Lenin's Lens: The Occupy Movement, an Infantile Disorder?

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a theoretical critique of the Occupy movement by drawing on V.I. Lenin's work, Left-wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder (LWC). This work emphasizes the importance of recognizing political power within institutionalized political systems, for example, trade unions and parliamentary democracy. We bring the ideas contained in this work to bear on the Occupy movement by drawing on 20 activist accounts from two UK Occupy camps to argue that the Occupy movement was an earlier phase of a developing political challenge to neoliberalism. In this respect, Occupy was an immature politics unlikely to lead to social change. However, recent research suggests that the creation of a new wave of 'movement parties' (della Porta et al., 2017) are a more organized and politically mature response to neoliberal austerity, which to some extent grew out of the mass movement assemblies like the Occupy movement. By applying Lenin's ideas to analyse the main political practices of Occupy, this paper argues that a Leninist viewpoint could offer some practical improvements towards the political strategy of new movements by being part of a coalition of activists and trade unionists, with the ultimate aim of working within parliamentary democracy.

Keywords: social movements, Lenin, occupy, protest

INTRODUCTION

This paper offers a theoretical critique of the Occupy movement by drawing on V.I. Lenin's work, Left-wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder (LWC). This work emphasizes the importance of recognizing political power within institutionalized political systems, for example, trade unions and parliamentary democracy. We bring the ideas contained in this work to bear on the Occupy movement by drawing on 20 activist accounts from two UK Occupy camps to argue that the Occupy movement was an earlier phase of a developing political challenge to neoliberalism. In this respect, Occupy was an immature politics unlikely to lead to social change. However, recent research suggests that the creation of a new wave of 'movement parties', such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, and Momentum in the UK are a more organized and politically mature response to neoliberal austerity, which to some extent grew out of the mass movement assemblies like the Indagnados in Spain and Occupy in the UK (della Porta et al., 2017; Gerbaudo, 2017). By applying Lenin's ideas to analyse the main political practices of Occupy, this paper argues that a Leninist viewpoint could offer some practical improvements towards its political strategy by developing a proletarian hegemony through movement parties, which would include a coalition of activists and trade unionists, with the aim of working within parliamentary democracy.

This paper begins by outlining when, where and how the Occupy movement emerged. It provides key information on the way it was organised and especially the limitations of horizontalism. The next section discusses why Lenin's ideas contained in LWC are relevant for contemporary movement analysis. Here we engage with literature that makes a comparable point to this paper in terms of critiquing the Occupy movement. However, we

justify the use of Lenin by arguing his work recognises the importance of political power and the importance for social movements to be properly organised to implement a political programme towards social change. The next section details the methodology of the study, where we outline the main methods and sampling technique used to select respondents involved in two Occupy camps. Finally, we subject the Occupy movement to a Leninist analysis and claim that the Occupy movement represented an awakening, but it was amorphous and lacked structure and real decision making capacity to implement social change. We argue that a coalition with organised labour and the formation of a political campaign group – or what has elsewhere been termed a movement party- would help give form and shape to a new political movement that could work with democratic political parties within parliamentary institutions where real policies and decisions can be made to bring about social change.

THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT

The Occupy movement began on 17th September, 2011 after the radical subverting magazine, Adbusters, put out a call to Occupy Wall Street. The location was chosen for symbolic reasons (following the financial crash of 2007-8) because activists perceived it to be where those responsible for the crash worked.

The first Occupy encampment was created in Zuccotti park (near Wall Street), New York, on the same date. The movement quickly spread to over 950 cities in 80 countries (Castells, 2012). It is well documented that it was a protest against the financial mismanagement of the economy leading to a global economic downturn and by extension the failure of western, democratic governments to control the crisis. The financial crash and subsequent austerity measures imposed by governments created the structural conditions for these protests, which led to the protesters interpreting their politics as resistance through an anti-austerity collective action frame (della Porta, 2015). The social demographic of Occupy included a significant number of what have been termed the precariat, those who in the era of globalization face precarious working conditions with little job security on flexible or zero hour contracts (Standing, 2011). As della Porta (2015) states the main social demographic activist base from the Arab spring through the US and European Occupy movement included young, unemployed or underemployed people. In fact, young people (20-30 year olds) have been the first to mobilize because of their precarious position within neoliberal labour markets and the related grievances this creates (Fuchs, 2014; della Porta, 2015).

Set within this context it has been argued that the Occupy movement mobilised a new generation of activists who demanded and created a new type of politics, one which 'ignored political parties, distrusted the [corporate] media, rejected all formal organization, relying on the internet and local assemblies for collective debate and decision making' (Castells, 2012: 4). Linked to the new type of politics was more use of new media than in the past, especially web 2.0 technologies, including Facebook and Twitter platforms. In recent years, since the alleged election fixing in Iran (2009) and the Arab spring (2011), a number of authors have commented on how such user-generated content has shaped political protests (Mason, 2010; Hands, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012). For example:

> Facebook is used to form groups, covert and overt- in order to establish those strong but flexible connections. Twitter is used for real time *organization* and news dissemination, bypassing the cumbersome 'newsgathering' operations of the mainstream media. YouTube and Twitter-linked photographic sites Yfrog, Flickr and Twitpic- are used to provide instant evidence of the claims being made. Link-shortners like bit.ly are used to disseminate key articles via Twitter (Mason, 2010: 75 cited by Gerbaudo, 2012: 3).

The twitter platform was used by the Hacktivist collective, anonymous, to distribute information through the #Occupy Wall Street. (Juris, 2012; Roberts, 2014). According to a survey of 500 US Occupy activists conducted in 2012 by the Occupy Research and Data Centre, 64% of respondents stated that they had used Facebook within 24 hours for Occupy related activity (Roberts, 2014: 175). In short, there was a critical mass of young, educated and technologically savvy protesters who were politically active with real grievances that helped create the Occupy movement.

According to a number of authors, the Occupy movement along with the Arab spring and the Indignados protests in Spain emerged because of the inequality created by structural conditions of neoliberal capitalism (Ancelovici et al., 2016). In addition to this, there has developed amongst some parts of the citizenry a distrust of established political parties (Graeber, 2013; Standing, 2011; Badiou, 2012; della Porta, 2015). In some parts of the western world, political elites were viewed as either responsible for the economic crash through a dereliction of duty, say in the UK and the USA, or, viewed as complicit and even possibly corrupt, for example, in Greece and Spain (della Porta, 2015). Encapsulating the gross inequality between social class groups, Graeber (2013) has been credited with creating the slogan, 'we are the 99%'. This refers to how the richest 1% hold and control the majority of wealth in US society- it became a slogan that extended to all Occupy camps around the world and other protests against inequality. This slogan became the motif of the Occupy movement, which clearly presents itself within an anti-austerity collective action frame. Linked to this inequality is the distrust of official political power and their

reluctance or inability to address wealth inequalities in societies. For example, the first page of Fuchs' (2014) book on Occupy draws on a set of anecdotes and quotes from activists who give their opinion on the crisis of capitalism, the first one states: 'For me, the Occupy movement is one important part of the catalyst which will bring change to this corporate / political bloodsucking system that is bleeding us all dry' (Ibid.:1).

Statements of discontent like the one above were also used by the political forerunners of Occupy, they were present during the Arab Spring, the Indignados in Spain, and the Greek protests. della Porta (2015) provides evidence of how these protest movements through their statements represent a crisis of political responsibility within advanced democracies. For example: a poster at the Indignados protest read, 'They call it democracy, but it is not', and the group at the Spanish camp outs- 'Real Democracy Now', which implies the one citizens have at the moment is not real, these are concrete examples of feelings of distrust of politicians and the political system amongst the population. During the Greek protests after tens of thousands of citizens mobilized in Sytagma square for three days, a call from Facebook was circulated stating 'any corrupt politician should be either sent home or to jail' (ibid.:2). Understandably, this distrust carried over into the way Occupy organized itself. It was one which desired to create something different from the organized, institutional political systems already in place. To some extent and in some camps this also meant a rejection of left-wing political parties and trade unions too (Roberts, 2014).

The Occupy movement was an important 21st century movement which captured the academic, (Castells, 2012; Pickerill and Krinsky, 2012; Graeber, 2013; della Porta, 2015) popular, (Mason, 2012, 2015) and activist imagination (Halvorsen, 2012). The fact that it emerged in over 80 countries and in 950 cities across the globe demonstrates that inequality is not located in just a few cities or countries and it is not imagined. Further empirical evidence of inequality is provided by Hardoon (2015):

> Global wealth is becoming increasing concentrated among a small wealthy elite. Data from Credit Suisse shows that since 2010, the richest 1% of adults in the world have been increasing their share of total global wealth' (p2)…In 2010, the richest 80 people in the world had a net wealth of $1.3tn. By 2014, the 80 people who top the Forbes rich list had a collective wealth of $1.9tn; an increase of $600bn in just 4 years, or 50% in nominal terms (Ibid.:3).

The popular slogan used by the Occupy movement, 'we are the 99%', highlights a perceived wealth and power disparity and calls into question the efficacy of political democracy. As such, the Occupy movement was also a reaction to the lack of democratic accountability of politicians to prevent wealthy elites, specifically the financiers' reckless practices that led to the 2007-8 financial crisis (Elliot, 2011).

Occupy and Horizontalism

Due to the lack of perceived democratic accountability within western democracies especially after the financial crash the Occupy movement organized itself horizontally in a bid to move away from traditional political organizations, including institutionalized political structures such as trade unions and representative politics including parliamentary type political parties.

Since there were over 950 occupy camps in over 80 countries across the world it would be simplistic to assume they were all identical. Furthermore, some Occupy camps had different dynamics and demographic compositions to others, which is to be expected in terms of the different cultural customs and practices nationally, regionally and locally. However, there are some key political features of Occupy movements which were shared. The main point is that Occupy camps were organized horizontally. Horizontalism refers to the practice of non-representational and therefore non-hierarchical politics, that is, there are no *de jure* leaders and decisions over political tactics and strategy are reached through consensus. Secondly, the main organizing and decision making body was by way of a General Assembly (GA). The GA was the commonly agreed decision making body of the Occupy movement, a non-hierarchical and decentralized collection of people from the camp that is non-representative. Thirdly, the general ethos of Occupy camps drew on a 'do it yourself' approach (McKay, 1998; Bryan et al., 2007). This refers to taking an independent approach towards achieving political change, acting and thinking for oneself and taking personal responsibility for your choices and not leaving decisions to others but rather abiding by the principles of the Occupy camp that encourage independence. Fourthly, the practice of prefigurative politics, which refers to living the politics one desires now and not waiting for an ideal opportunity brought about by others (particularly leaders in institutionalized political groups, for example trade unions) to implement change or to make decisions and take action on your behalf. Fifthly, the practice of consensus-based decision-making, which is informed by the principles of non-hierarchical politics through the establishment of a General Assembly which was the main decision making body on Occupy camps. Members of the GA are members of the camp and all on the camp are welcome to contribute to the direction and future of it. Given camps are run on a basis of direct democracy, a number of working groups are set up to take responsibility for activities that facilitate the smooth running of the camp. These include security, cleaning, and campaigning, for example. However, decisions are reached through

consensus at these groups, not through majoritarian voting. Instead, members who wish to raise points, block, or support decisions use hand signals. This helps to support the flow of discussion and helps to stop shouting over the top of other people, it is hoped that this will encourage less confident people to voice their opinions without fear of being shouted down or their voices being drowned out by more dominant members. Since this process relies on consensus-based decisions, no decision can be passed without either full agreement of those present, or at least no one who is absolutely against the decision. The working groups, after reaching decisions on their activities, then take their decisions to the GA. The GA then hold a meeting to inform the rest of the camp of what has been decided. This is horizontalist decision making *par excellence*.

As a 21st century movement, the importance of Occupy cannot be overstated. It created an anti-austerity, master collective action frame, which demanded change across the globe. Its sheer size and spread in terms of the number of camps and across so many countries is one of the largest in history; to the extent it has been argued that the political power of the 99% might be revolutionary and truly transformative, which could lead us into a post-capitalist world (Mason, 2015). However, it is our contention that this is not the case since the Occupy movement did not have a coherent political strategy to change anything long-term for the better given the problems associated with their main political practice of horizontalism. It is for this reason we draw on Lenin's work in the next section.

Why Lenin?

Academically, social movement scholars are increasingly using Marxism as a theoretical resource to understand the latest conditions of protest (Barker et al., 2013; della Porta, 2015). Briziarelli and Guillem (2014) for example draw on Gramsci to explain how Occupy lacked hegemonic capacity by only working at the level of civil society and not operating at the level of the integral state. We would agree with this in the sense that not working at the level of the state i.e. outside of political state recognition has little chance of success as it is avoiding the necessary power structures needed to have citizens interests represented when it comes to decisions over the economy and perhaps stop financial crashes like the one that happened in 2007-8. Lenin in particular brings to bear some important ideas about how a more centrally organised political group structure could achieve a 'proletarian hegemony (working class predominance) through an organised vanguard' (Le Blanc, 2017:112)- that is a situation whereby citizens could direct the struggle but through a party representing the collective will of the people. Gerbaudo (2017: 191) makes a similar point when referring to earlier peoples assemblies that emerged in the 20th century that citizens craved organisation and wanted all power to the Soviets (workers councils) that could mobilise all the individual wills into a collective will. And the party could make decisions away from the 'turmoil of the crowd'.

That said, drawing on Lenin's ideas of establishing a party to represent citizens interests might be considered controversial because of the suggestion of elitism in his work and some of the choices he made to ensure the repression of opponents (Ali, 2017). Trotsky, (his ally and a key figure in the Russian revolution) was no less concerned about the possible substitutionism that could and did arise when the professional revolutionaries of the party substitute for the masses, the committee for the party and then the dictator for the committee. His fears became reality with the subsequent rise of Stalinism, the expansion of the gulag system and all the brutality that ensued (Trotsky, 1999). Then there are the failed examples of Marxism-Leninism such as the ultimate collapse of the Eastern Block since 1989. However, to answer these claims, Lenin's work has been rediscovered and reinterpreted to overturn some of the previously assumed elitism. Lih (2005) for example, goes into great detail on how Lenin's work has been simplified by previous historians referring to and relying on a few quotes from 'textbook' and abridged versions of *What is to be Done?* (WITBD), taking statements out of context and ignoring elitist statements from Lenin's political opponents, for example, the Mensheviks.

However, reference to Zizek (Lenin and Zizek, 2017) is useful here, since he argues we should not try to reinvent Lenin, but we should repeat him, especially since the collapse of the Eastern Block, circa 1990. It could be argued that trade unions could play a key role in developing socialist ideology to counter neoliberalism and challenge the inequality, debt crisis, financial mismanagement, and political crises that have occurred in recent times (Dorling, 2016; Graeber, 2011). This means criticising and moving beyond the way political groups like Occupy organise that could be considered post-ideological, that do not have a stable political vision or a plan to challenge the austerity that occurred after the financial crash of 2007-8. It should be made clear that Lenin's methods of political transformation are problematic, his treatment of 'counter revolutionaries' and the way in which he was very much part of the expansion of the gulag system should not be dismissed. Therefore, as Zizek has argued Lenin's work could be used objectively and within the horizon of human rights to avoid the painful experiences of the 20th century (Lenin and Zizek, 2017). Notwithstanding these criticisms, Lenin was an intellectual and a political strategist and therefore his writings, which were borne out of particular conditions, are still very valuable in that they can be used to analyse situations based on empirical realities of political negotiation and

compromise. LWC offers an opportunity to understand how political compromise and cooperation, coupled with political organisation and structure can be used to push forward a political programme that challenges elite power.

In LWC, Lenin's criticisms of various left-wing political groups including the German Left Communists and the Mensheviks after the Russian revolution, 1917, are underutilized in social movement studies and yet they provide a sound theoretical basis with which one can use to critique the action repertoires of contemporary activist groups. In this case, the Occupy movement and the political practices of horizontalism, which include the underlying position of no compromise with parliamentary politics, at best an ambiguous relationship towards trade unions (as they are seen as part of institutionalized political structures) and at worst rejecting their help; instead opting for the political practice of prefigurative politics and consensus-based decision making. Underlying Lenin's work is recognition of the importance of *political power* and that without strategically compromising with political power there is little chance of changing political structures that have led to inequality (Lenin, 1999). LWC can be used to understand how without a real structure for political representation and a structured plan of how to bring about societal change, the Occupy movement and indeed any other activist groups leave themselves open to attack from reactionary forces that have a very clear plan of how to derail progressive politics. This is what Lenin warned when he stated:

> 'the dictatorship of the proletariat means a most determined and most ruthless war waged by the new class against a more powerful enemy, the bourgeoisie, whose resistance increased tenfold by their overthrow…' (Lenin, 1999, Chapter, 2:1).

Lenin's warning above refers to how the bourgeoisie were reacting to an implementation of a dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia; he is arguing that the bourgeoisie's resistance increases tenfold when threatened with being overthrown. Although his work was based on an early 20th century political situation in Russia, it was rooted in what he called 15 years of political and 'practical history', which included the earlier revolution of 1905. Therefore, his theory is derived from real experience, and regardless of the time period it is a *classic* critique of those movements and parties who fail to acknowledge how important it is to organise and plan a clear political strategy which would involve forming a party with a range of political forces against elite hierarchies who wish to maintain power.

Before the methodology for the research is discussed there are two main points to bear in mind. Firstly, Occupy emerged in over 950 cities and in 80 countries across the globe. Therefore, this analysis is necessarily at a level of abstraction given the size of both the Occupy movement and the body of Lenin's work. There were political and cultural differences between camps across cities not to mention between countries, a paper of this type cannot hope to capture the various nuances that existed. However, there are certain central and key common features of Occupy camps in terms of their organizing and mobilizing structures and collective action frames that can be referred to and used for analysis, despite variations. These include the political practice of horizontalism and consensus-based decision making (CBDM). To illustrate some of the problems that arose on camps we have provided interview evidence from activists involved in two UK camps and accounts from academic literature on the Occupy movement. Secondly, Lenin's critique in LWC was aimed at the German Left Communists (GLC) and other groups, which were quite different from the Occupy movement. In some respects, the GLC would be more like a traditional left-wing political party. However, the aim is not to compare the Occupy movement with whom he was criticizing, but rather to apply some general points of his criticisms to an inexperienced political and social movement, and point out the mistakes they made by not recognising the importance of political power and that to affect change mass movements need to develop into a more mature political and organised form- a party that represent the interests of the many.

METHODOLOGY

To offer some empirical evidence which supports the theoretical analysis, 20 activists from two Occupy camps were interviewed by way of semi-structured interviewing technique in 2014; some of who were involved in an Occupy camp in a northern UK city and others in Occupy London, UK. All the interviews took place after the activists were no longer involved in Occupy and after the campouts had ended. In addition, a range of documents were consulted, both academic and journalistic to gather background information on the Occupy movement. The activists were sampled through two main ways. Firstly, through purposive sampling, one of the authors has contacts in a range of activist networks and through these was able to interview various 'knowledge sources' who were involved in the Occupy movement. Secondly, to extend the research, a snowball sampling technique was used by asking activists if they could suggest other activists who would be willing to be interviewed. Interviews were carried out using a recording device and were later transcribed. The interview questions were open ended and centred

around activists political biography, political values, motivations and affiliations, and their experiences of Occupy. The data was analysed in a qualitative and thematic manner.

A LENINIST CRITIQUE OF OCCUPY

In the following section we present evidence from empirical data and published material that suggests the political practice of horizontalism as used by Occupy lacked the necessary organizational and decision making mechanisms to produce any significant social change. Furthermore, because the political practice of Occupy eschewed formal political institutions and structures it was unlikely to gain any political traction to progress its politics towards achieving a more equal society/ world. It is for these reasons we claim that Occupy was an immature political movement. This is not meant to be used pejoratively, but rather to suggest that it was the beginning of an earlier phase of a challenge to neoliberal austerity. Through the development of 'movement parties' we are now seeing signs of political maturity since they contain a coalition of social and political forces that have emanated out of movements like Occupy which are attempting to build a counter hegemony. Whether these will be successful in the long term is another question beyond the scope of this paper and only time will tell; what is for sure though is the examples of movement parties like Momentum in the UK and Podemos in Spain have lasted significantly longer than Occupy and have gained popular support.

We now subject the data to a Leninist analysis by first outlining some examples of how Occupy was disorganized, then explain how organized labor in the form of trade unions offer important material and organizational resources for social movements that could help in the political development towards a new movement party. Linked to this, we claim that to advance a movement's political position from a camp out it is necessary to enter into parliamentary politics, perhaps through or working with an interlocutor movement party.

The Politics of Disorganisation

Occupy was a mass movement assembly as such was prone to disorganisation. This has been documented quite widely with a number of examples that suggest endless meetings with no concrete decisions being made which is a direct consequence of CBDM as part of the wider political practice of horizonalism. Here we present some empirical data to substantiate these claims and take forward our argument to suggest occupy was an infantile disorder. An interview with a key activist who was a trade unionist and helped set up one Occupy camp in the North of England, UK, outlines the problems he experienced with CBDM. Interestingly, even just trying to organize the General Assembly to start the decision making process was difficult. He states: 'the biggest problem about the General Assembly was implementing the General Assembly' (R1) (also see Ibrahim, 2015). This was because too many people had different interpretations over how it should work. And without any democratic mechanisms decisions could not be reached. He goes on to state that 'the same topics were discussed over and over again' (R1), which relates to the issue of 'reinventing the wheel'. It was also the case that when he suggested organising a voting system so decisions on how to organize could actually be reached, he was told 'no' by other members of the camp. Furthermore, this was not open for discussion. In this sense the camp was quite prescriptive and restrictive which seemed clearly at odds with open discussion. That is, whilst majoritarian voting is not desired, open discussion should at least allow the debate to be had. He pointed out that he felt that this was quite contradictory to the principles of open discussion and CBDM.

Another activist respondent stated:

> People seemed to have a problem with any form of organization, a lot of people came in with individual ideas… they thought those ideas were the ideas that would take it forward, and you can't imagine how difficult it is when there's a room full of people all with their own ideas wanting those ideas to be the leading ideas in the organization and not understanding that people have to compromise and look for ways to move forward together (R2).

It is interesting to note that there seemed to be little compromise by some members of the camp who were dominant. Yet, there seemed to be little organization and actually achieving anything seemed to be impossible because there seemed to be no plan that could be decided upon.

He goes on to say that:

> So the sort of anti-organization of it was really difficult and the mentioning of the word leadership caused terror amongst people. Although leaders naturally develop, well I say they naturally develop, they tended to be quite well educated, university graduates who had been able to articulate themselves and had a sort of higher understanding of politics. Maybe they'd been involved in some politics on campus and stuff like that. So they were able to establish themselves as leaders of it [the camp] which were detrimental to the whole thing really (R2).

The same problems have been outlined in the literature on Occupy. Smith and Glidden (2012), for example, state that while having no formal structure allows for spontaneity and open process, it also leads to a tyranny of structurelessness. In the Occupy movement, a lack of formalized structure meant that individuals or cliques tended to dominate the politics of the group. In relation to Occupy Pittsburgh, this was evident in the early months of encampment, as those who maintained a continuous presence in camps claimed a higher status during group decision-making. As well as possible flaws in terms of democratic practice there were issues of practicality- without agendas, specific times of meetings or an end time (some structure) meetings ran on and/or newcomers would discuss issues that had already been discussed. Gerbaudo (2017) has made a similar point from his research on mass movement assemblies including Occupy. In particular, how meetings can become endless and at certain times members of the camp chose to make decisions when other members were not there to challenge them. In this respect, CBDM was never meant or suitable for mass movements (2017:201). There are two issues here: one is colloquially referred to as 'reinventing the wheel' where the same issues are discussed over and over again. The other is when there are invisible hierarchies and no democratic accountability; decisions are made by *de facto* but not *de jure* leaders. Some of these issues have been documented in the civil rights movement and feminist movement in the 1970s (Freeman, 1972-3) as well as in more recent turn of the century anti-capitalist movements (Bramble and Minns, 2005), but it is surprising that they are still being played out well into the 21st century. This is where a Leninist analysis towards the implementation of structure and gaining insights from how a trade union organises might be instructive.

Trade Unions and Organization

The organization that a trade union can bring to a social movement is detailed in Lenin's work when he argued that the party directly relied on trade unions and demonstrated how indispensable they were after the 1917 revolution and during the precarious dictatorship of the proletariat phase when capitalists and counter revolutionaries wished to stop and destroy the Russian revolution:

> Without close contacts with the trade unions, and without their energetic support and devoted efforts not only in economic but military affairs, it would have of course been impossible for us to govern the country and to maintain the dictatorship [of the proletariat] for two and a half months let alone two and a half years (Lenin, 1999, Chapter 7: 2).

Lenin also points out how trade unions can provide educational and political development for citizens. He states how in political practice trade unions when working with social movements can carry out 'propaganda, agitation, and timely and frequent conferences' (Ibid.:2). They can help politicize citizens to be more aware of their material conditions and equip them with the knowledge to develop and improve on their action repertoires, in turn, this could help further positive social change when such skills are deployed. However, when decisions cannot be reached and arguing takes place on how to organize an action or event, a type of political entropy occurs whereby the political will and energy people once had for the movement dissipates, people leave and camps simply collapse.

Lenin goes on to argue how trade union support was paramount for the Bolsheviks, that they could not have retained power for two months let alone two years without the energetic support of trade unions. Interestingly, a good deal of UK Occupy camps collapsed in two months. The London camp, the longest running one in the UK, lasted four months before moving with fewer participants to Finsbury Square. It finally ended in June 2012. From another interview an activist recalled how one northern UK camp lasted 'no more than six weeks' (R3). This was after a split between those in the camp who wished to collaborate with the public sector trade unionists (who were organising a mass strike and demonstration through the city against the cuts in pension benefits for public sector workers imposed by the UK government) and those that did not and who wished to hold fast on non-cooperation with trade unions.

Although the way in which labour unions organize is at odds with the dominant practice of horizontalism, '[i]t was recognized that unions could be key allies and that they shared similar grievances to Occupy activists' (Pickerill and Krinsky (2012: 282). However, collaborations only succeeded in a few places and even in those places cooperation broke down eventually. A case in point was Oakland Occupy, which worked with the International Longshoreman and Warehouse Union. Together, they organized a large general strike and action that closed several West Coast ports. However, disagreements over tactics, the need for leadership, and which issues should take priority emerged and these led to the break-up of the alliance.

On another occasion, there was also confusion expressed by some Oakland occupy activists who applied for a permit to demonstrate whereas others did not, thereby resulting in the criminalization of those that did not (Roberts, 2014). The lack of planning (structurelessness) in regards how action should be coordinated is an inherent problem for horizontalist politics, since there are multiple perspectives, multiple goals and differences of opinion on how things should proceed. There is often no real plan for a future action, as plans are seen as restrictive, and

prefigurative politics is the general strategy. The resultant affect can be a collapse in certain circumstances or like the Oakland case an unintentional undermining of fellow activists. No clear leadership structure often results in confusion and/or splits like the case of the northern, UK camp mentioned earlier.

Building on this argument, to ignore the organizational power of labour with which a coherent political programme can be brought about is to ignore the power geometry of political struggles. A major source of power within a social movement is its ability to deploy resources and sustain itself during a political campaign (McCarthy and Zald, 1977).

Creating alliances with the labour movement can bring much needed resources to a campaign or struggle both at the macro level of framing the struggle and at the micro level in providing some basic and much needed resources on the ground. This was the case during the Occupy camp in the North of the UK. According to one activist who was interviewed, 'trade unionists brought food and torches to campers and opened up their offices to allow them to use their shower facilities' (R4). Whilst these examples of cooperation at the micro level do happen, at the level of organization however, political compromise and cooperation between activists and trade unions were short lived. Therefore, we argue what is needed is a 'movement party' which could bring together the spontaneity of new movements and the structure and organisational power of trade unions. This way at the macro level of framing struggles, trade unions and movement activists could have their respective collective action frames aligned under an anti-austerity collective action frame. This could result in a broadening of their own politics so they recognize how each other's struggles are caused by financial neoliberalism and decide how they can work together towards a shared political objective. This in turn could create an alliance whereby they lend support and resources (intellectual and material) to each other and raise issues in different forums thereby creating a confluence of ideas attracting a wider populace.

This again is where Lenin's work is instructive. He outlines how trade unions have the power to call upon a vast number of members and mobilize towards a strike. If grievances escalate, Lenin has argued, a situation of an 'economic strike can turn into a political strike' (Lenin, 1999). This means moving beyond a narrow economic benefit towards a greater political and societal transformation. The anti-austerity collective action frame produced by the Occupy movement did create what has been termed 'togetherness' in certain instances but not 'solidarity' (Cambell, 2011 cited by Roberts, 2014: 179). This means that the coalition of forces sharing the same grievances came together at certain times but there was no unified political programme because the model of horizontalism does not allow for the building of alliances with other groups that have different ways of organising. An opportunity to build alliances was lost for example in the UK when trade unions organized a mass public sector strike over pension reform in November, 2011. Although both groups were campaigning against aspects of austerity there was little meaningful collaboration between them. This is where a movement party representing the interests and perspectives of different groups could and have brought diverse groups together under a broad leftist ideology arguing against austerity- this in turn could develop as a political force to challenge neoliberalism.

Although we have levelled a critique at Occupy, it is also important to draw on a critique of trade unions too at this point. Lenin (1973) was aware how unions were susceptible to what he termed a 'trade union consciousness' and therefore sometimes unwilling to go beyond the immediate demands for better pay and conditions, which could exclude movement activists who are not part of a trade union. Therefore, it could be argued that trade unionists are reactionary to some extent. This is where a Leninist analysis (1973) from *What is to be Done?* (WITBD) is useful. He argued that professional revolutionaries in the form of a party organization are what is needed to lead workers beyond immediate rewards into an emancipatory communism. A contemporary form of what Lenin was arguing for is what we call a movement party that represents all interests of those who are disenfranchised by neoliberalism; this is a party that contains a range of social and political forces with the hegemonic capacity to push forward an anti-austerity agenda. It can include trade unions and political activists who may have differing strategies and ideas but within a movement party working for change are able to unite and develop solidarity.

This brings the paper on to the next part of the Leninist framework, and how participation in bourgeois parliaments is necessary since it is in the parliamentary forum that a movement party can gain traction. However, this means understanding the importance of political power in the form of parliamentary institutions and working at the level of the state and not just civil society.

Participation in Bourgeois Parliaments

The question on whether to work with bourgeois parliaments arose for Lenin and other communists, just like it does today. There is an inherent distrust of institutionalized political organizations amongst a good deal of horizontalist type movements and Occupy was no different. Hence, Lenin dedicates a chapter in LWC which asks 'Should we participate in bourgeois parliaments?' His answer is yes and is based on the practicalities of working with political organizations that have institutional power. In essence, his view is that political power is necessary for advancing a political cause. It is an essential power structure that can shape and determine how and where

resources (campaigns, education, and propaganda) might be needed to best convey the ideological vision of a political group.

Lenin at the time understood that there were arguments for not participating in bourgeois parliaments put forward by the German left communists (GLC). The GLC argued that such parliaments were 'historically and politically obsolete'. Lenin recognized that this propaganda statement by the GLC was necessary to move the masses into thinking more radically beyond the dominant political mode available to them. He divides the GLC statement up between being 'historically obsolete' and 'politically obsolete' (Lenin, 1999, Chapter 8:2). In the first sense he agrees that the era of a dictatorship of the proletariat has begun thus rendering parliament obsolete, but he states that this is a 'far cry from overcoming it in practice' (Ibid.:2). That is, it still exists and is one of the main loci of power in society whether 'from the standpoint of world history' or not. Whilst socialism is still evolving and would be a better political system he argues that we have not yet reached the final stage. As such, the real and concrete power structures of bourgeois parliaments are there and they have a strong grip on power over decision-making. His view is that political groups should still work with them whilst they are a central power structure in society even if they are reactionary. In fact, Lenin argued it's precisely because they are reactionary that activists who envisage a better society should work with them. Lenin argued activists should work with reactionary institutions more generally:

> because in them there are still workers who are stupefied by the priests and by the desolateness of village life: otherwise you run the risk of becoming mere babblers (Lenin, 1999, Chapter 8:1).

Of course, Lenin here is referring to an early 20th century situation. Applied to today, the general principle of working with those beyond the Occupy camp to build a stronger activist base could help bring about societal change. There is also the danger of not working with trade unions, and other politicos too, as Barker (2013) has argued. If the left abandons the working class, say in trade unions, parliament, or other 'reactionary institutions' it leaves them open to conservative or reformist forces (2013: 58).

In regards the view that parliament is politically obsolete, Lenin claims this is a major theoretical error of the then left wing factions in Germany since the position of the left is not strong. He adds that parliament cannot be possibly politically obsolete 'when millions and legions of proletariat are still in favour of bourgeois parliament and are downright counter-revolutionary'. He further claims that the GLC is mistaking 'their desire, their politico-ideological attitude, for objective reality' (Lenin, 1999, Chapter 8: 2). Lenin is therefore more than aware that in order for it to gain hegemony, a mass social movement must move beyond closed and narrow confines of its own membership and make links to other movements and institutions. As a Marxist, Lenin hoped that the working class would gain political consciousness as a social and class movement when:

> workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata, and groups of the population (Lenin, 1973:50).

Here, Lenin is suggesting that workers need to recognise and build on a relatively simple fact. Under capitalism, which in Russia at the time Lenin was writing was still trying to compete for dominance with feudal social relations, labour is constituted at a concrete level through which it produces use-values. Yet, labour's concrete existence is also incorporated into abstract and indifferent social relations in the guise of homogenous bundles of commodities constituted through labour power and socially necessary labour-time. Labour therefore acts as the structuring principle for the totality of capitalist social relations, and secures the relationship between concrete and abstract forms of life in capitalism. That is to say, and building on Marx, labour is not a static socio-economic category for Lenin, but represents the shape, form and movement of society – indeed, labour is a form of society (Neary, 2002:176). And this is why those socialists who wish to see a radical transformation in society had to move beyond their own party dynamics and work with representative democratic institutions across society.

It is here that parallels can be drawn between horizontalist politicos such as Occupy and GLC because of their pure attitudes towards political organizing. Just as the GLC argue that bourgeois parliaments are obsolete, Occupy were doing the same by subscribing to prefigurative politics and wanting to work outside institutionalized power structures. What is obsolete to activists subscribing to horizontalist politics might 'not be obsolete to the masses' (Lenin, 1999, Chapter 8:3). It is also the case that there are left-wing groups and trade unions with many grassroots activists from political parties who campaigned on an anti-austerity agenda. Working with these local groups could have been an opportunity for the Occupy movement to align their interests with these groups, who have a direct link with parliamentary political groups. If we take Momentum in the UK for example, a grassroots activist campaign group that evolved out of the election victory of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party leadership campaign in

2015, we can see that if activist groups like Occupy were to emerge again, a future collaboration with Momentum could strengthen both of their political positions.

Of course, it is the case that some parliamentary politicos are reactionary and might not cooperate with activists, even grassroots activists of the same party. However, as Lenin (1999) states, political groups still need to work legally with even the most reactionary institutions because it is within these that you will find workers who are exploited and could be valuable allies. This is where Occupy, the grassroots political party activists and trade unions could work with reactionary groups to transform them. Trade unions and party politicos in this instance have direct contact and have much experience in campaigning, which could be utilised.

In our interviews, there was one instance where an Occupy activist recalls how he compared the lack of experience of an Occupy activist with that of a seasoned trade union activist. The former seemed to lack 'know how' and 'leadership':

> During the pension strike, the members of the Occupy camp were invited to come and speak and the Trade Union were really praising them and saying 'we're so proud.' 'I heard this brings a new element to our fight for pensions' … 'we want your support'. But when the 'leadership' of the Occupy Movement stood on the Town Hall steps, it was like a child speaking next to the rest of the [trade union] movement that were speaking. They really had no idea of what was really happening. It was quite [a] difficult experience. If you were looking for leadership from that platform, you wouldn't have looked to the people from Occupy for any form of leadership (R5).

Therefore, we contend that if Occupy activists were to work with the trade unions and political parties from the left under a coalition or movement party, a political frame could be created to help mobilize fellow citizens from all sections of society to become what McAdam (1982) calls 'cognitively liberated' through the framing of their situation as a political struggle.

CONCLUSION

The title of this paper, which asks the question if the Occupy movement was an infantile disorder was not meant to be disparaging, rather, it is to ask if there is a certain political immaturity given the newness and inexperience of Occupy. Occupy was very much a 21st century political experiment in direct action and participatory democracy. Underpinning the politics of Occupy is a certain idealism, which comes from a variety of thinkers. One such activist and academic who is a proponent and a key influence for this type of political practice is Holloway (2002, 2010). He has argued that it is time to 'learn the new language of a new struggle'; and given the inequities produced by capitalism 'the need for radical social change is more pressing and more obvious than ever, but we do not know how to bring it about' (2010: 10). He recalls the failed political experiment of 'Oaxaca (in 2006) where people took control of the city for five months, but then were brutally repressed' (2010: 10). This type of repression is not new, and earlier we stated that it is what Lenin warned when elites feel threatened. Horizontal, leaderless political groups are vanquished and are constantly attacked by *organized* opponents whose determination increases when alternatives outside of robust political institutions emerge. The main reason progressive groups are repressed is that they have no legal power or organized critical mass from which to draw on. Holloway (2010) persists that his solution is 'to crack capitalism in as many ways as we can and try and expand and multiply the cracks and promote their confluence' (2010: 11). His approach is admirable but this is where the notion of naivety arises; oppressive regimes and reactionary, institutionalized politicos can resist pressure from a disorganized and unorganized group much more easily than from an organized one and having the panoply of the state to hand can expedite the organized effort to crush it.

Although Occupy was not crushed it did collapse and fade because a lack of resources, organisational as well as material, and there was no real political articulation between Occupy activists largely confined to camps and the masses. This is where the trade union movement and parliamentary grassroots activists could have been helpful since they often have connections and contact with citizens in a variety of locations (including the workplace and on the streets) who are less politically engaged, on a regular basis. It is for these reasons we argue that Occupy was an infantile disorder because it was unwilling to adapt to political realities and strategize beyond camp outs and towards long-term goals and consider how a broader populace could be reached.

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