Long Shadows of the New Left: From Students for a Democratic Society to Occupy Wall Street

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The New Left has cast a long shadow over the development of the left in the United States. Movements today are frequently compared to those of the Sixties, and social justice activists are still regularly labeled "hippies" in the media. And indeed, there are striking similarities in both political style and content, as well as important differences. This text examines the political legacy of the New Left on the alterglobalization movement and Occupy Wall Street in the United States. It argues that the New Left's transformation in the U.S. from participatory democracy to Maoist sectarianism constituted a trauma deeply inscribed in the formation of subsequent social movements, especially its direct chronological successors in the New Social Movements of the Seventies and Eighties. This synthetic movement included a marked aversion to ideological sectarianism instantiated in single-issue campaigns, a turn to cultural politics, and a commitment to feminism, antiracism, and ecology. This development reflected new issues and a newfound sensitivity to economic reductionism, and above all a preference for prefigurative political forms whose means were consistent with their ends. This political constellation increasingly gravitated towards the anarchist tradition, and would become definitional for the alterglobalization movement that emerged in 1999 on the streets of Seattle. After a period of movement hibernation and eclipse by antiwar organizing, it reemerged later as Occupy Wall Street alongside new populist themes.

By charting the development of groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Abalone/Clamshell Alliances, the Direct Action Network (DAN), and the emergence of Occupy Wall Street (OWS), this paper explores how the New Left's discourse of "the personal is the political" evolved into the neo-anarchism that became increasingly hegemonic from the Nineties up until Occupy today. It contends that some of the same limitations that demobilized the early New Left, New Social Movements, and the alterglobalization movement persist through the present, as in Occupy Wall Street. Exploring the continuities and ruptures between these movements, I

argue that the prefigurative neoanarchist politics that have become increasingly that were hegemonic within the North American left overcorrected themselves in response to the failures of twentieth-century Marxism, posing serious theoretical and practical problems for social movements today.

Trauma of the New Left: The Rise and Fall of Students for a Democratic Society

The immense historical shifts of the postwar world—unprecedented working-class affluence, an insurgent black freedom movement, disillusionment with Soviet authoritarianism, and mass entry into higher education—crystallized into a New Left that broke dramatically with the Old Left. In particular, this generation focused its political concerns less on poverty and labor exploitation (especially its own) than on issues stemming from the alienation of a Cold War affluence won, in part, by the primarily union-based victories of predecessors and in turn catalyzed through solidarity work with the Civil Rights Movement.[1] These politics radically shifted across a relatively short time span, ranging from the struggle for black civil rights, transforming into tackling poverty through the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), manifesting in Berkeley as the Free Speech movement, and finally a nationwide convergence around opposing the Vietnam War that dwarfed all preceding phases. Along the way, the emergence of the counterculture, feminism, cultural antiracism, sexual liberation, and ecology movements exponentially expanded the range of the political into new arenas and concerns, transforming the basic grammar of the left.

Students for a Democratic Society came to be the most important and visible organization of the New Left; its history reflects many of the political shifts that transformed left politics in the United States. The Intercollegiate Socialist Society that began in 1905 as a university-bound intellectual milieu abandoned its nominal attachment to socialism in 1921, largely in the wake of changes in the political climate wrought by the Russian Revolution. It adopted a more politically neutral moniker appropriate to the emergent Fordist Era, the "League for Industrial Democracy" (LID), and enforced a

1 Both Miller (1987) and Gitlin (2003) note in their accounts of the Sixties the catalytic effect that participating in the Black Freedom Movement of the time had on white activists.

strictly anticommunist line. This firewall between socialists and communists collapsed in the turmoil of the mid-Thirties, with the student wing of LID, SLID, joining the communist-aligned National Student League to form the American Student Union, until this organization was eventually subsumed into New Deal liberalism and Popular Front support for the U.S. in World War II.

LID relaunched its student division in 1945, colored by the triumphalist glow of postwar liberalism, only to find they could not attract students uninterested in labor unions or social democracy. The group was on the brink of extinction until Al Haber, soon to be assisted by Tom Hayden, successfully tapped into student energy by focusing on the Civil Rights Movement, at that moment moving from legal battles to a new phase of enforcement via direct action (Miller 1987, 33–38, 55–61; Sale 1973, 13–14, 21–22). In 1960 they changed their name to "Students for a Democratic Society," signaling a break with a firmly entrenched postwar liberal consensus perceived to be both complacent and irrelevant. The new name also reflected a more expansive political agenda, and an opening to new political concerns and actors not bound to labor (Sale, xvi, app.). This "new left" orientation immediately brought about conflict with LID's bureaucratic leadership and cautious labor-liberalism. The tension between LID and SDS quickly grew into a rift, primarily over SDS' rejection of Cold War anti-communism. After the first march against the Vietnam War in 1965, which included communist participation, LID and SDS formally parted ways (Miller 126–140).

The Port Huron Statement, written in 1962, attempted to chart a course between both the Old Left and postwar liberalism, and laid down the terms for the coming rupture. Its evocative critique of the alienation, racism, and anticommunism of Cold War America found its positive inverse in the concept of "participatory democracy," a vision of a fundamentally more democratic society that extended the principle of self-governance to all arenas of society. An array of postwar social problems were refracted through a political lens shaped by the influence of unorthodox antiauthoritarian thinkers like C. Wright Mills and Dwight McDonald, beat culture, existentialism, and American pragmatism (Miller 1987, 39, 79–98). This political vision was also importantly forged by white activists' experience within the Civil Rights Movement, both the violence it was subject to and the radically democratic culture of groups like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which relied primarily on direct action tactics (Gitlin 2003, 104–107, 127–169). Participatory democracy was an ambitious attempt

to consciously craft a new left politics capable of addressing new historical conditions and problems, drawing primarily on specifically American traditions, language, and concerns. The result was a novel political constellation, indeed a New Left.

However, this vision of participatory democracy faltered in the mid-Sixties turn "from protest to resistance" (Gitlin 1987, 242–252). Port Huron's utopian vision collided with the reluctance of the postwar liberal order to change, the frustratingly slow pace of such reforms, and the violence the process unleashed (Part IV). Meanwhile, labor appeared to be exhausted as a progressive force; indeed the working class became a key terrain if not central target in the fight against racism and imperialism. This left increasingly abandoned the (especially white) working class as a progressive historical agent, viewed instead as complicit in racial domination at home and bought off by the plunder of imperialist wars abroad (Varon 2002, 7). The result was a left which often framed the "Amerikkkan" working class majority not as its audience and potential allies, but rather as its enemy. During this time, the New Left increasingly regarded "anti-imperialism as the central revolutionary dynamic" (Epstein 1991, 43).

With the popular basis of participatory democracy in doubt, the political center of gravity shifted back towards Marxism, and especially Maoism, during the mid-to-late Sixties.[2] Departing from the Old Left, the New Left reframed the traditional Marxian conflict between proletarian and bourgeoisie as a global struggle between the Third World and First World imperialism (Varon 2002, 7). Facilitated by the growing centrality of the Vietnam War, leftists championed typically communist national liberation movements like the Cuban revolutionaries, the National Liberation Front of Algeria, and the North Vietnamese Liberation Army. Revolutionary anti-imperialism became increasingly central within the American radical left, an ideology "whose main premise was that the prosperity of advanced industrial societies depended on the economic exploitation of developing countries, evident in the intensity with which the United States battled left-wing insurgencies in the Third World" (7). Abandoning the prospect of revolution in the heart of empire, all that was left was to "bring the war home" (Gitlin 1987, 378–388; Varon 61). As Weatherman Shin'ya Ono put it, America's "only choice is either joining the world revolution led by the blacks, the yellows, and the

2 "In about a six months period," as Greg Calvert later put it, "suddenly everybody in SDS said, 'I am a Marxist,' or 'I am a Marxist-Leninist.'" See Epstein 1991, 368.

browns, or being put down as US imperialist pigs by the people of the Third World" (qtd. in Gitlin 1987, 212).

The last SDS national conference in 1969 reflected these developments, and would profoundly shape the subsequent trajectory of the U.S. left. A variety of simmering ideological tensions between various rival factions exploded on the floor, with the Revolutionary Youth Movement, the Black Panther Party, and the soon-to-be Weather Underground on the one side, and the Progressive Labor/Worker Student Alliance (PL/WSA) on the other. Disagreements over the role and importance of students, workers, and nationalist Third World movements for the revolution, as well as conflicts in political style and organizational culture, resulted in an ultimatum followed by the expulsion of Progressive Labor by the Revolutionary Youth Movement and Weather factions, delivered under threat of violence by the Black Panthers. Despite this struggle for the soul of SDS, the RYM and Weather factions soon shed SDS to become Weatherman and quickly moved from their initial failed strategy of recruiting disaffected youth through violent confrontations to a guerilla campaign of clandestine bombings (Kopkind 1969).

The PL version of SDS/WSA continued to insist on centrality of the working class, combining antiracism with participation in labor struggles such as the GE and postal worker strikes of 1969–1970. The PL/WSA version of SDS lived on for another five years but never regained its earlier momentum, dwindling as the Vietnam War—its major source of numbers and energy—wound down. In 1974 SDS/WSA disbanded to become the International Committee against Racism (Klehr 1990, 88–89). The name change reflected broader discursive shifts happening within the left, on the one hand from stating a positive alternative social vision to stating what one was against, and on the other, from a focus on political economy to issues of culture and recognition. Epstein argues that by the Eighties, race and gender had "largely replaced class as the organizing categories of the left, as progressive forces have become fragmented into a series of particular constituencies" (1991, 259).

Others at the time suggested alternative paths. As SDS was imploding at what would be their final conference, a caucus aligned with anarchist Murray Bookchin distributed a polemic titled "Listen Marxist," which criticized the mechanical application of Marxist theory to a historical moment that defied its basic categories, in particular its fixation on a conservative and numerically-waning industrial proletariat and lack of interest in the radical promise of ecology. The pamphlet's cover featured an illustration of Marx

and Engels alongside Bugs Bunny, an image well-timed for the farcical sectarian collapse of SDS. Bookchin and James Miller drafted a speech outlining an alternative anarchist platform which was never delivered, eclipsed by intra-Maoist fratricide (Gitlin 1987, 368; Miller 1987, 17, 147). Some New Left politicos, exhausted by an increasingly violent and sectarian radicalism, took a pragmatic turn, opting for a "long march through the institutions" (Gitlin 1987, 409), community organizing, academia, or electoral politics. The counterculturally inclined dropped out, formed communes, started intentional communities and artist centers, or explored various alternative lifestyles and spirituality.

Was such a trajectory inevitable? Todd Gitlin suggests that the prefigurative foundation of the New Left deferred questions of concrete political vision, organization, and strategy too long, at which point the search for a radicalism suited to the age became frantic and opportunistic. Finding himself one of the "old guard" of SDS alienated from its later incarnation, he wrote in 1969, "The New Left, again, refused the self-discipline of explicit programmatic statement until too late—until, that is, the Marxist-Leninist sects filled the vacuum with dogmas, with clarity on the cheap" (Gitlin 2003, 179). Frustrated by what seemed a glacial rate of change caused by a recalcitrant populace and government, SDS and the New Left more generally were unable to translate the lofty aspirations of the Port Huron Statement into a viable mass movement. In the span of seven years, the ideal of participatory democracy had curdled and been replaced by support for various Third World revolutions against the United States and the embrace of revolutionary terror towards this end (1987, 367; 1969).[3]

The evolution of SDS charts an important transformation of the left in the United States. Its implosion not only destroyed the main organization of the New Left but had a lasting political impact on the development of subsequent social movements. Its strong anti-imperialist perspective lived

3 Either it would take itself seriously as a visionary force, conscious of post-scarcity potentials with revolutionary and democratic goals, or it would buy clarity on-the-cheap, taking refuge in mirror-models of the underdeveloped socialisms of Russia and the Third World. This is now a familiar social movement cycle. There has already been one case where frustrated Occupy activists, although prompted and orchestrated by an undercover FBI informant, were arrested in a plot to blow up a bridge in Cleveland. "Anarchists who had grown disenchanted with the Occupy movement, which they considered too conservative, they yearned to make a radical statement of their own – to send a message to corporate America, its corrupt government and that invisible grid underlying it all, the System." See Erdely 2012.

on in a left with a strong critical emphasis on U.S. foreign policy, reflected in the popularity of critics of American hegemony like Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, or the centrality during the Eighties and Nineties of Central America and South Africa solidarity campaigns. The intense self-scrutiny and a moralistic language of personal guilt and responsibility expressed in the New Left slogan "the personal is the political" strongly influenced the discourses of ecology, anti-consumerism, and white privilege politics that became hegemonic on the left. A wide array of subsequent identity-based movements would mirror national liberationist analyses and aims, often framing the struggles as those of an "internal colony" seeking to establish autonomous communities.[4]

On another level, the trauma of Marxist sectarianism also opened up a political vacuum filled by the ascendance of new concerns and political modes such as feminism, queer politics, community organizing, single-issue campaigns, prefigurative direct action movements, spiritualism, indigenism, and ecology. Yet even as New Left politics found wide expression in anti-discriminatory legislation, new university departments and programs, Earth Day, greater cultural permissiveness, and increased subaltern visibility and assertiveness, the scale and scope of left politics were becoming more modest. Jurgen Habermas noted, the New Social Movements which followed in the wake of the New Left primarily fought to defend "lifeworld" from colonization by a "systemworld" that was on the whole unchallenged (Habermas 1981). Thus even before the collapse of the Soviet bloc was interpreted as a neoliberal "end of history," the traditional left goal of large-scale social transformation, undermined in theory and battered by history, had already been largely abandoned.

New Social Movements: Prefiguring the Left of the Future

The implosion of the Maoist New Left led to an exploration of alternative ideas and traditions, and although buried in the rubble of SDS, the idea of participatory democracy lived on in the culture and politics of the New Social Movements of the Seventies and Eighties. Barbara Epstein describes these movements as representing "the younger brothers and sisters of the antiwar protesters. They had been infected by the idealism of the sixties,

4 On the post-9/11 shift to an anti-imperialist frame, see Dixon and Epstein 2007, 457.

but they had also seen the weaknesses [...], its tendency to resort to internal hierarchy and violent rhetoric, its sexism" (Epstein 1991, 84). Thus, this overlapping, synthetic movement combined feminism, peace, antiracism, counterculture, and ecology, embedding these concerns in a movement culture consciously opposed to that of sectarian Marxism: anti-hierarchical, directly democratic, and nonviolent. Within this milieu, radical feminists championed an analysis of patriarchy situated within a broader critique of intersectional domination which took cultural, lesbian, and socialist forms. Peace and anti-nuke activists appropriated Quaker and left-libertarian notions about consensus decision-making, prefigurative politics, and the use of affinity groups. Countercultural revolutionaries such as "Up Against the Wall, Motherfucker" mocked what they saw as the lifeless bourgeois assumptions of sectarian Marxism, armed with the insights of Marcuse (his stepson a key member). Anarchism experienced a renaissance; Murray Bookchin's synthesis of social anarchism, critical theory, and ecology—an eccentricity that in the late Sixties earned him the derisive nickname "the Smokey the Bear anarchist" from Guy Debord—became an important influence within the movement (68–78). Barbara Epstein writes, "The cluster of concepts on which that movement based itself—small scale community, consensus-process grass roots democracy, the rejection of all hierarchies, nonviolent revolution—had intellectual roots in pacifism, anarchism, and the memory of the early civil rights movement but were grounded in the immediate experience of the left/countercultural politics of the late sixties and its migration to the countryside in the early seventies" (51).

The direct action wing of the antinuclear movement, especially the Clamshell and Abalone Alliances, became a key terrain of struggle during this period, and one which would have a lasting impact on subsequent movement development. These two organizations, named after the respective East and West Coast shellfish threatened by the construction of nuclear plants, set up encampments and blockades in order to physically obstruct the construction or operation of nuclear and military facilities. In contrast to Marxism's emphasis on theoretical coherence, objective conditions, and patiently building a revolutionary party, these activists placed a premium on living one's politics in the present. The "use of guerilla theater and other forms of creative expression, its lack of interest in the conventional political arena, its emphasis on the creation of alternative communities, all suggested that revolution had more to do with thinking and living differently,

and convincing others to make similar changes, than with seizing power" (Epstein 1991, 51).

This model of social change centered on a "prefigurative politics" which attempted to "create a new society in the shell of the old" by modeling the social relations desired in the future good society (Epstein 1991).[5] Intense internal debates about personal relationships, vegetarianism and consumption in general, sexuality, and internal decision-making animated these activists more than traditional politics. The principle of consistency of means and ends often verged on becoming the end itself; the creation of alternative communities via communes and collective houses becoming both the good society and how it was achieved. Although these movements would fade by the mid-Eighties, their sentiment, politics, and repertoire would be passed on, percolating through movement tactical handbooks, further developed in sections of the radical ecology and peace movements, to emerge twenty years later on the streets of Seattle as the politics that would define the alterglobalization movement.

The Alterglobalization Movement: Neoanarchism Ascendant

The alterglobalization movement, also called the anti-globalization or global justice movement, made its debut during the 1999 World Trade Organization summit demonstrations in Seattle. Responding to an original call put out by the People's Global Assembly, an international network opposed to neoliberalism launched by the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Mexico, this "movement of movements" included diverse actors from labor, environmental, human rights, Global South, faith, and other independent groups. However, the heart of the alterglobalization movement was a younger cohort of radical activists united by a shared political repertoire forged during the Nineties in the direct action campaigns of groups like Earth First!, Reclaim the Streets, and Food Not Bombs (Dixon and Epstein 2007, 452–55). Although skepticism of ideological sectarianism remained, by the end of the Nineties many activists had grown frustrated with an unwieldy list of single issues and began to reframe their politics as a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Activists from movements as divergent as anti-sweatshop organizing,

5 Additionally see Heller 1999, which discusses the convergence of ecofeminism, anti-nuke, and social ecology movements (49–55).

feminism, radical ecology, animal rights, and antiracism were increasingly uniting their diverse political concerns under the banner of anarchism (452).

These politics congealed into a common set of tactics and targets that consisted of employing mass nonviolent direct action to block or disrupt the institutions of global neoliberalism, including the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and G8 summits. Actions were carried out by small groups coordinated through the Direct Action Network (DAN), a short-lived organization that quickly institutionalized the standard repertoire: nonviolent direct action conducted by affinity groups coordinated via spokescouncil meetings governed by consensus decision-making.[6] DAN helped to establish a national continuity of discourse, targets, tactics, and organization that gave the movement the specific political and organizational character which differentiated it from earlier and later periods of protest activity. [7] Thus, a relatively small number of activists created a new generational political hegemony through a politics that made a strenuously democratic medium the message (Graeber 2002; 2009).

Departing significantly from both the Marxism of the New Left and classical anarchism, neither of which focused much on direct democracy, some have dubbed this emergent politics "neoanarchism" (Castells 2005). Neoanarchism can perhaps best be understood as an attempt to revive the radical left project while attending to both the authoritarian legacy of Marxism in the twentieth century and the expanded terrain of the political initiated by the New Left. Prominent theorist and activist David Graeber argues that this new form of anarchism is the "heart and soul" of the new movement. What he calls "small a anarchism" is at once a utopian and pragmatic form of immanent politics, one which ultimately aims at "reinventing democracy." Responding to critics who claim the movement has no coherent political vision or strategy, he notes, "It is not opposed to organization. It is about creating new forms of organization. It is not lacking in ideology. Those new forms of organization *are* its ideology" (Graeber 2002, 62, 70). For Graeber, the most novel and promising aspect of neoanarchism is how it neatly resolves old problems of ideology, goals, and strategy by combining all three.

6 I will use the more accurate term "alterglobalization" throughout the text. The "antiglobalization" moniker assigned by media commentators fundamentally misrepresents the global nature of the movement, in terms of rhetoric, international scope of action, seminal inspiration from developing world and indigenous groups, and actual global makeup of activists from the first North American movement action—Seattle.

7 "Repertoire" is the set of various protest-related tools and actions available to a movement or related organization in a given time frame. See Tilly 2008.

The alterglobalization movement was strongly shaped by its New Social Movement predecessors, including important personnel and organizational continuities. George Lakey, a gay rights activist and leading figure in the group Movement for a New Society, conducted nonviolence trainings in the lead up to Seattle; his book *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* a widely-read how-to guide. Key DAN organizers like David Solnit, Erica Kay, Lisa Fithian, and the ecofeminist writer Starhawk were all veterans of earlier West Coast direct action campaigns (Graeber 2002, 234–35).The New Left aesthetic of the artistic and carnivalesque continued in the towering colorful puppets that marked the Seattle protests, many in fact built by Seventies peace movement mainstays Bread and Puppet. Activists affiliated with Bookchin's Institute for Social Ecology, founded in the Seventies amidst the radical ecological movement, educated a younger generation of activists in summer classes on political theory and movement history, also hosting the influential "Renewing the Anarchist Tradition" conference.

Just as the New Left drew numbers from the hippie counterculture, many in the alterglobalization movement came out of the countercultural upsurge of the Nineties, in particular the political punk subculture. The alterglobalization movement discourse of direct democracy drew directly upon the utopian aspirations of the early New Left, especially the vision of participatory democracy outlined in the Port Huron Statement. And just as the end of the New Left saw a profusion of Marxist grouplets, the failure of the alterglobalization movement to actualize its radically democratic vision was accompanied by an explosion of ideological groups which narrowed their political analyses and strategic foci, ranging from the class-oriented North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (NEFAC) to the Anarchist People of Color (APOC) network; a good number also entered the academy (Dixon and Epstein 2007, 456–57).

There were also echoes of the late Sixties as well, with an increase in militancy and in some quarters a turn to more violent tactics. Recalling the Chicago Days of Rage, black blocs emerged at demonstrations that engaged in targeted property destruction and scuffles with police, while arson attacks by the Earth Liberation Front recalled the bombing campaigns of the Weather Underground. In these often intertwined milieus, strongly connected to the angry militance of the underground punk scene, strong ideological commitments to anarchism and deep ecology sustained a rejection of nonviolence, often portrayed as both ineffective and a symptom of privilege.[8]

8 See the widely-read Churchill 1997.

Another resonance with the Weather Underground is that both engaged in violent action on behalf of an absent other. In the Sixties these were peasant victims of imperialism in the Third World, while in the Nineties this took the form of defending animals and nature. This observation is also mirrored in right-wing radicalism of the period, as prolife activists shot doctors and bombed abortion clinics in their much more violent war to protect 'the unborn.'

The alterglobalization movement went into decline in the aftermath of 9/11, demobilized by a combination of factors including the failure to transcend mass direct action as a strategy, increased state repression, skillful recuperation of movement concerns by savvy corporations, and a defensive national mood.[9] The Direct Action Network formally disbanded in 2003, although the movement had already been demoralized and shrunken as energy was siphoned off by electoral work to unseat Bush and the emergence of a more traditional antiwar movement, one largely organized by communist front groups.

Occupy Wall Street: Establishing a New Hegemonic Frame

The emergence of Occupy Wall Street in 2011 revitalized left social movements, challenging economic inequality and the neoliberal discourse that legitimated it and reintroducing words like "capitalism" and "class" back into political debates. Rejecting both of the major American parties and narrow demands, the OWS encampments instead sought to carve out space, both figuratively and literally, to practice a form of politics that modeled the radically democratic society desired. Its dramatic arrival and subsequent global spread caught many observers off guard—who were they, what did they want, and where did they come from? Many were quick to point out similarities to the New Left. James Miller, participant and scholar of the Sixties, suggested:

> Occupy Wall Street has resurrected a defining aspect of the New Left of the 1960s: an overriding commitment to participatory democracy, understood as the making of decisions in a face-to-face community of friends and not through elected

9 Various accounts of movement decline are to be found: see Bello 2002 on repression and a changed political climate, Dixon and Epstein 2007 on the shift to an anti-war movement, Epstein 2001 on tactical limits, and Taylor 2013 on recuperation.

> representatives. The ongoing experiment of Occupy movements around the world with the General Assembly process suggests that democracy is *still* "in the streets"—a welcome reminder that politics isn't just about elections and voting; and proof, if proof were needed, that the Port Huron Statement – the 1962 manifesto of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which first popularized the ideal of participatory democracy – has left a living legacy, however paradoxical. (Miller 2012)

Others, however, have emphasized differences with the movements of the Sixties. In Chris Hedges' formulation, "The power of the Occupy Wall Street movement is that it has not replicated the beliefs of the New Left. […] It seeks to rebuild the bridges to labor, the poor and the working class" (Hedges 2011). Even *Bloomberg Businessweek*, in an article titled "Occupy Wall Street: It's Not a Hippie Thing," noted that the sharp divide between "hard hats" and "longhairs" so paradigmatic of the Sixties no longer holds:

> In its grassroots and leftist character, Occupy Wall Street bears a superficial resemblance to protests from the '60s and early '70s. But the Woodstock Era was different in ways that tell us important things about the current siege. Then, radical students preached an affinity with the "working class," but it was rare that the students and any members of the working class actually joined arms. (Lowenstein 2011)

In fact, both views are correct. Occupy is a hybrid movement; it represents the convergence of the neoanarchist politics of the alterglobalization movement influenced by the New Left and New Social Movements, with a populism animated by those directly hit by the economic crisis. Significant overlaps in political discourse, repertoire, and personnel strongly suggest that OWS is the alterglobalization movement coming out of a period of abeyance—a period of relatively inactive hibernation. Yet, it has been reawakened by a radically changed political opportunity structure—a deep economic crisis that has mobilized new political actors and opened up previously closed avenues of political argumentation. Although the popular alterglobalization slogan "Teamsters and Turtles: Together at Last" suggested an alliance between labor and the left, in practice this has rarely been sustained. The alterglobalization movement emerged during an economic boom not unlike that which underwrote the Sixties; activists primarily fought on behalf of "others" like Third World peasants and the environment. In contrast, OWS responds to those same forces of austerity and structural adjustment coming home to roost, conditions that directly affect millions and have translated into a more materialist orientation and wide popular base absent in its precursor.

Despite these differences, OWS has been definitively shaped by the neoanarchist milieu of the late Nineties. Its initial call to action was announced

by Adbusters, an anarchist-leaning magazine widely read in alterglobalization circles. Long-time activists in New York City engaged in ongoing anti-austerity organizing, New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts (NYABC), began organizing for the September 17th action locally, noticing similarities to their own recent encampment protesting budget cuts, "Bloombergville." The Adbusters call gained momentum through participation by the internet activist group Anonymous, as well as a fair number of right libertarians and Ron Paul supporters.[10] In early planning meetings, radical anthropologist David Graeber along with other anarchists and DAN veterans successfully pushed in for the group to organize via "general assemblies" ruled by consensus decision-making. Thus months before taking Zuccotti Square, Occupy had taken neoanarchist forms: a pluralistic critique of corporate power wielded by an organizational model of leaderless direct democracy, consensus decision-making, and direct action.

Given this genealogy, it is perhaps unsurprising that in its short lifespan, OWS confronted many of the same obstacles that felled its precursors in prefiguration. Early on, discussion of contentious political questions had already proven to quickly shatter the consensus of the 99%, effectively incentivizing the substitution of a shared tactic for a shared politics. Demands were shelved and the movement became defined by encampments governed by directly democratic general assemblies. In the assemblies, one heard relatively little about conventional political matters of vision, strategy, policy measures, or even the Tobin Tax. Instead, the General Assemblies had the character of interminable house meetings punctuated with political slogans, where discussion primarily centered on the logistics of maintaining the occupation: how to feed people, keep them warm, and organize toilet and sleeping arrangements. The continuous demands of householding neatly filled an ideological vacuum; form stood in for and evacuated political content. Many found the length and inefficiency of assemblies meetings frustrating, and the movement suffered from high rates of attrition and burnout. When the encampments were eventually evicted, the movement lost its unified identity and the nation's attention, and quickly disappeared into the usual variety of localized activist campaigns.

10 On origins, see Miller 2012 and Sledge, 2011.

Conclusion

The rise and fall of the New Left has profoundly shaped the trajectory of the social movements that emerged in its wake. Its immediate predecessor, the groups and struggles lumped under the umbrella term of "New Social Movements," proved to be a laboratory and incubator for a new left sensibility. Keen to heal the trauma of the late Sixties turn to violence and sectarianism, these activists consciously returned to the earlier participatory democratic ethos of the grassroots Civil Rights Movement and Port Huron Statement. This sentiment developed into a unique political constellation, which combined nonviolent direct action, direct democracy, feminism, and ecology. Disdainful of ideology, Marxism in particular, these groups turned to alternative radical traditions such as utopianism, anarchism, and pacifist religious sects like the Quakers. This concern with a consistency of means and ends translated into a prefigurative politics, which shifted emphasis from transforming political and economic institutions by seizing power to a more diffuse notion of cultural revolution based on alternative ideas, lifestyles, and institutions.

By the late Nineties, a generation of younger left activists had gravitated towards anarchism as the ideological glue holding together a diverse political patchwork: a critique of the state, capitalism, and all forms of hierarchy; conjoined to feminist and antiracist sensibilities; and held in place by a discourse of direct democracy and prefigurative strategic orientation. This neoanarchist politics formed the core of the next upsurge of left activism, the alterglobalization movement. After a decade of hibernation during the Bush years, which witnessed a rebirth of the antiwar and anti-imperialist politics of the Sixties, neoanarchism returned in the guise of Occupy Wall Street. Here, those on the receiving end of neoliberal inequality turned to the political and organizational experience of anarchist veterans of the alterglobalization movement. The result was the creation of a pluralistic counter-community in Zuccotti Park operating according to directly democratic principles and a spirit of mutual aid, governed by general assemblies using consensus decision-making. Neoanarchism was conceived in the long shadow of the Sixties, after the trauma of Marxist sectarianism, violence, and fragmentation into single-issue campaigns and identity movements, representing an ideological attempt to put the left back together by adopting a pluralistic, nonviolent politics that institutionalizes a strict consistency of means and ends through a prefigurative political strategy wary of power. Thus, in the span of forty

years, ideas and traditions once relegated to the margins of the left had taken center stage, largely supplanting Marxist with neoanarchist hegemony.

However, charting the historical evolution of the neoanarchism shows that these attempts to resolve problems posed by the past have also created new ones. These movements have been plagued by persistent and recurring patterns: the emergence of unacknowledged leadership, the limitations of directly democratic organizations and strict consensus, and the strategic shortcomings of prefigurative politics. This simultaneously more utopian and modest scope is reflected in the evolution of protest organization names: the positive social vision expressed by the name Students for a Democratic Society was followed by names reflecting a defensive orientation, as in the Clamshell and Abalone Alliances. Later, the names denoted a shared tactic, as in the *Direct Action* Network and then *Occupy* Wall Street. Ultimately, these movements all failed to translate movement form into a broader social vision; direct democracy remained at the level of a tactic and set of practices rather than an alternative institutional order. This inability to move from direct action to social transformation has been an important reoccurring factor in movement decline. The populism and antipolitical tendencies of Occupy exacerbate this tendency.

Yet there is no eliding the thicket of politics. The questions confronted by Occupy are not new; indeed a great deal of pertinent knowledge has been amassed which describes the obstacles prefigurative movements have consistently succumbed to: the substitution of tactics for politics, conflating movement and society, questions of leadership and organization, inability to expand into mass movements, and tendencies towards lifestylism and burnout. Perhaps this is the most enduring legacy of the New Left—its anti-intellectualism, skepticism of theory, historical amnesia, and bias towards experiential novelty have bequeathed a left culture in which these resources remain largely unexplored, its most persistent political questions remain unasked and unanswered.

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