

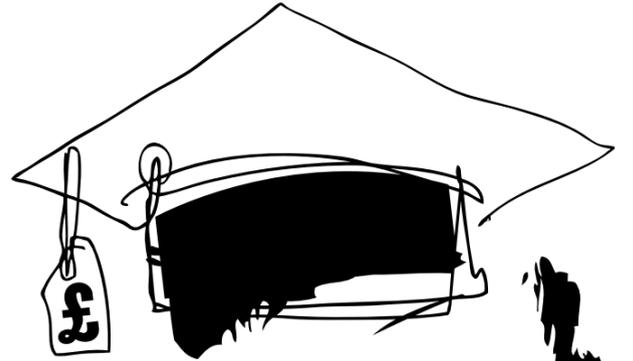
THE OCCUPIED TIMES OF LONDON

#17

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# Editorial

Humans are innately inquisitive. Curious about the world around us, we yearn to explore and, by extension, to learn. We now live in an information age, something to be celebrated. Instead, what is spreading isn't free education and the ideals behind open access for all, but monopoly and privatisation. Academic research is locked away in expensive journals, libraries are closing down, and the UK's education landscape is scarred by a deepening chasm separating those who can afford to learn from those made to feel that education is not for them; whether financially or socially.

The problem resides in the cultural worth we attribute to learning, coupled with the interference of political and economic powers seeking to control and commodify. We should not ignore, nor think it a problem, that many choose not to continue formal education, and instead find jobs or specialised vocations. The problem arises when they find that the 'lack' of formal qualifications harms their prospects of gaining employment. Many young people will find themselves on the dole or in one of the million call centre jobs around Britain. Millions more will enter the swelling ranks of the precariat as a broken political economy fails to provide employment, fighting instead for its own survival at the expense of the people.

Too many schools are run like businesses. From above, the managerial classes pose as sitting judges of teachers' performances, 'assessing' them via the arbitrary ticking of boxes that will ultimately determine their future. Modern schools are about exam results, inspections, league tables, and state-supported corporate academies keen to churn out their next generation of employees. The very process of learning is packaged as a product for parents to purchase - some through private fees, others through moving house to be in the catchment area of excellent schools.

This brave new world has undermined the role of the classroom teacher: no longer encouraged to prioritise the sharing of knowledge or dedicate time the needs of each individual, teachers are compelled

to provide a service to paying parents (who expect a return on their "investment"). In any dispute, the manager will usually sacrifice the teacher at the altar of political expediency. After all, the customer is always right.

Rational Choice Theory is based on the assumption that consumers have equal access to the necessary information to make 'rational' decisions. This is a sham, where the less educated are disadvantaged. As with hospitals, people don't want choice when it comes to secondary schools (as can be seen with the poor take-up of Michael Gove's "Free Schools" initiative.) What most people want are free, quality public services, in their locality.

At University, neoliberal policies have recast the role of the student as a consumer. It is they who must insist that the university provides a 'product' that is fit for purpose, quoting consumer rights legislation in the faculty office when they feel the service being offered isn't as advertised.

It is important to highlight that what has happened isn't as binary as privatisation vs. public sector (a line now perpetually blurred by the ubiquity of "public/private partnerships"). The NHS, the BBC and state schooling are still, to all intents and purposes, in the public realm, but their public service ethos has been corroded. Author John Lanchester describes this as, "the hegemony of economic, or quasi-economic, thinking. [whereby] The economic metaphor came to be applied to every aspect of modern life, especially the areas where it simply didn't belong". He goes on to write, "There was a kind of reverse takeover, in which City values came to dominate the whole of British life". This is true in education as much as anywhere.

Peter Mandelson always talked of disciplining young people to meet the demands of the global marketplace and the Coalition's message was loud and clear when they continued financing science and technology from the public purse but removed all taxpayer funding from the arts and humanities. For them, universities exist to oil the wheels of growth and thus knowing your history or cultivating a knowledge of art are regarded as luxuries.

This is a far cry from what education has been, and could be, if it was genuinely free. Universities were set up to foster critical thinking and learning in arts and sciences, and have been at the forefront of research and analysis. The problem is that fees, debt and elitism further cement class stratification. Social mobility is a chimera unless there is genuine freedom to participate, which is impossible so long as money, rather than people's thirst for knowledge, is the deciding factor.

Class discord is deeply entrenched in Britain. Some traditionally working class families will have consecutive generations who have grown to resent or distrust the education system. This becomes more apparent at secondary school when the idea of community starts to fracture. Classrooms become more polarised as children begin to internalise their 'assigned' social roles. Disadvantaged kids are not really 'disappointing' teachers, they are merely acting out the roles we expect them to play. Society hasn't fulfilled its part of the bargain (the "social contract").

Everyone can see that problems exist in state schools. The Right likes to argue that this is a problem intrinsic to state schooling when in fact, the problems are inequality and class division. The social problems affecting large numbers of children, even before they pass through the school gates, are complex and widespread: addiction, family breakdown, mental illness, childhood obesity, teenage pregnancy, etc. As Mark Fisher writes in *Capitalist Realism*: "It is not an exaggeration to say that being a teenager in late capitalist Britain is now close to being reclassified as a sickness." But it doesn't have to be this way.

University remains free in many countries: not just in wealthy Scandinavia but also places like Argentina who have a far lower GDP than Britain. In Norway, free universities are still seen as a key cornerstone of their more egalitarian society and there, as in Brazil, free public universities are considered better than private establishments.

Cuba spends more than double of its central budget on education compared to the UK (10% vs. 4%). It is free at every level and devoid of market interference. Education is valued, and social attitudes are very different from the UK's offensive mantra of "those that can't, teach". Access to education for all and academic-vocational cooperation are promoted, ensuring that universities stay connected to the rest of society. The Cuban system also boasts a high teacher-to-pupil ratio, rigorous teacher training, and a healthy gender mix across all disciplines. The reasonable assumption to draw is that by keeping education a free and shared resource, the pursuit of knowledge and a culture of learning become widely valued and serve to benefit society as a whole. Education is a basic right, debt shouldn't even come into it.

To offer a vision of one possible future: US student debt has ballooned by 511% since 1999, a growth rate twice that of housing-related debt. The student debt market is big business for Wall Street, where it is packaged up and traded as asset-backed securities (sound familiar?). The parasitic failed wizards of global finance continue to accumulate wealth not through their self-proclaimed superior talents but off the back of our mortgages, our illegitimate student debt. For how long will we allow this?

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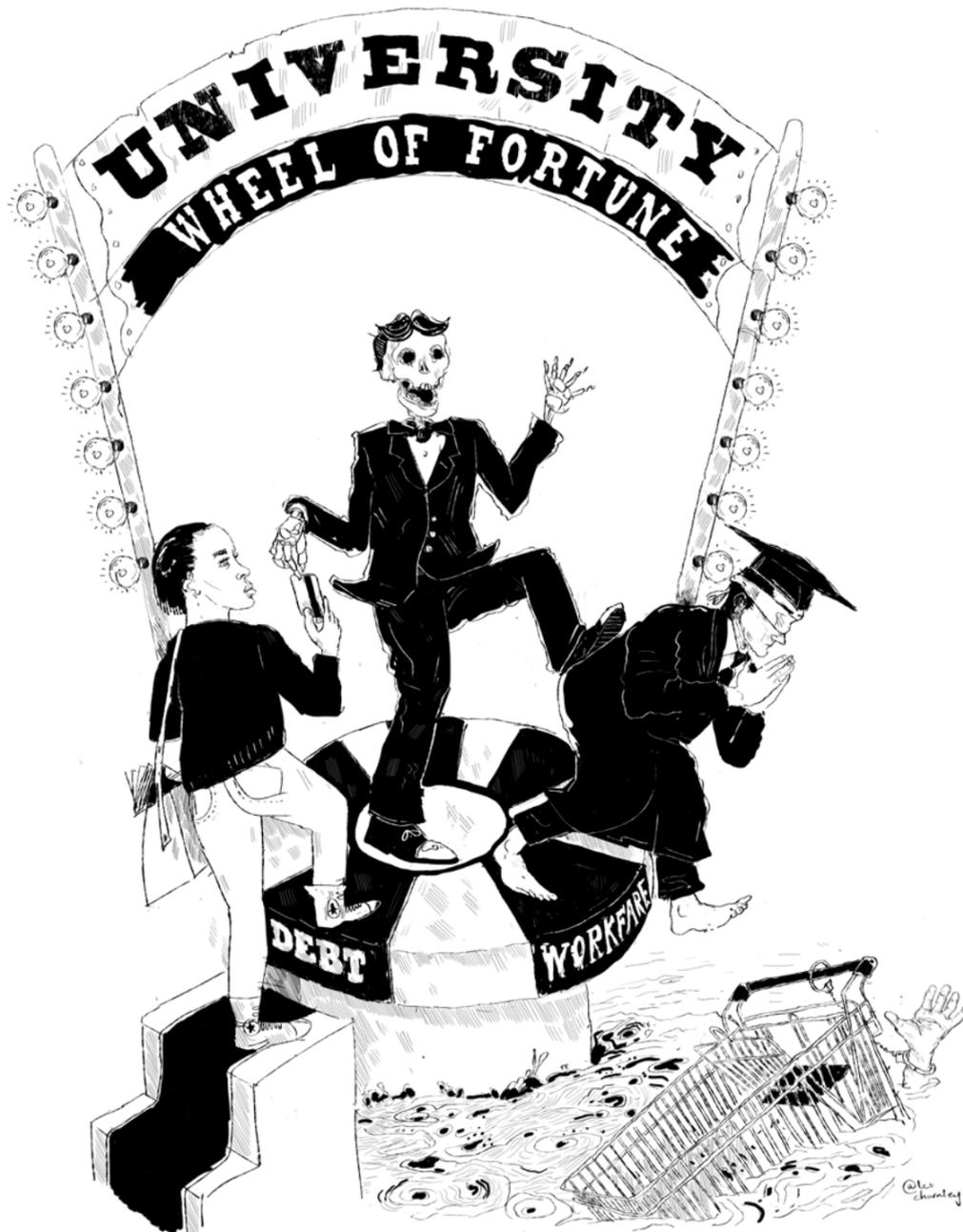
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# SEAN RIGG'S FOURTH ANNIVERSARY

SARA CAMERON

*On 21 August 2008 local musician Sean Nicholas Rigg died in police custody at Brixton Police Station. On the 4th anniversary of his death, over 200 people attended the Sean Rigg Public Memorial held at Lambeth Town Hall organised by the Sean Rigg Justice and Change Campaign and in association with Black Mental Health UK.*

The memorial was comprised of speeches from family members and a selection of speakers from Black Mental Health UK, the Newham Monitoring Project, and the RMT union. Attendees were also invited to watch the powerfully poignant short film 'Who Polices the Police?' before taking to the streets to peacefully march towards Brixton Police Station.

Throughout the march, chants of "No justice, No Peace" rang through the air, attracting groups of onlookers who inspected the placards and banners daubed with messages demanding accountability for all the deaths in police custody. More people joined the march as the crowd snaked its way down Brixton High Street. People driving by slowed their cars and honked their horns as a mark of respect. At the Police Station, a candle-lit vigil took place in remembrance of Sean. Standing around a lonely tree carefully decorated with photographs, letters, flowers and tealights, Sean's mother and sister shared their thoughts with the gathered crowd.

The Rigg family also accompanied Mona Dohle into the station as she filed a formal complaint, in which she claims to

have been eyewitness to appalling police brutality. Dohle says she saw 51 year old Freydoon Baluch wrestled to the ground and knocked unconscious by police officers outside the Ritzy cinema in Brixton recently. Sean's sister Marcia Rigg, spoke to the Brixton Blog about the treatment of Freydoon and how lessons still hadn't been learnt: "This is exactly how Sean died after he became unconscious from being restrained faced down in the prone position for approximately 'eight minutes.'" An inquest into Sean's death revealed that police had used 'unsuitable' force when restraining him.

Sean's case demonstrates a clear lack of understanding by police about how to behave in situations involving people with serious mental health problems: From the "unacceptable failures to act appropriately" by the 999 call handler (the fifth in line to be alerted to Sean's acutely psychotic behaviour by his hostel manager, Angela Woods), to his treatment by police officers during the chase on the streets, where Sean was restrained in a face down position for an 'unnecessarily' long period of time, and his treatment in police custody. Sean is just one of hundreds who have died in police custody in recent years, a disproportionate number of whom have a diagnosis of mental illness or are black, or as in Sean's case, both. 23 year old Olaseni Lewis died after being restrained for 45 minutes by police called to Bethlem Royal Hospital after his behaviour became increasingly erratic. His family are also waiting for answers. And justice.



ANDREA BAKACS

## XSTRATA 16 – AN INSIDE VIEW

JOHN RANSON

*John Ranson, one of the arrestees from November 30, gives an account of his experience of the case.*

Eight months after being spuriously charged with burglary, imprisoned overnight and deprived of our clothes and shoes before being released to find our way home in the small hours, the sixteen of us arrested on November 30 2011 were finally declared not guilty of criminal offences under the Public Order Act.

It all started with a banner-drop from the roof of a Central London office block. Our huge banner read "ALL POWER TO THE 99%", neatly tying the ethos of Occupy London to the anti-cuts agenda of the TUC's Day of Action. Appropriately, the office in question was home to the obscenely remunerated Mick Davis, CEO of the mining conglomerate Xstrata.

After the initial violence of our arrest, what followed was tedious. Nearly 24 hours in detention, an appointment to answer bail and a total of six days in court, all spanning a period of 252 days - the whole ordeal seemed contrived to bore us into submission. Happily, it also gave us a great opportunity to socialise. I knew none of these folks before N30 whereas now I count them among my best friends.

I knew nothing about Xstrata before N30 either, and if we'd received just a wagging finger that might still be the case. But given how harshly we were treated, it was only right and proper that Xstrata should be thoroughly investigated. And so, the Carnival of Dirt was born. When I heard that Peruvians, blighted by Xstrata, were planning a solidarity action alongside our carnival, all the hassle of the arrest felt worthwhile.

That's not to say I sought the arrest. It's been an expensive and time-consuming business which I could have done without. I was roughed-up but not injured; some of the others on that roof weren't so fortunate. None of us had been made aware of the risks or nature of our target by Occupy London before we were sent into action, leaving us subsequently feeling quite annoyed. Lessons need to be learnt. Ignorance is no basis on which to build an ongoing direct action movement.

My abiding thoughts, however, are positive: the sense of justice in fighting our charges, the mutual support of a very special group of friends and, of course, the massive relief of a 'not guilty' verdict. @John\_Ranson



JESSICA LEHRMAN

## OCCUPY WALL ST - 1 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

SARA CAMERON & JACK DEAN

**In July of last year, a new hashtag began multiplying across Twitter. A few months passed by, bringing with it the beginnings of a new "mental environment". Saturday 17 September 2011 marked the physical birth of Occupy Wall Street as people gathered in Manhattan's financial district of New York City to pitch their tents in the cause of social, economic and environmental justice. The impact of this action reverberated around the world. One year on, starting September 15, Occupy Wall Street has invited all of us, the '99%', to downtown New York, once again, for three days of education, celebration, and resistance in the form of "permitted convergences," assemblies and mass civil disobedience.**

It has been a challenging twelve months. The global Occupy movement has experienced the wrathful machinations of those who sympathise with corporate power - police brutality, a biased commercial media and cynical, corrupt politicians. It has also experienced countless internal struggles over meaning, process and purpose. But none of this should be allowed to overshadow the power of the central concept. Occupy Wall Street - and its hundreds of sister movements from Nigeria to Australia, Hong Kong to Peru - has brought solidarity, awareness and passion, inspiring millions of people across the world.

**The global callout for action includes the following:**  
**"They built their bonuses out of stolen pensions of teachers, civil servants, and our neighbors. We pay for their welfare. They bet and borrow against our future. We drown in debt. So who is really in debt to whom? Now our elected representatives want us to embrace austerity—work harder for less, retire later (if at all), and say goodbye to our fundamental labor protections. They're betting on our obedience. They're betting wrong...For every crumbling aspect of our society, the cause of the ruin can be traced back to corporate greed. Follow the money. All roads lead to Wall Street. And in the days and weeks before (and long after) September 17th, we will be here, demanding a system that puts the health of our communities over the profits of the 1%. We are the 99%. "**

For those not able to reach New York, the organisers have the following advice:

**"It's just as important that we Occupy Main Street. Pick a local target that embodies corporate greed—occupy your state Capitol building like the people of Wisconsin, or a chamber of commerce conference as they did in D.C. Take inspiration from revolutionary occupations worldwide, from the railroads of India to the rivers of the Amazon to the streets of Spain. Wall Street has occupied our entire planet. What do you have to say about that?"**

**You are not a loan.**



ANDREA BAKACS



JESSICA LEHRMAN



KARNEY HATCH

## PAST OCCUPATIONS: WHAT'S GOING ON WITH OCCUPY IN THE US?

TIM GEE

In Madison, Wisconsin, you can't avoid politics. The graffiti outside the state Capitol Building, the snatches of overheard discussions in the bars, and the commemorative cards at the radical bookstore all relate to one thing: the events that have unfolded since the rebellion of March 2011.

Against the backdrop of events in Tunisia and Egypt, months before the advent of Occupy Wall Street, thousands of students, trade unionists and generally disgruntled citizens occupied their state senate for ten days straight, to protest the passing of a bill that would sharply curtail trade union rights. Doctors signed sick notes so people could join. Even the police union declared solidarity with the protest. The Democrats in the Senate abandoned the state, preventing the functions of the house and delaying the bill.

Since then there have been recall elections for the governor and several senators. Although the much reviled governor, Scott Walker, managed to retain his seat, the Democrats gained control

of the legislature. On the day of my visit, power is being formally transferred. For the activists I speak to it feels like a small victory compared to the aims of the campaign, but the wider win may have happened already. The Wisconsin Uprising of 2011 showed that the spirit of the Arab Spring is not confined to the Arab world. Through their actions they demonstrated that the movement for people power is global, paving the way for Occupy Wall Street.

I've spent the last few weeks touring bookstores in the US, giving talks about tactics adopted by social movements through history. In every city I visit, there are visual clues to a much more recent history: that of the Occupy camps. On Wall Street, the letters 'OWS' are etched into the back of an empty shop window. In Pittsburgh, the privately owned open space renamed the 'People's Park' by the city's Occupy presence is still fenced off – apparently in breach of local bylaws. In Oakland, dried mud serves as a reminder of the

decision of city authorities to leave sprinklers on when the city square was occupied. And at Philadelphia's biggest Quaker meeting house there are signs of the movement continuing: a flipchart full of thank you messages from activists who had used the space during the Occupy National Gathering the previous week.

Following the Gathering, fifty or so activists opted to walk '99 miles for the 99%' back to Wall Street, generating press attention along the way, especially given the 99 degree heat. But overall, there has been a shift away from this kind of symbolic action, towards more dispersed grassroots solidarity work alongside the communities most affected by the ongoing economic crisis.

One such project is 'Occupy Vacant Lots'. The effects of globalization in the US are hard to miss, especially the shells of disused factories that blight deprived areas like North Philadelphia. In response, Occupiers in Philadelphia and beyond have

teamed up with locals to regenerate the areas into urban community gardens, whilst others have taken to the countryside to establish sustainable farms.

Another project gaining traction variously takes the name 'Occupy our Homes' or 'Occupy Foreclosure'. An example of this in action began in February of this year, when PNC Bank ordered the Cruz family to return their keys within 48 hours. Instead, the family gave the keys to the local Occupy movement. Activists kept a 24 hour watch over the building, successfully resisting bailiffs three times. Meanwhile others trailed the bank's executive Dan Taylor around public events, asking challenging questions.

Replicated across states and twinned with the actions of the longer-standing groups that assist people to renegotiate their mortgages, this tactic is beginning to have an effect. In parts of California, new alliances have declared 'Foreclosure Prevention Zones' (FPZs), providing a locus for activity, and an opportunity for local politicians to lend their support. Meanwhile, an even more radical (although somewhat quieter) strand of the movement works with homeless people to rehouse them in vacated properties.

In Pittsburgh, new alliances have been forged with campaigners for better public transport, resulting in protests escalating from polite petitions to full scale civil disobedience. In Maryland, where one in four citizens has a criminal record, citizens protesting the disparity between spending on prisons and education went so far as to build a temporary school on the site of a proposed prison.

In New York too, there is clear evidence of alliances being built. Open-air info-shops around the capital direct people to a union picket where utilities workers have walked out on strike for the first time in 27 years, having been locked out of negotiations with management. The workers I spoke to said they were willing to stay out

for as long as it takes, whilst OWS activists present gave solid support. In Wisconsin, Occupy activists are going a step further, supplying not just solidarity but sustenance to workers at Pizza Palermos, out on strike for days on end for the very right to form a union at all.

Despite the groundswell of activity, I get the sense that activists are tired and soul-searching. Over and over I hear familiar questions: How could it be that so much effort could lead to such slow changes? Could it be that the grassroots rebellion from Madison onwards is in the process of being channeled into tactics less troubling to the powers that be and therefore less effective? Or, conversely, should the movement be more willing to engage with hierarchical institutions and hierarchical methods of organizing?

Whatever answers the movement find, and whatever name it chooses for its next stage, there is undoubtedly a shift taking place. As an activist in New York put it to me: "Anger can only last so long. We need to focus that anger." Another observed "Occupy has too many groups. If we're to continue building, we need some kind of structure to hold it together." A Philadelphian activist echoed the sentiment of change, observing that "at first we just had to announce events and people would come. It was magical. Now we're really putting in the legwork."

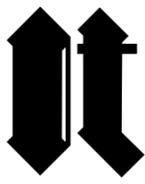
To my eye, the shift is indicative of the transition that every successful movement must make, from initial consciousness-raising to the harder job of coordinating the building of a mass movement which is radical and resilient enough to have a realistic chance of effecting change. There might be fewer headlines now, but the words daubed on the pavement in front of Wisconsin's Capitol building serve just as well: "This is far from over."

*Tim Gee is the author of Counterpower: Making Change Happen, New Internationalist, 2011. He recently completed a speaking tour of the USA.*



# BALLET OF TEARS

DAN HANCOX



It's difficult to overstate the importance of last year's eight million strong Spanish indignados movement to the new paradigm of networked, technologically

enabled protest. Most obviously, it provided the meme and the template for Occupy in its attempt (for better or worse) to form a pluralistic mass movement that said no to market fundamentalism, repudiated the corruption inherent in our parliamentary democracies, and sought to create Democracia Real Ya (real democracy now).

In January this year, while searching for a communist utopia in the middle of the Spanish countryside, I spent some time in Sevilla, capital of Andalucía, a region with a staggering 34% unemployment. By then the indignados movement had devolved into smaller local chapters working together on local battles and alternatives, time banks and economics classes, but keeping the network bonds tight so they were ready to coil back in again when the moment was right. I went to one of these meetings on a sunny Saturday afternoon. Forty-odd activists gathered in Plaza del Altozano in Triana, the city's historic gypsy quarter, the home of flamenco – and working class radicalism.

At the end of the meeting, as they rounded things up, that week's chair, Juanjo, turned and said in Spanish loud and clear enough for me to understand all too well, that there was an English journalist present. "Now," he says grinning at me, "he will make a speech to us." Oh great. When Bakunin's lieutenant Giuseppe Fanelli made his legendary proselytising addresses about anarchism in Spain, he did so in Italian and French. Even though none of the Spanish workers spoke these languages, the force of his presence, and the tumult of his rhetoric, tipped the first rocks tumbling in the anarchist avalanche. I am not Giuseppe Fanelli.

It's was not covered in Michel Thomas's Basic Spanish, not in the bit I've got to anyway. Module 1: asking the way to the train station. Module 2: rabble-rousing demagogic address to close a proto-revolutionary assembly. So I stumbled through in broken Spanish, with Juanjo graciously translating the words I didn't know – the problems of el movimiento are, um, similarrr en Inglaterra, muchas personas at the big marches, muchas personas at Occupy Londres, but then what do we do when the energy dies down? Lo que es proxima? What is next? - They didn't know the answer either.

Having survived this embarrassment, we went to a nearby tapas bar to discuss the future more.

Juanjo was a handsome, dark-haired guy in his early 30s with a broad moustache and a goatee, and an elegance at odds with his casual clothes. He looked like a musketeer who had woken up in a grey and orange zip-up hoodie by accident. He worked with under 18s as a community educator, he explained, and added a quintessentially 2012 job title: "I'm also an unemployed economist."

I told him that I couldn't believe that with 50% youth unemployment, there had not been Greek levels of disorder already. Look at Sevilla – it's so calm! He gave me a smile as placid as the river behind him. "I know it seems crazy that there has not been a revolution, or riots. But it is because of the family, I think. The traditional family model in Spain is about sharing everything, so now there are a lot of people living with their parents." Is it difficult making the money stretch? He nodded. "We have nothing, but we share it." And I don't suppose anyone is expecting the welfare state to save them?

"The way of thinking about the state is different here. In Spain the state was normally the enemy of the poorest people. Then when the dictatorship ended, and we got democracy and we started to join Europe, people started to actually believe in the system. After fifteen or twenty years of development and rising



national income, I think most people don't want to wake up from the dream, from the capitalist dream. They say we just have to wait until those good times come back again."

It's not going to happen, I said. "I know – but they are still waiting!" Juanjo laughed. There was, he said, only one thing even more important to explaining Spanish stoicism than the multi-generational family support unit.

"Also I think there is a cultural point in Spain, a Catholic way of thinking," he said. "They say that life is a valley of tears." Because the letter 'v' sounds virtually the same as the letter 'b' in Spanish, it sounded like 'ballet of tears', which is perhaps even more poignant – dancing the ballet of tears. However you pronounce it, Catholic endurance is tremendously powerful, to the point of masochistic pride. "We have been in all this richness!" Juanjo exclaimed, gesturing at the river and the ornate city around him. "But now! Now the people think: it is time for the valley of tears."

"The people that are now in power," he went on, "50 or 60 year-old business people, they have grown up with fascism, they are used to

just obeying." If you're not used to criticising, how can you improve, he said. How can you change the difference among Spanish people now: the older people believe in the system, and the younger people don't."

That was the middle of January. Since then there has been a nationwide general strike, mass student protests in Valencia, and a miners' strike in Asturias which saw them firing rocket launchers at riot police. The mayor of my obscure little communist utopia is suddenly front page news after leading expropriations of food supplies from supermarkets, and doling them out to the unemployed. The valley of tears has absorbed the Spanish crisis so far, and done so to a remarkable degree. With a staggering €65bn of spending cuts to be made over the next two years, it will be a miracle if it can hold on much longer.

Dan Hancox is a freelance writer whose work appears in the Guardian, New Statesman and Q Magazine, among others. This article is partially adapted from 'Utopia and the Valley of Tears: A journey through the Spanish crisis', available now as an ebook.



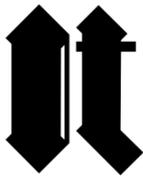
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# LATERAL POWER & THE 3RD INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

JEREMY RIFKIN



's happened before, in 1848 and in 1968. The youth of the world took to the streets to protest the injustices of autocratic political regimes and rapacious business interests, and to demand the basic human right to participate as equal citizens in the affairs of society.

On October 15th, millions of young people - and their parents and grandparents - swarmed onto the streets in large cities and small towns around the world, decrying an economic system that favours the rich 1% at the expense of 99% of the people. The protesters are frustrated by a lack of jobs. They are angry over governments giving bailouts to global banks and subsidising corporate giants, whilst cutting vital public services to the middle class and poor. And they are worried by the steady rise in the earth's temperature that now threatens to disrupt the world's ecosystems and trigger a mass extinction of life on the planet.

I recently spent time with many of the October 15th organisers in Spain and Italy - the countries which hosted the largest street protests. I came away with a clear impression that the young people in these countries, along with Wall Street and elsewhere in the world, are not just after reforms of existing political and economic policies and practices. They sense there is something fundamentally wrong with the very way the political and economic

system is set up, and are beginning to search for a new economic vision that can put people back to work, establish a more responsive governing framework and protect the biosphere of the Earth. Finding that new vision requires an understanding of the technological forces that precipitate the profound transformations in society.

The great economic revolutions in history occur when new communication technologies converge with new energy systems. Communication / energy regimes largely determine the way societies are organised, and particularly, how the fruits of commerce and trade are distributed, how political power is exercised, and how social relations are conducted.

Energy revolutions make possible more expansive and integrated trade. Accompanying communication revolutions manage the new complex commercial activities made possible by the new energy flows. In the 19th century, cheap print technology and the introduction of state schools gave rise to a print-literate workforce with the communication skills to manage an increased flow of commercial activity. This was made possible by coal and steam power technology, ushering in the First Industrial Revolution. In the 20th century, centralised electricity communication (the telephone, and later radio and television) became the communication medium to manage a more complex and dispersed era of oil, autos and suburbs, and the mass consumer culture of the Second Industrial Revolution.



FABIO PEZZARINI



FOTO MOVIMIENTO 15M

## THE OLD POWER ELITE

The First and Second Industrial Revolutions were built atop the most centralised energy regimes ever conceived. Fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) are elite energies. They are found only in select places, requiring a significant military investment and continual geopolitical management to secure centralised command and control systems. This in turn demands massive concentrations of capital to move from underground to end users. The ability to concentrate capital - the essence of modern capitalism - is critical to the effective performance of the system as a whole. The centralised energy infrastructure then sets the conditions for the rest of the economy, encouraging similar business models across every sector.

The oil business is one of the largest industries in the world. It's also the most costly enterprise for collecting, processing, and distributing energy ever conceived. Virtually all of the other critical industries that emerged from the oil culture feed off the fossil fuel spigot. Modern finance, the automotive industry, power and utilities and telecommunications were, in one way or another, similarly predisposed to large size in order to achieve their own economies of scale. And, like the oil industry, they require huge sums of capital to operate and are organised in a centralised fashion.

Three of the four largest companies in the world today are oil companies: Royal Dutch Shell, Exxon Mobil, and BP. Underneath these giant energy companies are five hundred global companies representing every sector and industry, with a combined revenue of \$22.5 trillion, which is the equivalent of one-third of the world's \$62 trillion GDP. These companies are inseparably connected to and dependent on fossil fuels for their very survival.

The beneficiaries of the oil era, for the most part, have been the men and women in the energy and financial sectors, and those strategically positioned across the First and Second Industrial Revolution supply chain. They have reaped extraordinary fortunes.

By the year 2001, the CEOs of the largest American companies earned, on average, 531 times as much as the average worker, up from 1980 when that figure was only 42 times greater. Even more startling, between 1980 and 2005, over 80 percent of the increase in income in the United States went into the pockets of the wealthiest 1% of the population.

By 2007, the wealthiest 1% of American earners accounted for 23.5% of the nation's pre-tax income, up from 9% in 1976. Meanwhile, during the same period, the median income for non-elderly American households declined and the percentage of people living in poverty rose.

Perhaps the most apt description of the top-down organisation of economic life that characterised the First and Second Industrial Revolutions is the oft-heard "trickle-down theory", the idea that when those atop the fossil fuel-based industrial pyramid benefit, enough residual wealth will make its way down to the small businesses and workers at the lower levels to benefit the economy as a whole. While there is no denying that the living standards of millions of people are better at the end of the Second Industrial Revolution than at the beginning of the First Industrial Revolution, it is equally true that those on the top have benefited disproportionately from the Carbon Era, especially in the United States, where few restrictions have been put on the market and little effort made to ensure that the fruits of industrial commerce are broadly shared.



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#### A NEW ECONOMIC PARADIGM

Today, internet technology and renewable energies are beginning to merge to create a new infrastructure for a Third Industrial Revolution that will change the way power is distributed in the 21st century. In the coming era, hundreds of millions of people will produce their own green energy in their homes, offices and factories and share it with each other in an "Energy Internet," just like we now generate and share information online. The creation of a renewable energy regime, loaded by buildings, partially stored in the form of hydrogen, distributed via an energy internet, and connected to plug-in zero-emission transport establishes a five-pillar infrastructure that will spawn thousands of businesses and millions of sustainable jobs.

The Third Industrial Revolution will also bring with it a more democratic economy. The distributed nature of renewable energies necessitates collaborative rather than hierarchical command and control mechanisms. This new lateral energy regime establishes the organisational model for

the countless economic activities that multiply from it. A more distributed and collaborative industrial revolution, in turn, invariably leads to a more distributed sharing of the wealth generated. The new, green energy industries are improving performance and reducing costs at an ever-accelerating rate. And just as the generation and distribution of information is becoming nearly free, renewable energies will also. Sun, wind, biomass, geothermal heat and hydropower are available to everyone and, like information, are never used up. The shrinking of transaction costs in the music business and publishing field with the emergence of file sharing of music, ebooks, and news blogs, is wreaking havoc on these traditional industries. We can expect similar disruptive impacts as the diminishing transaction costs of green energy allow manufacturers, retailers, and service industries to produce and share goods and services in vast social networks with very little outlay of financial capital.

#### HOW THE INTERNET GENERATION IS USING LATERAL POWER TO TRANSFORM THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The democratisation of the economy goes hand and hand with the democratisation of governments. The internet generation is driven by a new political agenda. Their politics has little in common with the right / left economy that characterised the ideological politics of the First and Second Industrial Revolutions. The young activists of the October 15th movement judge institutional behaviour through a new lens. They ask whether the institutions of society - political, economic,

educational, social - behave in a centralised manner and exercise power from the top down in a closed and proprietary fashion, or whether they function in a distributed and collaborative way, and are open and transparent in their dealings. The new political thinking is a game-changer that has the potential to remake the political process and reshape political institutions in every country.

Lateral power is a new force in the world. Steve Jobs and the other innovators of his generation took us from expensive centralised mainframe computers, owned and controlled by a handful of global companies, to cheap desktop computers and cell phones, allowing billions of people to connect up with one another in peer-to-peer networks in the social spaces of the internet. The democratisation of communications has enabled nearly one third of the human population on earth to share music, knowledge, news and social life on an open playing field, marking one of the great evolutionary advances in the history of our species.

But as impressive as this accomplishment is, it is only half of the story. When internet communications manage green energy, every human being on earth becomes his or her own source of power, both literally and figuratively. Billions of human beings sharing their energy in vast social networks, like they now share information online, creates the foundation for the democratisation of the global economy and a new beginning for the human race.

The youth protest, that began in the Middle East, Spain and Italy and spread to Wall Street and then the world, is a harbinger of a new era. "Lateral power" has become the battle cry of a new generation, determined to create a more just, equitable, and livable society.

The youth have shown that they know how to use lateral power via Facebook, Twitter and other social networks to bring millions of people to the streets to protest the inequities and abuses of the current economic and political system. Now, the looming question is whether they can harness the same lateral power to create a sustainable economy, generate millions of new jobs, transform the political process and restore the Earth for future generations.

*Jeremy Rifkin is the author of The Third Industrial Revolution: How Lateral Power is Transforming Energy, the Economy, and the World.*



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## 'GREEN ECONOMY': THE FINAL FRONTIER

JODY JOANNA BOEHNERT

The UN's Rio+20 declaration, 'The Future We Choose', warns that "the scientific evidence is unequivocal...the time to act is now!" With this document, the UN calls for "a great transformation" emerging from the recognition that business as usual is no longer sufficient. Humankind is now in the "Anthropocene" and must live within the "safe operating space of planetary boundaries." The programme launched at Rio+20 is called the "Green Economy". Does this strong environmental rhetoric demonstrate that the UN is serious about addressing the biodiversity crisis? Or has the UN simply appropriated green language to sell its new project to the global public?

The so-called "Green Economy" reveals a new approach to sustainable development, based on creating new markets for nature's processes. The basic provisions of the natural world are now "ecosystem services" (water purification, plant pollination, carbon capture and maintenance of soil fertility, etc.). Presently free and commonly shared, the emerging programme will soon quantify, financialise and marketise them. The commodification of the natural world supposedly aims to protect nature by accounting for "externalities" of environmental damage by industry. According to this logic, once nature's processes are given a financial value, prices of goods and services will reflect ecological costs and it will no longer make economic sense to produce ecologically harmful products.

The problem with this project starts with the assumption that nature's processes can be effectively managed as commodities. The project is built on a staggering philosophical error that assumes the economy is of greater importance than the ecological system on which it depends. By permitting ecosystem services to be sold to the highest bidder (therefore subject to destruction by industrial processes), it assumes that forests, species and stable climates are somehow replaceable.

Nature's processes cannot be safely disaggregated. Ecological systems are not fragmented but complex webs of interconnected and interdependent relations that cannot be effectively understood – much less managed in isolation. Reducing the value of nature to financial terms is

an epistemological prelude to exploitation in the material realm. It is no small thing to bring nature into the space where everything must prove its financial worth. Nature is more complex than can be captured through financial valuations. It is foolish to over-simplify the processes of a system on which we are entirely dependent.

Philosophical errors spawn further methodological errors in the quantification and financialisation of nature's processes. We simply do not have the scientific capacity to measure all of the life-sustaining services provided by nature. What is possible to know for sure is that there will be no financial system to create this human construct we call money without the benefit of a stable climate, clean water and healthy local ecosystems. When scientists do fix a price for nature, these values are often absurdly low or simply ridiculous. The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) report estimates a total economic value of insect pollination worldwide at €153 billion. It's a high number, but does this number actually reflect the value of pollinating insects? Considering that we are dependent on these "ecosystem services" and pollinating insects are a vital part of these ecosystems, it follows that insects are priceless. Our own survival depends on their survival.

The political problem with the false "Green Economy" is the omission of democratic participation in environmental decision-making. In privatising the commons, the conservation of nature becomes yet another aspect of modern life subject to the whims of the market. Democratic control of development agendas will no longer be possible as markets consume the space where environmental decisions are made. Those making decisions become those with the financial clout to participate (i.e. corporations and the financial sector).

The "Green Economy" is an intensification of the long trajectory of the enclosures of the commons. This is a state-supported transfer of common land from commoners (i.e. the 99 percent), to politically powerful elites, and has occurred over several centuries. The Indigenous People's Kari-Oca 2 Declaration at Rio+20 describes the project as "a continuation of colonialism... a perverse attempt by corporations, extractive industries and governments to cash in on Creation by privatising, commodifying and selling off the Sacred and all forms of life and the sky." The so-called "Green Economy" is the commodification of life itself. We, the people and the earth that we inhabit, are a community, not commodities ripe for exploitation.

The "Green Economy" is attractive to the financial and corporate sectors as it creates new areas for market growth in the global commons. Contrary to the environmental rhetoric used to sell this project, in no way does this agenda offer a solution to the biodiversity and mass extinction crises. Instead, the project uses the ecological crisis as an opportunity for extracting even greater profit. Nevertheless, the UN and its member states (especially the UK) are pressing ahead with the commodification of nature. Nature is being redefined as "natural capital", as a prelude to the intensification of its exploitation. The same innovative but opaque financial mechanisms responsible for the economic crisis will be transferred to the already endangered ecological system. The earth, the geo-physical context that makes social and economic systems possible, has become the final frontier for capitalism.



## BAN THE BURN!

EMMA FORDHAM

"Town that won't stop flooding: Hebden Bridge cleans up for the third time in three weeks." That was a Daily Mail headline on 11 July 2012. It was a slight exaggeration. Most people who live in Hebden are pretty sure they were only flooded twice, but it was enough. Cars were submerged, the library was evacuated, people were stranded, the main road was closed, businesses were wrecked, homes swamped, livelihoods devastated.

Could this be climate change in action? Maybe. Or it could be a direct result of more localised environmental damage.

A story is emerging involving a millionaire landowner, a government minister, environmental breaches at a site of special scientific interest (SSSI), a mysteriously dropped court case, the profitability of shooting grouse, and the spending of taxpayers' cash. The setting: the wuthering heights above Hebden Bridge, famed moors of the Brontës. The unlikely heroes of the piece are blanket bog and sphagnum moss.

On Sunday 12 August, flood-hit residents of Hebden Bridge and campaigners from across the country set out from the town centre on a protest walk to the Walshaw Moor grouse-shooting estate. Following the walk, the Ban the Burn! national campaign launch took place at Hebden Bridge Trades Club.

Timed to coincide with 'The Glorious Twelfth' (the opening of the grouse-shooting season), the day of action highlighted the damaging effects of burning and draining on the moors: increased flood risk downstream; very significant carbon emissions; adverse impacts on water quality and the destruction of ecologically significant habitat.

The campaigners are demanding a ban on burning and drainage of blanket bogs, which are protected under the European Union Habitats Directive and the UK Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

According to Natural England, a public body tasked with improving and protecting England's natural environment, "Blanket bog is one of the rarest wildlife habitats in the world. In addition to its importance as a wildlife habitat, the role of blanket bog in the provision of a number of ecosystem services is significant. This includes its ability to capture and store large amounts of carbon, its role in securing high water quality and its ability to reduce flood risk."

Walshaw Moor Estate Ltd., which owns a significant part of the moorland catchment above Hebden Water, came to public attention when Natural England initiated a prosecution for 43 environmental breaches. Natural England abruptly dropped the case in March this year, before the scientific evidence could be presented. Subsequently it entered into an Environmental Stewardship agreement with the estate, whereby

£2.5 million of taxpayers' money will be paid to the estate over the next ten years. It will permit "controlled" burning activities, under an exemption from a rule which normally forbids burning on sensitive areas such as peat bog and wet heathland. Ban the Burn! is campaigning to close such loopholes.

According to local resident DK, "Here in Hebden Bridge we know the real hardship of flooding – shops and businesses in our town are still shut, and many of our friends and neighbours have suffered irreplaceable loss. In order to reduce our town's vulnerability to flooding, we need the upland catchment to be managed to promote healthy blanket bog, with sphagnum moss to act as a sponge during heavy rainfall. It seems grotesque that the taxpayer is paying for the exact opposite – £2.5 million is about five times as much as we have in the Calder Valley flood recovery fund!"

Landowners such as Walshaw Estate Ltd drain and burn blanket bog in order to create a habitat where grouse can breed and feed. Draining blanket bog dries the peat, so that heather can grow. Once heather is established, burning is carried out to limit its height, because grouse need short heather to nest in. In the process of draining and burning, sphagnum moss is destroyed and a carbon sink is turned into a carbon source. According to the Commission of Enquiry into UK Peatlands, damaged UK peatlands currently release almost 3.7 million tonnes of CO2 a year – more than all the households in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Leeds combined. This has serious implications for worsening climate change.

Local climate action group Treesresponsibility is dedicated to bringing about ecological restoration in the Calder catchment. The group wants to make the Calder Valley more resilient to extreme weather events and works towards this with tree-planting, climate awareness education and fundraising for catchment management projects. Land mismanagement on 'the tops', however, threatens to reverse fourteen years of hard graft.

At the end of a "brilliant", "eye-opening" and "exhausting" day, one of the walkers explained (via a live blog courtesy of environmental justice website EnergyRoyd) why he joined the Ban the Burn! campaign: "I think it's a travesty that Walshaw Moor Estate has been given public money... they've got some friends in Whitehall, and the Minister for Wildlife's a grouse shooter – basically, a bunch of aristos up here who want to shoot grouse are making life worse for hard-working folk in the valley by increasing the risk of flooding."

When it comes to environmental degradation by a politically untouchable elite of large landowners, the Hebden Bridge story may be just the tip of an iceberg. *More info: [www.energyroyd.org.uk](http://www.energyroyd.org.uk) Ban the Burn! can be contacted at: [changingmorethanlightbulbs@gmail.com](mailto:changingmorethanlightbulbs@gmail.com)*

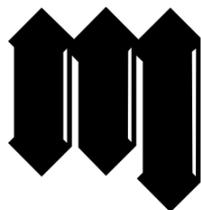


FABIO PEZZARINI

# WHAT'S IN A SEED?

## GM WHEAT & THE RIGHTS OF FARMERS

RAGNHILD FRENG DALE  
& EMMA FORDHAM



averick organic farmer and activist Hector Christie was arrested in May for pulling up genetically modified (GM)

crops at the Rothamstead Research centre in Harpenden. On 24 August, he was fined a total of over £4000 for the damage caused, though the valuation has never been released to the defence. Christie, who pleaded guilty, explains the context and background of GM trials and the concerns underpinning his actions.

A 'Take the Flour Back' demonstration against GM wheat trials had been planned, and the idea of catapulting organic seed over the fence into the trial site had been mooted when Christie decided to take a preliminary look around. In what he describes as a rather miraculous series of events, he found a way into the site, helped by an unwitting security guard who went to the toilet at just the right moment. Christie was in the GM trial field for approximately three minutes, during which the prosecution has claimed he pulled up hundreds of plants. Christie says that he initially scattered organic seed, then pulled up and bagged just a few plants before peacefully giving himself over to the police for arrest.

"I didn't get the seriousness of what I was doing," Christie says. "There were dozens of police in cars and vans. As I was driven away from the site I saw several of them in lanes and lay-bys along the way. I innocently asked whether there had been a major crime committed in the area but was told they were all for me."

Christie was held for sixteen hours and questioned intensively. The police, he claims, knew every protest he had

been on, and asked about his friends in other protest networks. Bail conditions were largely about keeping him away from the Olympics; the torch was passing close to his home in north Devon the next day and officers seemed convinced that he intended to cause disruption.

Until recently, Europe has been largely GM free. The media and consumers have kept biotech companies at arms' length, but that is changing now with a U-turn to allow wheat trials at Rothamstead, and a massive PR campaign by the Conservative government promising to solve the world's food problem through rolling out GM crops with higher yield. "Cameron recently accepted £250 million from the biotech industry," Christie claims, before suggesting that "they need to pay for the Olympics somehow." The latter may only be speculations, but who stands to gain should be a question in the GM debate.

Anti-GM protesters are adamant that they are not 'anti-science', but argue that genetically modified crops are being forced into the land, onto the supermarket shelves and into our food chain and bodies with scant regard for safety, biodiversity, the right to choose, farmers' livelihoods or anything else except profit margins. Whilst no reports currently show a definite health-GM correlation, sufficient long-term independent testing has not been conducted to rule out long-term effects - and "Take the Flour back!" fear the consequences will be impossible to reverse. The CEO of Rothamstead Research centre reasons that we must embrace this technology in order to feed the growing world population, but the people doing the monitoring are often the very same people who will make a profit from GM. Director of Rothamstead, Professor Maurice Moloney, has been involved in



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developing the Roundup Ready canola, a patented Monsanto crop causing major problems for Californian farmers. Christie and fellow activists therefore fear that the results will be kept out of the public domain or manipulated to suit the profiteers.

The film *Gmcropsfarmertofarmer.com*, compiled by a Cornish farmer, is about how GM has affected the livelihoods of American farmers. Those interviewed deeply regret being coerced into growing GM crops. Having been 'hooked in' they can't back out, even though, after three or so years, the insecticides and herbicides that the GM crops have been engineered to resist become ineffective. More and more of these chemicals must be used until

eventually no amount will get rid of the resistant superweeds that appear, which have to be pulled out by hand. Christie shakes his head in disbelief as he insists that "This is obvious! If you keep applying the same herbicide or pesticide, nature mutates and resistance builds up. GM is a one-trick pony."

Christie says that "The livelihood and way of life of everyone who works the land is seriously under threat. That's why I felt I had to do something... I have tried every angle to get this message out: Engaging with ministers, protesting peacefully, writing endless letters...". He invokes the spectres of tobacco, DDT and asbestos - all substances believed to be harmless and used liberally with devastating consequences. In the Philippines, biologist Mae-Wan Ho reports incidents of sudden illness and death amongst people living close to GM maize crops. This coincided with the flowering season of the maize, which has now been removed from some areas, whilst similar episodes occur elsewhere. The government has refused to investigate further.

Social consequences of patented seeds are no less dire. In the Speakers' Forum at The Green Gathering, Christie began his talk with a dramatic tale of suicide amongst farmers. Vandana Shiva has reported that tens of thousands, possibly even hundreds of thousands of Indian farmers have killed themselves since GM crops were introduced. Patenting of seeds by biotech companies forces some of the poorest farmers in the world to buy new seed every year, which is bad enough in itself, but becomes untenable when promised yields fail to become reality, driving the farmers deeper into poverty and despair. The biotech companies are now making a beeline for Africa, partly funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and again Christie highlights the inalienable and sacred right of the farmer to save seed.

He also points out that the US, Canada and Australia (which have accepted most GM crops with alacrity to date) have all rejected GM cereals. Wheat is a grass species native to the UK, and pollen from GM wheat could potentially crossbreed or contaminate grasses and cereals far and wide, despite claims to the contrary from the biotech industry. In the US, where genetically modified crops are widespread, even papers such as *The*

*Daily Mail* are reporting that incidents of pesticide resistant weeds and insects are on the rise. A report from 2005 also reveals the evolution of a resistant 'super-weed' at an old trial site for genetically modified oilseed rape, now resistant to herbicide due to a genetic cross-breeding. This is also happening in Japan, a country without GM crops of their own. Evidence of wild-breeding GM canola and even crossovers to its related species broccoli has been reported along transport routes and near harbours where canola oil is imported. Activists are organising to protect a biodiversity they fear is at stake, calling for the relevant corporations to take responsibility.

"They call us ecoterrorists, but they really don't get the picture," Christie complains. He hopes that his trial will raise awareness and help the larger cause. Bindmans - a leading London-based law firm - took up Christie's case when it became apparent that abuse of process and other inconsistencies had occurred. According to one of Christie's friends, "It looks like special branch and people 'higher up' have been caught red handed treating a protester like a terrorist. Incredibly dodgy and clumsy details have emerged." The total costs and compensation he has been ordered to pay include a £350 fine, £15 victim surcharge, £85 CPS costs and compensation to Rothamstead Research for the damage caused. In previous hearings, the prosecution had increased the compensation claim to £51,900, but later lowered this to £3850 - a mere fraction of the original claim.

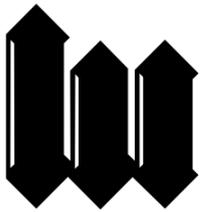
Though Christie pleaded guilty to criminal damage of the crops, he has not made up his mind about whether to pay the compensation. What is certain, is that he will not give up his campaigning for biodiversity in future. He is passionate about small farmers' livelihoods and right to choose, as well as the big issues of long term food security and biodiversity. On his Tapeley Gardens website he writes "Do we in the countryside want to give up control of our choices and businesses to a few ruthless, solely profit driven large corporations? The UK is an island, and as such we have the most fantastic opportunity to be a source of GM-free food, plus we have a potentially invaluable GM-free seed bank for ourselves and the world in the future."



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# NOTES ON WHAT A RADICAL PEDAGOGY MIGHT FEEL LIKE

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What would a radical pedagogy feel like? Have we forgotten? Did we ever know? Perhaps, in the moments we do experience

it, we don't recognise it as being anything like pedagogy, learning or understanding (that is, the collective and collectivising transmission and production of ideas, strategies and practices.)

What we need to find out is what a radical pedagogy might now be, in the face of an exponential marketisation of thought, research and radical practice. How might a radical pedagogy be germinated and propagated, so that it becomes everyday, viral and voracious, unceasing and unstoppable? In other words, how can we learn with and from each other to become something inherently inimical to things as they are, caustic even to those technologies of capitalism that seek to recoup value at every node, even from those initiatives that seek its destruction?

I do not mean learning exclusively within the school, the university, the nursery or the workplace training centre. What is interesting is when learning starts to take place elsewhere. When collective learning reveals the classroom to be moribund, it must be mobilised and on the move, invigorated by having a point, enervated when struggle becomes pointed. I have only ever known I was learning in this way after the fact. These moments have been few and fleeting, but the flash of a liberatory social power experienced at Millbank gives an example of what I think radical pedagogy might feel like. True, this was something of a high watermark in terms of the student movement, but it was accompanied with the rupture of the classroom as the place of learning, with learning spreading beyond its walls.

The recent period has seen a proliferation of experiments with alternative forms of educational

institution and radical critique of educational institutions: Edufactory, The Really Free School, Tent City University and The University for Strategic Optimism to name a few. Being non-aligned and outside of "the university proper", these groups have sought to avoid reproducing the contradictions of the classroom in a more makeshift and less hierarchical way. Beyond the standard lecture format, the only obvious remnant of the traditional university is the decapitated seminar, sometimes called workshop. Not only do these formal aspects remain intact in the move beyond the classroom, or more accurately, moving the classroom outside, much of the content of the classroom remains the same also. By this I mean that people who take part in these experiments are usually the same disgruntled grunts from the classroom proper. As such, we bring the classroom with us intact, try as we might to deface its walls.

The need to bring people excluded from the classroom in, as the only possible means of breaking down the walls of that classroom, stumbles on precisely the 'radical' move outside. For instance, when the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm visited a prison to give a lecture, he acknowledged the unstable foundations of his status by suggesting to his audience that they probably knew more than he did. The prisoners reacted angrily at what they perceived as false modesty and castigated the professor along the lines of 'you are the one with all the learning, don't pretend you aren't, teach us.' The attempts to radicalise pedagogy often serve only to address the issues of those who already have access to the classroom, as well as what they suppose might be in the interests of those excluded, rather than the actual interests or concerns of those people themselves.

My point here is twofold. Firstly, we need to put a stop to the handwringing over our status as intellectuals, academics and students, and secondly we need to find out from those excluded



ANDREA BAKACS

from the classroom what they might want from us, and how (or if?) we can be of use. An advanced understanding of dialectics may not be as obviously useful to some as the ability to change a gearbox, but neither is there any reason to be embarrassed about a specialisation of learning like this. I would make a shit mechanic, and communism cannot live on bread alone.

This stumbling block, a pedagogy that replicates the classroom but with fewer resources, feeds into and is fed by something of a crisis of conscience and confidence of those in the university. On the one hand we see that the university has become like any other factory but the niggling concern of class privilege means we realise that we are not cleaners or coal miners. Neither one nor the other, we somehow believe the lie that the 'student movement' is bracketed off from 'the workers' proper. Swinging precariously from the Union Jack, we are closer to Bullingdon Club than NHS nurses. This, combined with the collapse of the student movement, has led many to claim that there is no radical possibility left in the university. It is important, I agree, not to privilege the educational sector as some type of a more radical hope, but to think of it as more hopeless than any other part of society also misses the point.

Education, conceived broadly as learning, is not something accidental to the struggle, or a privilege to be considered following some future victory.

It is a necessary part of the reproduction of ourselves, our lives, and any thought of social flourishing is unthinkable if it does not include thinking and learning for everyone. It is not as if capital hasn't noticed how important institutionalised education is to its own interests, both as a way of externalising the cost of worker training and discipline, and increasingly to provide terrain for its own constant need for expansion. Education must now produce surplus value for the capitalists even as it trains workers for them.

As a malignant and parasitic managerial class continues to colonise the university, it demands not only sustenance for its superfluous existence, but also that the host becomes a reflection of the infestation's own image. Students and staff alike must become self-regulating receptacles of core company goals and values. Value comes to be produced through an arbitrary institutional calisthenics and the spread-legged, spreadsheet-measurement of that performance. This motley new managerial class must learn to present itself as the petty bourgeois shopkeeper, marketing specious wares, or as the entrepreneurial visionary explorer, tasked with terra-forming new vistas of corporate training, consultancy and product placement; or as public brand-uni spruiker of telegenic 'ideas' and Verso-style controversy coffee chat radical publishing. Welcome to the factory of an absent future!



ANDREA BAKACS



CHRISTINA E LOZANO

# THE COMMODIFICATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IS CORRODING CRITICALITY

ALEX CHARNLEY



In 2010, the Higher Education sector, like so many other social provisions coveted by the coalition, was caught in the pincers of neoliberal reform. Like New Labour before, coalition ideologues have reasserted the belief that Higher Education will only be 'sustainable' when the 'dead hand' of the state is removed and students are left to fend for themselves in the free market. In an attempt to untangle the corrosive implications of these policies, it is important to track how UK universities, especially those in the middle of the pack, are now reacting to these changes, and the effect this is having on learning and teaching.

When universities were asked to set their own price, the government was appalled to find that nearly all decided to charge £9000 per academic year. Predictably, those universities lacking the prestige of their Oxbridge counterparts would rather be an empty product on the top shelf rather than a tin of spam in the discount bin. Angered by this flippant disregard for the free market, the government intervened, punishing universities for not being competitive and cutting the number of low achieving students that they could enroll. This measure has primarily affected the institutions in the middle of the pack, 'wider access' universities as they're called, which have traditionally supported students from working class backgrounds. At this time, institutions of the middle had two choices: either drastically

cut resources, drop the fees and gain access to a larger pool of students; or keep the top tariff, cut resources less drastically, and convince a dwindling pool of students that they will at least be employable when they finish.

The universities that maintained the top tariff attempted to compensate for the 40% cut in the Higher Education Funding Council's (HEFCE) financing, and the limited pool of domestic students, by embarking on a renewed recruitment drive for international students. This is a strategy that has financed a Higher Education sector bereft of state funding. In the OECD study, *Education at a Glance (2008)*, the UK invested only 1.2% of GDP into Higher Education, just below Portugal (1.3), Estonia (1.3), and Ireland (1.4). With the recent cut in funding, this is set to drop further still. International students are now worth an estimated £8bn to the Higher Education sector, so in the face of savage cuts to funding, universities reasserted their energies in the global market.

If doubling fees damaged domestic demand for Higher Education and alienated working class students, Theresa May made short shrift of the international market by tightening restrictions on student visas the following year. Universities offsetting losses by recruiting more international students were suddenly cut adrift, prompting 68 vice chancellors to sign a letter to David Cameron urging the government to take foreign students out of net immigration counts.

What now for the undergraduates paying double fees? This bungled marketisation has prompted universities with less prestige to cut resources and throw more money at PR companies, in a desperate attempt to out-hype their competitors. Marketing strategists are getting rich pitting one struggling university against another, whilst staff get restructured and students get less, for more.

With many universities expecting recruitment to fall by up to 12-13%, and international revenues at risk, those students paying double will almost certainly have access to fewer resources than their peers in previous years. This includes smaller libraries, fewer support staff, and a 'flexible' resourcing of space, which is now at a premium. Courses that rely heavily on studio space or are not considered 'vocational', such as Fine Art and Philosophy, are at particular risk. As a consequence, tutors now operate in a weirdly temporal existence, anxious that studios and seminar rooms will be reallocated to courses that can get more 'bums on seats' for less capital investment.

Adjunct to diminishing teaching and practical resources, commodification of Higher Education is having a detrimental effect on learning and teaching. The theory of experiential learning, as described by David Kolb, is "the



process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". The educational concept of active participation for learning is slowly being eroded as universities present themselves as 'trainers' and 'skill givers', luring students with the promise of a 'step up' into employment. This language of 'employability' omits the responsibility of the learner to be active, by promising something in return for payment. Students cannot develop criticality if they are encouraged to believe knowledge is a commodity that can simply be purchased.

There is now a growing dichotomy between the attainment of technical skills and competencies, as advocated by industry, and the cultivation of autonomous and critical learners, who are empowered to venture beyond the short-term compulsions of the free market. Moreover, the government continues to preach about jobs where there are none. In fact, David Cameron himself "cannot see a day when the economy is not under pressure". If youth unemployment is close to a

record million people, and a third of graduates are in unskilled work, how could indebted students to the sum of £27,000 (plus living costs) on the promise of employment ever be deemed sustainable? This is further evidence of a coalition government tying itself in knots with the economic irrationalities of neoliberal governance: evangelising small government at one juncture and making shambolic market interventions at the next.

In Quebec and Toronto, students are fighting for the abolishment of tuition fees and reclaiming the dignity of their institutions. On November 21, at the NUS protest, students and university workers across the UK will join that fight. Students are entitled to a debt-free education and the opportunity to participate in a community of practice, unhindered by the crude assumptions of the knowledge economy. Only in this context will the new 'lost generation' acquire the critical distance to question capital, and develop new frameworks for production.

@alex\_chnrley



# RIOT FROM WRONG...

## WHY WE CAN'T AFFORD TO DISMISS THE UK RIOTS AS AN ACT OF MINDLESS VIOLENCE

By August 2011, the average Brit had endured months of headlines detailing shocking deceit and manipulation. With the News of the World phone hacking scandal having taken place under the editorship of then Conservative Party Communications Chief Andy Coulson, and overseen by David Cameron's long-time Christmas bunting chum Rebekah Brooks, public confidence in our newly elected coalition government was at an all-time low.

This was nothing compared to what was to follow shortly after, during what has been labelled as the biggest civil unrest seen in the UK for more than thirty years. The English media relished the opportunity to brandish young people as feral hoodies, and none more so than the young black male victim of a police shooting in Tottenham, the catalyst which sparked the UK riots of 2011.

Shortly after the death of Mark Duggan, tabloid newspapers published slanderous articles in an attempt to defame his character. As quickly as they were printed, these tales were juxtaposed with the 'word on road' gospel, and further cemented by family, friends, campaign groups and peers aiming to expose the defamation with their first hand version of events.

Many believed that Duggan had been murdered by the police, and debate continued across independent and social media networks as clarity was sought between conflicting media reports, a farcical game of "passing the buck" between the Metropolitan Police and the IPCC, and the affirmation of character from those who knew him well.

Mark Duggan, at 29 years old and hailed from one of the most deprived and violent estates in London, had no criminal convictions, and ballistics tests by the IPCC proved that bullets he reportedly fired were in fact fired from a police issue Heckler and Koch submachine gun.

On the fourth day of the riots, having witnessed the contradictions between independent and mass

media, we decided as the fourteen young people who make up Fully Focused Community, to go directly to Broadwater Farm Estate and speak to the family and friends of Mark Duggan. This was the beginning of our feature-length documentary, Riot From Wrong.

The more people we interviewed, the clearer it became that people were angry, and rightfully so. A family was left distraught by a lack of communication from the police and negative media lies as a result of dishonest, unethical journalism. Attempts to defame Duggan luckily ended up being short-lived, transparent and weak.

The summer of 2011 saw cuts to the Educational Maintenance Allowance, Housing Benefit for the under 25's, and increased university tuition fees, not to mention cuts to youth clubs, youth programmes, Connexions centres and youth counselling services. When you factor in unaffordable housing costs and steep unemployment, this culminated in one of the bleakest outlooks for Britain's youth in recent times. Unemployment among young black men rose from 28.8% in 2008 to 55.9% in the last three months of 2011.

The expenses scandal had been gathering pace for some time, the banking crisis tightened its grip, austerity became the new buzzword and our MPs went off on their summer holidays.

We note this period as it is easy to dismiss the sociological impacts of the greed and immoral behaviour of our politicians and those in the financial sector and mass media on their fellow citizens, the poor and black "underclass." Newly defined by words such as "Chav", "Hoodie" and "Feral Youth", they were suddenly united in aggression and economic hopelessness against an increasingly detached elite and those perceived to protect the haves from the have-nots: the police.

Like most of the country, the Fully Focused Community Team reacted with bewilderment, confusion, anger and fear throughout the riots, however



we made a commitment to search for solutions and rather than dismiss a generation that feel they have nothing to lose, we offered a platform for honest dialogue and critical debate.

The riots were dismissed as a domestic problem triggered by the shooting of Mark Duggan. In retrospect, violent street protests were also unfolding in Greece, Portugal, France and Spain throughout 2011 - a European rebellion against draconian austerity measures, poorly articulated, if at all, by the UK rebellion.

On many levels, producing Riot From Wrong was a cathartic experience for the Young Steering Group at Fully Focused Community, as we had the opportunity to engage with those involved in events on a real, honest

street level. At the same time though, we were detached via the lens of the camera, enough to look deeper and gain a clearer perspective on ourselves, our peers and our communities.

What we unearthed were complex and deep-rooted issues within wider society, and it soon came to light that the connecting thread of the majority of our interviewees was the necessity to address the underlying issues within our own communities, take personal responsibility, and hold to account the moral misconduct and greed of our leaders.

London is now revelling in post-Olympic glory, but continuing the dialogue to address issues of hopelessness and marginalisation remains vital. It is for this reason that Fully Focused Community remains

committed to looking deeper through the lens, searching for solutions.

By Natalie Hughes & Kyle Adair Whyte  
Fully Focused Community (@UKFullyFocused)  
RiotFromWrong.com (@RiotFromWrong)

Fully Focused Community create high quality youth-led media to build platforms of expression with global potential. We are a non-profit Organisation dedicated to providing industry standard, hands-on film and media training, offering opportunities to young people across London. Our objective is to open minds and broaden horizons, while encouraging young people to tackle issues that are important to them.



# LONDON'S FREE UNIVERSITY

DR DEBRA SHAW



London's Free University (LFU) was inaugurated at the Bank of Ideas in November 2011. The aim was to provide free education in free spaces; free in the sense that nobody would have to pay but also free from the restrictions of contemporary institutionalised learning.

Many people at that first and subsequent meetings were escapees from the neoliberal university - precariously employed lecturers, PhD students, and a couple of Emeritus Professors old enough to remember the days before fees, loans, "employability", and degrees for sale - supplemented by a scattering of hackers and City workers. What emerged from these early meetings was a shared commitment to challenging the structure and content of higher education by providing an alternative committed to exploring radical ideas for social change.

The radical educationalist Paolo Freire likened the education systems of the 20th century to banking: investment for a guaranteed return in the form of quiescent workers and a populace educated into conformity. In the higher education corporations of the 21st century, education is packaged and sold like a commodity, with students expected to be informed consumers, investing in their own futures by betting on what they need to accumulate to give them an advantage in the job market. The net result, however, is pretty much the same.

Acquiescence and conformity are assured by a combination of crippling debt and a culture of competitive individualism, where grades are the only standard of achievement. Radical theoretical approaches to the study of social and cultural structures emerged, largely, from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1960s. These ideas had their most potent effects during the brief heyday of the polytechnics, but have now been incorporated into the kinds of instrumental knowledge required by 'vocational' degrees which churn out fodder for the 'creative industries'. Students happily absorb the fact that language is ideological, that consumer culture depends on escalating levels of anxiety and contemporary global capitalism destroys ecologies and communities, but the seductive packaging of degree courses in what are loosely termed 'the humanities' performs an effective disconnect between knowledge and its practical, political implications.

The packaging of degree courses as branded products has coincided with increasingly stringent gatekeeping by universities. The shiny new campuses of the post-1992 new universities, which replaced the functional buildings of the old polytechnics, segregate students from the communities in which they are located. They effectively check credentials at the door, charge an admittance fee and then electronically tag those deemed suitable to make sure they comply with attendance requirements or to exclude those owing fees. What passes for education takes place within carefully prescribed boundaries marked by the physical limits of the university and the practical limits set by access fees and entry requirements.

Increasingly, what happens inside the institution is only related to the outside by its link to corporate investment, and what universities cynically refer to as "knowledge exchange" i.e. knowledge being exchanged for cash. The exchange value of what is understood to be 'knowledge' fluctuates according to utility. So, for instance, the "riots" of August 2011 are a hot topic attracting research funding and, outside the social sciences, psychology has been getting a much needed boost to its coffers from buddying up with evolutionary science to 'prove' that our selfish genes make us all natural capitalists. Unsurprisingly, Occupy itself is another hot topic. And, consistent with the universities' mission to innovate in order to accumulate, new degree programmes proliferate, feeding back the results of hot topic research to the next generation of marketers, policy administrators and educators.

Reflexive knowledge is fundamental to people organising for social change. Freire believed this, which is why he advocated dialogue as a principle of radical pedagogy - the art of teaching - and why he considered the acquisition of literacy to be inseparable from the process of identifying and naming what limits our power to act in the world. A truly radical pedagogy, then, recognises those constraints and works to find collective strategies to surmount them. Although Freire was never a direct influence on the constitution of the LFU, the consensus that emerged from the early meetings seemed to respond to his ideas. In retrospect, this makes sense. If the function of the university is to not only transmit knowledge but to actively produce it, and not merely in the hallowed ivory towers of elite research

institutions but in the interaction between students, teachers and the wider culture of which they are a part, then a free university associated with Occupy must necessarily take on board what is essential to the movement.

In part, this has meant that, whether by accident or design, we have found ourselves addressing issues urgent to the ethics of the movement: Who has a 'right' to the city? What is the social psychology of totalitarianism? What is the relationship between the banking system and social deprivation? How is the mythology of democratic government perpetuated? We also studied broader issues like what it means to describe ourselves as 'human' and the fundamental problems associated with thinking about democracy in a different way. But, the association between the LFU and Occupy has also meant that the space where these dialogues occurred had a profound influence on how they were conducted.

The classes at the Bank of Ideas and, later, the School of Ideas were crowded, lively and driven by a collective sense of radical participation. When the School of Ideas was evicted, we struggled on in pubs, community centres and, notably, the foyer of the Royal Festival Hall and a corridor in Friends Meeting House. Attendance dwindled and currently we are not so much taking a break as wondering where to go next. What this seems to suggest is a vital connection between the politics of space and learning as a political and social activity. Privatised education limits the possibilities of thought in the same way that privatised space controls how we function as citizens. We are determined that London's Free University will live on and flourish in the borderless campus offered by the abandoned spaces of the city.



# NUCLEAR IS NOT AN ENERGY SOLUTION, IT IS PART OF THE PROBLEM

THIEMO GROPP

Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Earth Institute and professor of sustainable development at Columbia University, said recently that the urgency of climate change and the immaturity of the renewable energy industry, leave us with little option but to expand our nuclear power production. In so doing, he joined a group of vocal nuclear advocates in Europe and the US who insist that nuclear power must form an important part of any serious attempt to curb greenhouse gas emissions. This isn't true.

In the midst of the heated debate about our energy future, it is important to remember that nuclear power is just one of a range of technologies that we could employ to help address our dangerous dependence on fossil fuels, each with their particular strengths and challenges.

At the DESERTEC Foundation, we believe that the world's deserts hold the key to addressing global climate challenge. By harnessing their abundant energy, renewable technologies such as concentrating solar power (CSP), photovoltaic (PV) and wind can complement renewables in other regions to generate the affordable power we need to reduce emissions and provide greater security of supply. However, in order to take full advantage of the plummeting costs of solar PV and onshore wind, and to get the most out of the clean and affordable power they provide, we will require a transmission grid and an energy mix that plays to their strengths. Such a system would not include nuclear power.

Ultimately, this is why nuclear power is a dangerous distraction. Not because of legitimate concerns about safety, or waste, or proliferation, but because the right combination of renewable technologies can deliver more of the electricity we need, and cut more carbon emissions in less time and with less cost.

Electricity from new nuclear plant designs will be much more costly than that produced by existing nuclear power plants. Vincent de Rivaz, chief executive of EDF Energy, says that power generated by proposed European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) plants would cost more than double (and perhaps triple) the current wholesale price. That means two to three times more than the present cost of onshore wind power and up to twice as much as the cost of concentrated solar power. Some analysts estimate that two new reactors at Hinkley Point would add a further £200 a year to the average UK household energy bill.

Compare the rising cost of nuclear power to the consistent fall in the cost of various renewable technologies: PV module prices have plummeted, dropping by 75% in the last three years, and in some locations geothermal, onshore wind and PV are already competitive with fossil fuels. Falling prices are being accompanied by explosive growth in the design and use of these technologies. Over the last four years more than half of new capacity in Europe was solar or wind. Last year it was 68%. Nuclear power exhibits a negative learning curve, becoming more expensive and slower to build as time goes on.

The increased use of intermittent solar and wind means there is demand for flexible energy production to fill the gaps. In this case, nuclear is not the answer because plants need to run at close to full capacity to be sustainable. The success of wind and solar PV therefore makes the economics of nuclear much less attractive. Energy companies RWE and Eon recently scrapped their involvement in proposed new atomic plants at Wylfa and Oldbury in the UK, claiming that nuclear power was too long-term an investment in the current economic climate. Perhaps these decisions were made with the projected growth of wind and solar PV in mind?



Another argument against nuclear technologies is that solutions are needed which can be implemented with immediate effect. In late 2011, the International Energy Agency said that the choices made over the next five years regarding our energy supply will determine whether we can prevent runaway climate change. The urgency of the climate challenge cannot be overstated.

According to the Chairman of the UK Atomic Energy Authority, Professor Roger Cashmore, fast reactors "are not yet at a level where you can roll them out on a large scale." On thorium reactors he observed, "of course, until you make one of these things go you really don't know the costs and difficulties." Generation-IV reactors may help to address issues such as proliferation and waste in the future, but they cannot deliver the capacity needed in the timescale required, and therefore should not divert finance and political energy from the scalable technologies that we have.

Looking at the available options it is not that difficult to pick winners. Within a few years, wind and solar PV will do what nuclear technology has never done and become fully competitive with fossil fuels. Taken together with other renewable technologies, they offer the most affordable option for the energy future of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East (EUMENA). We should build on their successes, and design our energy system accordingly.

The key to this success will rely on the development of a 'super grid'. By using technologies that can respond to diverse and dispersed intermittent renewable energy sources, an energy mix with a very high proportion of wind and solar PV can provide reliable power. It is simply a question of the right choreography. A 'super grid' would allow the UK to develop the best sites for its enviable wind, wave and tidal power resources and transform itself from a net

energy importer to a net energy exporter. A pan-European grid would bring economies of scale, increasing market competition and drive down costs by reducing the need for expensive back-up plants. Extending the grid into North Africa would result in further savings for UK and European consumers.

A golden age of energy is coming to an end and we have to make the transition to a new age, before our fossil fuel inheritance is spent. This means making informed choices on the kind of energy system we want and encouraging the political leadership to drive these changes through. There are no cheap options or quick fixes whichever way we choose to replace our ageing infrastructure, but there is opportunity here. Investment could stimulate growth and lay the foundations for the future

prosperity of the EUMENA region.

The more we fear the impacts of either climate change or peak oil, the more judiciously we should invest to ensure the greatest and quickest reduction in carbon emissions per pound, per year. An integrated and complementary energy system based on renewables gives us the best chance of doing that.

Jeffrey Sachs got his reasons right but his target wrong. Over fifty-five years since a nuclear power station first fed electricity into a power grid, the urgency of the climate challenge and the immaturity of nuclear technology means we must turn to renewables to find a solution.

*By Dr. Thiemo Gropp, Director & Co-founder of the DESERTEC Foundation ([www.desertec.org](http://www.desertec.org))*



# HDYBAM?

HOW DO YOU BUILD A MOVEMENT?

## THE “EVERYBODY SAYS DON’T” SOCIETY

LOZ KAYE

There's a song by Stephen Sondheim, in the only musical about local government I can think of, that goes:

*“Everybody says don't,  
Everybody says don't walk on the grass,  
Don't disturb the peace,  
Don't skate on the ice...”*

This seems to be the kind of Britain we have now, where the slightest disturbance of the status quo is met with a swift “don't”.

Each week brings new examples: McDonalds' Olympic sponsorship leading to instructions that off-message chips could not be sold in the Olympic park. The decision by Argyll and Bute council to ban a school child's blog about school dinners, without any authority to do so, showed how even the most passive freedom of speech can be seen as a threat. Want to do something about it? One of our Pirate Party activists was stopped for leafleting and told they couldn't do so without a £50 licence, again without any authority.

The default policy seems to be to say no first, issue a press release after. If you are media savvy, you can get a single ridiculous decision overturned. If you aren't and post a ranty thing on YouTube, you're just a ranty person on YouTube. Little by little this threatens to undermine the desire to speak out, to participate. It increases the sense of individual powerlessness. Our Pirate Party activist is now more wary of going out to deliver, having been made more reluctant to take part in the democratic process at the grass roots level.

A recent study by Democratic Audit on the state of British democracy warned it is in “terminal decline”. Overall perception of conduct in public life is increasingly negative. It's not hard to see why. But the toxic atmosphere created by the “everybody says don't” society is every bit as important as MP's expenses and the financial crisis. This is because the world most of us live in is not the world of MPs, mayors and bankers. It is the world of chips, school dinners and our local streets.

In trying to deal with this terminal democratic decline, too much focus has gone on the big institutions. We are to vote for police commissioners in

November in an election few people are aware of; an election which apparently didn't require a referendum to implement. In Manchester, a mayoral ballot failed to present exact information on what the candidate would do. Supporters of electoral reform must be painfully aware that there is no great popular movement for changing democratic institutions – especially after last year's failed Alternative Vote referendum.

It has always seemed a ridiculous idea that the way to fix low electoral turnout is to hold more elections. Perhaps the greatest example of the failure of the main parties is the issue of House of Lords reform. All agree that change is needed to empower citizens, but none seem able to find a consensus.

Even on this issue, harmony would not solve the fundamental problem, that of a deeper sense of powerlessness. Much is said about voter apathy. From my own experience on the doorstep it's not apathy, it's antipathy. If you have no power to find out who owns the land behind your estate, or you are told that objecting to having missiles sited on your flats is baseless, then antipathy becomes a logical response.

Democratic decline will not be reversed until people genuinely see a change of culture that is meaningful to them on their terms. This means changing the default response of no to yes. Yes- we should have the right to know what is being done in our name, and on the sources of funding behind societal projects. Yes- we should encourage people to speak out. Yes- we should encourage people to participate. Then we may begin to think our voices can truly be heard.

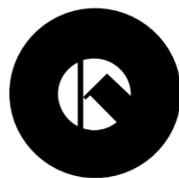
Deep damage has been done. Let's stop worrying about the “Big Society”, a little society would be a start. It is the climate of restriction and control that needs to be changed before we can really expect the public at large to have the confidence to move from antipathy to participation. This will require shedding fear, and effort to reach out to the 99% who don't belong to a party and have no interest in occupying anything.

Oh. And how does the song end?  
*“I say don't. Don't be afraid.”*



## OCCUPY AT THE GREEN GATHERING

EMMA FORDHAM



Occupiers organised assemblies and discussions, music jams and poetry slams, talks, workshops, films and livestreaming at The Green Gathering, a small festival held near Chepstow in early August.

The Green Gathering's Occupy camp consisted of an Info Tent and freshly-painted ‘Occupy’ and ‘Capitalism is Crisis’ banners, and a campfire discussion space. Occupiers involved in a number of working groups were present, including Process, Economics, Energy, Equity and Environment, The Occupied Times, Press and Occupii.org.

Three occupiers spoke and debated in the Green Forum on “What is Occupy – past, present and future?” Iain Findlay hosted a workshop on sustainability, and climate activist and poet Danny Chivers gave an engaging account of his arrest for “thought crime” and the subsequent unravelling of the case against the Ratcliffe-on-Soar protesters due to the nefarious activities of an infamous undercover cop. A film screening tying together various aspects of the Occupy movement was drawn from footage from YouTube, Polly Tickle Productions, a Russian TV interview and an agitprop animation.

Occupied Times editor Ragnhild Freng Dale said of her time at the Gathering: “What surprised me, in a world where the corporate media has mostly forgotten about the Occupy movement, was that so many people knew and felt positive about Occupy. They felt the Occupy name is widely recognised and has resonance, that it should be retained and utilised even if people are increasingly associating themselves with a diversity of campaigns, actions and groups. I discovered in others, and through them in myself, a thread of hope tied to Occupy which can be cherished and built upon.”

Tim Flitcroft of Occupy London's Economics Working Group said “The visitors to the Occupy camp were largely sympathetic and their criticisms and questions were useful and informative. Many identified with radical, alternative or green organisations, meaning that the interaction would likely go beyond the individual and towards the growing of a networked community. This is the benefit of being at this type of festival, we were finding and forming links with like-minded people and groups as well as outreaching to those who, living in the countryside rather than in cities, have only a hazy understanding of what Occupy was and is about.”

The main question people asked was “what can replace the current system?” Workshops on squatting and co-operatives, renewable energy, permaculture, transition and traditional crafts, made it feel as though this Gathering created a space for exploration of some real life alternatives. Occupy helped to tie these alternatives together and relate them to a bigger, global picture.

An assembly on the theme “what are festivals for?” elicited a patchwork of responses from the value of “sharing skills and experiences. Seeing all the incredible things people are already doing and have been doing for years, and for gaining hope and inspiration from that.” Some present instead focussed on the future and the importance of building networks. “We need to organise and build the alternatives we are talking about in our local communities. But we also need wider networks to get new ideas and support, and to organise against a government that will attack us sooner or later.”

There was debate about the degree to which festivals have been commodified and corporatised. The feeling was that smaller, less commercial festivals are better; that they have a basis in personal responsibility, in creating something together, rather than having a passive, hedonistic experience ‘laid-on’. Latitude, which hosted an Occupy camp in July, was sponsored by Vodafone. It is by no means the most crass of today's festivals, but for many it and similar events have lost their soul. The Festival of Resistance, which also had an Occupy presence, is at the other extreme, with very little in the way of entertainment, being less of a festival and more of an educational activist-moot. The Green Gathering lies between these poles, and is seen by many in alternative communities as a ‘Gathering of the Tribes’, although less so than pre-2007, when it attracted 20,000 like-minded souls and was described as an entire alternative city. According to those involved in organising the gathering back then, the powers-that-be were “afraid, very afraid”. They closed the festival down, bankrupting it in the process. Resilient, it has sprung back, but is now much smaller than in its heyday.

It sometimes feels as though an event such as this needs to last for more than four days to fulfil its potential, but occupiers learnt the hard way that temporary autonomous zones have a tendency to sap energy and engender disillusion if they attempt to put down roots and become permanent. In a true TAZ, every moment is precious.



# WHO ARE YOU CALLING MEEK?

THE IRREVERENT  
REVEREND NEMU

Why would King James, famous for his anti-democratic machinations, his shameless financial extravagance and his costly military misadventure, want the following in the Bible?:

*"The meek shall inherit the earth"*

This is spin that would make Peter Mandelson blush. "Inherit" implies a delay, even a patient wait for something to pass naturally. Strong's definitive biblical dictionary, however, also translates *yarash* as "occupy", and the primary three meanings listed are seize, dispossess, and take possession of. "Meek" is equally misleading. The Hebrew *anav* is used to describe Moses (not mouses), but Moses was badass, the ruthless and relentless commander of the original desert storm. *Anav* usually means "poor" or "needy", humble before the Lord, perhaps, but mighty amongst men. Given that *eretz*, "the earth", was a more local concept in the ancient world, and is translated as "land" twice as often as "earth", the line can be turned upside down:

*"And the poor shall occupy the land"*

So was the prophecy fulfilled amidst the tents at St. Paul's? Are the shovels of the Diggers2012 splitting the crust of New Jerusalem? Or are we just waiting around meekly for the second coming? Couldn't we be a little more proactive?

For centuries upon centuries, churchgoers (i.e. nearly everyone) were subjected to a form of brainwashing through iconography. In an age when few could read the Bible even if they

had been allowed to, when pictures and engravings were rare, the psyche of Christendom was bombarded with images of a helpless Christ. First as a baby in his mother's arms, he is then beaten and humiliated around the church through the stations of the cross, pinned to a cross to suffer in stoic agony, and finally dead in his mother's arms in Pietà.

With all these grave and graven images in mind, seared into the group mind of our culture, it is no surprise that tyrants have taken advantage of docile sheep, and used us as battering rams. Theology has more often been a tool of oppression than liberation. It was no priest that abolished slavery, it was shifting economic priorities in the British Empire, whilst its staunchest defenders repeated Noah's curse upon Ham and his black descendants. Women's suffrage was resisted vigorously by the church as a perversion of the divine order; when the Church of England refused to cut from the marriage service the bride's vow to 'obey' her husband, the Suffragettes made clear their religious convictions by burning down St. Mary's Church in Wargrave.

There have, of course, been high profile clergymen in the civil rights movement. Rev. Martin Luther King had a dream and raised a cry, but Malcolm X's Islam-enthused activism may have been more pivotal, and the end of the British Empire began with a Hindu mahatma, not a Christian saint.

Ex-Canon Giles Fraser's protest against the possibility of a violent eviction of Occupy London made him, in my book, the coolest canon in the crypt, but the nature of his protest is revealing. He was so opposed to something his institution was planning that... he gave up.

Indeed, resignation is the essence of his theology. Discussing the function of prayer in the Guardian, he wrote:

*"The world does not revolve around you or me. And I can't make it or other people dance to my tune by strenuously wishing things were other than they are. ... The fundamental move is to give up trying to be in control."*

Indeed, the world does not revolve around you or me. It revolves around a wheel of commodification, consumption and debt, turned by a small number of corporations and institutions. People can dance how they like, the problem is that freestyle finance is wrecking the harmonies and experimental economics keep breaking down into glitchy chaos amidst the bass drops.

"The ultimate question for a responsible man to ask is not how he is to extricate himself heroically from the affair, but how the coming generation shall continue to live," said Pastor Bonhoeffer, a staunch opponent of Hitler. His calling not just to "bandage the victims under the wheel, but jam the spoke in the wheel itself," lead him to advocate a clergy strike in protest against the Nazification of German churches, and secretly train a network



of illegal underground preachers. Resistance agent and eventually part of a conspiracy to assassinate the Führer, he was executed shortly before the end of WWII.

If the Western world has come to fetishise suffering without complaint, if turning the other cheek comes down to us as justification for passivity rather than a challenge to authority, it has strayed far from its root, the legendary Galilean upstart relentlessly provoking the authorities:

*"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? ... Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three."*

Resistance is the holiest of supplications, and the Holy Spirit anoints whoever sets out to turn the world upside down. If, however, the devout praying of rosaries, intoning of mantras or bashing one out into the sacred fire of Isis makes the worshipper content with his or her lot, even as seas rise and war zones simmer and spit, these rites are the spiritual equivalent of morphine shots. Like an action without a target or an online petition clicked and Facebooked, the world is no better than before. Indeed it is worse, because righteous indignation has been assuaged. The protest has been registered, but the world remains as gloomy as before and its people remain resigned to the inevitable, like martyrs, ministers and masochists before them. Is it not time to give up giving up? Engage and enrage, provoke and challenge, but don't just drop it. Pick it up and shake it out.

In the beginning was a manifesto, but what then? Activists hawk literature and address crowds, not unlike evangelists. Both point to the immanence of better worlds in the language of urgency, but which really makes a difference? Which goes beyond words to the word made flesh?

According to the study of signs and their movements (semiotics), as formalised by its modern master Pierce, information can be said to have passed from person to person if the behavior of the receiver changes. If the dentist tells you to floss and you don't, semiotically speaking, the idea has not been transferred. Any suggestion, every

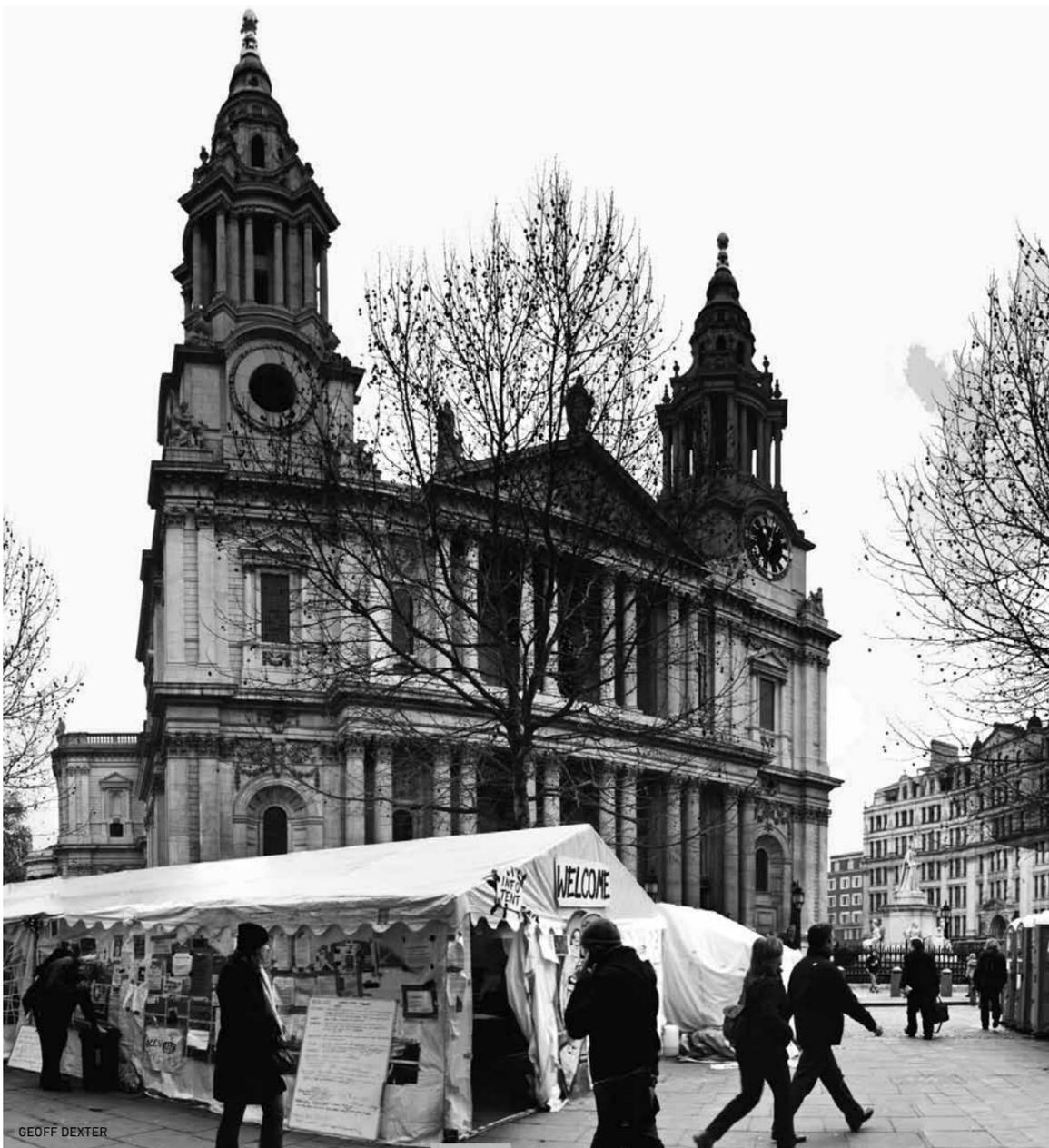
clamour raised in the street, is just words, unless it ends in action. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

If you love your neighbor as yourself, find out who is facing eviction in your town and get down there as a witness, with a placard or a D-lock, and some photographers to greet the bailiffs. Engage, make the sacrifice, even the small sacrifice of filling out a few forms, to bank somewhere ethical. If "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit", how can you stay with Barclays, your money funding bomb-making and tar sands extraction, hastening the end of all things bright and beautiful?

As Bonhoeffer put it:

*"It is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith. One must completely abandon any attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be a saint, or a converted sinner, or a churchman... By this worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world."*

Turning the world upside-down begins with a revolution in consciousness, a stamp of personal authority on the world we author collectively. The slavish citizen who would rather someone else sorted it all out, preferably with "the Enemy" in a desert far away, is complicit in the plans made by the oppressor. But a slave can also go into the desert himself, face his real enemy, and refuse the treaties he is offered. According to the story, he returns as saviour, and immediately starts stirring up trouble.





# ON THE SOAPBOX

READERS' LETTERS & COMMENTS

## SYMPTOMS & DISEASE

TINA LOUISE

It has been a pretty life-changing 10 months since I took a tent and became part of the Occupy movement in London. Following eviction, I came home to Blackpool in Lancashire and found the mining company, Cuadrilla, breezing through plans for shale gas exploration and exploitation of the Bowland Shale in the region known as The Fylde; a well-populated area of prime agriculture and tourism. Having been part of tackling the primary cause of society's ailments with others in the Occupy movement, I now find myself among equally determined others, dealing with a symptom - an urgent one that must be tackled now, before any further harm is allowed to be done both here and in the rest of the UK.

Despite this, I sense a futility in easing symptoms, whilst the disease rages on damaging so many aspects of society I am torn as to how to divide my time and energy. It's as if involvement

with single-issue (symptom) fights, entangle us in something that is all-consuming and leave little left for 'cause-of-the-disease' fighting. I haven't found a balance or a solution. I just keep counting on winning the battle against fracking.

I wonder if this is what always happens? Do people become so wrapped up in curing the symptoms rather than tackling the true cause? Maybe that's why protest groups continue to exist - because the causes of a sick society continue unabated? I see the Occupy Movement as a potential solution, however its ability to unify pockets of resistance and focus on the cause rather than the symptoms, must be more effective. Whether it's fracking, the LIBOR scandal, dodgy expenses, huge bonuses, or wars in foreign countries, all of these symptoms are the result of a system which is riddled with disease.

## BUILDING A MOVEMENT FOR REAL DEMOCRACY

STEVE FREEMAN

Every day millions of people struggle against the conditions capital imposes on society. People are confronted by economic and social injustice, environmental degradation, and the threat of war. Popular democracy appears when people begin to act together to organise protests, demonstrations, strikes, occupations, and revolutions. The appeal of democracy is universal because it offers the prospect of people governing themselves and determining their own future.

Capital and Democracy are fundamentally opposed. The power of money confronts the power of people. Should money or people rule the world? Capital concentrates more power in the hands of the minority. Democracy seeks to mobilise the power of the majority. Both are engaged in a protracted worldwide struggle for power, which will decide the future of humanity and the survival of the planet.

In the last twenty years, the struggle for democracy swept across Russia and Eastern Europe, South Africa, Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan, and Palestine. Liberal or parliamentary democracy holds out the promise that the 'will of the people' will prevail and civil liberties will be secured. However, the experience of liberal democracy has shown that financial and corporate power continues to rule. Around the world people are increasingly disillusioned with

liberal democracy because it cannot resolve the issues of economic injustice and sustainability.

### DEMOCRACY'S OPPORTUNITY

The Occupy movement was one of many responses to the crisis of capital. Spontaneous action caught the authorities off-guard, but now they have regained their composure and control. Consequently, Occupy faces a major decision regarding whether to convert itself into a more 'permanent' organisation with long term goals and strategies, or to accept defeat and move on to the next protest campaign.

We do not, however, have to invent a new strategy or aims. We need to understand the contradictions and alternative pathways within the movement itself. The future of Occupy is already there. Three objectives stand out: real democracy, economic and social justice, and a sustainable environment. It is not that they are opposed to each other. It is more a question of strategic priority, emphasis and linkage.

### MOVEMENT - CAMPAIGNS, PARTIES AND ACTIONS

Although the US movement began with economic focus on Wall Street, in 'Scenes from Occupied America', Rebecca Solnit identified the two issues at the centre of the movement - "economic justice and real democracy". She says that by "living out that direct democracy every day through assemblies and committees", the movement is "winning through people power". New York Occupiers, like Marina Sitrin, urged people to take the real democracy route: "Soon, I hope, in our plazas and parks, our neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces, we will all be saying something similar: Real Democracy!"

Real Democracy is the means by which people power can implement economic and social justice, and a sustainable environment. Without it, the people can protest against injustice and ecological disaster, but like King Canute, we cannot stop the tide of capital lapping over us. Occupy has a future primarily as an international movement for real democracy. It has to win the argument that real democracy is the road to economic and social justice and a sustainable environment.

A movement is not a single organisation. The environmental movement, for example, has a range of parties, campaigns, think-tanks and direct action groups. There is the Green Party, the Alliance of Green Socialists, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Climate Change, Climate Camp and more. The trade union movement remains the prime focus for struggles for economic and social justice. It has many organisations, publications, and campaigns gathered around it.

In contrast, there is no recognisable Real Democracy movement. Occupy should become the catalyst for a Real Democracy movement with a range of Real Democracy institutions, parties and think-tanks. Occupy should be the first organisation to take Real Democracy seriously, but eventually become one voice within a broader movement. We should not try to 'own' or control such a movement but play our part in building it.



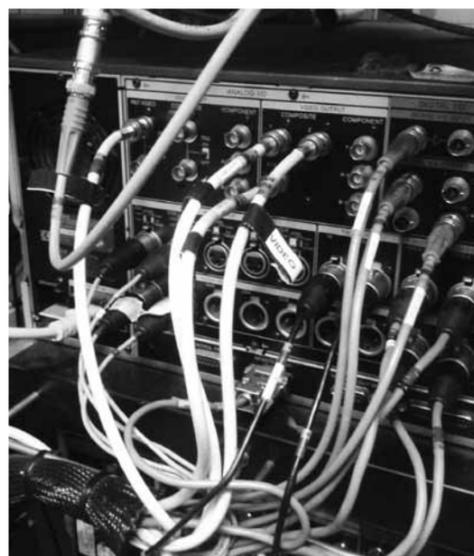
BRIAN LELI

# TALES FROM THE GRIND

JACK DEAN

The media production industry is not glamorous. It is the sound of air conditioning. The smell of organic herbal teas. Rows of silent men sitting in darkened rooms hunched over graphics tablets. The lowest level employees, runners, skulk in the kitchen picking through leftovers from clients' meals. But most of all, it's watching loading bars tick by on computer screens. Hundreds of different types of loading bars.

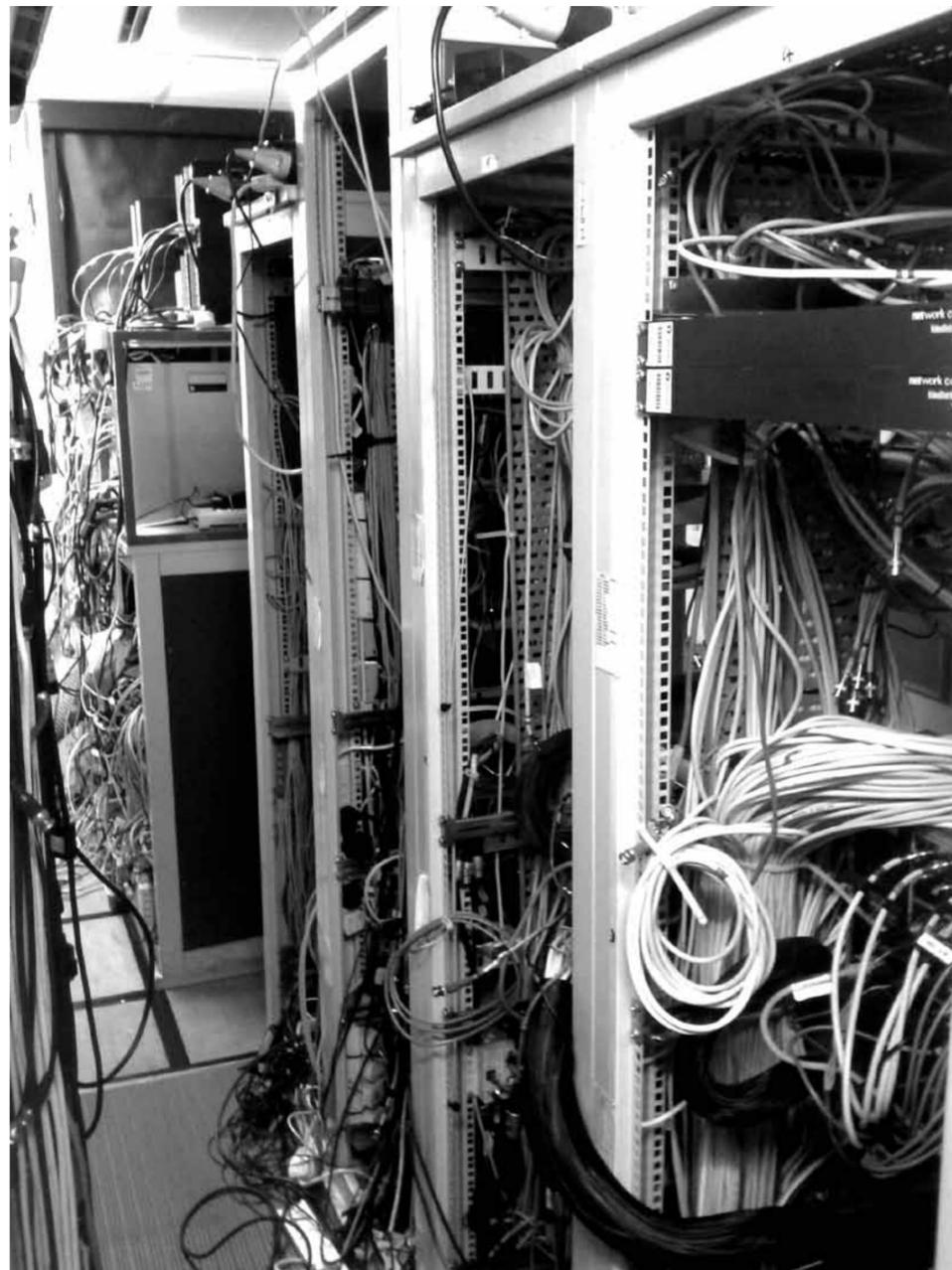
As my company grappled with a collapsing advertising market, attempting to regain its balance on the rapidly shifting terrain, a quarter of the team I was a member of were being spun through the redundancy cycle. It was against this backdrop of job insecurity that my rather impulsive



temperament got the better of me. Perhaps it was bitterness that led my hand to its crime. I was in the client area of our company, a room composed of Steel surfaces, iPads stuck to tables and "wacky" wall coverings. It was, rather sadly, probably the first act of not-for-profit creativity that had been seen on the premises for some time. Perhaps if I'd realised this at the time, I would have put more effort into it. I found myself, almost automatically, and certainly without any real conscious thought, beginning to draw on the base of the coffee mugs with a permanent marker. I attempted a few small designs: an "up yours" hand signal, a rendition of male genitalia and other such doodles. I then made a cup of coffee and wandered back to my machine room to check on the loading bars.

A few days passed, entirely without memory, until one morning I was interrupted by my Head of Department. I was ushered silently towards one of our larger conference rooms where a file was placed on the desk. Inside was a blurry but unmistakable photograph of my hastily scribbled phallus. There was no disputing it. Having been caught, I thought the honourable action was to admit to the artwork. I could not have disputed the witness statement even had I denied the act in the first place. In any case, I was obviously fired.

If there is one lesson to be taken from this episode it is as follows: if you absolutely must draw human sex organs on company property using company property, take every precaution not to do it in front of the Head of Human Resources. It seems odd, in a company where clients and staff took class A drugs and had sex in their hired suites, that my lesser deed was worthy of instant dismissal. But then, I suppose they didn't do that in front of the Head of HR.



## IDEOLOGUE ATTACKS SCHOOL

ALEX CHARNLEY

Britain is coming to terms with the latest in a series of attacks on young people as a lone ideologue, with a history of involvement in a dangerous right wing group, once again targeted pupils at a state school in Central London.

Witnesses of the attack, which took place barely an hour after pupils received their GCSE results, described how the celebratory atmosphere suddenly turned as a crazed attacker entered the school gates and made a beeline for students discussing their grades in the playground. The man was seen accosting vulnerable pupils and scrawling letters over their foreheads with a permanent red marker. A number of pupils attempted to flee the scene but those who did escape attack were later caught, tagged and given ASBOs by officers from the Metropolitan Police.

One witness, who preferred to remain anonymous, explained her despair as the attacker roamed the playground: "At some point it [the pen] must have ran out, but he had these sticky labels, he must have prepared them earlier, it was definitely premeditated. He was relentless, pinning them down and plastering them with these labels, F here, D- there, snatching their mark sheets and sniggering. The kids were really weeping, it was awful."

As the attacker fled, the shocked victims were taken away by Action 4 Employment

representatives and assigned to Workfare initiatives across the country. The Headmaster and teachers at the school are inconsolable, but the accused, a Michael Gove, has refused to explain his motives in any coherent fashion, only stating that the attack was "radical but necessary."

This was just the latest in a string of attacks and follows two similar ambushes. The first took place a week ago in Croydon where a man, matching the description of Mr Gove, was found defacing the congratulations cards of students as they received their A-Level results. The other incident took place in Basingstoke in June when poorly spelled, but neatly inscribed graffiti was found on the exterior of a school which had that morning received its SATs results for the academic year.

Unconfirmed reports are also emerging that a copycat attacker has been seen lurking around a hospital on Tyneside. The criminal, described by one young man as a "grey-haired manky codger", was bursting onto cancer wards and rewriting patients' test results. He could be heard repeatedly muttering under his breath, "if all the tests fail, then it's up for sale." Doctors and nurses later told of their bemusement at seeing the man terrifying patients and riding roughshod over their clinical work.

This epidemic of unhinged violence seems only to be getting worse. It must be stopped.

# THE OT HOROSCOPE

## OPPRESSORS



### COP

This month things must improve as you've been derriere-licious in your duties. It may have been

marginally out of your jurisdiction but this perp displayed a naked contempt for the law. He was clearly drunk and disorderly, indecently exposing himself and there was even said to be crack openly on display. If you set eyes on this bum in Britain, you be sure to give him a royal spanking.



### BANKER

Another month, another multibillion dollar money laundering scandal. It really is hard to get that

stuff clean. Out, damned spot! the ambitious Lady cried but she felt guilt, do you? Have you enough cash to stop up the access and passage to remorse? What's done is done and cannot be undone, the innocent flower is dead and you're the serpent for all to see. At least the Lady did the honourable thing. You will not find love this month.



### NATIONALIST

Why shouldn't you bask in the glory of Olympic triumph? Blighty wasn't just the hostess with

the mostest, she bestrode the world's stage once again. Team GB cycled, ran and rowed their way to victory and did it for Queen and country. The Daily Mail might be right about those mixed raced families in the news but surely not Jess Ennis? Question is: would you still love Mohammed Farah if he hadn't won?

## POLITICIANS



### NEOLIBERAL

It's a globalised world, you know you've got to race to survive. People don't seem to understand

how important it is for the health of the economy to make an export economy out of health. How unfair of others to think that you'd start abroad before setting up shop back home. The NHS is a brand just waiting to be exploited and this month the starter's gun has officially been fired. Don't forget to thank Danny Boyle for the free advertising!



### CHAMPAGNE SOCIALIST

Oh dear. On the one hand, you really don't like those big bullies America. But on the

other hand, you don't want to appear to be anti-justice. All of the columnists aren't helping either, with their carefully reasoned but contradictory arguments. It's probably best to follow the usual rule: agreeing with whichever group you feel is being least represented in the discussions. Which in the Assange case is, almost certainly, the Inuits.



### LIBERAL

You should be very pleased. Your eldest really did benefit from those hours of private tuition, so getting

accepted to university should be a breeze. But don't forget those exorbitant fees. You have been saving hard with your local building society and shopping at Sainsbury's instead of Waitrose. Of course, if you find you lose your savings, you can always remortgage your home to make sure she gets to study at Oxford.

## PROTESTERS



### ANONYMOUS

You have, once again, shown your true power! Tens of people trembled at your latest "attack" on some

websites. But, it can't be an easy time for your group. A former hero's reputation lies open for all to see, yet you now find yourselves defending unaccountability, the very concept the organisation was formed to tackle. If people do point out this rank hypocrisy, you could always distract them with some cute kitty photos?



### PACIFIST

What a triumph for science. The largest man-made object placed on Mars is leading to vast leaps

in human knowledge. But should you be pleased? NASA are sort of a part of the military industrial complex aren't they? In fact, The United States have clearly just colonised Mars, isn't that a bit imperialist? It's time to march to the American embassy and demand on behalf of all Martians the right to self determination.

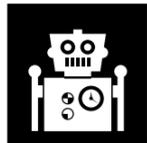


### ANARCHIST

Those ideological state apparatus are at it again. The clunking fist of central authority has dealt

a disproportionate blow in the battle between punk and Putin. You have witnessed how the direct actions of three brave women can ignite Pussy Riots across the globe. Now they're recruiting, you must build on this momentum. But beware, it's not only the Kremlin who don't like pesky protesters around churches. Balaclavas at the ready?

## CITIZENS



### WORKER

The time for escalation is now. For inspiration look to Leicester. Yes, you read that correctly. Sacked

disabled workers occupied the boss's HQ! Radicalism is the way forward. No good just trying to get from A to B. Especially when B's not much worth getting to. Your compañeros in Asturias are using homemade rocket launchers to fight, for you it's all about October 20. Let's try something new this time...



### STUDENT

Ignore the hubbub. First they crank up the pressure on exams every year then they tell you it's all too

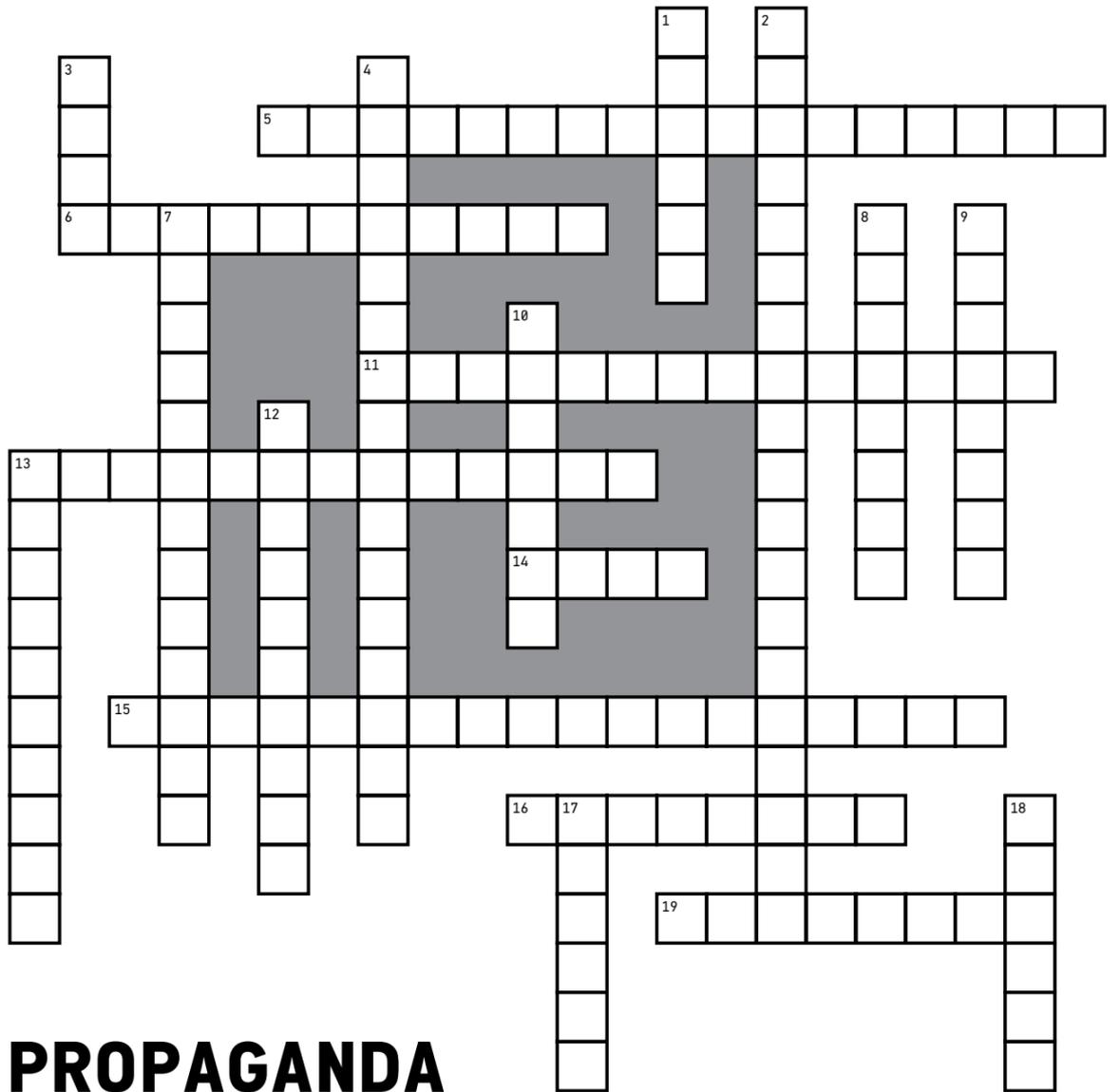
easy? Michael Gove was probably a straight A student: so hey, maybe exam results aren't the be all and end all? These are important times, but don't forget that life will always test you so be sure not to sleep through the most important lessons. Next class: insubordination.



### PENSIONER

You worked hard for this and undoubtedly you deserve security in your dotage. But at what cost? Can yours

be the generation that no longer stays silent as your pension makes money from BP? You aren't the shy and retiring type when it comes to injustices at home but what about when our prosperity is linked to exploitation abroad? Those corporations didn't create that value, your lifetime of work did. Why let them profit from your labour?



# PROPAGANDA CROSSWORD

THE OT

## MASSIVE PROPS GOING OUT

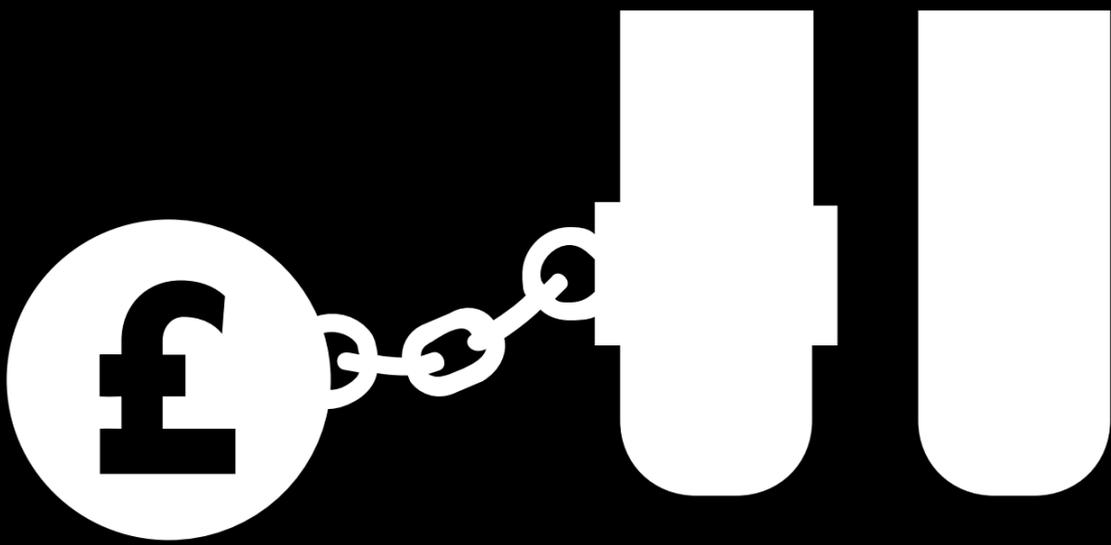
### DOWN

- Noam Chomsky and Edward S. \_\_\_\_\_ developed their propaganda model of the corporate media in Manufacturing Consent. (6)
- Anarchist form of direct action employed as an example for others to follow. (10,2,3,4)
- The Currency of Propaganda (4)
- Petty spin doctor. Likes barging in on Channel 4 News. (8,8)
- The man who thought we were animals, so he invented public relations to tame us. anagram: Brand Draws Eye. (6,7)
- The "Commie's" version of propaganda. (8)
- Be afraid, be very afraid. They're not us! (3,5)
- The GOP's propaganda machine (3, 4)
- He loves you. (3,7)
- This WW2 chap wasn't quite as British as his radio voice suggested. (4,3,3)
- This word is made up of 7 letters. It has always been made up of 7 letters. (6)
- Some newspapers, like this ingested vomit of a daily, deploy the "Common Man" technique. Appealing to supposed salt of the earth values of their readers while screwing them over economically. (3,3)

### ACROSS

- Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Kim Jong-Il and Justin Bieber all have or had one of these. (4,2,11)
- Film maker of a Nazi persuasion. Her most famous work was a triumph. anagram: Fear Hit Lens. (11)
- The process of being led to think, without any critical thought. (14)
- Moustachioed man in WWI poster proclaiming that he "wants you." (4,9)
- Propaganda units deployed by America in regions they're blowing to smithereens. Most famously deployed in Vietnam and Club Tropicana. (4)
- Prams galore on the Russian steps. (10,8)
- Nazi Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (rumoured to have had "no balls at all"). (8)
- The irrational byproduct of making us all terrified of Communism. Check under your beds. (3,5)





~~YOU ARE NOT~~  
~~A LOAN!~~