What Comes
After Occupy?

ADAPT LABOUR STUDIES BOOK-SERIES
International School of Higher Education in Labour and Industrial Relations

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What Comes After Occupy?:

The Regional Politics of Resistance

Edited by

Todd A. Comer

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TODD A. COMER

Tracing origins is always a foolhardy business, even when it is necessary on occasion to fix a point and say (quite contingently), "Ah, there it is!" This is no less true of the book you hold in your hands. One could point to the events in Zuccotti Park as an origin, but that would too quickly marginalize the work of certain people in Vancouver who sent out a call for tent dwellers. One might as well point to the Arab Spring, to Tiananmen, to the U.S. mortgage crisis, or any number of causes, because one cause leads on endlessly to another. It's all rather untidy, but perhaps that is the wonder of the experience.

Even, so, here's where I am going to place the blame, at least for the moment: It was Occupy Wall Street's fault, or, rather the folks who organized the local group eventually known as Occupy Defiance. It was our collective struggle to define ourselves, our targets, our audience and context, and our actions that was the immediate origin for this book. I was greatly interested in our own awakening as a local iteration of OWS, and I wanted to tell my version of events as justly and usefully as possible (what follows in the introduction is my own inevitably biased take on our experience). Secondly, and relatedly, I wanted to create a space for others in similar out-of-the-way locales to tell their own stories.

For me, the great joy of Occupy and this collection was the experience of making real many of my own abstractions (now that the Occupy event is "past" here in Defiance, Ohio, ironically here I am back in the world of abstractions. But, never fear, this is only a rest stop on the road back to the real). I have been awakened through this process and owe a great debt to the many people I have worked with over the last two years as this project slowly took shape. To the core group which organized Occupy Defiance—Jacob Gallman, Josh Lesniak, Roger Molnar, Sean Moulder, Amanda Mullins, Mara Watson, Dolores Whitman—thanks! I learned much from you and hope our work continues here in Defiance, even if under a new standard. Certainly, after Occupy Defiance, I owe the most to my contributors who have had a profound impact on my thinking. Many people—Ken Barlow, Nathan Crook, Chris Medjesky, Dylan Wittkower,

INTRODUCTION

BEING SINGULAR PLURAL
ON MAIN STREET

TODD A. COMER

1. Introduction

This is not a book about Occupy Wall Street. This is a book about what Occupy became, is becoming, and must become if its politics are to survive.

While numerous books have been published on Occupy Wall Street, most of them have focused on Zuccotti Park, and have been laudatory in nature. *What Comes After Occupy?* focuses on the margins—unglamorous sites in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Montana, Indiana, California, or Texas, for example—and is, despite our generally positive viewpoint about Occupy, purposefully critical in nature. The goal, through critically highlighting the limitations (*or* strengths) of Occupy, is to learn from the past and prepare for the future. We highlight in order to give our reader a sense of what blind spots need to be addressed.

Only the original version of Occupy Wall Street has received any sustained attention in published form. It is our contention that, however influential Occupy Wall Street (OWS) was in New York City, on the margins, all over the world, Occupy also had an impact; and it is to our detriment to ignore this radical flourishing that, while it may have taken its cue from events in NYC, certainly did not allow that supposed "center" to limit its own creative politics. *Adbusters* on its web site[1] refers to the "morphing" of Occupy, as if this morphing has only just began. We believe that the morphing began as soon as the first group on the margins saw the example of protest in NYC and began to repeat it. Our collection

[1] Adbusters. nd. "Occupy Wall Street Day 933," *Adbusters*
https://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/occupywallstreet (accessed 26 July 2014).

is concerned with rescuing this creative politics from marginalization so that the lessons learned are not lost but put to work to build the movement which is Occupy.

We are optimistic about Occupy and its impact on culture and politics; however, we argue nevertheless that a number of problematic issues need to be discussed in order to improve Occupy and leftist politics in general. Clearly, as a collection devoted to the interdisciplinary assessment of Occupy, while we agree in general on certain large issues, we do not by any means hold a univocal position on all issues. Specific positions depend on the contributors who are in dialog with other contributors and who hold opposing or complementary positions on the same issue.

Needless to say, dispersed throughout the collection are concrete examples of organizing on the margins in small towns and in suburbia. What follows is just such a concrete example, though its particular critical slant is *by no means* representative of the essays that follow. It is one of a number of takes on the "Occupy Movement," if one were to dare to homogenize such a complex and heterogeneous experience.

2. The Example of Occupy Defiance

Consider the following Main Street: Defiance, Ohio, rests at the confluence of the Maumee and Auglaize, two rivers which, while not aflame like the Cuyahoga waters of recent legend, are polluted, shot through with impurities from the outside, from Fort Wayne, Indiana, where the Maumee—named after the Miami Indians—emerges at the confluence of the St. Joseph and St. Mary, until it dumps its load into Lake Erie, near Toledo, home of toxic algae blooms.

Forts Defiance *and* Wayne: 18th century forts, constructed by Brigadier General "Mad" Anthony Wayne, were a crucial part of the U.S. military strategy to shelter its citizens from the acid rain of difference embodied in Native Americans. In this case, these forts served a simple function: the conquest of nature (the Northwest Territory), entailing the extermination or purification of all who stood in the way of the incipient United States. Despite the *nom de guerre*, such forts were an imminently rational decision, if rationality is understood to be on the side of simplification and order, as it most assuredly is.

Today, in the 21st century, the fort is gone from Defiance (replaced by an underfunded library). The city boasts a GM plant, a college, a NASCAR champion, and, yes, a main street. There are just under 17,000 people in the City of Defiance, according to 2010 U.S. census data. Eighty-eight percent are white; 3.6 percent are African American; 14.4

percent are Hispanic; only .3 percent are Native American. Wayne's mad purifying campaign appears, at first glance, to have been successful.

But perhaps not as successful as it may seem. These numbers—and the 2.8 percent of people who claim dual "race"—do suggest a limit to Wayne and the nation's social project. But the most telling limit, at least for those of limited means living within Defiance, is not immediately social but *natural*. As colonialism and capitalism purified the social landscape (so that the nation could more readily claim ownership over nature), it left collateral damage. At the local college in recent years, immediately following a heavy rain, flyers appear, haphazardly taped above water fountains, warning students, faculty, and staff to beware: Raw sewage has contaminated local rivers, our source for drinking water. Opt for a bottle of water. (And here, local residents, is your whopping EPA-mandated water bill.)

Madness. What is mad, at least, in the case of Defiance, Ohio, is imagining existence apart from our relation to nature and society. Mad Anthony Wayne, of course, is merely a stooge, a local and perhaps strained metaphor for Western tendencies in general.

In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour describes the West as defined by two pursuits, the conquest of nature and society.[2] And, he argues, that it is only by creating purified ontological zones that this is made possible: We're always mixing nature and culture, creating hybrids, but, simultaneously, we hide (purify) such knowledge from ourselves, for if we could see how our conquest of nature affects society, the work of progress would be impeded. After years of global economic turmoil, and a year of excessive weather here in Defiance and elsewhere, perhaps we have finally reached the point where that purification process breaks down. Perhaps we are beginning to recognize that our actions in and on the world rebound back to us.

How much was that water bill again?

<center>****</center>

Despite what might appear to be an emphasis on the local—forts are grounded in a particular locale after all—what we see in Defiance is a sort of blindness to the local, a blindness that allowed and allows for the violation of both nature and culture under the—"inevitable" or "natural," they will say—guise of Manifest Destiny, the Enlightenment Project, Humanism, Progress, the War against Terror, or, to localize this string of

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[2] Latour, B. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 8-11.

abstractions, Community. To emphasize the local is to deny universalizing; it is to deny the "cyclopean eye" which assimilates everything to its own subjectifying gaze.[3] It is to deny the fantasy of the individual, as well as the two-party system which simplifies and frames much of what we do and think in these United States.

With such a history and population, how might an effective politics be mounted that would be appropriate to such an audience and context? Even here, however, one must be careful not to homogenize. Defiance was not and is not a homogeneous community. It is shot through with difference, rich hybridizing veins that keep the local inevitably cosmopolitan, making any serious politics vexed, focused, as it must be, on a homogenizing *construct*, an audience, and yet constantly open to something other, something on the outside. Such a politics is mobile, searching, creative, and probing. It does not allow large ideological framing devices—"individualism," the two-party system—to simplify, hygienically erasing the complexity of reality or the complexity of our politics, tactics, and strategies.

Strictly speaking, this denial of the cyclopean eye of the two-party system is something apparent even in the particular variation of OWS that "began" in New York City. Pundits, scholars, amateur politicos had no idea what to make of Occupy Wall Street, a political event with no political affiliation and no list of demands. Having no idea, they laughed; they pointed fingers, scapegoated, generalized, and, finally, wrote off OWS as a gaggle of unhygienic anarchists.

Fortunately, not everyone recoiled in hygienic fear. Such is the triumph of Occupy.

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A local politics is grounded in one essential element: It is a politics of the *with*—what Jean-Luc Nancy describes as being-singular-plural[4] in his

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[3] Haraway, D. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 192.

[4] Nancy, J-L. 2000. *Being Singular Plural*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 28-29. Nancy writes, "Being singular plural: these three apposite words, which do not have any determined syntax ('being' is a verb or noun; 'singular' and 'plural' are nouns or adjectives; all can be rearranged in different combinations), mark an absolute equivalence, both in an indistinct distinct way. Being is singularly plural and plurally singular. Yet, this in itself does not constitute a particular predication of Being, as if Being is or has a certain number of attributes, one of which is that of being singular-plural—however double, contradictory, or chiasmatic this may be.

book of the same name. There is no "I" without an other, social *and* natural. Clearly such an understanding of being means that we are not separate from that which we act upon. Instead, our actions in the world, on others and on nature, reflect back to our own being: If we violate nature, we violate ourselves. But we don't need a French poststructuralist to tell us this. Nature, influenced, by humans, has been telling us this for decades in Defiance. With each drink of water, or each water bill, we are reminded that we exist *in* and *with* the world, despite the abstractions we create to shield us from this uncomfortable reality.

The goal, again, is to live in light of this relation, to see that the Maumee that cuts *"our"* Anthonian city is of the Miami.[5] And to see, again, that within this trace of the Miami "Indian" is the Virgin Mary, as well as her frustrated partner, Joseph. And so on *ad infinitum*.

This *with* is dangerous, disturbing, and difficult. While in certain ways relatively homogenous (in terms of class and "race"), Occupy Defiance includes self-identified preppers (a.k.a., survivalists), followers of Alex Jones, fervent Obama supporters, and at least one Green party supporter. There are immense differences of opinions in the group on many issues, making our alliance against the corporate control of democracy both strained and productive. This means that when we act, our actions are not immediate but built upon slow, sometimes tedious and tense, discussions in general assemblies. But the glory of such a group is that it is even more disturbing for those on the outside. Many times as we stood in front of the Defiance County court house, *pre-emptively* picketing war with Iran, along with the infrequent honk of approval, we'd hear through the screeching tires, or slamming car doors, "Go get a job!" or "Bum!"

Cue footage from our October 25, 2012, protest of Mitt Romney's politics: Romney, with a coterie of celebrities like Meatloaf, was stumping for the presidency on this sunny day in Defiance. While two blocks away a boisterous assembly of United Auto Workers expressed their support of Obama in the designated protest area, a small group of Occupy protestors stood on a sidewalk, holding signs and quietly enduring abuse from Romney supporters safely ensconced in their cars. A police officer asked if we were Obama supporters, warned us to move on, and then threatened us with arrest (his concern: One of the cars moving at a speed of five-miles-

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On the contrary, the singular-plural constitutes the essence of Being, a constitution that undoes or dislocates every single, substantial essence of Being itself. This is not just a way of speaking, because there is no prior substance that would be dissolved. Being does not preexist its singular plural".

[5] Nancy, J-L. 1994. "Cut Throat Sun," in *An Other Tongue: Nation and Ethnicity in the Linguistic Borderlands*, ed. Arteaga, A., (Durham: Duke UP), 113-124.

per-hour would have an accident as its driver read our signs). We did not move.

The intriguing thing about a politics grounded in the *with* is the way in which it disturbs the status quo, which must know, must rationalize our being in some way. If we are against the politics of Romney, we *must* be Obama supporters, as if there is no other option. If we have the will and time to picket against war, we must be lazy, slobs, out-of-work. Here, again, is this mad obsession with hygiene. To be *with* others is disturbing; it undermines expectations, and confuses, as it opens up others to new possibilities, political and social.

This is, in part, an issue of nationalism and biopower. The state exercises power less over death today than over life itself, as Foucault theorized in his *History of Sexuality* ("If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population").[6] But what perhaps Foucault could not have fully foreseen was the rise of a perpetual state of emergency, following September 11, that has been cynically used to slowly exert force over human life as the United States pursues its war on terror. The state—and we should not forget its connection to eugenics and statistics,[7] or the revelation of its power and arc which was Germany in the 1930s and 40s—must label, and fix our being. And it is, arguably, our denial of categorization that disrupts it most profoundly.[8]

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[6] Foucault, M. 1978. *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*. New York: Pantheon, 137.

[7] Davis, L. 2013. "Constructing Normalcy," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Davis, L., (New York: Routledge), 1-14.

[8] See also Agamben, G. 1993. *The Coming Community.* Minnesota: U of Minnesota Press. Agamben's text ends by discussing the politics of a "community" that does not produce any clear identity markers. Agamben writes, "In the final instance the State can recognize any claim for identity–even that of a State identity within the State . . . What the State cannot tolerate in any way, however, is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging . . . The State, as Alain Badiou has shown, is not founded on a social bond, of which it would be the expression, but rather on the dissolution, the unbinding it prohibits. For the State, therefore, what is important is never the singularity as such, but only its inclusion in some identity, whatever identity (but the possibility of the whatever itself being taken up without an identity is a threat the State cannot come to terms with)" (chapter XIX).

In Defiance, when I first moved here in 2005, my and my partner's IDs were confiscated by the Department of Motor Vehicles after a social security card, squashed in a wallet for a decade, looked a little questionable under a microscope, only to be returned a few days later after a background check and with a suggestive comment about how much more like a brother and sister we looked than husband and wife (as if, we thought at the time, he saw us as a brother and sister terrorist team, or illegal immigrants). The paranoia was palpable. Not even a small town in Northwest Ohio is safe from the paranoid projections of nationalism.

As an issue of nationalism and capitalism, this may be readily understood as a matter of borders and spatiality. In New York City, in Zuccotti Park, it was an issue of the unhygienic disturbance of a certain ontology of space. A group of people "occupied" (colonized) a space that was privately owned,[9] and yet open to the public in one of the most famed, and symbolically marked districts of the world: The private is public and the public is private, though even that simplifies too drastically the confusion of identities that occurred on September 17, 2011. Behind *occupation* is a foregrounding of space and hybridity—how we are *with* others, not isolated behind walls marked "private" and "public." Surely "Occupy" is not simply about literal occupation (tents and all), though certainly in light of the wealthy, fixed edifice which is Manhattan, tents are an entirely appropriate response (elsewhere, where an urban space is not quite so laden with meaning, such tactics may not be so effective). The real work of occupation occurs on the level of meaning, and perhaps the question on the local level is how to mount an occupation that locates and disturbs the most central ideological edifice of one's local city or region, with or without tarp.

Occupy Defiance, a very small group in a very small town, had a surprising and unexpected influence on local politics on two fronts. First, with the assistance of the U.S.-wide Move to Amend organization we were able, while working within the system, to pass[10] a local ordinance requiring the mayor and city council to hold biannual public meetings "to analyze the impact of political contributions on local elections" and require the mayor "to notify the Ohio General Assembly and U.S.

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[9] Wells, M. 2011. "Occupy Wall Street: Zuccotti Park Re-Opens—as it happens," *The Guardian*
http://www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2011/nov/15/occupy-wall-street-zuccotti-eviction-live (accessed April 6, 2014).
[10] "Defiance Ohio Voters Pass Move to Amend Initiative." 2013. *Move to Amend*
https://movetoamend.org/defiance-ohio-voters-pass-move-amend-initiative
(accessed 6 April 2014).

Congress that the electors of the city of Defiance passed the ordinance calling for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution declaring that only human beings, not corporations, are legal persons with constitutional rights and that money is not the equivalent of speech be adopted" (original language from the ballot).

Second, while Occupy Defiance never really "occupied," a group[11] of us did mount a chalk walk on October 26 of 2012, attempting to occupy our main street in a discursive manner. And here we stumbled upon success. A chalk walk is a seemingly inoffensive means of protest: All one needs is a box of chalk and a message. Our group, before it was stopped, had scrawled messages on the public sidewalks about Monsanto, Citizens United, freedom, local business, spirituality, and hope. The group was stopped by the police. After a call back to HQ, the officer on hand was told that "if it was political it would have to stop".[12] Eventually, through the work of members like Jacob Gallman and Roger Molnar, the ACLU was enlisted and this free speech story went national. The Associated Press and the *New York Times* covered us, as did many other news outlets. The *Toledo Blade* published a pro free speech editorial[13] as a response. And the *Dayton Daily News* published a comic[14] of two small children chalking up a sidewalk in preparation for a mean game of hopscotch. A ring of cops surround the confused children. Their guns are drawn. The word bubble reads, "Mayday. More sidewalk chalk anarchists in Defiance, Ohio!"

Here, again, we have an obsession with hygiene, and a small town notion of spatial propriety which, when allied with ignorance, out-of-date ordinances, and collusion between government and business, created the perfect publicity event. Public sidewalks are not owned by businesses, but part of that fast disappearing thing we call the commons. Every chalk mark on a public sidewalk, as such, staked a claim on our city and reminded the intertwined forces of business and government that their claim was not secure. While Occupy Defiance did not create sensational headlines across the country, or even engage in what many in Occupy would term radical politics, by knowing our city and surprising the

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[11] Mara Watson, Josh Lesniak, Jacob Gallman, and Sean Moulder are listed on the police report filed by Officer Williamson.
[12] Williamson, J. 27 Oct. 2012. "Police Report: Narrative Supplement." Defiance Police Department, Defiance, Ohio.
[13] "Chalk it Up." 28 Oct. 2013. *The Blade*
https://www.toledoblade.com/Editorials/2013/10/28/Chalk-it-up.html (accessed 4 April 2014).
[14] Untitled editorial comic. 26 Oct. 2013. *Dayton Daily News*
http://www.daytondailynews.com/ (accessed 27 Oct. 2013).

authorities, we made a dramatic splash in Northwest Ohio that rippled across the nation. Radicality, in short, is dependent on context and for Defiance, Ohio, our actions were radical to a significant portion of people (and, contrariwise, for others it was the excessive actions of the police that were radical and alarming). Citizens debated. Minds were changed. And our message against corporate greed was spread as we simultaneously fought for our right to spread that message in the commons.

The *with* is disturbing to the nation state and its local, privatizing emissaries because it defines itself in opposition, as against, the Nation. The dream of the nation state is essentially autarchic, a dream of a purified, individualized divinity; the *with*, by contrast, is a clear-sighted confrontation with our essential mortality, connected as we are to the world, an infinite series of contingent, impure traces—so many forces that differ with us, and, yet, leave marks within our being.

3. Volume Contents:
Openings and Closures in Three Parts

We must embrace the situatedness of ourselves. We are *here* and *now*—in Defiance, in Portland, in El Paso, in Tahrir Square. And what is true—what *works*—in Defiance is not true, necessarily, elsewhere. The essays that follow do not follow the line of argumentation above. Many of the essays by scholars or activists which follow focus on the singular, the local, the regional, or main street, from his or her own particular vantage point, and within his or her own singular style and discipline. While there may be themes and motifs across essays that are in common, the aim is not commonality but interdisciplinarity and diversity.

As we were casting about for submissions, one correspondent criticized the very notion of a book on Occupy Wall Street. Such a work undermined the work of Occupy, belittled it, archived it, he argued, as if it were just one more folio edition of, say, Shakespeare. He might have quoted Marx (from "Theses on Feuerbach") at this point—"Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." But even Marx found time to write and reflect on the revolution![15]

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[15] The question of whether OWS has been or is being appropriated by business, academics, and others is an important issue and has been addressed numerous times. Our collection is not interested in saving or resuscitating Occupy because what is needed is less a name, Occupy Wall Street, than an event, a surprise that has yet to be named. For an early voicing of this concern, see protestcamp. March 2012. "Can Occupy Survive Its Own Representation," *Protest Camps*

Following the success of its early days, the violent response of government, police, and banks to OWS, and the movement's loss of momentum, this anthology reflects upon something that has received little real attention as all spotlights were trained on Zuccotti Park: The local manifestations of OWS, or what we prefer to call Occupy Main Street. Regional responses to Wall Street and to this our neoliberal nightmare number in the hundreds, possibly thousands. As of April of 2014, the Occupy Directory listed more than 1,500 Occupy groups from all over the world—many of which have not been heard from in any substantial way.[16]

The goal in what follows is to mount a dialog about our successes, our failures, and about where our politics—under whatever name—might go from this point on. Our collection is not about closure (or even a resuscitation of that which falls under the heading of Occupy Wall Street), but about creating meaningful openings that will lead us, refreshed, back to action and to reality, as if we could ever leave it. *What Comes After Occupy?* has three major sections, *Occupying the Local: Promise and Predicament*; *Occupying Space and Borders: South, East, and West*; and *Occupying the Media: Local, Regional, and National Dilemmas*. In these sections, we address three essential facets of the Occupy experience. No one would disagree that Occupy was a media event (section three) or that it was profoundly concerned with public space (section two). However, just as important as media or spatiality was the rapidity of OWS's spread from New York City to *locales* throughout the world that do not, unlike New York City and Wall Street, operate as symbolic centers. *Occupying the Local* probes, in part, *how* and *why* this expansion occurred and, more importantly, examines the promise and predicament of engaging in a politics that, arguably, emphasizes the local more than the universal (or the party, as opposed to the Party, as one of our contributors, Christopher Taylor, succinctly describes this opposition). Of course, none of these sections (or essays) are discrete. Each has a *general* emphasis as described above, while also being in dialogue with essays from other sections.

Our first section critically examines the political benefits of a conceptual emphasis on Main Street versus Wall Street, or the "local" versus the "universal." Taylor, Henkel, and Deb's essays are among the most theoretical in the volume; the essays by Johnson and Osborn focus on Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Portland, Oregon, and concretely ground in a local space—like most of the following essays in the volume—some of the ideas that are circulating in *Occupying the Local: Promise and*

http://protestcamps.org/2012/03/01/can-occupy-survive-its-representation-5/ (accessed 4 April 2014).

[16] *Occupy Directory*. http://directory.occupy.net/ (accessed 4 April 2014).

Predicament. Christopher Taylor's "'This is what democracy looks like!': Occupy and the Local Touch of the Political" begins our collection, ironically enough, with a focus on Wall Street. His goal, however, is not to bolster the abstraction that Wall Street has become, but to return it to itself, to the singularity of the local. Wall Street, Taylor writes, "names an intangible social force, one impossible to point to, to touch," and it is Taylor's goal to make this famous street tangible once again. His focus, however, is on the related issue of how Occupy Wall Street has transformed the nature of politics. Taylor, for example, discusses how in a world of politics, which is both "distan[t]" and "mediat[ed]" (as people, for instance, *see* and *hear* about politics via television and radio), the politics of Occupy returns us to the local, to others, and to a kind of bodily sensibility. Concerned about the future, he writes, "[i]f I am touchy about touch (and I am and will be, in the name of the future that Occupy touched upon), it is because calls for the construction of post-Occupy political organizations tend simply to reproduce the spatial and sensory organization of the political against which Occupy emerged."

Scott Henkel's essay on the "The Advantages of Leaderlessness" confronts a basic criticism of Occupy: How can Occupy expect to create any effective organization without leaders and organization? Henkel delineates the limits of leadership, and the benefits of a leaderless group in his essay. Engaging in part Jo Freeman's "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," he argues that one can lack a leader and yet retain structure: "[L]eaderlessness is not structurelessness, but rather a type of organization that facilitates constituent power." Constituent power is a verbal power, a power drawn from local individuals who are cooperative, active, and creative in the absence of a "constituted power" structure. Constituted power, by contrast, is grounded in a normative leadership structure and tends "to dominate, to control, whether by force, persuasion, custom, or other means." Occupy's success is grounded in its leaderlessness which marginalizes constituted power, and allows for the incredible creativity and energy of constituent power.

In a sense, David Osborn's essay is an extended footnote to Henkel's essay as it is very much interested in the tension between constituted and constituent power, though he does not use this language. Osborn hails from Portland, a city with a lengthy radical history. His concern in "Anarchist Interventions: Impacts and Effects of Preexisting Radical Communities on Occupy" is with how the pre-existing anarchist network (*cynically*, a form of constituted power, to use Henkel's language) in Portland influenced Occupy Portland. How did pre-existing radical groups choose to intervene in the movement? What form do interventions in

emerging movements take? How did different radical interventions fare in Portland? Osborn sees "newly activated" activists as "decisive;" however, the goal of his essay is to analyze "how pre-existing activists and new participants mix and influence one another", thereby "allow[ing] us to develop pre-existing communities that will be even more effective in contributing to the emergence of future movements." But this is ticklish business, as Osborn admits, in his conclusion. Pre-existing radicals can do much to facilitate a movement; however, the other side of the coin is beautifully expressed by one of his interviewees:

> The movement was happening organically. And it was chaos, but it was also incredible, powerful, beautiful and wild and uncontrollable by the state. And we intervened to try and create structure [but] how can you create structure around a wild beast and still have it be effective? … I wonder about the power of the organic uprising and [how] trying to contain it potentially actually deflated it.

Basuli Deb's "Transnational Feminist-Queer-Racial Common Fronts: Who is the 99%?" asks tough, critical questions of Occupy. After drawing a parallel between Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's concept of the "multitude" and Occupy Wall Street's emphasis on the 99%, Deb asks to what degree such a multitude is in fact a realistic "vision of a futuristic world of liberation." Referencing the infamous scene of the "girl in the blue bra" (Tahrir Square, December 17, 2011), Deb asks whether such a movement can be sustained without an intense look at those marginalized within its homogenizing vision. Deb argues against a tendency to universalize in the Occupy vision. She argues that difference (of particular, local bodies that may be female, of color, gay, and so on) needs to be attended to in any future politics that does not want to merely reproduce a version of neo-imperialism.

Taylor, Henkel, Osborn, and Deb's essays generally privilege the "local," to use an umbrella term that can only partially frame and join their separate concerns. Johnson's "The Problem of Whiteness in the Occupy Movement" provides another point of view, a critical position which is alarmed by the emphasis on the local. Johnson issues his warning by returning us to reality, the reality of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Since OWS has no supervisory central organization (with a set of standards) and is organized locally, it depends and is limited by the locale within which it exists. If the community is conservative, a local Occupy group, however progressive, will be limited by such a community. If the group is wholly white as a result of its community, for example, it will smuggle into its politics, consciously or unconsciously, white privilege. Johnson ends with

a number of recommendations that will enable Occupy activists to be more able to deal with the complexity of white privilege in the future.

Occupying Space and Borders: South, East, and West opens with a focus on politics on a literal border, the border between the United States and Mexico. In their "Occupy El Paso and the U.S.-Mexico Border," Josiah and Merlyn Heyman provide us with an exemplary ethnographic snapshot of Occupy on their own main street in a border town. The Heymans begin by describing El Paso in terms of class, race, and ethnicity.

When they turn to Occupy El Paso, they describe at length the sort of actions that it engaged in: a tent occupation (followed by eviction); the creation of an active Facebook presence; the support of other progressive groups such as unions; actions calling attention to NAFTA, the student loan crisis, and so on. While their essay is a positive litany, it is also critical and alert to the limits of Occupy El Paso's context. They write, for instance, that the "nation-state frame has proven difficult to escape . . . It both frames explicit issues, agendas for change, and arenas of struggle; and it sometimes limits the imagination, despite our best efforts to overcome such 'borders.' Transnationality remains a challenge, as well as a reality, for Occupiers." Still, theirs is a positive analysis, placing in the end, much faith in the lessons learned through the Occupy El Paso experience. Young people, not "aging punks" like the authors, learned lessons about organizing and politics that will be crucial in future actions. Insofar as the Heymans focus on the "distinctive youthfulness" that they saw in Occupy El Paso, their essay is a ready complement to Osborn's focus on the experienced activist.

The next two essays focus on the related issue of space. How do different groups—protestors and the "homeless"—navigate, hold, or share space? Marie Skoczylas' "The Importance of Space: Lessons from Occupy Pittsburgh" focuses on the spatial politics of protestors in Occupy Pittsburgh. She describes how the group's four month occupation experienced little outside interference; the protestors were, as a result, free of anxiety. However, she writes of how regardless, in this space of experimentation, there were real issues that impeded the political impact of Occupy. Based on two dozen interviews, she describes how differences of political belief affected space-taking and horizontal organizing.

Focusing squarely on the tensions between those who preferred political "organizing as usual" and those who wanted to prefigure the future, Skoczylas describes the two groups and how each group attempted to ground their politics in the space of Occupy Pittsburgh's camp. One person that she quotes, for example, saw the occupation as "detract[ing]

from the larger goal of real social and economic change." Space was for the "organizing-as-usual" group limited to being an "organizing hub."

While members of the prefigurative group considered space "holding" as "inseparable from challenging inequality and building stronger movements", occupation "pushed people's normal boundaries of socialization [and] forced people to question the exclusivity and unequal nature of private property". Skoczylas concludes by emphasizing the importance of common space. Space, she argues is crucial, but how we think and share space needs to be rethought because "[w]hen approached strategically, space can provide opportunities for diverse strands to work together, maintaining and building trust across difference, while building a sense of place in a common struggle."

David Jones' "A Big Enough Tent: Challenges of Inclusion and Unity Under the Big Sky" takes, if you will, the opposite tack of Osborn's essay. When occupiers set up camp on the Missoula, Montana, court house grounds, they were not met with another group of experienced radicals (as in Portland), but with the poor, the drunk, the disabled, the transient, who had already staked their claim to that space. In short, unlike in Portland where there was a deeply entrenched radical community with decades of experience to draw upon, in Missoula the entrenched locals seemingly had little to offer new activists. But this was only the first hurdle. Later, as general assemblies moved indoors, a small group of defiant (often "inebriated") "tenters" remained outside. Occupy Missoula splintered, some arguing for the importance of continued physical occupation, while others argued for new tactics. Jones—somewhat in contrast to Skoczylas' optimistic framing of prefiguration—writes of how Occupy failed to prefigure a future in part because, "we found ourselves often replicating deeply entrenched social relations brought from the 'real' world of work, school, family, and state in which we are all embedded. We might have been able to imagine The New, yet we pathologically re-constructed The Old within the shell of the old."

Occupying the Media: Local, Regional, and National Dilemmas focuses on the challenges confronting Occupy in a media-driven world. The section begins with an essay focused on rhetoric and media at the local level; such local struggles over power and representation are then telescoped to the state, national, and global levels in the next three essays. Ursula McTaggart's "The Occupy Movement and the 'Poetics of the Oppressed': Occupy Cincinnati as a Case Study" performs a close analysis of the "poetics" of Occupy. In particular, she is concerned with analyzing the phrase "We are the 99%" as an inclusive and non ideological slogan, and on analyzing the movement as a "theatre of the oppressed," to quote

Augusto Boal, a follower of the late Paulo Freire. She concludes by writing, "'Occupy' is not a brand but a drama that can be reenacted and re-shaped to fit a time and place, whether for mobilizing fast food workers to fight for higher wages or for mobilizing Detroit citizens to defend their rights to democratic representation in a city governed by an appointed emergency manager. It is the most culturally current rhetoric we have for uniting radical leftist causes, and for that reason alone it remains valuable."

Michaela Curran, Elizabeth A.G. Schwarz, and Christopher Chase-Dunn's "The Occupy Movement in California" continues this focus on Occupy's media production insofar as it takes as its object of analysis the incredible outpouring of social media activity that followed as local Occupy groups sprung up all over the world. Their focus is California, however, and the 481 Facebook pages created by local California cities. They do not, however, analyze rhetoric, so much as what the construction, spread, and success of the Facebook pages tell us about the constitution of Occupy in terms of age, race, and class. For instance, their analysis reveals that "California communities with a higher proportion of young people were more likely to have active Occupy movements." Their data also indicates clear deficits in Occupy organizing that needs to be attended to in terms of race, the unemployed, and the "urban poor". They pinpoint the following: "Looking to the future, social movement organizers might ask themselves how they can best engage everybody, not just Whites. A focus on issues such as racism, police brutality, and immigration might help draw ethnic minorities into the next political movement."

"The Occupy Movement in the Pacific Northwest: The Internet and High-Cost/Risk Activism" by Nelson Pichardo Almanzar, Pamela McMullin-Messier, Tracey Hoover, and Mike Lee puts forward a comparison between social movements of the past and present. Specifically, they compare the Sit-in Movement of the Civil Rights era (built upon the Black Church in local communities in the South) with Occupy Wall Street (grounded in social networking and lacking to some degree a geographical location as a result), asking how the different organizing methods of the two movements impacted the high-costs and risks of activism. Occupy, with its savvy use of the Internet, was able "to reach and garner the support of individuals from disparate biographical backgrounds" at an amazingly fast rate. It was able to "raise awareness" and quickly connect people with resources. However, unlike the sit-in movement which had a lengthy focus on "community building," Occupy had little to ground and focus its costly and risky activism and was, unsurprisingly, transient and lacking, as a result, in the "capacity to

generate a common set of grievances." However, despite lacking "an organic community" that would assist in creating a "common singular voice, Occupy may yet represent a new form of social movement agitation focused on providing and exporting a social movement 'plug-n-play' model that can been readily replicated for future protests."

The last two essays described above mined the Internet in order to get a better sense of Occupy's demographic and organizing shortcomings with the ultimate goal of improving future social movements. Ivan Greenberg, in a complementary fashion, in our final essay on "The State Response to Occupy: Surveillance and Suppression" shows in detail how the federal government and its lackeys also mined social networking in order to obstruct radical politics in multiple U.S. cities. He then argues that "[e]stablishing a thick historical record is vital in order to analyze the movement's strengths and limitations . . . Police and intelligence records can add specificity and historical consciousness about what the movement represented to official power and the threat it posed to remake society." Greenberg ends by arguing that protestors will need, increasingly, to "occupy surveillance" to ensure an effective politics in the future. Surveillance systems are not coherent, seamless tools of power; we need to locate weaknesses, and find ways to undermine surveillance in tactical ways: "Overall," he writes, "the new reality of the surveillance society is sobering, and the tenacity of the American state to protect its practices should not be underestimated." Still, he writes, with the advent of Edward Snowden, a critical movement is beginning to take shape to combat excessive government surveillance of local cities.

4. Final Words

To speak of Occupy in the past tense (as some of the following essays do), and then to gesture toward a future 'Occupy' is perhaps premature. The 2014 events in Hong Kong led by Occupy Central attest to the power of Occupy as a tactic, strategy, and as a banner that still draws crowds. Or perhaps not. Perhaps after the first iteration of Occupy in Zuccotti Park, *every* new Occupy was a future 'Occupy'. Perhaps Occupy was over at some vague, impossible-to-determine-point a year after the first occupation, and that radicals, at that point, really were looking toward the future. Trying to nail down beginnings and endings in this way is impossible (though sometimes it must be done), and perhaps to do so would be to violate the very 'essence' of Occupy which for some was all about a violation of certainty, and propriety, as invested in public space, to point to the obvious example. Such a historical construction depends on

too many variables, where the historian stands, who he or she is, and on a notion of purity—purity of act, and clarity and independence of thought—that should be thought suspect in light of the following examples which do, constantly, remind us of the limitations of our politics.

Basuli Deb's essay discusses the need for a "praxis of accountability"—a recognition that no movement is perfect and that we fail to the degree that we begin to believe in perfection. Rather, what we need is a recognition, a fear, of imperfection, that spurs us on to a constant appraisal and reappraisal, via critique, of our politics. The following essays, along with many others, prefigure just such a praxis of accountability.

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SECTION ONE

OCCUPYING THE LOCAL:
PROMISE AND PREDICAMENT

"THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE!": OCCUPY AND THE LOCAL TOUCH OF THE POLITICAL

CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR

> It matters that as bodies we arrive together in public
> —Judith Butler, Remarks delivered via the People's Mic[1]

> Then we can get into the phenomenology of backrubs, like the chain backrubs in the break from facilitation training. Holding hands or linking arms in human chains. General patterns of touching: ordinary Americans almost never touch each other. Anarchists seem especially fond of hugs…people leaning on each other, holding hands….[A]ll the trainings involved physical contact, from carrying people off limp, to just sitting pressed up against each other in crowded rooms.
> —David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography*[2]

In *Direct Action*, David Graeber offers a brief description of what radical democracy feels like: massaging hands upon one's back, elbows crossed through one's own in a human chain, the heat of bodies in a crowded room, a hug hello. According to Graeber, "general patterns of touching" are constitutive of the sociality of anarchist movements in the Americas. This emphasis on tactility distinguishes anarchists from "ordinary Americans" who "almost never touch each other"—or, at least, who almost never touch strangers, and who certainly would not give a backrub at a political meeting.[3] For "ordinary Americans," touching is deprived of a political and public life because it is taken to be an irreducibly private, necessarily sexualized, mode of interpersonal communication. In opposition to this enclosure of tactility by the private, Graeber states that anarchists' "general patterns of touching" are "largely,

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[1] Butler, J. 2012. "Composite Remarks," *OccupyWriters.com*
http://occupywriters.com/works/by-judith-butler (accessed 21 July 2014).
[2] Graeber, D. 2009. *Direct Action: An Ethnography*. Oakland: AK Press.
[3] Ibid., 264.