

The Occupiers' dream: an easy revolution?

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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The Occupy movement took a global leap on Saturday, although numbers were minimized by the corporate media. Where is this movement at, and what can happen? Start with the minds of protesters:

It may be that many Occupiers believe they can bring about major social change without much pain or sacrifice. Could this be an easy revolution, or a naïve hope for it? Not that they believe they won't ever be attacked by police, but that they might keep driving and pursuing their normal lifestyle while protesting.

Some of this attitude is connected to wishful cooperation with or immunity from the enforcement arm of the corporate state, to avoid confrontation. But protest is confrontation, although the more peaceful and positive it can be, the better. The more the merrier, and the safer, and thus very effective for positive outcomes.

A strong contingent of activists, many from Earth First! and the anti-globalization movement, has gotten a belly full of the full range of response by the corporate state, the news media, and the confusion of oblivious consumers. The experienced contingent is well versed in all the issues and has already made lifestyle changes, e.g., going car-free and living more communally. Peace activists are often more mainstream, but bless them all.

For now, one could characterize the Occupy movement as "Pre-food-riot have-nots asking for wealth redistribution." This description is unwieldy, but it says a bit more than "the protesters feel they are the 99%" who demand, "Make Banksters Accountable!"

To keep together all under one tent, as it were, the protesters are in danger of standing still. So where will they go next? There will sooner or later be another step to take that's not so easy. Will corporate news media offices and government buildings be forcibly Occupied, using nonviolent civil disobedience? Great numbers would be required. The scene could turn ugly and violent instantly, most likely because of police or agents de provocateur tactics.

If people are unemployed, it's a good reason to hang out in a park as Occupiers. Exchanging views and being visible to the world are wonderful developments. However, the follow-up has to be just as strong or else the movement dies.

So they have to move forward before they are subverted. At this very moment the powers that be must be striving to undermine the Occupy movement. And many an average citizen may resent his or her world being rocked by protesters. As nonsensical as "Get a job!" may be when hurled against someone ready and willing to work but cannot find a job, critics of protest are ready to support fascistic measures to keep crowds from taking over whole cities.

To maintain the initiative and not be sitting ducks, protesters must make a clear demand that resonates widely, something overdue that is insisted upon until the fight is won.

Freedom and justice cannot be gained easily; they must be taken by force -- without undue harm to innocents or even "enemies."

If people knew there had to be a revision of recognized rights, such as replacing the Constitution with something more like the Articles of Confederation, there would be greater promise. Restoring the states' rights would mean breaking apart the empire in part by having no standing army. And doing away with corporate personhood is another basic reform to minimize the excesses of Western Civilization.

But a limited focus of the Occupy movement on Wall Street, banks and corporations can fall short of meaningful change if sops of reform take hold: a sham or co-optation is erected. It is naïve to believe corporations can be made accountable, because they will grow and dominate if they can -- and we'd be back to Square One.

In contrast, boycotting oil would be deeper than a demand, but rather a lifestyle change that upends the corporate economy. Moreover, such a change allows people to live life to the fullest, closer to nature and more self-reliant, and it expands their consciousness toward unity. Yet, if separation as consumers -- whether middle-class or low-end -- persists, the Occupy movement will be easily overtaken (or even forgotten) by a huge crisis such as a food riot.

To keep ahead of the stagnation pitfall, perhaps the agenda needs to be "Accelerate collapse" -- assuming the protesters understand that collapse has begun. Collapse sounds bad or like a wish for destruction. But if collapse, due to peak oil and overpopulation, is inevitable and must cleanse the rotten system, fresh energy and healing then come to the fore. That's a natural consequence of people coming together voluntarily and in their self-interest for a collective solution.

Community-healing

If the Occupy movement keeps spreading, one main result will be a trend toward community; i.e., permanent unity. Community is what has been lacking where the people have been divided by capitalism, corporatism and bureaucratic control. Land reform is not quite on the lips of the 99% -- in the U.S., that is, the "land of opportunity" where it's all been fenced or paved.

Isolated consuming has played into "divide and conquer" to keep people from uniting in their own interests. The forces of social control from on high are essentially anti-community, because mass awakening and action threaten the dominant order of inequality.

But at Occupy protests, people from all walks of life are meeting and working out their ideas, and unless totally disrupted these community builders will keep moving forward. A big aspect of the Occupy movement is -- although hardly mentioned -- healing. The power of community includes healing, and if allowed to flourish is on all levels.

Healing, however, is not instant, nor is it obtainable free of effort. It takes place only when conditions are right and the body (or community) is no longer bombarded with toxins or other injury. This is best during a fast -- whether fasting from compliance with a dysfunctional financial system or from food when a body is busy resting or eliminating toxins. Time is required for expelling poisons, such as via fever, puss, vomiting, scabbing, etc. -- "healing crises." When the organism can break from the onslaught of unhealthful influences and conditions, it is able to deal with the crisis and cleanse to raise its immunity and defenses. Then can best come the needed rebuilding, renewal and rejuvenation. A body thus regains health, doing better for itself than relying on the fix of pills going under the knife if cleansing is required. A body is not like a car, whereby a defective part can simply be replaced. Socially, we are also one and must heal from within. As we are beginning to see, a function must sometimes be restrained at a critical historic juncture: unlimited material growth, such as manifested by greed, has to stop. A fast and a new, healthy diet then can save both the body and the body politic.

What is the goal of Occupy, given the root problems?

The anti-war group The World Can't Wait points out,

Corporations and Banks Are Part of Something Bigger

((But, you know, if we hate what the corporations and banks are doing, and we want to stop it, we have to look at what they are part of. They're part of something bigger than themselves, a system of capitalism that operates according to certain dynamics. (Think about this: Corporations and banks don't exist forever: they're bought and sold.

Are Corporations Corrupting the System... Or is the Problem the System of Capitalism? -
Revcom.us

That gets us part way.

Aaron Lehmer, co-founder of Bay Localize (Oakland, California), says

In this hopeful, historic moment of change, one idea "occupies" my mind: calling on the 1% to invest their fair share in jobs, social programs, and economic stimulus will not be enough. We must also build local resilience to thrive in the post-growth economy that's coming, re-creating vibrant regional food systems, investing in clean community power, and re-balancing our lives with the rhythms of nature.

What more do we replace the problem with?

Activist Arthur Brenner brought this perspective forward, from Genevieve Vaughan, author of
Women and The Gift Economy

"The answer to the injustice of the appropriation of the abundant gifts of the many is not a fair return in cash for the theft but the creation of gift based economies and cultures where life is not commodified. ((While such a radical change may appear extremely difficult, it is more 'realistic' than simply continuing in our attempts to survive and care for one another in the frighteningly destructive and increasingly toxic world we know today, for these attempts are doomed to failure in the long term."

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"Live Revolution" -
OccupyStream
#OccupyWallStreet "Live from around the world. We are the 99%. A central hub for all livestreams."

The Wall Street Journal partially featured this Culture Change article: What's up with the Occupy protests - for a sustainable culture? - Helpful links for connecting to protests.

I'm Not Moving

As the protest movement spills out from the US and takes over the world, one award-winning director cuts the long story down to a short film.

Photo journalism is by Jan Lundberg (unless otherwise indicated) at Occupy Santa Cruz March, Oct. 15, 2011. He notes,

The Santa Cruz newspaper Sentinel, a Republican sheet owned by the San Jose Mercury News, said on Oct. 16 that "dozens" of protesters marched the day before, but there were about 1,500. At any rate, most cars going by honked supportively, and one might have counted one of them at any time.

Organizers tried to get all people off the road at march's end to please the police. (I sat in the road a while.) The police finally walked up to ask the one remaining sitter to leave, apparently after protesters asked the police to ask him. He complied, and any "unpredictable chaos" receded. So the "easy revolution" eased on. I also videotaped this scene with one hand, the other hand holding my trusty tambourine.