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ZAPATISMO AND THE GLOBAL ORIGINS OF OCCUPY

I.   *Introduction*

" The Occupy protests seemed to come out of nowhere," according to mainstream media sources across the political spectrum, from *Fox News Network* to *The New York Times*.[1] This seemingly innocent observation is also an unreflective affirmation of a certain prevailing political assumption: that neoliberalism is the only conceivable political reality and that everything else must have come out of "nowhere." With respect to the dominant political discourse of parties and corporations, there is no recognizable location of the event of resistance. The use of the word "nowhere" effectively reduces the history of revolutionary action leading up to the Occupy movement to "nothing." Every act of resistance "seems" to be spontaneous, isolated, and ephemeral. It is no coincidence that this particular ideological erasure of revolutionary history deployed by the media in the most recent period of global revolt, in 2011, is the same erasure made at the first event of global revolt, in 1994: during the Zapatista Uprising.[2]

The Occupy movement did not come out of nowhere. As some theorists have already pointed out, many of the strategies deployed by the Occupy movement have their origins in the alter-globalization movement.[3] But where did the alter-globalization movement get these

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[1] Kate Zernike, "Wall St. Protest Isn't Like Ours, Tea Party Says" *New York Times,* 21 October 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/22/us/politics/wall-st-protest-isnt-like-ours-tea-party-says.html (accessed 24 January 2013); Dunstan Prial, "Two Protest Movements, Two Divergent Paths" *Fox News Network*, 20 September 2012, http://www.foxbusiness.com/government/2012/09/20/two-protest-movements-two-divergent-paths/ (accessed 24 January 2013).

[2] Patricia Huntington, "Challenging the Colonial Contract" in William Wilkerson and Jeffrey R. Paris, ed., *New Critical Theory: Essays on Liberation* (Lanham MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 115–17.

[3] Naomi Klein, "Occupy Wall Street: The Most Important Thing in the World Now', *The Nation*, 6 October 2011, <http://www.thenation.com/article/163844/occupy-wall-street-most-important-thing-world-now> (accessed 12 February 2012); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "The Fight for 'Real Democracy' at the Heart of Occupy Wall Street: The Encampment in Lower Manhattan Speaks to a

strategies in the first place? Did those too "come out of nowhere"? The alter-globalization movement was initiated by the group, Peoples' Global Action—an offshoot of the first and largest global anti-neoliberal gatherings: the Intercontinental *Encuentros* organized by the Zapatistas in 1994 and 1996.[4] Thus, the origins of the Occupy movement and its defining strategies are profoundly global. But the legacy of global resistance is not one of models and copies—no one "copied" the Zapatistas. In contrast to a linear descent of active transmitters and passive adopters, global resistance has spread more through the indirect force of "inspiration." Global resistance did not copy the Zapatistas, but took inspiration from them and *adapted* Zapatista strategies to fit their own situation. Thus, the history of global resistance is one of resonance and mutation: the struggles mutually inspired one another and adapted their strategies to their shared structural conditions.[5]

Accordingly, the Occupy movement owes its strategies to many predecessors, although none more than the Zapatistas. It is thus surprising that, so far, no one has traced the wave of theoretical and practical influence that runs from the Zapatistas to the Occupy movement. Accordingly, the aim of this article is to do precisely that. In order to accomplish this task, this essay is divided into three sections—each of which argues for the theoretical consistency and practical resonance of one of the defining political strategies of the Occupy movement: (1) horizontalism, (2) consensus decision-making, and (3) the political use of masks. The thesis of this paper is that these three defining political strategies can all be traced back to the influence of the Zapatistas.[6]

Failure of Representation," *Foreign Affairs*, October 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136399/michael- hardt-and-antonio-negri/the-fight-for-real-democracy-at-the-heart-of-occ upy-wall-street?page=show> (accessed 4 February 2012); David Graeber, "Occupy Wall Street's Anarchist Roots," *Aljazeera*, 30 November 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/1 1/2011112872835904508.html> (accessed 7 February 2012).

[4] Notes from Nowhere, ed., *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2003); Alex Khasnabish, *Zapatismo Beyond Borders: New Imaginations of Political Possibility* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Giorel Curran, *21st Century Dissent: Anarchism, Anti-Globalization and Environmentalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Mark Engler, "The Anti-Globalization Movement Defined," *The Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice*, 2007, <http://www.stwr.org/the- un-people-politics/the-anti-globalization-movement-defined.html> (accessed 4 March 2011).

[5] See Leonidas Oikonomakis and Jérôme E. Roos, "'Que No Nos Representan' The Crisis of Representation and the Resonance of the Real Democracy Movement from the Indignados to Occupy," unpublished manuscript.

[6] While the Occupy movement certainly uses more than three strategies, these three are some of the most unique and characteristic of its political form. Further, the Zapatistas are not the only and ultimate "origin" of these strategies. They are simply the ones most responsible for their popularization and resonance in the case of the Occupy movement. The goal of this paper is not to locate direct diffusion or causality in a single origin, but simply to make the case for the theoretical and strategic consistency among a group of similar struggles, which began most influentially with the Zapatistas.

II.   Horizontalism: The Party vs The Assembly

The first global political strategy adapted by the Occupy movement that I would like to address is that of horizontalism—the egalitarian gathering of people into popular assemblies and their globally networked connection. The name *horizontalidad* or "horizontalism" was first widely used in Argentina during the popular revolts and assemblies that emerged after the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) policies led to economic meltdown in 2001. According to Marina Sitrin, "as its name suggests, *horizontalidad* implies democratic communication on a level plane and involves—or at least intentionally strives towards—non-hierarchal and anti-authoritarian creation rather than reaction. It is a break with vertical ways of organizing and relating."[7]

The Theory of Horizontalism

Horizontalidad emerged, in large part, as an alternative to political parties. Political parties have long been the organizational tools of both the Left and the Right for bringing together large groups of people under commonly shared platforms and ideological positions. The party is made up of officials, who represent, educate, and speak for the constituents whom they represent. The party structure is the way in which the power of the state is divided up and executed.

But this division is precisely one of its problems. The very nature of parties is to be partisan, oppositional, and divide the people between conflicting positions. Unfortunately, this makes it quite difficult for political demands that do not fit party lines to emerge and change political life. Popular movements are either ignored or transformed to fit or oppose party platforms. The problem with this is that there is no system in place to challenge party divisions or the party system itself. French philosopher Alain Badiou's activist group, *L'Organization Politique* identifies this phenomenon as one of the greatest dangers to social movements like those of the *sans papiers* (undocumented migrants) in France. "When movements deploy their own statements," the OP say, "they are considered [by political parties] as unusable and dangerous. [Political parties] thus liquidate the movement by putting it into service against the opposition within the parliamentary framework, that is, ultimately in the framework of an electoral relation of forces."[8]

This is precisely what occurred in France as the result of civil disobedience against the Debré (anti-immigration) laws and the large (100,000 people) rally in Paris supporting the *sans-papiers* on February 22, 1997, before elections in June. The Right had created these laws and the Left sought to capitalize on the surprising amount of public outrage against them. The Left was able to turn popular support for the *sans-papiers* into a partisan electoral issue right

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[7] Marina Sitrin, *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (Edinburgh, Scotland: AK Press, 2006), 3.

[8] L'Organization Politique, *La Distance Politique* 19–20 (3). [my translation].

before the election. On June 1, 1997 the Left won the election with the promise of regularization (contra the Debré laws). Although (Left) Prime Minister Jospin did regularize many of the *sans-papiers*, he refused to declare a moratorium on deportations. By June 17th, many members of the Saint Bernard *sans-papiers* collective were deported. The party claimed to be responding to the interest of the people, but as soon as they were elected, the movement was abandoned. The lesson learned from the *sans-papiers* struggle is that the party is a partisan organization of the state that cannot unite the people, but rather relies on their opportunistic division.

The second problem posed by the structure of the party system is that of corruption. All too often political parties (Left or Right), as leaders of the people, are bribed with positions of greater power and money not to act in the interests of the people. The very structure of having a few party leaders decide state policy concentrates political power in the hands of a few and makes them more vulnerable to influence and corruption. Even if the people realize that their voices are not being heard, they can only elect new representatives who fall prey to the same system of influence and corruption. There is no real way to change the system of party representation through the election process. Division and corruption are two major concerns at the core of the party system—and two motives for creating an alternative.

Instead of the party system, horizontalism proposes the assembly. A popular assembly is a group of very different people who gather together in order to discuss the shared concerns by which they are all effected. In contrast to the oppositional structure of the party, the assembly is not divided by party lines, ideologies, or represented constituents. The assembly is open to everyone. It is non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian, and without leaders. The aim of the assembly is simply to bring into direct, unmediated contact the people with themselves—as opposed to a small gathering of representatives speaking on behalf of the people. If there is any alternative at all to the problems posed by political parties, it must begin with a popular gathering of the people—in particular those who are disproportionally excluded from the party system. These assemblies are then connected to other assemblies through horizontal social networks, including national and international gatherings. In contrast to the corruption of the party, the horizontal diffusion of power reduces the likelihood and effect of political corruption, since the assembly has no leaders to be corrupted.

The theory of horizontalism was developed and put into practice well before the 2001 uprisings in Argentina. It was developed five years earlier at the first Zapatista *Encuentro* (encounter or assembly). On July 27, 1996, 3,000 activists from more than 40 countries converged in Zapatista territory in Chiapas, Mexico, for the First Intercontinental *Encuentro* for Humanity and against Neoliberalism. The aim of the first *Encuentro* was, according to the Zapatistas, to gather the "minorities of the world: the indigenous, youth, women,

homosexuals, lesbians, people of color, immigrants, workers, peasants, etc."[9] and create a space where they could share their struggles and create bridges of mutual global solidarity. The goal was not to create a new "global program for world revolution" or a new party "that assures all of us a position, a task, a title, and now work," but to create a whole new type of organizational network.[10]

Here, the Committees in Solidarity with the Zapatista Rebellion were created and charged with the further organization of more *Encuentros* on five continents—Europe, Asia, America, Africa and Oceania—in the coming years. The closing remarks of this first *Encuentro* (*Second Declaration of La Realidad*) defined two central aims of this new horizontal network. First, to make a collective network of all singular struggles and resistances:

> This intercontinental network of resistance, recognizing differences and acknowledging similarities, will search to find itself with other resistances around the world. This intercontinental network of resistance will be the medium in which distinct resistances may support one another. This intercontinental network of resistance is not an organizing structure; it doesn't have a central head or decision maker; it has no central command or hierarchies. We are the network, all of us who resist.[11]

The second aim was to create an intercontinental network of alternative communication among all struggles and resistances that "will search to weave the channels (*tejer los canales*) so that words may travel all the roads (*camine todos los caminos*) that resist . . . [and] will be the medium by which distinct resistances communicate with one another."[12] Although the Zapatistas do no use the word "horizontalism" in this declaration, their idea for an international network of global struggle and communication with no central command or hierarchy is exactly what horizontalism is. But what is the theory and practice behind this strategy? Global horizontalism, for the Zapatistas, is composed of at least two strategic concepts: the *Encuentro* (encounter) and the *puente* (bridge).

The Encuentro

For many years the Zapatistas delivered an open invitation to all the minorities of the world to participate in a global *Encuentro*. The *Encuentro* is not just a gathering of various marginalized peoples against neoliberalism; it is a new political strategy. It is different from

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[9] Subcomandante Marcos, *Ya Basta!: Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising*, ed. Žiga Vodovnik, (Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 642.

[10] The Zapatistas, "Closing Words of the EZLN at the Intercontinental Encounter
—2nd Declaration of La Realidad,"
http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/1996/ccri_encount_aug.html (accessed 23 January 2013).

[11] Marcos, *Ya Basta!*, 645.

[12] Ibid.

other international conferences insofar as it affirms the equality of all the heterogeneous struggles of the world: not only class struggle, or feminism, environmentalism, or anti-racism, etc., but all of them equally. Thus, the *Encuentro* is not about a single issue, it is a globalization of the struggles themselves: a "globalization from below." The *Encuentro* is not an international program but rather a place of encounter for all the struggles of the world to meet without the authority or leadership of a vanguard or a party.

The *Encuentros* are "horizontal" in the sense that they are non-hierarchical, flat planes of communication among equals. There is no "vertical" relationship of authority of anyone over anyone else. The *Encuentro* can thus be defined by three key characteristics. (1) First, it is a new form of solidarity: "mutual global solidarity." The *Encuentro* is a site where minority struggles around the world support one another—as opposed to the one directional support of first world solidarity with the third world, socialist style internationalism, or human rights solidarity focusing primarily on the rights of individual persons.[13] Mutual global solidarity is defined by a high degree of mutual aid between activists that blurs the distinction between the provider and the receiver of solidarity and has a larger emphasis on non-material solidarity (inspiration, education, affection and so on). For example, the Zapatistas, who are some of the poorest peasants in the world, still send people, materials, and written support to Palestinians and others. (2) Second, the *Encuentro* is not a decision-making apparatus. It is not a centralized program for the world to follow. No participants are bound by the authority of the *Encuentro*. (3) Third, the *Encuentro* is the medium (*el medio*) through which the minorities of the world gather. It is not an entity separate or above the groups that gather under its name. It is the open space where they gather in equality: horizontally.

Puentes

The *puentes*, on the other hand, are the networked connections between struggles and communications: "a network of woven channels [or bridges] so that words [and actions] may travel all the roads that resist." The concept of the network discussed in the *Second Declaration* should be distinguished topologically as an "all channel network" (where everyone can connect horizontally with everyone else in a non-linear series: like a rhizome) in contrast to a "chain network" (where top-to-bottom communication is mediated hierarchically: like a tree) as well as a "star or hub network" (where actors are tied to a single central actor and must go through that node to communicate with others: like a tuber).[14] The "all channel" network is the horizontal network.

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[13] Thomas Olesen, *International Zapatismo: The Construction of Solidarity in the Age of Globalization* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 256.

[14] David Ronfeldt, John Arquilla, Graham Fuller and Melissa Fuller, T*he Zapatista 'Social Netwar' in Mexico* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1998), 7.

The second dimension of the *Encuentro* proposed by the Zapatistas is the creation of an alternative media network for the coordination (weaving) of concrete words and actions around the world. This is a novel and important form of global connection. As Ronfeldt et al. highlight:

> More than ever before, conflicts are about 'knowledge' – about who knows (or can be kept from knowing) what, when, where, and why. Conflicts will revolve less around the use of raw power than of 'soft power,' as applied through 'information operations' and 'perception management,' that is, media-oriented measures that aim to attract rather than coerce and that affect how secure a society, a military, or other actor feels about its knowledge of itself and its adversaries. Psychosocial disruption may become more important than physical destruction . . . Mexico's Zapatista movement exemplifies [this] new approach to social conflict that we call social netwar.[15]

Accordingly, Marcos says, this media network is "not about communication, but of building something."[16] Media not only produces knowledge but also produces effects that transform reality. Thus, it may be "the word which is the bridge to cross to the other,"[17] but "extend[ing] the bridges that joined those who were the same, [makes] them different."[18] The concept of the bridge, deployed often in Zapatista writings, is accordingly not a common link between two different things that brings them into a unity; it is a differentiator between two common things that keeps them apart and holds them together *as differentiated*. It is in this sense that the Zapatistas say that their "goal is to be a bridge on which the many rebellions in the world can walk back and forth."[19] But at the global level, solidarity cannot be realized as a generic encounter against neoliberalism; it has to take on specific coordinated words, slogans and actions, that is, one or more bridges that connect two or more singular struggles together. The more concrete bridges or connections made through this alternative media network, the stronger and larger the network. Because the network is nothing more than the connections or bridges that effectuate it, there is no party, state or bureaucracy at the head; it is acephalic, horizontal.

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Subcomandante Marcos, "Entrevista a Sub-Comandante Marcos", *El Historiador*, 2001, <http://www.elhistoriador.com.ar/entrevistas/m/marcos. php> (accessed 4 March 2011).

[17] The Zapatistas, *Zapatista Encuentro: Documents from the 1996 Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998), 8.

[18] Subcomandante Marcos, Y*a Basta!: Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising*, ed. Žiga Vodovnik (Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 437.

[19] Subcomandante Marcos and EZLN, "Communiqué from the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee – General Command, of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation," 15 and 16 September 2008.

The Global Legacy of Horizontalism

From the Zapatistas to the creation of Peoples' Global Action (PGA), The World Social Forum (WSF), and the *Indignatos*, the global legacy of horizontalism leads all the way up to the Occupy movement. In 1997, the Second Zapatista *Encuentro* was held in southern Spain, drawing over 3,000 activists from over fifty countries. It was here that the plans originated for the creation of an offshoot group called Peoples' Global Action (PGA) in order to "move beyond debate and exchange and propose action campaigns against neoliberalism, worldwide."[20] Beginning in 1998, PGA organized a series of direct actions and interventions at almost every major alter-globalization summit protest from the Seattle WTO protests in 1999 to Genoa G8 protests in 2001. Their organizing strategies (drawn from the Zapatistas) have influenced the way almost all major summit protests are now organized. We can see the Zapatista influence in the PGA's fifth organizational hallmark: "An organizational philosophy based on decentralization and autonomy." According to one of the founding members of PGA and participant at the early Zapatista *Encuentros*, Frederike Haberman, this is "the Hallmark on horizontality and this is particular to what the Zapatistas are saying."[21]

After the PGA used horizontality for the purposes of organizing the alter-globalization movement, the World Social Forum (2001–present) and regional social forums were inspired by these same principles: horizontal (non-hierarchical) organization and global alternative communications without centralization.[22] For example, the fifth Charter Principle of the World Social Forum states that "the WSF brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but does not intend to be a body representing world civil society."[23] The WSF in this way follows the *Encuentro*'s horizontalism of being non-hierarchical and non-representational. Accordingly, the eighth Charter Principle follows the concept of *puentes,* proper to Zapatista horizontalism: "The WSF interrelates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world." The WSF is thus not only a non-hierarchical space for the world's social struggles to gather, but also an "interrelation" of these organizations.

Another global inspiration for the Occupy movement are the *Indignatos* in Spain, who used horizontalism earlier that year. In May 2011, 6.5 to 8 million Spaniards participated in a series of marches and occupations against Spanish austerity measures and political corruption in Spain. The *Indignatos* occupations were decentralized, non-hierarchical, and did not elect representatives or create a new political party. They demanded real, popular

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[20] Oliver de Marcellus, "Peoples' Global Action: Dreaming up an Old Ghost," in Midnight Notes Collective, ed., *Auroras of the Zapatistas: Local and Global Struggles of the Fourth World War* (New York: Autonomedia, 2001), 105–17.

[21] Khasnabish, *Zapatismo Beyond Borders,* 237.

[22] Ibid., 238.

[23] The World Social Forum, "Charter of Principles," http://fsm2011.org/en/wsf-2011 (accessed 23 January 2013).

democracy, "*Democracia Real YA!*". In particular, this was organized through an internet social network called *Democracia real YA* (created in January 2011) that gained the support of over 500 associations (without the support of unions or political parties). On May 15th this online social network forum called for coordinated protests across Spain. In Madrid 50,000 people assembled; in Barcelona, 15,000; and in Granada, 5,000. Once people had marched and occupied city centers across Spain, they organized themselves into self-described "horizontal people's assemblies."[24] In their text on "Group Dynamics in People's Assemblies," the Commission for Group Dynamics in Assemblies of the Puerta del Sol Protest Camp (Madrid), define horizontalism as:

> a type of social organisation which implies equality for everyone participating in a group or society. There is no hierarchy and it is the opposite of vertical organisation in which some people make decisions and others obey them. The method used to make decisions in a horizontally-organised group or society is through assemblies. An Assembly is a gathering place where people who have a common purpose can meet on equal footing.[25]

Within the assemblies the people (as equals) can engage in what the authors call "collective thinking." According to the Madrid Commission,

> Collective Thinking, [is not compromise] but . . . people with differing ideas work[ing] together to build something new. . . . It is like a synthesis of individual talents and ideas, not an eclectic summary of what is best but rather a synthesis of all. Individual talents placed in the service of common good, creating through differences, understanding differences as elements which enrich our common vision or understanding.[26]

Just as the Zapatistas' horizontalism is defined by the two components of the *Enceuntro* and the *puente*, so the horizontalism of the *Indignatos* is defined by the *assembly* and *collective thinking*. All across Spain people gathered in assemblies and coordinated their actions—daily activities, food, supplies, and shelter were all decided through the collective thinking of the groups.

Finally, horizontalism was taken up by Occupy Wall Street as an organizing idea in September, 2011.[27] The Occupy movement spread to over 2,556 cities across eighty-two

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[24] Commission for Group Dynamics in Assemblies of the Puerta del Sol Protest Camp (Madrid), "Quick guide on group dynamics in people's assemblies," http://takethesquare.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Quickguidetodynamicsofpeoplesassemblies_13_6_2011.pdf (accessed 23 January 2013).

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] The Occupy movement was inspired by the general spirit of global revolt of the Arab Spring, the occupations in Wisconsin, the riots against austerity measures in Europe and the UK, and the

countries, and over 600 communities in the United States.[28] Not only was horizontalism "in the air," in 2011, it was also on the ground in New York—in the form of organizers from People's Global Action and the alter-globalization movement (strategic resonators of Zapatismo). In particular, activist, anarchist, and anthropologist, David Graeber, helped organize the first OWS assemblies. Graeber was a member of People's Global Action (and organizer for many anti-globalization protests in Quebec City, Genoa (G8), the Republican National Convention, and World Economic Forum. According to Graeber,

> It was only on August 2, when a small group of anarchists and other anti-authoritarians showed up at a meeting called by one such group and effectively wooed everyone away from the planned march and rally to create a genuine democratic assembly, on basically anarchist principles, that the stage was set for a movement that Americans from Portland to Tuscaloosa were willing to embrace.[29]

Disappointed with the preplanned march proposed by New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts (NYAB), Graeber and others organized democratic general assemblies and encampments, including community "kitchens, libraries, clinics, media centres and a host of other institutions, all operating on anarchist principles of mutual aid and self-organisation—a genuine attempt to create the institutions of a new society in the shell of the old."[30] The general assemblies were egalitarian and open to anyone who wanted to participate. OWS in New York was not a command center that organized other protests and sleep-ins across the country and world, but was connected by horizontal communication over social networking sites and blogs. Further, OWS proposed no single unifying set of demands or protocol that was enforced at other Occupy rallies around the world. OWS was not a top-down vertical organization seeking political representation or a new party platform, but a horizontal organization of mutual aid and voluntary alliance. The general assembly and the Occupy Wall Street National Convention are the places where people meet under the open condition of equality and participation and build bridges of communication through Twitter and social networking to coordinate their actions.

III.   *Consensus Decision-Making: Representation vs Participation*

The second crucial strategy and global political philosophy resonating in OWS is that of consensus decision-making—the process by which participants seek collective agreement, but also resolve or mitigate the objections of the minority to achieve the most agreeable

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occupations by the Spanish *Indignados* and the Greeks at Syntagma Square. But this does not mean that all of these groups shared the same strategies, or were all equally legacies to the Occupy movement's strategies.

[28] Joanna Walters, "Occupy America: protests against Wall Street and inequality hit 70 cities | World news," *The Observer (UK)*, (accessed 7 February 2012).

[29] Graeber, "Occupy Wall Street's Anarchist Roots."

[30] Ibid.

decision. Consensus is more than just a horizontalism of egalitarian gathering and networking, it is a site where concrete decisions are made and where grievances can be resolved. Consensus decision-making tries to come to agreements that everyone (or almost everyone) assents to.

The Theory of Consensus

Consensus is an alternative process to political representation and majoritarian decision-making. Consensus emerges as response to the following failures of majoritarian decision-making: (1) Majoritarian decision-making is based on competition between opposing outcomes. The winning outcome is followed by all and the losing outcome is tossed aside: all or nothing. This is likely to create majority and minority voting blocks and an atmosphere of antagonism and partisanship. (2) In addition to antagonism, the subjected minority is likely to feel alienated by having to carry out consequences that they did not agree to. (3) Further, the winning majority not only claims to speak for itself, but also for the whole. But the representation of the whole by a part misrepresents the minority who did not support the decision. Thus, majoritarian decision-making is also a misrepresentation and marginalization of the minority.

Consensus decision-making aims to resolve these problems and can be defined by the following characteristics. (1) Consensus does not strive for a uniformity or homogeneity of opinion, but rather a pluriformity or held tension of differences. "Recognizing differences and acknowledging similarities,"[31] as the Zapatistas say. (2) Consensus is participatory. As many stakeholders (anyone who is effected by the decision) as possible should be involved in the consensus decision-making process and the process should actively solicit the input and participation of all decision-makers. Participation includes everyone without the need for representatives or representation. (4) It is cooperative. Participants in an effective consensus process should strive to reach the best possible decision for the group and all of its members, rather than opt to pursue a majority opinion, potentially to the detriment of a minority. (5) It is egalitarian. All members of a consensus decision-making body should be afforded, as much as possible, equal input into the process. All members have the opportunity to table, amend, and veto or "block" proposals. (6) Finally, it is solution-oriented. An effective consensus decision-making body strives to emphasize common agreement over differences and reach decisions based on synthesis and other techniques to avoid or resolve the emergence of mutually exclusive positions within the group.

The Global Legacy of Consensus

The history of consensus is a long and diverse one, and the Zapatistas were certainly not the first to use it. Consensus decision-making, in some form, has been used by the Iroquois

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[31] The Zapatistas, "Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, January 1, 1996," http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/jung4.html (accessed 24 January 2013).

Confederacy (twelfth century), the Quakers (seventeenth century), Women's Liberation Movements and anti-nuclear movements in the US (1970's), and by organizations like Food not Bombs, co-ops, and anarchist organizations in the 1980's and 90's. While not the first to use consensus, the Zapatistas were the ones most directly responsible for its popularization by the alter-globalization movement and ultimately by OWS.

The indigenous peoples in Chiapas had been using consensus for a very long time before Marcos (an important organizer) arrived. When the Zapatistas emerged as a confluence of indigenous and revolutionary Left strategies, consensus was modified and expanded to women and others. Zapatista communities hold *consultas* in town hall spaces with the whole community on important issues and decisions, where people will meet for hours and hours on end, speaking from their particular vantage point and experience, until the issue is resolved or until people feel they have been heard and are ready to end.[32]

Consensus is not a fast process, but it is a more democratic one, when it works. When practical decisions needed to be made at Zapatista global gatherings, they follow the consensus process. Early participants at these meetings learned how to use this process and carried it forward in the PGA and the alter-globalization movement. Accordingly, David Graeber writes that,

> one of the main inspirations for the new generation of anarchists are the Zapatista autonomous municipalities of Chiapas, [indigenous] communities who have been using consensus process for thousands of years—only now adopted by revolutionaries to ensure that women and younger people have an equal voice.[33]

Early PGA members like Frederike Haberman and David Graeber directly attribute their usage of consensus to the Zapatistas. Accordingly, consensus decision-making was used at almost all the general assemblies and spokes councils of the alter-globalization summits from the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999 and onward. It was summit protest organizers like the PGA who introduced hundreds of thousands of people around the world to the popular and political use of consensus.

In Spain (the conceptual birth place of the PGA) consensus was also used by the *Indignatos* in the People's Assemblies as the main way of making decisions. According to their pamphlet on *Group Dynamics,* the people's assembly:

> is a participatory decision-making body which works towards consensus. The Assembly looks for the best arguments to take a decision that reflects every

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[32] Natalia Castaneda, "Some Zapatista Principles and Practices," see www.leadershiplearning.org/system/files/Some%20Zapatista%20Principles%20%2526%20Practices.pdf (accessed 24 January 2013).

[33] David Graeber, "New Anarchists," *New Left Review*, 13 (January/ February 2002), 61–73.

opinion—not positions at odds with each other as what happens when votes are taken. It must be pacific, respecting all opinions: prejudice and ideology must left at home. An Assembly should not be centred around an ideological discourse; instead it should deal with practical questions: What do we need? How can we get it? The Assembly is based on free association—if you are not in agreement with what has been decided, you are not obliged to carry it out.[34]

Consensus is not representational or ideological; it is direct, participatory, and aimed at making effective decisions with complete agreement of participants.

Drawing on all of these traditions, OWS organizers in New York made the (ambitious) decision to try and organize large general assemblies of people using the consensus process. "Three months later, hundreds of assemblies, big and small, now operate by consensus across America," Graeber says.[35] The aim of this process for OWS was not to create a new political party or platform, but to create in the present a working form of non-representational political participation, a practice missing from many Americans' lives. This is what the Zapatistas, the *Indignatos*, and OWS all have in common: they believe that the dominant system of political representation is irreparably broken. Accordingly, their goal is not to reform it, but to create something new in its place—where the voiceless minorities can speak. The aim of OWS, to offer a third (non-party) way of political life and organization, is similar to the Other Campaign of the Zapatistas, to create a way of life outside the party system in Mexico. In contrast to the vertical system of political representation and party leaders, these groups propose horizontalism. In contrast to majoritarian rule, they propose participatory consensus decision-making.

However, since large-scale (hundreds of people) consensus does not have significant precedent in New York (or many other places), the learning curve is steep. Consensus decision-making is not without its flaws and dangers. (1) Consensus risks preserving the status quo. Since everyone has the ability to block[36], a small minority can more easily block change, resulting in a prolonged situation where the majority of people would like to change things, but cannot. Thus, consensus can give too much power to un-accommodating people. (2) Consensus is susceptible to groupthink. In the Abilene paradox, a group can unanimously agree on a course of action that no individual member of the group desires because no one individual is willing to go against the *perceived will* of the decision-making body.[37] (3) Finally, consensus is time-consuming. The Zapatistas talk for hours and days, sometimes months. Since consensus seeks the input of all participants, it can be a time-

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[34] Commission for Group Dynamics, "Quick guide on group dynamics in people's assemblies."
[35] David Graeber, "Enacting the Impossible (On Consensus Decision-Making)" *Occupywallst.org*, http://occupywallst.org/article/enacting-the-impossible/ (accessed 24 January 2013).
[36] The ability to block can vary depending on the size of the group. Some groups decide to have "consensus minus two, or three, etc."
[37] Jerry B. Harvey, "The Abilene Paradox and other Meditations on Management," *Organizational Dynamics,* Summer 1974, 3 (1): 63.

consuming process. This is a weakness when decisions need to be made quickly, or it is not possible to have a full discussion before needing to make a decision. Further, if some individuals are not able to commit to spending that much time in the process, this might exclude them from participation. Despite the flaws of consensus, it remains a significantly more democratic and egalitarian process of decision-making than majoritarianism.

IV.   *The Political Use of Masks: Identity vs Anonymity*

The third global strategy used by the Occupy movement is that of the political use of masks—the disguising of one's identity. More than ever in the history of political struggle, masks and costumes of all kinds are used by contemporary global protest movements.

The Theory of the Mask

The mask as a political strategy is deployed in contemporary global social movements as an alternative to the prevailing concept of political identity as it is historically embraced by the Left and Right. The classical political subject is the one whose identity is represented by the party, the state, or the dominant definition of "the people." A represented individual has two identities: the identity of itself with itself as a unique person and the identity of this self with the state or whole, which itself is the political unity and identity of the whole political community. In this way the particularity of the individual merges with the universality of the whole—as a political subject of a state. The particular and self-identical will of the individual is made universal through the law of the state, which everyone affirms and follows. If an unrepresented minority desires representation within the state, they must show their faces and make the state include their identity.

This theory of political subjectivity poses two problems for political movements. Firstly, if political inclusion is based on the identity of represented individuals, it means that those whose minority "identities" are not represented by the state are opposed to those who are— they are different or "other" identities. Minority identities thus serve as markers of exclusion and increase the chances of hierarchical qualifiers (race, class, sexuality, etc). Secondly, the concept of political identity is incapable of subjective transformation. Self-identical subjects can express their positive freedom (what they know they want) and have a negative freedom from forces of domination (what they know they do not want). However, what the identical subject is not free to do is change its form of subjectivity itself, since the condition of political agency is the representation of identity and not something other than this. Further, if there was a problem with the very system of political representation itself, how might one respond to and change it if the conditions for political change themselves relied on identity, representation, and opposition?

The political use of masks is a critique of the system of political representation and proposes an alternate strategy to the one of identity: anonymity. By wearing masks and costumes, global social movements reject the traditional presupposition that political minorities are

seeking a party to represent them, or an identity to be represented. In contrast to the opposition of different minority identities vying for representation, the use of masks disidentifies these movements and allows them to speak for themselves, in their own name. Instead of embracing the first person singular "I" (the self-identical subject), masks and costumes also allow these movements to create a new form of third person subjectivity: "we". The "we" cannot be distinguished between itself and a vanguard or leadership. Its anti-authoritarian horizontalism is expressed in the indistinguishable anonymity of the mask. However, while the masks and costumes are anonymous, they are not random. The similarity of the masks (the Zapatista ski-mask, the Guy Fawkes mask, the pink bloc, etc.) creates a group subjectivity. Just as horizontalism and consensus reject the representation of the party and the people, so the use of masks rejects the representation of the person.

In many ways, the contemporary use of masks as a political strategy is a continuation of an ancient and medieval strategy. For example, in 400 BCE the Romans wore masks and costumes in celebration of the harvest festival of Saturn, on December 17. In particular, Roman slaves dressed in their masters' clothes and the patricians, wearing costumes, roamed the streets singing and playing music alongside their slaves as equals. In their anonymity, Roman hierarchy was abolished, and slaves were free for a day. Thus, the Latin "persona" has a double meaning: "Roman citizen" and "mask." The origin of the political use of masks was thus an egalitarian phenomena in which slaves and masters all became persona: masked anonymous citizens.

In the Middle Ages the word for mask, *masca*, takes on a double meaning of its own: as disguise, but also "witch or specter."[38] Medieval peasants, often overtaxed and oppressed under arbitrary manorial laws, took up the Roman tradition of wearing masks around the harvest time and began going door to door singing to the wealthy in exchange for wassail (an alcoholic dairy beverage). Later, masked peasants, called mummers, began performing plays for the wealthy in exchange for money and food. The word "mummer" comes from the Greek word *mommo*, meaning "mask," as well as the Greek word *mormo*, meaning evil spirit.[39] Thus, medieval Christmas was effectively a holiday where roaming bands of masked peasants begged and stole from the homes of the rich and performed didactic plays about good and evil, rich and poor, and the resurrection of life from death. If the wealthy did not give food or money, the mummers, under the cover of their mask, often took it anyway.

Mummers were commonly vagabonds displaced from their homes through debt, due to commutation (the conversion of land-tenure to money-rent in the 13th century) and

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[38] J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), "mask" entry.

[39] Enid Welsford, *The Court Masque: a Study in the Relationship Between Poetry & the Revels* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 34.

increasing land privatization (enclosure laws in the 14th-17th century).[40] The association of "witches and specters" with masked peasants is not only etymological, it is also political. Almost all forms of peasant resistance (the killing of tax collectors, the burning of the homes of the rich, and the revenge of beggars) was labeled as "heresy" by Inquisition officials. Thefts of property and disorder were also threats to the clergy, who benefitted by the same arbitrary taxation and land acquisition as the wealthy. Older single women in particular were disproportionally effected by their expulsion from shared common peasant lands and had to beg to stay alive. Witches and specters are the proper names given to masked Medieval vagabond resistance.[41] Accordingly, Henry V passed a law in 1418 forbidding "mumming, plays, interludes or any other disguisings with any feigned beards, painted visors, deformed or coloured visages in any wise, upon pain of imprisonment."[42]   The history of the political use of masks is part of the history of resistance.

The Global Legacy of the Political Use of Masks

Despite this political history of masks, most forms of political resistance in the 18th, 19th, and most of the 20th century did not use masks. The American revolution, the French revolution, the Russian revolution, the abolition movement and the labor movement in the US, etc. have, for the most part, located revolutionary force with the power of the identity of a people. The figure of the protestor or revolutionary soldier, is not afraid to show its face. In fact, its aim is precisely to do so. The aim of resistance is thus to free oneself from the yolk of oppression and be fully represented by the political system, or capture the state and create a new regime of more complete political representation. The liberal and enlightenment tradition of increasingly universal forms of political inclusion and representation for identity groups seems to have prevailed up until the late 20th century.[43]

In the 1970's and and 80's, however, German and Italian Autonomists protesting squatter evictions, nuclear power, and restrictions on abortion—among other things—began using motor cycle helmets and padded armor to protect themselves from police brutality. These were quickly outlawed as "passive weaponry," by the police, but the masked anonymity that these outfits allowed would not be forgotten.

More than the mummers and the autonomists, the Zapatistas are responsible for the global popularization of mask wearing as an explicitly political strategy. On January 1st, 1994, the day NAFTA went into effect, the Zapatistas marched on San Cristobal de las Casas with

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[40] See: Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).

[41] The practice of mumming was later added to All Hallows Evening (Halloween) making the ultimatum explicit: trick or treat?

[42] Chambers' Book of Days, http://www.thebookofdays.com/months/dec/24a.htm (accessed 24 January 2013).

[43] This is precisely why the KKK's use of masks is not "political", but rather an "extra-political" or paramilitary form of violence. The KKK, as the white majority, is already represented by the state. Their masked actions are not about inclusion or equality or liberty, etc., but about exclusion.

their faces covered by black ski masks. The *compas* (short for compañer@, or partner/comrade) wear black masks and bandannas to create a collective and anonymous group-subjectivity. "In order for them to see us," Marcos says, "we covered our faces; so that they would call us by name, we gave up our names; we bet the present to have a future; and to live . . . we died."[44] While Marcos has given several different reasons for the use of these masks over the years, from making sure no one tries to become the leader to portraying Mexico's covering up of its real Mexico, the collective practice of masking has also produced a very specific kind of revolutionary subjectivity immanent not to a consciousness who represents an "I" to itself, but to the event of Zapatismo itself.[45]

The practice of collective masking in Zapatismo is hostile to vanguardism insofar as it creates a visual equality between subjects, without leaders. One can imagine how confusing it would be to try and follow a single person when everyone was wearing the same black ski mask: "are you the one leading us? No, I thought you were leading us." Everyone takes turns leading by obeying.[46] The point is to lead, but to lead by obeying those you are leading. "Because," as Subcomandante Marcos says, "here in the EZLN the mistakes are conjugated in the first person singular and the achievements in the third person plural."[47] By covering their faces as a political action, the Zapatistas are able to create a unique political anonymity (open to anyone, and yet unambiguously against neoliberalism) that rejects identity-based models of subjectivity in favor of a collective subject of the event itself.

This practice has been used not only by Zapatista solidarity groups at almost every alter-globalization summit protest, but also expanded into different groups of people wearing similar masks or colors to create a "bloc" effect (the black bloc, pink bloc, white bloc, clown bloc, etc.). The benefits of using these masks at summit protests are: (1) it conceals one's identity from police cameras; (2) it makes it harder for police to "single out" individual protestors to arrest; (3) they create a visual feeling of solidarity and equality; and (4) they disrupt internal hierarchies so police cannot identify "a leader" (because there is not one).

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[44] Marcos, *Ya Basta!*, 115.

[45] "The main reason is that we have to be careful that nobody tries to be the main leader. The masks are meant to prevent this from happening." Marcos quoted in: Kenneth Maxwell and Neil Harvey, "Review of *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy*," *Foreign Affairs*, 1 March 1999, 6 <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/54737/kenneth-maxwell/ the-chiapas-rebellion-the-struggle-for-land-and-democracy> (accessed 10 February 2012). I will take off my ski mask when Mexican society takes off its own mask, the one it uses to cover up the real Mexico." Marcos quoted in interview by: Elaine Katzenberger, ed., *First World, Ha Ha Ha!: The Zapatista Challenge* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), 70.

[46] Subcomandante Marcos, *The Other Campaign/La Otra Campaña* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2006).

[47] Gloria Muñoz Ramírez, *The Fire and the Word: A History of the Zapatista Movement*, trans. Laura Carlsen and Alejandro Reyes Arias (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2008), 307.

The Occupy movement's use of masks is a mix of all of these global strategies. At Occupy demonstrations and encampments one can find protestors wearing Zapatistas-style ski masks, various animal costumes (*apropos* of the mummers, who often wore animal costumes), and occasionally organized into colored "blocs," for defensive purposes. But the Occupy movement also adds one new mask to the mix: the Guy Fawkes mask. Why did Occupiers begin wearing these masks? Interestingly, it is due to the German and Italian Autonomist movements of the 70's and 80's. But there are a few steps in-between.

In 1982–1989, Alan Moore, a British comic writer and self-identified anarchist, wrote a graphic novel called *V for Vendetta* in which the main character "V" calls upon the people of London to wear Guy Fawkes masks and show up to Parliament, prepared for social change. The use of masks was not part of the original Gunpowder Plot in 1605 to assassinate King James, to which the Guy Fawkes mask refers. The image of thousands of masked protestors at the capital was something Moore borrowed from watching German Autonomists in their "black blocs" on the news in the late 80's.

In 2006 the cartoon face of Guy Fawkes (inspired by *V for Vendetta*) was attached to a stick figure on the internet message board 4chan and given the name of "Epic Fail Guy" or EFG—if you're into leet speak. The figure quickly became a popular internet meme relating to all things "fail." In 2008, thousands of anonymous protestors from the message board 4chan hacked the Church of Scientology, releasing all of its secret documents. On February 10, 2008, the hacking group, calling itself "Anonymous," picketed Church of Scientology centers around the world while wearing Guy Fawkes masks and refusing to give their names. Finally, in 2011, the group Anonymous joined the OWS movement in New York's Zucotti park and helped organize social networking and technical communications. Anonymous brought the Fawkes masks with them and soon the masks appeared at Occupy demonstrations all over the world.[48] The Guy Fawkes masks were then used in much the same way as the Zapatista's ski masks or German autonomist's helmets—who were their original inspiration.

V. Conclusion

From Zapatismo to the alter-globalization movement to the *Indignatos*, this article has argued that the Occupy movement and its political strategies did not "come from nowhere." While there are certainly more than the three political strategies covered in this paper, my aim was to show that there exists not only a theoretical importance and consistency to these

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[48] Overnight, the Guy Fawkes mask became the best selling mask on Amazon.com. Nick Carbone, (2011-08-29). "How Time Warner Profits from the 'Anonymous' Hackers". *Time*. Retrieved 2011-08-30 from: http://newsfeed.time.com/2011/08/29/how-time-warner-profits-from-the-anonymous-hackers/

strategies, but also a global legacy of their political practice that can be traced back to the Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico.[49] The legacy and the struggle continue.

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[49] For an expanded discussion of the theoretical and practical consistency of the Zapatistas' struggle and connection to the philosophy of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, see: Thomas Nail, *Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari, and Zapatismo* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).