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The new democracy: anarchist or populist?

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ABSTRACT
The meaning of political concepts is always tied to the practices that develop, sustain, and change them through time. Democracy is no different. One of the most interesting recent chapters in the history of democracy is the New Democracy Movement, which includes the wave of movements from the Arab Spring to the Movement of the Squares and Occupy, and is sometimes taken also to include later events like Nuit Debout. These movements used the language of democracy to critique our most basic institutions – both political and economic – and have changed the way many people think about politics, arguably leading to a spread of anarchist tactics of direct action and prefiguration along with the re-emergence of left populism in the growth of parties like Syriza and Podemos and candidates like Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn. This review article discusses three books about the New Democracy Movement, with particular focus on the debate about whether it is best seen as an effort in 'translating anarchy' or as the birthplace of a new left populism.

KEYWORDS Democracy; populism; anarchism; occupy; occupy wall street; the new democracy movement

Three studies of the new democracy movement

The meaning of political concepts is always tied to the practices that develop, sustain, and change them through time. Democracy is no different. One of the most interesting recent chapters in the history of democracy is what many of its participants call the New Democracy Movement, which includes the wave of movements from the Arab Spring to the Movement of the Squares and Occupy, and is sometimes taken also to include later events like Nuit Debout. These movements have used the language of democracy to critique our most basic institutions – both political and economic – and have changed the way many people think about politics, arguably leading to a spread of anarchist practices of direct action and prefiguration along with the re-emergence of left populism in the growth of parties like Syriza and Podemos and candidates like Bernie Sanders, Jeremy Corbyn, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.[1]

Here I will discuss three rather different, but each original and interesting, books on the nature and legacy of especially Occupy: Mark Bray's *Translating*

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Anarchy: The Anarchism of Occupy Wall Street; Michael Gould-Wartofsky's *The Occupiers: The Making of the 99 Percent Movement*; and Paolo Gerbaudo's *The Mask and the Flag: Populism, Citizenism, and Global Protest*. All three connect the rise of the New Democracy Movement to the current crisis, including both the economic crisis from the 2007–8 onwards and the connected legitimation crisis of contemporary capitalism and representative states. Whereas Bray's and Gould-Wartofsky's books focus on Occupy, Gerbaudo takes a broader international approach, exploring the New Democracy Movement as a whole. Perhaps the most marked disagreement between them can be found in their interpretations of the political nature and legacy of these movements. Bray argues that Occupy Wall Street organisers were broadly 'anarchistic' in their ideology (more on what this means below) and that Occupy in many ways aimed at translating anarchist principles and ideas for an unfamiliar audience, while Gerbaudo argues instead that not only Occupy but the New Democracy Movement as a whole, marks a decisive turn away from anarchism towards a new form of left populism that he calls 'citizenism'. After first discussing each of the three books, this review article turns first to the misrepresentation of anarchism that Gerbaudo relies on to make much of his case against Bray's reading and thereafter to Gerbaudo's argument for the populist reading of the New Democracy Movement. Although the New Democracy Movement has clearly been an important factor in the rise of recent left populism, the case for the movement itself incubating this ideology is unconvincing.

Competing interpretations: influences and impacts

Both Mark Bray's *Translating Anarchy: The Anarchism of Occupy Wall Street* (Bray, 2013) and Michael A. Gould-Wartofsky's *The Occupiers: The Making of the 99 Percent Movement* (Gould-Wartofsky, 2015) focus on Occupy Wall Street in the United States. And both combine an insider account of Occupy Wall Street with interviews of its participants in order to analyse its origins, nature, and impact. *Translating Anarchy* is, in my view, the best book written about Occupy so far, and anyone who writes about Occupy should read it. Drawing on extensive participation in Occupy (especially in the Press and Direct Action working groups of Occupy Wall Street in New York) and interviews with a large number of its (other) organisers, Bray argues, among other things, that almost three-quarters of the organisers surveyed (72%) had anarchist or 'anarchistic' politics. More precisely, 39% of the organisers he surveyed were self-identifying anarchists, and another 33% had politics that can rightly be considered 'anarchistic', in that they 'were anti-capitalists in favour of direct democracy and opposed to hierarchy who considered direct action, rather than elections, to be the most effective route toward social change, but chose not to use the anarchist label' (Bray, 2013, p. 42). Importantly, 78% of organisers surveyed were explicitly anti-capitalist and

'82% were in favour of non-hierarchical direct democracy rather than representative government' (Bray, 2013, p. 44).

Bray has been criticised for trying to argue that Occupy as a whole, or at least its organisers were all anarchists. Given the vast number and variety of – often previously a-political – people drawn into Occupy in New York, much less the rest of the United States and elsewhere, this would be implausible on its own and insufficiently supported by the evidence he provides. The problem with this critique, however, is that it relies on an inaccurate representation of Bray's thesis. Bray is only arguing that most of the organisers he surveyed were 'anarchistic', not anarchist, meaning that their politics largely (but need not entirely) overlap with those of anarchism, without necessarily self-defining as anarchists. This distinction is established in the academic anarchist literature, and as we just saw, Bray spells out exactly what he means by 'anarchistic' as opposed to 'anarchist'. This critique is therefore unfounded.

Bray's book begins by explaining and correcting a number of misunderstandings about Occupy prevalent in the mainstream media – and, one might add, academia – much of which remains shockingly ignorant about the basics of anarchist theory and practice. After that, he moves on to discuss the role of anarchism in Occupy, explaining and defending his thesis that a majority of Occupy's organisers had broadly 'anarchistic' politics, before discussing the nature and some different strands of anarchism, their critique of capitalism, anarchist views on alternatives to capitalism and the nature of democracy, and finishing with a discussion of a number of Occupy's problems – including certain liberal ideas, debates about demands, problems dealing with racism, and strict consensus decision-making. After this, the book examines how Occupy translated anarchist and anarchistic ideas and politics for a new audience and a number of anarchist and anarchistic views on strategies for long-term, systematic social change.

One of the things that really (and still) makes Bray's book stand out from the rest of the literature on Occupy, is its detailed knowledge of anarchist theory and history, the different strands of anarchism, and how they relate or conflict with different features of Occupy. This includes their views on leaders and leadership, affinity groups, general assemblies and spokescouncils, direct action, and more. For example, many anarchist advocates of consensus decision-making do not point out that most anarchist movements and organisations – past and present – have not taken this approach, and critics of Occupy frequently make the mistake of thinking that all of anarchism is committed to consensus decision-making. Bray not only explains why this is incorrect, but also offers a critique of the kind of strict adherence to consensus decision-making in large mass assemblies that characterised – and in his view often hindered – Occupy.[2]

Gould-Wartofsky's *The Occupiers* is similarly based on participant observation and interviews, but takes a somewhat different tack in exploring and analysing Occupy's origins and implications in more detail. Occupy is put in the context not only of the failures of neoliberalism, the financial crises, capitalism's legitimacy crisis, and the failures of both Bush and Obama to address them; but also the broader awakening sometimes called the New Democracy Movement, from the Arab Spring to the Movement of the Squares, to the uprisings in Wisconsin, and finally the explosion of Occupy. Its detailed, first-hand account of Occupy is interesting and enlightening, as its discussion of the ideological splits and disagreements that plagued it. Gould-Wartofsky's book is especially strong on the violent police crackdown on occupiers throughout the US and on the immediate aftermath that Occupy had. Importantly, he also discusses the efforts of occupiers to continue their work in movements beyond Occupy itself, such as movements working on housing, foreclosures, migration, and the labour movement. The last point suggests that one of Occupy Wall Street's more enduring consequences – in addition to helping spread anarchist and 'anarchistic' ideas, tactics, and strategy – may be its contribution to the slow rebirth of a radical labour movement, particularly in the United States.

An interesting and worthwhile contrast to both of these books is Paolo Gerbaudo's *The Mask and the Flag: Populism, Citizenism, and Global Protest* (Gerbaudo, 2017). For one, Gerbaudo's book has a broader focus, seeking to develop an over-arching analysis of the political theory and practice embodied in the New Democracy Movements of 2011–2016. These movements, Gerbaudo argues, come in five 'clusters': the Arab Spring; the Mediterranean wave (in particular Greece and Spain); Occupy; Turkey and Brazil in 2013; and, finally, Nuit Debout (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 31). The central theme of Gerbaudo's book is his claim that the New Democracy Movement essentially saw the development of a new and important political theory and practice, a kind of radical democratic populism that he calls 'citizenism', which has supposedly displaced anarchism and other libertarian socialist influences. To be clear, Gerbaudo agrees with other commentators (Bray, 2013; Gould-Wartofsky, 2015; Graeber, 2013; Sitrin & Azzellini, 2014) that Occupy and other parts of the New Democracy Movement were significantly influenced by anarchism and featured many both explicitly anarchist and more loosely 'anarchistic' organisers – and he does not dispute Bray's empirical findings supporting the latter. This influence is seen *inter alia* in their anti-capitalism, refusal of state and party capture, forms of bottom-up (what Bray calls 'direct') democracy, and emphasis on prefigurative politics and direct action. Although the definitions of anarchism are highly contested, these are all commitments that are part of the core of the social and political movements that have called themselves anarchist since the late 1800s (van der Walt & Hirsch, 2010 and the next section).

Acknowledging that 'populism' is a term increasingly emptied of meaningful content, Gerbaudo identifies its core with a concern for popular sovereignty, which includes identifying the People as the source of state power and the idea that the state should act in its interests – a principle he, in turn, connects to traditions of civic republicanism.

Citizenism, the emergent ideology that Gerbaudo reads into the New Democracy Movement, further involves a concern to reclaim popular sovereignty over and within the state, including a commitment to experimenting with more bottom-up and participatory institutional forms; it bases itself on the citizen and the citizenry (rather than e.g. class) as the political agent and identity it appeals to; it sees the central social conflict as between the citizenry and the oligarchy (rather than e.g. the capitalists and the working classes); and it envisions a future of 'real democracy' essentially in the terms of a 'restoration and bottom-up expansion of democratic space, the road toward reconquering people-power and addressing the manifold problems of a neoliberal and elitist society, marked by grotesque inequality' (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 83). Gerbaudo is at pains to argue that this marks a political turn away from the forms of anarchism and autonomist Marxism that have been influential in more recent protest politics, part of which includes a critique of Mark Bray's (Bray, 2013) analysis thereof – a subject I discuss below.

Building on this, Gerbaudo examines the New Democracy Movement's appeal to 'the 99%', arguing that it signals a focus on appealing to a broad and inclusive conception of the indignant citizenry, as opposed to the more minoritarian and identity politics-focused appeals of prior protest movements. The New Democracy Movement is also argued to mark a return to nationally focused politics, in line with its shifting focus on the state and citizen – a turn that Gerbaudo argues was important and useful for mobilising broad segments of the population around causes and grievances close to home, but which is not without potential pitfalls. He also discusses these movements' use of social media, in particular their embrace of corporate channels like Twitter and Facebook, and their use of these venues primarily for external appeal and information, rather than for internal networking and organising, as well as the importance of occupying highly visible public spaces offline, and their roles as public fora. This goes along with a populist 'interpretation' of these occupied spaces as a symbolic ritual 'whose value was found (…) in the relationship occupations constructed with society at large, and the way they acted as a point of identification' (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 179), as opposed to an anarchist interpretation emphasising their prefigurative structure and their educational, and experiential effects.

The three books differ in interesting ways in the role they see for the large general assemblies that typified the New Democracy Movement in many places. For example, for both Bray and Gould-Wartofsky, the general assemblies represented a new form of direct and participatory democratic politics that would be both an experience of and education in a new form of

social organisation – one more free, equal, and democratic than any of our major basic institutions.[3] Gerbaudo, on the other hand, argues that the choice of assemblies rather than a structure of spokescouncils reflects a populist drive to centralise decision-making, that their radical openness helped to attract a broad and diverse range of participants, and that their mass character and diversity of participants lead to their decline.

A more important disagreement concerns the ideological character and legacy of occupy. While for Bray Occupy was an experiment in translating anarchy, Gerbaudo argues that its character and legacy instead lie in the new left populism, citizenism, that it developed. The following two sections will discuss Bray and Gerbaudo's diverging views on the role of anarchism in Occupy, and the extent to which there is a good reason to see Occupy as the incubator of the new left populism.

The question of anarchism

Corresponding to his attempts to read a coherent ideology of citizenism into the diverse Movement of the Squares, Gerbaudo repeatedly tries to contrast the statements and practices with those of anarchism in general and what he calls neo-anarchism in particular. It is not clear exactly what or whom Gerbaudo takes himself to refer to by 'neo-anarchism', or how he thinks it differs from anarchism in general. Nor is it always clear when he is talking about anarchism in general or the (presumably) narrower category of neo-anarchism. In light of this, my focus will be on Gerbaudo's misrepresentation of anarchism in general. This misrepresentation is important not only because anarchism was a major influence on the theory and practice of the New Democracy Movement – a point on which all three books agree – but also because anarchism is increasingly a political force in other movements and organisations today and is garnering greater attention and interest both within and outside of the academy.

From the beginning of his book, Gerbaudo contrasts populism with anarchism, arguing that the latter has always 'espoused a politics of anti-statism, seeing the state as the root of all domination' (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 6) and 'the root of all evil' (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 237). When arguing against reading the New Democracy Movement as essentially or significantly anarchist, Gerbaudo makes the related point that 'counter to what has been claimed by anarchist theorists, these mobilisations have not adopted a narrow anti-statist and anti-representational view' – which presumably anarchism does (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 17). When describing traditional anarchist themes, he mentions 'freedom, equality, rejection of hierarchy, anti-statism' (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 64), but consistently fails to note anarchism's traditional opposition to capitalism, slavery, and feudalism – among other things. Finally, Gerbaudo often stresses that anarchism and neo-anarchism suspects and/or rejects large organisations as such (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 65).

There are thus three features that Gerbaudo attributes to anarchism in general that I want to challenge here: (1) that anarchism is solely concerned with opposing the state, which is seen as the root of all social problems; (2) that it has not centred on struggles against e.g. economic institutions, such as capitalism and the state; and (3) that it rejects large-scale organisations and organising. All of these points are mistaken, and any attempt to assess the content of the New Democracy Movement, and/or any relevance it might have going forward, needs to get them right.

There is no uncontroversial and agreed-upon definition of anarchism, but the historical movements that have called themselves anarchist since the late 1800s – which are what Bray in part argues that much of Occupy Wall Street comes close to and what Gerbaudo seems to target – have a number of salient features in common.

> The core ideas of anarchism (…) are clear. Fiercely opposed to all forms of social and economic inequality and oppression, anarchism rejected capitalism, the state and hierarchy in general. A revolutionary and libertarian doctrine, anarchism sought the establishment of individual freedom through the creation of a cooperative, democratic, egalitarian and stateless socialist order. This would be established through the direct action of the working class and peasantry, waging an international and internationalist social revolution against capitalism, landlordism and the state. (van der Walt and Hirsch, p. xxxvi–xxxvii)

These include much of the world's anarcho-communist, syndicalist, and anarcho-syndicalist movements, and includes the one non-contemporary anarchist thinker that Gerbaudo names, Emma Goldman. Turning to Gerbaudo's objections, first, anarchism has not historically been concerned solely with opposing the state. Major historical anarchists like Elisée Reclus, Emma Goldman, Errico Malatesta, He-Yin Zhen, Lucy Parsons, Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Voltairine de Cley, and many more all opposed capitalism, slavery, and feudalism as well, among many other things, including nationalism, imperialism, racism, and sexism. Indeed, the anarchism of the historical anarchist movement first took shape within the First International, an anti-capitalist, internationalist, and anti-imperialist workers' organisation and continued to be a major influence within syndicalist unions worldwide, including those which were not explicitly anarcho-syndicalist. As Benedict Anderson has noted, anarchism and syndicalism constituted 'the main vehicle of global opposition to industrial capitalism, autocracy, latifundism, and imperialism' at the turn of the century (Anderson, 2006, p. 54). This is connected to the second point, that anarchism has in fact centred on other struggles as well, including economic struggles against capitalism, slavery, and feudalism – which Gerbaudo at one point concedes (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 78) before trying to explain it away by means of an uncharitable reading of a single anarchist thinker (Emma Goldman) (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 80). A host of major anarchist organisations from the federalist sections of the First International to later organisations like the Spanish CNT, the Argentinian FORA, Uruguayan FORU,

and many more all explicitly aimed at replacing not just the state, but e.g. feudalism and capitalism as well (Damier, 2009).

Lastly, anarchism, in general, has not opposed large organisations at all. Quite the contrary, throughout much of the world, in particular the later parts of the 19th Century, Eric Hobsbawm writes that 'the bulk of the revolutionary left was anarcho-syndicalist, or at least much closer to the ideas and the mood of anarcho-syndicalism than to that of classical marxism' (Hobsbawm, 1993, p. 72–3). As I already noted, Benedict Anderson has argued that anarchism and syndicalism constituted 'the main vehicle of global opposition to industrial capitalism, autocracy, latifundism, and imperialism' at the turn of the century (Anderson, 2006, p. 54, see also van der Walt & Hirsch, 2010). These included organisations with tens or even hundreds of thousands of members, such as the Spanish CNT, the Argentinian FORA, the Uruguayan FORU, and the Swedish SAC, as well as anarchist participation of major radical (but not purely anarchist) syndicalist unions such as the French CGT, the US IWW, and the Italian USI. In fact, many anarchists have traditionally seen the formation and development of mass organisations as an essential component of bringing about the large-scale social change that they want. To take just one among innumerable instances, Malatesta writes:

> Let us enter all the workers' associations, establish as many as we can, weave ever larger federations, support and organize strikes, and spread everywhere and by every means the spirit of cooperation and solidarity between workers, the spirit of resistance and struggle. (Malatesta, 2014, p. 172)

There is, of course, a strand of anti-organisationalist anarchism, but, as these examples show, to conflate anti-organisationalist anarchism with anarchism as a whole would be a mistake.

These mistakes should be connected with how one interprets the New Democracy Movement. When the New Democracy Movement sought mass appeal and organising, highlighted economic issues and concerns, and was not narrowly anti-statist, this can be interpreted as an anti-anarchist step *only if* we ignore the fact that all of these are perfectly compatible with anarchism. However, as this section has shown these commitments are standard features of historical anarchist movements and thinkers worldwide. This leads naturally to a follow-up question: If part of Gerbaudo's argument for the New Democracy Movement marking a turn from anarchism to populism is based on misconstruing anarchism, what reason remains for preferring his interpretation?

A new left populism?

There is no doubt that the New Democracy Movement has affected the rise of left-populist parties and candidates in important ways, from Syriza and Podemos to Berne Sanders, Jeremy Corbyn, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. By bringing questions of inequality, class, and class power into public

debates and consciousness, by presenting devastating critiques of contemporary capitalism and states, and so on, they have laid the foundations for the rhetoric, appeal, and (so far very limited) success of these formations. The question is to what extent they have grown organically from the New Democracy Movement, or whether they have taken advantage of, and built on, some of its lasting effects. As we have seen, one of Gerbaudo's most interesting and challenging theses is that the former is the case that the new wave of left populism and the ideology of 'citizenism' it embodies has emerged naturally from the New Democracy Movement. This, of course, connects to his critique of Bray, since it is important for Gerbaudo's thesis that the New Democracy Movement in general marks a turn away from anarchism towards electorally focused populism. What is the basis for this?

Gerbaudo argues that Occupy was populist, moving away from anarchism, because calls of e.g. 'We Are the 99 Percent' are 'strongly in line with the populist view' of appealing to majorities, rather than any anarchist focus on minorities (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 76). This marks a 'transition from the neo-anarchist narrative of contestation of the State and all large-scale institutions to a denunciation of the elites perverting them' (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 78). Rather than a popular translation of anarchist principles, the critique of bankers and plutocrats marks a turn away from anti-capitalism to a vague form of populist anti-elitism (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 77–83), and invocations of 'real democracy' really calls to recapture state sovereignty rather than replacing it (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 83–6).

Importantly, this contradicts the claims of anarchist participants, who argue that appeals to the 1% vs. the 99% were rather a way of articulating class inequalities of wealth and power. As one of the inventors of the 'We Are the 99%' slogan writes:

> This is of course precisely what we were getting at when we first decided to call ourselves the 99 percent. In doing so, we did something almost unprecedented. We managed to get the issues not only of class, but of class power, back into the center of American political debate. (Graeber, 2013, p. xxii–xxiii)

This point is repeated in Mark Bray. We should also here recall that Mark Bray found that 72% of the organisers surveyed were broadly speaking 'anarchistic', a necessary condition for which was being anti-capitalist. At least for Occupy Wall Street, Bray's case seems stronger here, relying on 192 interviewees compared to Gerbaudo's 24 for Occupy in the US. Both Bray and Graeber were also active members of Occupy and agree that part of the purpose of their message was precisely to put questions class, class power, and anti-capitalism back on the political agenda. What is more, they seem to have succeeded, with a number of recent studies showing growing numbers of young people rejecting capitalism.

Nonetheless, Gerbaudo insists that his interpretation of certain movement statements, the main source he claims support from (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 250),

supports his populist reading over the anarchist one. He may be correct that his reading is a *possible* interpretation of movements' written statements, but he presents no convincing evidence or argument for *preferring* his reading to the others – which is particularly surprising given that his readings contradict those of previous accounts he is responding to. A movement consisting of several very different tendencies largely unable to formulate a coherent political programme might easily be expected to revert to strategically vague language in order to prevent the members of any one group blocking their proposals, and in order to maximise their impact among a broader populace. If that is the case, as several inside observers and participants in these movements point out (Bray, 2013; Gould-Wartofsky, 2015; Graeber, 2013; Sitrin & Azzellini, 2014), the fact that many different official statements *can*, with sufficient creativity, be interpreted as expressing a new and coherent emergent populist political theory or ideology does not entail that this is the *most plausible* way to make sense either of the political theory and practice of these movements or what their participants thought, valued, and aimed for. Unfortunately for his case, Gerbaudo provides no convincing evidence or argument for his claim that should lead a reader to prefer his interpretation to those of his opponents.

The question here is not whether the New Democracy Movement has been important for the recent revival of left-populism as a political project; clearly it has. The question is whether it really makes sense to read a coherent ideology of 'citizenism' into the movement as a whole. So far, it does not.

Conclusion

The New Democracy Movement in general, and Occupy in particular, is an event whose political consequences it is still too early to determine. In light of its sudden appearance, spread, and seemingly just as sudden disappearance, it is natural to ask: what, if anything, did the New Democracy Movement achieve? I would argue that it achieved at least two major victories unparalleled by any other movements of the last four or five decades: it has contributed to the growing rejection of capitalism and support for socialism in the name of democracy; and, just like the world revolution of 1968, it is seen the growth of a culture not just of resistance, but of active struggle for positive social change. Part of all of this is the re-thinking of democracy in interesting and innovative ways. This is associated with a major shift in public discourse towards questions of class and class power worldwide, even in the US. We have seen the growth of direct action movements like Fight For 15 and Black Lives Matter, along with a new wave of worker organising and militancy especially in the United States (including recent teachers' strikes and organising of fast food workers), many of whom have won significant victories (in particular better wages and working conditions). There is, finally, a spread in the

tactics favoured by the New Democracy Movement to many contemporary movements, including a reinvigorated radical labour movement, anti-racist and anti-fascist movements, and ecological movements. These include an emphasis on direct action (including strikes and occupations), a connected refusal to rely on taking capitalist state power (indirect action), and a commitment to pre-figurative and non-hierarchical forms of social and political organising. It is still too early to see what the effects of these movements will be, but whatever they are it is clear that the New Democracy Movement has been very influential on today's movements.

The recent reinvigoration of progressive populist politics is certainly also among the new Democracy Movement's effects. However, the politics of the new left populism have not been generated within, nor have they ever really been rooted in, the movement politics they aim to articulate and support. For those who have faith in party politics, this remains an important challenge which must be kept in mind. For those who do not, the New Democracy Movement offers different lessons altogether.

Notes

1. There is significant debate about whether the New Democracy Movement really amounts to a single coherent movement. None of the authors mentioned thinks that all parts of the New Democracy Movement share e.g. a single programme for political reform. However, it is not uncommon to talk of worldwide political phenomena, such as the 1848 revolutions or the 1968 uprisings, not only as movements, but as world revolutions (Arrighi, Hopkins, & Wallerstein, 1989), because they shared a certain point of focus – albeit somewhat broad and vague. The 1848 revolutions were generally speaking *for* popular sovereignty and *against* the counter-revolution of 1815 (Arrighi et al., 1989, p. 97), while the 1968 uprisings were arguably *against* the world order imposed by the US after 1945 and *for* the goals of universal human emancipation (Arrighi et al., 1989, p. 98). Both were world revolutions which fundamentally changed the world, despite failing to achieving any of their immediate goals and despite their lack of any centralised organisation or common programme across different countries and regions. Whether Occupy amounts to a world revolution remains to be seen, but it should be clear that it has just as much coherence across regions as do the 1848 and 1968 revolutions, representing, at least among other things, an uprising *against* the neoliberal world order imposed from the 1970s onwards (and more proximately to its political failure of dealing with the 2007/8 financial crisis) and *for* a democratic society. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for recommending that I address this important question, and apologise to them and (other) readers for not being able to explore it more fully here.
2. I should point out that many advocates of consensus decision-making – such as David Graeber (Graeber, 2013) – do not actually advocate strict consensus decision-making in large mass assemblies, but instead the use of consensus decision-making in smaller groups that come together in spokescouncils. This is another important point that much of the critical literature misses.

3. Though as I have already pointed out, Bray, in particular, is clear that the model of large general assemblies is not the one typically advocated by supporters of consensus decision-making and criticises the decision to retain such large assemblies rather than focus on a spokescouncil model, diagnosing it in part due to a malign liberal influence.

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