

# OCCUPY CONSCIOUSNESS

*essays on the global insurrection*





AN EVOLVER BOOK

# OCCUPY CONSCIOUSNESS

*Essays on the Global Insurrection*

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# OCCUPY CONSCIOUSNESS

## *Essays on the Global Insurrection*

This anthology is a gift to you from the Evolver Social Movement, a non-profit project that organizes local communities and raises consciousness about ideas and initiatives that support a new planetary culture. Many of the essays and articles included here were originally published in Reality Sandwich ( [www.realitysandwich.com](http://www.realitysandwich.com) ), a media sponsor of the E+SM. You can learn more about the Evolver Social Movement, and its 40+ local chapters, here: [http://www.evolver.net/join\\_the\\_evolution](http://www.evolver.net/join_the_evolution)

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PART 1. MEDIA EVOLVING

**A Fish Out of Water: Occupy and the  
New Media Environment**

*by Mitch Mignano*

When I first heard about the occupation of Zuccotti Park last fall, I was sitting comfortably in my uncle's beachfront apartment in southern California. My close friend Dallas, an avid Facebook updater, had posted his own first-hand images and descriptions of the events on his wall, as well as links to collections of similar information and videos as they became available. Shocked to see evidence of such a significant protest, not in the Middle East, but right smack in downtown New York City, where my uncle and I are both from, I eagerly relayed the news to him. The problem was, he didn't believe me.

Ever since his days at the college paper, my uncle has been a television and print news junkie. He is the reason why Marriott elevators play CNN, Caesar's Palace airs Fox in the Roman Baths and the Hotel Imperial in Vienna delivers the Herald Tribune with your morning coffee, if you're American, anyway. Ever since we shared the experience of witnessing the collapse of the World Trade Center on television so many years ago, he and I have sustained a discussion surrounding naïve realism and mass media spectacle.

Like many people, my uncle believes that what makes it into the mass media dialogue is basically the truth. He feels that the validity and significance of a story will always lead to its finding a home within the mass media. From his perspective, radical or conspiratorial views are marginal because they are simply less valid. I find his view absurdly naïve. It seems to me – and most of my friends - that corporate media will always exclude some stories and play up others based on their own narrow interests. Different media companies reflect similar underlying structures that seek political and economic gain. Therefore, radical points of view are systematically squashed and marginalized, leading to an implicit, if not explicit, conspiracy of corporate American values.

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The fact that people of my uncle's mindset cannot see beyond the mass media envelope is akin to a fish unable to think 'water' because it is completely immersed within it. This is what media theorist Marshall McLuhan called, the "invisible media environment." According to McLuhan, once the old media is made obsolete by the new, what was previously invisible becomes visible, and the old world becomes the content of the new. Let's consider what happened at Zuccotti in this light.

The Occupy protest took place in an extremely high-visibility location - Zuccotti is only a block from the Milky-Way's most intense rubber-necking attraction, ground-zero - but the mainstream media simply ignored the first days of the occupation. Companies like Fox, the New York Times, and CNN are supported by advertising revenue from major financial institutions. Their dependence upon the system determines how they cover Wall Street. While the major media conglomerates operate from the same small island of Manhattan, and could not have missed this uprising happening at the epicenter of the financial world, they cast a blind eye upon it. Even The New York Times, believed to be the voice of liberal conscience, refused to give the protest lip service at first. In their first foray, they ran an embarrassingly negative piece by Gina Bellafante that sought to diminish the significance of the uprising.

But the media landscape in 2011 has changed significantly. Because of the extraordinary proliferation of smart phones and new social technologies, the occupiers were able to take matters into their own hands, circulating photos, Blog posts, and video of the events, disseminating the information directly to their circle of friends and beyond, via Facebook , Youtube, Twitter, and so on. This is how, from the beach in California, I was able to see posts from my friend Dallas, someone I know personally and whose information I trust. His updates showed me exactly what was going on, a significant protest with shocking violence and police brutality. On Youtube, a video of young women fenced in and sprayed with mace for no apparent reason suddenly grabbed the public's attention. The ability of videos such as this one to go viral and reach millions of people in a few days reveals that the old media environment is becoming obsolete, as we enter a new one.

The sluggish response of mainstream media, the politically motivated nature of their editorial processes, and the lack of a concrete and trustworthy human link are simply no match for



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a global network of people with smart phones and social-media tools, a decentralized swarm that is a new civil society power. With the overreaching violence of the police now common knowledge, the ice quickly melted and left-leaning media personalities like Keith Oberman and Michael Moore started to speak out. In fact, they would have been perceived as irresponsible, and would have lost credibility as progressives, if they didn't respond to what was taking place.

The lack of mainstream coverage in the first five days was a glaring omission, and one of the main topics initially discussed. But even after this, as the media caught up, and even published some excellent pieces (such as Frank Rich's account in *The New York Times* that noted Occupy Wall Street was revealing a new "architecture of consciousness"), the attempts to marginalize the uprising continued, and all but drowned out legitimate representations of the movement. A fish, we must remember, cannot breathe outside of water and so will submerge itself once again until it dies a 'natural' death.

The occupiers were youthful and inventive. Moving quickly to develop an alternative media infrastructure, they started live webcams, published their own newspapers, and created other forms of DIY news. As Occupy stayed true to its anarchic, process-oriented ideals, the uprising spread rapidly across the planet, replicating itself in city after city. Despite the scoffing and snarky putdowns from the mainstream, Occupy managed to shake many people out of the trance of television and print media, altering the carefully scripted discourse. Over the course of several months, the planetary community received a Shakti-burst of insight into our potential to reconstitute society through humane and ecological values that are beyond money, that are ultimately ubiquitous. We are like sleepers awakening from a dream, and as we awaken, we realize that the urge to rebel against the collusion of corporate media and financial institutions – the sorcerers who maintain the spell – is everywhere. It has been hidden under the surface all along.

The weeks that followed the onset of Occupy revealed a perpetual dialogue between the social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and the old media rulers. If the *New York Times* changed a page that had already been posted without referencing it, someone on Facebook would show the before and after with side-by-side screenshots. But there is a darker more Pynchon-esque side to the new media too. The new anonymous power of the

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multitude to “culture jam” and create discourse around power and control can also be used irresponsibly, even dangerously.

At one point, a number of posts claimed that Facebook was trying to censor a picture of the protest. Even some friends of mine started to post this photo – which was actually of a mob of baseball fans in the streets near City Hall – claiming it was a huge Occupy protest that Facebook was suppressing. Evidently they weren’t checking what they were doing before they posted. They were disseminating the images simply because they ‘wanted’ to believe it. Any New Yorker should have known that the image was not what the caption claimed: baseball fans and protestors against social injustice have a different look. By spreading a deceptive image, the posters threatened the delicate balance between the powers-that-be and the emergent opposition. At that delicate point in the ongoing narrative of Occupy, if enough people believed that a massive swarm of people was taking place and being ignored by the media, it might have incited riots. The new media power that spreads memes and images virally allows many people to amplify what is happening without taking responsibility or being ethical – a similar example was the rapid dissemination of the recent Kony video, which turned out to be a form of propaganda. At this point, there are many people who haven’t taken responsibility for their new social power. They enjoy yelling “fire” in a theatre to watch the ensuing chaos unfold.

Both fortunately and unfortunately, this is the new hyper-mediated world in which we are now immersed. Occupy Wall Street promises to be only the beginning of this story. Right now, “cold wars” over media hacking, viral propaganda, municipal evictions, are raging rapidly, while political organizations and private companies seek to manipulate the new situation to their advantage. The choice we make, individually, as to how we use our new extraordinary connectivity and media power is the front line of a global struggle for the future of the earth. The situation requires deeper awareness and responsible participation on all of our parts. The new media environment is characterized by networks of trust between connected individuals, and is thus horizontal rather than hierarchical. Instead of getting “All the news that’s fit to print” from one authoritative source, we have all becoming collaborators in discovering and sharing what is relevant to our lives.

By the time an old media environment is rendered visible on a large scale, a new and invis-

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ible one has already replaced it. In order to avoid regressing into outmoded forms, we must learn to surround and contain the old world, while developing a stable relation to the new. Following McLuhan's metaphor we might make a jump from fish to amphibian. We do this by searching out and playing with the boundaries of what was previously invisible to us, and making it visible for ourselves as well as others. One crucial reference point for this emergent culture is gatherings, such as festivals (or the now-forbidden Occupy zones) where an alternative culture, based on trust and transparency, can manifest temporarily. For instance, I could easily see the gaps in the mass media's presentation of the facts, where my uncle couldn't, because I participate in a counterculture of all-night dance parties and festivals like Burning Man. These "temporary autonomous zones" ritually turn our world upside down and redefine our social boundaries, revealing the constructs of every-day life, and our potential to change them.

Our changing media landscape is chaotic and unpredictable. The new environment of our communication technology empowers us as individuals, but it can also lull us into a dreamlike state of trance if we do not take responsibility for our new capabilities. In this time of intensifying pressure and ongoing insurrection – at "the edge of history," as the cultural theorist William Irwin Thompson defines it – we are discovering that we possess the power to remake the world as active participants, if we learn to collaborate. The alternative is to passively "enjoy the ride" as the prevailing system of domination and surveillance continues to strangle and suffocate the planet, erasing our identities in the process.

*Faust.*                    *If ever I lay me on a bed of sloth in peace,  
That instant let for me existence cease!  
If ever with lying flattery you can rule me  
So that contented with myself I stay,  
If with enjoyment you can fool me,  
Be that for me the final day!  
That bet I offer!*

*Mephistopheles.* *Done!*

**Think Occupy Wall St. is a Phase?  
You don't get it**

*by Douglas Rushkoff*

*September 23, 2011*

*This article first appeared on CNN.com*

Like the spokesmen for Arab dictators feigning bewilderment over protesters' demands, mainstream television news reporters finally training their attention on the growing Occupy Wall Street protest movement seem determined to cast it as the random, silly blather of an ungrateful and lazy generation of weirdos. They couldn't be more wrong and, as time will tell, may eventually be forced to accept the inevitability of their own obsolescence.

Consider how CNN anchor Erin Burnett, covered the goings on at Zuccotti Park downtown, where the protesters are encamped, in a segment called "Seriously?!" "What are they protesting?" she asked, "nobody seems to know." Like Jay Leno testing random mall patrons on American History, the main objective seemed to be to prove that the protesters didn't, for example, know that the U.S. government has been reimbursed for the bank bailouts. It was condescending and reductionist.

More predictably perhaps, a Fox News reporter appears flummoxed in this outtake from "On the Record," in which the respondent refuses to explain how he wants the protests to "end." Transcending the shallow partisan politics of the moment, the protester explains "As far as seeing it end, I wouldn't like to see it end. I would like to see the conversation continue."

To be fair, the reason why some mainstream news journalists and many of the audiences they serve see the Occupy Wall Street protests as incoherent is because the press and the public are themselves. It is difficult to comprehend a 21st century movement from the perspective of the 20th century politics, media, and economics in which we are still steeped.

In fact, we are witnessing America's first true Internet-era movement, which -- unlike civil rights protests, labor marches, or even the Obama campaign -- does not take its cue from a charismatic leader, express itself in bumper-sticker-length goals and understand itself

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as having a particular endpoint.

Yes, there are a wide array of complaints, demands, and goals from the Wall Street protesters: the collapsing environment, labor standards, housing policy, government corruption, World Bank lending practices, unemployment, increasing wealth disparity and so on. Different people have been affected by different aspects of the same system -- and they believe they are symptoms of the same core problem.

Are they ready to articulate exactly what that problem is and how to address it? No, not yet. But neither are Congress or the president who, in thrall to corporate America and Wall Street, respectively, have consistently failed to engage in anything resembling a conversation as cogent as the many I witnessed as I strolled by Occupy Wall Street's many teach-ins this morning. There were young people teaching one another about, among other things, how the economy works, about the disconnection of investment banking from the economy of goods and services, the history of centralized interest-bearing currency, the creation and growth of the derivatives industry, and about the Obama administration deciding to settle with, rather than investigate and prosecute the investment banking industry for housing fraud.

Anyone who says he has no idea what these folks are protesting is not being truthful. Whether we agree with them or not, we all know what they are upset about, and we all know that there are investment bankers working on Wall Street getting richer while things for most of the rest of us are getting tougher. What upsets banking's defenders and politicians alike is the refusal of this movement to state its terms or set its goals in the traditional language of campaigns.

That's because, unlike a political campaign designed to get some person in office and then close up shop (as in the election of Obama), this is not a movement with a traditional narrative arc. As the product of the decentralized networked-era culture, it is less about victory than sustainability. It is not about one-pointedness, but inclusion and groping toward consensus. It is not like a book; it is like the Internet.

Occupy Wall Street is meant more as a way of life that spreads through contagion, creates as many questions as it answers, aims to force a reconsideration of the way the nation does business and offers hope to those of us who previously felt alone in our belief that the

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current economic system is broken.

But unlike a traditional protest, which identifies the enemy and fights for a particular solution, Occupy Wall Street just sits there talking with itself, debating its own worth, recognizing its internal inconsistencies and then continuing on as if this were some sort of new normal. It models a new collectivism, picking up on the sustainable protest village of the movement's Egyptian counterparts, with food, first aid, and a library.

Yes, as so many journalists seem obligated to point out, kids are criticizing corporate America while tweeting through their iPhones. The simplistic critique is that if someone is upset about corporate excess, he is supposed to abandon all connection with any corporate product. Of course, the more nuanced approach to such tradeoffs would be to seek balance rather than ultimatums. Yes, there are things big corporations might do very well, like making iPhones. There are other things big corporations may not do so well, like structure mortgage derivatives. Might we be able to use corporations for what works, and get them out of doing what doesn't?

And yes, some kids are showing up at Occupy Wall Street because it's fun. They come for the people, the excitement, the camaraderie and the sense of purpose they might not be able to find elsewhere. But does this mean that something about Occupy Wall Street is lacking, or that it is providing something that jobs and schools are not (thanks in part to rising unemployment and skyrocketing tuitions)?

The members of Occupy Wall Street may be as unwieldy, paradoxical, and inconsistent as those of us living in the real world. But that is precisely why their new approach to protest is more applicable, sustainable and actionable than what passes for politics today. They are suggesting that the fiscal operating system on which we are attempting to run our economy is no longer appropriate to the task. They mean to show that there is an inappropriate and correctable disconnect between the abundance America produces and the scarcity its markets manufacture.

And in the process, they are pointing the way toward something entirely different than the zero-sum game of artificial scarcity favoring top-down investors and media makers alike.

## **iOccupy**

*by Conner Habib*

### **I.**

On the home page of the New York Times on Thursday, October 6, 2011, two images, staggered: One, a crowd; the colors are vibrant and varied. There are people, dozens, maybe hundreds, spilling out of the frame and into the world beyond the photo. Sitting, standing, yelling and looking up. Signs held up high read “OCCUPY-RESIST,” read “REVOLT.”

Next to it, down the page a bit, is a man against a black background. He’s pale and staring into a screen. He’s seated. Alone. This man could be nowhere but on a stage.

This man, Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, has just died, and with his death a worldview is dying with him.

The worldview in the other photo, as enacted by Occupy Wall Street, has just been born.

The day before, one could feel the mass media about to finally present Occupy Wall Street - the movement that is largest in New York, but growing into other cities, echoing Middle East protests, and targeting corporate greed and demanding corporate accountability. Leftist journalist Amy Goodman had showed up on the livestream; documentarian Michael Moore was tweeting away, unions had joined. Surely, no one could ignore the movement.

Then Steve Jobs died, and an opening was made for the media to crawl out of or into. A “visionary,” as he is being called by seemingly every media outlet everywhere, had passed. Pancreatic cancer - we saw it coming, but as always with death, it still seemed to arrive from nowhere.

My Twitter feed, which had been very slowly filling with Occupy Wall Street-related news, erupted with “RIP Steve Jobs” messages which ranged from the heartfelt (“Your technology has made my life possible”) to the light-hearted but warm (“iSad”). Many recounted their first Apple purchases.

### **II.**

I started earlier than most: My mother bought my family an Apple IIc in the 1980s.

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With it, I began to write a novel when I was seven years old. The computer, with its clumsy floppy disks and off-white entire-desk-occupying monitor fused with my creative life. I would have never written so much as a child without the computer, and writing so much is what kept the thread going -- from writing then to writing now. And the thread is here at this moment; I'm writing this on a Mac.

But despite this early involvement with Jobs's early, clumsy children, I wasn't exactly moved by his death. He was and Apple is, unlike prime competitor Bill Gates, notorious for not making charitable donations (at least publicly -- Jobs's apologists, including Andrew Ross Sorkin and Forbes magazine, say he may be giving secretly). His company is reported to use sweatshop labor, and last year, materials used for Apple products were traced back to murderous African militia groups. He was as anti-pornography as someone could be while not being a radical fundamentalist. His devices are, according to many public health advocates, spreading cancer. Without even approaching the enormous amount of resource depletion and pollution creation computers are responsible for (and this should not be ignored, should be examined more deeply and more often), Jobs and his work are problematic and cannot hope to present moral value in and of themselves.

On top of that, there was and is, what from any angle looks like a revolution happening, and the mainstream media suddenly shut it out.

The Twitter feeds kept coming in from sources (like @OccupyWallSt) directly related to the protests; many stating police were corralling protestors to arrest them and worse. Some protestors were being beaten and pepper-sprayed for doing little more than holding those colorful signs and bearing witness to economic crimes against humanity.

While this was happening, people began to march to Apple Stores, not to occupy them, but to grieve, with their glowing devices in hand; mock candles that costs hundreds of dollars. They placed notes. Some cried. Many took photos of each other.

### III.

Commenting on any of this in public was tricky business, I learned. When I said on Twitter and in a cafe I was worried that people were projecting emotion onto their gadgets, I got a cold "fuck you" and called an asshole more than once. "He changed the world!"



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Was the most common response, as if change were value-laden, the measure by which a person's life is gaged. As if we all don't change the world.

When I said, "let's not forget Occupy Wall St while we mourn," people scolded me. Didn't I know, they wondered, that the whole movement couldn't be happening without Steve Jobs's innovations? I mused back: maybe these protests wouldn't be necessary without the corporate and technological running amok. Not much of a response there, only that I was "dismissing people's sense of loss."

I was reminded of Andrew Ross Sorkin's particularly stupid article on Occupy Wall Street just a few days earlier (The New York Times, October 3, 2011). He thinks he's got some sort of stick-it-to-them line for the protestors: a withered and sixth-grade criticism. He asks one (out of tens of thousands) how they got to the protest. When the response is by plane, he questions more "deeply" that planes are part of corporate culture no? "Doesn't Virgin America represent the corporations you are trying to fight?" he asks. In other words: don't these fools know they're hypocrites? Sorkin's question is profound, though by no credit of his own. He doesn't know it's profound, because he asks with the intent of dismissing the group. The call of hypocrisy is often a child's game, because it refuses to recognize complexity.

The real weight of this question in light of Jobs's death is this -- where do these gadgets, corporate-built but now woven into the fabric of our being, fit into our lives? It's not clear that they're good -- good for whom? Certainly not Apple's sweatshop workers, nor for the millions that can't afford Apple products. Nor are they good for many of those who can afford them, but brandish them like badges of honor -- status symbols in a strange war for whose iPhone is the whitest. Add, again, the problems of resources and social implications of these devices and I'm not so sure they're good for us or that the way in which Jobs "changed the world" was for the better.

Then again, bad for whom? Occupy Wall Street and the movements they engendered or grew from them employ technological advances like no movement before.

Livestreams, Twitter, phones with cameras, phones as walkie-talkies, hacking systems, broadcasting to the world, emailing demands. So, like the first apple, to bite at technology

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renders unto us a gift that is by no means free.

Of course, none of this means that Steve Jobs was a good person. The Nobel Prize was named after the inventor of dynamite, which was subsequently responsible for death after death. The Rhodes scholars take their name from a racist diamond mogul. Works of peace or beauty often come from violent and strange places.

### IV.

Sorkin's other question was "What's the message?" He writes, "...at least to me, the message was clear," but then uses the rest of the article to point out just how messy and unclear he thinks the message is. This is as ubiquitous a media sentiment about Occupy Wall Street as "visionary" is about Jobs. But aside from the fact that many of the participants have stated clearly what they want, their detractors miss the point: decentralization is its greatest strength and most profound feature. And this decentralization was made possible historically and practically by technology.

Whereas once there were figureheads and men and women with megaphones fighting the power, now there are waves. The protestors don't seek a leader, but consider themselves collectively as a leader of a new way of thinking. The movement is the leader, in service to its subjects.

This is possible only because our sense of self is changing; growing more accustomed to connectivity through the Internet and globalization, we have begun to define ourselves by our interactions with others, not merely our own pursuits. Self is composed of a vast matrix of others instead of being segregated into Ones.

Of course this has its consequences too -- as many media theorists have pointed out; we can become more isolated by thinking the rest of the world is in the computer rather than real. But Occupy Wall Street represents this new sense of self at its most human.

Connecting online before and during the protests, with each other as well as the world, Occupy Wall Street occupies real space, and finds solidarity in virtual space with those who can't be there.

And this connectedness has given us a vast sense of equality that the protestors want borne out on a global, economic, and political level. A way to understand this is exhibited

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by the Ever-Shrinking Celebrity. No longer the untouchable black and white movie divas and leading men, celebrities are instead our neighbors, sitting in their living rooms. We're connected to them and participating in our own exhibition on YouTube and Facebook and Tumblr. We're curators of the fascinating museums of our superstar lives; media- and business-selected celebrities are less interesting to us. Even genuine mainstream celebrities like Lady Gaga show a different sense of self; in touch with her fans, she is her fan base, she tells us. Their actions are her blood. Other celebrities are less direct but nonetheless exhibit diminishing old-school fame. They talk to "the other 99%" on Twitter. They're no longer mobbed for autographs at the airport but instead they pose -- without pay -- for quick cellphone photos. We're them. They're us.

If our cherished celebrities cannot withstand the erosion of collectivity, how could our leaders -- financial and political -- hope to be spared? We're interconnected enough to know what others need. We don't need to be "represented" anymore, because we can actually speak to one another.

Famous, brilliant, "visionary" Steve Jobs, alone in the black with his gadget, isn't quite the hero he would have been even ten years ago. Vitriolic responses to critics of his corporate miserliness can be seen as symptoms of clinging to an old worldview. Since we're now understanding ourselves as connected, so will we connect moral bankruptcy with technological innovation. The latter will not excuse the former.

The world is fleshing out a new ethic and moral structure as the sense of self changes. Until it resolves (and perhaps it never will; perhaps it will be in this tension for a long, long time), we will stand in paradoxes. This isn't hypocrisy, it's a moment of learning, of process. But one of the messages of this moment has already emerged:

If you were famous, you will no longer be famous. If you were uncharitable but innovative, we'll take the computers and turn them into charitable devices. If you were irresponsible, you're one of us, and we demand responsibility of ourselves. No more figure-heads. No more totalizing centralization. No more celebrities, no more superpowers, no more Wall Street or despots. No more crimes from iron-fisted, power-wielding authorities because there will no longer be any authorities. The center is everywhere, and we occupy it.

## Occupy the Mediasphere

*by Antonio Lopez*

Earth embodies a great spirit, of which we are all a part.

But alienated humans have colonized this planetary life force. Working in service of corporate abstractions, they have forsaken membership in the Earth community for the power and privilege to exploit all its resources and living subjects. Despite being children of Earth, they no longer know from where they come. Instead, they enclose commonly shared resources, altering the chemistry of the atmosphere and oceans in order to transform our biosphere into a buy-o-sphere. These ecological imperialists cannibalize the living systems they depend on. Not only do they subsist by eating the world, they colonize the media in order to harvest the system's most valuable resource: human consciousness.

The corporate project of savage capitalism is a colonial war on the spirit of Earth, anima mundi, the all-encompassing life force of minerals, water, air, plants, animals and humans. Through creativity and the capacity to learn, anima mundi represents the self-regulating power of the world that guides evolution and life. It is both our ancient past, and our ancient future.

Rather than acting as a parasite on its life force, human culture should act as part of Earth's immune system. Such an immune system is encompassed by the cultural commons, the un-commodified activities and mutual support that are key to evolving our species. The cultural commons includes food recipes, agricultural knowledge, spiritual traditions, rituals, healing practices, language, everyday skills, crafts, songs, games, political conventions and philosophical knowledge. In traditional land-based cultures, the vast array of practices that enables them to survive from year to year are passed between generations, sometimes refined and built upon, but always based on the condition that culture remains "all that we share."

Characteristics of the cultural commons include reciprocity, mutual support, participation, intergenerational dialogue, self-sufficiency and receptiveness. Ultimately,

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these practices and behaviors derive from knowledge gleaned from inhabiting the biggest commons of all: Earth. Therefore, the cultural commons is integral to sustainability and is the last line of defense against the fencing-off and privatization of life on Earth. For a sustainable cultural commons to thrive, we need organic media that promotes green cultural citizenship and an Earth Democracy. Coined by Vandana Shiva, Earth Democracy represents the Indian concept of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, Earth family, which encompasses the planetary community of beings that comprise our living systems. Because corporate media and gadget companies promote technological “progress” while excluding living systems from our awareness, organic media practitioners are charged with the responsibility of incorporating an Earth perspective into their engagement of media ecosystems.

The French theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin argued that if the biosphere is all that contains life on Earth, then a noosphere contains our collective consciousness. The semiotic version of a noosphere is the semiosphere, which is the totality of human signs and symbols. Anthropologist Wade Davis envisions an ethnosphere, which contains the totality of human cultural and linguistic diversity. The space of mediated civic engagement refers to the public sphere. The mediasphere is an all-encompassing media ecosystem that mixes these various concepts: a mediated cultural commons that facilitates planetary communications.

As a space of appearance that shapes our interconnected reality, the mediasphere can make visible the spirit of Earth. Imagine the healing and bridging potential of a healthy, conscientious, democratic media space. Unfortunately, the mediasphere is largely colonized by corporate forces that propagate an unsustainable model of unlimited growth and technological progress. This domination is represented by the increased monopolization of traditional mass media (TV, film, popular culture, news, etc.), the commercialization of the Internet and an unsustainable system of media gadget consumption. If unchecked, corporate media’s power to shape our collective imagination inhibits our ability to envision alternatives beyond a colonial model of the world, in which a handful of megacorporations privatizes the planetary commons at the expense of the public good and living systems.

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Resistance to corporate domination of the planet is reflected in the struggle for control of the mediasphere between the concentrated wealth holders of the planet and the global majority. Colonized media coordinates the interests of the corporate kleptocracy; decolonized media emerges from daily practice and the communication habits of people. The former is vertically structured and controlled by a handful of multinational megacorporations; the latter constitutes the horizontally-networked communications environment that makes up the rest of the global mediasphere.

As such, we see hope in people's movements around the world: across the planet citizens take root, occupying the last remnants of the commons. Through self-mediation and network savvy, occupations glo-calize their struggle; linking local conditions with a larger globalized network. In the process they engage in a kind of cultural citizenship that is shifting planetary culture toward an Earth Democracy. It's represented by systems theorist Ervin Laszlo's call to consciously evolve civilization from conquest, colonization and consumerism to connection, communication and consciousness. In short, through active engagement we can transition the cultural commons from "my space" to "our space."

Media's collective "myth space" is shifting from the top-down, transmission-based system of the Industrial Age to ritual communication. Ritual draws on the ancient traditions at the root of communication: commune, commonness, community and communion. Through the occupation and reclamation of public spaces and the cultural commons—done in the spirit of conviviality, democracy, and connectivity—we can chart a new course of planetary evolution. When these physical spaces hybridize with global networks, they create an interconnected swarm of raised consciousness.

To this end, we can instigate a kind of media occupation that accelerates the emergent democratization of our collective imagination. Occupy, a transient verb, represents movement and transition in a number of ways: (1) seizing possession or control; (2) dwelling or residing in time or space; (3) filling or performing a function; (4) residing as owner or tenant; and (5) engaging attention. It should not be thought of as a noun or an end, but rather an action. Occupation doesn't mean taking over the TV studios or editorial offices of corporate media. It means staking a position as a node within a network that

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transcends the top-down propaganda machines of the past. Like the fluid media spaces we engage on a daily basis, sites of occupation are provisional, liminal zones. They politicize and socialize according to the form they take. These five dimensions are expressed by the following characteristics:

**Seizing control** – The past five hundred years of colonization have resulted in the corporate occupation and theft of the global commons from Earth's human and nonhuman inhabitants. The consolidation of corporate control is leveraged by the monopolization of the symbolic order. Because media represent the planetary communications commons, such a space must remain open, transparent, diverse, and democratic. Occupying the media means reclaiming the cultural commons and envisioning alternate realities beyond the corporatocracy's vision of world enclosure.

**Dwelling in time or space** – Colonization resulted in a disruption of our ancient sense of time and space, breaking our perceptual bonds with living systems. The antidote requires that we engage a participatory cosmology that reintegrates time and space into a shared reality that extends to global ecology. Our minds and bodies are designed to interact and engage with living systems. The rupture with and virtualization of living systems necessitates that we integrate our perception to acknowledge, respect and engage the nonhuman world. Media should serve the purpose of making these connections more real and significant.

**Inhabiting place** – We reside within embedded landscapes, from how we connect our senses with the environment to the bioregions that feed and nurture us. Occupying the media means the reinhabiting of not just public spaces but living systems. By hybridizing local issues with global movements, these actions glocalize the reclamation of the commons. Media occupation extends beyond just the Internet, cell phones, plazas, parks and streets, but also to how we inhabit the landscape of our lifeworld and within our own sense perception.

**Engaging attention** – The colonizers' most precious commodity is our attention. Daily complacency and inattention enable the commodities system's ecocidal assault on the planet. Additionally, colonized media repackages and sells the time we spend doing

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things with media. Through media mindfulness we can allocate our energy through the careful application of our attention so that we no longer manufacture consciousness for the benefit of the corporatocracy.

Performance – When one occupies a specific position within an organization (whether formal or informal), it entails a set of practices, skills, relationships and expectations. It also means belonging to communities of practice with unspoken guidelines and norms. Whether working in traditional media companies and marketing firms, producing activist media, participating in education or engaging in daily media practice, our global emergency calls for explicit ethics. Green cultural citizenship means articulating and thinking about the ethical orientation of our work, and engaging in mindful practice founded on a moral framework that puts the commons and the sacredness of life at the center of our attention.

Media occupation means applying green cultural citizenship to media ecosystems. Every media portal offers the chance for individuals to make the choice of whether to perpetuate the system of conquest and destruction, or to become part of a greater evolution in which consciousness and connection build an Earth Democracy. Integral to this evolution is the reintegration of ecological intelligence into our daily practice, in particular how we use and make media. Media occupation and green cultural citizenship cannot be prescribed. There is no singular handbook or manual to direct its activities; the form of its practice comes through its doing and not through description or ideology. These particular practices emerge in the same way that dreaming merges creativity and learning to create new pathways of understanding.

The one thing we can be sure of is that the planet calls upon us to take action. Either we continue to reproduce the colonizers' planet-destroying delusions, or we restore the mediasphere's power balance by embracing the one advantage we have: our collective imagination. As such, we are too big to fail.

You are the ultimate mediator. As a medium of the planet's spirit, channel wisely.



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PART 2. PROTOTYPE FOR  
A NEW WAY OF LIVING

**Hope That We Can Change the World:**

*Russell Brand Visits Occupy Wall Street*

October 20, 2011

**A**mong the many triumphs of the Occupy Wall Street movement (a campaign so alive with zeitgeist that I feel here obligated to reference its proper title – #OccupyWallStreet) is the remarkable sense of occasion that accompanies the phenomenon. Since it began a month ago I've been subliminally transfixed. Then, like a baffled alien abductee, I unwittingly found myself first transplanted from Los Angeles to Manhattan then suddenly somnambu-jogging through Tribeca to Zuccotti Park, lured by a peculiar certainty that I simply had to be there. Leaving my apartment with an objective no grander than to go for a run I somehow landed amidst Zuccotti's tarpaulin sprawl in unforgivable leggings and a headband that would have had Alice reaching for a shard of cracked looking-glass.

There can be few cultures that would unthinkingly welcome into their fold a man dressed as I was in the macabre attire of a spandex scarecrow but the occupants of this pop-up civilization offered me first food, then shelter and then, incredibly, hope that we can change the world.

Of course, this may seem like cock-eyed optimism given that physically the site resembles a Kenyan slum, all slung together wigwams, a Toy-Town medicentre and a cardboard-igloo library, but whilst the visible structures may be flimsy they are held together by an invisible scaffold of ideals founded upon the thing the establishment fears most: the will of the people.

During my first accidental visit I chatted with an enthralling bunch, notably a beautiful group of teenagers, righteous and idealistic and interestingly mellow. I suppose they differ from the London teens that last month took a starkly contrasting course

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of action from the same impetus of frustration, in that while they may be similarly disenfranchised, they believe in the possibility of change.

Brianna, who is seventeen, pagan-pretty and dusky, attending college by day and occupying Wall Street by night like some heart-wrenching cross between Pocahontas and Batman, said that young people are entitled to an education without being bound to a lifetime of debt, whilst “Messiah” (there’s a lot of those names flying about; go with it; it’s a small price to pay for utopia) literally danced into the conversation and self-consciously, but touchingly, divided up and shared a stick of gum in a Sermon on the Mount brought to us by Juicy Fruit. You might think that given her name, that was the least she could do, but we’re talking about a sixteen-year-old girl here. If Fox News and the Daily Mail are to be believed I’m damn lucky she didn’t shiv me in the guts and film it on her phone.

Here in Zuccotti Square these young people clearly felt safe, purposeful, included, and behaved with charm, compassion and respect. Naturally, I was impressed but more agitated than ever by my jogging outfit. Really, it’s terrible; I mean, if we’re going to bring about systemic and meaningful social change, I want to be dressed for it.

The next day I returned to learn more in a very fetching scarf with my friend, Daniel Pinchbeck, the brilliant writer, radical and ludicrously, yet truthfully, titled “psychedelic shaman.”

One of the movement’s significant principles is that there are no appointed leaders. That said, there are more experienced and pragmatic inhabitants with whom Daniel and I chatted. We were given a tour of the site and in spite of the lashing rain and gales, which I, of course, regarded as the winds of change and cleansing rain, all we encountered were bonhomie and welcoming. Much more than I’d anticipated. Let’s face facts: one of the campaign’s few edicts is to provide the unrepresented 99% with a voice; had I, when I fitted into that demographic, chanced upon a touring celebrity I would have used that voice to tell him to fuck off, no matter how nice his scarf was.

Perhaps it is this ambience of inclusion, of acceptance and, indeed, of love that has brought #OccupyWallStreet such success. There is a remarkable absence of anger and

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resentment, which is why the movement resonates so deeply. Is this movement's implicit goal to re-engage our humanity? To reach beyond the political, the national and other illusory, temporary concepts and into our true, spiritual nature?

Justin, our volunteer tour guide, was smiling and patient, especially with my incessant questioning about where people go to the toilet; mostly in McDonald's it transpires – I'm glad Ronald and the Hamburglar at last have a chance to atone for their mucky past and eery jocundity. The sense of cohesion and civic duty in the square, which many call Liberty Square, its former title, was something I found appealing. In my country, England, and across the world there is amongst older people an irritation at the breakdown of traditional values, a grudge against apathetic and uncaring youth, atomized and Xbox-agog, indifferent to their culture, abstracted from their land.

Here, young men who would typically be drenched in spittle-flecked, "get a job" rage diligently join committees for sanitation, cooking and on-site security. A voluntary conscription to the cause of change. A nation founded on ideals of harmony and responsibility, on representing the whole, built here in a privately owned square. The ownership of the Square, explained David, a seasoned and visionary activist, is important, as the New York real estate group which represents the interests of the powerful institutions to whom this movement is a threat is now desperate to implement legislative change that will ensure the Occupation will be curtailed and not repeated. Clearly, this is no simple undertaking, as demonstrated when the suspicious attempts to vacate the Square for cleaning were abandoned. It is unlike Mayor Bloomberg to back down, but David outlined this movement is unlike anything this country has ever seen.

Other protestors took the time to educate me on the matters that had brought them to the Square. One purple-haired, perfect-skinned occupant told me beneath the billow and crack of the turbulent tarpaulin that in 2009 24% of American families with children were at some point too poor to buy food. Hunger: it doesn't get more basic than that. Another lad, black and bright-eyed with spectacles that I suspect-acle didn't have glass in them, informed me that 50 million Americans do not have health care. Perhaps that's why his glasses weren't finished.

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Of course these problems are not unique to America; they are the symptoms of a global epidemic, said a lady who was there speaking on behalf of the Mexican Zapatista movement using the already iconic “Human Mic” system in which staccato sentences are truncated and repeated by the crowd. A charming and inspiring instant cultural artifact.

A Scotsman there told me that he considered this to be America’s class awakening, that the 99% are a contemporary proletariat existing in opposition to an oligarchical 1%, a business class that has been steadily waging a clandestine class war through market deregulation and psychopathic economic exploitation. The surprisingly sanguine Scot told me that now this exploitation is reaching critical mass, too many families are affected, too many people are losing jobs, too many people across our planet cannot put food on their family’s table for this behavior to continue unopposed.

As I listened, Johnny, a wild-eyed wolfman drummer, continued the burgeoning rhythm: a slow, comforting, nocturnal heartbeat.

Later, leaving the McDonald’s lavvy (the staff were lovely and friendly and seemed to really like the protestors, recognizing perhaps whose interests were being represented) we exploited corporate facilities further by questioning Bill, a seasoned campaigner, in Dirty Ron’s boutique brand, Pret A Manger.

Bill has been an activist for many years, primarily with the early campaigns to bring awareness and justice to sufferers of HIV and AIDS. He said there were similarities with the #OccupyWallStreet movement in terms of the bureaucratic obstacles and official reluctance, but that this huge issue of social inequality, of unbearable economic disparity, has a veracity and velocity that was difficult even for those on the ground floor to anticipate.

Daniel Pinchbeck proposes that we are entering an era of profound change of consciousness. That capitalism has provided our civilization with the machinery of mass communication and with it potential global union.

It occurs that the relentless charge of vagueness leveled at this movement may be its great strength. The reason there is no candid agenda is because a spiritual shift this seismic is initially difficult to legislate.

I think another attractive distinction that #OccupyWallStreet has is that unlike a lot

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of pious “Lefty” movements, it’s a riot down there – I mean in the sense of “fun,” not the kind of riots I was arrested at as a boy. Why, I met a fellow in a skin-tight, stars-and-stripes gimp suit, all covered with scribbles and slogans. I’m not ashamed to admit that in the giddiness of the moment I quite forgot myself and unzipped his mouth and planted a kiss on his full lips. Only after did I ask his sexual orientation, which he described as “open-minded,” the perv.

As I was leaving, my outfit compromised once more by the addition of a freely given plastic poncho (it wasn’t really a poncho, it was a sack: I had to chew my way out of it to make a head-hole; even then I was hardly Clint Eastwood but I had to do something about my hair, plus my ascot was by now ruined), a bloke I spoke to, a former US government employee, a Doogie Howser Deep Throat, told me of the fear the movement had generated amongst politicians. #OccupyWallStreet has no recognizable funding, an anomaly the government does not know how to address. Typically, public protests are funded by non-profit organizations that are easy to hound, and behind them, foundations that would yield to political intimidation. But this amorphous, righteous, global collective is impossible to buy, too popular to repress and too peaceful to oppose militarily. Those in power, for the first time in two generations, are being confronted with something they don’t understand, and they are afraid.

As I walked home to my 1% apartment I felt incredibly hopeful; the benevolence and enlightenment of the Zuccotti tribe alleviated my feelings of hypocrisy, at least for now. Looking back through the media trucks and flash bulbs it was apparent that they have colonized more than the formerly anonymous square: they have colonized the international agenda. All about, the surveillance cameras observe, the police look on.

The Occupy Wall Street movement is already a success on the most basic of principles: its own simple objective as stated in its name has been met; Wall Street is occupied. At least Zuccotti Park, this once architecturally banal plaza framed by silently thundering corporate tombstones, is becoming both the graveyard of a deceased economic dogma and the cradle of the revolution.

America is awake and with it the American dream has awoken.

## Occupy Wall Street's Anarchist Roots

*by David Graeber*

*This article first appeared on Aljazeera.com*

New York, NY - Almost every time I'm interviewed by a mainstream journalist about Occupy Wall Street I get some variation of the same lecture:

“How are you going to get anywhere if you refuse to create a leadership structure or make a practical list of demands? And what's with all this anarchist nonsense – the consensus, the sparkly fingers? Don't you realize all this radical language is going to alienate people? You're never going to be able to reach regular, mainstream Americans with this sort of thing!”

If one were compiling a scrapbook of worst advice ever given, this sort of thing might well merit an honorable place. After all, since the financial crash of 2007, there have been dozens of attempts to kick-off a national movement against the depredations of the United States' financial elites taking the approach such journalists recommended. All failed. It was only on August 2, when a small group of anarchists and other anti-authoritarians showed up at a meeting called by one such group and effectively wooed everyone away from the planned march and rally to create a genuine democratic assembly, on basically anarchist principles, that the stage was set for a movement that Americans from Portland to Tuscaloosa were willing to embrace.

I should be clear here what I mean by “anarchist principles.” The easiest way to explain anarchism is to say that it is a political movement that aims to bring about a genuinely free society – that is, one where humans only enter those kinds of relations with one another that would not have to be enforced by the constant threat of violence. History has shown that vast inequalities of wealth, institutions like slavery, debt peonage or wage labor, can only exist if backed up by armies, prisons, and police. Anarchists wish to see human relations that would not have to be backed up by armies, prisons and police. Anarchism envisions a society based on equality and solidarity, which could exist solely on the free consent of participants.

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### **Anarchism versus Marxism**

Traditional Marxism, of course, aspired to the same ultimate goal but there was a key difference. Most Marxists insisted that it was necessary first to seize state power, and all the mechanisms of bureaucratic violence that come with it, and use it to transform society — to the point where, they argued, such mechanisms would, ultimately, become redundant and fade away. Even back in the 19th century, anarchists argued that this was a pipe dream. One cannot, they argued, create peace by training for war, equality by creating top-down chains of command, or, for that matter, human happiness by becoming grim, joyless revolutionaries who sacrifice all personal self-realization or self-fulfillment to the cause.

It's not just that the ends do not justify the means (though they don't), you will never achieve the ends at all unless the means are themselves a model for the world you wish to create. Hence the famous anarchist call to begin "building the new society in the shell of the old" with egalitarian experiments ranging from free schools to radical labor unions to rural communes.

Anarchism was also a revolutionary ideology, and its emphasis on individual conscience and individual initiative meant that during the first heyday of revolutionary anarchism between roughly 1875 and 1914, many took the fight directly to heads of state and capitalists with bombings and assassinations. Hence, the popular image of the anarchist bomb-thrower. It's worthy of note that anarchists were perhaps the first political movement to realize that terrorism, even if not directed at innocents, doesn't work. For nearly a century now, in fact, anarchism has been one of the very few political philosophies whose exponents never blow anyone up. (Indeed, the 20th-century political leader who drew most from the anarchist tradition was Mohandas K. Gandhi.)

Yet for the period of roughly 1914 to 1989, a period during which the world was continually either fighting or preparing for world wars, anarchism went into something of an eclipse for precisely that reason: To seem "realistic," in such violent times, a political movement had to be capable of organizing armies, navies and ballistic missile systems, and that was one thing at which Marxists could often excel. But everyone

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recognized that anarchists – rather to their credit – would never be able to pull it off. It was only after 1989, when the age of great war mobilizations seemed to have ended, that a global revolutionary movement based on anarchist principles – the global justice movement – promptly reappeared.

**How, then, did OWS embody anarchist principles?**

**It might be helpful to go over this point by point:**

1. The refusal to recognize the legitimacy of existing political institutions.

One reason for the much-discussed refusal to issue demands is because issuing demands means recognizing the legitimacy – or at least, the power – of those of whom the demands are made. Anarchists often note that this is the difference between protest and direct action: Protest, however militant, is an appeal to the authorities to behave differently; direct action, whether it's a matter of a community building a well or making salt in defiance of the law (Gandhi's example again), trying to shut down a meeting or occupy a factory, is a matter of acting as if the existing structure of power does not even exist. Direct action is, ultimately, the defiant insistence on acting as if one is already free.

2. The refusal to accept the legitimacy of the existing legal order.

The second principle, obviously, follows from the first. From the very beginning, when we first started holding planning meetings in Tompkins Square Park in New York, organizers knowingly ignored local ordinances that insisted that any gathering of more than 12 people in a public park is illegal without police permission – simply on the grounds that such laws should not exist. On the same grounds, of course, we chose to occupy a park, inspired by examples from the Middle East and southern Europe, on the grounds that, as the public, we should not need permission to occupy public space. This might have been a very minor form of civil disobedience but it was crucial that we began with a commitment to answer only to a moral order, not a legal one.

3. The refusal to create an internal hierarchy, but instead to create a form of consensus-based direct democracy.

From the very beginning, too, organizers made the audacious decision to operate not only by direct democracy, without leaders, but by consensus. The first decision



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ensured that there would be no formal leadership structure that could be co-opted or coerced; the second, that no majority could bend a minority to its will, but that all crucial decisions had to be made by general consent. American anarchists have long considered consensus process (a tradition that has emerged from a confluence of feminism, anarchism and spiritual traditions like the Quakers) crucial for the reason that it is the only form of decision-making that could operate without coercive enforcement – since if a majority does not have the means to compel a minority to obey its dictates, all decisions will, of necessity, have to be made by general consent.

#### 4. The embrace of prefigurative politics.

As a result, Zuccotti Park and all subsequent encampments became spaces of experiment with creating the institutions of a new society – not only democratic General Assemblies but kitchens, libraries, clinics, media centers and a host of other institutions, all operating on anarchist principles of mutual aid and self-organization – a genuine attempt to create the institutions of a new society in the shell of the old.

Why did it work? Why did it catch on? One reason is, clearly, because most Americans are far more willing to embrace radical ideas than anyone in the established media is willing to admit. The basic message – that the American political order is absolutely and irredeemably corrupt, that both parties have been bought and sold by the wealthiest 1 per cent of the population, and that if we are to live in any sort of genuinely democratic society, we're going to have to start from scratch – clearly struck a profound chord in the American psyche.

Perhaps this is not surprising: We are facing conditions that rival those of the 1930s, the main difference being that the media seems stubbornly willing to acknowledge it. It raises intriguing questions about the role of the media itself in American society. Radical critics usually assume the “corporate media,” as they call it, mainly exists to convince the public that existing institutions are healthy, legitimate and just. It is becoming increasingly apparent that they do not really see this is possible; rather, their role is simply to convince members of an increasingly angry public that no one else has come to the same conclusions they have. The result is an ideology that no one

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really believes, but most people at least suspect that everybody else does.

Nowhere is this disjunction between what ordinary Americans really think and what the media and political establishment tell them they think more clear than when we talk about democracy.

### **Democracy in America?**

According to the official version, of course, “democracy” is a system created by the Founding Fathers, based on checks and balances between president, congress and judiciary. In fact, nowhere in the Declaration of Independence or Constitution does it say anything about the US being a “democracy.” The authors of those documents, almost to a man, defined “democracy” as a matter of collective self-governance by popular assemblies, and as such they were dead-set against it.

Democracy meant the madness of crowds: bloody, tumultuous and untenable. “There was never a democracy that didn’t commit suicide,” wrote Adams. Hamilton justified the system of checks and balances by insisting that it was necessary to create a permanent body of the “rich and well-born” to check the “imprudence” of democracy, or even that limited form that would be allowed in the lower house of representatives.

The result was a republic – modeled not on Athens, but on Rome. It only came to be redefined as a “democracy” in the early 19th century because ordinary Americans had very different views, and persistently tended to vote – those who were allowed to vote – for candidates who called themselves “democrats.” But what did – and what do – ordinary Americans mean by the word? Did they really just mean a system where they get to weigh in on which politicians will run the government? It seems implausible. After all, most Americans loathe politicians and tend to be skeptical about the very idea of government. If they universally hold out “democracy” as their political ideal, it can only be because they still see it, however vaguely, as self-governance – as what the Founding Fathers tended to denounce as either “democracy,” or, as they sometimes also put it, “anarchy.”

If nothing else, this would help explain the enthusiasm with which they have

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embraced a movement based on directly democratic principles, despite the uniformly contemptuous dismissal of the United States' media and political class.

In fact, this is not the first time a movement based on fundamentally anarchist principles – direct action, direct democracy, a rejection of existing political institutions and attempt to create alternative ones – has cropped up in the US. The civil rights movement (at least its more radical branches), the anti-nuclear movement, and the global justice movement all took similar directions. Never, however, has one grown so startlingly quickly. But in part, this is because this time around, the organizers went straight for the central contradiction. They directly challenged the pretenses of the ruling elite that they are presiding over a democracy.

When it comes to their most basic political sensibilities, most Americans are deeply conflicted. Most combine a deep reverence for individual freedom with a near-worshipful identification with institutions like the army and police. Most combine an enthusiasm for markets with a hatred of capitalists. Most are simultaneously profoundly egalitarian and deeply racist. Few are actual anarchists; few even know what “anarchism” means; it's not clear how many, if they did learn, would ultimately wish to discard the state and capitalism entirely. Anarchism is much more than simply grassroots democracy: it ultimately aims to eliminate all social relations, from wage labor to patriarchy, that can only be maintained by the systematic threat of force.

But one thing overwhelming numbers of Americans do feel is that something is terribly wrong with their country, that its key institutions are controlled by an arrogant elite, that radical change of some kind is long since overdue. They're right. It's hard to imagine a political system so systematically corrupt – one where bribery, on every level, has not only been made legal, but soliciting and dispensing bribes has become the full-time occupation of every American politician. The outrage is appropriate. The problem is that up until September 17, the only side of the spectrum willing to propose radical solutions of any sort was the Right.

As the history of the past movements all make clear, nothing terrifies those running the US more than the danger of democracy breaking out. The immediate response

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to even a modest spark of democratically organized civil disobedience is a panicked combination of concessions and brutality. How else can one explain the recent national mobilization of thousands of riot cops, the beatings, chemical attacks, and mass arrests of citizens engaged in precisely the kind of democratic assemblies the Bill of Rights was designed to protect, and whose only crime – if any – was the violation of local camping regulations?

Our media pundits might insist that if average Americans ever realized the anarchist role in Occupy Wall Street, they would turn away in shock and horror; but our rulers seem, rather, to labor under a lingering fear that if any significant number of Americans do find out what anarchism really is, they might well decide that rulers of any sort are unnecessary.

## **Occupy Wall Street is not a Protest but a Prototype**

*by Douglas Rushkoff*

*October 26, 2011*

*This article first appeared on CNN.com*

The more familiar something looks, the less threatening it seems. This is why images of funny-looking college students marching up Broadway or shirtless boys banging on drums comprise the bulk of the imagery we see of the Occupy Wall Street movement. Stock brokers look on, police man the barricades, and what appears to be a traditional protest movement carries on another day, week, or month.

But “Occupy” is anything but a protest movement. That’s why it has been so hard for news agencies to express or even discern the “demands” of the growing legions of Occupy participants around the nation, and even the world. Just like pretty much everyone else on the planet, occupiers may want many things to happen and other things to stop, but the occupation is not about making demands. They don’t want anything from you, and there is nothing you can do to make them stop. That’s what makes Occupy so very scary and so very promising. It is not a protest, but a prototype for a new way of living.

Now don’t get me wrong. The Occupiers are not proposing a world in which we all live outside on pavement and sleep under tarps. Most of us do not have the courage, stamina, or fortitude to work as hard as these kids are working, anyway. (Yes, they work harder than pretty much anyone but a farmer or coal miner could understand.) The urban survival camps they are setting up around the world are a bit more like showpieces, congresses, and “beta” tests of ideas and behaviors the rest of may soon be implementing in our communities, and in our own ways.

The occupiers are actually forging a robust micro-society of working groups, each one developing new approaches - or reviving old approaches - to long running problems.

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In just one example, the General Assembly is a new, highly flexible approach to group discussion and consensus building. Unlike parliamentary rules that promote debate, difference, and decision, the General Assembly forges consensus by “stacking” ideas and objections much in the fashion that computer programmers “stack” features. The whole thing is orchestrated through simple hand gestures (think commodities exchange). Elements in the stack are prioritized, and everyone gets a chance to speak. Even after votes, exceptions and objections are incorporated as amendments.

This is just one reason why Occupiers seem incompatible with current ideas about policy demands or right vs. left. They are not interested in debate (or what Enlightenment philosophers called “dialectic”) but consensus. They are working to upgrade that binary, winner-takes-all, 13th Century political operating system. And like any software developer, they are learning to “release early and release often.”

Likewise, Occupiers have embraced the Internet access solutions of the Free Network Foundation, who have erected “Freedom Towers” at the occupy sites in New York, Austin and elsewhere through which people can access free, uncensored, authenticated WiFi. As this technology scales to our own communities, what happens to corporate Internet service providers is anyone’s guess.

The Occupiers have formed working groups to tackle a myriad of social and economic issues, and their many occupation sites serve as beta testers of the approaches they come up with. One group is developing a complementary currency for use, initially, within the network of Occupy communities. Its efficacy will be tested and strengthened by occupiers providing one another with goods and services before it is rolled out to the world at large. Another working group is pushing to have people withdraw their money from large corporate banks on November 5, and move it instead to local banks or cooperatively owned Credit Unions.

Whether or not we agree that anything at all in modern society needs to be changed, we must at least come to understand that the Occupiers are not just another political movement, nor are they simply lazy kids looking for an excuse not to work. Rather, they see the futility of attempting to use the tools of a competitive, winner-takes-all

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society for purposes that might better be served through the tools of mutual aid. This is not a game that someone wins, but rather a form of play that is successful the more people get to play, and the longer the game is kept going.

They will succeed to the extent that the various models they are prototyping out on the pavement trickle up to those of us working on solutions from the comfort of our heated homes and offices. For as we come to embrace or even consider options such as local production and commerce, credit unions, unfettered access to communications technology, consensus-based democracy, we become occupiers, ourselves.

### **EVOLVER Q and A: A few follow up questions with Douglas Rushkoff**

**Evolver:** You describe the movement as a “prototype for a new way of living.” What do you suppose are the best avenues to take what is learned from the testing phase of street demonstration into the ordinary world?

**Rushkoff:** I try not to predict or prescribe too much, or anything at all really, because what I think of as “best” may not be what is actually best. I would hate for someone to bring this to a General Assembly as evidence that “Rushkoff says we should be doing this or that.” That’s been the whole problem to begin with: top-down, one-size-fits-all prescriptions for challenges that are much too local and individual to be generalized.

There are many things being modeled on the streets – from alternative currencies and gift economies to conflict resolution and crowd control. In the end, these places are microcosms of the real world, so they end up with most of the same issues, writ small. And the more people solve problems in collaborative ways, the better they will get at applying these methodologies across the board.

**Evolver:** Going deeper with this notion- when Daniel and I visited Zuccotti throughout the fall, Occupy felt more like a festive community or living system than

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a politically oriented protest. Marxist idealogues were no longer the face of radicalism, but rather thrown within a complex interplay of dynamic perspectives. A feeling of inclusiveness, experimentation and play overwhelmed the park. While it may be important for the new ‘content’ of Occupy to feedback into the more static systems of bureaucracy that organize our cities and corporations, how do you suppose we might spread the process-oriented form of the movement, detached, as it were, from any notion of ideological association that is the weight of mainstream thinking?

**Rushkoff:** Again, I do not believe that we actively “spread” such notions as much as we engage differently with the people, groups, and institutions in our own lives. Oh, I know the deepfelt desire to help people, to bring them wisdom, to try to assist them in their ascent to greater levels of awareness.

But once we put ourselves in the role of active “spreader” of things, we are back in the role of the ideologue. The spreading takes precedence over the doing. Where the doing is itself the spreading – and in the most organic form possible.

**Evolver:** In the early stages, Occupy spread like wildfire. This suggests that a dormant potency was waiting to emerge, a powder keg if you will. What do you suspect was the straw that broke the camel’s back? Was it the recognition, through Obama’s inadequacy, that dualistic systems such as American party politics are a deficient mode of thinking and being in our time... or might it have been the ubiquity of smart-phones leveling the power of centralized media... or perhaps even the image of municipal violence when Manhattan cops maced obviously innocent young girls from Brooklyn that burst the collective delusion that we are somehow safe and living in the most advanced liberal democracy on the planet. Do you have any thoughts on who shot the Archduke this time around?

**Rushkoff:** A lot of things happened, I guess. The promise of Obama, followed up so quickly by his engagement with Goldman Sachs, was particularly disturbing. But so



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was the utopianism with which people approach the Obama myth. During the election cycle, I begged people not to treat Obama this way – as a brand or myth rather than a process. I said that we'd get disillusioned once we see that participation in a campaign is not the same thing as participation in a civic reality.

It was our fault for looking to Obama for answers, but it was also Obama's fault for not inviting the public into their own rehabilitation, instead of trying to get banks to lend America back to prosperity.

Otherwise, it really was Arab Spring. People got to see how it's done.

**Evolver:** In other work, you talk about new technologies providing an opportunity for a person to program their environment, but also suggest that failing to do so results in the technologies programming you. What so you suppose is the primary inhibition to getting on the right side of this equation? Is it financially motivated powers that benefit from consumer unconsciousness or simply the narcotic effects of the new technologies themselves?

**Rushkoff:** The main obstacle is laziness. People think learning how these things work is going to be hard. It's easier to thumb through Netflix or iTunes than to think and create. But digital means fingers. It's about production. This \*is\* a Marxist moment, in that people again have the tools and means for production and value creation. But it's also a Marxist moment in that the laziest path ends up the one we take. Unless the shit hits the fan and we have to take another course.

**An Open Letter to the Occupy Movement:  
Why We Need Agreements**

*by Starhawk*

*Alliance of Community Trainers is the training collective I work with. Here's our statement to the Occupy movement on questions of violence, nonviolence and strategy:*

**From the Alliance of Community Trainers, ACT**

The Occupy movement has had enormous successes in the short time since September when activists took over a square near Wall Street. It has attracted hundreds of thousands of active participants, spawned occupations in cities and towns all over North America, changed the national dialogue and garnered enormous public support. It's even, on occasion, gotten good press!

Now we are wrestling with the question that arises again and again in movements for social justice -- how to struggle. Do we embrace nonviolence, or a 'diversity of tactics?' If we are a nonviolent movement, how do we define nonviolence? Is breaking a window violent?

We write as a trainers' collective with decades of experience, from the anti-Vietnam protests of the sixties through the strictly nonviolent antinuclear blockades of the seventies, in feminist, environmental and anti-intervention movements and the global justice mobilizations of the late '90s and early '00s. We embrace many labels, including feminist, anti-racist, eco-feminist and anarchist. We have many times stood shoulder to shoulder with black blocs in the face of the riot cops, and we've been tear-gassed, stun-gunned, pepper sprayed, clubbed, and arrested.

While we've participated in many actions organized with a diversity of tactics, we do not believe that framework is workable for the Occupy Movement. Setting aside questions of morality or definitions of 'violence' and 'nonviolence' -- for no two people define 'violence' in the same way - we ask the question:

What framework can we organize in that will build on our strengths, allow us to

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grow, embrace a wide diversity of participants, and make a powerful impact on the world?

‘Diversity of tactics’ becomes an easy way to avoid wrestling with questions of strategy and accountability. It lets us off the hook from doing the hard work of debating our positions and coming to agreements about how we want to act together. It becomes a code for ‘anything goes,’ and makes it impossible for our movements to hold anyone accountable for their actions.

The Occupy movement includes people from a broad diversity of backgrounds, life experiences and political philosophies. Some of us want to reform the system and some of us want to tear it down and replace it with something better. Our one great point of agreement is our call for transparency and accountability. We stand against the corrupt institutions that broker power behind closed doors. We call to account the financial manipulators that have bilked billions out of the poor and the middle classes.

Just as we call for accountability and transparency, we ourselves must be accountable and transparent. Some tactics are incompatible with those goals, even if in other situations they might be useful, honorable or appropriate. We can’t be transparent behind masks. We can’t be accountable for actions we run away from. We can’t maintain the security culture necessary for planning and carrying out attacks on property and also maintain the openness that can continue to invite in a true diversity of new people. We can’t make alliances with groups from impacted communities, such as immigrants, if we can’t make agreements about what tactics we will employ in any given action.

The framework that might best serve the Occupy movement is one of strategic nonviolent direct action. Within that framework, Occupy groups would make clear agreements about which tactics to use for a given action. This frame is strategic -- it makes no moral judgments about whether or not violence is ever appropriate, it does not demand we commit ourselves to a lifetime of Gandhian pacifism, but it says, ‘This is how we agree to act together at this time.’ It is active, not passive. It seeks to create a dilemma for the opposition, and to dramatize the difference between our values and theirs.

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### **Strategic nonviolent direct action has powerful advantages:**

We make agreements about what types of action we will take, and hold one another accountable for keeping them. Making agreements is empowering. If I know what to expect in an action, I can make a choice about whether or not to participate. While we can never know nor control how the police will react, we can make choices about what types of action we stand behind personally and are willing to answer for. We don't place unwilling people in the position of being held responsible for acts they did not commit and do not support.

In the process of coming to agreements, we listen to each other's differing viewpoints. We don't avoid disagreements within our group, but learn to debate freely, passionately, and respectfully.

We organize openly, without fear, because we stand behind our actions. We may break laws in service to the higher laws of conscience. We don't seek punishment nor admit the right of the system to punish us, but we face the potential consequences for our actions with courage and pride.

Because we organize openly, we can invite new people into our movement and it can continue to grow. As soon as we institute a security culture in the midst of a mass movement, the movement begins to close in upon itself and to shrink.

Holding to a framework of nonviolent direct action does not make us 'safe.' We can't control what the police do and they need no direct provocation to attack us. But it does let us make clear decisions about what kinds of actions we put ourselves at risk for.

Nonviolent direct action creates dilemmas for the opposition, and clearly dramatizes the difference between the corrupt values of the system and the values we stand for. Their institutions enshrine greed while we give away food, offer shelter, treat each person with generosity. They silence dissent while we value every voice. They employ violence to maintain their system while we counter it with the sheer courage of our presence.

Lack of agreements privileges the young over the old, the loud voices over the soft, the fast over the slow, the able-bodied over those with disabilities, the citizen over the immigrant, white folks over people of color, those who can do damage and flee the

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scene over those who are left to face the consequences.

Lack of agreements and lack of accountability leaves us wide open to provocateurs and agents. Not everyone who wears a mask or breaks a window is a provocateur. Many people clearly believe that property damage is a strong way to challenge the system. And masks have an honorable history from the anti-fascist movement in Germany and the Zapatista movement in Mexico, who said “We wear our masks to be seen.”

But a mask and a lack of clear expectations create a perfect opening for those who do not have the best interests of the movement at heart, for agents and provocateurs who can never be held to account. As well, the fear of provocateurs itself sows suspicion and undercuts our ability to openly organize and grow.

A framework of strategic nonviolent direct action makes it easy to reject provocation. We know what we’ve agreed to—and anyone urging other courses of action can be reminded of those agreements or rejected.

We hold one another accountable not by force or control, ours or the systems, but by the power of our united opinion and our willingness to stand behind, speak for, and act to defend our agreements.

A framework of strategic nonviolent direct action agreements allows us to continue to invite in new people, and to let them make clear choices about what kinds of tactics and actions they are asked to support.

There’s plenty of room in this struggle for a diversity of movements and a diversity of organizing and actions. Some may choose strict Gandhian nonviolence, others may choose fight-back resistance. But for the Occupy movement, strategic nonviolent direct action is a framework that will allow us to grow in diversity and power.

*From the Alliance of Community Trainers, ACT*

*Starhawk*

*Lisa Fithian*

*Lauren Ross (or Juniper)*

PART 3. CONSCIOUSNESS EVOLVING

**Occupy the Future: A New Generation  
Reaches for the Emergency Brake**

*by Dave Oswald Mitchell*

*This article first appeared on rabble.ca.*

**W**hen students take to the streets of Paris or London today, it is no longer to bring about a better world, but to defend what they can of the world their parents took for granted. -- Dougal Hine, 'Remember the Future?', Dark Mountain II

If someone has compiled an Occupy Wall Street reading list, investigative journalist Matt Taibbi's book *Griftopia* is surely on it. Taibbi argues: "The financial leaders of America and their political servants have seemingly reached the cynical conclusion that our society is not worth saving and have taken on a new mission that involves not creating wealth for all, but simply absconding with whatever wealth remains in our hollowed-out economy."

Taibbi is clearly dabbling in rhetorical hyperbole here, as he so memorably did when he called Goldman Sachs "a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money," but the image of a kleptomaniac elite stripping the commons of everything that's not bolted to the floor because they've lost hope for the future has a certain truthiness to it. The past three years of massive bailouts, deepening debt and vicious public austerity make a lot more sense if Taibbi's right.

Capitalism has always been driven by naked self-interest, of course. Under neoliberalism, selfishness just has a lot more freedom to do its damage. So rather than seeking to change course to avert catastrophe, capitalists seek new ways to profit from the devastation by piling into the next speculative bubble, the safest hedge to hide behind, or the next commons to enclose and exploit. This high-class looting act is both self-

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fulfilling and self-defeating: slashing public revenues and looting public infrastructure only destroy the common resources needed to mitigate the damage, while deepening inequality makes everyone, including the one per cent, more vulnerable. It's the prisoners' dilemma on a planetary scale. Walter Benjamin's observation "perhaps revolutions are not the train ride, but the human race grabbing for the emergency brake" has never been more apt.

This is why the occupy movement is such a game changer: these predominantly young activists have seen the same storm clouds on the horizon that trouble the dreams of the one per cent, and have caught on to the heist they are perpetrating. The occupiers realize that for them, cynicism is a luxury they can't afford, and they won't surrender their future without a fight. With the cliff we're careening towards in full view, hundreds of thousands are now in the streets and collectively reaching for the emergency brake. As Rabble blogger Aalya Ahmad so pithily put it, "Let's *carpe fucking diem* on this one, eh? The way this world is going, many of us may not get another chance."

### The nature of the beast

For all that has been written about the financial crisis, there have been precious few efforts to connect it to its shadow: the planetary ecological crisis. Over the past two decades, stagnating growth, ecological limits and deregulated finance capital have meant that private wealth comes increasingly from, and public wealth is increasingly destroyed by, speculative bubbles which have rapidly accelerated the destruction of the natural world while displacing more stable but slower-growth investments in infrastructure and productive enterprise.

We are now witnessing the unraveling of the latest and greatest bubble: credit, increasingly known by its four-letter synonym debt. Debt, in essence, is a gamble that the future will be more prosperous than the present: we defer payment today because we assume we'll have more money tomorrow. This is not so different from how we've dealt with the climate crisis: future generations, we assume, will have the money to solve this problem, so we don't need to. In both cases, our gamble that future prosperity will manage to pay for past excess is starting to look like an incredibly stupid one.

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(No wonder so many banks -- both financial and fluvial -- are getting washed out.) Without economic growth, financial debt becomes unmanageable; without ecological regeneration, ecological debt becomes unmanageable.

After years of underinvestment in the real economy, the three per cent compound growth that capitalism requires has stalled. Finance capital chases itself in circles, creating nothing. Economies sink under the weight of rising commodity prices -- themselves a speculative bubble, though one rooted in real natural limits. The desperate and costly efforts of governments and central banks to restart growth by further priming the credit engine have created nothing but more debt. This is the endgame of finance capital in an age of ecological limits, dashing the dreams of a generation and threatening to bring down entire economies.

To stop this runaway train requires a recognition that the basic tenets of capitalism -- everything has a price, competition trumps cooperation, scarcity is the natural state of humanity, material gain is the only motivator, the only agent of change is the consumer -- are only true because enough people believe them to be true and act accordingly. There are other ways of relating, and through collective struggle, we can and must awaken to them. This is not utopian, but exceedingly practical: as philosopher Slavoj Žižek told the Wall Street occupiers, “The true dreamers are those who think that things can go on indefinitely the way they are.”

Our fear of future scarcity cannot be resolved within the terms of capitalism, because capitalism thrives on scarcity and the fear of scarcity. Outside of the logic of that system, there remains an abundance of the very things that nourish us: the desire to provide for ourselves and our loved ones, the courage to approach an uncertain future with creativity and generosity, the ingenuity to pool our resources to create together what we could never create alone.

These are the seeds of the other world that capitalism tells us is not possible. They are being sown in countless individual and collective acts each day: a community raises funds for an integrated health centre that had lost government support, a bus drivers' union refuses to transport arrested protesters, 50,000 artists gather in the desert to



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participate in a gift economy, a group of activists blockade the highway to the tar sands, another group prepares meals from discarded food and gives them away to anyone who's hungry. And so on. Everywhere you look you'll find capitalism, and everywhere you look you'll find the seeds of its successor.

### **'Our one demand'**

Occupy Wall Street, like the indignados of Spain who inspired their actions, has been criticized for the vagueness of its demands. But the occupiers and indignados have seen clearly what the politicians cannot: the situation is irresolvable within the frame provided, so the frame itself must be broken.

To limit their demands to minor reforms that leave the extractive structures of vampire capitalism intact would be a terrible mistake. Those occupying the public squares know that we must think both bigger and smaller. To demand anything, we must demand everything. Each eviction, bankruptcy or new mining development must be fought in such a way that a victory builds momentum rather than dissipating it. Each demand formulated and won must propel the movement towards the point that it need no longer address its demands to the illegitimate power structures it seeks to displace, because it has already displaced them.

We will hear the same dismissals from respectable corners when thousands descend on Bay Street in Toronto and the public squares of many other cities on Saturday, but this next wave of occupiers must also refuse to take the bait. The enigmatic "one demand" of Occupy Wall Street was always only that, to occupy Wall Street. Shut it down. No more business as usual. No more profit from human suffering and ecological destruction, no more speculation on food and energy, no more sacrificing sound public policy to the growth imperative.

With its own demands sidelined until the economic crisis is resolved, the environmental movement faces a choice: either continue to work within the frame provided, hoping against hope that capitalism can resolve the crisis it has caused and get back to greenwashing itself, or construct an anti-capitalist politics that places solidarity, mutual

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aid, and the defense and expansion of the commons at the centre of its labors. The economic crisis finds its true resolution in the ecological realm, and vice versa.

The left in general faces the same choice: either try to save capitalism from itself by putting a human face on its worst excesses, or engage in the difficult work of theorizing and building an ecologically sound, anti-capitalist alternative. Eco-socialists like Joel Kovel and John Bellamy Foster have perhaps gone the farthest in articulating the contours of such an alternative, which is prefigured in countless local, indigenous, and commons-based initiatives. Such initiatives must be defended, supported, connected and multiplied.

So, in sum: capitalism is in the process of cannibalizing itself by devouring public infrastructure, personal livelihoods and the planet. Faith that the system can save us from itself is falling rapidly. Liberals and conservatives alike have abandoned any semblance of pursuing what Noam Chomsky long ago called “the vision of a future just society,” and no viable alternative vision exists within the frame of respectable debate. This is a deep crisis of legitimacy, irresolvable within the current system. It’s also a moment of immense opportunity, if we have the courage to seize it. The emergency brake is just within our reach. Occupy the banks. Occupy the commons. Occupy the future.

## **Occupy Wall St: You Cannot Evict The Evolution**

*by Velcrow Ripper*

To the powers that be: sorry to hear you are so full of fear, that with violent disregard for democracy you felt compelled to bulldoze the heart of the people's park of parks into the ground. Last night's raid of Occupy Wall Street was a disgrace. Altogether lacking in grace. Claiming it was a health hazard is a ruse that's been in use since the eviction of Martin Luther King's version of Occupy, "Resurrection City," back in 1968. To be said with an incredulous New Yorker's accent: "And your tear gas isn't a health hazard?"

Just what is it you are so afraid of? Is it because you realize that your powers that be are in truth the powers that were? That the corporate pyramid scheme you are trying so desperately to prop up is reaching the end of its road? Sorry for the inconvenience, but we're changing the world. We are here to offer something new. Don't fear us, join us. Celebrate the arising of hope, possibility and community. We are discovering that true power is shared power.

We are creative, we are adaptive, we are resilience itself. You can cut this branch, but a thousand more will grow. All you are doing is building up our immune system. As a new Occupy protest song by the Hawaiian singer, Makana, goes, "We are the many, you are the few." And could you but realize it, you are Us too. We are the 100% and we're not going anywhere.

We are awakening from the false dream we have been relentlessly sold, and have relentlessly bought. It is, in fact, a nightmare paradigm of a commodified world, a lifeless world of objects, separation and scarcity. We are awakening to a new possibility, where the true abundance of this Earth is no longer hoarded. Where relationships are not transactions. Where your well being is my well being is the planet's well being. That old dog eat dog eat dog story is a myth. We are celebrating a new story that is as old as life. Collaboration is where it's at. Co-operation has created this incredible complex ecosystem called Earth that sustains and delights us. The competitive aspect of

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evolution is for the juvenile species. It's time we grew up. It's time we learned to share. From rainforests to coral reefs to human communities, we are inextricably intertwined in gorgeous webs of interdependence. This is what democracy looks like; planet to person, person to planet.

We are not afraid. This movement is here to stay, here to grow, here to evolve. I'm excited to see what new form it will take. Every time you try to bring this surprising, thriving movement to the ground, it grows ten fold. From the pepper spraying in the early days of Occupy to the bridge arrests of 700 people - thanks. You are radicalizing a new generation, and giving old radicals a brand new spark.

We have much to learn from the people's movements of Spain and Greece that emerged from the Arab Spring. They didn't stop at taking the square. As time went on, they moved into the neighborhoods, offering real solutions to immediate problems in real time, together, through local general assemblies and working groups. A sign left behind in one of the Spanish people's camps read, "we have not left - we have moved into your consciousness."

This movement is not bounded in space. It's as boundless as an open heart. It's the opposite of contraction into fear. The crisis of this moment in our movement, as camps continue to be evicted, will only speed our evolution into something even more powerful, more effective, more creative.

## **Occupy Gaia in 2012: Subtle Activism Meets Street Activism**

*by David Nicol*

In early October of 1939, one month after Germany invaded Poland, British esotericist Dion Fortune sent a letter to her network announcing the start of a magical project to support the war effort by opening a channel to allow spiritual influences to uplift the “group mind” of the nation. The project came to be known as the “Magical Battle of Britain.”

The letter contained instructions for a specific meditation practice that all members were asked to perform each Sunday from 12:15-12:30 p.m. and then again daily at any regular time of their choosing. A small group of experienced practitioners under Fortune’s guidance formed the focusing point for the meditation work, sitting in circle together each Sunday at Fortune’s home in London.

The meditations involved visualizing certain symbols believed to attract and focus spiritual forces that acted through them. Although the symbols were first created through the imagination, Fortune describes them “coming alive” early on in the group’s work, as though taking on independent forms that maintained themselves of their own accord and that developed organically over time. A set of symbols eventually emerged that were associated with key figures from the Arthurian tradition (King Arthur and Merlin) and from Christianity (Christ and Mary). It was understood that, through meditating on these symbols, the network helped to transmit to the collective British consciousness the archetypal ideals of chivalry and bravery associated with both Christianity and the myth of King Arthur, crucially strengthening the nation’s resolve during its hour of need. Because the myth created by the network was in deep harmony with the British national tradition, it was thought to have been especially accessible to the national mind. The theory was that individuals would pick up the ideas unconsciously and bring them to consciousness by thinking about them. Experts in various positions of influence would then give concrete expression to the ideals through action in the

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world. Indeed, Fortune claimed that the editorial pages of *The Times* -- widely regarded at the time as the mirror of the national mind -- came to give expression to the ideals of the work in a way that was “not only adequate but verbatim.

### **Subtle Activism**

The Magical Battle of Britain is a striking example of what I call “subtle activism” -- the use of spiritual or consciousness-based practices for collective (rather than individual) transformation. Subtle activism is a bridge between the inner world of spirituality and the outer world of activism (as normally conceived) that emphasizes the potential of spiritual practice to exert a subtle but crucial form of social influence. It arises from the recognition that there are many creative ways to support social change and that shifting collective consciousness lies at the heart of any successful campaign. History is replete with examples of victories by armies or social movements that were badly outmatched by their opponents in technology and size, yet which prevailed because they possessed the superior will. Subtle activism feeds the will of a social movement by making it more conscious of, and permeable to, profound evolutionary and spiritual currents that underlie it, adding deeper dimensions of meaning to the movement and inspiring greater levels of motivation and commitment among its participants. It works on the assumption that, beneath the appearance of separation, we are profoundly connected to each other at deeper levels of consciousness, and that the focused spiritual attention of even a relatively small group can subtly and positively affect the collective consciousness of an entire community, nation, or even species.(1) It is not a substitute for direct physical action, but it can play a vital role as part of a more integrative approach to social or planetary change.

While the “Magical Battle” example illustrates a western esoteric approach to subtle activism, it can be practiced in a variety of spiritual forms and traditions. A notable form that has emerged since Fortune’s time -- facilitated by the development of the Internet, the growing global interfaith movement, and the increasing hybridization of spiritual traditions -- is a global meditation event involving many thousands of people

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engaged in synchronized spiritual practice in different parts of the planet. In whatever way it is practiced, subtle activism can be seen as one of a growing number of creative spiritual responses to the challenges of our times that recognize the need to integrate the paths of inner and outer transformation. Looking at our present moment, how might we engage in the practice of subtle activism to support the Occupy Movement and the broader movement for global transformation it represents?

### **The Spiritual Dimension of the Occupy Movement**

From the beginning, there seems to have been a certain magic to the Occupy Movement. Whereas most interventions by progressive activists in recent decades failed to make hardly a dent in mainstream awareness, the Occupy Movement almost instantly struck gold. It was quickly recognized as something more than just another protest, a movement of potentially historic significance. Whether it was the brilliant marketing meme of “Occupy,” the simplicity of the “We are the 99%” message, the strategy of setting up encampments, or just the stars lining up right, it evidently tapped a red-hot vein in the collective psyche and inspired a widespread excitement that fundamental systemic change might actually be possible.

At the time of writing, with many encampment sites largely abandoned for the winter or having been shut down, the movement seems to be in a liminal phase, trying to ascertain its next move. Some are already writing eulogies, arguing that the movement has failed to channel its early momentum into a mission specific enough to gain political traction. Perhaps this is true. Yet the seeds of revolution planted in the fall will inevitably sprout forth again in new ways, and probably soon.

The injustices highlighted by the movement have not in any way been addressed and, with the events of the Arab Spring, the emergence of the Spanish and Latin American indignados, and the proliferation of Occupy sites world-wide, it is obvious that we have entered one of those rare historical periods in which the zeitgeist supports revolutionary action.

The bigger picture is that the issue of economic injustice targeted by the Occupy

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Movement is just one symptom of a multidimensional global crisis that is exerting enormous evolutionary pressure on humanity to make a fundamental shift. To acknowledge the multiple threats of climate change, peak oil, massive species extinction, calamitous loss of topsoil, overpopulation, and potential financial collapse is to recognize that the current form of our civilization is rapidly approaching its demise. In this context, the Occupy Movement represents an inevitable uprising of the life force on the planet to attempt to initiate a new way forward.

The transition we are called to make goes far beyond incremental policy changes within the current system, positive though such changes might be. We are called to re-imagine and re-create our world around fundamentally new organizing principles. The old world is essentially on life support in any case. Our choice really is to participate consciously in the birth of the new era, or to have it forcibly and painfully delivered to us.

At the heart of the transition lies a shift in consciousness from the modern trance of experiencing ourselves as somehow separate from each other, from nature, and from the cosmos to a mode of awareness in which we acknowledge and live the truth of our interdependence and interconnection. Ecologist and cultural historian Thomas Berry succinctly summarized this shift as one in which we will experience the universe as “a communion of subjects” rather than as “a collection of objects.” For human civilization truly to become a benign and sustainable presence on the planet, we will need not only to develop a global culture of cooperation, rather than competition, to solve the many planetary-scale challenges that affect all humans, but also to fundamentally transform our relations with the entire community of life on the planet.

Although the Occupy Movement has focused its attention on the inequities of the financial system, I believe that much of the excitement it initially generated was because, in the diversity of its participants and in the generality of its aims, it also represented a long awaited public stance for a fundamentally new and more inclusive world on every level. The General Assemblies and the practice of making decisions by consensus, for example, can be understood as an evolutionary experiment to create new, more participatory governance processes that could serve as models to better harness the



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collective wisdom of a society. The spiritual significance of the movement can thus be seen in the way it has created an opening in the socio-political domain through which the seeds of the new consciousness can enter.

Whether the new consciousness will actually take root and flower through the Occupy Movement is an open question. As noted, after the initial eruption of energy in the fall, the movement has entered a more introspective phase, an in-breath, to pause, gather energy, and reflect before making its next major outward push. And the movement does face many challenges: how to resolve internal conflicts about whether to adhere to non-violence as a strategy versus 'a diversity of tactics' that includes property damage or even physical violence; how to avoid becoming overly focused on disputes with police and local authorities regarding the encampments at the expense of highlighting the primary issue of economic injustice; how to embrace the complexity of protesting against a financial system we still use and depend upon.

Yet this period of inner reflection and dialogue represents an ideal time to channel energy into the movement to help realign it with the deeper impulses that provided it with its power and relevance in the first place. This is the work of subtle activism, accessible to almost anyone. Again, it is not a substitute for more obvious or direct forms of action -- which are necessary and to be encouraged -- but it represents a creative response that allows many people to become engaged who might otherwise remain passive. Out of the wide spectrum of actions that can be undertaken for social change, frontline engagement does not call to everyone (and of those called, not all can respond). Indeed, in relation to the Occupy Movement, for every person who has camped out in tents and marched in the rallies, there have surely been hundreds, if not thousands, or even millions who have sympathized with the protesters, yet who would not or could not join them in the streets. Through subtle activism, we can link together with all who share our sense of the underlying promise of the Occupy Movement (including those on the streets) and build a global field of awareness that holds a space for the highest possibilities to emerge from the movement. Here is a project that provides a way to do just that.

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### **Occupy Gaia**

Occupy Gaia is a subtle activism program convened by the Gaiafield Project (<http://gaiafield.net>) to help build a global field of support for the Occupy Movement. (2) It is one of a surprisingly large number of initiatives that have been developed to link the transformative power of spirituality to the Occupy Movement (other examples include meditation flash mobs, Sit for Change, Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Zen Peacemakers, and various interfaith coalitions). Occupy Gaia involves two free one-hour teleconferences/audio webcasts per month, in which participants engage in a simple subtle activism practice. After callers introduce themselves, the practice starts with a short guided meditation to connect participants to themselves, to others on the call, and to subtle and overt dimensions of the natural and spirit worlds. Then a period of silent meditation follows, usually about 20-25 minutes long, during which participants bring their inner attention to the Occupy Movement while remaining open for any guidance that might arise from the field. In the final stage of the practice, participants are invited to share any insights or experiences that came to them during the meditation. The call becomes like a multi-dimensional planetary oracle, with a field of deep collective wisdom about the current state of the movement emerging from the intersection of our human awareness, the inner and outer ecology of Gaia, and subtle dimensions of spirit. Personally I almost always experience the calls to be profoundly meaningful and am usually struck by how quickly an atmosphere of deep intimacy develops from participants sharing their inner worlds with each other.

This article is a call to action for all who resonate with an inner approach to collective transformation. To those who feel the call, we invite you to join us on the second Wednesday of each month, from 5.30-6.30pm Pacific time and/or on the fourth Friday of each month from 8.30-9.30am Pacific. For the call-in details, please visit <http://gaiafield.net>.

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### Notes

1. A growing body of scientific evidence supports this hypothesis. See the many well-documented studies by researchers associated with the Transcendental Meditation movement that show consistent, statistically-significant correlations between the presence of large TM groups and improvements in indicators of social harmony (such as crime rates) in nearby cities. (For a good summary of the research see TM researcher David Orme-Johnson's website: <http://www.truthabouttm.org> or Robert Oates's Permanent Peace: How to stop terrorism and war-now and forever.) Also note the strong evidence of non-local transmission of mental images between human minds in parapsychology research, such as the remote viewing studies undertaken by the US government at the Stanford Research Institute in the 1970's and 1980's and the 'ganzfeld' studies conducted by a variety of researchers since the 1970's (for a detailed discussion of this research see Dean Radin's The Conscious Universe).

2. The Gaiafield Project is a project of the Center for Subtle Activism, an action research center associated with the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco. Visit the Gaiafield Project on Facebook.

**We are the 100 Percent: A Metta-tation for the Masses**

*by Darrin Drda*

It's been a crazy couple of days in the San Francisco Bay Area. For a group of about 170 Occupy Oakland protestors camped near City Hall, the madness began at about 5:00 a.m. on Tuesday October 25th, when police in riot gear began tearing down tents and forcibly removing people from Frank Ogawa Plaza, issuing at least 70 arrests in the process. Later that day, hundreds of protestors reassembled and attempted to take the park back, only to be met by a large regional police force who fired volleys of tear gas, rubber bullets, beanbags and flash grenades. In what looked like an urban war zone, more arrests were made, several people were injured, and a young Iraq war veteran named Scott Olsen received a critical skull fracture.

The next night, partly in reaction to the overbearing force used by police, at least 1,000 people convened for a general assembly meeting, from which emerged a call for a daylong, citywide strike designed to shut down Oakland. Meanwhile, on the other side of the bay, a similar number of people amassed along the Embarcadero in response to reports that the Occupy San Francisco encampment would also be torn down. Apparently, the massive show of support prevented the eviction from happening, although a live feed that I tuned into just before midnight seemed to show police throwing sleeping bags, food, and other personal belongings into the back of a garbage truck.

Just to be clear, I received all this info in digital form, mostly via Facebook friends who braved the elements, surrendered sleep, and risked arrest and injury. But it wouldn't be quite accurate to say that I witnessed it all from the comfort of my home, since much of what I saw made me distinctly uncomfortable. Especially disturbing was the video footage of Oakland protestors clashing with police, culminating in the now-notorious clip of Olsen, lying injured on the pavement, being helped by comrades who are then dispersed with yet another deafening flash bomb. "WTF?!!" I thought, "Did that really just happen? What country is this? What kind of world is this?"

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My disbelief turned quickly to anger at the cops. “Why are they so violent, so ruthless, so uncaring, so inhuman?” Then came cynicism: “Some of them must be henchmen of the 1% - mercenaries paid to show protestors across the nation who’s the boss.” My mind fell right into the all-too-familiar dichotomy of “us vs. them,” of peaceful protestors against Blue Meanies and their evil overlords. But as I watched and researched a little longer, the grays became more apparent. Some of the protestors were clearly antagonizing the cops, and others were allegedly pelting them with rocks and bottles. This is not to say that the behavior of a few black-bloc types would justify an all-out assault against a largely peaceful crowd, but that the line in my mind between good and bad began to soften and eventually fade.

What slowly came into focus was a moving picture of human beings in pain. Some were in physical agony, half paralyzed by tear gas or projectiles. Some were filled with rage, at both the imbalance of power in the situation and the system that maintains it. Many were fearful of what harm might come to them, their friends, or their allies, and some were simply doing a job they had hoped would garner admiration or at least provide some security during a time of financial uncertainty, perhaps even thinking of their families back home, their own physical and emotional ailments, or the dim prospect of a decent night’s sleep.

The more that everyone’s humanity emerged, the more that compassion welled up inside me. Through moist eyes and a soft heart, I could clearly see how all the wounds of the past were being played out in the present. I well understood that despite our deepest desire, none of us are truly free, least of all those caught in the game of power and money. I saw anew how extreme wealth indicates a poverty of spirit, of real community, of love. I later shared these feelings and insights with my wife, a student of Indian mythology, religion and language, who reminded me of Lila, the divine play. We are the 100 percent, performing our unique roles in some cosmic, karmic drama whose outcome and purpose lie forever beyond our understanding. In other words, we’re all in this together.

Given how much is at stake -- not only our individual futures but also perhaps

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that of humanity at large, if not life as we know it -- do we really want to keep playing the tired old game of “us against them”? Can we not take to heart the words of Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who wrote “...the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart.” The Hindu master Ramana Maharshi put it even more starkly. When asked how one ought to treat others, he replied, “There are no others.”

Call me an idealist (many have, and I take it as a complement), but I want this movement to be different from all previous movements that have pitted the righteous against the depraved. I long for a true revolution of the heart, a love-olution in which there are no others. As we of the 99% stand against the injustices of a dysfunctional and dying system, let us stand for profound change by embodying the respect, tolerance, patience, empathy, kindness, and other qualities we find so lacking in our supposed adversaries. Indeed, we have a precious opportunity to teach these qualities by example, by being the change we want to see in the world. Remember, the whole world is watching.

**Love as the Force of Revolution:  
The Occupy Movement and Beyond**

*by Monica Mody*

Last year in May or June I realized that my political views were not quite what they used to be. It occurred to me that the words “Revolutions + justice” on my Facebook profile were no longer adequate to what I felt was my politics. It occurred to me that love was a crucial element of politics, and I proceeded to add “Love” before “revolutions + justice”. It felt like a radical act.

**Love + Revolutions + Justice**

On the night of October 25, in Oakland, I lit tealights and placed them on our front and back porch stairs with two of my housemates. It was Diwali already in India, and I was supposed to have risen early the next morning to join my mother and brother over skype as they performed the diwali havan. In all the years I have been living away, it was the first time we would be celebrating together, via technology, a festival that holds special meaning for my family. It was also the infamous night when Occupy Oakland was tear-gassed.

Earlier that morning, between 2am and 5am, the police had raided the camp at the Frank Ogawa/Oscar Grant Plaza. The Occupy Oakland text alert had sent out message after message as the raid proceeded; I had read them upon waking up and this is how I had received them: Heavy police presence. Raid is imminent. / Raid is confirmed. / Please wake up friends and come help defend! / Please come! / Please come! / Please come! Like sharp blows, like pleas ignored, like help not given. There had been over a hundred arrests before dawn.

By evening, people were back on the streets. A short while after lighting the tealights, we started hearing the helicopters. Text messages reported that the police were using tear gas upon the people. For a while, we tried to ignore the sound of the

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helicopters and the texts. I changed my clothes and got into bed, but could not sleep. It seemed as though the pain in my heart was growing and growing.

What can one do during a revolution? What can one do to help a revolution along? My housemates and I decided to go to the plaza with a bag full of rags and vinegar, which we naïvely hoped to hand in to the protestors so they could protect their faces. Of course, when we got there, we did not find a discrete group of “protestors” we could just hand over these things to. Instead, we found hundreds of people milling about, standing about, while the police in riot-gear barricaded the plaza from all directions. And I found two persons sitting across the barricades and quietly looking at the police. This felt so powerful that I joined them, and once I was sitting cross-legged, it seemed natural to begin meditating. When I opened my eyes, at least a dozen other people had joined us in the meditation.

The story of the night does not end here. At some point, there was a commotion in the crowd. One of the protestors had hurled abuses at the police, and he was quietly but firmly asked by the others to back out. Someone with a megaphone suggested individuals come forward and assure the police that most of the people present stood for non-violence. It suddenly struck me that I wanted to go up to the megaphone and say “I love you” to the police. I went, quavering, wondering if people would think this was inane and, as I took the horn in my hand, there was a light explosion a few feet to my right—firecracker thrown by a protestor? flash grenade thrown by a cop?—followed almost immediately by a tear gas canister fired at the crowd.

Even as I was running, even as I found my housemates and we found a safe spot and quickly doused rags with vinegar and put them against our burning eyes and nose, I found myself thinking, “Wow, that was quite a coincidence.” Not then, but a while later, after the bravehearts, the largehearts, of Oakland were back in front of the barricades speaking about non-violence, I did go up to the megaphone and say “I love you” to the police and to all the people present. And people around me said to me, “Thank you for saying that.”



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### **Collective Unconscious as Intelligence**

How do we read the synchronicity between my attempted speaking of love and the firing of tear gas that momentarily blocked it? Was it a challenge the universe was throwing in my direction: could I, even in the face of violence, hold love in my heart? If so, I have reasons to suspect that this “I” that I speak of is not just a personal “I”. My “I love you” came before I knew that love had become a meme in the Occupy movement, that meditations were a part of the regular schedule of the Occupy Oakland camp, that inter-meditational sits were being organized as a way of being present at Occupy San Francisco by several mindfulness-based communities coming together. My “I love you” came, I believe, from a collective mind.

C.G. Jung conceptualized the collective unconscious, a part of the psyche that exists beyond the level of the personal: “The collective unconscious is common to all; it is the foundation of what the ancients called the ‘sympathy of all things.’” (1963, p. 161). It is this deep, transpersonal part of our psyche that “[c]arries and triggers the great collective events of the time; works on and sends out enormous collective fantasies and primordial images; it’s where history prepares itself” (Chalquist, n.d.).

Elsewhere, Jung wrote, “It is more like an atmosphere in which we live than something that is found in us.... in the cases of the so-called synchronicity it proves to be a universal substrate present in the environment rather than a psychological premise” (cited in Aziz, 1990, p. 176). Thus, meaningful acausal events are one way in which the collective unconscious—which Jung in this letter written in his later years equates with the *unus mundus* or “one world”—communicates to the conscious mind.

Is it possible that the abovementioned synchronistic event that I was a participant in signaled not just my personal struggle but also a struggle happening at the macro-cosmic level, and though in this instant it was communicated to me individually, the incident was part of a larger feedback loop that is going on between the collective and the personal unconscious?

As a paradigm based on fear gives way to a paradigm based on love, the world is witnessing crises at several fronts: ecological; access to food; human rights of immi-

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grants and the poor; financial. Even as the global Occupy movement is a response to these crises—preceded within the last year by protest movements and demonstrations in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Greece, England, Israel, and Chile, to name a few countries—it is also home to some of the schisms at work in the world. The ethical crisis of the times is reflected in the heated debates within the Occupy movement about the efficacy of violent versus non-violent methods of protest.

For instance, in an evocative essay on a radical Christian blog, the author “confessed” her erstwhile unwavering commitment to nonviolence. Calling out race, poverty, social class, lack of access to education, and constant threat of violence and humiliation, Torbett (2011) wrote,

...part of what I’ve come to realize—and this is hard—is that so long as these social and economic systems exist, they do violence in my name and for my benefit, and so there is no way for me to claim to be nonviolent without perpetrating hypocrisy.

If I really want to practice nonviolence, I have to get in the way of the machine that is brutalizing living beings all over the planet. I have to lay my own life down, actively. There is this chilling point in each of the gospels at which Jesus turns and begins to walk steadily toward Jerusalem, the center of his culture’s violence, knowing full well what awaited him there.

The debates are only intensifying. Grof (1985), reviewing Thomas Kuhn’s paradigm theory, says the acceptance of a new paradigm is seldom easy.

The discontent with the existing paradigm grows and is expressed more and more explicitly. Scientists are willing to take recourse to philosophy and debate over fundamental assumptions—a situation that is inconceivable during periods of normal research. Before and during scientific revolutions there are also deep debates over legitimate methods, problems, and standards. (p. 7)

That moment at Occupy Oakland, when I consciously chose to return love to the world—or, in the language of Marianne Williamson and *A Course in Miracles*

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(1992, p. 71), worked a miracle—was my “Aha!” experience that, according to Kuhn, characterizes the shift to the new paradigm (Grof, 1985, p. 10). The emerging paradigm of love itself is creating such Aha! moments for its scientists, its seekers, its practitioners, but we also have to choose to love for the paradigm to emerge. “When love reaches a critical mass, when enough people become miracle-minded, the world will experience a radical shift” (Williamson, 1992, p. 71).

### **Morphic Fields**

Going beyond the Jungian idea of the collective unconscious as human collective memory, Rupert Sheldrake’s morphic fields suggest that each species in the universe has a collective memory (1987a). “Fields, especially morphic fields are invisible, nonmaterial, organizing principles that do most of the things that souls were believed to do” (Sheldrake, 1988a). “They are localized within and around the systems they organize” (Sheldrake, 1988b). Even when particular organized systems cease to exist, the morphic fields organizing them in a sense do not, because they can reappear in other times and places given the right circumstances. When they do reappear, “they contain within themselves a memory of their previous physical existences,” through a process Sheldrake calls “morphic resonance” (1988b). Further, “[t]he memory within the morphic fields is cumulative, and that is why all sorts of things become increasingly habitual through repetition” (1988b).

According to Sheldrake, societies and social groups too are coordinated by morphic fields (1987b). These fields correspond to the system’s mind, its intelligence, its consciousness. Minds are not, for Sheldrake, private, portable entities located in the brain but extend, as fields do:

...in both space and time with other people’s minds, and with the group mind or cultural mind by way of their connection to the collective unconscious. Insofar as we tune into archetypal fields or patterns which other people have had, which other social groups have had, and which our own social group has had in the past, our minds are much broader than the “things” inside our brains. They extend out

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into the past and into social groupings to which we are linked, either by ancestry or by cultural transmissions. Thus, our minds are extended in time, and I believe they are also extended in space. (1988a)

### **The Collective Field of Love**

The Occupy movement is the most recent example of how, as a species and as a society, the collective mind we have been developing over the last several centuries—the morphic field that surrounds us—is beginning to center on love-consciousness. The energetic vibration of thousands of years of spiritual, heart-centered practices by members of the human species and society, including those carried out in the face of brutality and repression, adding up in the collective memory and vibration, are beginning to influence current spiritual, heart-centered patterns of activity. Transformative activities are spontaneously spreading among contemporary generations. Mystical, metaphysical, and spiritual teachings, principles, and methods are becoming more easily available, learned, accepted, and known.

When the first thought the Dalai Lama has upon waking is a prayer of love and compassion (Salzberg, 1985, p. 84); when Buddhist monks in Burma chant the Metta Sutta against the military in Burma; when Mother Teresa does “small things with love” (Kornfield, 1993, p. 14); when Mohandas Gandhi says love is the key (Williamson, 2011); when Pancho, Adelaja, and their friends meditate and hold the space for peace and love knowing that the police is about to raid their camp; when “we” who are the 99 percent consciously facilitate the healing of the 100 percent (Loftis, 2011): each experience is synthesized by the collective mind of the human species and society—the psyche—the whole; influencing the healing and transformation of the whole, and also the healing and transformation of every individual embedded in psyche. For these activities, “which [seek] to indirectly affect events in the social and political realm through exerting a non-local influence on the collective mindset of a community, nation, or even the whole human species,” David Nicol (2008) has used the term “subtle activism”.

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### **Radical Love**

We are just beginning to learn that, and how, love can function as an instrument of radical critique: through releasing the energy of acceptance; through recasting hierarchies as participatory communities formed by individuating members; through its visionary creativity; through its willingness to take concrete actions; through allowing itself to be embodied in different forms.

Vimala Thakar (1984) discussed this brilliantly a few years ago: “The force of love is the force of total revolution. It is the unreleased force, unknown and unexplored as a dynamic for change.” Williamson has also championed love as a transformative force: “Love taken seriously is a radical outlook, a major orientation from the psychological orientation that rules the world. It is threatening not because it is a small idea, but because it is so huge” (1992, p. 17).

The Occupy movement, in taking love seriously, is attempting to forge new dimensions to our cultural and political definitions of reality. Here are some statements that have emerged from people involved in the movement:

Ultimately, we want to create a money system, and an economy, that is the ally not the enemy of love. We don't want to forever fight the money power to create good in the world; we want to change the money power so that we don't need to fight it. (Eisenstein, 2011)

I think the ultimate purpose of Occupy Wall Street, or the great archetype it taps into, is the revolution of love. (Eisenstein, 2011)

We are the early adopters of a (r)evolution of values. We are the evidence that this system is broken. (Ramos Stierle, 2010)

We're fighting for a society in which everyone is important.” (Solnit, 2011)

...turning love into a broad-scale social force....seeking to change the world from the inside-out. (Williamson, 2011)

Moreover, love is being ritualized within the Occupy movement through symbolic actions such as creating human installations that look like the heart-symbol from above, and dancing flash-mobs. “Occupy Love” and “Occupy Compassion” are today memetic entities as well as actual groups that exist on the interweb and sometimes in physical

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spaces. As Sheldrake has pointed out, “rituals enable the current participants to reconnect with their ancestors (in some sense) through morphic resonance” (1987b). On the one hand, this kind of communing strengthens the collective field; on the other hand it signals an eruption, a surfacing, of the collective mind in group contexts. Rituals also provide a language to express the transpersonal experience of love that is really, “not of the realm of ‘experiencer-perceiver’ and ‘experienced-perceived.’ Rather, it is a noumenal, unitive space within which the phenomenal world and intentional consciousness manifest” (Valle, 1989, p. 259). Such experiences can be awe-inducing, sometimes almost to an unbearable extent (see Sovatsky, 2004), making the presence of a language to express and contain them vital. The instinctive quality of such expressions points to the archetypal dimensions of nonlocal, transpersonal love.

### **In Conclusion**

As love becomes a part of our collective learning, sacred and societal transformation are beginning to go hand in hand. The ideals of direct democracy, freedom, and a society based on principles of human solidarity are beginning to get articulated alongside a love-consciousness. We are beginning to realize that, in fact, there is no “alongside” or “outside”: rather, the nature of love is ontological, and that love is the true nature of psyche or our collective morphic field. As Tillich put it, “Love is being in actuality and love is the moving power of life” (1960, p. 25). Or Kornfield: “Our love is the source of all energy to create and connect” (1993, p. 17). Or Salzberg: “Love can go anywhere. Nothing can obstruct it” (1995, p. 23). Or Williamson: “Love is energy, an infinite continuum. Your mind extends into mine and into everyone else’s. It doesn’t stay enclosed within your body” (1992, p. 29).

We could say the collective mind is rediscovering and relearning its true nature. Or we could say we are. We are growing into a critical mass. We are remembering that we are not separate from each other. We are remembering our interconnected beingness and our interconnected ways of being. The organizing models of our society are just beginning to reflect this love-consciousness. Soon, love and compassion could become viable alternatives and then, we could say, ours is a paradigm of love.

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## PART 4. EXPERIMENTAL SOLUTIONS

**Where Next for Occupy?***by Charles Eisenstein*

Occupy has awakened a potent energy that had been lying dormant. It has made activists of people of a new generation, and brought renewed hope to veterans of past movements. Unlike earlier protest movements, it has not objected to any specific policy, such as segregation or the Vietnam War. It is a protest against a condition of society, highlighted by the maldistribution of wealth and debt whose symbol is Wall Street, that goes deeper than anything the Occupiers can easily name. As we say, no demand is big enough.

Having been awakened though, this energy needs to find appropriate avenues of expression. So far, the movement has eschewed involvement in electoral politics, nor has it adopted any specific social cause. An outside observer might think that its purpose were to fight for the right to camp in urban centers. While the right of free assembly and the reclamation of public space are important issues, the vast groundswell of public indignation that OWS has tapped into is not primarily about those. If the movement turns inward and becomes about the encampments themselves, it will alienate the majority of the public and become an historical footnote.

The occupations have served an important purpose, but the time has come to direct the energy they have awakened toward tangible goals. I say this with all due respect for the wariness that has held the movement back from political involvement so far. Whatever these tangible goals are, they must not be too narrow. No one in the movement is going to get very excited about any proposal on the mainstream political radar: the payroll tax cut, for instance, or Obama's health care plan. For too long, the left has mortgaged its soul to a dispirited, defeated version of the practical. Society and the planet are in such a strait that the old practical isn't enough. We need to think big -- and then be practical.

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Let us name, then, the underlying object of the protests' discontent. It is a society that fundamentally isn't working, a system that coerces us into ruining the planet and exploiting its people, denying us life and liberty if we refuse to comply, and sometimes withholding them even if we do comply. It is a society where life is a little bleaker, gaudier, uglier, less authentic, and less hopeful with each passing year. It is a system of winners and losers, in which even the winners are less happy than a typical Ladakhi peasant or Amazonian hunter-gatherer. It is a society of pretense, image, and illusion. It is a society where more human energy goes to war than to art. Most tellingly, it is a society where it is normal to hate Monday. The discontent behind the protests comes from the conviction, "We can do better than this!"

Despite the rhetoric of the 99% and the 1%, I find in talking to influential people in the movement a deep understanding that no one is merely a victim of the system I have described. We are also its perpetuators and its enforcers; it is woven into our habits, our psychology, our very being. That is why the movement has striven to embody a different way of relating and being through consensus-based decision-making, open space technologies, gift-based allocation of resources, non-violent communication, and so forth. We want to change the psychic and interpersonal substructure of the system we live in. That is why this movement has united the long-sundered currents of spiritual practice and political activism. And that is also why we say: The revolution is love.

While such a statement might trigger the inner cynic who associates love with a mere emotional state, akin to the spiritual escapism of the last three decades, I think it actually offers an organizing principle around which meaningful social and political action can coalesce. Let me offer some examples of Occupy-themed actions that might flow from a vision of a revolution of love.

1. Occupy the civic realm. All over the country, budget-strapped municipalities are eliminating city services, closing libraries, laying off police, and so on. As they retreat from these important civic and social functions, they leave a vacuum that we can occupy. Occupiers could, for instance, "occupy the library" -- not as a symbolic protest that inconveniences librarians and patrons, but to take over a library that is being closed,

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turning it into a “people’s library” akin to those on the encampments. It wouldn’t be a protest at all, it would be a public service. In unsafe neighborhoods where police services have been cut back (or where residents don’t trust the police to begin with), activists could “occupy the night” by providing escorts and a friendly, protective neighborhood presence of big dudes with vests and walkie-talkies, perhaps military veterans, former police, and ex-gang members, trained in mediation, who do some of the work that we would like police to do. Where city parks are closing or falling into dereliction, a new kind of “occupy the park” could take over their maintenance.

Remember that, after all, the motivating spirit of the protests was never to jostle for a place in the world-wrecking machine. The protesters want more than “jobs” -- they want to be useful people and do meaningful work. There is no shortage of meaningful work to be done, so let us do it! Maybe we have relied for too long on an inefficient state apparatus to serve functions that we can take over from the grass roots. Here also is an opportunity, through direct donations and also by working with existing foundations and non-profits, to create an alternative system of funding civic work.

2. Occupy the economy. While economists define “the economy” as all things exchanged for money, a broader definition might include all the ways that human beings share the products of nature and human labor. Today, there are vast areas of economic potential that languish unrealized: we have, on the one hand, enormous needs to be met, and on the other vast amounts of surplus labor. There is, in other words, a gap across which gift and needs cannot come together. There are many ways we can “occupy” this gap. For example, our food system produces vast quantities of unsellable but perfectly edible food -- dented cans, expired packages, and the waste that ends up in supermarket dumpsters (or, increasingly, trash compactors). It is unsellable through normal channels, but it could be distributed in non-monetary ways: free supermarkets in needy neighborhoods, soup kitchens, food trucks. Where supermarkets are reluctant to give it away and undermine their own markets, or where bureaucrats offer resistance, the tactics of occupation can sweep away these obstacles.

Another way to mediate the gap between gifts and needs is through complementary

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currency systems. Occupy, with its nationwide network of activists, is uniquely positioned to create one. I think a time-based system (like Ithica Hours) would be ideal. That way, the people carrying out all of the functions I've described could be "paid" in hours-based credits, which they could exchange for many of the needs that otherwise are met with dollars. Reclaimed food, for example, as described above, could be sold according to how much time it took to procure it. While such a currency wouldn't completely free people from the dollar, it would provide some independence and an alternate means to support people doing socially useful work.

3. Occupy abandoned buildings. It is ironic that politicians celebrate every rise in new housing starts when there are millions of abandoned buildings around the country. These could be reclaimed, renovated, and occupied. The obstacle to doing so is certainly not a lack of willing labor, but rather a maze of property rights, tax liabilities, and building codes. Here again, the tactics of Occupation can create the necessary changes. I am not talking about squatting (nor am I excluding it); after a building has been made usable, it can be deeded over to someone in need of a home, who can repay the hours spent renovating it in kind. It could also become a halfway house, community center, homeless shelter, free warehouse, or business, depending on what kind of building it is.

Political radicals have traditionally disparaged charitable causes on a number of grounds, for example that they mitigate the most obvious effects of the capitalist system and, therefore, enable its perpetuation, or that they give us the illusion that we are doing something about problems that actually grow from much deeper roots. However, I think the kind of work I've been describing is also good strategy. It is easy for a mayor to justify police force to clear away protestors who are only proclaiming a message. It is much harder, from a PR standpoint, to justify removing people who are using illegal tactics to feed the hungry, care for the sick, and house the homeless.

These acts of love inspire popular support and defuse the charges of hypocrisy and laziness so often leveled at the Occupiers. Furthermore, they provide a vehicle for the acceptance of proposals on the macroeconomic and political level by making it clear that we are not in it for ourselves; that these proposals are in the same spirit of service

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as our actions are. Moreover, social service activism also demonstrates that a different kind of economy is possible by providing a living example of human beings working hard for motivations of service rather than economic necessity, greed, or self-interest. What would you trust: a political proposal announced by Mother Theresa, or the same proposal articulated by Donald Trump? Ok, that's a fanciful scenario, but the fact remains that any message is more powerful when the messenger walks the walk.

While American politics has earned criticism for being too focused on personalities over issues, in an age of PR, spin, and hype, we are well-advised to base judgments on actions rather than words. A sustained political movement needs strong ties to non-political social institutions. In Egypt, for instance, it was the Muslim Brotherhood, with decades of social welfare work in the cities, that came out on top in the recent elections.

4. Occupy politics. Of course, thousands of organizations exist already that are devoted to social justice and political reform. What makes Occupy different from many of them is its emphasis, encoded in the very name, on physical action. "Raising consciousness" and "educating the public" are valid goals, but they are only a first step, not an end. Walking around with a new opinion doesn't change the world by itself. The social and economic actions I have described all involve hands, not only minds; actions, not only words. The same can happen in the political arena, despite the fact that it is mostly a realm of symbol: laws, votes, policies, regulations, budgets are made of words and numbers. The citizen is mostly an abstraction for the politician, whose face time is mostly with lobbyists, staffers, and other members of the political culture. It is time to bring politicians back to reality. The Tea Party developed one tactic, showing up in droves to heckle conservative politicians who didn't uphold its views. Occupiers can do the same with progressive-leaning politicians. It can also invite them to speak at events, solicit political promises, and then hold them to those promises through the threat of occupying their offices, campaign headquarters, and so on. Many politicians are eager to tap into anti-Wall Street fervor while striving to do as little as possible, assured that as long as they are the lesser of two evils, the votes of liberal Americans are secure. They should be made to speak unambiguously and to follow through on what they say.

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I hope it is clear that I am not saying that Occupy should become a political movement in the narrow sense of electoral politics. I am saying, rather, that it should inspire a political movement that shares its ideals and draws upon its tactics. The goals and basic motivating spirit of OWS are bigger than the conventional political discourse can contain. To turn toward politics as we know it would be to make the movement less. It should be first and foremost a social and a spiritual movement, with a political wing.

5. Occupy the environment. Imagine what would happen if the same energy and dedication that went into occupying Zucotti Park were devoted to occupying fracking sites, mountaintop removal operations, gas pipeline projects, and other venues of environmental pillage. The 99% that has been left out includes the vast majority of life on earth, human and otherwise. Julia Butterfly Hill saved a stand of redwoods by occupying a single tree. What could her example achieve, multiplied by ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a million?

I'm sure readers in the movement who like acting in the material realm, not just the realm of words, can think of many other Occupations to reclaim, to protect, and to serve humanity and the planet. Already, the movement has awakened in hundreds of thousands of people a willingness to act, sustained by the solidarity of others who can affirm that no, none of us are crazy for bearing witness to the reigning insanity. The next step is not to demand a more beautiful world - it is to create one.

## **The World's Ominous Reckoning**

*by Thomas H. Greco*

In a recent Washington Post article titled 'Europe's Ominous Reckoning,' economist Robert Samuelson correctly argued that "Ireland's economic crisis is ... not about Ireland." What he seems to not recognize is that "Europe's ominous reckoning" is not about Europe.

The reckoning will be global because the money and banking regime is global -- and deeply flawed.

Discussions about possible solutions to the debt crisis tend to degenerate into ideological bickering because ideologies provides an inadequate framework in which to understand the nature of the problem and discover real effective solutions. Fiscal conservatives want to cut social spending so as to avoid raising taxes on the rich and privileged class. Political liberals have largely caved in to the same interests because they think that supporting the privileged class's agenda is their only hope of gaining power. They will pay lip service to a social agenda and throw a few crumbs to the masses in an attempt to get elected, but they will ultimately advance the same elitist agenda, as have Presidents Clinton and Obama. Progressives argue that budgets can be balanced by cutting the military budget and raising taxes on the rich, but they remain impotent because political power has been so thoroughly centralized that popular progressive agendas have not a prayer of being implemented. Even if they were, they would simply make matters worse because under the present money and banking regime, a balanced government budget is not possible. How can the debate move beyond ideologies, and common ground be found?

Samuelson, like almost all conventionally trained economists, blames the woes of Ireland, and every other country, on failures in policy. He says, "Most European economies suffer from the ill effects of some combination of easy money, unsustainable social spending and big budget deficits," but he fails to address the deeper questions of why? Why has money been easy? Why is social spending unsustainable? Why have budget deficits been too big?

It is not only a problem of European economies, it is a problem for virtually all national

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economies. As Samuelson points out, even the most prosperous countries have accumulated enormous debts. The governments of Germany and France, for example, have, respectively, gross debts of 76 percent and 86 percent of GDP (GDP is a measure of total economic output). The debt of the United States government is projected to exceed 100% of GDP within the next couple of years. And this picture does not even include the debts of lower levels of government -- states, counties, and municipalities -- or all of the private sector debt that burdens companies and individuals.

If the world has become so prosperous and productive, why all this debt, and why does it continue to grow ever more rapidly?

It is not a matter of policy, i.e., how we operate a flawed system. The problem is structural and systemic. The system is designed to create debt, and ever more of it. Like a pernicious cancer, debt is a parasite that is killing us, and in the end a parasite will die along with its host. How much of our well-being shall we sacrifice to keep feeding this cancer? Are we willing to starve ourselves and our children, to endure cuts in spending for education and public services, to sacrifice our hard-won freedoms, in order to sustain a system that despoils the earth, destroys the social fabric, and creates ever greater economic inequities?

A few have been calling for “debt forgiveness,” a remedy analogous to cancer surgery. That may be a good start, but even that does not go far enough. We can excise the cancer, but if we do not recognize and eliminate its fundamental cause it will simply grow back. We can restart the game of Monopoly, but the outcome of the next round will be very much like that of the previous round unless we change the rules -- or choose to play a different game.

The fact is, there is a debt imperative that is built into the global system of money and banking, and debt is eating us alive. As I wrote in my first book more than 20 years ago, our money system, based as it is on banks’ lending money into circulation at compound interest, requires debt to grow with the passage of time. Virtually all of the money today is created when banks make “loans.” The compounding of interest on these loans means that debt must grow as time goes on, not slowly, but at an accelerating rate. Ever greater amounts of money must be borrowed into circulation for this system to continue. When the



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private sector debt can no longer be expanded, government assumes the role of “borrower of last resort.” That is why government budget deficits have become chronic and continue to grow. In the latest cycle of Bubble and Bust, governments are rescuing the banks by taking “toxic” debt off their hands and giving them government bonds in return. In this way, the system can be sustained a little bit longer, but at costs that have yet to be tallied.

The current global predicament is the late-stage symptom of this fundamental flaw. Every political currency collectivizes credit. It is our credit that supports each national currency. We have allowed the banks to control our credit and we pay them interest for the “privilege” of accessing some of it as bank “loans.”

What must be done? The answer is simple, but few have been willing to hear it: interest must be eliminated from the money system to put an end to the growth imperative. To modern economists, such a proposition is heresy, foolish even, unthinkable! Interest to them is an essential inducement to save and invest and a necessary means of regulating credit and the economy. Nonsense, I say, a gross error and delusion fostered by incessant propaganda, media hype, and financial mumbo-jumbo. In an economy that is free from inflation, preservation of one’s capital is sufficient motivation for saving, and return on productive investments can be had in the form of ownership shares (so called equity investment) instead of interest on debt. Such equity investments share both the rewards and the risks inherent in a productive enterprise, making the relationship between the user of funds and the provider of funds more harmonious and fair. As for regulating credit, we don’t need interest to do that; we can merely decide to withhold or offer credit, to whom, for what purpose, and in what amounts.

We need to learn to play a different game. We need to organize an entirely new structure of money, banking, and finance, one that is interest-free, decentralized, and controlled, not by banks or central governments, but by businesses and individuals that associate and organize themselves into cashless trading networks. This is a way to reclaim “the credit commons” from monopoly control and create healthy community economies.

In brief, any group of traders can organize to allocate their own collective credit amongst themselves, interest-free. This is merely an extension of the common business

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practice of selling on open account -- “I’ll ship you the goods now and you can pay me later,” except it is organized, not on a bilateral basis, but within a community of many buyers and sellers. Done on a large enough scale that includes a sufficiently broad range of goods and services spanning all levels of the supply chain from retail, to wholesale, to manufacturing, to basic commodities, such systems can avoid the dysfunctions inherent in conventional money and banking and open the way to more harmonious and mutually beneficial trading relationships that enable the emergence of sustainable economies and promote the common good.

This approach is no pie-in-the-sky pipedream, it is proven and well established. Known as mutual credit clearing, it is a process that is used by scores of commercial “barter” companies around the world to provide cashless trading for their business members. In this process, the things you sell pay for the things you buy without using money as an intermediate exchange medium. It’s as simple as that. According to the International Reciprocal Trade Association (IRTA), a major trade association for the industry, “IRTA Member companies using the “Modern Trade and Barter” process, made it possible for over 400,000 companies World Wide to utilize their excess business capacities and underperforming assets, to earn an estimated \$12 billion dollars in previously lost and wasted revenues.”

Perhaps the best example of a credit clearing exchange that has been successful over a long period of time is the WIR Economic Circle Cooperative. Founded in Switzerland as a self-help organization in 1934 in the midst of the Great Depression, WIR provided a means for its business members to trade with one another despite the shortage of official money in circulation. Over three quarters of a century, in good time and bad, WIR has continued to thrive. Its more than 60,000 members throughout Switzerland trade about \$2 billion worth of goods and services annually.

Yes, it is possible to transcend the dysfunctional money and banking system and to take back our power from bankers and politicians who use it to abuse and exploit us. We do it, not by petitioning politicians who are already bought and paid for by an ever more powerful elite group, but by using the power that is already ours to use the resources we have to support each other’s productivity and to give credit where credit is due.

## **Empowered Public Wisdom Rising from the Grassroots**

*by Tom Atlee*

*The following is excerpted from “Empowered Public Wisdom: A Practical Vision of Citizen-Led Politics,” available on August 7, 2012 through Evolver Editions.*

Although we can generate public wisdom with the proven processes I’ve described so far, most of them are expensive and laborious to organize. The adoption of public wisdom processes would go much further and faster if they were designed to require less effort and money (for professional services, travel, and accommodations for participants, etc.). So I’ve wondered: How can we generate public wisdom right at the grassroots, with people creating that capacity in their communities whenever they want to? Can we get at least 80 percent of the quality of a professionally organized face-to-face citizen deliberative council with far less expense and effort—especially with smart use of the internet?

There’s also the question of empowerment. We can already generate public wisdom, but it usually has little power to shape public affairs. Even the deliberations in the Citizens’ Initiative Review and the National Initiative for Democracy involve judging proposals from interest groups rather than from We the People. How do we set things up so that the public—especially the deliberative public—is the empowered source of wise public policy?

Finally, there is the prospect of enhancing the wisdom-generating capacity of citizen deliberative councils by using crowdsourcing dynamics to help deliberators take into account more of the facts, arguments, and options that should be taken into account for broad, long-term benefit. How can we use the broad public to inform and enlighten the mini-publics convened to deliberate on behalf of the common good?

Is there some form of enhanced, empowered, wise democracy we could start creating right now at the grassroots? Surely, the answer is yes. There are already many innovations developed or being developed that we can use as prototypes or resources

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to further this vision.

It would help to have some serious funding to develop further innovations that are sufficiently potent and self-organizing, but if they were designed well, they would not require much funding to keep them going. Like many popular online knowledge creation and social networking sites, good design would allow public deliberation and empowerment sites to function well with minimal management. But developing and launching them would require some pretty intense collaboration among activists, funders, process experts, programmers, and webpage designers. This is especially true because anything that would actually do the job needs to be made as potent and resilient as possible before being broadly released, so that it can show up and spread rapidly before efforts to stop or co-opt it can get rolling.

So that's the challenge explored in this chapter: Let us clarify what it would take to create an inexpensive, self-organizing, self-replicating, and viral deliberative and political power-generating system usable by any community, state, province, country, or other population (a) to find its collective judgment or wisdom about any public situation or issue—in other words, to generate an informed, trustworthy, inclusive voice and will of We the People; and (b) to implement that informed public wisdom and will through direct individual and community action and/or pressure on existing institutions and power-holders and/or future institutions designed for such implementation.

To achieve this we will need to combine the wisdom-generating power of high-quality face-to-face dialogue and deliberation with the distributed intelligence, communication, and networking power of the internet and social media. And we'll need to tap the collective intelligence resources of educational institutions, libraries, community groups, and other parts of society, as needed, to serve the above purpose.

Among the system functions for which we need design solutions are the following:

- A. How will issues for deliberation be chosen?
- B. How will these issues be framed?
- C. How will deliberative mini-publics be selected?

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- D. How will citizen deliberators be brought into this work?
- E. What sorts of deliberative process should be used?
- F. How will information and expertise about issues be provided for deliberators?
- G. How will the deliberators make their final decisions?
- H. Who else should be involved in this?
- I. How can participants' interest and engagement be sustained?
- J. How can the results of these deliberations impact public policy and public life?
- K. What sources of organizing energy and structure could support this?
- L. What other resources are available to help us think about and organize this?

So let's explore each one of these for deeper understanding and possible approaches. I'll undertake this exploration as if it were planning for the creation of a grassroots People's Voice network whose purpose was "to help ordinary people think and work together to create high quality public policies that would make a difference in the things that matter to them—and then to gather public and official support to get those policies passed and implemented."

I offer this exploration primarily as a stimulus—to provoke not only appreciations and critiques, but also additional approaches and possibilities. I hope it invokes an evolving community of change agents interested in pursuing these questions further both online and in multiday face-to-face conversations.

Some of the sections below offer links to existing resources or approaches to the challenge addressed in that section. Some of those approaches have interesting explanatory videos which I haven't linked, but which you can search for and enjoy on YouTube.

### **A. How Will Issues for Deliberation Be Chosen?**

We need a broadly participatory system whereby issues can be raised, discussed,

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and prioritized. This would most likely be a site where anyone can post issues and also rate issues that others have posted—perhaps using priority voting like instant runoff voting. It should allow issues to be displayed in a number of ways—for example, most popular, most recent, random—and it should allow searches for particular issues. It would support both individual and group postings—perhaps indicating ones prioritized by transpartisan groups or CDCs because they are likeliest to have the broadest appeal. There would also be a way to engage experts who are monitoring emerging issues about which the public has little awareness (such as technological developments or obscure repercussions of current events) that could have a profound effect on millions of people, and to include such issues in the emerging roster of priorities for deliberation.

### **B. How Will These Issues Be Framed?**

In contrast with framing an issue for debate—using metaphors, images and stories to get people to think the way you want them to—framing an issue for deliberation involves developing impartial (or multiple-viewpoint) briefing materials that fairly explain at least the mainstream perspectives and proposals on that issue. We want to give deliberators an understanding of the nature of the controversy without limiting their options. A good framing provides extensive information and guidance to help deliberators explore the values underlying various positions, the arguments for and against each position, the evidence for those arguments, the consequences and tradeoffs implied by each choice, the organizations and thought leaders who support various options, and so forth. Ideally a deliberator can see how a reasonable person could support each of the different approaches. Ideally, as well, each issue or proposed approach would have a place where other issues or proposals related to it or impacted by it could be cross-referenced, to take other relevant deliberations into account and to help mitigate against solutions that create problems elsewhere.

Most issue framings present three to five alternative approaches—since providing only two options would invite polarization and more than five could seem overwhelming. However, a good framing often invites participants to move beyond the

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mainstream perspectives—to cocreate their own alternatives that integrate the best of the various perspectives, or that step totally outside the limitations implicit in all the given perspectives.

In a sense, the goal with issue framing—and the closely related field of argument mapping—is to provide a holistic, inclusive, multiple viewpoint story of the issue. What’s going on with this issue? Why are so many people so concerned about it—and fighting over it? The deliberators are implicitly invited to step into the story to create a new chapter in which they—as the wise, sovereign We the People—resolve most of the dramatic tension present in the battles raging in their polarized realm.

Some organizations create briefing booklets and framings for current issues, which can be used by grassroots deliberation groups. But the system we design should also be able to generate its own framings as needed. So ideally, on our imaginary People’s Voice website, there would be evolving cocreated, collectively evaluated framings.

Although ideally it would enable anyone to participate, there definitely should be participant ratings and exclusions as necessary, as the issues being framed are usually controversial and the site could be readily abused if it were fully open and unmoderated. Since the purpose of framing is to fairly show all perspectives, there is no excuse for abuse; partisans should just put their views in the proper place in the framing. And since the framings should be of use to the average citizen, it should be designed to remain as simple and accessible as possible even if more complex work on it is going on in the background.

As much as I like the idea of open participation, it may prove necessary to restrict some functions to serious, fully answerable participants. There may be levels of increasingly responsible participation and privilege with users moving up the ranks according to the quantity and quality of their participation. People might also join groups or teams who share answerability for responsible participation and collectively qualify for higher editing privileges. The teamwork of such a group could also increase the value of their edits and add a social dimension that might help recruitment and sustained engagement. (I explore this further in notes about “Civic Circles” below in sections D, H, and I.)

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Alternatively, organizers could seek particular participants with time or expertise to make special contributions. One source of such framing work might be undergraduates or graduate students who do issue framings as projects or theses. Graduate theses tend to end up hidden away on a shelf somewhere. Framing significant social issues would allow them to actually make a difference with their research right now. There could also be a way for diverse advocacy groups, partisans, and experts to cocreate framings in a moderated collaborative online workspace or wiki, perhaps working in teams, and then transfer their work to the People's Voice site.

In some traditional citizen deliberative councils, an oversight group is usually gathered together, made up of five to ten partisan experts from across the political spectrum on the issue, who together ensure that the materials presented to deliberators are impartial. The work of such oversight groups could be woven into an ongoing process of online framing issues for deliberation.

It would be very valuable to enable users to rate arguments, evidence, references, comments, and authorities for (a) veracity (factual truth), (b) importance (usefulness and relevance), (c) accessibility (easy to understand), and (d) popularity (user approval or liking). Where appropriate, the default presentation of these items should be based on an algorithm that integrates all four ratings, while at the same time allowing the user to view a presentation prioritized by any of these rating categories they are interested in at the moment.

One exception: users would not rate the different approaches (i.e., policy proposals) for dealing with the issue, but would rather prioritize them, choosing no more than perhaps a third of the approaches listed. The aggregated priorities of all viewers would determine which three to five approaches were displayed on the main framing page for that issue. However, when the user first views an issue's framing page and that issue currently has more than five approaches associated with it, they are presented in random order, to prevent past popularity from unduly shaping future popularity. After the user votes, they will then see the top five vote-getters so far. They can change their vote at any time, with the algorithm recalculating accordingly. On subsequent views,



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they will see both the top five and, on another part of the page, any new proposals that have been developed since their last visit.

Users should be able to rate each other according to the (a) usefulness and (b) dependability of their contributions. They would also have a rating reflecting their level of participation as tracked by the site. We could also have a transpartisan rating indicating “this person helped me see the other side better.”

Such ratings help users evaluate the mass of data and help them identify power users and abusers.

Systems for choosing, framing, and deliberating issues should be set up to allow citizens and public officials to explore local, county, state (or provincial), and national issues. Vertical and horizontal interactivity among them should be enabled. For example, different counties could share work on waste disposal issues (horizontal), and many state-level issue framings about education could be aggregated for addressing educational policy at the national level (vertical).

I envision all this included in a Deliberapedia—a crowdsourced wiki-like database of issue framings that could weave together any and all of these resources—as well as the considerable energies of competing advocates in the debate about each issue—into an informational commons of significant value to every citizen and group in the country, whether or not they are part of the broader People’s Voice initiative I’m proposing here.

Finally, here are some existing approaches to issue framing (mostly based on some form of argument mapping):

- TruthMapping—[truthmapping.com](http://truthmapping.com)
- Multicentric Issue-Based Information System (MctIBIS)—[ncdd.org/rc/item/6091](http://ncdd.org/rc/item/6091)
- MIT’s Deliberatorium—[cci.mit.edu/klein/deliberatorium.html](http://cci.mit.edu/klein/deliberatorium.html)
- DebateGraph—[debategraph.org](http://debategraph.org)
- Debatepedia—[debatepedia.org](http://debatepedia.org)
- bCisiveOnline—[bcisiveonline.com](http://bcisiveonline.com)

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- IPA—Issue/Position/Argument—a discussion of underlying principles of issue framing software—[dkosopedia.com/wiki/Issue/position/argument](http://dkosopedia.com/wiki/Issue/position/argument) and [dkosopedia.com/wiki/Open\\_politics\\_argument](http://dkosopedia.com/wiki/Open_politics_argument)

### **C. How Will Deliberative Mini-Publics Be Selected?**

One of the advantages of face-to-face citizen deliberative councils is that they have rigorous ways of choosing participants to collectively represent the diversity of the community and be resistant to outside manipulation. This gives them a potential legitimacy that is similar to, but more refined than, the selection of trial juries, which also seeks to convene a cross section of the community. However, in citizen deliberative councils, the selection usually involves establishing a pool of randomly selected citizens (from voter rolls, driver's licenses, phone listings, or other broad samplings of citizens) from which people can be selected with demographics that reflect their community's demographics (a "stratified sample"), usually by phone interviews and/or mailed surveys. This is done separately for each council convened. This level of rigor is one of the major expenses of convening such citizen councils, so we need alternatives.

Let us imagine that in any local community where our new-style deliberative network is going to be established, People's Voice organizers recruit at least six hundred to one thousand people (or 10 percent of the community, whichever is less) into a pool of citizens who agree to be on call for deliberative service to the community. One strategy is to recruit diverse interest groups, community groups, and religious congregations to recruit their participants for the pool, suggesting that will help their perspectives be represented in future deliberations. Another strategy is to hold open public conversations on issues and to recruit the participants into the pool. Those recruited would enter their individual demographic information on the site (which would be secure, only visible to themselves and the algorithm that helps build the pool and select the deliberative mini-publics).

When an issue comes up for deliberation, the algorithm selects four to ten groups of five to ten deliberators who collectively represent the diverse demographics of the

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community. When they are done with their deliberation, they go back into the pool, awaiting another random selection. Any initial investment in organizing them is ameliorated by the fact that the same pool can be reused in different combinations for different deliberations. Organizers would maintain and increase the size and diversity of the pool, regularly recruiting from groups, organizations, and activities that involve demographic types they seek for the pool.

### **D. How Will Citizen Deliberators Be Brought into This Work?**

If people are going to take away time from their busy lives, they must be given a compelling reason for doing so—something of real value to them: a vision, a thrill, a promise. It needs to be clear what they'll need to do and what they'll get in return.

People are motivated by different reasons and many of these reasons can be called into play in recruiting citizen deliberators. Usually the top motivation is the chance to have a real impact on their community or country. This is the holy grail of citizen engagement. A number of things can inspire confidence that the deliberator will have an impact, such as if the deliberation has a direct line to public officials (especially if those officials are committed to do something specific with the results, or publicly announce why they can't or won't); if the deliberators' findings and recommendations are going to be presented at a community meeting or published in the news media or on a much-used website; or if a grassroots group has pledged to push the results onto the public agenda.

Related to impact is mission—the chance to participate in an effort to make their community or country better, to revitalize democracy and citizenship; to bring some common sense to government decision making; to realize the dream of Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson; to take responsibility together for self-governance; and to show that it's possible to do the impossible (i.e., for very different people to work together on behalf of their community and children). Different messages would inspire different groups and individuals.

Moving down to the less dramatic motivators, we find simply the opportunity to

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make a contribution. This is the quiet cousin of impact and mission. People contribute merely by participating, and will be appreciated for that. There are also the rewards of achievement and pride, of actually getting something done that so seldom gets done in public discourse or even the halls of power. Related to this are the social rewards of a positive group experience: getting to know one's neighbors and people different from oneself; having stimulating, respectful conversations; and working together for a good shared goal. Many people value the simple chance to speak up and be heard and understood. Others can be drawn in by a chance to be recognized—to be mentioned in an announcement, get status in an online community, or be given some award or certificate. Financial payment or other reward is also a potent motivator—if resources can be gathered from a sponsor (including local businesses or nonprofits) or from crowdsourced fundraising.

One of the least researched and potentially most compelling reasons to participate in online deliberation is that it is fun. The challenge here is to make online (and phone) deliberation truly engaging for diverse ordinary people who are not geeks, wonks, activists, or academics. Deliberation has a reputation for being serious and intellectual—in short, weighty—and many of the existing online resources that support it are dry, heady, and unappealing. So to what extent can deliberation be an exciting game? That's a question well worth exploring with Jane McGonigal ([janemcgonigal.com](http://janemcgonigal.com)) and other social change gamers (or should I say social game changers?).

Another strategy is to have people in small groups from the start. It may be that putting the people in the selection pool into small Civic Circles to socialize and to work on Deliberapedia or other community services together would engage them and habituate them to the online environment while they wait to be picked for a deliberation.

We should only promise what we can deliver. In terms of the impact of an upcoming deliberation, written or recorded promises from officials or groups who will produce the impact are best. In terms of the personal experience as a deliberator, stories and testimonies from previous participants—such as videos from a postdeliberation public meeting or media interview—are one of the most potent ways to interest new prospects.

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Stories of people who have participated in similar efforts elsewhere can also help.

Finally, some people will need actual support to participate as a deliberator. In face-to-face engagement we face the logistics of food, travel, wheelchair ramps, and other issues. Even in online and phone deliberation support may sometimes be needed. Someone may need help with child care, with using a computer, with understanding the briefing materials, or with translation services. The more diverse the group membership, the more likely someone will need support. To a certain degree, group members can support each other, which helps the group bond. But there is also room here for students, congregations, civic groups, and others to lend a hand to help someone serve their community in this way.

Ideally, with networks of Civic Circles, people who are engaged in other aspects of the deliberative enterprise would naturally be available to help. See sections H and I below for more exploration of ways to motivate and engage people.

### **E. What Sorts of Deliberative Process Should Be Used?**

Most traditional citizen deliberative councils involve twelve to twenty-four deliberators meeting in concentrated dialogue over two to eight days (distributed over one to ten or more weeks, depending on the method) facilitated by professionals. Since the kind of grassroots system we're envisioning here probably cannot match the deliberative quality of this arrangement, we can seek to augment it in various ways using the distributed intelligence potential of the internet.

Online interactions would, of course, include at least chats, forums, and collaborative document work. If at all possible, it would be best to have deliberative groups engage in face-to-face dialogue as well—perhaps at least at the beginning (to get to know each other) and end of deliberations (to publicly announce their results), if not repeatedly. Face-to-face meetings could happen in living rooms, libraries, community halls, schools, churches or temples, or even restaurants.

We might add conference calls to these in-person and online interactions—especially with software that displays participant photos and facilitates taking turns, as

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well as videoconferencing and Maestro conferencing (which enables breakout group conversations and “hand-raising”—[maestroconference.com](http://maestroconference.com)).

By having several groups of five to ten people (somewhat like study circles or Planning Cells) deliberating simultaneously on the same issue (often face-to-face within the group, but each group relatively independent of the others), we can compare outcomes from the various groups. Similarity of outcomes would be powerful evidence that the will of We the People is fairly clear. However, where the outcomes from different groups differ significantly, we can use that diversity to enrich the deliberations by mixing and matching people from the different groups into new groups to seek higher common ground. This can be done in the spirit of World Café, with people moving to different groups in some preordained or random order, where they would continue their deliberations. After several rounds of such shifting, if a coherent outcome has not appeared (e.g., on a collective wiki page), members of all the groups could meet together for a day-long plenary deliberation, using the best facilitation available. Dynamic Facilitation would be ideal for this.

Volunteer facilitators/moderators for small-group deliberations can be readily trained by keeping the guidelines simple. Here is an example:

- **Focus:** Encourage clarity about the task, mission, or agenda for the group’s work together (in general or in a particular meeting or workspace). Help the group attend to the topic or work at hand and not stray too far. Explicitly record in a “parking lot” any topics to handle later or elsewhere.
- **Speaking/Listening:** In face-to-face meetings, encourage those who talk a lot to say less, and those who don’t talk much to speak up. Taking turns helps everyone have a fair chance to speak. Reflecting what you heard someone say helps him or her feel heard.
- **Civility:** Get group agreement to be civil and respectful—unless you are confident you can help the group use heated conflict creatively.
- **Differences:** Use differences to clarify areas of agreement and disagreement,

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arguments for and against, and so forth. When people try to convince or contradict each other, clarify their concerns and encourage group effort to creatively satisfy those concerns to increase the level of agreement among them and the wisdom of their results. Know that it's okay to simply leave the differences clarified. Never push for mere agreement that leaves bad feelings and a lot of unhandled concerns.

- **Records:** Help the group record what needs to be remembered or shared.

Basic facilitation manuals are available online. Training and support—as well as live workshops—for managing conference calls can be made part of the system as well. It may even be useful to organize volunteer facilitators into local or conference call facilitator support groups that meet regularly to share experiences and tips. Many cities have professional facilitators who could help with facilitation and training, contactable through their professional networks like the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation or grassroots networks like the Occupy Together movement. Experimentation will help us improve facilitation and process techniques for our particular purpose, as well as improving local grassroots facilitation capacity generally.

Some citizen deliberative councils simplify decision making by telling deliberators to choose among (or rate) preordained options, departing from these only where they have broad agreement to do so. While this can reduce the collective intelligence of the outcome, it may be appropriate where fixed alternatives are built in (such as the evaluation of a ballot initiative) or where available facilitators are not up to the challenge of evoking cocreativity out of diversity and conflict.

Finally, there is the question of using online dialogue or collaboration spaces (e.g., wikis, GoogleDocs, or specially created software), either to help the several deliberative groups collaborate (when appropriate) or to allow participation by or commentary from the larger community, at various stages of the process. People familiar with public uses of such online resources can help suggest fruitful lines of experimentation in this realm.

One intriguing model, known in its proprietary form as Synanim, involves a group

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of six to ten anonymous members each of whom writes an unsigned one- to two-page proposal about the issue in question. Then they each read all six to ten papers and choose one to revise in light of what all the others said, with no discussion. They then read each other's papers again. This process iterates through several rounds, naturally narrowing down to a consensus or two to three alternative proposals that can be discussed or subject to further iterations, perhaps with a clarifying question or broader participation.

### **F. How Will Information and Expertise about Issues Be Provided for Deliberators?**

As noted above in the discussion of framing (section B), organizers of traditional citizen deliberative councils convene a committee of politically diverse experts to oversee the fairness of the information provided to the citizen panel, including which expert witnesses they interview. In some methods the citizen deliberators have a say in—or actually choose—which experts they interview. Members of the oversight committee can demand inclusion of specific information they favor, but cannot exclude anyone else's information. To the extent they collectively ensure representation of a full spectrum of (at least mainstream) viewpoints, they deflect criticism that the process is biased. This is an important factor in collective intelligence (which learns from and integrates diverse views), perceived fairness, and democratic legitimacy (the willingness of ordinary citizens and officials to respect the outcomes of the process).

Unfortunately, most traditional citizen deliberative councils seldom use the internet as an information source and are often weak in including creative perspectives and options that have been developed outside the mainstream discourse on the issue. We could and should change that in our grassroots People's Voice system.

Finally, traditional citizen deliberative councils provide a unique opportunity for citizens to interview and cross-examine experts on the issue they're deliberating. This is a hallmark of the process, and vital to helping deliberating citizens clarify the issue. However, providing stipends and travel costs to expert witnesses can be a major expense.



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So three questions come to mind:

1. How do we ensure demonstrably balanced expertise and information for deliberators in a grassroots online process?
2. In addition to the issue-framing systems explored above, how do we utilize the unprecedented information-gathering capacities of the internet to inform deliberators—even beyond mainstream perspectives?
3. How do we use modern technology to reduce the cost of access to expertise?

### **Some approaches for each of these:**

1. **Balance:** Regarding the first question, organizers could contact advocacy groups on different sides of the issue, asking whom they would consider legitimate experts to oversee such a process. If there were a national or international movement around this—a concerted effort to generate an inclusive, wise People’s Voice—lists of willing experts on various sides of various issues could be developed (centrally and/or through the efforts of diverse local groups and/or crowdsourcing) and made available online. These lists could be used to provide experts to oversee information fairness as well as to provide expert witnesses to represent competing perspectives. Cooperating academic institutions may also be willing to provide expert overseers. Explicit approval of an expert by a known partisan advocacy group legitimizes that expert as a representative of a particular part of the spectrum of opinion on that issue—a useful fact when trying to present a balanced group of experts. Names of partisan or neutral authorities could be solicited from the public and embedded in the online framing of issues.

Balanced information would naturally be provided through the online system of crowdsourced issue framing. If the framing covers diverse approaches to the issue, if each approach has arguments for and against it, and if each argument has evidence related to it, that should ultimately generate balanced information. If certain information is missing, deliberators or supporters could research it and enter it into the framing or ask an appropriate partisan group to do that.

2. **Internet as resource.** One way we might harness the internet for citizen delib-

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erative activities is encourage deliberators to use it between meetings—or we might even divide them into teams to see which team can come up with the most interesting information and/or options from the internet within a specified time. Some people may require assistance from their more internet-literate fellow deliberators or volunteer nonpartisan internet research assistants. This internet searching could go on before, during, and/or after other aspects of the group’s deliberations. It may be that after they have explored the pros and cons of mainstream proposals, they will be informed enough to understand and evaluate other options. They can then get expert critiques of those new options, back and forth, until they are satisfied they understand the best solutions available.

**3. Experts:** Deliberators could interview experts by audio and video teleconferencing and conference calls, as well as through email, chats, and various kinds of online forums. Such interactions would be most useful when diverse experts and citizen deliberators can all hear and respond to each other. Body language can be an important factor in judging the information being provided, especially in cross-examination, so video or face-to-face interaction is desirable. We’ll need to research what is lost and gained through expert consultations that aren’t face-to-face. Obviously, if experts are willing to show up at a face-to-face gathering (which is easier and cheaper if those experts are local), effort should be made to gather all the deliberators together to efficiently engage with them, even if the deliberators deliberate separately afterwards.

### **G. How Will the Deliberators Make Their Final Decisions?**

In all, I see several distinct modes of policy selection that could be enabled with the People’s Voice system:

1. A formal face-to-face citizen deliberative council
2. A People’s Voice version of a citizen deliberative council, mostly online, requiring at least 80 percent support for main recommendations
3. Randomly selected straw polls at the request of public officials or others
4. The overall popular vote of People’s Voice network participants for policy

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solutions presented in Deliberapedia

5. The overall People's Voice network vote weighted to reflect the appropriate demographic and/or transpartisan distribution
6. The vote of power users, who are theoretically more informed

Numbers 1, 2, and 3 need to be specially organized separate from the general flow of activity in the People's Voice network. Numbers 1 and 2 produce legitimate public wisdom that is worth highlighting in some way on the site and worth lobbying for in the political arena. Number 3 produces aggregates of public opinion from a population that is somewhat better informed than the general population, but it doesn't inherently qualify as public wisdom. Numbers 4, 5, and 6 require little work, are advisory for political players, are of ongoing interest to visitors, and continually evolve as participants and visitors enter and change their votes.

In this section I'll focus mainly on number 2, because what we're looking for here is readily accessible grassroots public wisdom.

During the research phase of this project, we will want to see what level of consensus can be reached by groups that are largely online, while recognizing the limitations of our design for that (i.e., dispersed groups or individuals with nonexpert facilitation). Probably it is most useful to have different levels of agreement being expressed simultaneously on different aspects of the evolving findings and recommendations. Ideally software could facilitate straw votes and sort conclusions by level of agreement, and as deliberation proceeded, conclusions would move up or down the levels and be edited as well.

In the end, different levels of agreement could be reported in the group's final statement. For example, the findings could announce (a) what there was full agreement on; (b) what received 80 percent agreement; (c) what received 67 percent agreement; (d) what received mere majority agreement; and (e) any coherent minority statements (like the minority opinions issued by U.S. Supreme Court justices alongside the majority opinions).

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Given the not-so-robust nature of our process, it is probably best to strongly advocate only for those decisions that are supported by at least a supermajority (two-thirds or more) of the deliberators—and leave the rest to the adversarial partisan battle, rather than claiming it as a legitimate “people’s voice.” But we should also realize that if groups of a few dozen randomly selected (and thus diverse) people have studied and deliberated on an issue and come to 80 percent or more agreement on a solution, that’s a truly remarkable fact that should be recognized as valid public wisdom despite the small sample. It means something radically different from an opinion poll, a single expert’s advice, or a politician’s position. It is something new and potentially powerful in the political arena.

Another role that could be created in this system would be transpartisan mediators whose specialty is helping strong partisans work out their issues creatively. In addition to people already capable in this work, an algorithm could track and identify participants who propose approaches that generate the least concerns and the most support (especially at times when data about who supports what indicates a deep conflict). Similarly, if an issue seems stuck, those with concerns could be called together to work it out. A special part of the website could be reserved for mediating—or scheduling conference call mediations of—such conflicts, with special rating points given to all those who participate successfully.

The site could track a person’s opinions in the context of other people’s views (like Amazon’s “people who bought this also bought that”). People who want transpartisan engagement could then ask the site to show them positions or arguments that they disagree with, so they can develop and post contributions that seek to bridge the gap between their perspectives and those of the people they disagree with.

Another approach to generating agreements is to include the larger community (the whole city, state, or country—or just the larger community of People’s Voice participants) in evaluating proposals from the deliberative groups. If several policy options are presented that are supported by, say, at least 40 percent of the deliberative participants, these options could be submitted to such larger communities for a vote.

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In general, the fewer participants and the weaker the process (in design and facilitation), the higher the level of agreement we will need in order to generate a recognizably legitimate people's voice—and this assumes a good diversity of participants, preferably chosen randomly or otherwise embodying the diversity of the community. Most trial juries, which only have twelve people, can be viewed as a legitimate expression of the community because they come to full consensus. With thousands of people and little deliberation—as in a poll or local election—51 percent is considered adequate to represent the “will of the people.”

Since our current proposal involves twenty to one hundred citizens and medium-quality deliberation, somewhere between three-quarters majority and full consensus might be considered acceptable as a valid voice of the people—if these people are adequately diverse and the process is demonstrably unbiased. However, research is needed to assess whether the public agrees or could agree to the legitimacy of such a panel, since we're not just going through the motions here. We want to generate a deliberative voice of the people that the vast majority of the population will recognize as such, so that this voice can then be legitimately empowered by their support.

### **H. Who Else Should Be Involved in This?**

The more the public is involved in the deliberative process, the more they will understand what is going on and why, and the more they will “own” and support the results. We've already seen how including too many people in the final deliberations can degrade the quality of the results. But to the extent that we don't engage a lot of people in the whole process, we'll find it much harder to achieve effectively empowered public wisdom. Some of the same principles we explored above for engaging the pool of citizen deliberators can be applied to engaging others, and do not need to be repeated here.

I use the term Civic Circle to describe members of the People's Voice network who work in a coherent group over a period of time. I don't have a restrictive definition of what they do in such groups.

Ideally, a large People's Voice network made up of both individual contributors and

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Civic Circle groups would form the core participants in this public wisdom-generating initiative. Some individuals and Civic Circles would make specific commitments—such as four hours of work a week for two months (to be reconsidered at the end of that time)—and get some special status for that—but most would not have made such commitments. Some of them would be members of local, state, and national pools of prospective citizen deliberators, but most would not. Some would be working on the Deliberapedia the way the Wikipedia community works on developing and maintaining Wikipedia. A few would be organizers, facilitators, fundraisers, or support people for the special mini-public deliberations. Some would be committed media people. There would be some Civic Circles of artists, videographers, street performers, and other creative people who would create aesthetic, educational, or dramatic works around political issues, which they would tie into the Deliberapedia and mini-public deliberations. And so on.

Active people at the core of the People's Voice network could be a vibrant community dedicated to creating and empowering public wisdom in whatever ways they could. Around that core would flow more casual visitors—observers and occasional contributors. All would be engaged by social networking software enabling them to connect for work or conversation on political issues—as well as general socializing—within and across political divides.

People's Voice network organizers would actively recruit others to participate in online and face-to-face public conversations, to issue priority ratings, and to vote on proposed solutions, and then the organizers would invite the newcomers to become further involved. They could join Civic Circles organized by location (for in-person meetings) and/or by focus (for dialogue or shared work, online or in their local communities).

In some areas the People's Voice network would be used to give input to public officials and politicians willing to work with it. These politicians might ask for survey responses or feedback from partisan or transpartisan Civic Circles on some issue or proposal, or track the progress of online issue framings and expressions of support

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for various options, or they might sign a Politicians Pledge to take seriously citizen deliberations held by the network. Their engagement would be a key plank in their election platforms.

The startup page of Deliberapedia and the People's Voice network would be clean, easy, and addictive, like Twitter or Google or YouTube. It might include a short video introduction and a few key questions on the visitor's opinions and issue interests. A visitor's answers to those questions would then generate top-layer issue framings (in simple graphic form) for one or two of their top issues, plus links to profiles of a few other people in their local area who hold similar views—and some who hold different views, but who'd like to talk with people of varying opinions. The point is to keep it simple, clear, and focused, with each page inviting engagement that produces the next page deeper into the system, or sustains a loop of engagement (e.g., you can't see the overall ratings or answers until you do your rating or answer). This would hold the visitor in the site with an attention-absorbing experience. They can then be tempted to do low-level Deliberapedia edits ... or join issue-focused teams or Civic Circles ... or post to forums connected to a current citizen deliberative council ... or sign up for the deliberator pool ... or ...

### **I. How Can Participants' Interest and Engagement Be Sustained?**

Not only do we need to attract people out of their busy lives to participate, we need to make this adventure a vital part of their busy lives. All the above, if done well, will encourage people to stay with the program. But what else can we think of to get people enthusiastic about it and stick with it?

In general, I see four main motivations for people to return again and again to an online community activity like this:

1. **Passion**—values, interest, stake, caring, need, love of the topic, vision, purpose, contest, some action-stimulating emotion (indignation, fear, desire, determination), etc.
2. **Rewards**—fun, enjoyment, money or other material payoffs, status, influence, success at a challenge, pride, self-improvement, etc.

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3. **Social glue**—duty, loyalty, involvement of family and friends, belonging, group expectations, responsibility for others, answerability systems, communication from a “buddy,” etc.
4. **Ease**—simplicity, elegance, fits with other aspects of their lives, low barriers to entry and persistence, low effort, etc.

There are obviously hundreds of ways to apply the above four motivational factors. But I want to highlight several areas that might easily be overlooked in designing such an activity.

**Buddies and Teams.** The idea behind teams and Civic Circles is to engage the “social glue” factor. I can even imagine that early on there’s a bit of match-making (a la dating sites like OkCupid) between a newcomer and longer-term members who have volunteered to be helpful buddies. Based on profiles and responses to questions, possible buddies are presented to the newcomer, who checks them out, communicates with them, and picks one or a few. The software could also enable volunteer mentors to just show up and offer help and companionship, as happens in Second Life (and sometimes real life). This goes way beyond online support forums and chats and even the old computer users groups. It is a very human connection, intended to be ongoing. Ideally, real friendships would develop out of this and new people would be drawn into social circles where the other dynamics (rewards and passion) would play out individually and collectively (such as competitions between teams working on framing an issue they all care about from different angles).

**Resources.** Money should be available (a) to support and reward people and teams who are making exceptional contributions to the system, even to the point of providing a livelihood for doing that; (b) to fund citizen deliberative councils in both their online and face-to-face forms; and (c) to fund direct grassroots initiatives—education, promotion, organizing, lobbying, and/or implementation of recommendations arising out of citizen deliberations. Start-up funding may well be through traditional philanthropic lines, but ideally the system would develop its own powerful crowdsourced funding



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functions, like IndieGoGo and Kickstarter, to the point of even enabling ongoing support for “agents of public wisdom,” perhaps through monthly donations like those being innovated by CrewFund.org or being part of an online gifting community like Kindista.org.

Stories. Stories motivate more people more deeply than practically anything else. Ideally, the site would have a section for stories—written, spoken, and videoed. Stories of people’s participation in the People’s Voice network would encourage participation by others. Stories of how people were personally impacted by an issue or why they are so passionate about an issue or proposal would provide human interest and understanding. News stories and histories of issues and proposals would provide context. Stories from times and places when a particular solution was implemented would provide compelling evidence for or against it, or even inspiration around it. Imaginative scenarios of future possibilities—both positive and negative—and “backcasting” stories looking back from the future could suggest possible initiatives and consequences that should be considered. And of course, stories of public or official conversations that considered an issue or policy—especially where a good collective decision was reached—to provide motivation for us to persist in our own conversations. All these stories could be linked to and from the relevant part of the issue-framing argumentation, but they could also exist as an attractor that brings new people in and keeps existing members engaged to see the latest stories—perhaps even presented in newspaper or blog format, with space for comments and ratings, with the most popular stories rising in visibility or even being published or broadcast in local or alternative media—the promise of which would invite more storytelling from more people.

Mobile apps. This is part of the “ease” motivation. Can mobile apps be developed to enable people to participate in Deliberapedia and converse with others on some issue for which a decision-maker wants community input? On-the-run participation could increase and sustain greater ongoing participation in all aspects of the system.

But perhaps the most powerful motivating factor would be the guarantee that one’s engagement in this exercise of democratic wisdom would have demonstrable and

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repeated impact on the actual policies of governments and the troubling real-world conditions we've all been living in. That guarantee can be made real for us only by our collective resolve and collaboration. But it can be made.

### **J. How Can the Results of These Deliberations Impact Public Policy and Public Life?**

There are many ways to create impact, among them these:

**Dialogue.** Promote more conversations on the topic—as explored in chapter 10—with forums in which community members can talk about the deliberators' findings and recommendations as well as hearing the deliberators' personal stories about their experience in the deliberations. In addition to online forums, face-to-face modes like World Cafés, Open Space conferences, and study circles can help ripple the results out into the community, especially if they are seeded with participants from the original deliberation. A community World Café could be kicked off with the deliberators sharing their experiences. Alternatively, a public forum could be held in which relevant public officials join the deliberators for a dialogue in “fishbowl” style (see appendix 1), viewable by the public. Citizen deliberators would explain how they came to their conclusions and the public officials would describe how they see the issue, to the enlightenment of everyone involved, including the viewing public.

**Media.** The more, and more varied, media coverage of any public deliberation, the better. This includes press releases, media coverage of public events where the participants report their findings and recommendations, media coverage of the “human interest” aspect of the changes participants went through during the process, letters to the editor, talk shows, and so on—as well as online publicity and commentary such as blogs, websites, and chat on Facebook and Twitter. Ideally, in many areas it would be possible to build alliances with media interested in being creative catalysts for building this democratic capacity while generating stories their readers or viewers will love. For an example of truly remarkable mainstream media coverage of a citizen deliberative council, see the story about Maclean's magazine in chapter 8.

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Lobbying and mobilization. Here is where online phenomena like bloggers, MoveOn.org, MeetUp.com, various crowdsourced marketing and funding sites, and others can be used to empower the public to ensure its collective wisdom is heeded. These could provide innovative ways to spread the word, to craft messages and media, to fundraise, to mobilize demonstrations or community engagement in recommended community projects, to lobby, and to engage people in face-to-face assemblies on behalf of solutions recommended by duly convened citizen deliberations. This need not be a matter of developing new technologies, so much as using state-of-the-art activist organizing and networking technologies on behalf of the whole rather than merely to push a partisan agenda. That is a critical shift that would change everything.

An emerging and ambitious online resource, the Interactive Voter Choice System (IVCS at [reinventdemocracy.net](http://reinventdemocracy.net)), is being designed to enable citizens to organize around policy options they agree with, regardless of what party or ideology they favor. This would be incredibly valuable to empower the voice of public wisdom, if it were designed to include and feature that voice. While I'm doubtful about IVCS's power and resilience in its current form (as of January 2012), I consider its visionary scope and use of social networking to be a breakthrough. In order to fulfill its mission, I believe it would have to be far more attractive, sticky (so engaging that it is hard to stop using it), and viral (so compelling that people quickly share it with their networks). We would need considerable support for—and participation in—research and development to enable that resource, either through the existing platform or through a new one based on a similar vision.

A similar empowerment effort with a different logic is A Greater U.S. ([agreater.us/index.php](http://agreater.us/index.php)), which allows users to propose a bill they would like Congress to pass and the president to sign into law, and to rate the submissions of others in an annual collective effort to define the most important bills the public wants that year. They then collectively pressure politicians to pass a bundle of the most popular bills, using “the greater middle” as the “third force” swing vote in American politics. The bill selection process includes a politically weighted voting system to ensure transpartisan support.

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Involvement of politicians and other leaders. Many politicians and public officials can be influenced by what the public—particularly an informed, inclusively deliberative, active public—say and want. One approach is to allow them to view deliberations, participate in them, show up as expert witnesses and/or engage in public forums as described above in the first part of section J: “Dialogue.” Their involvement can even be as low-key as the public official having a private hour-long interview with several of the citizen deliberators, just to get a feel for how the educated public thinks about the issue. Another way is to actively solicit the prior support and/or sponsorship of public officials for such citizen deliberations. They can sign a Politicians Pledge (e.g., [co-intelligence.org/PoliticiansPledge.html](http://co-intelligence.org/PoliticiansPledge.html)) to take seriously the results of any duly convened citizen deliberation. Several public participation-oriented politicians (especially if they are politically diverse) can sponsor certain citizen deliberations. Their engagement—or lack of it—can be made into a campaign issue to motivate politicians to get more involved in, and even to advocate, citizen deliberations that generate legitimate public wisdom. Similarly, other community leaders can be usefully involved, especially if they represent a broad spectrum of normally adversarial views and/or have extensive networks that may be impacted or activated through the involvement of their leaders.

Cultural embeddedness. This kind of ongoing deliberative process can, over time, become the legitimate, wise voice of the people if, and only if, the majority of citizens come to expect and respect its work. Given a good, supportable, and regularly carried out process, a culture of deliberation will grow such that people await the results eagerly, and don't finally make up their own minds about an issue until they have heard the voice of the people (which does not dictate, but provides information in a unique, useful, and potent way). This sense of expectation can be nurtured by carrying out the initial participant selections (and the other steps of the process) transparently. Once this process has a good record of success, the opening of deliberations and the announcement of results can be done with some fanfare to further engage the public in the proceedings.

Institutionalization. Ultimately, when the process is well developed, proven, and broadly known, it may be embedded in local, state, and national political and govern-

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ment institutions (unless, of course, it has grown to supersede them), as described in chapters 6, 7, and 13. At this point, however, such visions are simply future possibilities. Chances are that this effort will evolve in unpredictable ways, some of which may even make institutionalization irrelevant.

### **K. What Sources of Organizing Energy and Structure Could Support This?**

I suspect that the initial organizing energy for something like the People's Voice needs to come from a small group dedicated to realizing that possibility. Something this complex and embedded in a dynamic system like American politics and technical developments cannot simply be planned out ahead of time and then set in motion. It must be done in a participatory, flexible, and responsive manner, and those involved—especially funders—must realize that such flexibility is necessary and potentially powerful. When a good beta design is worked out, it can be spread by bloggers, seeded by dedicated teams (for example, as was done by Beyond War in the 1980s, when about a dozen families moved to swing states and catalyzed self-replicating living-room presentations demonstrating that war was obsolete, a meme that thereby spread rapidly). The beta design could also be spread through collaborating organizations (as has been done by National Issues Forums since the early 1970s, providing materials and training for deliberation, and promoting those resources and their resulting successes to community groups, churches and temples, nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions, and receptive public officials). And once deliberations are held, chances are good that some of the deliberators will be interested in helping spread the excitement and power they experienced, as long as they get some support for doing so.

An existing alternative political party that shares the goal of listening to and empowering inclusive, informed public wisdom may also be interested—or such a party could be formed to focus on this. A “People's Voice Party,” for example, could be dedicated to advocating whatever policies come out of citizen deliberative councils and other well-organized citizen deliberations that met its standards. It would take no positions on issues except where public wisdom processes had clearly articulated what the public

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wanted, through deliberative dialogue and supermajority agreement or consensus. Other than that, its only position would be to empower the people's voice—both through widespread high-quality public dialogue and deliberation (and high-quality information and technical infrastructure to support it) and the institutionalization of official ad hoc or periodic citizen deliberative councils of various sorts, explicitly empowered to influence official decision making.

### **L. What Other Resources Are Available to Help Us Think about and Organize This?**

There are a number of efforts that, in their own way, reflect this kind of cocreative participatory democratic vision—although not with a focus on public wisdom. I include two here as examples:

**Civic Evolution**—[civicevolution.org](http://civicevolution.org)—An online space to help citizens thoughtfully seek common ground together about desired changes they can make in their community. Using a system for cocreating and rating “curated talking-points” (a good way to chunk deliberative units), teams develop coherent, actionable proposals they can use to garner support from their community and local government, which can be pursued both online and face-to-face.

**Democracy Lab**—[democracylab.org](http://democracylab.org)—A website dedicated to engaging the public in a merit-based forum for public dialogue and creative problem solving, and for improving communication between public officials and their constituents. It proposes to help people foster connections between their values, their objectives, their favored policies, and the laws implemented by their government.

In closing this chapter, I want to highlight two notes regarding all the websites listed herein:

First, the People's Voice vision I presented here focuses on generating public wisdom about public policy. We also need the capacity to generate empowered public wisdom to guide community self-organization—along the lines of Civic Evolution. It may or

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may not be possible to combine these two functions in one site while keeping it simple and functional. But this is definitely worth considering.

Second, analyzing and evaluating the gifts and limitations of these innovative approaches are beyond the scope of this book. Suffice it to say that they are quite different from each other, based on different assumptions and providing significantly different ways of exploring and working with an issue, suitable for different groups and uses. What I would hope is that by exploring in detail these and other technologies for issue-related work, a group seeking to pursue the vision of empowered public wisdom would gain valuable lessons for the creation of something that reaches far beyond them all in its simplicity, appeal, functionality, and power to evoke democratic wisdom and transformation.

## **Converting Urban and Suburban Lands for Growing Food**

*by Peter Ladner*

*The following is excerpted from The Urban Food Revolution, published by New Society Publishers.*

I felt just a little conspicuous walking through the South Side of Chicago; I was the only white person in view since I got off the bus many blocks away. I was headed to Growing Home's Wood Street Urban Farm in the Englewood neighborhood. "You must be going to the garden," a man said to me as I walked past a cluster of friends chilling on a porch a few blocks away from the garden. The garden and I are both relative newcomers to the neighborhood. Its parent organization, Growing Home, was started in 1992 by Les Brown, Director of Policy for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, but this farm has only been around since 2007. It's a beacon of hope and fresh food in a depressed neighborhood with few real food stores. A restaurant I passed on the way, Pappy's Restaurant, featured shrimp, fish, chicken wings, tacos and burritos. A "Fresh Meat" store had nothing but liquor ads in the window.

Hidden at the end of a cul-de-sac in a resolutely residential neighborhood, Wood Street Urban Farm's trim, neat rows of vegetables under hoop-house frames bespeak a new standard of eating and growing local. Through the back of one hoop house, I could see the homes right across the street. This two-third-acre site is a farm, but it is far away from typical farmland.

Three collegiate-looking young people are bunching turnip greens, mint and radishes for an upcoming farmers market on the north side of town. Selling produce at the various farmers markets is just one way the farm makes money to support itself.

The Wood Street Urban Farm provides job training through its non-profit organic agriculture business. Upstairs, in the brand new office building (finished July 2009), the day's training class breaks for an afternoon smoke. These trainees are people with



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employment barriers who are learning the basics of finding work. They look more like hip young people than farmers, but they're being trained for any job they can get that's food-related. This year has been better than last: one member of the class already has a job. Today's class is trying to figure out how to attract neighbors to the Wednesday veggie stall set up on the premises.

Before the spartan but classy new offices were built, vandalism was an issue with the farm's on-site trailer. Now things are better. In 2008 the farm produced approximately 5,000 pounds of produce; a year later it was double that. Spinach, lettuce, arugula, swiss chard, tomatoes, zucchini, beets, turnips, kale, mustard greens and collards all grow happily in the warm, moist hoop-house climate, oblivious to the traditional urban surroundings.

Wood Street Urban Farm is just one of many new intrusions of agriculture and food production into the urban food revolution landscape. To think of food production in cities as an intrusion is odd. Historically, food has been an integral part of city life; in fact, the first cities came into being to store and protect domesticated agricultural produce. In the developing world, live food is still everywhere in cities. Without that urban produce, many more people would be starving than already are.

Live food--cattle, chickens, orchards, pigs, vegetables--has been a major presence in cities through the ages. Only in very recent years has food production been pushed out beyond the city boundaries and processed food been brought in the back way--through suburban warehouses and hidden loading bays behind centralized supermarkets; now, food magically appears out of trucks, trains, planes and ships from places we know nothing about.

Today's challenge is to bring food back into our cities in a much more visible and tangible way, "past forward" to a 21st century model that feeds on the new technologies and the old reality that everything we eat has to grow somewhere-- the closer, the fresher.

### **Friction at the Edge**

There were some good reasons why farmers left cities for the comforts of the country. But even in the country, especially at the rural boundary, you can feel the friction

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between urban dwellers and their farming neighbors.

“Urban infrastructure and rural infrastructure are diametrically opposed,” says Kim Sutherland, a regional agrologist at the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. “Farmers need easy access to their fields, and roads with little traffic. They don’t want a lot of neighbors who will complain about noise and odors.”

People with homes close to farms, especially farms with livestock, have to put up with noises, foul smells and bad air quality. One farm neighbor in Aldergrove, in the Fraser Valley east of Vancouver, filed a complaint with the Farm Industry Review Board about the dust made up of chicken manure, skin, feathers and feed that was settling on his house. He said the dust, which came from the fans on the side of his neighbor’s chicken barn, gave his family breathing problems, irritated their eyes and throats, and caused flu-like symptoms. The review board, a quasi-judicial tribunal that balances “right to farm” legislation with excessive disturbances, ruled in favor of the farmer, but they couldn’t remove the inherent conflict between these two land uses.

The common practice of manure spreading on dairy farms is another frequent cause of complaints. One resident in the Okanagan area of B.C. filed a complaint saying it was “like living in an outhouse” after manure had been freshly spread.

Noise-- from blueberry and cherry cannons, chickens being caught and moved in the middle of the night, or boisterous guinea fowl--is another reason more urbanized residents get upset with their farm neighbors. The city of Surrey, B.C. forces some new developments to include information on land title documents that a particular lot may be subject to agricultural “noise, smells and dust.” Many municipalities have buffer zones of hedges, ditches or linear parks to reduce disturbances from farms.

Ironically, people who own small farmland plots mainly as a backyard for sprawling “rural lifestyle” houses tend to be reluctant to let farmers come and work their land.

### **Farming at the Urban Edge Adds Value Both Ways**

But let’s not forget that farms can add value to the residential communities around them. One study in Abbotsford, B.C. tried to quantify the benefits of farmland. After

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taking away a dollar value for the “public nuisance cost” of farms, it added up the “amenity benefits” (most notably, access to local foods, greenspace and rural lifestyle) and concluded that “the present value of the stream of public amenity benefits and ecological services provided by each acre of farmland in Abbotsford in 2007 is estimated to be \$29,490.” Comparing this to the net tax benefit from industrial and residential land, the study concluded that industrial land provided a benefit of only \$14,000 per acre, while residential lands cost taxpayers \$13,960 per acre.

This community benefit provided “free” by farmers has led to proposals for compensating farmers for providing those public benefits. It’s a nice idea, but how would you quantify the payments, and where would the money come from?

Having farms close to cities also has advantages for the farmer. Farmers like Delta, B.C.’s Terry Bremner take advantage of their proximity to the city to add new revenue streams. He bottles and processes his blueberries on-site, sells his products at his own retail store, hosts classes, classic car shows and musicals, and rents out the barn for festivals. He got permission to rezone some of his farmland for these multiple uses so he could make a living as a farmer. He thinks all farmers should be able to carve off a small slice of their land for light industrial agriculture-related uses like a welding shop or warehouse. This would help them make a decent living.

“Doing something like that could give the farmer either more productivity or another \$150,000 from commercial rental--that would keep him on the farm.”<sup>2</sup>

Being at the edge of the city makes Urban Edge Agricultural Parks work in California. Pioneered by Sustainable Agricultural Education (SAGE) in a partnership with landowner San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, the 18-acre Sunol Agriculture Park, 40 minutes from Berkeley and 30 minutes from Oakland, provides land and infrastructure for four small organic farms run by city folk. The farmer leases the land, and SAGE provides a farm manager, fences, roads, irrigation and a watchful eye on maintaining hedgerows and natural habitats for pollinators and beneficial insects.

The current wave of urban farming is very much alive in Europe. In the UK, the first modern urban farm was started in North London in 1971. By the mid-1990s, 60

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similar farms had popped up around the country. Some market gardens thrive on the edge of cities by catering to the luxury urban markets. Others, like the Wood Street Urban Farm in Chicago, grow food in poorer areas of cities, providing environmental education and engaging the community in ways a larger rural farm wouldn't.

Is turning suburban lots into farms undermining the need to densify suburbs to reduce automobile dependence and create walkable neighborhoods? Not at all. First, there is still lots of opportunity to densify suburbs along transportation corridors and around commercial/industrial centers. That's where density belongs. For those who lament that outer-ring suburbs are doomed to become abandoned ruins of a cheap-oil lifestyle, what better way to revitalize the ruins than to bring them back to life as suburban farms? New approaches to farming inside city boundaries are changing the meaning of "city boundary."

### **Cities Without Edges**

Many cities are blurring the boundary line that used to dictate that food is grown "out there" and eaten "in here," give or take a few backyard gardens. Architect/designers André Viljoen, Katrin Bohn and Joe Howe make the case for an "edgeless city" in their book *Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes*. "The emerging 21st century city can be identified as 'the Edgeless City'.... The concepts of city boundary, greenbelt and suburb are all obsolete. Cities are becoming formless, edgeless and seemingly endless."<sup>3</sup> These authors advocate for the creation of city-traversing open spaces providing a mix of leisure, recreational and green transportation uses. But their main focus is the introduction of agricultural fields into urban life--green strips farmed by local residents who rent the land and work it commercially for local food production.

When this happens, agricultural urbanism becomes a growth-containment mechanism. By integrating agriculture into suburban settlements, residents learn first-hand the value of preserving agricultural land. It's part of their lives, rather than the next land waiting for development at the city's edge. When we're all living with agricultural land in some form as part of our everyday lives, it is more valued and less in need of

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draconian protection measures. Still, it's hard for local governments under pressure to provide land for other community purposes, like low-income housing, to give the nod to urban agriculture uses.

Traditionally, many cities have had commercial suburban farms associated with prisons and mental institutions that provide food for the institution, with the added benefits of providing therapeutic healing and teaching responsibility, work ethics and self-sufficiency. The New Jersey Department of Corrections is the largest farmer in its state, supplying milk and processed foods to state departments at lower rates than commercial farms. The 800-acre Frontenac Farm in Kingston, Ontario is believed to be the largest urban farm in Canada. Bizarrely, it and five other prison farms across Canada are being shut down because the federal government believes they are too costly (\$4 million a year) and that they compete with local farmers and don't provide relevant skills to inmates. How can they not provide relevant skills if they compete in the marketplace with other farmers?

### **Fed Up on the Roof**

Some urban farmers and their farms are well disguised. Eli Zabar is a Manhattan baker, retailer and restaurateur. Up on the roof of a three-story brick complex on 91st St., under the eye of neighboring apartment buildings, his big commercial rooftop greenhouses cover raised beds pumping out herbs, salad greens, radishes and tomatoes. A compost grinder helps convert bakery and deli waste into compost. Exhaust pipes from the ovens downstairs keep the greenhouses at the precise temperatures that work for growing tomatoes in the winter.

Restaurants all over North America are doing the same thing--growing what they can on-site, either in a ground-level garden, or, like the restaurant at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel in Vancouver, on an upper-level courtyard. At the Uncommon Ground restaurant in Chicago, volunteers hauled six tons of topsoil up to planter boxes on a 2,500-square foot rooftop garden.

Converting a roof to a garden isn't easy. The weight of the soil and the constant human traffic up to a rooftop requires extra support, which can be expensive. One of Uncom-

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mon Ground's owners estimates he spent \$150,000 on construction. "We resupported the entire building. We dug down five feet and put in all new posts and beams. That was all to support what we wanted to do on the roof... My structural engineer said we could probably land the presidential helicopter on the roof."4 Uncommon Ground's roof also features a pair of beehives that produce 40-50 pounds of honey for the restaurant.

Brooklyn's Grange Farm has gone one better. Boasting the world's biggest rooftop farm-- on the Standard Motor Products building in Long Island City--its one acre of garden required 600 tons of soil to be hauled up six stories in a 91-year-old building. The Long Island Business Development Association was so impressed, it presented Gwen Schantz and the Grange Farm with its 2010 Green Business Award.

Or would you like rice with that? Mori Building, developer of Roppongi Hills in Tokyo, is using rooftop gardens to create "vertical garden cities" to add green space to a depressed area and dampen its intense urban heat island. The company's Keyakizaka complex rooftop boasts a seventh-floor rice paddy--yes, rice paddy--and vegetable plot. The paddy is small (155 square feet) and largely symbolic, but still capable of producing 135 pounds of rice, with elementary school students doing the planting and harvesting under the instruction of rice farmers.

There's lots of rooftop space potentially available. By one estimate, the 4.8 million commercial buildings in the United States have about 1,400 square miles of roof, most of it nearly flat. That's an area larger than Rhode Island. Not all of it is useful for rooftop gardening. Aside from the obvious structural loading issues, acceptable access to the roof is critical. In many multi-family residential or commercial buildings, occupants may not want urban farmers with wheelbarrows of compost and muddy tools traipsing through a public lobby. But even leaving out the roofs that are shaded, inaccessible, or structurally unable to support rooftop activity, that's a lot of growing space.

### **Finding Farming Space in Cities**

Back at ground level, the lands most often being converted for urban farming are those that are underused (lawns, parkland, abandoned backyards and schoolyards) or

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eyesores (brownfields). In Milwaukee, Growing Power's Will Allen bought the last remaining farm in the city and brought it back to life as a 1.7-acre complex of greenhouses, compost production and aquaculture ponds.

To make space for livestock, a British company makes portable (designer!) hen-houses that sit happily on the front lawn. Hens are being kept by half a million British families; 10,000 of them are using these "Eglus," high-tech chicken coops with fox-proof runs.

Single-family homeowners are taking a second look at their lawns and wondering why they're working so hard on a manicured look when they could be reaping tomatoes and lettuce. Dan Goosen, general manager of Intervale Compost Products, says the average American lawn uses 8,000 gallons of water a year, compared to 3,000 for a one-acre organic plot. According to the EPA, one lawnmower can emit as much carbon in one hour as a car does in a 200-mile ride.

"There's so much land in cities we're spending money mowing," says Ward Teulon, who has a backyard food harvesting business in Vancouver called City Farm Boy. He used to be in the lawn care franchising business, opening new franchises across North America. He says his average clients were spending over \$300 a year keeping their lawns mowed, weeded, fertilized and aerated. He offers to take over the land and start growing food, saving the homeowner those costs and paying her in all the produce she can eat.

Some food sources don't even need cropland allotted to them. Some cities are replacing decorative boulevard trees with edible fruit and nut trees, and new developments pride themselves on edible landscapes. Developers with projects in Vancouver's Southeast False Creek downtown housing development are required to include edible landscaping and food-producing garden plots for rooftops and courtyards. Rooftops feature espaliered fruit trees and raised vegetable beds, and courtyards are framed with blueberry and raspberry bushes and trellises supporting fruit-bearing vines.

### **Legalizing Urban Farming**

Cities all over North America are struggling to figure out how to allow farm uses in traditionally residential, commercial or industrial neighborhoods. Baltimore, for

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example, is revising its zoning to officially recognize community gardens and urban farms; the change is expected to become law in 2011.

Cleveland has already added a new “urban garden district” designation in its zoning code that allows for both community gardens and urban farms. The code includes details about allowable structures, including chain-link fencing up to six feet high, something not allowed elsewhere in the zoning code. Cleveland’s director of planning says there was initial public resistance to having farms in the city, but since the zoning changes were made, not one person has complained. Cleveland is now considering allowing an “agricultural overlay” on lands zoned for other uses, allowing temporary agricultural uses until other development takes over.

Philadelphia has changed its zoning code to open up residential districts to “agriculture and horticulture, except the commercial keeping or handling of farm stock or poultry; and except commercial greenhouses or establishments for sale of farm or horticultural products.” This effectively allows community gardens but not commercial farms.<sup>5</sup> Philadelphia’s next step is to recognize urban agriculture as a primary land use in its new zoning code, including commercial farming. The goal is to bring local food within 10 minutes of 75% of residents.

Milwaukee has generous provisions for “raising crops or livestock” in residential districts, not just allowing community gardens but also a range of livestock unheard-of in most cities: cattle, horses, sheep, swine, goats, chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese or any other domesticated livestock permitted by the health department.

### **It’s Hard to Lock Up Urban Farmland**

The biggest issue surrounding converting urban lands for farm use is security of tenure. In Milwaukee, as in many cities, bringing in permissible zoning but only allowing short-term leases of city-owned plots for community gardens begs the question: how can a community gardener or urban farmer be assured they’re not going to get kicked off the land just when they’ve got the soil built up and everything growing?

Cities are now recognizing that securing tenure for urban farmers is the key to



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opening the gates on urban agriculture. Serious urban farmers aiming at commercial food production look for underused lots that can be converted to growing food with some certainty that they'll remain as urban farms for many years.

That's where an organization in Chicago is showing the way. NeighborSpace has been working with community groups since 1996 to buy land on behalf of local partners and end the uncertainty about future possible redevelopment (neighbor-space.org). Their goals are a mix of conservation, recreation, preservation, community food production and beautification. Their sites, always public, also provide opportunities for socializing and educational activities. It helps that they get money and support from their founding partners, the city of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Those public entities set up NeighborSpace when they discovered that Chicago ranked 18th out of 20 similar-sized cities for open green spaces. By 2010, NeighborSpace owned or leased 61 sites, with another 20 under acquisition.

Yes, guerilla gardeners are jumping in and starting farms and gardens on rooftops and in underused lands all over our cities, asking forgiveness while politicians craft bylaws of permission. But serious food production on urban sites isn't going to happen until urban farmers are sure enough that land will be theirs for long enough to reward their investments in time and soil-building.

It's conceivable that small agricultural reserves inside city limits could one day become a new civic amenity as important as parks and school grounds. In the meantime, farm spaces will more likely be carved out of underused properties in both cities and suburbs, protected by zoning permission, and swarmed by city farmers eager to ramp up local food production. Declining cities, where vacant land is widely available, will have the easiest time converting to agriculture. But every city, even if it has to squeeze farm sites onto rooftops, is going to be looking for ways to grow more food closer to home. The reason is simple: people really want it.

## **Tamera Manifesto: For a New Generation on Planet Earth**

*by Dieter Duhm*

“Behind the global violence, powers of a profound change of era are showing themselves. Those who stand against despotism today could witness a completely changed world tomorrow. We greet those who are preparing the new era on all continents today, often risking their lives. We greet the newly arising planetary community.”

A quote from the Gaza Youth’s Manifesto for Change from December 2010: “We are scared. Here in Gaza we are scared of being incarcerated, interrogated, hit, tortured, bombed, killed. ... We are youth with heavy hearts. We carry in ourselves a heaviness so immense that it makes it difficult to us to enjoy the sunset. ... There is a revolution growing inside of us, an immense dissatisfaction and frustration that will destroy us unless we find a way of canalizing this energy into something that can challenge the status quo and give us some kind of hope.”

This is the cry of the youth of Gaza. It is the cry for help of a generation without hope. A call from many countries of the earth. Representatives of Tamera Peace Research Centre in Portugal have undertaken several pilgrimages in Israel/Palestine and Colombia. May the following text contribute to a way out of the misery, and to finding a new channel for suppressed energies.

We greet the youth of the world. We greet all peace-activists and helpers in the crisis areas of the earth. We greet those who, often risking death, dedicate their lives to uphold human rights, for the protection of children and indigenous peoples, the protection of animals, the protection of oceans, trees and all co-creatures of the great family of life. We also greet those governments who still have the courage to stand up against worldwide globalisation and its methods. This is a manifesto for a young generation which no longer has a future in existing society, for those who are actively involved in the struggle for liberation, for the relatives of the victims, for the unbearably many people who can no longer see a way out and who have no perspective in

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the face of daily misery.

The world is in transition towards a new way to live on Earth. The old dictatorships and hierarchies cannot remain much longer. We are experiencing the collapse of the mega-systems. The revolution in the Arab countries, the youth rioting in the Western mega-cities, the world financial crisis and mass unemployment, the rise of wars and man-made natural catastrophes, the moral decline into squalor of most governments, the international plans for states of emergency and the underground bunkers for the wealthy are sure signs of the approaching end of a violent epoch. Behind the global violence, powers of a profound change of era are showing themselves. Those who stand against despotism today could witness a completely changed world tomorrow. We greet those who are preparing the new era on all continents today, often risking their lives. We greet the newly arising planetary community.

### **Global System-Change**

Behind the global massacre of our times stand wrong systems of economy, wrong concepts of love and religion, wrong systems of thought, and the endless abuse of natural resources. A global matrix of fear and violence has developed because of a wrong turn of evolution, and has eaten its way deep into the collective human soul. The new planetary community is making a fundamental system-change from the matrix of fear to the matrix of trust. It is doing so in all areas – from personal relationship issues to the political and ecological issues of the healing of the planet. Most natural catastrophes are the result of wrong human intervention in the cycles of nature. This system-change is a change of power. The new power no longer consists of domination over others but of reunification with the sacred laws of life. Everywhere that destruction is now raging, the first cells of a new world are emerging. The global apocalypse, horrible as it is, means not only downfall but also revelation. The forgotten sanctity of all life is rising from the ruins of the old and now giving birth to a new epoch. The new communities enter the service of life, service in the vineyard of God, and cooperation with those highest powers who have always, from the very beginning, formed our universe. The system-change will happen surprisingly

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quickly. In a few decades our children and children's children will know the millennia-long age of war only from history books. The Earth can be healed. There is a world that heals our wounds. This is the world of undistorted life. And there is a world that causes the wounds: the world of the human being. These two worlds have to come together to prevent future suffering. The world of the human being has to be reintegrated into the basic structures of universal life. The following four basic areas must be healed: energy, water, nutrition and – love. These four sources of life must be liberated from the dark powers which have destroyed them (energy companies, dictatorships, churches and so on). This is not a private, and not a local fight. It is a global fight. It is a fight between the global powers of life and the global powers of destruction. If life wins, there will be no losers.

### **A New Planetary Community**

Besides the global riots, there is today a global movement to save life on earth. It consists of groups from Indigenous, Buddhist or Christian peace-traditions, especially in Latin America and Tibet. And of those moved peace-activists, environmentalists and seekers of life that has long known that there is no future worth living within the existing systems. We see a new generation of pilgrims from all countries travelling across the earth. They are no longer bound to nation, language, race, culture or religion, nor to wealth or possessions. They help in crisis areas, visit sacred sites, meet at campfires and in hostels, share their bread and develop a new quality of community. A new global citizenship is developing beyond all institutions. A new form of positive 'globalisation'. This process is supported by the development of new centres which slowly spread across the earth. We call them 'healing biotopes' or 'peace-villages'. They serve for the pilgrims as shelter, study centre and workplace. Real research work is done here on the technological, ecological, social, spiritual and intellectual basics of a non-violent world society. These centres follow a common ethic of living together, a charter of human rights and animal rights, a kind of planetary set of 'precepts'. The following eight peace-thoughts are valid at all places on earth:

#### **1. Human Rights and Animal Rights**

They recognize basic human rights independent of religious, national or ethnic

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origin. They do not tolerate the presence of hatred, violence or humiliation. And they recognise basic animal rights: the right of all animals to living space, food, freedom of movement, curiosity and contact. Animals will not be mutilated in the new world. No dogs will have their tails cut off, and no animals will be subject to experiments by the pharmaceutical industry. There will be no fur farms and no slaughter houses. Animals are natural cooperation partners and friends of the human being in the great family of life. Animals need our support and not our persecution.

### **2. Three Ethical Principles**

They follow the basic ethical principles of community, particularly the three principles of truth, mutual support and responsible participation in the whole. In communities which are based on truth and mutual support, a power develops which is stronger than any violence. It is the power of trust: trust between men and women, trust between adults and children, and trust between humans and animals. The re-establishment of an original trust, in a world in which fear no longer exists. Trust is the basis on which life heals. There is no deeper vision than the vision of a world in which trust reigns between all beings.

### **3. Sexuality, Love and Partnership**

They also follow the principle of truth and mutual support in the areas of sexuality, love and partnership. There cannot be peace on earth as long as there is war in love. The new world has overcome all forms of the fight between the genders. Neither chauvinism nor feminism exist. The genders stand as equals beside each other and work together for the same goal, the reunification of life. Questions of monogamy or polygamy, of couple-love or free-love are not ideological or religious questions, but rather questions of personal development and the decision of those who are involved. Love is a natural process, not a legalistic issue. There is no legal claim on love, or right of ownership of a love-partner, but there is great trust and deep solidarity between the female and the male halves of humankind. Sexuality is liberated from all forms of religious suppression, lies, humiliation and violence. It serves – in addition to reproduction – only mutual love, health and joy of life. In a humane world it can never occur against the will of one partner.

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### **4. No Religious Barriers**

There are no religious barriers in the planetary community. The same God, the same heaven and the same cosmic order of the sacred matrix reign over all religions. The sacred authority we serve is not a clerical institution, but life itself, because this is what we love. The Divine no longer reveals itself in old bibles, but in the movements of a stream, or in the construction of a blade of grass, and particularly in love and the mysterious interplay of the powers out of which all life originates. The Creator is not a punishing father-God. It is the I-point of the world, in which all vibrations come together. This I-point exists in all beings. When we meet anew in this understanding, there can be no religious violence.

### **5. Grace: No Revenge. Reconciliation**

The newly forming planetary community has given itself a name. Their posters say “GRACE – Movement for a Free Earth.” They are declaring that the injuries and pain suffered will no longer be answered with hatred and violence. The pain has given birth to a new determination. Hatred has transformed into an absolute decision for life, peace and healing. There is no neutrality any longer, as one has taken a stand for life. This is no ideological or political stance. The tears which are cried by an Israeli mother for her murdered son are the same tears as those cried by a Palestinian mother. For many, the pain is too great for any more tears. Accusations and judgments are of no use any more, because they perpetuate the downward spiral of violence. The young demonstrators in Cairo or Tripoli are the same age as the soldiers and police shooting at them. They could have been friends. The peace-workers in Colombia’s San José de Apartadó and the murderous paramilitary who kill them could also be friends if they could step out of the constraints of a vile system. No revenge! This was the appeal of a young Israeli woman (Michal) after her face was destroyed in a suicide bombing by a young Palestinian. She said that she might have acted similarly if she had been in his position. The inner power of this attitude is based on the deepest insight that we humans all come from the same source, have passed through similar suffering and are striving towards a similar goal of peace and healing.

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### **6. Life without Fear**

There is no more fear of any enemy, as there are no real enemies any more. The Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo fought as a revolutionary for India's independence from England. While he was awaiting a death sentence in prison, Vasudeva (God) appeared to him. Vasudeva appeared to him in the form of the guards, the prosecutors and the judges. He had no more fear and was released. This is a very high point in the development of consciousness. When a human being has reached an inner point where he no longer reacts with fear or hatred, his organism changes and he becomes increasingly immune to attack and invulnerable. There are astonishing examples of this miracle. The Jansenists in Paris in the 18th Century could not be killed, as they were no longer afraid. In the times of the Great Plague, those helpers who were not afraid of infection were immune to the disease. There are stories of people in concentration camps who were spared by the executioner because they were not afraid of his power and cruelty. There is an essential key for peace work in our times here. Those who do not project onto evil cannot be reached by evil. Evil does not have power in itself, but gains power from projections of fear. An evil regime cannot remain in power once people stop projecting on it. It depends in the deepest sense on ourselves whether we win or lose this fight. We will win it once we stop reacting in old patterns. This requires a high level of training and a high vision of the common goal. Victory is not a question of collective emotion but a question of collective wisdom. When a new planetary movement takes a stand for life wholeheartedly, without reservation, then it stands on the side of higher justice and is thereby protected by high powers.

### **7. Water-Healing**

Water is not merely the chemical substance H<sub>2</sub>O, but a living organism. The new world knows the secret of water, as described most deeply by Viktor Schauberger. All the information of life from the cosmos and the earth is taken on by water and given to all beings. Healthy water, full of energy is a key to completely healing the earth. Healthy groundwater and healthy drinking water is the basis of a healthy subsistence economy, for the healing of nature and humans and for a healthy connection of new

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communities with the core power of life. Thanks to its strong self-cleansing powers, water can be healed relatively quickly as soon as the disruptive factors are removed and its natural forms of movement are restored. The new planetary community has started to develop new systems to heal water at several places on earth. Water can be created in even the most barren regions of the earth. If the possibilities inherent in water are used in an intelligent way, autonomous settlements can develop almost anywhere on earth. Water, energy and food are freely available for the whole of humankind!

### **8. The Sacred Alliance of all Beings**

The new planetary peace-community is accompanied by a host of visible and invisible co-creatures who together form the biosphere. All beings of the biosphere are in resonance with each other. Together they form a unified information system (the noosphere). This information system has been greatly disturbed by the violent interventions of the human being. Whales are losing their orientation, bees are dying out, and many dead birds have been falling from the sky recently. To heal the biosphere again, the appropriate healing information must be introduced. All co-creatures joyfully accept information that is based on trust and respond to it enthusiastically. We know the moving pictures of the baby playing with the giant snake, of the lions who lovingly embrace their keepers, and many more. A similar co-existence with snakes, rats and wild boars has developed in Tamera. As soon as the human abandons his occult fears of the animal kingdom, the animals completely change their behaviour towards him. A cooperation starts between human and animal that previously only existed in fairytales. As soon as the first communities have developed the global information of peace, the whole animal kingdom will stand at their side. Whales and dolphins, birds, rats, frogs, ants etc. are part of an invisible information system which spreads its frequencies over the whole earth. Peace-communities of the new times will therefore do anything to rebuild the lost friendship with all creatures. This needs a radical renunciation of violence, deceit and abuse. Animals are no longer used for production. Food, cosmetics, medicines, clothes or bags for which animals had to die or suffer, will disappear from human households. The more conscientiously this happens, the stronger will be the healing power which guides the global processes from these centres.



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### **Global Success**

How can the new system of global peace spread and prevail worldwide? What gives us the optimism to so strongly believe that the global massacre will soon be over? It is an understanding of the powerful effect of new thoughts which are in resonance with the healing powers of the world. We can compare the earth's information system to a biological Internet in which all the information is passed on to all participants. The system has become suffused with dense information of fear and violence, but behind this traumatic web lies a very different pattern, the pattern of healing which we call the 'Sacred Matrix'. If just a few groups on earth succeed in "downloading" the sacred pattern, the information of trust and healing can then be "uploaded" back into the global net, causing the global chain of violence to break. The healing information connects with the life forces of the sacred matrix and enters the body of the earth with great power, immediately causing genetic changes and a global field from which similar groups will arise all over the earth. A planetary process is thereby initiated, which cannot be stopped, as it is coherent with the entelechial powers of life. To illustrate this with an analogy, if we perceive the earth as a unified organism, then the healing information that is introduced has a similar effect to that of medicine introduced into the human organism. A single dose of medicine can effect a healing process in all organs and every cell! In the present case, a single dose of (complex) healing information effects a healing process in the whole organism of the earth. Human beings will no longer be physically or psychically able to torture and kill their co-creatures.

A major contribution to the shift from one age to another is provided by the power of vision. We are actually experiencing the birth of a powerful vision today: the vision of the new earth! The vision of a non-violent planet! The vision of a new planetary community! The vision of solidarity with all co-creatures! The vision of the sacred alliance! Nothing is more powerful than a vision whose time has come. If the revolutionaries of our times can develop a solid vision of peace which prevails against all resistance, then they have an unlimited power of manifestation. The power of thoughts and visions arises from the existence of the 'invisible substance'. Thoughts and visions build invisible fields of energy and information which are not limited by space. The visible world comes from invisible fields of energy and

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information! Just as a tree comes from the invisible substance of its genetic information. The whole of humankind is in such a process of a new becoming at present. It could be interesting in this regard to point out the famous Mayan date of December 21st 2012. We look at the scientific significance of this date, not the mythological meaning. At this point in time, different astronomical events coincide, such as a maximum of solar activity, changing the magnetic field of the earth. This change causes molecular changes in the genetic and neural structure of the human being, meaning in his consciousness and character. This process needs only relatively small triggers to lead to a genetic peace movement of planetary dimension – if these triggers are coherent with the sacred matrix. The future-trances which have been undertaken in the Peace Research Institute of Tamera, Portugal, show a shining picture. The Mayan date is not the end of humankind but a peak of global transformation and the start of a new epoch.

### **Tamera and the Global Campus**

Over the past years, Tamera Peace Research Centre in Portugal has been developing a research settlement (currently 170 inhabitants) for a future without war. The thoughts of this manifesto were developed here and are being brought into reality. An international university, the so-called Global Campus, has been founded for the global dissemination of these thoughts. It has branches on several continents. The basic thoughts of the project are connected with practical developments in the fields of energy, water and food. A new model is being developed for the basics of human life, without damage to nature and our co-creatures. Energy, water and food are freely available for all of humankind, if we manage the natural resources of our earth wisely. Nobody on earth has to suffer from deprivation, starvation or cold once the tyranny is ended. May the death of so many peaceworkers not have been in vain! The call from Gaza and the earth's cry for help will no longer fade away unheard. The catastrophe in Japan has awakened millions of people. So let us come together worldwide to create a future worth living.

*In the name of life.*

*In the name of all children.*

*In the name of all creatures.*

## **How to Change Everything: My Answer to Henry Baum**

*by Daniel Pinchbeck*

Henry Baum writes: “Until you offer some practical ideas about how the transition will work, much of this is an intellectual exercise. Invigorating, thought-provoking, but of limited utilitarian value to the 6 billion other people who don’t have the time, resources, or inclination to consider these ideas. Beyond “time for change,” it’s also time to be pragmatic, or these ideas are only going to appeal to a New Age minority. These ideas are transformative and inspiring, but that’s only half the equation.”

Henry, I appreciate the comment, although I do feel I have offered many practical ideas about the transition in my past work. Here I will once again seek to encapsulate various aspects of my thesis into a practical program. For those who want to follow my line of reasoning, a number of books have been critical: *Multitude* by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *On Revolution* by Hannah Arendt, *Spontaneous Evolution* by Steve Bhaerman and Bruce Lipton, *Conscious Evolution* by Barbara Marx Hubbard, *Utopia or Oblivion and Operation Spaceship Earth* by Buckminster Fuller, *The Future of Money* by Bernard Lietaer, *The End of Money and the Future of Civilization* by Tom Greco, *Cradle to Cradle* by William McDonogue, *Mediated* by Tom DeZengotita, *The Spell of the Sensuous* by David Abrams, etc. Not to mention works by Marx (“The Jewish Question”), Rousseau (“The Origins of Inequality”), Gandhi, Macchiavelli, and so on.

Essentially, the plan is to simultaneously work within and outside of the system as it exists, to bring about a rapid transmutation of this system so that it serves humanity as a whole and safeguards the planetary environment through long-term stewardship.

### **Business**

Think of corporations as nascent organs in the collective body of humanity. A media company is akin to the species’ perceptual and cognitive capacities; an energy company

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is like its blood; a waste treatment company like its liver; etc. As Lipton and Bhaerman discuss in *Spontaneous Evolution*, immature eco-systems are characterized by competition and aggression, while mature eco-systems are symbiotic and cooperative. We find a great example of this in our own bodies, made up of hordes of micro-organisms that learned to work together for the greater good of the whole, many millions of years ago. You don't see our liver cells invading our pancreas, etc. *Spontaneous Evolution* proposes that humanity is on the verge of recognizing itself as collective organism, a planetized species that possesses a collective consciousness: This is what our meshing together through communication technology points toward.

Corporations are the most powerful agents for transforming matter and energy, for taking concept and idea and realizing it in tangible form, that human beings have ever devised. The development of the corporate form in the 17th Century was a great evolutionary leap. However, we now need to reach a collective realization of the design flaw in how corporations currently function so we can redirect them from being agents of planetary destruction to cooperative entities that work for the good of the planet and safeguard the future for our descendants.

Essentially, corporations are “artificial life forms” that we have constructed out of legal code, brand insignia, and financial data and let loose on the planet. Unfortunately, we have constructed a set of game rules for them that are suicidal for the earth. We have given corporations one single prime directive: to maximize shareholder value, no matter what. If a corporation doesn't do this, it dies. Therefore, being artificial life forms, that is exactly what they seek to do. According to this program, if there is an expensive environmental restriction, they will seek to overturn it. If there is government regulation, they will do anything to corrupt it: This is built into their nature, according to the rules we constructed for them, to be profit-making machines.

Because of this intrinsic design error, no superficial reform of the current financial and regulatory system is going to be truly effective. We have to consciously redesign the game rules so that all corporations function according to different prime directives: they need to have an ecological and cooperative ethos built into their operational logic

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from the start. This doesn't mean that current protests against hydro-fracking, genetically modified organisms, etc, should be interrupted: In fact, victories in these areas will help to move us to the next point in the struggle, where the need for this deeper transition becomes generally accepted, something that enough of us will fight for, unremittingly, until we bring it about. The efforts from within corporations to make them more sustainable are also valuable -- but they won't be truly effective until the game rules of the system are changed.

### **Financial System**

Concurrent with the growth of the awareness that the corporate system is a planetary suicide machine as currently designed, we also need to undertake a far-reaching transformation of the financial system, and consciously redesign "money" (the token of how value is exchanged) so that it functions to enhance local communities, protects resources, safeguards the commons, and so on. Evolver recently published two books on this subject: *Sacred Economics* by Charles Eisenstein and *What Comes After Money?*, an anthology of essays originally published in *Reality Sandwich*: I recommend them. "Money" is not a neutral tool -- or something natural and inevitable -- it is an instrument that has been designed according to certain values and beliefs, to support particular ends. The ruse of the fractional reserve banking system and the "Federal Reserve" (which is neither federal or a reserve) has been exposed. Our financial system creates artificial scarcity and enforces cutthroat competition -- as the joke has it, how do people in Hollywood say, "Fuck you?" "Trust me." The entire financial system is a debt pyramid, a Ponzi Scheme, with a currency that has been delinked from all tangible resources and functions entirely virtually. In fact, the global financial system died on the operating table in 2008, and since then, the ruling banking elite has been seeking to artificially resuscitate it by creating trillions of imaginary credits and pumping them into it. Bankers are now running European countries -- with former members of Goldman Sachs installed as rulers in Greece and Spain -- in an increasingly desperate effort to keep this system of tyranny and debt-peonage afloat.

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There is no reason that consortiums of local businesses cannot get together to create their own credit system based on tangible goods and issue zero-interest loans, as Greco proposes. Lietaer proposes a global trading currency, the Terra, indexed to a basket of real-world goods and resources that decline in value over time. Therefore such a currency would lose value the longer it is held -- it would have what is called a “demarrage” charge, as many currencies did in the past. If you found yourself with an abundance of this resource, instead of seeking to horde it you would be best off sharing it generously with your community, as people would then remember you did them a good turn, and would do the same for you when they attained temporary abundance.

Once again, to look at the biological metaphor, our cells use energy in the form of ATP: No cell can store a huge surplus of this energy, the energy transmits through the whole system and is available for all cells to use as needed for the tasks they are required to fulfill for the good of the whole.

Eisenstein, in his remarkable book, proposes a currency that has its value linked to the health of the commons: To that which should belong to all of us, which we should seek to protect -- such as clean air, clean water, wildlife, wetlands, etc. In the same way having a currency linked to gold leads people to tear gold out of mountains and rocks, a currency indexed to what we hold in common could lead people to value that most of all.

In the near term, we can participate actively in creating and working with local currencies: Even creating a time-share among a group of friends who are willing to help look after each other's kids, or a community currency that supports sharing and cooperation. At the same time, agitating for financial reform is good -- as long as we realize it is not good enough, since what is required is systemic change. Since banking is essentially a virtual system, there is no reason a better virtual system can't be created that functions according to the alternative principles proposed here: At some point, an instant switch-over can be made -- perhaps when the current financial system finally tanks.

The point in all of these areas is not to reject the current system and thus cut our-

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selves off from being effective. We can learn to utilize the tools and techniques of the current system to transmute it, creating a new social, financial, and decision-making infrastructure that is consciously and compassionately designed to bring sufficient resources, and, ultimately, abundance, to every person on Earth.

### **Industry**

There was a time, not long ago, when few people believed that humans would ever be able to create a flying machine. Today, we tend to believe that industry has to create toxic waste and pollution that degrades the biosphere and our own bodies, to bring us the products we crave. However, as Cradle to Cradle explores, it is quite possible that all of our industrial systems could be redesigned to create no toxic effluents -- so that everything we create feeds back into the eco-system and even supports its flourishing.

Do we see any examples of such a perfected technology? Of course we do! It is called nature. Nature creates no waste. As Buckminster Fuller realized, humans need a “design revolution” so that all of our design and industry is reinvented to follow nature’s no-waste, less-is-more, hyper-efficient principles. I propose that the destiny of humanity -- if we choose to survive as a species -- is to reintegrate with nature -- to become “supra-nature,” in a sense -- at a higher order of being and knowing. In doing this, we redesign all of our industrial technologies so they do no harm to the biosphere. Perhaps this will take many decades to accomplish fully – or perhaps it can happen much quicker, when we truly work collaboratively – but it first has to become an ideal that we recognize as possible and then collectively seek to realize.

### **Energy**

The question of energy is, of course, an important one. We are already seeing cars and vehicles able to function on electricity created from solar power, from hydrogen or water hydrolysis. There are also new biofuels made from algae, and techniques such as Biochar, that create energy while removing carbon from the environment, over time. In my film, we converted a scooter to run on water hydrolysis with energy from a solar

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panel providing the electrical charge. The interesting point is that the entire fleet of 600 million currently existing internal combustion vehicles could be repurposed to function on water hydrolysis by adding tanks to them. This could be an amazing opportunity for Detroit to reinvigorate its factory system to provide these conversions for all vehicles currently existing in the US.

Beyond even that, there is the legitimate potential for energy that is unlimited in supply, produced from drawing upon the quantum fluctuations in the vacuum, as the movie *Thrive* explores. Personally, I also believe there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that extraterrestrials - galactic civilizations - visit the earth in different kinds of ships that exist at various levels of materiality. If this is the case, these ships are not coming here powered by coal, oil, or plutonium. They are using some kind of anti-gravity or Zero Point energy system, which means that such a form of energy does exist and is potentially available to us. It may also be that humans have accessed and used this form of energy in past times, in Egyptian and Atlantean epochs, as Nassim Haramein and Graham Hancock, among many others, have proposed. It is possible that development of this energy has been suppressed by elements within the control system, as *Thrive* proposes. But information is now coming out in so many ways and from so many sources, that its dissemination is uncontrollable.

In the near term, then, we should continue to push for alternative energy solutions, while also furthering public discussion on transformative energy possibilities that could be used to rapidly elevate the living conditions of humanity as a whole, if they are legitimate. We should see a plethora of alternatives, including a comprehensive initiative to retrofit current vehicles for hydrolysis, thus reducing the carbon emissions of post-industrial civilization drastically.

### **Work**

As we supersede the system of artificial scarcity that forces people to labor incessantly in order to support themselves, like gerbils on a wheel or rats in a maze, we will transition out of our current construct of work, into a different realization of life's purpose and



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meaning. As Buckminster Fuller realized, most of the work that people currently do has a negative value and actually subtracts from the real economy -- the natural economy -- of the earth. For someone to drive to an office, sit indoors all day thus becoming sickly, use Styrofoam cups and toner cartridges and wear out computers built out of “conflict minerals,” is just a negative from the mother planet’s accounting. If people were, instead, subsidized to live in home communities where they were encouraged to grow their own organic food, have deeper multi-generational ties, and create festive spectacles and ceremonies (what tribal people did, and do, with their time), this would be of much greater benefit to the earth, as well as creating a happier and more fulfilled humanity.

Deep down, nobody wants a “job” to occupy their time: People want a mission to inspire them and bring out their deepest soul capacities. I have yet to meet a child who wasn’t a magician, artist, seer, and shaman, all wrapped into one. The current system is idiotic, as it snuffs out our vital and creative impulses in order to turn us into zombies staring vacantly into screens and even believing we prefer these virtual spectacles to true human and spiritual communion with each other and the earth.

So, in the future, following Fuller’s brilliant insights, I believe that everyone will receive a living subsidy -- enough food to eat, a decent place to live -- in order to pursue their inclinations and creative drives to the Nth degree. That in fact would be the proper and sensible use of our technical genius, rather than what we do now, which is use most of our intelligence to thwart our deepest potential from becoming manifest. At the same time, some will feel called upon to excel, produce and create, more than others -- and this will also be natural and right, with a greater reward for the achievement in terms of social prestige and access to resources for making new things, but greater talent won’t be rewarded as excessively and inequitably as it is today. In a world of cooperation and abundance, that will seem foolish and unnecessary. Ultimately, creativity is its own reward.

### **Agriculture**

It has been well-demonstrated that organic and permaculture based approaches to agriculture produce a higher yield of edible crops and are much less destructive to

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land and soil than industrial or “mono-cultural” systems of food-production. They are also more labor intensive and require a deeper level of forethought, care, and skill. We should transition quickly back to a global system of organic and permaculture based agriculture, using heirloom and traditional seed stock. The interactive technology of the Internet can be utilized to do global training sessions in these techniques, with local experts going from place to place to educate different cultures on the best practices that have been discovered.

There is no reason for people to be starving on this earth. I interviewed the director of Pro Natura, a non-profit. They have developed an alfalfa leaf extract that can provide a human being’s basic nutritional needs for a few dollars a year. In my film, we spoke to aquaponics experts who noted that 80% of New York City’s nutritional needs could be fulfilled from within the city’s boundaries through rooftop aquaponic gardens. We saw in Cuba what happened when subsidies from the USSR were withdrawn: Instead of starving, they undertook a massive urban farming initiative, and are in better environmental shape than most countries on earth today, with a more secure food supply. In the US, the average morsel of food comes from 2,000 miles away, which is absurdly wasteful.

I think we are only beginning to reckon with the effect of nutrition on human consciousness: I know this is a process I am exploring in my own life. The revolution in practices related to food and nutrition and the evolution of consciousness are the same process, in material and immaterial form.

Therefore, we should be fighting against Monsanto, ADM, the subsidization of chemically polluting industrial agriculture, while many of us learn to grow our own food, create gardens, or at least buy from local organic farms or join CSAs, etc. More community permaculture projects would be great!

### **Media**

One the biggest logjams we currently face is the horrific condition of contemporary mass media, which is a consciousness control system that keeps the mass of

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people, the multitude, in a stupefied state of cynicism and passivity, hooked on alienated spectacles like sports and Hollywood films that have no relationship to their real lives or future potential. The mass media -- from Fox to The New York Times to Conde Nast -- is an extension of the corporate military industrial complex. It is designed to suppress and limit awareness.

In *Multitude*, Negri and Hardt discuss how we have shifted from Marx's time when "material production" (of goods) was most important or "hegemonic," to a time when immaterial production (of images, memes, ideas, ways that affective relationships are constructed and defined, etc) have become hegemonic (Facebook and Twitter being great examples). Now, in a system where immaterial production has become hegemonic, what, ultimately, is being produced? For Negri and Hardt, the answer is "subjectivity." The mass media machine is a factory for producing a particular form of human subjectivity -- passive, consumerist, at the same time, through the cunning distortion of the concepts of individuality and the construct of the "hipster rebel," believing itself to be superior, knowing, to have chosen its apolitical alienation as the most individual gesture and statement it could make -- and making other options or ways of being invisible. Consider the the media for sale and on view at an airport, and you will get what I mean.

In other words, the mass media produces and reproduces a certain level or form or frequency of human consciousness, and standardizes and homogenizes us through its continual beaming of this frequency. Now, this is not all bad: In fact, this standardization and homogenization of consciousness is part of what we needed to attain our next level of species being. Try to imagine a bunch of noble Masai warriors lining up for airport security screening, to get a sense of what I mean. The effect of transnational postmodern capitalism in standardizing the planetary consciousness is a necessary phase that provides the ground for another stage in our realization of human being-ness. Lewis Mumford noted that we needed to integrate the lessons of the machine realm -- its impersonality, standardization, and functionality, etc -- so that we could become more deeply human, more truly humane. Because we are all meshed together now

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in this way, we can potentially all hold hands and take the next jump together, when unavoidable and necessary.

In my own work, I have been particularly working in this arena of media to help bring about the necessary transition through an opening and liberation of awareness in many fields. When I found the traditional mass media organs were barred to me, I worked with a team to create an alternative media and educational system, Evolver.net, which is still growing and developing. We now offer interactive webinars, Evolver Intensives ([www.evolverintensives.com](http://www.evolverintensives.com)), and books ([www.evolvereditions.com](http://www.evolvereditions.com)), and a web magazine ([www.realitysandwich.com](http://www.realitysandwich.com)), and have a social network that is intended to facilitate building a planetary community of people who share an understanding of the process of change now underway ([www.evolver.net](http://www.evolver.net) -- Evolver Social Movement on Facebook).

Once again, the approach is not an “either or” but a “both and”: Work within the traditional media structures if possible, while seeking to construct an alternative media infrastructure that uses all of the techniques of marketing and advertising if possible to disseminate an alternative vision and a set of tangible practices that people can access from wherever they are. DIY media; alternative media going viral through Youtube, Facebook, or Vimeo: all of this is part of the process now underway, which is breaking down old hierarchies and has the potential to create a new open-source media democracy.

### **Social Networks and the Political System**

When we review our history, we find that whenever a profound new media technology is born, there is a paradigm shift in political and social organization. For instance, you couldn't have had far-flung Empire until you had writing and a standardized code of law; you couldn't have had the modern democratic nation state until you had the printing press, which was necessary to distribute enough information about current events that people could vote. We now have a new form of media technology that is fully interactive, and this points toward creating a new political and social organization, which I tend to

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think of as “direct democracy,” or what the anthropologist Pierre Clautres called “Society without a State.”

Our current system of government was designed in the 18th Century to run on 18th Century technology: it is designed for horse and buggy speeds in an era of super-computers. There is no reason that “we the people” couldn’t participate continuously in the democratic process, through constant referendums, votes, educational campaigns, and public debate. There is also no reason that the government is not entirely transparent to us: There is no reason we shouldn’t know everything about who supports our elected officials, where their money comes from, to whom they owe fealty based on their past track records, and so on. Most people don’t know that congress people are actually permitted insider trading that is forbidden to traders on Wall Street, for instance.

We see the evolution of social networks leading to civil insurrections and overturning across the world, most famously in the recent “Arab Spring,” and the emergence of the global Occupy movement. Unfortunately, as we have seen in Egypt and elsewhere, while Twitter and Facebook are fantastic tools for getting people to join forces for a cause, they are not built to facilitate the next level of necessary reinvention and reconstruction of our currently semi-moribund democratic system. We therefore require a new social network that is built to be an instrument for democratic decision-making. This would require a track-back system for discussion forums where evidence could be organized in tree-like structures on any important subject so we don’t always have to return to “ground zero” or get thrown off course by corporate disinformation or the subterfuge of private interests. For instance, take a subject like genetically modified organisms, all the evidence for and against could be organized in a transparent system that reveals the source of all statements, the ideological position of the speaker, etc. In this way, it should be possible to always track back to the set point of what is established and necessary for anyone to understand, outside of any bias. For instance, in the case of GMOs, the problem of a lack of a precautionary principle, as we don’t truly know what the effect of a mutation will be generations down the line, or whether a mutation in a plant -- such as forced sterility -- can jump to other species. Also, we need to be able to explore the full efficacy of an

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industrial or technocratic approach compared to other solution-based approaches, with evidence provided from various research initiatives. This type of “reason tree” should be instantly available to us in all areas, so we can make naturally informed decisions.

The Occupy movement is currently foundering on the issue of consensus-based decision-making, and needs to shift into a framework that recognizes the exercise of “rational” -- as opposed to “irrational” -- authority: Rational authority is limited to an area of specialization and achievement that an individual has reached through a training process. Very interesting efforts to in a sense “automate” the bestowal of authority in group collaborative processes are being made: one of them is Shareef Beshay’s Better Means system, which provides an infrastructure for working teams to rate their own and each other’s performance, based on achieving tangible results.

As with the logjam in the financial system, we can address the current political impasse through the construction of new social networks that create a direct democratic infrastructure, that can be utilized first by early adaptors, and eventually by everyone, on a planetary scale, when we require it and when the time is right.

Through interactive media and social networks, a global retraining and re-imprinting can be undertaken, to rapidly bring about a new awareness of our interrelatedness with the biosphere as a totality, and to provide intensive and rapid education in ways of being and doing that support this realization.

My model does not propose a violent overturning of the present political system, but a plan to rapidly supercede it by building, iterating, and releasing the virtual infrastructure for the “civilization2.0” we all know in our hearts is possible, and that we need for the sake of our own lives and our children’s children’s children.

### **Pacification**

Another urgent need is the demilitarization and decolonization of the human mind, and a collective movement toward pacification. We have the models of Gandhi and Martin Luther King to consider: How the desire for peace can move from a passive wish to an unstinting demand, backed up by nonviolent action. We have begun to see a resurgence

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of this form of activism in the Occupy movement: It seems to be something that is welling up from the collective consciousness of humanity, part of our collective immune system response to the parasitic predation of the dominator complex that is now underway.

If a spiritual revolution were to occur in the United States, first and foremost, that involved a realization of love and divinity as a living presence on earth, then we could potentially convert our far-flung network of military bases into re-training centers for nonviolent communication, meditation, permaculture techniques, and other modalities that support rapid pacification. I think it is quite possible that this spiritual revolution is the destiny of our country: you could feel the first tone in this new octave of cooperative human being-ness sounding out in the Occupy zones. The pendulum swing of contracting consciousness had to go all of the way in the other direction so it could come back with sufficient force to break through the “mind-forgd manacles” that hold us in a certain set of limiting beliefs and ideological inertia. As I have written elsewhere, the advanced consciousness that emerged in the 1960s -- anthemized in the music of the Beatles, etc. -- was a presentiment of the new form of species being that will soon become the common property of humanity as a whole.

To bring about the pacification of human consciousness, meditation is a powerful tool. Experiments with Transcendental Meditation demonstrated that a sufficiently large number of meditators in a particular locale were able to significantly reduce the rates of violent crime in the Washington DC area and other places. Now, why was this experiment discontinued?! Why not make it a permanent, ongoing “experiment” taking place everywhere all at once. TM now absurdly costs thousands of dollars to learn “officially”: I recommend making this and all other such modalities freely available and mass-distributable through Internet-based training programs that thousands or millions of people can access at once.

### **Bioremediation**

This was explored at length in my film, *2012: Time for Change*, which streams on Netflix or can be bought at [www.2012timeforchange.com](http://www.2012timeforchange.com). An extraordinary repository

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of beneficial projects can be found by going to [bfi.org](http://bfi.org) and looking through the proposals for the annual Challenge Grant: Bioremediation will be the growth economy of the future, once we transition to a new paradigm in which the exchange of value is redesigned to support the health of the environment and the strength of the commons. We should be using natural systems to heal nature -- as John Todd and Paul Stamets are doing.

We will also need to do massive collective work to reverse deforestation, desertification, mitigate climate change, and preserve biodiversity: I believe that this can be undertaken as a multigenerational initiative that will be recognized as a sacred trust, and a joyful, devotional act toward the Mother who gives us life, breath, body, and soul.

### **The Commons**

I look toward the end of the concept of private property and intellectual property in general: This may take a few generations to accomplish, but I believe it is our destiny, and could actually happen much faster, once realization is attained by those who make up the “tipping point”. Aboriginal people and nomadic people don’t have a traditional concept of private ownership: However they have a concept of something like “usufruct,” meaning that while you are actually using something productively, you have the right to continue using it, and nobody can take it away from you.

I think intellectual property laws are anathema to human creativity, and patently absurd. Shakespeare was only capable of being so amazing because he could take other plays that were lying around and revise them as he saw fit.

We are currently seeing a movement in this direction with the “Creative Commons” licenses, etcetera, plus with the crumbling of the capacity of the media industries to stop people from copying and reproducing whatever they want: Information wants to be free: Let’s make it free. Obviously, this process needs to run in parallel with the other aspects of the transition described earlier: toward subsidization, shift in the work culture and transformation of industry and the media. We don’t want the artists to be shafted while the corporate system morphs into a new insidious form, which is a current tendency, at least superficially.



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### **A Snake Shedding Its Skin**

We could look at the whole process through biological metaphors: One is that of a snake shedding its skin. The texture of the old skin of our current civilization needs to hold together long enough, as this new skin -- of mythology, paradigm, social and technological praxis -- meshes together beneath it.

Another popular metaphor is “caterpillar to butterfly”: the few imaginal cells that propagate the reconfiguring code that transmutes the biotic goop of the caterpillar into a gorgeous winged being: Changing from rapacious consumer to elegant pollinator, while gaining the added dimension of flight.

Henry, please let me know if this satisfies your request for tangible applications of my ideas and how we can make it happen in the short period of time now available to us. If you would like me to drill down deeper in any area, please let me know and I will be happy to do it.

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*Starhawk* is the author of twelve books on Goddess religion, earth-based spirituality and activism, including “The Spiral Dance”, her novel “The Fifth Sacred Thing” which is in pre-production as a feature film, and her latest, “The Empowerment Manual” (New Society Publishers). She consulted on the Women in Spirituality series of documentaries the National Film Board of Canada, and together with director Donna Read, founded Belili Productions, [www.belili.org](http://www.belili.org), making films on issues concerning women and the earth. She directs Earth Activist Training, teaching permaculture design with a grounding in spirit and a focus on activism, and also offers trainings in strategy, nonviolent direct action and process for many movements. Information on her work can also be found at [Starhawk.org](http://Starhawk.org)

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<http://reinventingmoney.com>, offer an unprecedented wealth of information on the interplay of money, finance, economics and democracy.

*Tom Atlee* is founder of the nonprofit Co-Intelligence Institute ([co-intelligence.org](http://co-intelligence.org)) and author of “The Tao of Democracy” and “Reflections on Evolutionary Activism”. The watershed event of his life-long activism was the 1986 cross-country Great Peace March, a self-organized mobile tent city of 400 peaceful protesters. Living now in a consensus co-op in Eugene Oregon, Tom works on theories and practices to help make empowered public wisdom central to modern politics and governance.

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<http://www.realitysandwich.com/esm/join-evolver-social-movement-esm>