# How The Occupy Movement May Be Off-Base, and How It Can Evolve ("Occupy the Land")

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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The Occupy movement is by and large preoccupied with most wealth being hoarded "on Wall Street" in the hands of "the 1%". While it's true statistically that the money is there, what will ultimately prove to matter more to the "the 99%" is access to healthy land that can support life and human subsistence. When the total financial meltdown hits, it won't be the money in digital accounts that matters, but productive land that is held privately or in common.

Power as people commonly perceive it is not on Wall Street. Neither is the power in Washington, D.C.
The 20th century saying goes, "political power comes out of the barrel of a gun." But this is also a short-sighted analysis that ignores the future -- for a world of 7 billion people on a collision course with sustainability. So, where is the power and wealth today really at, and can a transfer of wealth for equitable redistribution -- if that were indeed possible -- really transform people's lives positively?

What folks in "poor" countries have always understood is that their power and survival lie in possessing their own land. Land reform in many parts of our increasingly crowded world is a burning issue. Many people live and die for the struggle for their right to live on their ancestral lands. A movement in the U.S. for the masses to take back the land from the few is inevitable.

Better late than never; many decades have passed during which the importance for consumers of being close to the land was greatly diminished. Real wealth, the land, was given up for wages and cheap petroleum's technology explosion. Population growth has happened so fast that a new generation didn't know it was inheriting a world less and less free and no longer abundant in life-giving resources ("ecological services").

But as the sun sets on the system of vast, false monetary wealth and on the oppression it has wielded, nature may first wake us up rudely, before people in the U.S. can go about land reform. If so, after societal and possibly ecological collapse, there may be quite a bit of land available and to share after the population has diminished sufficiently in size. This was the case in Europe after the 14th century plagues took their toll. However, in no way should such drastic "solutions" be pursued.

"Occupying" the heart of cities today does mean something in today's world of artificial environments, material culture, and middle class values. But instead of occupying the cities, the movement should be about running away from cities. Instead of occupying Wall Street, run away from it: abandon it, abandon the system, abandon consuming, and embrace simple living on the land. This ought to be the prime goal, rather than a stampede today or tomorrow. When, though?

Why "run away" and focus on healthy land, you may ask? Many ecological environmentalists have dealt with the issue of lifestyle choices versus availability of money that is false wealth. Apart from quality-of-life considerations and ethical values, how we live today for a sustainable future can't be ignored: the simple fact is that U.S. cities feed themselves through massive petroleum inputs, such as for distribution of food grown on average 1,500 miles away. So we must enhance community economics and solidarity with our neighbors or tribe.

Occupy Big Oil (TransitionVoice.com) is a healthy impulse, for starters. It points out that the billions of dollars in increased profits of major oil companies are tied to Wall Street. But "running away from Big Oil" -- boycotting petroleum -- is much more effective and life-changing than trying to redistribute wealth. There is no social justice on a dead planet. Nor is there going to be abundant, clean energy for a crippled consumer economy. To demand alternative energy that would replace cheap oil on a similar scale is unfortunately the naive position of too many Occupiers: "The New York City General Assembly recognized the role of Big Oil in the declaration of grievances against corporations that it put out in late September: 'They continue to block alternate forms of energy to keep us dependent on oil.'" (TransitionVoice.com,

Oct. 31)

Another problem facing the Occupy movement is that the contest is really between "the 1%" and another 1%. The latter refers to the approximate bulk of the intelligentsia nestled in "the 99%" that actually turns out for protests, or that is active compared to the average consumer. A third of the U.S. population does seem to support the Occupiers, which can spell success. The American Revolution was carried out by approximately a third of the colonists (active and supportive). But, as we asked in a recent column, what is the Occupy revolution fighting, or does it know?

The relatively small turnouts to date at Occupy sites are not as much of a problem as the possible dispersion or fragmenting of the movement. If there is a push by a faction for boycotting corporate products, for example, this might gain enough support to see the movement graduate to a specific agenda. Attempting car-free living is an even harder plank for finding acceptance. Taking over land for food production, like the Diggers did in 1649 in England, is more germane to our true need today as modern humans separated from nature and her gifts.

While focusing on the elite rich, the 1%, what about the fact that so many people below the 1% in terms of wealth -- say, the top 5% of the population -- don't care about the bottom 95%, just as the top 1% doesn't care about the bottom 99%? Society's values are such that the top 10% and the top 25% don't care about the bottom 90% or the bottom 75%, respectively.

Where does it end? The illusions of materialism and artificial living have yet to be shattered. Are the bottom 5% together in solidarity? Probably not, although they may appreciate more than the upper 95% the efforts of the few actually protesting on the streets. A scary statistic: in this time of ecological collapse, the car-free by choice portion of the U.S. population might be just .01%. What does that make the other 99.99% -- oblivious polluters, or helpless consumers?

Let us guestimate that we are the ecological 1%. We are awake and active. Join us, you other 98% of the mass and even you 1% holding your false vast wealth!

Occupy the land!

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Occupying Wall Street also means occupying Big Oil — Transition Voice, Oct. 31, 2011

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