press (www.heathwoodpress.com) 15 November 2013

R.C. Smith (with contribution from Elliot Sperber) 'Democracy in Crisis: Toward a Foundational, Alternative Theory of Participatory Democracy' Heathwood Institute and Press (www.heathwoodpress.com) 15 May 2014

Richard Gunn and Adrian Wilding 'Occupy as Mutual Recognition' Heathwood Press and Institute (www.heathwoodpress.com) 12 November 2013

Richard Gunn and Adrian Wilding 'Hierarchy or Horizontalism? - Critics of Occupy' Heathwood Press and Institute (www.heathwoodpress.com) 31 January 2014

Richard Gunn, Robert Smith and Adrian Wilding 'Heathwood: Critical Theory and Revolutionary Practice' *ROAR Magazine* (<http://roarmag.com>) 4 March 2014

Naomi Klein 'Why Now? What Next? Naomi Klein and Yotam Maron in Conversation about Occupy Wall Street' *The Nation* 9 January 2012

P. Walker 'Tent City University – one of the most remarkable aspects of Occupy London' *The Guardian* 19 January 2012

Mike Neary and S. Amsler 'Occupy: A New Pedagogy of Space and Time?' *Journal for Critical Educational Policy Studies* Vol. 10, No. 2 (2012)

Cemal Burak Tansel 'The Gezi Park Occupation: Confronting Authoritarian Neoliberalism' posted at www.adamdavidsmorton.com on 1 June 2013

Jason Hickel 'Liberalism and the politics of Occupy Wall Street' *Anthropology of This Century* Issue 4 (May 2012)

Nancy Fraser 'Against Anarchism' *Public Seminar* (www.publicseminar.org) 9 October 2013

Mark Bray 'Five liberal tendencies that plagued Occupy' *ROAR Magazine* (14 May 2014)

Slavoj Žižek *The Year of Living Dangerously* (London: Verso 2012)

Slavoj Žižek 'The simple courage of a decision: a leftist tribute to Thatcher' *New Statesman* 17 April 2013

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri *Declaration* (New York: Argo 2012)