**London RBF Field Notes**

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Interview Guide London

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**LN1, Harry**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

I definitely consider myself an activist. Being Irish I have always been political and I have been politically active since my early to late teens. Starting with socialism then progressing to Irish nationalism and republicanism and probably in the last 12-15 years more around disability rights.

1. *On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*

The people who founded our movement/organization are a mixture of activists, ordinary people who found themselves in a situation and were looking for information and support. It also includes carers for people with impairments.

1. *Is the organisation./movement part of wider anti-austerity movement?*

Absolutely. In so much as that goes on at the Left. We certainly have a bigger plan than previous disability movements have had. I don’t know if you know a lot about the disability movement? [I say yes I know about it, and then he goes on to say]. You probably know there was a big movement in the 1980s and 1990s. A really vibrant and really angry movement, with a lot of energy. But one of their biggest failings however was that they didn’t integrate themselves with the other political movements around them.

That is one of the biggest lessons we have learned and that is to place ourselves very much at the heart of all the other movements, whether that is the trade union movement, the wider anti-austerity movement, the anti-capitalist movement, or community building movement.

For instance, like the [NAME], which is a new source of funding for activists and community groups. Donors and activists or groups who receive funding run it. So decisions are made not only by the donors who contribute the money, but those who receive it as well. So we have been involved in all of this.

1. *What were your main slogans?*

Rights not Charity.

1. *What was the high point of your movement?*

For the average man on the street, what they saw was the ATOS Games last year, the week of campaigning around the Paralympics. And they would see that and other direct actions as the high point. But for me personally as a campaigner, was bringing the movement together with over 50 legitimate disabled persons organizations in last September (2012) to have a summit around defending our rights to priorities our issues going forward. This put us at the heart of the campaigning movement but also the wider disability movement this involved campaigners, individuals and DPOs [disabled people’s organizations]

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

We are a cell structure and a loose network; we don’t have a hierarchal structure. We have autonomous groups that are free to campaign on whatever levels. So have people who work on inclusive education, independent living, campaigning around welfare reform, and they will be influencing policy and decision making level through forums and representative groups. And we produce academic works, like papers and articles for publication and distribution. We also do skills shares at local level with other local activist groups. We also try to get into trade union movement by visiting local branches and bringing the impact of austerity and cuts face to face with the public service workers who are implementing them. While at the same time entering into joint campaigning agreements with the [NAME] union and joint strategies for joint campaigning and doing joint pieces of work.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

Through the net, email, Facebook page, Twitter and website.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

I see them as potential partners. Our 3 main areas of our focus are the trade’s union movement; the anti-austerity movement; and the disability movement. I see them as our three main areas of our focus. We have to do as much work in educating and building confidence with those movements as those we do as those we are fighting against for different reasons.

For instance, when in the DPO sector, lots of them are voluntary organizations that provide service delivery at the local level. So they don’t have the capacity, confidence or will to campaign. This will put funding under threat and using up man-hours, all the usual complaints. So that network in September was about developing confidence of how DPOs can contribute ideas or at least facilitate campaigning if not in the organizations by at least using their networks and resources at least to facilitate camping.

As for the trade unions, this is the potentially the key to unlocking mass change. Or at least enabling mass movements to fight for change. But he unions have their own agenda and tokenism is rife in unions or union committees towards disabled workers. Its where people don’t understand how disability relates to the union movement or being more interested in the wider trade union politics and not the specifics or dynamics of disability.

1. *What about connections with political parties?*

We have made attempts. On the local level, for instance, in [NAME] where I live, we have a very good working relation with disability liaison officers. What has changed at a national level has been the Liam Burn (??), the Shadow Minister for Employment, has now begun to engage with networks and campaigners and grassroots orgs such as ours rather than the big charities which have traditionally come into the door and have had exclusive access to ministers. Whereas now, this time our around it’s different. It’s a bid to brand themselves, because the policy work is very far from our ideal, but before we wouldn’t have had that opportunity to express our concerns face to face, but at least we now have the opportunity to challenge the knowledge they are working from and to bring the real issues right to their door. That is a shift. It’s the most useful thing this time around.

But the Labour Party we would say that they are not a friend of disabled people. Traditionally they have been slightly, and we are talking degrees, slightly better than the other side [i.e., Tories] but not hugely. They don’t capitalize on their opportunities.

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?*

What we have found is that informal support through both local networks and then feeding this into national networks is one of the critical things that this campaign has provided and that to be heard and listened to and to get informal support for work capability assessments. To get information, moral support, and those kinds of things which are overlooked in many campaigns. But if you are someone that faces many barriers, just sharing that space and your concerns can be energizing and what you feel you bring and what you get back. We offer that safe space where people can speak openly and honestly of their barriers, fears and emotions is something they get.

This is one of our achievements of our movement, to create this space.

1. *Where does the movement stand now?*

We are at the very beginning. It’s taken us two years to see the landscape and not just what’s in front of us. We have raised the profile and the issues and now it’s about bringing about bring those things together and empowering communities to take the issues out. We’re not about you bring us your issues and we’ll take them forward. It's about what do you need to take this forward. What do you need to take this out to your community and to get people involved? So we are at the very beginning of building systems whether that is communication, alliance building or skills. We see areas that need work and we are trying to develop a plan of how people can do this.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

We have a biased perspective in London because so much activity is going on here so those who are prominent in London can be perceived as being in representative roles as leaders. But there is just as much activity going on around the country that isn’t given the same exposure. So it’s a double-edged sword because we do need recognizable figures where people see themselves reflected, disabled people who are able to contextualize the argument and to propose the solutions that are practicable and workable for everybody. But want to demystify so people can believe they can be the next leader, the ne[name] t person who can step into that role.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

The police dealt with the movements of the 1980s and 1990s very harshly and there are startling images. We had some experience ourselves of police violence last year during our week of campaigning when one of our activists had a shoulder broken and 2-3 campaigners had wheelchairs broken during protests outside the Department of Work and Pension. But we do think people need to know that when we take action it will be in a safe environment. But I do thing that our actions have been in a safe environment. Out of the 20 actions that we have been involved in, only 1 action has seen violence others have been safe and negotiated on our terms, when had full control of when we left, so [NAME] actions have been safe, but you can never legislate of how others including police or other activists might dictate the terms of how a space or actions might go.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

Without a doubt. I think at times like this it can go one way or another. We have places like Walthamstow as fantastic joint community response to it. Or places like Liverpool where Irish activists were attacked by where the far right has confidence. This confidence comes from representation. Their legitimate representation as they would call it through the likes of UKIP Or EDL, who have reasonable media exposure and profile who are given space to make their arguments and their issues to the table and because of that the more fringe elements have grown in confidence to be able to raise their issue and we have a Tory councillor had to resign because of comments they made about Pakistani children. They don’t go anywhere; it’s about how confident they feel about airing or not their views. Because they are getting more time in the centre ground those on the edges feel more confident about bringing their issues to the centre ground.

The Irish activists were attacked on St Patrick’s celebrations and [deleted] who is a political prisoner in Ireland. Liverpool has been very Irish dominated and the friction has always been there, but there was stone throwing and physical assault. And also a few weeks ago the far right confronted us when we took an action at Whitehall, which coincided, with their action. They confronted our movement and [NAME] group and the police moved them on.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

Nothing. It’s a sham. The democracy that we experience it means the privilege of a chosen few, chosen by themselves at the expense of the masses. And that we believe that by selecting a group of worthies once every 5 years that we somehow contribute to decision that affect our daily lives, but we actually don’t.

1. *Is your movement democratic?*

We are trying to be. That’s a really good question. What are we trying to be? We are trying to be different than what we are opposing. We are trying to say, ‘look it isn’t about what I think and what I do, it's what it's about what you think and what you do.’ Whatever your issues are, you need to do something about and to not expect others to do it for you. If there is any power to be had, it’s in you and you must start exercising that.

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

Without a doubt. Dignity is at the heart of the disability movement. It’s about dignity and the barriers that dehumanize and that remove that dignity. About access to information, personal care and support and removing the barriers which are lacking at the moment. It's about systems and institutions recognizing those barriers and recognizing that we are the systems and institutions and the system is not the buildings and the administration that rules them.

1. *Is indignation a basis for mobilizing?*

Yes, without a doubt. Take one case in point. The work capability assessment is all about proving your un-worth it all about how much you can’t contribute to your society in order to be financially remunerated for your that ability to not to contribute. What we are doing is defining our contribution in employment terms. It’s about pounds per hour terms. But what we want people’s value to be defined by what people do for their community, for their family, what they bring to the space they are in and not just the work they do for financial remuneration. That is dehumanizing people and taking their dignity. If you are asking people to e[name] plain their not worth, their invalid contribution, how they aren’t worthy to be put in the work place and being remunerated and how undignified they are, then yes, indignation is at the heart of it.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

If we are going to talk about that in terms of the welfare state and social security. First, there will always be a percentage of the population who in employment terms, that won’t be able to work and which will need financial support to exist in the community in a meaningful way. But on another scale are we saying that unemployed people create unemployed. There are many barriers to unemployment for non-disabled people and none of those barriers. And for disabled people there are hugely more barriers, the transport infrastructure, employers’ attitudes, the built environment, the skills of people and none of this is being addressed. Fact is most people who are receiving benefits, a significant proportion of those people, are already in work. It's not about dependency, it's about subsidizing MNCS and landlords and topping up low wages with state support when in fact the MNCS should provide people with a living wage and remuneration which actually lifts them rather than traps them. So dependency and responsibility, you have to look much further back the chain to where that responsibility has been shirked and not focus on the individual.

1. *Do you see what you are part of as a London movement, a British movement, or a European or global movement?*

At the moment, it’s a UK based movement. What we are trying to do is to broaden out the issues, because we are aware that in other places, like Greece, Bolivia and Australia there is activism by disabled people to e[name] press their anger and their demand for their rights. In Spain there is an awakening of disabled people. So we are seeing this around the world and it's up to us to join up the dots. There is a weeklong Freedom Drive in Strasbourg, this year in September, happens every two years, there is lobbying, there are academic debates, and cultural activities and we want to link with that to broaden the arguments and to unify the movements involved.

1. *Do you think there unique things about the London movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?*

Access to politics, media, other activists and to activities. It seems to be the base of all that we do. So if you are looking for media or activists or political debate or conferences all of those things are happening in London.

END

**LN2, Fred**

Fred, is in his late 60s. Fred described himself as a Marxist and a student of Georg Lukasz.

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

I am only an activist in a philosophical sense. I am an evolutionary activist and I don’t pledge allegiance to any particular movement. I only support evolution of the consciousness of society and to make it more equitable. So, in a broad sense, I am an activist.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?*

In my youth I was a Marxist and I believe there are essential elements in Karl Marx’s work that I still find instructive. Not his economic thesis but the method he applied in aligning his intellectual inquiry with the most dynamic movement of his time, which was the movement of the working class.

So, today I am aligning myself with the most dynamic movement of the day. My interest as a radical sociologist is to strive to combine theory with praxis. So if I stay close to the movement and I participate in it, I can learn and also contribute to the evolution of the movement. I am part of the self-reflective part of the movement.

Every movement needs a mirror in order to enhance its collective consciousness. I am that mirror.

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

I see the movement as an intellectual movement and so the high point in that context for me is when Occupy Wall Street organized the Making Worlds a Commons forum in February 2012 – February 2013. This is where I see the high point of Occupy because the most frequent criticism of Occupy is that it doesn’t provide an organizational vehicle that can carry the critique of capitalist society in a viable way. So the Forum on the Commons is the self-organization on social production of which Elinor Ostrom got a Nobel Prize. So the Occupy activist and the commons’ theorists are meeting and it is an on-going process. Occupy is not dead, it is just changing form. But for the press it is dead because they don’t see the tents and they think it has gone away. But it is undergoing a much deeper social transformation.

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general*

That too is happening with the creation of the solidarity network. It isn’t necessarily happening in London, but it is happening in Spain. Solidarity is more than working together, it is a political term and there are forms of social production that are going on and emerging out of Occupy and the Indignados such as the cooperative movement.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

As you know all of these movements have been traditionally suspicious of established political actors and NGOs. But there was collaboration with the progressive wings of the trade unions in London. Not the Unions headquarters, but their local chapters, the radical branches that is progressive. There was also some collaboration with left leaning faith groups. There was not much collaboration with political parties because there is not much belief in the political parties and the institutions of representative democracy. Occupy feel very betrayed by representative democracy. There was some discussion in London to run candidates, but this position was defeated in the Occupy General Assembly.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

What is meant by achievement? If achievement is understood as tangible things, such as what the classic workers’ movement achieved in getting the 8 hour working day, which became stable and not rolled back, then that type of achievements or impact has not been made by Occupy. So we can’t really speak of a tangible achievement like a new level of freedom or equality. But if we think of achievement like that of the Paris Commune or the 1960s student movements, which largely fizzled out, then it was an achievement of cultural importance. Occupy like the 1960s movements created new patterns of organizing and of relating to one another. Moreover, there was also cultural shift and changes in the cultural sphere and forms of expression.

Horizontality is also a new pattern of organizing and the relationship between the working groups and the GA is horizontal. These are achievements because of the learning that has taken place. So movements of the future can then look back and they will have something to learn from and review and to critically apply in the future.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

Big dramas evolved in London because of this issue. Because Occupy strongly developed as a leaderless movement, but because there was the press group and it became most visible during the occupation of the square, the media was engaging with them. The media as spokespeople represented some members of the Occupy press group for Occupy. But they didn’t have leadership inside Occupy; it was the public facing side, which gave them attention. Internally, these people were criticized. There has been anger because some people have written books about the movement and to show that they know a lot about it. But these people don’t have political clout inside the movement.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

Not so much in the UK, but in Greece yes it is. In Spain, no, the progressives in Spain are too strong and because the country had a fascist past, which does everyone despise, they don’t allow for the emergence of fascist movements today.

1. *Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement*

Occupy London was explicitly formed on the basis of gender equality and it was part of the founding statement. But in addition, there were a large number of women present in the Gas and the working groups and they were often facilitators.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

Police violence always has the impact of radicalizing movements. In London, the violence was not as brutal. It was utilized during the eviction, and to frighten. But it was sporadic. But even so, it created a sense of solidarity among the activists.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

Literally, democracy means rule by the people but the whole political sciences use the term in the context of representative democracy. It is an obsolete system that was useful in the past perhaps and necessary for a long time. But it is not realistic to expect that an MP can represent 1000,000 people in his or her electorate. So my critique of representative democracy is that it isn’t suitable to deal with the complexity of the situation, which we are facing. Largely because it is not capable of mobilizing the collective intelligence of the people. So I believe in democracy because it is far better than the alternative, which is dictatorship. But I think we need to develop it much better.

1. *Who do you demand democracy from?*

You don’t demand democracy from anyone, you organize for democracy. The GA’s were a training group for setting up, introducing and realizing direct democracy. There were larger scale issues like citizen juries that were discussed. The essence is to tap into the shared knowledge, the collective intelligence of the people and to deal with complex needs. We need both representative and direct democracy, but they need to be linked and combined in a better way.

1. *Is the movements themselves democratic?*

It tries to be, but it has many ‘childhood illnesses’. Like for instance, the consensus model. They take it sometimes in a very dogmatic way, which can lead to very long discussions and can be frustrating and can hinder the process of decision-making in a meaningful way. Many people ended up leaving Occupy because they were frustrated by the inefficiency of this model. So the ones that were left were the professional political activists.

1. *What does social justice mean to you and who would you demand social justice from?*

Social justice is an ideal of a future society in which all social institutions and the systems are designed and organized to optimize each individual’s capacity to be able to realize his or her own potential. In that sense, the development of each is the goal of the whole. This is how I see social justice. It has to be embedded in society and there must be **real** equal opportunities, not just in talk but also in action. It is like democracy, we get the social justice that we fifth for. The ruling elites won’t dole out social justice; the state and the public authorities will not give it out for free. You must fight for it. And then, the state and the public authorities will be less the servants of the few and the privileged and they will be the public’s servants, which they are supposed to be. This will happen if we push for more direct democracy.

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

Dignity and the commitment to human dignity showed up in the UK movement in an interesting way. It was because the Occupy London gave shelter to those whom society has been depriving of dignity such as people with mental problems and with drug addictions. Occupy tried to restore their dignity with mixed results.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

I would like to change one letter in the word ‘responsibility’ to make it ‘responsAblity’. ‘Responsibility’ means that we don’t have to put up with the position of the victim or we don’t have to accept that the system is victimizing us. Yes, we are in a crisis and we have a choice of how we exercise our responsAbility and what is our response to the crisis. Again the Spanish Indignados are leading that response that goes way beyond the protest. It's about organizing new forms of collective life where people coming together to co-=produce and co-govern resources and not waiting for the state to deliver its services. That is the form of responsAbility that I favour and promote.

It is a two-front struggle to continue for self-organization that is continuing to fight against the cuts and showing pushing the line of critique that austerity for the majority and the 1% isn’t much affected by austerity. So it’s not giving the state a free ride that we are going to take care of ourselves because they are using the money of the public. But what they are using the money for, needs to be the part of continuing dialog.

1. *Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones? Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?*

It’s a very interesting relationship with the Arab Spring. It’s a very different socio-historical context and not unlike 1968 where a spirit of freedom and youth movements swept the planet and touched down in countries as different France and Mexico and Yugoslavia and the US. Again we are looking at a new wave of the spirit of autonomy and self-organization led by youth mostly showing up in very different social and economic circumstances. So the similarities aren’t superficial. They are all coming from the same source that we are living a time when the proliferation of electronic tools and technologies of collaboration, not only makes news and modes of organizing travel fast, but the desire for self-governance is amplifying by the struggle of each country. The same way when in 1980s when the countries of the former Soviet bloc feel like dominos one after the other by the revolutions or activists getting bolder and bolder and gaining courage from the stories of the others. So this is happening in today’s movement. But I don’t think that they all come from their own cultural context which is different with some connection through the zeitgeist.

Of course the Occupy has a quite a well-connected international network. So the activists in each local Occupy has an outreach group to reach out to local and international Occupys. There are also organized ties also.

END

**LN3, Joseph**

1. *Do you consider yourself an activist?*

I don’t consider myself to be an activist with a capital A. Have always been interested and engaged in politics, but a lot of people would call me an activist, given my background. (Grew up in the North, Barnsley). Dad was in the NUT, nothing on Mum’s side. I was in my second year when student protests against fees were going on. I was involved in the big demonstration in [NAME] , but as participant rather than leader.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?*

The big student protest in [NAME] was a culmination of a lot of activities. We were involved in the preparation and the employees of student unions were encouraged to go and be stewards. I was aware of the anti-austerity rhetoric. One of the failings of the movement is that it was defined by what it is against, rather than what it was supporting. Large sections were marching in support of the status quo of tuition fees but no rise in it, others wanted publicly funded education but they were in the minority. Though in my opinion you cannot have free education in real terms. There were muddled messages – the only agreement (both within [NAME] and other unions) being that there was no agreement with government proposals. There were also many students (a more significant number than you would expect) were in support of the uncapped fees, so you had both ends of the continuum. However, most students towards centre left than centre right. The broad brush approach of the movement is positive, but also negative in that specific issues are easier to protest against.

1. On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?

The university I belong has long experience of protest, e.g. the anti-apartheid movement. The [NAME] always harks back to the radical past. As a first year, most people have very little experience of protest. So, I definitely had that in mind when I applied to the university and also when I became active in the movement and ran for office.

1. Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?

I think the university was more involved in the case of the anti-fees movement in the organizational aspect of the protest route on the day, rather than organization of the body politic as whole. The hub of the protest start was near the campus. The university was very involved organizationally with [NAME] . Less involved with bigger national universities.

1. *What were the main slogans of the movement?*

In the case of the anti-fees protest, the smaller, more radical organizations use more violent imagery. It seemed to me that it was an anti-Coalition march and Labour got off scot-free. Some people had banners saying “Fuck Fees”. The official line of the NUS was less extreme, but less memorable, of course. I can’t even remember what it is specifically anymore.

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

Debate amongst activists at the time, and since, at university unions about whether the involvement on the unions’ part should be specifically about higher education or whether it should be tied into greater anti-austerity concerns, e.g. privatisation, cuts, etc. Should the university join marches against Privatization bills, and anti-austerity movements in general? For example, the Unions have not been very vocal against the Bedroom Ta[name] . A case of limited resources and commitment to your own membership, showing them that you are representing their interest is essential. The debate will go on.

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

Demonstrations have part to play, but they are a brutal instrument and people lose sympathy with too many of them. Students are seen as time wasters and people on benefits are lazy – that does not breed support. You see that when you are opposed to something specific, there is more support. So, naturally less people in the 2012 protest. But apart from sending union members out on marchers, you have to take into account that the university do “development” very well. I mean, going on a protest is very important act as a citizen and practising democracy. BUT, the university teaches people to debate, engage, and talk critically to others and to engage in developmental activism. This is very important and is hard for national movement to do. You have to think about how you develop as an activist.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

Combination of all of those, actually. Social media have a more important role to play, especially globally, e.g. what happened in the Arab Spring. But it’s no substitute for a physical meeting. Social networks encourage people to passively post articles or like something on Facebook, vs. actual people attending and engaging. The university is fortunate in the people who are running the social media side of things in that it’s not just about posting things, but engaging and replying to people. Social media’s role in organizations is not just conveying information but engaging people.

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

As a general rule, no. But, the majority of the student body have great English skills. Also, there is a perception that people will ask why, if you do have a release in a language other than English, in only one ‘foreign’ language not another. However, there needs to be more to address the students from mainland China from an activism and involvement point of view. We want to encourage them to be politically engaged and you have to tell them what they gain by participation. So communication in Mandarin might benefit students in this regard and I am involved in a small project to do this.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

In the case of political parties, well, I don’t think you cannot be involved with student politics just because you are conservative or right wing. I mean, of course there is the involvement of political parties on campus with the SU itself. I don’t mind a union being radical and debating internally, that is essential. However, the big problem is that a lot of the rhetoric of protest against the fees and education policy was about kicking the Conservatives in the teeth. Many of these were students who voted for the first time and were being side-lined. Snuffing out a sense of activism in someone just because they are Conservative is not something I can support. However, the Union is a campaigning movement and has to take a position. You can have disagreements but not alienate. In terms of unions, the [NAME] is connected to both the School and the students and is a good bridging organization. I would actively encourage the university [NAME] members to join a trade union if that is relevant to their work interests. There is no point just to join for the sake of it. On a day-to-day basis, the [NAME] has meetings with Union stewards, when it comes up to time for marches then there is more coordination and discussions with other TUs. There is some synchronicity in planning, i.e. student marches are often soon after the TU marches. If there are joint areas of discussion; then you can coordinate.

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?*

As previously discussed, there is a debate as to whether the movement should be more linked to the concerns of its member students vs. general austerity concerns. I think it should be the latter.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

It would be hard to overstate the importance of the university [NAME] historical achievements. For example, the [NAME] Campaign that resulted in [NAME] staff getting paid the bare minimum to live in London. More recently, the ethics campaign re [NAME] . There is now an ethical investment policy at the [NAME] and something like [NAME] is unlikely to happen again. It doesn’t make market sense apart from being a moral issue. The [NAME] has brought obvious benefits to values of the university. In more recent days, had students not gone out and shown how angry they were with an uncapped and unregulated fee level, the current situation with fees would not have occurred. However, in the anti-austerity movement, what is impact? It suffers from the fact that it is an anti-movement and not pro movement. I struggle to see what benefits the anti-austerity movement is achieving, as it’s hard to quantify.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

The General Secretary of the [NAME] is the spokesperson for a well-known and large student body, and has to provide leadership as part of the job. But other forms of leadership are more difficult, as it’s a fleeting year that you are elected for. However, the [NAME] has not lacked for alumni who have gone to do important things in politics, business, law, charity, etc.

1. *Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement*

The majority of people who get involved in student politics and societies are men. Of course, there are very high profile female leaders, such as the General Secretary of the [NAME] and of the [NAME] , where the General Secretary has been female for the last three years. However, you would think that the state of financial consolidation in the UK adversely affects a disproportionate number of women compared to men. For example through the wage gap and maternity laws. They are a group that engages, but as a whole deserve to be more engaged with.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

No first-hand experience of police violence. Police perception in hometown is different than perceptions of the Met. I have known people who have suffered from police violence, but cannot speak for them.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

Despite being a labour member, I identify myself as a small c conservative. I worry that there is a danger that the centre of gravity in conservative politics moves away from being a kind of wet, one-nation conservatism to libertarian views like the US. There are people who come to university that are naturally a little right of centre, but may become more influenced by more extreme right wing views. If student unions talk in austerity rather general terms, i.e. in terms of an ideological debate of left vs. right, the centre of gravity can move away from pragmatic view to more idealistic, aggressive form of radical libertarianism. Conservatism for me, is about preserving values and institutions, but the Young Conservatives aren’t about that.

Thinking of national view, well thankfully, far right organizations viewed as silly. The BNP, Nick Griffin, are seen as national absurdity. That aside, I do worry that with so many people going into university, the white working class that don’t have those opportunities, might associate with a hooliganistic type of nationalist politics vs. policy lead orgs (i.e. the BNP, for better or worse). Balancing the books vs. creating growth is always impossible. UKIP, shift towards the right given that Conservatives are in power. Politics in EU will become a lot more populist, without a doubt. The worst place to be is being social democrats, it like being powerless.

1. *Do you see what you are part of as a London movement, a British movement, or a European or global movement?*

The [NAME] tend to get criticism as being London focused, especially when demonstrations happen. It is logistically difficult to come down here and have money to do it. However, we must accept that London is the hub of political debate in Britain. There were grounds to have more of a populist movement in terms of protesting fees, but a march down Whitehall would be the most media friendly and effective. So even though it was a national thing, the physical focus was on London.

1. Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones? Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?

We have had discussions and awareness with student politics in general. Some union to union bilateral meetings.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

Not just about electing the ne[name] t government. A citizen feeling that they have the power to change policy, also freedom from dictatorship or autocracy. It’s a positive thing! A nice word, but hard to see in other than general terms.

1. *Who would you demand democracy from?*

I would demand democracy from the citizen. When people develop the mentality that people and the government are separate then they become disaffected. I believe in representative government vs. direct. The government should be working for you and you should know why they are doing what they are doing.

1. *What would you describe as democratic practices?*

[NAME] has high turnout in elections, so I think we are quite democratic. Well over 80% students are involved in more than one society. I am satisfied that people believe that when they come to the university they can be involved in running their own life and making changes that can affect fellow students.

1. *Is the movement democratic?*

Regardless of the decision the Union makes it will annoy a large section of the membership. I don’t mind annoying people, but the whole point is that they should feel they have been consulted. If you didn’t go on the march in 2011, you were treated as a scab. That was wrong! However, if you don’t vote, don’t’ complain. The [NAME] is after all an executive not delegate body. We are allowed and should make policy!

1. *What does social justice mean to you and who would you demand social justice from?*

I believe in the socialist mantra from each according to his ability and to each according to their need. Regardless of your choices you should never starve or not have a roof over your head in this country. People should not be encouraged to be on benefits, work should always be an option, and however, no one should ever conceivably starve. If you are from a historically persecuted group, you should have the opportunity to break out of that. The government are worried about the perception of their actions and not doing enough. For example for disabled people. More has to be done to make people see themselves as citizens and not hyphenated citizens.

1. *Does the idea of dignity have resonance in UK context? Has it been source of mobilization?*

As a trope it’s Mediterranean, I think. We have a radical tradition on this country. There isn’t enough of a push to think of how radical we have been in the UK historically. Anti-austerity is not radical and new. People have to think of themselves of as occupying a long tradition of radicalism. Indignity, I feel, is relevant to EU not the UK. So there may be some resonance but anti-austerity needs to be couched in language unique to us.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

The credit crisis happened due to, among other things, poor investment, lack of infrastructure and proper regulation. However, the people who have suffered have been the ones that had most debt to begin with. There is nothing wrong with thrift and people can keep a hand on their own financial rudder. It should be something that people aspire to understand, that you need to have financial responsibility. The world is too materialistic anyway. The focus on local organizations is GOOD. Anti-austerity by itself doesn’t mean much. It means more when it’s SPECIFIC to community cuts or whatever. Community action and community discussion is the best thing. When Mrs Thatcher died, it made me think that when I was born the town I was born in had a living standard same as rural Albania. Only through local action have we gotten to that point of feeling pride and moving forward. This has been re-affirmed time and time again, that community is more important than a fleeting sense of impoverishment.

The internationalization of the student body in Russell Group universities mean that the concerns of the local students might not be of interest of international students. The greater debate should be how does higher education work vs. the specific concerns of fees, etc. See example of London Met losing license that engaged other international students. The international students have logistical limitations like visa issues that prevent them from taking up Union positions, so more could be done to address the concerns of international students.

END

**LN 4, William**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Traditionally I am not activist. But I did go on the anti-Iraq war march in February 2003 and I've been on a few Gaza protests. And I think what I observed in terms of police behaviour and brutality around the time of Gaza demonstrations prompted me to go down to St Pauls on October the 15th 2011. Because from everything I 've learned is that we are on the road to more authoritarian police state. The signs are there. So that was the main reason for my curiosity. So having done a lot of analysis of where we are in the world and what we need to focus on, I was keen to go and talk to people about the banking and monetary system which underpins so many of the things which Occupy is against.

Activist? Yes, I suppose it is activism…but I am more concerned with opening people's eyes through education of what's going on because we are fed so much distortion the government media and people don't just realise the extent to which they are manipulated into the positions they take.

1. How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?

No, I went on my own. I went on the Saturday night and started talking to people about banking. I was not camping out. I was a 'light-weight' Occupier but I did go there frequently. At least 3 times a week and sometimes more.

1. *On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*

I think there were a number of groups that were quite experienced. The Climate Camp people, UK Uncut, Anonymous, etc. there were various groups. There were very few people who started the Occupy thing in London. Obviously New York had happened a month earlier. And one of the guys I know got involved, he is a young, activist and very interested in international affairs and he got interested in organising it. It went down on social media and the rest is history I suppose

1. *What were the main slogans of the movement?*

Occupy like society represents a very broad church of dissatisfaction. And I think trying to come up with a single slogan for Occupy is horrendously difficult and something that we're still trying to achieve. In a sense I think, the overriding message of Occupy from its spontaneity and the way it rolled across the globe was just a demonstration of anger at just the way we're being governed and manipulated. And it obviously had a very heavy financial bias. It was prompted by the crisis, which 3 years on wasn't being resolved and here we are, five years on. The 99% was the slogan, but it belies a great deal of complexity beneath that. You could say its 65% versus 1% because we are all part of the problem. Or you could also say 0.01% because the actual people who control our lives and who are accruing all the wealth at the top are much less than 1%. But yes, as a slogan that was probably what most people could get behind. But it obscures a great deal of complexity.

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

Hopefully we haven't gotten there yet! It's very much a work in progress. From observations from people who were in the camp, I think the high point was probably 3 weeks in. Where it was still fresh and there weren't the sort of rivalries and bureaucratic problems, logistics. I think the camp worked very well and that the consensus model of decision making was very effective in addressing health and safety and fire regulations and all those things for which they could have been evicted. Very well organised. But it's fair to say, but the nature of an Occupation like that, which welcomes everybody, is that you are going to attract a whole raft of people, some of whom are very vulnerable. They have mental or physical challenges or social problems, you've got infiltrators who are trying to adopt Occupy to adopt their pet thing, like the Socialist Workers Party. Then you've got police infiltrators or the intelligence services. Then you've got the media who is always trying to get an angle. So between all of these pressures, I think Occupy achieved a great deal in trying to achieve consensus. But I think the strength of Occupy is more of what it spawned and it is an idea that lives on in many different groups. It may be below the media's radar, but there is a hell of a lot of things going on. And there is another thing that it seems to have done, it seems to have brought a lot of groups out of the woodwork and dialog has opened up between various groups. But I have had a lot of people talking to us and we have gone to talk to them. But these things are not coalescing around the whole movement. There are people who just want to tighten up regulations and get a morality in bankers. But given the incentives they have in front of them [the bankers] I think this is a lost cause. There are people at the other end who just want to junk the whole system and see this as a golden opportunity to change the route of civilization. I am at that end of the spectrum, but there is a whole raft in the middle.

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

Some occupations are still going on. Obviously St Pauls' left in February of 2012, Finsbury Square took longer. And Friern Barnet [library] in some ways was initially an occupation rather than what it’s turned into which is to return it to the community. But there are sections of Occupy who will occupy in the name of Occupy in an opportunistic basis. What Occupy spawned was a number of working groups. There is the Economics Working Group, the Real Democracy Group, Equality and Environment Group, and a couple of others. The [NAME] Working Group, to which I belong is probably the most active and it meets twice a week.

Occupy has a broad range of opinion and it's difficult to get consensus. But we did get consensus on the principles of capturing land value. Which is an idea which has been suppressed for 100 years or more by the banking establishment. So there are these groups like the Economics Working Group, and the strategy as I see it is to spread understanding of what is actually going on. Which is a huge task. It's done on the basis of if we can get enough people to understand of how they're being lied to and what's been proposed, whether to be austerity or whether it be what the Labour party recommend. There is no solution within the current paradigm. We're in a death vortex and the system's broken. It’s mathematically and ecologically unsustainable.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

I'm not the best person to ask this question as I have a great aversion to social media form a security and privacy point of view. And I also don't think Twitter is a media to communicate anything of any value. I think they have been very powerful, but I don't participate. The main means of communication for the Group joined are the two weekly meetings on Mondays and Fridays and there are minutes from those meetings. And we have produced some papers; there is an email mailing list and a group spaces chat. But I don't participate in that either. I am quite technophile, but because I understand technology, I have great suspicion of social media. That said, I am on Linked In, but you have to compromise somewhere.

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

Me personally, no, I have primitive French and German. There are lots of people who come and go, so there is a fair amount of international communication going on.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

There are a lot of complicated answers to this. The immediate thing that springs to mind is that I have been running this Critical Thinking project since January 2012. Within that we are analysing, did you hear of the Bank of Ideas, I was giving workshops on banking and finance there and as there was no body there, I went to this meeting to set up a free university. The free university was set up within the Bank of Ideas. My course, the [NAME] course, was one of the first. The idea behind that was to link the various pieces of the jigsaw, the world economic crisis, climate change, wars, GMO foods, pharmaceuticals, all these things and how they work together. It’s a collaborative project. It started off in the Bank of Ideas with me standing up at the Bank of Ideas spouting off ideas, but over time, its dwindled because we've had to keep moving, so now it's about 8 – 10 people and we've gone over various modules: we did banking & finance; the subprime crisis; climate change; the wars of the 21st century, etc. in the first year. this year we're doing international trade agreements, GMOs, education, and it's about putting these all into the framework of the system and e[name] plaining why the bad things happen because of the incentives in the economic system. As a result of the work in the first year, we are now developing a blueprint for the New Economy, which is looking at the three fundamental flaws of the land and resource and property rights; interest on money and the belief that the means to life is conditional on employment. That is the framework we've set out. So we've been talking to people form the Coalition for Economic Justice. These are groups that are interested in the reform of the banking and monetary system and we've been participating in that and they have set up conferences and I've given talks.

Everybody is coming from different directions, but everybody is lining up behind certain things. There is positive money and the commons movement. We've also interacted with a group called Global Vision 2000. So there are quite a lot of groups who contact us. The Coalition for Economic justice, the chairman is [NAME] and we met through the Quakers seminar and he asked me to talk about banking and money. He wants to put together a series of polices of the Labour party. He is a trade unionist. But putting together different people's ideas in an ala carte policy isn't going to work. I certainly don't think they will make progress through the mainstream political system.

The political system is dominated by the economic system. And people just don't understand that that whoever they vote for …the media they are being fed will determine how they vote. And whether its Labour or Conservative, it doesn't make a whole heap of difference. We're still subject to this economic system which enslaves us all.

So to answer your question, I have shied away from getting involved, but I did contribute to this ala carte policy process that [NAME] was organising. We've had various politicians, or people who identify themselves with a political party, people who definitely have a particular political label on them which identifies which party they belong to. My perception is that there is a mixed feeling within Occupy. There is this eternal dichotomy within Occupy, there is a desire to have names come along to draw crowds and then having one's message diluted or subverted by mainstream politics which is not really what we want.

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?*

Yeah, one is aware that it is happening. But probably less so in the UK than in places like Greece where there is a real necessity. But you look at the rise of local currencies that's indicative of an economic system that isn't working. Clearly the state is stepping back from helping the most vulnerable and people are pitching in and in some ex tent Occupy filled a social services gap, especially in Finsbury Square. They didn't do it very well, but that's not what they were there for. I think it's very nascent. I spend a lot of time on my desk, but I don't get out and about to activist locations in the country. My feeling is that there is some good stuff going on, but if you put it in contrast with the mainstream it is pitifully small and I would imagine it is making an impact where it is. But its barely registering on the radar, but that is my perception and there may be a lot more than I realize.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

Shifting the dialog. I think the fact that Andy Haldane came along to Friends’ House last October and spoke at an Occupy event and said that Occupy was right. I mean the rest of his speech was not particularly satisfactory in my view. But the debate has changed. When I first started giving workshops about fractional reserves, banks creating money from nothing, the evils of interest, all of these things were that had been buried by mainstream economics academia for 50 – 100 years were now being talked about. And now they are being talked about, you saw in the FT published a paper about fractional reserve banking, the IMF brought out a paper last June called “The Chicago Plan Revisited” which was proposing full reserve banking. And when I first talked about this stuff even people in the City didn’t understand fractional reserve banking. And this concept of just being able to create money out of nothing is still, even from within our group today still meets resistance. I think it was John Galbraith said, “The way in which money is created is so simple, the mind is repelled”. And it is . And even today, it is now on the mainstream agenda. And even talk of citizens’ income and when I first went to Occupy I was focusing on banking. I knew nothing about land and citizens' income. But citizens' income is now on the Green Party agenda. This is based on work done by CH Douglas in 1920s and 1930s. A whole raft of academic studies that has been suppressed by mainstream academia is emerging now. The work of Henry George and the business of how the capture of land and resources lead to great prosperity accompanied by abject poverty and they go in hand-in-hand. Because what was formerly communally owned was suddenly being captured by private consumption. And these ideas are all now, not very visibly, but they are being talked about in the mainstream media. They find it more fun to bash bankers rather than to analyse the system. But the more cerebral and thinking people are saying maybe we should look at those authors, including Henry George and CH Douglas. Margaret Kennedy has written a book called Occupy Money, a lot of the work that I done and shared through the [NAME] Group is based on her 1995 study which was interest and inflation free money.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

One of the things which we are going to start on in the Critical Thinking Group is power structures and governments and leadership. As a species we need to learn that we cannot just abdicate our individual responsibility to leaders. There are no perfect leaders, they're all corruptible. Hugo Chavez did amazing good, but he probably did things which were a means to an end. I don't know, probably. People place so much faith in new leaders, hoping to transform the world. It's not the way the world is going to change. It's not going to improve. One of the things which Occupy, and which sustained my interest in Occupy, was that it's trying to do something very difficult. It's trying to reach decisions by consensus. God knows I have enough problems with it on the business of climate change. Because they are still entrenched in the mainstream media debate that we're still headed for disaster but science has moved on and we now that we're not headed for disaster and there is a lot more uncertainty. So to focus on particular totemic issues or people is a big mistake. There is a film that's not written from an economic perspective, but its written from a biological and sociological perspective and I can't remember what it called, but essentially they're talking about the evolution of man from a biological perspective and post-Darwinism consensus that it was a dog eat dog world. And that the only way to get on was to get as much stuff as possible, survival of the fittest, and all these things. Contemporary biology tells us it's much more complicated than and that we're all interconnected. We're all interdependent. The other thing it says in this film, is that the way in which we're conditioned to decide on the basis of our emotions. You're familiar with the work of Edward Béarnaise the PR man? 1907-ish, I think, he basically wrote the book on how to manipulate populations through advertising.

So it talks about how we've come to live our lives on the basis of emotional decision-making. Any study of elections will tell you that people vote on the basis of emotions rather than intellect. What this film is saying is that we need to reverse it. We need to drop the emotion and bring out the intellect. And this all relates to leadership. If we are really serious about wanting a better world, then each of us individually needs to take responsibility. But in order to do that, we need to get away from this idea that in order to survive you need to take a 9 to 5 job. Economically it's not necessary. It's just that the most of the wealth is being captured by a very narrow minority by a mechanism of interest and appropriation of land and resources.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

I'd say you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that in the summer of 2007 we weren't paying our teachers too much. We weren't spending too much on benefits; we weren't spending too much on public services. What is happened is that we've had a financial crisis. According to the Federal Reserve Board, which was audited in 2011, for the first time ever. The audit showed that between 2007 to 2010, they fed the global banking system $17 trillion dollars in terms of creating money and pushing it out to American and global banks. In this country we've had the quantitative easing and the bailout of Lloyds and RBS. There's been a lot more cheap money given to the banks than we know about. It's got to be between £1-2 trillion GBP. That's created this debt mountain. The result of the financial crisis has been this debt mountain. The ideology that says let's go back to Thatcher's slashing of the deficit and austerity. We had some fat to cut in those days in terms of industries that were possibly over manned and inefficient, there was a fair amount that one could e[name] tract through that process of surgical skimming. We're not in that position now. There is evidence that workers have been kept on and wages have been kept low, so it's different in that respect but this austerity is definitely not going to work.

As far as personal and individual responsibility is going to work, as far as the government frames it. I would stick two fingers up to them. In terms of what needs to be done, as human beings, does require personal responsibility. This relates to conflicts around the globe. Here we are about to embark on yet another needless war in the Middle East on the basis of the same lies that were tried the first time around. Libya is descending into chaos, Iraq is descending into chaos, and this is all fabricated. It's all a product of the machine. So in terms of individual responsibility, this is all being done in our name to keep us safe. There was study done by a woman, and I can't remember her name, but it showed that every 1% increase in violence in a country leads to 18% increase in terrorism. Wars create terrorism, wars don't prevent terrorism.

So individual responsibility is to understand how the world works. And it's difficult because you have all the pressures of life because your means to life is conditional on you fulfilling certain obligations. You have a whole raft of bureaucracy. I mean life these days consists of filling forms for everything. My partner she has a heart condition and she had to sign a paper to get a treatment and it said 'client's signature'. I mean… yes, we have a personal responsibility to get angry and to understand what's going on. But yeah, if you don't know, you don't know.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

I think right wing groups are focused on immigration and that sort of easy target rather than looking at what Occupy and other protest groups are doing.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

I think in general terms, Occupy UK has got off pretty lightly in terms of police brutality as compared to America where they were pepper spraying and even in Zuccotti Square they were pretty violent from day 1. That was why I went down in the first place. I was pretty staggered by the number of police. I would guess that there were about 500 protestors and they were outnumbered by the police and there were vans everywhere. And the tactics they employed were quite aggressive. But violent? No, not really. I grew up in this town and I used to walk around the early hours of the morning without a care in the world. The police weren't armed or paramilitary looking. Now, it's difficult to convey the difference between 30 years ago and London today. It’s not the green zone in Baghdad but we're getting that way. The police are becoming more paramilitary. And that is what struck me at [NAME] that night -- the police had a paramilitary appearance. I had seen it on the Gaza march, but even more.

We did an action on [NAME] 2012, where we had a map of 50 culprits including banks and financial institutions that were going to be visited on this march. And I was going to do a talk outside Goldman Sachs and to talk about the vampire squid and all that stuff. And it started off at [NAME] and marched down, but didn't stop at Goldman Sachs, people just marched by. I mean I did, but it was just a waste of time. The police were looking for a confrontation and they did try to provoke people. The people form Occupy just wanted to get out and to continue to do what we were doing. But the police had other ideas. There was a growing resentment within the crowd that we were being manipulated in this way and some of us did break out and we ended up in 2 factions and the police tactics did break down. I mean at one point we were in direct confrontation with horses, vans, and police with armoured shields. Some of the younger, hotter heads among us were itching for a bundle. But cooler heads prevailed and we did manage to break out. It was a bit like Gaza.

I'll tell you briefly about Gaza. This was the first march and we had gone to Trafalgar Square. Then there was going to be a march, which wasn't authorized, to the Israeli Embassy in Kensington. And the march just started and the police were from then on were fighting a rear-guard action to stop us. They put up barriers or tried to stop us, but we would break through. They tried a few times near [NAME] to stop us and then put up a whole army near the underpass and put a line of police backed up directly in front to the march and made them walk exceedingly slowly. And there was pressure building up. I was meant to go through the underpass and I said to my partner, that "I am not going down there. I am not going under there. Let's go around the outside." I was concerned for her safety as well as my own. I could see what was going on, I said to people, "you don't want to go down there. Let's go around the side". But you know people have their own views. What happened, basically, was that people went down there and it took a hell of a long time to let them in. when they got there, halfway there they stopped and they started beating up people in the crowd. There was footage from phones. And there were women and children in the crowd. I don't know what it was? Intimidation I suppose. I saw one guy carried out who was bloody.

So somewhere between 2003 and the Gaza marches, police tactics got a lot more aggressive. Because the Iraq march in 2003, it was like a social event. I mean there was a policeman there, and he was the policeman at a comprehensive school in [NAME] where I am a Governor. I went over to him and shook his hand and had a chat. But that all changed. So in terms of police brutality, the fact that the US has commissioned Halliburton to build prisons for 2 million speaks volumes. They know that trouble is coming. They know that this system is going to collapse. So we are being policed accordingly. So we were being hyped up by all these terror alerts accordingly.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

We have is an illusion of democracy. You only have free choice if you have not perfect information, but at least not distorted and manipulated information. I'd say our democracy is pretty unsatisfactory. And when you look at electoral fraud and this sort of revolving door between politics business, QUANGOs. There is a cabal of people who are round tripping. You see it in the pharmaceutical industry where people who are regulating it are actually coming out of industry or are going back into industry. You have the whole of banking and economic regulation is controlled by banking interests. The university [NAME] curriculum is controlled by vested interests meaning, "This is the system we have. Don't look outside it. But you understand our system."

So yes, there is an illusion of democracy. You get to vote for people who are going to do the right thing. The Bilderberg conference is coming up in June and Mark Carney was there last year and bang, lo and behold he is now Bank of England governor. And he'll be there this year. There is Peter Sutherland, who is part of Goldman Sachs. You've got other people from Goldman there. The banking and financial interest meet up at Bilderberg. You have the movers and shakers there

END

**LN5, Emily**

1. *Do you consider yourself an activist?*

It should be said at the beginning that while we call ourselves [NAME] and that does mean that none of us speak for each other. We are not an organization, though we have to have organizational arrangements for more formal things like dealing with money where we have some and for ensuring that we understand what is out there and we are not only speaking from opinion and prejudice and our personal politics. But, what I have to say to you is only my voice and not anyone else’s. We don’t do command and control! And perhaps that’s why many of us don’t identify with the word activist, because life’s not that straightforward and the word has become co-opted over time. It’s somebody else’s word and formulation and since 2-3 years ago it became common parlance. It’s like partnership, or empowerment or active citizenship – all of these words – in terms of partnerships, I think of ballroom dancing! I certainly don’t think of these co-opted, dishonest, mendacious relationships between local authorities and governments, or whatever. So, it’s a word that doesn’t spring from my own activities and it belies the incredible wealth and range of how people e[name] press their care for what’s important to them. And it could be the tradition view of an activist who goes out and takes direct action and protests on the street or you know, squats or occupies. But actually, that is the tip of the iceberg, that’s the tip of the iceberg and only the minority of people. And it distances the people because of this stereotypical image, from their own commitment, motivation and drives.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?*

It was [NAME] and I who set up [NAME] and it was 5-6 years ago and it came out of the fact that we lived and worked and breathed in voluntary action all our lives and for a long time, 20 years, as freelance consultants. That meant we inhabited every little bit of what we call voluntary action, which might nowadays be called ‘activism’. Because we found ourselves both at the national and local level, amongst people who were paid professionals through to friends and families, we noticed an increasing professionalization and managerialisation. There seemed to be a dulling of the fire and the motivation that we grew up with and we started to wonder was this just the way we saw it, our corner of the world, or was there a real problem going on here? Was this co-option of voluntary action? We took a year off to talk to people and see what was going on and on a personal level we were increasingly dissatisfied with our clients and the work we were given. We found ourselves telling off our clients, which is not a good way of getting more clients! So we started thinking that we should find the bit of voluntary action that we want to be in, and so here we are six years later.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

Most of the people who were connected to [NAME] in the early stages came out of conventional voluntary action. I refuse to use the words voluntary sector … we are not a sector! That’s another way of boxing voluntary action and endeavour. But most of us have come from conventional, established, you know … Age Concern, Citizens Advice, the rights movement, which has now become the advice sector. I would say most of us are of a certain age, though that’s now changing. So we are welfare state babies, way into our 50s and 60s, some of us 70s and 80s. And we are the disaffected, the pissed off, the subversives within the conventional world of voluntary action. Let’s call it direct social action or radical activism, well many of us come from that period in the 60s, 70s, 80s, but have found ourselves in the conventional service provision world. But increasingly, they are not our world any longer, because of again what we were saying earlier. They have become privatized, corporatized and dead-headed. So we increasingly now align with and see our future with the direct action and radical movements. I wouldn’t say that we make common cause yet, and I would love to have this conversation in two years' time and see where we have gotten up to. We did a joint [NAME] -Occupy event and it was a spectacular failure! We were from two different worlds, we had two different languages, there was mutual incomprehension. I didn’t go, but I heard back from those who had, and it was like “Who are these people?” on both sides. So, it was like we were on tramlines, but there aren’t many connections. That’s why I am so intrigued by things like the Barnet Library video, and it showed me that it’s a really practical, grassroots coming together of two worlds. There’s my world, which is the local, saying “Bugger off, we’ll have our neighbourhood library!”, and Occupy saying “We’ll instigate and spark and do what we can and then you can take over”. I think that was a beautiful coming together.

I think there is a generational thing and it’s a thing that I am very interested in. I would like to think that within the next year we have done some intergenerational dialogue and exploration and we will have more and more younger people coming in our direction. And that piece of work that I have just finished around activism and dissent will take us in a very different direction, so we may yet find common cause elsewhere. The anti-cuts and entitlements and closing down of services, well, we absolutely sit in that same world and our two-day event last week was really interesting because we brought together people who often don’t have contact with in terms of subject and in particular people active around environmental issues and climate change. Because of where we come from individually, it’s very sort of welfare state, community services, and the environment hasn’t figured in our world at all and we knew it was the most enormous gap. But we felt that we had more to learn from environmental activists than they had to learn from us. And last week I started thinking, we are the overlaps, where are the alliances and certainly the [NAME] now is in a movement of change because of what’s been going on in the last two years, so we are in a position of changing. We are third tier, all our connections are local and national – strong social services, strong community action – and because we cover such a wide landscape and are not topic specific, our role has always been the bridging and connecting.

1. *What were the main slogans of the movement?*

Yes, “Dissent protects democracy”. [NAME[ and I had just come back from Mali in West Africa and I said look what we’re doing here is ridiculous! I’ve spent my life in anti-poverty strategies in the UK and I came back from West Africa and said, I have misunderstood. Poverty really, is not the issue, apart from a few pockets. It’s the social and political capital that’s the problem here and so we started off as two people and a dog and cat, both of whom are dead now! These are just a few fragile people! People always say to me when the discover who we really are and what we are really made up of “Oh we thought you were bigger than that!”. It’s so very easy with the website, and we are very productive. But we are a flea on a camel. I built our first website and I knew nothing about websites and I was thinking “OK, we have a banner, but it would be nice if there was a rotunda!” So, I looked through Google’s images and then I saw a rotunda and the “Dissent protects democracy” and I though, I quite like that! And so there it is. Nobody has ever commented on it, because of this piece of work, people are asking whether dissent really does protect democracy and whether that doesn’t presume that we have a democracy. And do we? Shouldn’t it be “Dissent creates democracy”. So I have recently had to write why I think dissent protects democracy and I have bunged it up on the website, along with a “this is what we stand for”, but the ‘we’, I am not sure that there is agreement about the ‘we’ or this. So, what you see isn’t necessarily what there is. We are tiny, and we have had this fantastic funder, the Tudor Trust. They are just to die for! If every funder was like Tudor, the world would be a better place. They are of the old style: We like what you do, we support what you do, here’s some money, get on with it! And in fact very early on when we talked to them, I said to them we don’t do performance indicators, we don’t do outcomes, we don’t know what’s going to happen tomorrow let alone in a few months' time. And the manager there said “Of course you don’t! But could you give us a general idea about what might happen? We won’t hold you to it!” So, they are wonderful and what it gives us is a contribution to mine and [NAME’s] time, we were able to employ 2 people, which was the equivalent of a full time position. So now [NAME] and I do all the coordination and we have some money in our back pocket to pay £500 here or a £1000 there for a contribution to people’s own time. The picture that I gleaned from “Here We Stand” is that money isn’t the issue. Money cannot spark activism, though it can close it down or have a good try at closing it down. But it’s not the point and that’s in stark contrast to voluntary services who say we can’t do it unless we are paid for it. And I just had a conversation this morning with the CBS, a local umbrella group who said “Oh we have no money, no core resources, where are we going to get money, it’s such a problem” and I said to them that they were the first people in months who talked to me about money because I had been living in the activist world where money is not the point. So we are tiny, but our web of connections is enormous and it’s taken six years to build up that web and to have a voice that people listen to. Initially people thought we were mad and scaremongering on the co-option of voluntary association, that our civil society was under threat, that dissent was no longer acceptable, that all the forces were closing down this public space, what we used to call ‘ungoverned space’. I no longer use that because it was co-opted by the American security forces. There was this chilling speech by a British political saying that along with Homeland Security they were going to close down ungoverned space. And initially I thought we were going to keep using it, but we had silly people saying “Well, nothing is ever ungoverned, is it?” and I used to think “Oh God! Have you no imagination? Can’t you think metaphorically as well as literally?”, but anyway, we have moved on from that because it caused so many problems. But that’s how I see civil society that “we will do what we will do”.

1. *What does democracy mean to you? And, who would you demand democracy from?*

Well, I had one about this recently with my partner because I am not sure what democracy is and I am not sure that ungoverned space is the same as democracy I think it literally means government by the people, but my Greek is rubbish! So it’s something about the collective, equal voices or at least contributions from many voices and about our governance together. But it’s a bit like “How many angels do we want to put on the pin?” and to tell you the truth I am not even sure how interested I am in it. For me the word democracy is too philosophical, and I am terribly pragmatic. If I can’t see or do it, or feel it, which isn’t the same as I don’t care about concepts and notions like compassion and humanity and stuff.

1. *What does social justice mean to you and who would you demand social justice from?*

Social justice is another of those words, isn’t it? I mean, I am really happy that you are looking at language and how it’s used. I mean, social justice, I don’t know where it came from, I never used to use it. You know, it’s like activism, apple pie and motherhood and it means everything and nothing. I have a belief that all human beings should have a basic liveable income to keep body and soul, to keep warm. If you are talking about those things then I can relate to it. But if you say social justice my brain just switches off and partly because I think that it’s used mendaciously.

1. *What would you describe as democratic practices? And is/are the movements themselves democratic?*

Democratic practices? I think if you looked at us, well, there are definitely some anarchists amongst us and I don’t think I use that as a political philosophy or a rule, you know? “We need more anarchism!” “Don’t tell me what to do!” But we are very, as you would expect, on the left wing of libertarianism, so very much “Don’t’ tell me what to do!”, so we don’t have a membership, very explicitly. We don’t want to be tied down by having to consult all the time or get a mandate or majority vote or any of that stuff. We absolutely don’t have party lines. We’ve only recently put up a statement on what [NAME] stands for, but I am not terribly interested. And that is because our heart is about promoting, protecting this thing of independent, self-determining action which is for a good society whatever that means. And one of our movements around the ungoverned space thing was that we knew we wanted to protect ungoverned space, freedom of association and action together, outside the state. Initially, we were working around that per se, and then we walked our journey a bit further and said we care what happens in that open space and so what we want to ensure is as much action for social justice, let’s use all those words! So I believe in free speech, and don’t believe in censorship and that puts me in a difficult position, because often people will say lots of things that I don’t like. So, social justice is important and we wouldn’t seek alliances with UKIP or the BNP or wouldn’t support a community development programme that assisted a tenant’s association to bar refugees from becoming tenants.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

Oh yes, I was just talking to my GP this morning because they have this really good thing, where we as patients sign postcards that say “I only want [NAME] treatment”, it’s a fantastic system! We got talking about privatization, and she said that some of her patients, who I presume from her comment come from minority ethnic communities, people are saying to her that they are frightened of being rounded up and put away. Or deported. We work with a lot of refugee community groups and in particular I have worked with the [NAME] group outside and known them for 10 years now and they are frightened and many like the Chief Exec I work with, whose children are born in this country are scared. I don’t know who they are frightened of, but I presume …well, I’ll speak personally. I’m not British; I am [NATIONALITY] and allowed to be in this country because I have stamped on my passport “Indefinite Leave to Remain”. Now, I know that that could be rescinded. I don’t know, given the work I am doing now, how far I would have to go or at what point the government will say we don’t want her here and I will have to leave the country or go underground. [NAME] was investigated by the intelligence services and we can’t go to America now. I’m a white, middle class, respectable, conventional person and yet my life is circumscribed. And that’s me! I mean I am well connected, I have resources, comparatively wealthy and yet I feel an anxiety for myself. And many people who have been marginalized have had that all their lives in a place like Britain. But I think that’s what’s changing, is that this depression, recessions, period of austerity, global economic collapse, I think what’s different about it compared to my experience in the 80s is that the tentacles reach beyond those on lower incomes, to all of us. It’s scary, I think I am increasingly scared and yet I lead a very protected life! And it’s not just about human rights and it’s not just about material things, it’s about the degradation in our connections with each other and what we see. My oldest grandson (I’ve got four grandchildren) and he is 16. Again, he has come from a protected comfortable background, and he has no hope for his future. He has already gotten into trouble with the police, he reaches for drugs as a way to find some solace and it’s very easy to paint a bleak picture. It goes against my grain, I’m [NATIONALITY]! Everything will be alright, everything is positive, we can do it!

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

Well, I am having a sense of needing to assert hope because it is there. What I see, particularly as a result of doing that work, that brought me back off my knees and that was because … somebody said this at our event last week. The collapse of this big global or national structure, because I have no doubt about the fact that it is collapsing, but if you look at the local level … well. You know the streets here and where [NAME] lives in [NAME] in the countryside, what is holding people together as it has always done are people’s personal relationships and the affection that human beings have for each other and the goodness of people. And whether you call those dignified relationships, I hadn’t thought of that way. The indignant! And that is such a nice way of looking at it, that word in the round of being dignified in austerity and dignified in adversity and that’s absolutely what I found, as well as the indignity of it. That’s a lovely way, and it’s absolutely my experience of voluntary association and the connection between people and what we do when we come together out of our own free will. It’s a very dignified thing and it e[name] presses indignity.

I speak very personally now, but I am exhausted to realize we’re growing! The number of times [NAME] and I have thought that it’s going nowhere and that we should stop, because it takes over our lives and it’s exhausting! We are both in our 60s now and increasingly, while we still have something to contribute, it is a world for the generations coming up behind us. That’s why it’s imperative that we leave the space and why I want to do this intergenerational dialogue. But what we have found increasingly is that [NAME] is growing, becoming strategically quite pivotal in our tiny little world and I can see as the other national representative bodies like NAVCA, NCVO and ACEVO (wash my mouth out!), as they are up a cul de sac pretending to be global players all corporatized this that and the other. As they are now the problem and not the solution, and they leave an enormous vacuum. And when we first started this six years ago, our first impulse was to look for a home, an existing home for our concerns and we couldn’t find anywhere. And that’s why [NAME] exists, because we couldn’t find anywhere. And this morning I suddenly said to [NAME], that we might be becoming the national infrastructure body because of the alternative. And you know what they say about revolution, then we will have to be turned over. And I thought “No! No!” because we were never meant to be an organization, but we are growing and we are changing. And that’s always a bad sign, because if you are changing, you are moving. So on a personal level we would like to close it down, and we are explicitly planning to exit and stop the organization. The reason for that is that we don’t believe in our existence as a structure. We believe in our perspective, and the imperative to extend that perspective, but we don’t believe in our organizational form or shape. It’s not the right means to the end and so what we are doing over the ne[name] t two years, maybe an extra third year if we and the funder want to have a third year, is to find alliances whereby we wouldn’t see [NAME] . You would hear their voice and perspective and activities spread all over the place.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

It’s not even about creating an impact so much as a voice and it’s a voice translated into practical activities. And it doesn’t matter who does it, just so it’s there and really all we are doing is … well, I really do wonder about this generational thing. There is one way of looking at [NAME] and it’s that it’s the voice of the outgoing generation. And maybe it’s not true anymore because of the younger people coming towards us, but at the moment there is a feeling that [NAME] is the voice of the outgoing generation wanting to speak their voice and to say to the up and coming generations “Make of it what you will, but we think that this is important”. That our experience of the post war consensus, the welfare state, that we think that there is something valuable there that shouldn’t be lost and I think the really interesting thing is that the post-second world war experience sitting down with the global environmental perspective and the non-organizational and non-tribal perspective of the younger generations coming up, is really interesting. How do we see it from our different worlds? What are the organizational forms or non-forms that social action/collective action is likely to take? Because Occupy, 38 Degrees, UK Uncut, my sense is that they are virtual activities and they are shifting alliance and “now you see it now you don’t/horses for courses” and if that’s true it has implications, because we are material beings and we have material interests and we don’t just exist on the internet. So what does it mean that our mechanism for social action in a local area? My neighbours next door in that block of flats there, I think quite a few of them are on housing benefits and they may be moved out and sent away as they get their housing benefit cut because they have too many bedrooms or because they are on universal benefit. So I will lose my actual neighbours, how is virtual social action and relationships going to sort that one? I find it quite difficult to imagine.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

We are on Facebook, and it’s interesting, as we are at the end of a feasibility to see what we’ll use. We are testing out a Twitter, a Facebook page, a Facebook group and a website which allows you to comments and a discussion forum. And we are looking at do people want to have a life there with each other and I’m really not convinced. I am convinced about the particular role that social media might perform in a particular circumstance. So, if you want to say “Hey look at this!”, you use Twitter; if you want to leak information widely, use Facebook; if you’ve got a few nerds who want to talk about democracy, you go on a discussion forum!

1. *Do you think there unique things about the London movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?*

Well, first of all I am prejudiced, because there’s only one place to live in the world and that’s London! I’m just trying to reflect and remember because the examples of activism that came from all over England and Scotland, I didn’t go to Wales or Northern Ireland. That’s not to say that they weren’t there. I am just trying to think whether there was something different here compared to what we found elsewhere. Well, this is completely subjective and not a research finding by any stretch of the imagination. But, I don’t think London is feudal and maybe this is a non-British person speaking, I find a lot of what happens outside London feudal. And that means that the constraints on activism outside of London might be much greater. Whereas in London because it is a melting pot, and if it ever was feudal, which I doubt it was, it certainly doesn’t feel like a feudal city at all. It’s too chaotic and too diverse. Even places inasmuch as I know them very well, like Manchester, Leicester, Birmingham, there is a strong feudal feel to them. Very close interpersonal, historical relationships, people having multiple roles so that they can stick their finger into too many pies. London doesn’t feel like that at all. You can’t control London, though many have tried.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

[NAME] does in West Africa, because he works with a Malian NGO, I don’t. But many of the people who would say they are at NCIA do. Of the 25 people who we brought together last week, a good third that I know of have very strong international connections and our conversation was informed by international concerns, not just environmental ones. We were having a discussion about what needs to be safe guarded in Britain during the battle we are in now and [NAME] who runs a community development organization was saying we cannot have this conversation without it being on a global basis, for all the reasons I don’t need to say.

This global thinking is new from my personal experience and for my generation, I think. The life I have lived, it’s new that the question of the environment, sustainability, biodiversity, international development, developing countries, us all being bound together across the globe with the Butterfly Effect. That wasn’t my experience growing up into an adult, but it’s certainly my experience now as an adult.

1. *Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones? Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?*

This was the major clash last week at our event! I come out of “a plague on all their houses”. You are looking at the founder member of the national “[NAME] campaign. I’ve never been interested any way, and I am certainly not interested now in these mainstream, formal political, tribal institutions. I had a great disdain for my generation’s trade union activity: misogynist, bureaucratic and in fact I was involved a lot with the Rights movement and spent so much time battling with trade unions, asking for solidarity for individual members and they were either incompetent, disinterested, corrupt and because of the position of women within trade unions in Britain, which is very poor, I just saw them as bullying. I have never had a good experience with trade unions. I never got into the political parties, but my generation and my cohort was very, very involved with all of that, both in a very mainstream way, you know, the Labour party, as well as on the guerrilla warfare, like supporting the IRA. There were lots of people I grew up with who were engaged in formal extracurricular political activity. And the crunch we had last week was between those of us who were saying that that’s not where the action is and that they co-opt our actions and energy and time, that they are time wasters, an old story, you have got to grow something new and those of us who were saying that the old regime can and has to be influenced. That you cannot turn your back on what the political masters are doing, and that they have got to be stopped and be influenced. And someone was there from the TUC, and as you would expect, he was saying I understand all of the things you are saying, I understand you are disaffected, but we need your help to give ammunition and an alternative perspective on what needs to happen so that we can take that. In fact, the guy who was there had to rush off at lunch time to meet with the Shadow Minister for something or the other and he said he had to put his suit on and go talk to these people because he is from the union. But he said “I need you behind me!”. So half of were saying you’ve got to engage, and half of us were saying we’re not doing it. And I don’t know what to do with it, it’s not my inclination, but it is the inclination of quite a few of us.

Our strength is our enormous landscape, because we can bridge and bond – solidarity and strength in numbers – we can bring the subversives within the co-opted to stand alongside anti-cuts campaigners. We can say to an insider in a local authority who we know “Give us the dirt on what’s been going on here!” So we are able to say to housing activists that they need to made common cause with activists around social care, we can bring people together who otherwise wouldn’t have come together. But as you rightly ask, who is our audience? Depending on what’s going on and where the pressures and opportunities are, we change. We are a bit like a yacht, we have to keep tacking. And we have been either confused or light on our feet depending on how positive we are feeling in the day, but I do think we are at a crunch point because our constituency used to be voluntary services, but I think we lost that battle. We were trying to keep them as independent rather than under contract to the state and private sector, and we were trying to get them to hold on to being the unfettered voice of communities of interest, rather than a subcontractor. And I think we failed, and appeared too late. And quite honestly, I don’t think that voluntary services are interested in saving themselves and we can’t do it for them. So I don’t think they are any longer our constituency, we failed them. On the other side, the bubbling up social activism, that we were hoping that voluntary service would go back to, well, they don’t need us. People do what they do. They don’t need their capacity built, not that any of us did! I’ve got a t-shirt that says right across my tits “I’m already fit for purpose”. They don’t need all of that and I have big big arguments with the capacity building industry and community development where they say that “There are lots and lots of people who don’t have the confidence …”. But then, that’s not the answer. The answer is to stand alongside each other. All of us need to be held up, whether we have resources and have been to university or whatever. So for me there is a real question. I said to [NAME] this morning that I don’t think [NAME] is needed any longer and yet it’s such an irony, as we keep finding ourselves with a stronger and stronger position because we are the only voice in this conventional world of voluntary action but we are speaking to a dead constituency and the thriving constituency don’t need us. Well, actually that’s not true, they need us in the way of an extra pair of work and to go and join. Instead of encouraging activism, to just go and be an activist.

END

**LN6, Leo**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Yes, I consider myself a community activist.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular? / On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*

Well, I became involved in political activism in the early to mid-1970s . That was when I got involved in political organizing and campaigning. I was a postman and was one time union branch secretary at the [NAME] sorting office. But I wasn’t involved in community activism, but more in the workplace and in political, anti-fascist and anarchist groups. Then in the 1980s I got involved in community struggles with the unwaged and unemployed struggles as well as the claimants unions across the UK. That was a significant movement in the 1980s. I carried on being involved with more idea based groups rather than community groups at that time. Then in the 1990s, I got side-tracked into ….. [REMOVED] So then after that was over, which was the 1990s, I focused from 1998 onwards on creating a resident’s association on the council estate in [NAME]. We formed a resident’s association and I was the secretary of that resident’s association. Then when I moved off that estate I started to get involved in creating an independent resident’s association in [NAME] and that really set a whole new dynamic of grassroots network in the whole borough and then other networks in other boroughs across London developed. These didn’t exist before that time. Then in 2007 I got involved in the Sustainable [NAME] network and we created to links to other sustainable groups in London and across the country. Then there was another borough wide network called the [NAME] Alliance.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? Or in the past two years? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

Yes, completely. There’s a tradition in [NAME] to do good work locally and then we link up in London and then across the UK. So most of the things are linked up federated or networked across London and the UK. All of these groups don’t exist in every borough and ours is one of the strongest in London. We have linked up with other tenants’ associations in London, but ours is unique because it’s an inclusive federation and not just council tenants’ resident’s association. It includes tenants in private housing too. Historically there has been a split, but we managed to unite all of the private and council tenants’ associations. And with the [NAME] groups that we organized, we have made links with other [NAME] across London. Now there is a network of about 500 Friends Groups across London. Some boroughs have a tradition or a foundation, if have a strong residents' movement. For us it's easy for us to respond to various challenges because we have already created an independent resident's movement. We also have an active libertarian revolutionary group, which has been going for 20 years and always supports borough-wide initiatives like the anti-cuts alliance.

So we are well set up and that is lesson to be learned elsewhere. If you can set up a foundation of independent grassroots networks and also independent radical libertarian organizations which supports a wide range of campaigns, then you can respond more effectively to than in other boroughs that may not have established the building blocks to resist what the government and big business are doing. So [NAME] Group is very important. The group also set up in the anti-poll ta[name] movement in [NAME] and we had a very strong anti-poll ta[name] org which linked up with London federation of anti-poll ta[name] groups, which I was the secretary of which at one time. And also across the UK. Then in [NAME] set up a general solidarity association rather than end the groups and nothing came out of that historic struggle. We decided to set up a solidarity group that would support a wide range of campaigns through the 1990s. That’s still going strong. I wasn't so involved in that in the 1990s because I was involved in the [NAME] campaign.

If you search for [NAME] you can get the info and can see most of the film. It got a lot of publicity in the states. [NAME] was the first major anti-corporate website. It’s frozen now but can still see most of it. But maybe it's not really relevant to what we're talking about expect for it helps to understand that it was building blocks of the anti- capitalist. It was a global movement, but it wasn't just about [NAME]. There was also an anti-Shell struggle so there were a number of different campaigns against and this helped created the grounds for the anti-capitalist movement globally. They were all kinds of relations established all over the world. And it helped build the anti-capitalist presence.

1. *What were the main slogans of the movement?*

When you say "your movement", there are many [that he is involved with]. Of course I see them all as being connected, but they don't necessarily see themselves as being connected. For example, the resident’s groups, well there are about 25,000 resident associations in the UK, but they wouldn’t see themselves to the anti-cuts movement. But I obviously connected think they are connected because if you're defending your community then must address what government is doing on a strategic level. But a lot of the resident's association only relate to their with their local area and only deal with local issues. Someone once said it’s a movement of movement. But not all movement sees how its linked to others. But with the [NAME] Groups, the movement was a direct response to the massive public cuts to public services of the 1970s and 1980s. But it took 10-15 years for the impact to hit home on green spaces, because green spaces you don’t notice the dereliction and gradual disintegrating of the infrastructure, the paths, fences and buildings because of lack of maintenance and staffing. And by the end of the 1990s, the situation of parks and green spaces was so bad, people had to take action. And most of the 5000 friends across the UK that exist now, started in end of 1990s and beginning 2000. So they came out of a situation of lack of resources. And green spaces were largely in the profile was raised because of the campaigning of park users to rescue green spaces. That largely was achieved but then before it was achieved, we had these massive public service cuts again and green spaces first to be hit because not statutory and like youth services and libraries, so councils can cut them much easier. So the rise of the anti-cuts movement in the last 2-3 years, we’ve worked hard that resident association and friends groups are part of the anti-cuts movements in [NAME] . So while it's obvious to me that this is a national struggle against government policies, but it's not obvious to resident associations. But with the [NAME] Groups we made the link stronger because of where the situation came from. We've now set up a new organization and its goal is to ask for adequate resources for green Spaces. So [NAME] Groups have had to reluctantly acknowledge that it’s a national campaign, they’d prefer to be involved in the local green space but circumstances have driven them to link up across London and nationally and to acknowledge that this is an anti-cuts struggle. That may sound daft to you, but it's very hard to impose your politics on a genuine grassroots resident's group. Most people in those kinds of groups, only relate just to their local area. But one of the roles of campaigners like me and [NAME] is to work within grassroots networks and say, "hey folks, these issues are national, if not international in scope, and we have to effectively take on the government. And not just try to improve our communities however we can." I think in the 2000s, the Labour government, which I don’t support, because I think people should control our resources ourselves, and Labour government was in favour of privatization and but one thing it did do was it put more resources in public services. Because it was fattening them up for privatization. as a result there were friends groups and local resident association which could lobby and apply for funding and make demands for greater resources going into local communities, whereas now that kind of central government funding has been cut and difficult to do anything apart from being very political about the situation.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

The politics is localized. People have a whole range of different views on party politics, lobbying and direct action. [NAME] would favour direct action, self-organization and speaking out for ourselves instead of voting in elections and involving councillors and MPs because that is disempowering and we would encourage people to take direct action where possible and to have a long term vision. Communities should run their own lives and we should be responsible for our neighbours and work places. There is a different kind of politics in [NAME] than in political parties and trade unions that have different kind of politics. [NAME] has tried to work in grassroots community networks where different views and political views and there is sympathy a with principles of self-organization and speaking for yourself. One of the things [NAME] did was held an Independence Day in order to support each other and make links between different groups. The only time when we worked with political parties is only been through the anti-cuts campaign. We had this debate in [NAME] if we need an anti-cuts alliance. I said it should be done by grassroots and community took the lead so not something run by political groups, so that we took the lead and that it was run by community groups and not political groups. In first 6 months was largely successful, but then community groups got demoralized and realized that it would be along political battle with the government. And the political organizations, which are geared up for that kind of politics, like SWP, the Socialist Party, and Green Party, and the [NAME] became the continuing core of anti-cuts movement in [NAME] and community groups drifted into the background.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

I am speaking as an individual. I think the Rise of the anti-cuts movement was very e[name] citing because it grew very quickly. These kinds of networks and alliances were t being set up. We though at that time that it was like the anti-poll ta[name] movement of 20 years ago, which was a genuine mass grassroots movement. In one way it was very simple with anti-poll ta[name] and to not pay and not cooperate with the court and not allow bailiffs to enter home and so on, accompanied by with mass protests. It was simple because it was only about the poll ta[name] and 18 million people didn’t pay the poll ta[name] , so it became and unenforceable due to mass resistance. Anti-cuts was same, but the attacks from all angles on [NAME] benefits, on jobs, welfare state, public service jobs, and so there wasn’t going to be a clear simple strategy and then a victory in 2 years. And also we, the anti-cuts movement, is fighting all 3 major political parties, so we, the anti-cuts movement is taking on the entire establishment who are really on the offensive and this will be a long battle. A lot of the community networks and grassroots groups are struggling to stay in the battle. The government has won a lot of arguments but at the same time , the government is playing a dangerous game because increasing general disaffection and class conflict and mechanism to resist what government is doing, because it's such a broad attack, so the mechanism for resistance is unclear. So the positives have been yes anti cuts campaigns across the UK and big mobilize around the [NAME] , which is traditional, because whenever [NAME] is under attack people rally. Especially around hospitals because hospitals support people. And 2 weeks agao30,000 people protested in Staffordshire and 5000 protested to defend the Whittington Hospital because facing job cuts and land sell off. So Hospitals have been a big source of mobilization and the government is struggling because they want to close hospitals to cut the[NAME] bill and to cut services. And the other big thing, and seemed a very positive thing was the trade union mass protests and demonstrations and one of them was with 500,000 people which as the largest ever trade union organized demo which was called by the trade unions and there was a feeling of optimism that there would be a growing anti-cuts resistance. But the trade unions, for some reason, people have different ideas, they stood back from effective action. There were big strikes around pensions, but that wasn’t the issue that would unite the whole movement. The issues were public services, but there was no industrial whatsoever against any closures or attacks on public services despite the mass movement.. So the unions effectively did virtually nothing and tried to protect historic positions. So I think people are struggling with the strategy. What is the strategy?

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

There was a big rise in the fascist National Front and they got lots of electoral support and big marches. There was a big anti-fascist movement which took a physical response which tried to get them to stop marching and selling their papers. It also mobilized lot of young people thru cultural events and was success esp. in some parts of the country. In the last 10 years the BNP was getting quite active and getting some electoral success, esp. in some parts of the country. But it's not really significant yet like in other countries in Europe and their vote is going down. The UKIP also has similar anti-immigration policy but I wouldn’t say they are fascist. Of course the government will be looking to deflect the attention to scapegoats. Have found lots of scapegoats like immigration, but also attacking people on benefits and try to blame them for the fact that they're not putting them into public services, so they are blaming the poorest for that and saying they are costing too much. Racism is a dangerous card to play in Britain because there is a very strong anti-racist tradition and blatant racism doesn't go down well , but it is creeping back and the Labour party is trying to adopt some of the soft racism that's growing and are trying to incorporate it in order to keep their votes up.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

*Police violence that is a big question. I don't know. PV has been with us a long time and it certainly can have an* effect on working class communities, esp. racist police violence. And as I live in [NAME] , as a result of the killing of [NAME] , angered a lot of people and led to 5-6 days of rioting. It wasn't strictly about police violence but it was the initial spark. But how that is linked with the anti-cuts movement is unclear. In the 1980s, the urban riots had against police racism in [NAME] and [NAME] and [NAME] .. I think when the Conservatives are in power, they have a different strategy of pushing the capitalist policies, than the Labour have. They both have roughly the same policies but push it differently. The Lab tried to mobilize local councils and the trade unions behind capitalist and austerity policies. The Tories want to get there faster and aren’t so worried about direct confrontation with local authorities and unions. So and this creates an atmospheres of confrontation and can create a greater feeling of class war. If the class in power, taking that blatant class attitude, then working class people say well, if bankers and millionaires are running the country, then have to fight back. While Lab tries to conceal the class nature of our current system in a little bit more subtle way. So they go slowly, but the conservatives like to push it. So that may impact on how people respond to police violence.

1. *What does democracy mean to you? Who would you demand it from?*

It means people taking control of own lives and taking control of their own neighbourhood, and taking control of workplaces and taking control of decisions making directly. And to me, and this isn’t how people see it, to me they are about empowering ourselves. To take responsibility of our estate, our neighbourhood the local parks that we use. To the public services and to say these are our neigh and our facilities and in that campaigning around issues to do with them, to develop a long term vision of actually we should be running these things ourselves. So to me a local resident's association is one side of the coin, and the [NAME] is the other side of the coin, because it is saying, "Hey everybody, we should be running our society ourselves". Instead of trying to reform or society or to vote for some politicians, we should be taking over and that’s a revolutionary strategy. So, I see all these things connected and it’s the same as the anti-cuts movement. Such as don't cut our services. To me its n not about keeping everything the same, but the principle of public service should apply to all of society. "What, things are going on that aren't serving the public? Then why are they happening?" to me everything should be a public service and everything should be serving the public. All the decision making, all the services, all the workplaces, should be public services. If not serving the public just to make profit for some company? For what reason. So, for me, I believe rather than cutting or privatizing public services, they should be massively expanded to cover the whole of society and everything that is private should be turned into a public service, all work places, all services, all resources should be in the hands of the public. So to me I see anti-cuts struggles, I am glad we called [NAME] rather than against cuts. Is that we are defending public services. I see it as a revolutionary process that we asserting and empowering ourselves in local areas FOR a society where all the services and all the resources are for the public.

1. *In the context of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

The Government has used the language of community action for its own ends. Just like all governments do, they Pick and choose what they think might be populist sounding phrases and ideas. But they were only using that to justify the cutting of public services by saying, "don’t worry about that because it’ll be picked up by a group of volunteers in the local neighbourhoods". But they were using to justify cuts to public services but they were also using it as a Trojan Horse to privatize public services as well. Because privatization is not popular in this country, rather than saying we're selling off public services to private corporations, they were saying , people can have choice and have charities can come forward and bid to take on local community health services. So the kind of big society propaganda from the government, was really a Trojan horse for increasing privatization and the community doing what public services actually should be doing and it's a complete nonsense.

But obviously the idea of society and people supporting each other is fantastic. But it needs to be aligned with a massive increase in our public services, so communities are working with rather than picking up the pieces of a chopped up public services. They should be working with strengthened public services. I think we should be working in partnership with guaranteed, systematic standards and quality across the whole country. So for example, with [NAME] Groups, the government was saying the [NAME] ’s they are best example of the Big Society. Because [NAME] ’s are fantastic, its people who love their local parks, they want them to be improved and are happy to pick up litter and to help with planting daffodils and the way the government saw that was, let's get them to replace to paid staff in the parks. But you need the paid staff and adequate resources, but you also need the [NAME] Groups working in partnership to develop visions of how the park could be improved and to be empowered to work with well-run well-resourced dpt. They need to be empowered as the community partners and they can work together with well-run, well-resourced public parks department. But what the government has done is that they have made 25-50% budget cuts nationally to green space budgets and its led to an acknowledged national crisis.

I am attending meetings about parks nationally, because I am the campaign's office of the [NAME] . So the national federation is a confederation of those grassroots networks. We've been attending lots of meetings organized by parks professionals. We can't return to the 70s and 80s, which was a total disaster for the parks and it's taken us 20 years to recover. So what you need is community involvement and need a well-resourced going into local governed. Otherwise, what's happening now is that parks are deteriorating again, standards are going down and councils are beginning to talk about selling off green spaces that they can't manage any longer and this is a total disaster. So you need both. But at the same time without the community involvement the public services are just seen as something that the council do. The mistake of the past was that community partners weren't integrated into the management of schools, health services, youth services, and parks. So it's made it easier for the government t to cut those services, because there hasn't been a lot of community involvement and worker control.

1. *Is the movement democratic? What would you describe as democratic practices?*

Yes, I think they are. They are as democratic as people can make them. In terms of that is the way they are. The [NAME] doesn’t have any power over the individual resident's associations. In [NAME] there are 180 resident associations and each one is independent and autonomous. So the federation doesn’t have power, but only moral power because we take up issues, but only does so through consensus. But if there are 1-2 groups that are against that issue, then we don't take it up. So we tend to focus on issues that resident associations are in support of. Or take it up in such a way that we don't tread on their toes. The Sustainable [NAME] is very democratic. Democracy is not the best way to describe the way of grassroots network. But it isn't' always about that. sometimes it's about consensus building, it's about the autonomy of affiliated groups rather than having a majority decision imposed on people. Trade Union tends to be more democratic in that old fashioned way, in imposing the views of the majority on the minority. But not to knock it can be an effective way of moving forward and making decisions that have to be made. The [NAME] makes decisions by consensus and in 20 years it's never had a vote. It’s a collective and decisions are made by consensus. So [NAME] is working with other groups of a similar nature with patchy success across London and national. There has been attempt to set up a network. What's happened in the last 20 years is that there has been the growth of networking as a real alternative of testing organizations with branches. It's one kind of model. There is more and more networking, where the groups’ part of the network remains autonomous and there consensus decision making is really important. So you can't impose decision, so have to move forward with consensus so people are on board. So this means decision making can be slower.

In last 20 years the rise of networking has emerged. Instead of branches and more and more growth of network, where groups part of the network remain autonomous and consensus decision making is more important and have to really make the decision.

Have a London's Local Anti-Cuts Alliance so the idea was to link up the borough wide anti-cuts alliances and groups as a kind of a loose alliance itself. For about a year, from 2010-2011, mainly 2011 it actually had some substantial meetings with 10-15 boroughs but gradually fizzled out in last 6 months because most of the London the anti-cuts alliances have become small, with some exceptions but there are other London wide and national networks. The political parties, like the socialist party or the SWP try to create front orgs run by their own members or run by themselves but that’s a failed model. People were not happy with that in the past and less happy with it now. The Model of alliances and networks is much more established in last 15 years. But the left wing political parties are still highly influential because have national infrastructure that libertarian and other radical political tendencies don’t have as effectively.

So you can just see it happening, the SWP just had a meeting 2-3 months and they decided the time was right to set up local campaigns for benefit justice. So have organized a conference on benefit justice on 11 May and by coincidence, they are setting up local campaigns on benefit justice and as if they are not connecting to the SWP. Yes, there's a big attack on benefits, so it's much needed, but they want to see it as something they control at the centre. The SWP have a mission to set up a national movement where they try to make sure that it’s the way they want it. But at the same time, if nobody else is doing it then there is vacuum which they are then happy to fill. In the anti-poll tax movement, the militants, which are now the Socialist Party, they played that same kind of left wing party role.

There was a fast growing anti-poll tax movement across the UK and [NAME] had a very organized anti-poll tax union and one time had 20 groups across [NAME] . And we were involved setting up a national conference and we were gradually building links with the whole of the UK and suddenly, Militant, which is the socialist party, they had some kind of national meeting and they decided they wanted to set up an all –Britain t federation of anti-poll ta[name] groups. And after 6 weeks of that decision, they had set up 100s of groups possibly 500-600 groups across over the country which were set up by their own members. These flooded into the existing local federation of g anti-poll tax groups and dominated and took over and then set up the all Britain Federation run by themselves. Only 3-4 federation, that had been painstakingly set up over a year around the country maintained their independent. Even the London federation, there was big split because Militant set up scores of groups all over London. There was a big split in London because of that and then they took over the London federation. So the left have a certain way of working, which puts a lot of people off of politics.

1. *Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones? Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?*

I don’t and most of the organizations I am involved in don't. Because most to that I'm involved in are grassroots movement. What usually links up internationally are the political organizations, political with the small ‘p’. And [NAME] was very special, it was a unique situation because if you are being attacked by a MNC, the way to hit back is to hit them everywhere, because they are everywhere. And it was a perfect opportunity because they are the most well-known and highest profile MNC in the world. And it was hoist by their own petard. If I'd chosen to be attacked by anyone, [NAME] would be the number one choice. That is why we grasped the opportunity and we were able to damage their image all around the world. It's unusual to have genuine grassroots movement to link up. It's usually activists who realize the need for linking up.

There is the coalition of resistance, which is people who were kicked out of the SWP and they’re people who have been active in broader campaign groups where the SWP was using them as front orgs, such as Stop the War, but there's been a dispute in the SWP, and people who were involved in the fronts either abandoned the SWP or were kicked out. So the coalition of resistance felt the need to keep some kind of political continuity going even if they weren't in the SWP. They set up the coalition of resistance and because it's not a party its reasonably open for different groups to work in but I can see the guiding hands behind it who would love to create another political party and replicate the problems that political parties create. But they have international links. and they’ve had a couple of European conference, or conferences in London that were trying to address situation in Europe with regards to austerity and they were trying to make international links. I don’t analyse the left anymore. But I could imagine that there is international political tendencies in ferment and jockeying of power in left politics.

But the occupy movement has been a breath of fresh air and they have international links. They have a refreshing libertarian self-organization and DIY politics. What's interesting is that In this country the occupations of symbolic town centres or sites, like St Paul's, could only go so far. It couldn’t take off without reorienting to community struggles and that’s what they have been trying to do. The same has happened with UK Uncut, which against is a libertarian movement and came out of the climate camp. The idea of and occupying space is a very libertarian direct action political position. With most strongest manifestation was the climate camp, it's very international, and in UK there were 5 or 6 major camps, with annual 1000ss of people but weeklong workshops and discussions of alternative ways of making decisions to educate a whole generation in DIY and consensus. But that movement reorient toward the community struggles, instead of taking on the state just by the sheer force of willpower just by occupying the public space. So Occupy and UK Uncut have both been involved in locally, UK Uncut has tried to take principles of DIY and direct action, to more traditional community and anti-cuts lobbying movement. UK Uncut has been a very important part of the anti-cuts movement because it works in a completely different way than the trade union and leftist orgs, they realized that just by sheer will power they couldn't do it. They had to link up with the anti-cuts locally based alliances. And Occupy more recently have started to do the same. They have international links. But I can't see any real grassroots links. I can't see genuine grassroots links where residents groups in the UK are linking up with resident groups in Greece or Germany, except where there are political tendencies like Occupy.

1. *What does social justice mean to you and who would you demand social justice from? Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

Those words that are around but they are almost never used by local community groups as part of their formal slogan. They are Used by more experienced campaigners, especially social justice. Social justice is a more kind of left-wing political stance. But I have to say, that the [NAME] federation of resident's associations, we did a leaflet describing ourselves and we put that in our standard leaflet. I remember when that was written, I was thinking would people agree to this that goes beyond local issues and it’s a principle more political activists use, but people were happy to adopt that. I think liber, radical and revolutionary ideas should be mainstream everybody should be able to use it. If people are genuinely independent and act and think for themselves. People often don’t know and in that environment radical ideas can grow very fast, because nobody is suppressing them. I am firm believer in power of ordinary people by setting up their own orgs, but here is constant pressure to conform and to work through politicians or to left-wing groups setting group front organizations and taking the power from people.

1. *Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement*

It depends on the group and depends on the issue, depends on what part of the country. It is an issue of How do you make grassroots campaign and network fully representative of the people and community that you’re a part of? and it can be an issue. Anti-cuts groups and political orgs around these issues tend to be white people, even in areas where there are strong BME communities. One thing we have done in [NAME] is that in the [NAME] activist centre and I think that’s been a very good experience but again its run by a political organization, a [NAME] left wing org that’s been good, but more recently in [NAME] specifically, not around cuts but around planning and urban regeneration, which is being pushed as response to the riots by property developers and the London mayor and the local council, trying to promote gentrification ad massive development to change the nature of working class areas and to kind of undermine council housing and to undermine working class culture. So we set up the [NAME] networks to stand up to the interests of [NAME] people rather than property developers that has brought a lot of people together and that’s been a very positive experience because a lot of community centres, the council is trying to close them or change the way they’re run. Because they’d been taken over by black or ethnic community. What we've done in [NAME] tried to get lots of different groups together working on regeneration issue and that's been a good thing.

END

**LN 7, Lucy,**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist? And how/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?*

I first got involved with [NAME] , I just finished my Masters in September of that year and was signing onto [NAME] and I saw a [NAME] at the Anarchist Bookfair that was held in London and I went over to them. I have always had an interest in welfare issues because my mum brought me up and she was a single parent and she claimed benefits because she couldn’t work as she was raising me and she had mental health problems. She couldn’t work till I was 12, and so my experience of growing up with my mom was one of poverty and I was very much aware that the welfare system in this country was pretty bad and as I was about to sign on myself and given my personal up bringing I wanted to become involved in a group that was challenging the poor state of welfare provision in this country. So after meeting them at the Book Fair, I went along with my partner to their end of year Christmas do and ever since then I have been very actively involved with that group.

I was a bit politically active before [NAME] , growing up disadvantaged in [NAME] , an inner city area with high levels of poverty and when I was at school I was aware of injustice. I studied Geography, as for me it was a way of understanding the world. I would read about injustices, both in general and for my course. Also, I mean, I lived it. I remember once my mum cooked dinner and I dropped it on the floor and that was the end of dinner as we didn’t have any more food. I didn’t become politically active until university where I did my dissertation on this UK based group called Climate Camp, where a friend of mine was a member and I became involved with them through doing research on them. I was interested in eco-justice issues at the time and that’s where I learnt about direct action and consensus decision making, as well as horizontal organizing. Whereas before, I had been angry about injustice and signed petitions and had been on the anti-Iraq march (my first proper activism in Year 9 of secondary school!). Before the big march there had been a call out of pupils to leave their classes and me and some mates did that and were running around Streatham! We were rounded up by our teachers, and they were going to punish us and I wrote a letter about why I had done what I had and we got into trouble! So I guess it does go back to when I was 13 or 14 ….

I guess I am an activist, even though I don’t go around calling myself one. I guess I go on a lot of protests! I read John Holloway, who is an open Marxist and he talked out not wanting to call yourself something because that stops you from becoming other things and maybe calling myself and activist will make me different from everybody else? I want to fight for my rights with people from my community and don’t want to distinguish myself as having a special set of skills, and I want to be seen as a normal person who goes out on a lot of protests. I am wary of the label, but as I saw on my Twitter I like radical politics, feminism, anarchism, queer theory and I do a lot of stuff, but I try and stay away from labels.

1. *On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*

The year since my involvement with [NAME], I have learnt tonnes! My views have changed so radically since the way I understood things in 2010. My politics have radically shifted through my involvement with [NAME]. About this time last year I was on [NAME], I was looking for work actively and doing all these job applications to [name] (e.g. Scope, Amnesty and Shelter), for paid internships and positions, looking to use my skills in writing and research. But over the past year I have developed an anti-work politics, I rage against work a lot. I mean a lot of people in [NAME] are not working because it’s not the right thing for them, you know? They may have disabilities, they may have mental health problems … but our culture has a real mantra and dogma of work. I am against work, and don’t see why everyone should have to work, and I laugh at the person I was last year – filling out all these applications for internships and low positions. Now I don’t want to work, sitting at a desk doing all these things. All those wasted says filling out these job applications, for example, 300 people had applied for the same part-time internship at the New Economic Foundation! The job market is rubbish, you know, the whole graduate without a future thing that Paul Mason talks about. I don’t have waged employment, but I spend my time doing things I really care about.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

Definitely. I think [NAME] would see itself as part of the anti-capitalist movement and the anti-austerity movement in the UK. We wouldn’t put that on our press releases as we try to be a bit more media friendly! [NAME] is a network of different groups around the UK, working towards the movement either under the name [NAME] or other names, doing their own things. The Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty inspires us loads! It’s definitely a UK wide movement where people are taking actions in their high streets and their local areas. We are also connected in the network [NAME] , the [name] Foundation who are an anarchist group and they have taken on workfare as one of their issues and we work with them to coordinate demos and so on. So we are a wider network and then I am a part of the London Group.

1. *What were the main slogans of the movement?*

I guess it changes from time to time! In March 2012, when we had our first national day of action on March 3rd, when there were actions across 30 cities in the UK. A young woman in Liverpool who had been part of UK Uncut, wrote in her callout “If you exploit us, we will shut you down” and so we have huge banner with than on it that we take to most of our protests. We try to stay away from policy making, we are clear that we want Workfare to stop, but we are not there to propose alternatives. We are just there to be against this policy that we fundamentally disagree with, we don’t want to call for Labour to make things better or something. We are a group of people who do this because we want to, not because we are paid to make policy. I think “Welfare rights and living wages for all” is one that we would be happy with putting out under our name.

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

My personal high point was the demo, i.e. the national day of action, on March [NAME] , 2012 when we had an action here on [NAME] in London. It was the first time since my partner and my involvement that we had arranged a proper street and we were really nervous about it. For that action we were inspired by [NAME] , which I had been involved with a little bit and I have many friends in and had gone on some of their actions when I was doing my Masters in Leeds. The plan was to go into shops and shut them down because they use Workfare and this tactic of going into shops and occupying them was started by [NAME] . It was just a great action – really good fun! We were racing up and down Oxford Street and the police couldn’t catch us and we got into a couple of shops and pulled it off. There were loads of people there, about a 100 at least. We had maps of all the stores that took Workfare in the area. It worked really beautifully, while we organised the first shop we would go into, people just naturally did their own thing and found their targets and managed to get into their chosen stores. It was horizontal organization working really effectively, which was amazing to see. We had organised getting people there and the first target, which we didn’t get into because of the police, but that didn’t matter as people were about able to organise themselves and get into other places!

So much happened in 2012 for [name] ! What kicked it off was in February, [NAME] accidentally placed an ad online for night time vacancy in [NAME] and they advertised it as “[NAME] ” and that spread into the national media. People just went mad, they thought it was disgusting! It caught the public’s rage and people were bombarding [NAME] on Twitter and Facebook. [NAME] had been going for a year or so before then, but that’s when it really went nationwide and people became familiar with it. Since then, so much has happened. We have forced companies and charities to pull out of Workfare. So all of 2012 was a highlight for us!

We were chosen by [NAME] magazine, who are slightly weird, hipster-y and cool as their “[NAME]”. Lots of people have said to me that after the student occupations and Occupy, things went really quiet, and then [NAME] was on their radar and keeping momentum going. Some have said that we are the most e[name] citing group in the anti-austerity movement, and have been quite important to it. That makes me quite happy and proud. We were one of the most active campaigns of 2012.

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

I guess for us, handing out leaflets with rights on them is really important! We go to Job Centres and hand out leaflets with people’s rights and what they can do on them. So we like to inform and provide support, such as through our email where people can write to us with problems and issues and we give them advice and solidarity, if we can. That’s really key to what [NAME] is, as we really want to provide support for people struggling with the welfare system. We also went sleuthing, which is going up and down the high street pretending to be looking for work and asking if shops took Workfare. This is really important as it gives us the information as to who is in or out! The actions in March were so successful because over time people had kept this lift of those who were using Workfare or not, and we had an up-to-date database. Companies, charities and even the public sector are constantly pulling out or sneaking back in. There are also a lot of Welfare to Work conferences, when Chris Grayling was the Ministers, and we would target these and would try and get inside them and hand out alternative propaganda, saying that instead of making money of unemployed people that companies like AE4 were doing, they deserve money that they can actually live on. One of the successful action before I joined was mobilising around a conference that lead to it being cancelled. We also had [NAME] national gathering in 2012 in Birmingham on the same day as one of these conferences, so we held our alternative conference and them went and we occupied the big room there were they had stalls from various charities and just generally being disruptive. I think we are keen to rethink our tactics as people are now getting arrested more easily and so we have think of new things to do that have impact.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

A lot of emails that get overwhelming, as there are so many. We also have monthly meetings in London, to which about 20 people come regularly. We try to have a social meeting as well, so we see each other twice a month. The meetings are where we make decisions as to what we want to do as a London group and if we are making decisions about the wider network then we would have feedback from them over email. Also, Facebook and Twitter are good if you want to get information out to the campaign and people who either affiliate or have an affinity with us. You can put up a post or a photograph of an action and there will be a 100 likes really quickly! That’s important to spread the message.

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

Languages other than English? It’s only English, even though someone wrote to us about writing leaflets in Welsh. One of our group went to give the keynote speech at a conference in Austria of unemployed workers and they were e[name] changing literature. People are e[name] cited that they were making links beyond London, and I don’t know if that means that we work in other languages at some point. Maybe our literature will be translated by other groups as people at the conference were saying that they don’t want to become like the UK, you know, how we say we don’t want to become like America! So there was excitement at the work that [NAME] is doing to oppose the situation.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

I guess we are not bothered about those groups of people! I think that often having relationships with those kinds of people is too much hard work. We are very clear that we have no links to political parties and we are a grassroots independent group of people who are either affected by Workfare or are anti-poverty campaigners. We don’t align with a political party! When the whole Tesco thing kicked off the Socialist Worker’s Party sent us emails and tried to make links. We went along to a meeting and tried to liaise, but we are really wary of them as they have a really bad reputation of hijacking movements. It seems they take things on when it is in the media spotlight and there are many people in the group really hate them.

We have an ambivalent relationship with the unions. Public Communications Services (PCS) who represent Job Centre staff – it would make sense for us to have a relationship with them and we have been trying to build one to see if they can stop sanctioning people, which is when their benefits are taken away from them or if they can stop Workfare schemes. We have had loads of meetings with PCS reps, but feel like we haven’t gotten anywhere at all with our demands. Maybe we are being used so that they can say that they are in touch with us and discussing things without actually changing anything. They want us to talk to their membership, but we aren’t about that, we are about taking action, they don’t seem to be doing much for their members.

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?*

The squatter scene amongst which I have many friends operates along those lines, like the free shops in the squat in Elephant and Castle. You can talk whatever people need. I am involved in Lambeth Save Our Services, my local anti-cuts group and recently we talked about a food bank style for the local area that is not run by the Christian associations as the other one is or we could copy Greece and give people in a political way. I was very opposed to this idea and find it problematic that Lambeth SOS would operate their own food bank, but it would be solidarity thing if it came to fruition. At [NAME] , we provide support to each other and that’s a form of solidarity. [NAME] came out of the [NAME] and involved people who were involved in [NAME] and were themselves on Workfare. They wanted to do something about it! The national campaign is really important, but for me it sometimes feels like we are forgetting the people we are fighting for and so I am very keen to get involved with grassroots campaigns again, i.e. people who are actually claiming welfare and having problems with it. So we have started the [NAME] and we are having our first meeting tomorrow. We are trying to provide local mutual aid and solidarity, but making it really social, we are baking cake and having tea and coffee. For me, maybe that’s a type of solidarity economy example.

Oh! I was sort of involved with setting up [NAME], I went to lots of meetings and tried to get the building, and my partner was very involved. There was a demo on October 20th, and they wanted to build a radical space to bring together all these different groups. There were anti-cuts groups, OAP groups, squatter’s groups, feminist groups and so on. In one meeting squatters and OAPs created a kind of solidarity as the OAPs were struggling with paying for their electricity and they squatters said that they could help with connecting them, probably illegally, so that they wouldn’t have to pay such high bills. That was example of the solidarity economy and it was really beautiful. From [NAME], there was also a meeting of all the different housing campaigns coming together. Because housing is a key issue, with the high rents and Housing Benefit cuts. We learnt about each other’s struggles and what was going on, and so there was a radical housing coalition that existed as an email list and now the people involved in it have set up the “Open House” a squatted space that will create a radical space to talk about and mobilise for housing issues. This should be really interesting and exciting!

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

I think our greatest achievement has been to change the discourse. I mean before 2012 people weren’t aware of the schemes and now they are angry, you know? Politicians now use it too, even though they didn’t want to until they were stuck in a corner and forced to use it. It’s become a high profile issue and hopefully it has given people being affected by Workfare and those in despair about the state of welfare in this country hope that people are getting rowdy on the streets. It’s important that people believe that change is possible and happening.

It’s something I ask myself all the time, what happens now, where do we go forward? I mean, urban camping, is not tenable. I mean, they can do it in Spain because it’s sunny, but things like Occupy in London are not possible in the long term. It’s good to create spectacle in the heart of the beast but it’s not sustainable, you can’t drive yourself mad standing on the steps of St. Paul in the rain. But we spoke to this Spanish activist who said that they had camped for a while, but they realised they have to go into the community and take the fight there. Occupy was different because of how diverse it was, unlike some protests where you just see your friends and you realise that your outreach hasn’t been very good. But even then, maybe Occupy wasn’t representative of the massive level of diversity that London has. You’ve got to start locally and then build from there, I am very interested in that. So if you have a big action, there will be a strong turnout if you have built those local connections.

*12. Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

In [NAME] , we don’t have or want a leader. I have gone and represented [NAME] as an individual, but recently we try to do talks as a threesome. You know, it stops one person getting glory or becoming the “face” of it, or whatever. We are very sure that it’s a collective project. In terms of the wider movement, some people who aren’t involved or understand the grassroots part of the movement would talk about [NAME] or [NAME] as leaders, but rather they are prominent figures on the left who are in the media spotlight. I guess there is the Novara Media Collective, with [NAME] and [NAME] and they were heavily involved in the student protest and I listened to their radio show and they have good stuff to say and are prominent amongst the far or autonomous left, I am not sure what to call us. The people I am friends with and organise with are totally against the concept and that’s not how we want to work.

1. *Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement?*

Well, it does affect women differently! The Lambeth One o'clock Club was shut down and before it was, I spoke to women who told me how important that space was to them to be able to go and talk and meet other women, in their roles as stay at home mums. You meet people you would never meet otherwise. One of them said that the summer of 2012 was a really rainy summer and domestic violence went up as women and kids were stuck inside all the time. So it’s really important to have these spaces, isn’t it? Also, rape crisis centres are being hit. Welfare used be such that women could get more as they were often single mothers raising kids, but with the cuts who knows? Women are also more in the public sector and that is being cut severely. In response to that, there was the occupation of the Women’s Library that is being sold to the LSE and I went along to that to occupy it and protest it being shut. It’s in the borough of Tower Hamlets I think and it’s an important service that is being taken away, so that women won’t have access. It was so e[name] citing to be in a feminist occupation, that had a real different feeling. It was a lot nicer than non-feminist spaces, for example they had a ‘safe space’ immediately set up where people could go and raise any issues that they had and it would be resolved together. They were aware straight off the mark that when you are in an occupation all these inequalities are present and people oppress people without even knowing it. So they created a physical safe space for people to go and I thought, aww that’s so feminist, that’s so lovely that they had thought of this, despite the occupation being on-going.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

I guess on our big March 2012 demo, even though there was a lot of running after us, there weren’t any arrests, unlike in Manchester. Policing of [NAME] has been quite light, we haven’t had any major incidents. Recently, we did an occupation of the [NAME] , and the workers there were really hostile to us and called the police on us. One of the workers blocked my partner and I from leaving and said to the police that my partner had assaulted him. My partner got arrested and that was really traumatic. About ten of us from London were there and it worked so well as a group as everyone pitched into help my partner. We have a kind of a link with the Guardian and so a woman who was there called up [NAME] , who has done a lot of Workfare stories and try to get him to put pressure on the Salvation Army about the arrest. Someone else was telling my partner his rights and when he should or shouldn’t give the police his details. There were also leaflets there about how charities involvement with Workfare is so problematic, i.e. a Christian charity aimed at fighting poverty being involved with a programme that just exacerbates it and we were showing them to the police. It was a strange gaggle of people, including an old lady who was trying to sweeten the police by putting on her little old lady act! A squat across the road came out to show solidarity and finally my partner was de-arrested because there was nothing there. But it was so lovely to see how everyone came together and did their bit and this is why [NAME] works so well in this horizontal manner. It’s the same all over the country, people take their own actions, like putting up Post-it notes and chalking and it adds up to something and it all feeds back to the movement.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

Well everyone is talking about UKIP, but they are a joke! It’s the media that is giving them more attention than they need to. Maybe I am being naïve, I don’t know. The right is so fragmented and don’t seem able to mobilise very well. I don’t feel that there is a movement as such that is growing. The March for England in Brighton, but hardly anyone turned up and there were more people who were to protest fascism. However, on the street there is that worrying trend of people saying “Oh all these immigrants coming and taking our jobs” or “Get a job!”, so we have working class people who are marginalised who turn on other people, and there is a problem with racism and blaming immigrants. I guess that could be turned into a movement if someone came and mobilised the sentiment, but I don’t really see it as such.

1. *Do you see what you are part of as a London movement, a British movement, or a European or global movement?*

We are a London group and we take action together and are friends, but we are very much part of the UK movement against Workfare and also against austerity and capitalism. We have strong links in Liverpool, Edinburgh, Bristol and we are coordinating with them because people all over the UK are resisting it. We have recently made links to European activists and it will be interesting to see how that develops.

1. *Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones? Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?*

I am watching what goes in Spain, Greece and Italy with real interest and I read loads of blogs about it all the time. We are struggling against the same things, capitalism and austerity and these decisions being made about our lives and struggling for freedom. The “black block” tactic where protesters dress entirely in black to make themselves faceless, genderless, a mass of black and the idea is that you are much harder for the police to identify has been used in Greece and Spain and [NAME] has used that too. We protest people breaking windows, throwing paint bombs or taking other actions from the media taking photos of them or try to hold the police back. People will do what they are comfortable with. Now in [NAME] we might call for a black block on top of a call for action like a demo, if the latter is just enough, you know, marching from A to B. It can be a diversion, it can be protection. It’s a form of protest I am becoming more and more interested in. It is a tactic being used across movement.

1. *Do you think there unique things about the London movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?*

London is pretty unique and there is so much going on here. I feel like I missed out with the student protests being in Leeds and it all happened in London. People have spoken about being in occupations, for example the student occupation and how it has changed their lives. A friend of mine was involved in Palestine Place which came before the Cuts Café and he said that it was a transformative experience. I haven’t had one of those, I want a life changing experience! My own experience in activism is that I have trundled along and learned loads and my politics have become more and more radicalised. I would have been against smashing glass, but now I see it legitimate and perhaps necessary. I mean, before being on Twitter while I was at Leeds I felt like I had no idea of what was going on in London and how big it all was, especially the occupation. London is special as there are load of long established groups and it is the centre of power, everyone wants to march on Parliament and the City of London is where the bankers are getting away with it. So it’s important to be where the centre of power is, I don’t think I could live anywhere else.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

For me true democracy (the world is bandied about and abused), and in this country it makes me a laugh a bit when we see the level of police repression that activists experience! The lack of civil liberties and the police violence. I guess for me it’s about real freedom and not someone representing you. I have had enough of representative politics. Lots of people across Europe, they don’t want to be represented by anyone. I want to have my own say and allow other people to have their say. It's about being able to be an individual within the collective, not in a neo-liberal alienating and isolating way, but to be organised in a better way where we live differently as a collectively. Also living non-hierarchically.

1. *Who would you demand democracy from?*

I would demand it from myself and create it from within myself. I don’t want to be given it by politicians, it wouldn’t be real democracy. We demand it and create it from ourselves like within the [NAME] groups.

1. *What would you describe as democratic practices? Is/are the movements democratic?*

We always use consensus decision making is important. Just because ten people have their hand up doesn’t make it the right thing to do or that will make people happy. Organizing horizontally and making sure everyone has a voice, no discriminating between or against people. You create democracy by allowing people to speak and allowing them to be heard to that you allow needs to be raised and met. Not about equality, because need varies, being responsive to each other’s needs. Coming to collective decisions.

1. *What does social justice mean to you and who would you demand it from ?*

I haven’t used these terms in a while. A part of thinks that I am calling for social justice, but my language has changed and now I want revolution. I can’t stand living like this! Maybe social justice is used by NGOs who are doing one thing but also cosying up to the government. I can kind of identify with it, like with social welfare people are committing suicide and that’s wrong.

1. *Does “dignity” have resonance in UK context? Has indignation been source of mobilization here?*

I am ambivalent about it and I think about it a lot. Someone who influenced my politics a lot is John Holloway who wrote about the Zapatistas and he wrote about dignity loads and loads, “We are fighting for our dignity”. I’m not keen on it and I associate it with death as people talk about the dignity of death and so on! I’ve never really liked the term. I think about phrasing how to talk about workfare and using dignity, but I don’t feel comfortable about it. People in the UK anti-austerity movement talk about it. Maybe disabled activists talk about it as they have to go through ridiculous tests to get their benefits. I feel like I might have heard it a bit.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

I am not keen on the term, as there is the discourse of the individual getting control of themselves and getting themselves a job. I think it’s a nasty discourse! [NAME] would never use that, we talk about collective action not the individual’s fault. We pointed out once that when A4E were not doing their task well of getting people into work, the government was like, well, the economic climate. But when it’s about individuals, then it's their fault not that of the economic climate. That’s a double standard. I don’t like that term at all because it’s right wing neo liberal dogma that you are hit with all the time that it’s your own fault that you are where you are. UK Uncut’s whole discourse of everyone to pay their own fair share like companies is similar to that for me. For me that’s not good enough, I don’t care if Phillip Green pays his taxes , I want something better. I don’t want a more equal society, but I want a radically different one. So I can’t support their stance as my critique has developed, before I would happily been waving UK Uncut flags! But now I know that’s not the social change that I want, even though people are talking about tax and they weren’t before. But it’s not enough.

END

**LN 8, Jake**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Yes, to qualify, "activist" meaning there is a sort of bifurcation within student politics in the UK between those who sit on paid positions, which I currently hold, for the sake of their careers in a sort of bureaucratic sort of un-dynamic way and those who use student unions and other trade unions to fight a cause and the basis of the movement I am a part of is in the streets. It’s about organizing and I see organizing. I see the world in class terms. And ideologically speaking the only power ordinary people have is the power of organizing. The only people in the world who can rely on not being activists are bosses.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?*

My parents met in the international Marxist group in the 1970s. So I was brought very left wing. I was brought to be a non-factional Marxist. I was not brought up to be a Marxist, but I was brought up to question the world and arrived at Marxism. By age of 14 I was playing a role in anti-Iraq school campaigns. I grew up in [NAME] , so that was my fist political activity in 2002-2003. I think that is quite common for a lot of people who were in university now, because a lot of us in our mid or early teens had gone through that Iraq war process.

When I arrived at [NAME] it was a notably right wing campus. And there wasn't a lot going on but that quite quickly changed and the student movement in 2008-2009 was beginning to bubble up again and there was a wave of occupations in 2008-2009. And that was related to Palestine, the Gaza stuff. That was my first year. So people learned there was something bubbling under the surface. And everything changed around the fees review. And the year before in 2009-2010 when had set up the [NAME] campaign; the vehicle I have been working with ever since and that was built around a lot of local struggles. So before the Tories own the election and before the Brown review were talking about local anti-cuts struggles and there were quite lot of student occupations. At [NAME] we fought the merging of our modern languages department and in Sussex they occupied. And in 2010, I was elected the sabbatical officer on the back of the anti-cuts work in 2009-2010 and there is no president at [NAME] so I was the politics officer at [NAME] .

1. *On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*

Absolutely everywhere, although I am a very special case in some ways. I think if you did a survey of the most vibrant thing that I have been a part of which was the [NAME] Occupation and if you took a walk around the [NAME] Occupation and I don't know if you've seen the film The Real Social Network, and if you'd walked around that room and you’d come across people. The profile of that movement was interesting. In 'posher' universities you’d tended to find people from state school backgrounds rather than private school background. So there is miniature class war kicking off on posh campuses. There was also loads of 'private schoolers' who became very left wing. I know one person who was involved in the [NAME] Occupation who was a Tory. But I know a lot of people who voted Lib Dem in the last election who came over and I suppose people around me saw that there was something very basic about what the Lib Dems did and there was something very basic about education and the destruction of the thing around you. It was quite bread and butter to people, that the nature of education was changing and people found that quite scary and that was how a lot of people got involved intellectually. And during the 2010 movement it was cool. People got involved because it was cool. And in particular the back burn, what we call the days of action, the biggest days of action was 24 November 2010, 120,00 people And FE (further education) students a lot of that is about people getting the class politics that there is a cabinet of millionaires who went to Eton who are fucking over your future. That really got people.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

Yeah, especially with [NAME]. [NAME] was almost the same thing as the student movement in 2010. And the same people who came out ended up in [NAME]. Those were very closely aligned. As for the wider trades unionism, yes, absolutely politically and there was a moment after 2010 going into 2011 when the [NAME] demonstration called on 26 March 2011 and that was when we realized that this was a much bigger, broader labour movement. And of course much later that year you had the June strike and the November strike. So it was always self-consciously about a broader anti-austerity movement. And actually, ironically, students, there was a great kind of end of history thing. I was born the year the Berlin Wall fell down. And my generation was brought was to believe that… it was a good thing that the Berlin Wall fell down; you know I am not a Stalinist. But there was this kind of feeling growing up that there is no alternative to free market capitalism and all of a sudden that brims over. And students and young people go from being the most de-mobilized, demoralized, conformist wing of the labour movement suddenly become the most radical and vibrant wing of the labour movement. The story of the last 3 years is that the big trade unions let down the radicalness of the student movement. That the leaders of the trade unions let down potential of the students that was created in 2010.

We're a lot better off than in 2009, before all that started. But it’s not at the same level, we have not retained everyone. I think there is a sense of the tide subsiding. Especially in student unions that has left sediment behind of radical people in student unionism and there is a general feeling on campuses. Some campuses have changed irrevocably. [NAME] is now regarded as a radical campus, it is regarded as the most radical campus in London and probably in the UK, well there is [NAME] but that is another kettle of fish. And a lot of people applied to universities because they saw videos of 2010 and a lot of people applied to [NAME] because they saw the as a place of student activism. Today there is a lot more localized activism. There is [NAME] occupation happening today and that wouldn't have been possible if all that stuff hadn't happened. And a lot of the consciousness and politicization that is informing anti-cuts struggles at a local level, the ability of the student movement to mobilize is informed by the sense of self-confidence to mobilize that is there.

1. *What were the main slogans of the movement?*

Our main slogan, as we are a campaign for free education is, 'Ta[name] the Rich to Fund Education’. I think that sums up our baseline. More broadly we oppose, well broadly speaking, politically you have a spectrum so on the right wing you have social democrats and on the other end you have anarchists. Then in between you have Trotskyites, unaligned socialists like me and everything else. So the slogans are about trying to fight the tide of neoliberalism because that is real battle that we are facing here. So our slogan, "Ta[name] the Rich to Fund Education" are about really basic ideas, they are social democratic ideas that public services should be accessible and should be free. That is really basic cornerstone of the post-war dream. And that is where that links in, because actually it isn't a terribly radical demand, in a historical sense it isn't a radical demand, but it contains a more radical political sentiment against the established order of things and about the present arrangement of society.

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

As for a peak, no, because if you live in the past then you never do anything. And I think the austerity is only just beginning to bite and that the objective conditions of that are only going to radicalize further. My worry is a further shift to the far right. We are sitting and talking on the day of local elections when UKIP have done very well. My worry is, is the left organized and credible enough to present a narrative and a mode of organization to people about what's going to happen with austerity because it’s going to get horrible. And so there is a lot of potential there. I think the student movement is going to become more and more localized and less and less national and I think the NUS is going to become less and less a feature. And I think we are going to see, in terms of [NAME] , we are a lot bigger than 2010, we are growing and we are consolidating. But the movement is different.

Because we are not going to face things like a fees bill. And the trade union leaderships don't look like calling massive national strike action. And so, what’s going to happen is what the government's done to higher education is to pull funding out of a huge number of post-1992 new universities. And those will mean cuts and cuts especially to the universities that working class people rely on.

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

Breaking the monotony of the A to B demonstration. This goes back to the Iraq war league and to breaking the end of history and restarting history. The idea of political agency. The Iraq war symbolized a huge mass of student opinion and public, general opinion against the war and the biggest demonstration in British history which meant nothing. It didn't stop the war because frankly it didn't stop enough roads, and there were no Millbanks. Tony Blair could ignore the Iraq war demonstration because it wasn't smashing his HQ. Because there was no spectacles like that and it wasn't disruptive or hard enough. It was just an A-B demonstration. So that was our basic tactic and what Milbank showed; to break the monotony, the tedium, and the polite form of the A to B demonstration. We are not polite about what we do, especially not towards the government. So occupations and wild radical demonstrations that aren't A to B. Those are our 2 main direct action tactics that really define us. And the other thing that’s cropped up in the last couple of years are campus demonstrations and national call outs for a campus and that has happened in Birmingham, Sussex, and again in Birmingham again in June to bus people in to local struggles

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

Some of it has been really damaging to us. We organized a demonstration on [NAME] . We organized that on a budget of £4000, a national demonstration on £4000 pounds! I have never worked harder for anything in my entire life. It was exhausting. And the police press released the threat of using rubber bullets 3 days before the demonstrations. They very deliberately press released that they were going to use rubber bullets if it got out of hand and that scared a lot of people away. And I think the likes of incidents like Alfie Meadows have provided a cause celebre. I think it has radicalized and made people's anger a lot more acute and it has raised the question about the role of the police in society and state violence. Which is quite good to link to the neoliberal argument and the ideology is easy to link over to a civil liberties kind of thing. I think people, since 2011, are scared of "getting done". I think more than anything the damaging thing has been the violent disorder (VD). You can get done on VD charges for basically shouting at someone at a demonstration and that's prison for a long time. And a lot people have been done for it. It’s the judicial system more than anything else that has scared people. Ideologically I am not at all surprise that police get violent when we raise up, because they are the violent wing of the state.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

Yes, we're in student unions a lot. I am the president to of the student union. So we are really involved in student unions. I am a member of the Labour Party believe or not. I am a member of Unison. I think the general position of the student left is "one foot in, one foot out". Use your influence, but don't get institutionalized by it. Don't get any illusions about it. There are a lot radical union branches across the country that are affiliated with the [NAME] that are Unison branches or RFT branches. I suppose our relationship to the big trades unions has at times been very useful. When we really need something publicizing or when we really need to condemn police tactics, Len McCluskey, Dave Prentiss and all the major heads of the trades unions will sign a letter to the *Guardian* that we have written to condemn attacks on us. So there is a level of 'fraternality' there but in terms of our strategy, I think we are a lot more radical than the union leaderships.

1. Have new leaders emerged from these movements?

The thing about leadership in the student left is that it really isn't a leadership. What I already said about 2010 is that it’s about figureheads. And occasionally you'll find yourself on BBC News defending everything that is happening. But that doesn’t necessarily mean you are leading the movement. The spirit of no leaders came out. It is undeniable, I suppose, that I am a figure head of [NAME]. We have made a conscious effort to have new faces. But in general we are against the cult of leadership.

1. *Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement?*

Yes, feminist politics are at the heart of what we do. I think the evolution of liberation politics inside the student movement, liberation in terms of the four campaigns. And I would say that if you go back to 2010, and the division of labour at the occupation and who was doing the cleaning and cooking and who was doing the public speaking was quite marked. So we have a gender balance on our national committee. We make absolutely sure that a lot of our stuff is consciously liberation balanced that there are, not just women, but black activists, and self-defined disabled activists, and self-defined LGBT activists as well. And I would say that consciousness around liberation and equality in the student left has gone up quite a lot in the last few years. Even in terms of language. You don't hear people saying that’s meant anymore at meetings because that is 'ablest' language. So that has really changed even in the years that I have been evolved.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

The rule of the people literally. I would say democracy for me, going beyond a liberal conception of justice, I think democracy is about democratic control over the way life is lived in general and I think that includes the economy, work places. Some of the work we have done is about democratic universities and that is about the staff and workers having control over the university. Abolishing managers and mangers control and the idea that there is no democratic accountability. I think democracy is the oxygen by which the student movement thrives. The lesson we have learned, when [NAME] started, no one thought the [NAME] was going to be the big vehicle for the left. Back then the other big campaigns were run by the Socialist Workers party (SWP) and various kinds of socialist, frankly quite Stalinist entities who held these big conferences that were big rallies and there would be no voting or discussions. And the success of what we've been able to do is that we are democratic and we vote on everything we do and decisions aren't made by fiat. No one has the power to simply say this is how it is.

1. *Is the movement democratic?*

Yes, the [NAME] is basically democratic and that is one of our core things.

1. *What would you describe as democratic practices?*

More than mechanistic processes. It is more than simply the notion of voting which is why I outlined participation earlier. It is about transparency, control from below is the basic thing. If you are going to have structures, and all national organizations need structures, then you are going to have to have if not something like representative democracy then something like an elected committee of some sort. Something we got into tussles about initially was whether we should have any structures at all. And democracy is about bypassing the tyranny of 'structurelessness' where loud white men get loads of air time because they shout out the loudest. And one of the important things about democracy is that it gets around people's privileges. It isn't only because it is right, but it is because it is the most effective way of building a student movement.

1. *Who would you demand democracy from?*

We place demands on the state. We place demands on our university management. We place demands on the bureaucracies such as [NAME] , our own organizations and expect our own orgs to be democratic. But that's all transition, because ultimately I see democracy coming from below. In a revolutionary way, that sounds hackneyed. I don't think the state will deliver democracy I think the class character of the state would have to change in order to change how our economy is run so that it was in a truly democratic way. I don't think that can be achieved with a liberal conception of the state. Ultimately you move beyond demanding things.

1. *What does social justice mean to you and who would you demand social justice from?*

Yes, it is broadly meaningful. The usual debate in the UK is between social justice and social mobility. I remember that being the big one and hearing that fees will be bad for social mobility. I don't believe in social mobility, I don't believe in poverty at all. So social justice is a better way of conceptualizing the world. But what does it mean? I guess the joy for us is to discover what it means because justice is a subjective thing and our ideology of justice can fill the concept of justice and then we can fight for justice. And a multitude of ideologies can fill justice with meaning. And a multitude of different people can fight for that justice.

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

Um…I am not sure what you mean? Dignity of work? Anger, indignation, feeling like you're being ignored. Dignity is an extremely broad meaning word. I don't speak Spanish or Greek, and maybe it has more meanings in those contexts. But dignity, huh, I wouldn't be able to nail it down to a single thing. I don't think linguistically it has the same currency but it is used dignity at work, dignity in protest, in defeat. These are loose meanings, but they aren't really used.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

Individual responsibility, um… it strikes as when people talk of global warming and people solving that through individual responsibility. But it’s systematic and you need a systematic response to it. And in the same sense austerity isn't an individual thing it is class thing. It’s about imposing austerity on certain people and not onto others. It goes along with all the ideologies that we had we Thatcher and the Labour party has been failing to counteract all of that over the past 2 decades. Individual responsibility is no longer seeing the welfare state as something, people of my generation, isn't the same as my parents would've seen it. The idea of a social good is very different. Everyone in society benefits from this, so everyone should pay for it. One of the things that struck me as bizarre is getting your money’s worth in the [NAME] or in education. These aren't services that are there for the benefit of society, but that you should get your money's worth. But these are indicative of the imposition of neoliberal attitudes on people in society in which a welfare state kind of e[name] ists. The generational aspect of that would be interesting.

1. *Do you see what you are part of as a London movement, a British movement, or a European or global movement?*

Yes, I attended a couple of meetings in Europe. One in 2009 and 2011, one in France and one was in Belgium. The Bologna Process, as it was known back then. International, yes, we have formal positions with solidarity with the Sri Lankan student movement. Or solidarity with the Swazi student movement. And before the student union got big in the UK, Palestine was the big issue. And everyone would talk about the French general strike. There used to be a tendency which located dissent, and action and the student movement as something which existed in the past or somewhere else. The politics of the student movement is very internationalist. Especially in the UK. And so the Syriza and Greece and the Arab Spring made a big impact. I was part of a demonstration, in March 2011, of the worst named action, "Turn Trafalgar Square into Tahrir Square", and we made a little FB group. But it was silly, silly substituionist nonsense but you know the Arab Spring was in our minds. A lot of people involved in NCFC are also involved in political parties, like Trotskyist political parties, those parties have very well international links. So there are well advanced links on the organized British left and on the discourse of the independent British left, which I am a part of, then it’s very different. It’s still part of the discourse even if we don't go there.

1. *Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones? Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?*

The Arab Spring, there was weird communications with people in the Arab world, who emailed us about the 2010 student movement and they said "you're great, you inspired us". I was like what? No, you're inspiring us. We’re not supposed to inspire people in other countries. That's not what the British are supposed to do. We are supposed to be the apolitical country. But we shouldn't be big headed; there is no way that the British student movement sparked the Arab Spring. I have heard people claim so crazy stuff about the British student movement and it wasn't that important. The Arab Spring gave a flavour of global crisis to the whole thing, a flavour of a world changing and then Greece and Spain feel much closer to home to that.

And then Syriza, the Coalition of Resistance, which is now largely a dead organization because it is run by fiat. They were originally they were called "Can't Pay, Won't Pay: Coalition of Resistance in Solidarity with Greece" (Colog). So there is the global capitalist crisis and the global crisis of US hegemony in the Middle East which I think is actually, the British student left has a high level of consciousness and awareness and analysis of US imperialism.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

Email and social media are the main forms of communicating. And now have a membership list and a lot of that stuff goes out over email. But a lot of interacting happens over FB and have an online forum. And a Twitter account with 4000 followers. I don't think social media is the cause of the student movement if that is the ne[name] t question [I say that is not the ne[name] t question]. Good because that is the most boring journalistic question.

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

Yes, English is the operational language in terms of the global stuff. I wouldn't say anything happens other than in English.

1. *Do you think there are unique things about the London movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?*

Architecturally, it’s very interesting. Most of London is not like Paris, it’s not like an impregnable fortress. You can run around it, because London just happened. It’s quite a disparate city and there are lots and lots of different landmarks spread out over it. So we can have marches on the city and on Parliament as we have done. It’s quite difficult for London to be shut down by the place. But it’s very easy to cause traffic chaos with a demonstration. It’s got a huge proportion of its population that is first or second generation immigrants if not from other countries than from other places in the UK. There are a lot of students. So there is an automatic internationalism to the city. There is huger proportion of London is students, probably more than any city on Earth. You have huge number in FE and Schools. There is a lot of deprivation and the organized left is a lot stronger in London than in anyone else in the UK.

London is THE centre of Britain. It is where everything happens. London sort of has a sense of historicity about it. It is an old imperial city and it feels that history happens here and it’s where everyone goes and everything happens and the demographics of it are quite good and Bloomsbury has a student population of probably over 100,000. There are also working class universities, like LSB and London Met which will be hit. It was institutions like those that don't have student unions, but have very astute students who have grown up conscious of their surroundings and what the world has done to them.

END

**LN 9, Matthew**

1. *Do you see your role as a Union changing in the context of austerity and the economic crisis in the UK?*

I think our role has become much more about campaigning than being about influencing policy or helping governments make policy, as it once was. There was a time when the [NAME] regional and national presence worked with the government both at a local and national level to help them decide how workers, industry and so on would function. No longer. Now we have to throw everything we have at opposing what the government is proposing to do to the plight of the members of our affiliate unions.

1. *What has been the [NAME] engagement with the new anti-cuts and anti-austerity groups, Occupy London, etc.?*

The [NAME] website calls [NAME] , is a brilliant campaign, a model that should be followed. For a social movement they were quite structured, there was someone to talk to and our beliefs accord with theirs. Our involvement did go wrong during the march we organized on March 26th, 2011, when half a million people marched through London, where I was the senior steward at [NAME] . So [NAME] joined the march and tried to occupy [NAME] . This gave the police an excuse to stop the march, so it was a bit of an own goal and they have admitted that it was the wrong thing to do in the circumstances. We didn’t manage to liaise with them properly about what we wanted to do.

I have been to campaign schools and on join platforms with them, attended workshops where they give training on how to behave at protests, what are your rights, how should and do the police respond to you. That was excellent quality training, and very professional. The [NAME] could learn something from them about direct action! When we have communications from them, we send their stuff out.

With Occupy, our relationship has been more complicated and they are less easy to work with. We went down to their big demonstration at St. Paul’s and took photos, we also of course spoke to people. I know [NAME] the union gave them political support and also in the form of food as well. As an organization they are much more difficult to talk to, as they are very amorphous. Even if someone is in a “leadership” role or undertaking some tasks, these change very often and the people change very often. It’s harder to have a structural relationship with them. They have less of a tactical blueprint that you can support and not much of strategy. Whilst I share the anti-globalization and anti-bank sympathies, but just occupying the space at St. Paul’s didn’t seem to have a purpose. Interestingly, Occupy as a movement became very dependent on the media for their self-existence and that’s part of the complex that it was supposed to be opposing, right?

On November 30th we organized a national day of action around defending public sector pensions and some of the protesters at St. Paul’s asked if they could join the procession and we said yes. However, the unions march in a particular order for a variety of structural reasons, like people speaking and getting to the stage, etc. and so we told them to join at the end with community groups, pensioners and political parties. They didn’t come to form up and only joined on the Aldwych as they obviously couldn’t be bothered to walk very far! And then instead of joining at the end they bundled in the middle, and the police surround them, they bisected the march in half and really naffed off some of the unions! We want to build a working relationship, but if your ways of working are so different, it’s hard to. We haven’t had much contact with them other that the London May Day march this year, where I said to the Occupy speaker there that we should talk again about ways of working together. I can’t even tell you how strong Occupy is. It’s very interesting how Occupy in the UK didn’t go beyond the St. Paul’s and the spin off in Finsbury (well, maybe spread a bit but died), unlike in the States. There it seemed to grow to many other cities and become tangible.

Anti-capitalist community organizing started as soon as the Conservative lead government was elected. There is a website called False Economy where anti-cuts groups could form and register, and when it was first started, a lot of these were community coalitions. Some were narrow based, like defend my library, but others were more broadly based and both [NAME] and Occupy were not involved in those. So, whilst they are interesting phenomenon, there is a thread running back into the further past. While there has been a lot of talk about anti-capitalism and austerity, these issues are not new. Whether it’s privatization, wages falling as proportion of GDP or even libraries closing, these have been around for a while, so Occupy and [NAME] were new phenomenon on an already crowded block.

1. *What were the main slogans / demands used in [NAME] marches in the past 2 -3 years?*

We use the strap line “Jobs, Growth and Social Justice for All”. That’s the banner under which 500,000 people mobilized. The November 30th demonstration was about pensions justice for all, but public sector pensions being threatened inspired a lot of public sector workers to come. A lot of [NAME] demands around ta[name] efficiency and ta[name] justice are ones that we support. Occupy’s demands are harder to define: we know more what they didn’t want rather that what they did. All the people at St. Paul’s were angry, but not angry about the same thing. It was hard to see what they were getting behind. We have been structurally involved in the critique of global capitalism for a long time, for example the Jubilee Debt campaign, mobilizing against the G8, etc., especially demands against the role of corrosive international finance. We have supported the Robin Hood tax.

1. *What would you say was the high point for [NAME] organizing has been in the past 2-3 years?*

I hope we are at the high point now! We have just launched a strategy document that sets out what we want to do and what we want to fight for. We have a new General Secretary, and the [NAME] is having a 360 degree review. This is not to change our structures, but to re-orientate our resources to focus on campaigning over the next two year time period. We want to develop better and stronger campaigning relationships with partners, they could be think tanks, academics but more notably campaign organizations that deal with issues that we are involved in like poverty, child poverty and homelessness; right through to industry type bodies as well. We also realize that we can’t do everything ourselves, we have done a fair bit of work to instigate and seed community coalitions to make them powerful campaigning voices. So, people don’t always work where they live, but each place has a trades union council that people can be a part of. We call trade unionism not a job but a way of life. So people can be involved in things where they live, not just where they work. There isn’t a blue print for them, but we put together community coalitions given our campaign demands.

For us, it’s intriguing what the aim of the [NAME] ultimately is. It’s all about timescale. On certain issues the goal might be to get the government to change their mind, like the privatization of the Royal Mail, which people don’t like. We can’t convert the current government from an enemy to an enlightened friend; so occasional wins are all we might have. So that might push the time scale up to the next election in 2015. And so, a goal there might be to persuade enough people that austerity is failing and that there is a better way in investing in jobs and growth and so the target campaign may be getting people to vote at the next election. But if people do vote and Labour comes in with an austerity like programme, then the time scale shifts again, doesn’t it? We would not have made any progress. Another target might be to persuade Labour to modify policy. The big picture for us is that society is best served and employments rights are more likely to be given through the existence of strong unions, so beyond the two year window it will be to keep the legitimacy of the unions and build the capacity of the movement long term. Even if we fail at all the other goals, we might still emerge a fitter fighting machine.

1. *Does the [NAME] use social media for connecting and communicating with members (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)?*

I must admit that the [NAME] have not been very quick off the ball with social media. Now we have people in the campaigns communications team whose job it is to create website and Tweets and so on. The total game changer for us was email and the Internet! Would we be able to get half a million on the streets of London without social media? Yes, that was traditional campaigning, organizing and communication and lots of buses and trains! I can see that for [NAME] and other direct action type groups, social media would be a brilliant tool.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the anti-austerity movement in the UK? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

I think [NAME] have been tremendously successful on the issue of ta[name] justice and have managed to unmask a lot of household names like Vodafone, Starbucks, Google and Amazon, and put it on the political agenda. The achievements of Occupy seem to be more tangible in the US than here, and the Indignados in Spain seem to be a deeper social movement than Occupy UK became. I don’t see there being a cohesive broad based anti-austerity movement. The Coalition of Resistance would like to be that, but they aren’t big enough. I went to one of their last demos outside the EU office, but didn’t get my banner out as it was too small. Some of the lead people in that have been involved in campaigning for 30-40 years, so not much new there!

As regards to the [NAME] , our own polling shows that we were successful in two of our three goals, i.e. that the cuts were unfair (hitting women, the disabled, etc.) and that they were happening too fast and were too deep. However, we have consistently failed to convince people that the cuts are unnecessary, including a good number of trade unionists, clearly. I am an economist by training and the way the government frames this whole thing, as if it’s like a household that cannot spend any more money is far too simplistic. It’s economic hokum! Its top of the mainstream agenda now, whether it's about borrowing or ta[name] revenues. We have had some achievements, there have been peaks and troughs, we want the general trajectory to be upwards! We had the EU (Baroso) come out and say that the people of Europe have taken as much austerity as they can take, the new government of Italy saying they want to move away from austerity, Hollande was elected in France on an anti-austerity mandate …there are positive things being said in Holland and Eastern Europe (Slovenia) that austerity is not working. No country in history with an economy like Britain’s has cut its way out of a recession. The examples always given are New Zealand and the other is Canada, but they were both ne[name] t to big booming economies and were dependent on primary products that they could e[name] port. So, maybe the juggernaut of austerity is turning around! It’s the comments from the IMF, the OECD and the EU that gets the headlines.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

In our papers, you are still reading the same people, like Toynbee and Monbiot! They may be old people saying new things. There does not seem to be new people coming through, but that maybe because I am not looking in the right place. I am still reading traditional media and watching Channel 4 news. And someone like Caroline Lucas has a strong message would have had less coverage than before. But I can’t think of new people coming through, but I might be in the wrong circles. It helps that she is eloquent and a good communicator! So, media wise, I think she is a go to type person who won’t sit on a fence. I do think that in some ways, that the general public are generally more attentive to an issue around ta[name] justice and economic justice or jobs. But them other issues like climate change have fallen off the agenda! Maybe there is a limited amount of issues that can held onto by the public and the media editorialize and make decisions about what they put up. I would be interested to know about membership of organizations like Greenpeace than the previous years.

1. *Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement?*

There are two dimensions to this. When the government came in with an emergency budget and 80% of those cuts were demonstrably targeted at women, the [NAME] did a good bit of research and media work around that. As there are cuts to public services, because women are differentially employed in public services and there will be 750,000 jobs cut in that sector, it hits women far more than men. The second dimension to this is that when problems occur within families and in society, it tends to be women or mothers that hold things together and perform as a family organizer. That puts a secondary burden on them. There is some weird stuff going on around the labour market as well. The government keeps trumpeting a million new jobs, but in our experience, it doesn’t feel like it. And in economic terms, you get a graph of the product possibility frontier and if you’ve got full employment, you should be somewhere near the top and we are nowhere near it. That’s because of all the contracts, part time employment, people not working to their abilities and so on.

It’s probably historically convenient that structured, but the [NAME] has a female General Secretary for the first time in its history. The [NAME] started in 1868, and only now we have elected a woman! She would have been elected anyway, and it is a great campaigner, but it is great timing. We are seeing more female heads of unions as well, especially teaching unions. They tend to be a larger number of teachers and more assertive in that sense. In terms of the public sector, that’s the sector that is really under the cosh. There are three unions NAS, NWT and NAL all have female General Secretaries. There is one union that organizes in universities and further education colleges that also has a female GS. We are seeing more female role models and officers. Other prominent females in the anti-austerity movements, well, in Greece women are playing a strong role. We have had guest speakers from there. UK Feminista, Kat Banyard – someone I would like to meet and I follow her work. Their profile has risen! It’s certainly true that in times of angst and churn, it is a good opportunity for people to come through. Whether it’s young people, the disabled, women …

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

I have helped to organize May Day processions in London since 1991. I was the senior steward at [NAME] when it all kicked off up the road in 2011. I personally organized the pensions march in 2011. In the past, in London at demonstrations, there was a habit of bringing in police officers from outside London to police demonstrations. They were not rom the Met, they did not understand London, they were out for the day and though that it was fun to thump a protester! That has completely changed. I don’t know whether that has changed because policing has become more intelligent and benign, or because everyone is now walking around with a mobile phone. I am tending towards the latter driving the former. So you don’t see officers hiding around corners with their ID numbers covered up and things like that … Just doesn’t happen anymore.

For the November 30th 2011 demo, I liaised with what felt like 30 officers, we covered every doorway of the route that might have been a threat or a hiding place – but they were entirely helpful! I had really good communication with the senior police officer there and they would only let people in to the march if I said so. And then as soon as they lost a bit of control, of an anarchist black block group, then the mentality totally changes and something switches on. The average police officer and I don’t just mean at the senior rank, now know that they have a duty to protect people’ right to protest. Because the things the [NAME] organizes are peaceful and we work with them, despite our communication mind-sets being a bit different, but we get the show on the road! Organizations like the black block, they don’t walk, they run, the police deal with it a different way. The problem is when our people get mixed up with them, and then are treated accordingly.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have been strengthened by the crisis?*

At the [NAME] we have an “Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist Action Plan” (ARAFAP), not a snappy title, for five or six years that has tried to target our resourced to working against the far right. The original motivation was the electoral progress the BNP had made in Barking and Dagenham. So we tried to align unions to work with organizations like [NAME], where it was on a case-by-case basis we worked with them. I was on the [NAME]. Most of the stuff we did was based around elections, but other stuff focused on building campaign capacity and positive role models for black people, etc. I won’t say that it was down to us, but the BNP as an organization has collapsed, their electoral gains have been wiped out and as an organization, it is now broken and defunct. The EDL looked far more menacing 6 months ago: it was organizing on social media, it wasn’t trying to get elected at elections, so it took our calendar away from us if you like, it could call mass demonstrations all over the place and people would go. Traditionally anti-racist campaigners have said that in times of austerity the potential politics is there, Greece is a good example. However, in this country that did not happen. The EDL fell apart – their strengths turned out to be their weaknesses – like the lack of structure. I don’t expect them to come back. There are racists in this country so they will come back in another form. For a year I have been asking my colleagues to look at UKIP. They have managed to define themselves as a non-racist organization that happens to have immigration at its number one issue. It keeps finessing that message. [NAME] said the other day that they wanted to cap net migration at 50,000 and they did not care who they were. You can’t say that’s racist, it’s not. When you have austerity, you have people looking at others and blaming others and we have got a bit of tidal wave of that in Britain today. UKIP are picking up on it, they will have influence and it will legitimize the focus on immigration. So they might not be a racist party, but they get support from a lot from racists. Luton has had a lot of trouble with BNP, but they have to look out for UKIP. They have a long established presence of BME (Black Minority Ethnic) population. We are lucky that we don’t have a far right party, but those sentiments exists! Sad really, given how much progress we have made. Overt racism is rare in somewhere like London compared to France and Belgium. But now we have all of those talk around Britain being a crowded island, but it’s not!

1. *Do you see any connection between the UK protests and the Arab revolutions or is that a very different context?*

I am a regional [NAME] officer, so I feel unqualified to talk about that! Our International branch would be in a far better position . In terms of pro-democracy, we have been very supportive of that. There is a philosophical provenance of beliefs in freedom, democracy, rule of the law etc. – I am sure there are functional links between those contexts and London, because it is a work city and not just because there are 216 languages spoken. I am sure to a degree the pro-democracy movement in Egypt was led by people who travel and speak more than one language, personal links? I watch interestedly in the news!

1. *Do you think the UK has been in some way an example for other countries in Europe?*

We are an example, especially in terms of anti-racism. I don’t necessarily put the state or the government at the forefront of that change. People’s own tolerance level of intolerance and racism and intolerant behaviour has reduced. Are we a model in terms of pro-debt relief or anti-capitalist campaigning? Well, we do have some very strong campaigns and organizations in this country, particularly around issues of global debt and the environment. There a long history of campaigning. An organization like Anti-Slavery International, based in Brixton, is older than the [NAME] and goes back to the abolition of slavery. In terms of anti-austerity campaigning, the trade union movement is constrained by the law as it relates to strike action. It is illegal to take strike action that is not related to a trade dispute. And that gets into the mentality of the people. We have had a European day of action and watched strikes in Portugal, Spain and Italy, etc. and all we can do it organize a meeting. We like in a different legal and historical context and it gets into our mentality. We have not been exemplars of anti-austerity campaigning here in the UK. There is not a strong direct action tradition in the trade unions!

There is a company called Lufthansa Sky chef, that prepares meals for airlines and there was a long strike that went for 16 months and it was mostly Asian women. And I went to the picket line. The factory entrance to this factory was tiny, lorries were still going in and out. In France, someone would have gotten a great big lorry, parked it cross the front and closed it down. They would have kept at it and kept doing that and then things might have happened quickly. But in Britain, we are terribly well behaved and don’t do those kinds of things. Although there was a strike of bus companies in London, there are 8 of them. They are generally not giving pay rises, or at least giving very small ones and so the drivers went on strike. A lot of them turned up outside the bus garages and sat on the road to block them. So, are we seeing the beginnings of direct action in the unions? Interesting, but probably not a grass roots thing. I think it was led by union officers being brave and doing something different! So it’s not bottom or social media, but it someone being brave.

1. *Do you think there are unique things about the London based movements that you would not expect so much elsewhere in the UK?*

I haven’t travelled the world enough to know that London is unique but it certainly is special! London has very strong media and to look new or being different gets you points in media. Trade unions don’t look new or different, so we find it really hard to get media in London. We don’t do stunty type stuff, it’s not our style. And then once you have done it once, then you can’t do it again. Other parts of UK media are more warm towards the unions. There are lots of organizations centred here. What is different about Lewisham than other regions in London? However, the closure of the A&E there had managed to get 25-30,000 people on the streets in the community to demonstrate. There are 6 or 7 emergency departments under threat of closure, but none of them are getting that kind of coverage and people are looking at it and saying how did that happen, because the story is the same. In terms of troops and campaign resources it does not get better than London, it’s all here if you are willing to organize them!

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

Democracy to me means the equal distribution of political power, developing mechanisms for making legitimate decisions and in doing so not oppressing minorities who do not agree with the decision. This is a million miles away from having parliamentary elections. So you look at all the things that parliamentary democracy doesn’t deliver well, and the list is huge.

1. *Is/are the movements themselves democratic?*

We style ourselves as being the voice of Britain at work, as in representing the working people of the country and their families. We are an organization that is part of a bigger labour movement. This frustrates our contacts with new movements, but we have very well codified rules about membership and elections, rulebooks and General Secretaries are elected every 3, 4 or 5 years, the unions send their representatives to the Congress, we have our Congress every year. That’s our form or representative democracy and there are processes of accountability. But it can make us slow at making decisions. An organization might come and say will you support this action next weekend, and we have a process where certain meetings happen monthly and people travel up for it. If we want to make the decision to support them democratically, then we have to go to that meeting once a month and we cannot make spontaneous decisions. Doesn’t always suit organizations like [NAME] . We might want to support them, but we have 6 million people in organizations that we try to be accountable to and that’s slow. It is particularly important when we spend money. People pay their trade union dues and we want to spend that wisely. All that means is that we can be slow to respond. There are elements of say Occupy or [NAME] that would see trade unions, General Secretaries, etc. as all part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Well, firstly we have been around a very long time, and secondly if you are critical of the economic arrangements of society, then you will see us as a problem. We are one part of industry. We have people who work in banks! Similarly we have people who used to work in tobacco factories or now work in nuclear power plants, that means we are part of the system but are fighting for a more equal share of the resources. But if someone believes in the complete overthrow of society and the economy, then we have to be overthrown too. We work within the status quo, but try to implement a more equitable, progressive way of being. We helped organize and fund the European Social Forum in 2004, I wouldn’t have done it if Ken Livingston hadn’t been Mayor of London. They were positive about it and needed trade union legitimacy, so we got involved and worked on that for 18 months. We worked with loads of people, many of whom dislike trade unions. We worked together using consensus decision-making methodology and I think we all learnt something. But most of those links drifted away.

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK context of activism?*

We campaign for respect and dignity at work. Joining a union is one way that people can get dignity at work and get a voice. Another context for dignity being used is in anti-poverty campaigning, i.e. how much a family needs to earn to live with dignity. That links back to the London living wage. In a broader sense, as it’s styled in Spain, when people go on demonstrations in this country, people go expecting to behave and be treated with dignity by the police, etc. In the protest against the Vauxhall plant being shut down, the protesters were not treated with dignity they were blanked and ignored by the police, that would not happen anymore. We don’t have the same broad social way that they have in Spain, but they have 27% unemployment and 50% youth unemployment, so it’s also context.

1. *In the context of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

I think as conveyed by the government, Big Society is the most appalling idea. As a volunteer myself, I understand how important it is to society, helping others… but to make that a substitute for taking away safety nets and public services is just hokum. It is a very thin veil over a nasty idea. The trade union movement is one of the best examples of Big Society, not that Cameron would ever recognize it. Thousands of people volunteer to be trade union representatives in their workplaces which is often very bad for their career! So we don’t need lessons from him. There should be a commitment that from each according to their abilities and to each according to their needs, as I am a socialist. Not everyone is the trade union movement is, though. If you have the ability to give to the greater good, then you have the responsibility to do it. People do have individual responsibility, but we have social justice and drive change best if we organize collectively.

I can see the interest in 2011-12, but I see the social movement continuum as much longer and starting with the anti-globalization, anti-G8 movement in the recent past.

END

**LN 10, Charlie**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Yes, I would.

1. *When did your activism start?*

Yeah, I think I would say properly in 2002-3 at university during the Iraq war protest. I was involved with the [NAME] group, you know, going along to meeting and helping in a very small way to organize protests and then I was also writing a column in a London student newspaper. I was also writing articles here and there about the war. After uni I was involved with campaigning against the arms trade and I was the [NAME] Coordinator there because I enjoyed the activism and I wanted to keep going with it. I was lucky enough to be there while there were some really good activists there, during 2005/6/7 and met people who were involved in Climate Camp. That was a place where a lot of people got involved in direct action and civil disobedience and got training, got knowledge, networked. That’s where all the people who became [NAME] got to know each other, took part in actions and protests together and become friends. They also got a sense of the possible in regards to direct action, got confidence, found out how to organize actions and come to decisions through consensus decision-making – a whole range of different tools and ideas. This was over a period of 3-4 camps. The first one for me was at King’s North, then the one at the City of London, Blackheath.

1. *Would you consider yourself a part of the wider anti-austerity movement?*

Yeah, I think so in the sense that there are other groups that take action around different issues like disability, the cuts, the unions, and so on. So, loosely speaking we work with people like [NAMES] and other people like that.

1. *What are some of the slogans of [NAME] ?*

That is an interesting question. I suppose the obvious one would be “Pay Your Taxes”! I think rather than particular slogans we have particular messages, things like trying to promote a sense of the alternatives, to oppose the government’s lie that we are not all in this together, that there is an alternative, that the poorest shouldn’t pay for a crisis created by the banks and that we can pay for and afford our welfare state, and to stop tax avoidance.

1. *What would you say has been high point/peak of the movement?*

I feel like there have been a lot of high points both personally and as a group. It has really built my faith in direct action and campaigning. The was the low of the Comprehensive Spending Review at the end of 2010, when the cuts were announced, and then the excitement of the student movement and [NAME] , which was very energetic, bold, confrontational response. It felt really good that people cared and wanted to take action against the cuts. Lots of people around the country were mobilized and it created a national network. Also, the recent successes with Starbucks and Refuge from the [NAME] (a national day of action) were both really good.

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

There are things like the one where we went to a conference of tax accountants, government officials and pulled a stunt there. We pretended to be corporate or business people from Goldman Sachs and Vodafone who ordered in flowers and a bottle of champagne and filmed it. And then that kind of spoof film was really popular with people. Another group inspired by [NAME] called “The Intruders”, do similar things, at like black tie galas. These have been really popular and even picked up by the US media. I would call these stunty type actions.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

It does make communication much more easier and straight forward! I think it also binds the group network together. When you have done a call out for a National Day of Action, then groups from other parts of the country can list their actions alongside ours as Facebook events. And then you can start to see events around the country and you get a sense of momentum and impact and you can get a feeling about how big it is going to be. And people can post ideas, messages, information, pictures – you get a sense of fun, engagement, team spirit, like a club or a family. It is quite a nice feeling, and we now have 60,000 followers on Twitter and 50,000 likes/members on our Facebook page.

There are a few people who know what they are doing! We have guidelines and rules of engagement, as we are a very media driven campaign or series of campaigns we have to craft our message very seriously and be focused. Also, we are very much aware that it’s a tools that is used for the whole movement. So when people Tweet at us about their various actions – i.e. defending the right to protest or people who need money raised to pay protest fines, or things like that, we are happy to promote them. We know that social media is embedded in the movement.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

Definitely not political parties at all. The biggest interactions have been with unions, who have provided different sorts of resources, help and support. We have tried to support them back by staging events at their marches, events like Solidarity, and just generally supporting them. It was a really good thing that they were getting behind us as it was good to have established and respected organizations supporting us to that people could know that we were serious about our work. I think it's about trust! They promoted our actions to their networks, they helped us out with leaflets, they have given us cover on social media. All of that adds up! If the head of UNITE says that we are doing good work that means a lot as they are the biggest union in the country and are backing Labour. Voluntary organizations do come to us from time to time, and it’s a bit more complex due to NGO politics. I mean, a lot of people involved in [NAME] work themselves working in NGOs.

1. *Does that create a conflict of interest?*

The benefits are that you have network and knowledge and you know who to talk to. They are all highly networked and knowledgeable about the political scene in the UK. We all bring to it experience of having worked into these organizations. So not just grass roots experience, but professional experience in NGOs as well. So we know both sides of the fence! For us [NAME] is a way to get away from the world of NGOs as they can also go so far.

1. *Is that becoming more so in the current context as NGOs are feeling even more constrained about speaking out?*

Well, if you look at, for example, people’s critiques of how the [NAME] campaign worked out, and also now people talking about the “If” campaign against the G8, people are unhappy. For [NAME] , it was about using more radical means and having a more radical message, being more autonomous than NGOs can be. It came of a sense of activists in the UK wanting to become involved in political participation. In the old days, you joined a political party or a union, but neither of those engage in direct action in the ways that we might want. NGOs pay you to work, but you start at be bottom of the ladder and you do not have enough influence to make real change and make your politics felt in the way you want to. So what are you left with? You start your own thing!

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

I think fortunately not! I think the media tried to pick out people as they are wont to do, but it’s so much about the network and non-hierarchical organization, we have tried to make sure as many groups as possible from around the UK were involved and people from different backgrounds as well. We wanted it to be heterogeneous! There wasn’t a top down leadership imposing things and taking all the limelight. That’s been a conscious approach. And also, it is becoming more diverse. In the early days as it was developing alongside the student movement, we had a lot of students. But as we have gone along we have felt a need to widen participation. Firstly, with women, who have been at the forefront of the anti-cuts movement, that’s been super important. But also bringing in people affected by the cuts. We were trying to foster a sense that direct action was a tool that was for everybody to use. As much as it’s been about getting our message in to the public domain, it’s also been about making sure that civil disobedience and direct action are seen as legitimate tools that are available to lots more people that we previously thought of. There was a sense that direct action was perceived from the outside as something for “activists”, not for everyday people.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

So, for us putting ta[name] avoidance on the agenda and getting the government to take it seriously is our biggest achievement. The government has taken on a lot of our rhetoric and messaging. They are chairing the G8 this year and David Cameron was saying that they want to crack down on tax avoidance. Even though that is just rhetoric, you can’t ignore the fact that at least they are now saying it and taking it on. Also, getting people talking about it. We are building on the work of other long-standing tax justice campaigners and we feel that just getting the results we have through the methods we have has created a sense in the movement perhaps that things are possible, i.e. resistance to this government and austerity, a sense of change being something that can happen. We want people to take action where they live on issues that they care about in non-exclusive and non-exclusionary ways, and they have! Given the times it's easy to feel that we are a low ebb with protest, but to keep that sense of resistance ticking over has been an important service we have provided.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

Political policing played a part in Fortnum & Mason’s. It was unjustifiable and unfortunate what happened there. Like someone in the police hierarchy decided to arrest people, even though 150 people were told by police officers on the ground that they were behaving peacefully and were going to be let go. We were misled and it was quite shady behaviour. But basically we have crafted a place for ourselves in the way that we organize and behave, the police respect that and know that they cannot use more confrontational and aggressive tactics with us because we are aware of who they are, what they are and how they operate. We make sure that they are responsible towards the people who come to the actions. There was someone who was pepper sprayed once, as I was aware of. But generally speaking because we are quite knowledgeable about how to organize the actions, the police are stand offish, because they know that if they are being aggro they will get slammed in social media and the news. So they have to be careful.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

I think it means more than pulling a lever every five years for a choice of different coloured puppets. I think it means that there is a culture of democracy at work, with your friends. The idea of direct democracy is that it is everywhere, how society is organized and how you order and organize your life. I think our democracy is mis-functioning, but no one has the political will to take on democratic reforms. Unfortunately, the state has allowed a lot of private and corporate interests to take over a lot of the decisions about investment and the economy, especially in the City of London. So [NAME] is trying to lever out those interests and make public spaces public again and resist that kind of encroachment.

1. *Who would you demand democracy from?*

I think there have been times of greater democratic upheaval in this country, like in the 60s. But representative democracy is not really where I come from. I am not here to demand anything, that’s why we don’t petition MPs or things like that. The state as it’s constituted is a public space, i.e. the House of Commons has democratic aspects to it, but that’s not the be all and end all. So I think we need to raise public consciousness so that they feel that they are able to take power into their own hand where they live and that that in turn will change the culture and create opportunities for fundamental change. I mean, there are other ways of engaging with parliamentary democracy, but other groups are doing that very well. But there is a need for more radical grass roots participation and breaking that sense that everything begins and ends in Westminster. That’s where we come to it from, if that makes sense.

1. *What does social justice mean to you?*

Yeah, I mean that the main way it works for us is that we hear the message that there is an alternative to austerity, but at the same time we are all in this together. The thing that resonates with people and that we have been able to use is that through tax avoidance big business and corporations have been able to suspend the social contract that exists, that everyone should pay their fair share and that that’s important for democracy and a civilised life. They think that they don’t have to because they are the wealth creators and they have the power to decide when and where they will pay their taxes. For Starbucks it was almost a voluntary sense of taxation whereas ordinary people can’t afford rich accountants and lawyers to decide how much ta[name] they will pay. So using that as a very strong example of social injustice that needs to be remedied. The corporate influence and lobbying has really corrupted the democratic process. I mean, the amount of economic capital that they have accrued, partly through ta[name] avoidance, should be controlled by the public. But no political party is going to do that, so it’s up to the public. I think that’s what [NAME] and Occupy in their heyday were really about, having that conversation, because it was not being had anywhere else. People care about it, but there is no outlet for people to have that conversation.

1. *Does the notion of dignity resonate in the context of UK austerity?*

I think it does, because the government have this strange political determination to punish the poorest and weakest in society and think that they can get away with it. They have picked their battles very carefully with people who seemingly don’t have any fight left in them. They have reduced social safety nets and now cast around this language of scroungers and that the sense of entitlement is unjustified and that you should tighten your belts. We are saying these people are worthy citizens who have a right to dignity and welfare. Welfare is a universal right, good and service. They shouldn’t be demonised, but rather celebrated as people who can give a lot but aren’t being given the opportunity to do so because the government’s economic policies have led to structural unemployment and economic inequalities. It’s about giving people back a little bit of hope and power.

1. *What do you think of individual responsibility within the context of your work?*

The idea of the Big Society, and all of us being in it together are essentially not bad things, i.e. the sense of egalitarianism, social justice and responsibility, but unfortunately, that is being propagated by a narrow elite. So there has be a sense of engagement and participation. But the Westminster elite’s sense of participation is very narrow, which a ratified and pre-determined sense of engagement. We say that that’s now what we want, as that limits the space. We want to set up parallel spaces for people to have their own say. We want to set a frame through days of action, but them people bring their own ideas and opinions and then feel like they can take decisions by themselves.

1. *Have you been consulted by the government?*

No. The only time you are asked to participate is every five years and even then the manifesto that comes out is a sham! There has to be a different process of participation.

1. *Is the movement democratic?*

I think there is a share culture amongst direct activist groups of consensus decision making and non-hierarchical direct democracy, and that feels very empowering, especially when you are aware of power and gender dynamics that are unhealthy and unhelpful. Our culture is patriarchal and capitalist, and there are elements of greed in the market. Protecting yourself and being very conscious of those and not replicating them yourselves to create a different way of looking at decision making and participation.

1. *Is [NAME] a British movement or wider?*

There was a [NAME] and an off shoot in France, and they did come over and talk to us, but you know it’s hard enough to build a movement that engages the country let alone abroad! I think that the next stage is about movement building and embedding roots in different parts of the UK. I mean, it’s just the nature of things that London can be seen as the hub and have the biggest actions. But the reasons it’s been a success and has scared the powerful is because people have taken action all over the country. I think that is the challenge for social movements in the future, to see what institutionalised forms it takes, because neither [NAME] nor Occupy were designed to be that way.

1. *Do you think there are unique things about the London movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?*

Well, the people who kicked off [NAME] were all living in London and were friends. There is a community of direct activists here, and those who work in environmental, peace and social justice fields and who are friends. They work with other on various things. But these groups needs to widen and there needs to be debate, in my personal opinion, about how that network will challenge power more confrontationally rather than just be large scale manifestations on particular issues.

1. *Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones? Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?*

I think because I and a lot of my friends are between 20-30 year olds, there does seem to be a generation thing. They are highly educated, they feel highly passionate, a sense of despondency, a sense of betrayal, hopelessness - about the climate, about the war in Iraq and the complete failure on the part of the political leadership to in any way challenge the status quo and really make fundamental changes in people’s lives. That sense of anger, especially regarding unemployment, a notion of who is going to take care of our future? In the past there was a sense that our leaders would take care of our future, but now that has faded. But now, what are you left with? Just your own actions. So I think that is shared between the Arab Spring and the UK in the sense of we have to do it ourselves. I think the conditions there are far more severe, the day to day suffering and oppression, I mean, we don’t get shot at for protesting. But the generational feelings, there is definitely a cross over there.

END

**LN 11, Thomas**

1. *Do you consider yourself an activist?*

I do not think that it's any good complaining about people having power and doing things which you don't like. If you want to get that power back, it means communities being far more active in their work and it has to become part of your life and to have a civic element to it like Greek democracy. Of course that was founded on a slave state but I mean it was the concept that a citizen had a part of his life that was dedicated to the work of society. I think we have to build the time dimension more broadly so that everyone has a basic income so that they have the time to devote to their society. Like one day a week or a certain amount of hours set aside by an employer for the employee to dedicate to his civic duties. There is the IOPS job-complex idea that we are divided a lot. One of the research by Marmot is that when people feel they have no control over their lives it creates tension in society. His society was very influential in the development of the Big Society. In the Tory idea, creating the illusion that people are part of this Big Society is part of the intellectual fraudulence of the idea. I think both things have to go hand in hand – time and money. I mean there are people who have jobs, but who are chained to their desk and they can't go to the toilet.

IOPS talks about the class division by breaking it down to the 'coordinator class'. This comes from Michael Alpert and Noam Chomsky. This is about the people who organise work and the rest of the people are in menial positions. Alpert has a very good example of it in which the workers in an Argentinian factory organised and even within this group of illiterate workers there emerged a coordinator class. This coordinator class asked for more money because they take more decisions whereas the workers don't take decisions. So there are differentials of empowerment. So the balance job complex is that people do different types of jobs in your role. People say well, 'How would you do brain surgeons job?' it's not that people would do a brain surgeon's job, but that the brain surgeon would also do the cleaning. So this is about a massive skills sharing and there would much more fluidity of roles in organisations.

So as an activist, I am active in the sense that you don't get nothing for nothing. So if we want to reclaim power from the elites it means we're going to have to do more and that has to be built into our lives. So it's not just retirees and young unemployed you go on these demonstrations but also the main bulk of parents and wage earners. So the time issue has to be factored in. so that is the sense in which I am an activist. I am not an activist in that I go on a big protest march. I am also not an activist in speaking against, I am more about building up and that is my sense of activism.

1. How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?

I've always felt a sense of justice. I went to a public school, a famous one in this country. And I felt as though I was being groomed for colonial rule which is what public schools do and I didn't like it. So I started reading existentialism and Sartre and that was my first sense of politicization in the 1960s when I was 17 and that was when I went to university I joined an occupation. We were socialist of various hues. So we were political analytically, but not politically active in the sense of creating a movement. So that has been my stance and over the years I have been involved in horizontally organized cooperative movement. I started squatting straight out of university. I was in [NAME] then so my housing always had my cooperative element to it and I was in council housing for a while.

I was also in various kinds of art cooperatives and the musicians' collective. We took over a 10,000 square foot building for 7 years and ran art events run out of our own funds. We got no grants.

But I became frankly despairing of the way neoliberalism had de-politicized the nature of debate. Particularly I was very depressed when I look at my son. I was struck by how deeply unpolitical he was. He is black by the way, and he has been stopped by the police many times for the way he looks. But he is 31 and he is very de-politicized and is caught up with his family. He works as a lawyer so he is very aware of things, but he is not political. So for many years I was not active at all.

Then a couple of years ago I got involved in [NAME] . I got involved because I was involved in the arts and it was something which we saw the danger looming of the austerity cuts long before all these other groups. [[1]](#footnote-1) It was about how the arts have been totally co-opted by capitalism. It was also about how art has become about 'internships' which are a very uncritical use of other people's labour. So [NAME] helped me to get back into being more politically active. So I did a sit in at the National Gallery, the Tate Modern and we had these meetings. So John Jordan from the Clown Army came and gave us workshops. Then David Graeber came and gave us talks about debt. This was the beginning of the financial crisis, in 2009.

At [NAME] was based on a horizontal form of decision making and then it kind of died when the student demonstrations fizzled out. They also supported various other actions like the [NAME] demo. Then Occupy started up and I couldn't go the first week. But since I have joined the [NAME] working group.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

The Library and the main supporters, no. They don't consider themselves as such. But me personally, I see myself as part of it. I am against austerity as an economic solution. I am against the structure the way capitalism organises itself so I am not just against austerity but the wider structure.

We clearly had discussions in [NAME] 3 years ago where we saw the danger looming. So I knew all this was going to be happening. But it doesn't say much to be against cuts. The question is what do you do with the economy and at that level I am interested in change. I mean I would go on an anti-cuts march but I think the important thing is that this situation is politicizing people. Very generally I am part of movements that are for change.

My biggest and strongest allegiance is the [NAME] Movement. It is a bold and positive movement and has enormous credibility both intellectually and on the ground. Secondarily, with Occupy, I believe in it. But sadly many in Occupy are not aware of the Commons. Even when I speak to people who are educated they think I am talking about the 'commune' and not the 'commons'.

As for the Friern Library, it was closed by the Council and the Save Friern Barnet Library started by creating pop-up libraries but the Council was not listening. Then one of the people in that group got in touch with people from Occupy and squatters. Squatters are now more constrained they can't go into just any old building, they have to go to public buildings. So he called on the squatters from Occupy to come in and this element of Occupy went and they occupied the building.

But the decision they were protesting was that the Council was trying to tell people what their needs were and they were not listening to the people and what they wanted. So once the building was opened, a lot of books were donated and they began running it again as a library. And then what happened was that one person from the Library group put in an application under the Localism Act to preserve the building. And an interesting court case started. Whereas in St Paul's Occupy lost because the council could say that Occupy's presence in the street affected the businesses locally, in the case of the [NAME], it was the case that they were trying to keep what had already been. It wasn't like they were trying to use the roads for a different purpose than it was designed for. They were using the Library for what it had been designed for. So it was very hard for the council to argue that this occupation was dangerous to the community.

So under the Human Rights Act people have a right to protest and what the judge has to do is to balance the rights of the community against people's right to protest. And in this case could see was that the protest wasn't disrupting people's lives. So what her ruling was that in this case was yes, the Council have a right to regain control of the building but they have to negotiate with the protestors. The Council agreed that they would so they gave the group a license and then a 2-year lease.

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

It was a broad alliance of people who wanted to protect the building and people who wanted to protect the library. When we won the court case and got the keys, it was a defeat for some people who said that we were betraying the library unions and were creating something along the lines of the Big Society. So some saw it as a defeat and others saw it as a victory. To me it was a partial victory because at least we had the building and it was a basis from which to fight back. I felt it was a point in the struggle.

But what are high points? It's things that grab media attention and it's because people see things in a mainstream media narrative. If you ask me what is a high point then it hasn't happened yet, because we don’t have a solid structure to keep the library going. Or if the austerity package was voted out – that would be a high point!

[Are those people who were disappointed with how the [NAME] has developed after the court case still engaging with the process?]

Very interesting that you should ask that because while I am engaging, and remember I saw it as a partial victory, I remain one of the few Occupiers who are still involved. There was a decision by the Occupiers to stand back and to let the [NAME] run itself. We felt we had opened it up and had given the opportunity to the community to make the point with the council. In that sense Occupy's job was done in that they had opened up the space to the community. And that was a victory. It was a victory for Occupy because we went to a community where we don't live and we created strong relationships and the local people were very grateful to us at one point and we had facilitated the community to achieve what they wanted. But now they, the Library team, are taking down all the history of Occupy and they refused to show the film about Occupy – the Polite Revolution. So Occupy is no longer involved, I am still involved but because I see it as a putative commons. So the decision was to stand back and let the community own it. But I quickly saw that it might collapse and I have remained in it as an individual to help support them.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

With Occupy the position is that all mainstream political parties are so corrupted by business that there isn't a lot of point to engage with them. You have to be very, very careful with them. This talk of having an Occupy mayoral candidate for London, I think that Occupy is very wary of that partly because Occupy is such a broad coalition of people.

Regarding relations with NGOs, I can't say how exasperated I am with them. The fact that we had all these people who are homeless and were drug addicts and alcoholics coming and disrupting a political protest and none of the homeless NGOs came to deal with that. None of those charities showed any constructive help whatsoever. And they should've done, it was a divine opportunity for them to develop relationships with those people and to get them off the streets and off the drugs. It was a kind of frontline rehabilitation centre for a lot of people who couldn't organise their own lives. I think that was an extraordinary failure for the NGOs and it was a political decision.

And with the mainstream media, there was so much misreporting.

Regarding the Library because it wants to put pressure on all the political parties to commit to save the Library. They are different in that sense in engaging.

But the Occupy critique is so extreme that there is no language in the mainstream political arena that allows such a position to exist. But the Library is a clear case where people can understand it more. So there are 2 Labour councillors from Barnet who attend our meetings regularly.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

I think there has to be a lot of caution. A lot of disputes can get a lot more vituperative because they start online rather than if they were face to face. People lose respect for each other online. Although we had a safe spaces online policy, many abuses occurred. So I think the role of social media has to be limited to certain things like information carrying. It has to be really well organized because it can get out of control. A lot of people left Occupy because of the level of insults they received in online forums. It's actually insulting to get things said about you and assumptions made about your character and your abilities. It destroyed a friendship I had in Occupy. And actually people exaggerate the level of social media use because not everyone in Occupy had access to a laptop and it's not like England is a fifth world country, but I think it was different from Egypt. I don’t know if they had the problem we did with a lot of dispossessed people in the square. These people didn't have any ability to keep up with things and the meetings. I think there is enormous potential for social media but it can also be very divisive. Its only good for dealing with groups that are well coordinated and are already agreeing with each other.

It's so important how groups manage online communication.

Occupy was organised by phones and maybe a Facebook page. Some people said it was set up by NGO type people and then they left because they thought it would be a disaster. It was started by activists, but once it started in grew spontaneously.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

Occupy London is pretty dissolved at the moment. People are getting into other protests. We are facilitating other people's actions and not doing our own. Partly because our main form of action is occupation and because of the legal ruling that pushed us out of St Pauls. But it's also partly because of the rehabilitation role we had come to play and unless we can solve that situation we wouldn't want to get involved in an occupation. So we only do temporary pop up occupations. So the question is how to move forward and we are considering new techniques of protest.

We had a huge issue with safe spaces. We recently had a situation where someone from Occupy was violent on another person and it completely split the community. Some wanted to protect the person and others wanted to ban him. He was banned from Occupy. And this is a big problem for Occupy of how do you implement a safe space.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

London went through a very rough experience in that the occupation went on for a very long time. Obviously it has had huge impact on politics and some things are said that weren't before. We did the Putney Debates in November 2012. There is a sense that politicians have to acknowledge what we were saying about corruption and the failure of the political system and how public money was supporting the banks.

But there are people out there who didn't even know we e[name] isted. My son's wife didn't even know about Occupy. Outside the activist bubble there are people who are disconnected this is the de-politicization which Noam Chomsky writes about which is so effective. And I think that Occupy has created a new interesting set of relationships between academics themselves and also academics and social movements and also between social movements and broadcasters, such as Paul Mason, David Graeber. So I think a new set of relationships have evolved out of Occupy. And I think it has also created a strong comradeship where people still support each other. So lots of things are going on but is that still Occupy because eh Occupy name isn't being used anymore.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

That is a huge problem. It caused tensions in that some hogged media attention. We had a policy that everyone could talk about Occupy. I think that people with strong skills led to the emergence of a coordinator class in Occupy. No leaders were appointed and we never got a leader. But people want leaders from the outside. We made it clear that we spoke as an individual who supported Occupy and not as a representative of Occupy. Unless we were reading an official statement.

1. *Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been* specific gender dynamics in the movement

It wasn't gender. But in the camp itself being female was more vulnerable than being male. I don't think that was sufficiently attended to and women faced a harsher situation with the lack of facilities. It was also an age thing. Therefore it was largely young men who camped. Partly because they were unemployed and partly because they could withstand the rigours of camping outside for so long. I don't think women were less able to speak because there were some very strong women speakers. And women were not regarded as less capable. But I don't think we created a safe enough space for women.

Occupy London was very white, male, heterosexual contingent. That was the predominant thing. I don't think by design but that is how it happened. So there weren't many people from other ethnic backgrounds there were very few Afro-Caribbean people. Maybe one or two Asians so in essence it was a very particular lot. So it still looked like a 99% but the people who came were very white. I had a black female friend who came and couldn't see how to join it. She didn't feel empowered enough to join and one of the problems was that it didn't give people enough links with how to engage. It created some e[name] cluding situation but that was never the intent. I think much more work needs to be done about that.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

Not in this country not. In the US yes, it was a factor.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

Noam Chomsky talked about the divide and rule aspects of neoliberalism. UKIP emerged out of BNP and it is a more liberal re-branding of it. The rise of the right in Europe is horrendous. In Germany the Occupy was attacked by the right. In England we never had the right attack us, but in Germany it was full on with guns and violence.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

Democracy in Athens was born in an unequal society. It was an elite having a conversation amongst themselves. It cannot work with representative democracy when the representatives get captured by financial interests. It doesn’t stay democratic very long. The best things in life are family, love and having meals and friends, this is the stuff of life. I mean who wants to think about how sewers or lighting should be sorted out. But if you leave those decisions to other people, you will get into corrupt states.

The commons idea is based on the environment. In my thinking any system of democracy has to start with respect for the environment otherwise you are building on sand. So what are the alternatives to representative democracy? We are talking about a much more participatory democracy.

1. *Who do you demand democracy from?*

You don’t demand it, you do it. There are a number of possible structures so you organize a patchwork around each resource so people would occupy several commons and they would be involved in managing those resources and there would be a group to sort out the conflicts between commons. It's about trying to identify the benefit for all and doing so through sensitive coordination, not like the predatory nature of capitalism. It is all done through a reasonable discussion, all these things are possible. Not easily of course. But bigger things like public transport, that would be done by the government. But they wouldn’t be governing but they would become part of the commons. Right now its state, private and commons but in the commons everything would become the commons. What we want is groups who talk to each. The ideal commons is a 150 people. It's all based on nested councils and a representative from each council would go to the ne[name] t level and discuss it. Then you would have a council at the top. When a decision is made at the top then everyone at the bottom will have to agree. That is what I think is democratic.

Another aspect of democracy is how we live and work. It's not just about voting. The workplace should be more horizontally run.

1. *Is the movement democratic?*

What happened with the [NAME] was that we were sitting equally. Then we had to elect directors who could negotiate with the council. The directors are now acting as if they want to shut everyone else up. So it's becoming an oligarchy and we are now fighting this. The acting chair has accused me of bringing the French Revolution and the guillotine. That is the level of the language being used! They are so paranoid of losing control.

People have to learn how to work horizontally. I learned in Occupy and [NAME] . Occupy in particular was so well organized and it is very labour intensive, but people don’t know how to do it. We want to make sure we give a voice to everybody – like break out groups – 4 to 2 to 1? We are still e[name] perimenting.

The London Solidarity network was created by Occupy and IOPS [international organisations for a participatory society]

1. *Is social justice a meaningful concept in the UK?*

In Occupy very, very much so. We were the only social movement that did not reject the homeless. We respected them and gave them a place. We tried to listen to them. It didn’t work out because we didn’t have the ability to provide that level of care. We managed to help 1 or 2 but there was so much need. These people owe their life to Occupy.

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing*?

This was most apparent in the [NAME] . I mean, why does a Conservative voter in a very conservative borough [Barnet] feel affronted when the local council tells them what is going to happen. They felt that their ability to choose was taken away.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

This is the example of the Tories co-opting language. It is ironic that the banks irresponsibility squandered billions are in no position to talk to anyone about responsibility. To label it as if we are irresponsible as a people is absurd! Having said that, yes we all need to be socially responsible but it's not our lack of responsibility that caused the financial crisis.

Back in the 19th century they had a better idea about social responsibility. If you had money, then you re-invested it physically into your community, you built a school or a hospital. Rich people now only think to rack up more and more money. THAT is where the responsibility needs to start from [emphasis in original]. Wealthy people need to understand that their wealth comes from others in society, they didn’t magically build it. They only got wealthy because other people cooperated. One of the things that e[name] ists in the Commons movement is “I and I is We; You are I” and that is the notion of social responsibility that I support. Capitalism invented the individualism.

The wealthy people are looking at it from the opposite end of the binocular. What they see is an atomized collection of individuals in society. And so you are responsible for yourself. I would turn that around and say that people who are wealthy bear more responsibility. I wouldn’t frame it around individual responsibility. I would say WE exist and so we have responsibility towards each other because I and I don’t exist without WE. I have come to realize that everyone is we and that is why I feel very friendly toward them.

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

No, unfortunately I don't.

1. *Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones? Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?*

Yes, I keep an eye on what’s happening in Greece and Spain and Italy as a point of comparison. Mexico really interests me a lot. Next week I will go to a conference on the commons where there will be people from every corner of the globe. I think the commons will become more important in the ne[name] t few years. Frankly I think it will be the only way to get out of this crisis. The thing about the commons is that it has a theoretical and practical element. One of the key ideas of the commons is reciprocity and it's not built on money. I may give you a chicken but I don’t want a chicken back. You may give me a basket of avocados.

Yes, we see a connection. And a few people from Occupy [e.g., NAME] went to the World Social Forum in Tunisia. People are speaking similar sorts of languages. After all what it's about is taking power from elites and oligarchies and despotic rulers. So the underlying narrative is the same. But similar with the Commons, every commons is individual. Every situation is particular, their problems might be entirely different form our problems and I don’t know enough about it to say. I think the neoliberal argument from Chomsky fits in this country [UK], but it may not fit in Tunisia and Egypt. They have different problems with sectarianism and tribal loyalties and religious schisms. So we can say, yes, our concerns may be similar but our situations are very different.

1. *Do you think there unique things about the London movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?*

What was unique about Occupy London was that there was a level of deprived people who attached themselves to the movement for their own reasons. This was such a strong feature of London. I think we had some really strong structures in place and our meetings were really well organized. A lot of care went into how we did things.

END

**LN 12, Sophie.**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Yes I have been an activist for 37 years. I have lived her for 40 years and I became involved in activism in 1975. And that was very local stuff, on my street. Then I got involved in the [NAME] and environmental, and transport. Then I spent about seventeen – eighteen years deeply involved in policy and community consultations and doing lots of other things at the same time. And at the same time I had a full time job. I used to be a senior official in the Treasury working on public expenditure control. And my specialization is organizational dynamics and the development of large systems. So I’ve had in parallel a professional occupation, which has been deeply investigating for decades what’s wrong in the way in which we run the corporate world. At the same time I have been a street, community activist. To me they are completely interlinked and that is why I have produced my theory because in fact I see the corporate world, and I include the voluntary sector in that, which is now absorbed into the corporate world as blind. They are blind to the dynamics. What I am particularly interested in is the organizational dynamics of what I call “below the radar” which is what your research is about.

[NAME] Model. Hybrid systems in the shared social eco-system. The political sector, the voluntary sector and the religious faith sector (in this country – the UK) are all mixed into this relationship between the “below the radar” activism with the public bureaucracy. The politics, voluntary sector and the religious sector are highly mixed into this (the bureaucracy – the blue section) and this is highly dysfunctional. This split between the vertical/hierarchical and the horizontal/peer is actually present in each of the voluntary sector, religion and political sector. They have each got this dynamic in them. So if you take the political sector (she is referring to political parties) and religion, they are basically hierarchical and authoritarian structures even in a democracy. But they also have thousands of people who voluntarily associate with each other in those things and the tension and the dysfunction is the same. The voluntary sector used to be like that. But I would say that 95% of it is now corporate. The thing that I call ‘voluntary sector’ and the distinction that I make is that if you are employing somebody, then you are in the corporate sector. Because you have to apply employment law and all kinds of things if you are paying people. It’s a completely different ball game and that is not what is present in the ‘below the radar’ world. That is a major distinction that I make in some of my tables.

So by blindness I mean that the ‘external/public agencies’ as well as the political/voluntary/faith sectors are totally blind to what is going on in the ‘below the radar’.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

Yes, in fact this is what it’s all about. That they (the blue and the green) are locked into a relationship with each other and this (the white bo[name] es between the blue and green zones) is what is happening between them. And because of the blindness, it is very dysfunctional. The voluntary sector does not support what the ‘below the radar’ are doing because they don’t understand the organizational dynamics. They constantly produce alleged ‘support systems’, which are actually serving the kinds of organizations they are themselves and not what is going on here.

When you talk about ‘scaling up’ you are using corporate language. Immediately you are drifting away from the organizational dynamics of the ‘below the radar’. The voluntary sector has all the wrong models. The blindness is organizational, not ideological or political or power distribution. I am an organizational specialist and I care about effective action and there is a huge amount of waste of public money, public effort, and human effort because of the blindness.

This theory has come about after 40 years of action. Because I am an analytical person, I have been bashing my head and thinking “why did this just happen?” so I have basically spent the past 30 years developing my methods. So all of my methods now are applying my theory. But it's not because I have a theory and I am applying it, but it has been a complete interactive process. The latest metaphor I have is of the Higgs Boson. The way in which the Higgs Boson field, in which particles get into a field things happen which they are investigating. They don’t know quite how it happens and why it happens, but things which do not have matter begin to have matter. And I have used that metaphor to e[name] plain what happens here [she points to the white space between the blue and green fields]. If you think of the interactions of the jostling particles, which are individuals in a neighbourhood, sometimes they begin to have traction with each other and they acquire matter. And I call the organizational form ‘the visible matter’ which comes out of the interaction of human psychological, social dynamics. Which is what I am concerned about here [points to the white space between the blue and the green]. It is the failure to get the sensitivity of all this [white space] is what makes so much policy a failure.

For example, just think about the government’s Big Society policy which is still there even if it's not called Big Society. The whole push, wrongly, of assuming that this thing that they like called ‘community’ can take on the delivery of public services is crazy, because it's not relevant to this [points to the green area representing the ‘below the radar’] and there is no way they can understand this because they haven’t understood the distinction. The only way you can do the delivery of public services is if you operate like that [points to the blue section].

There are processes of an organizational matter can emerge from the green space and go into the white space and eventually become a voluntary sector organization or a business. Like our [NAME], we have been working for years, but we don’t have a recognizable organizational form, but we have been working on it for years. We are a group of individual human beings in this [the green space] world.

So there are things that have emerged from the green space that can run public services, but it’s a tiny minority.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

We are the Big Society in the way they think they want it. But we are NOT about delivering public services. The thing that has gone wrong in the past hundred years, but of course it's been developing for centuries, but particularly since the second World War, is that the 7 billion people living on the planet are now serving the needs of the professional/technical world instead of the other way around. The professional/technical world has evolved out of human need for various things. When you look at the history of all professions, all specializations, they are there to help humanity. But the fact is that it's now turned on its head.

And this is what I want to say about how what we are doing is similar to what is happening elsewhere. During the Egypt eruption, I haven’t watched television for a long time. I watch it on the computer. So during the night I was watching little YouTube clips of the Cairo uprising and I knew instantly that they were the same as us. I knew from what they were saying, I knew empathetically. I wept because I felt, “my God, there it is in Cairo. The thing is unfolding”. And I saw what they were describing of how for 10 years or more they had been connecting with each other, which is what we do. Which is what this is [the green space]. And to me, this is a garden metaphor as well. If you are a gardener, you see how the roots of plants, weeds, grow down into the soil, they feel their way through, blindly really, but just finding the right place to go and sometimes they link with others and sometimes they won’t. And that is what is happening here [the green space] and that is what is happening in Cairo. So when the eruption happened, they had the digital media to support them and they were drawing on all those things. And this is e[name] actly what we have here [the green space].

The difference between us is that they are fighting a military / corporate dictatorship and we are fighting a professional /technical/financial corporate world.

So when Occupy started I thought, “Thank God, why have we not actually had demonstrations in the City of London non-stop since 2008. Because it's quite obvious that it’s a scandal. “ and I thought why is this not happening. And If I had been 40 years younger I might have done, because I had been involved in political activism (small ‘p’) before I got involved in this neighbourhood stuff. I took a leading role in the 1968 student revolution in [NAME]. So my roots of fighting against stupid, corporate decisions are quite long and started when I was 16. I joined the civil service at that time. Three years into my employment, I thought, why are we doing this? Giving court judgments against people to pay money they couldn’t afford, then locking them up and then they lost their furniture and they lost their houses. They ended up in a mess and we put them in prison for debt. And I thought to myself, this is crazy. Why is this happening? When I raise these questions, nobody understood my question and nobody had an answer. So I got myself into university on this quest to understand why the world was upside down and I have been on this quest ever since.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

To me, what has been happening is an inevitable degradation of democracy and alienation and cynicism, which is very serious for the Western democracies because the system in which we are operating now will never enable us to have real democracy. What I mean by ‘real democracy’ is that representative democracy on its own is clearly dead. I don’t mean dead in real life, but it’s a dead thing. And that is why we’re in a mess. But that is not the only thing why we’re in a mess. There are other things. For instance in this country, local party politics is death to democracy because it's like being in the Soviet Union. You don’t have a voice; you are not recognized as somebody who has a contribution to make to any thinking unless you are a member of the party in power. And it doesn’t matter which party, Conservative, Labour or LibDem. We’ve had all in this area and because I studied a little bit of Soviet politics when I was at university and I have always taken interest in dynamics. Because it's all about organizational dynamics which is how people relate to each other and how they organize themselves. So to me, what I am talking about is a way of fighting back against the dead hand of the local party system. And this deputation that we had in the last 3 weeks, I am sick to the stomach of having to engage all over again with the local bureaucracy and the local party system and the dysfunction between them. And all of these hundreds of thousands of people are e[name] cited about party politics and ideology and they think that they are going to have an effect, but of course what they are doing is tangling with the authoritarian politics inside the party system.

1. *Who do you demand democracy from?*

Self-responsibility. But it’s not the only thi.ng. But this [she points to the blue section] has infantilized us. It has infantilized 7 billion people and told them you are here to serve us, to buy our good, to do what we tell you, to vote for us every 4 years. You know it’s infantilizing. The commercial consumer world is as bad as the party system.

1. *What are democratic practices?*

In the conventional language I am talking about participative processes being integrated into the representative processes. But personally I think that quite a lot of people have lost the plot by thinking that they have to get everybody involved in making difficult financial decisions. What I think is that when I am voting, I am voting people in who when the crunch comes and when there is a decision to be made about allocating resources, they will make it. And what I am concerned about is that the lot that have to make the really difficult decisions will have good quality information to help them make that decision. You can scale up what I am saying to the national, regional and even European level. These are different scales because I have been involved in organizations at the national level, which are doing the same thing, but on special topics.

1. *Is your group democratic?*

Its revolutionary. It’s a revolutionary process, pioneering, and thinking of different ways of imagining of people being engaged that is what it is for. That is the only reason that I do this now. The whole pioneering of new ways of process building, of linking in fact just two days ago, we just constituted [NAME] after 7 years of working. Most people are driven by this lot [she points to the blue sphere] to constitute within months, weeks of setting up. Wrong! It needs to find its matter; it needs to find its form. You need to nurture connections to allow the right kind of people to link together, which are going to be able to work together well. And who will have an organizational form that emerges from their experience. That takes time, which these people [in the blue sphere] rarely allow. I will send you a copy of our constitution and that will give you an idea about our fumbling at the moment of what our organizational form is to be.

1. *How many people are involved in [NAME]?*

It depends on what level. At the visible organizational level, there are 5. This was born on Tuesday. It has taken me 7 years to find 4 other people who are sufficiently committed to running this organizationally entity. Because that is what this is about, commitment. But I have also got a 2500 mailing list that has been growing for 10 years and they are also part of our form. We are also moving towards having a Friends of [NAME] and also a volunteer hub, where we can tap into.

And that is another thing; this lot [the blue sphere] talks about ‘harnessing’. What is harness? It is a straight-jacket! [Here she stands up and grabs me from behind to demonstrate what harnessing means!!!] Harnessing means you are going to do what I tell you to do!! What I talk about is ‘tap into’. So what we do is find organizational forms, which enable the energy, which is in here [points to the green space] and bubbling non-stop to be made available in a way in which this lot [the blue space] can understand it.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

First of all the concrete things. The bureaucracy would hate how I am describing this. But we stopped the insane demolition of a 7-acre site across the road [from NAME station]. Second, we brought the [NAME] waiting room [where we are holding the interview] back into life so that it transformed the discussion. So it’s about quality information and facilitating processes in the neighbourhood, which will help more and more people to feel engaged. Third, there is the multi-story car park. Well, there is an interesting story. In 2006, when we were starting to campaign and to bring attention to the site across the road and its potential, there was a squat of young artists 2 – 3 streets from here. They, the squatters, got on my mailing list and it was growing, and at that time it was 4- 5 years old and there were about 800 – 900 people on it. There was an e[name] change between them and me. They told me that they were being pushed out of where they were squatting and if I knew of any available spaces. And I told them about this space that we were trying to publicize about the different and alternative kinds of uses. So they went and got a space there in a warehouse. They sat there and now they are an internationally known, leading lights of the art world called the [NAME] gallery. There was huge article about them in the Evening Standard yesterday (14 May 2013). Since 2008 they have attracted 500,000 people to [NAME] in the summer months because of the work they have done at the top of the multi-story car park. And I view this as one of our achievements. Nobody would’ve known of that space, apart from people who had very detailed knowledge and who could also influence the [NAME] areas development action plan.

The council bureaucrats can’t work with us conceptually. There are tiny little exceptions, but basically their stance is “we control it, we are responsible for it, we’ll tell you what we’re doing and we might or might not adjust it. But their grasp of what this is about [points to the green space], which is about joint working conceptually, which is crucial to participative democracy, is entirely blank. Consultations are only about ‘what do you think about what we are saying”. What I am talking about is different. Of course consultations are important, but this [the green space] is about a continuing prior process and it's about the quality of the information that is created for people who take important decisions. And now this {the green space} is excluded from that. What we have now, the project is our battle now with regards to the development of the areas adjacent to the train station. We meet with them every 6 – 8 weeks and they refuse to tell us about their plans with Network Rail. I wish that a year ago I had started applying for freedom of information month by month, but I didn’t realize that we were going to get into this tangle. And what happened was that on a midnight, on a Tuesday the council sends out an automated notification of papers being submitted to Cabinet. And they actually talk about [NAME] as ‘being a partner’. But they didn’t even have the courtesy to tell us that this was going to come into the public domain. That is their lack of grasp of what working with other people means!! Because they only have one box to put us in, “public” because we are not in a contractual relationship with them and we are not in the voluntary sector.

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

Dignity has a meaning to us, because they [referring to the local politicians and bureaucrats] belittle us, they marginalize us, they patronize us, they treat us as infants even people who are as professional or even more professional than they are. So what is it like for people who are not in the professional technical classes trying to do this for themselves, God only knows? But I know it is dreadful. You are a no person unless you are member of the party. And frankly, I was a member of a party until 2 years ago and you can also be a no-person inside the party.

1. *Is social justice a meaningful concept?*

No, it will achieve that. No it’s a totally different vision of how human beings will relate to each other and other species for the survival of a habitable planet. I have been involved in this kind of stuff, consciously, since 1984 when I fell into a global network of people who were very dissatisfied with the way that the world was run. I was working in the [NAME] at that time and 2 years later I left. Because what was happening to me conceptually and in value terms was incompatible to remaining in the bureaucracy. I was ill, I had to leave. But I brought with me everything that I had worked on for the 30 years prior in my understanding of how the world worked and how I wanted to improve it. And it started when I was working as a clerk in a county court and was ruining people’s lives. And I couldn’t understand it then of why we were doing what we were doing. But I understand it a lot better now. And that is where I differ from the anti-cuts campaigners, because they see conspiracies everywhere and it’s all ideological and I am not saying that what I am talking about is not ideological; of course I have my own ideology. But it’s not what I am driven by. What I am driven by is what works. And I think that a lot of what is going wrong is that people are trapped by their ideological glasses, which means that they miss the obvious. I mean our political system in this country is dead. You just have 3 political parties constantly fighting for their position. Right down to the bottom level and its death to intelligent consideration.

But in the 7 billion society globally that we have, we probably have all the intelligence and understanding of all the issues to make this planet a really good home for us and all the creatures to make it a good home and to do this humanely otherwise it will happen inhumanely.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

Yes, globally, I am part of wider global network since 1984 I have been involved in the Business Network which I stumbled into it in 1984 in London which was very rare at the time. There were 3 – 400 people who had been doing, for the past 20 years their own work on the ecology, the environment, spiritual values, business, you name it, there was a whole set of people, including wacky people, but there was also a lot of truth in it. And that was where I came across new scene, new physics. So all this was happening in the 1980s and I became involved in small global networks which were linking the conceptual models people have in their heads, which come from science, with the ways in which we organize ourselves right across the field in industry, economics, politics, etc. That was called the Business Network in London and it was a conduit for activist coming through London and it linked people doing their own thing. There were scientists, academics, activists, business people, etc. It has already been happening for 30 years after the war. There were already people working on what was wrong with the financial monetary system at that time when I got involved. The New Economics Foundation, that was founded in 1984 and I was one of the first members and I have been an active member ever since. So everything I think has been informed by everything that I have been involved through these global networks over the past 30 years – politics, economics, spiritual values. I have to say, there are people around with flaky ideas, but it’s not all flaky. As we can see now happening in the world today, are the widespread outgrowths of what was happening in the 1980s.

1. *Do you think there are unique things about the London movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?*

Totally. It is a different country. Mainly demographically, obviously, and this has changed all kinds of things. Certainly people growing up in London will have a very different view of the world than people growing up in provincial places. I myself come from a provincial place. I was 23 when I first came to London and I am from the north east of England and where I grew up; we had very little experience of people who had grown up in any other parts of the world. So there are major differences and it's one thing that worries me. So I observe what happened in Yugoslavia, when it broke up and in Bosnia in particular. So what you had there were the provincial areas got power at this level (points to the green level) and then they trashed Sarajevo. And London is in the position of Sarajevo and is totally disconnected from what is happening all around it.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

Of course. The extremism and the retreats into simple solutions is the default position at times of terror *and* that is what we are moving into. And some people are already in it because of personal, political, demographic reasons. It isn’t of course politics, it's also religion and there is a rise of fundamentalist religion. But of course in Islam the two things have gotten mixed up. I am always very involved in the multi-faith world for the 30 odd years because I see it as a crucial part of all of this (she points to the green and white spaces). There are hundreds of millions of people whose connection to the wider world is through their religious association. And in London there is a completely different thing happening now because there has been an upsurge of religion and there is now competition over land. The people who have the money to buy the land and buildings are not indigenous community groups but are groups from abroad and this can be a real flashpoint here. I have had battles in my own street with a Nigerian church where I was accused of being the leader of a white racist group because we opposed their planning application for turning a site that was totally inappropriate, into a Nigerian Church. So I have first-hand experience of clashes at this level [she points to the green level], which are not visible to the outside world unless you are deeply involved in it. The local and national politicians are deeply scared so they are burying their heads in the sand.

1. *What is your slogan?*

Yes, it is “One Step Ahead of the Authorities” and that is the way that you win. Otherwise, you are trailing behind them and responding to them.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

I use social media extensively. I also have an email list. One of my successes in this is my ability to process information so I am plugged in into a lot of things. So I spot things that are of interest to residents, which they may not have seen. So I get quality information and I know how to process it, how to package it and to put it into small digestible chunks and I then send it out over email. I then put all of those emails onto a blog, which are all accessible, and that is all now linked to Facebook and Twitter.

It has made a huge amount of extra work. But there is impact. For instance, when I was campaigning 30 years ago against the multi-storey car park over there and I led the public enquiry into the car park, which was a dreadful idea. And we proved it. And now the council wants to demolish it. But now we are opposing it because we want to turn it into a cultural centre to save global carbon emissions!!

I remember sitting up into the middle of the night, addressing envelopes and sending them out by post. And now I have to send 11 emails to cover 2500 and it takes me about 40 minutes.

1. *Do you do this by yourself?*

Well, yes and now. I have now got somebody who helps me fulltime, but he needs to find a job because he has no income left. But I have to go on with hope and faith and believe that if I stick to my vision, and I do what I can, and if I stick to integrity.

Did you ask me the question about ‘integrity’ before?

Interviewer: *No, I asked about dignity.*

Well, ‘integrity’ is very important and I believe I have been so successful because of my integrity and other people experience my integrity. They know that when I put things out that I have worked really hard to check the facts and give people what they need to check for themselves. Because it is about empowering other people and not spoon-feeding them. So I give them all the links and all this is made much easier by the new digital world. So I am exploiting the new media, but I am a technophobe. I am happy as long as it works, but I am unhappy when I have to learn new processes. I find it difficult at the age I am. I find it difficult, but I find that it’s obvious that it has enhanced our impact. It’s a bit of a love hate relationship.

At 5 pm today I have a meeting with a guy that I have worked with since 2006 on our website. We have 5 websites, 3 FB pages, twitter and 2 blogs. And I do all of those with [NAME] . He does the real tough technical stuff in the back and I do everything else and I have only met him 10 times since we started working together. And he is the son of the guy who owns the site across the road. We need to find someone who will manage our website fulltime. But we also have young boys, aged 14 joining us, as part of a reverse mentoring scheme where 14 year olds who are very familiar with social media come and see how organizations are using it. And giving their expertise to us. We’ll see to what extent they have any capacity to help us.

We have now levered in £11 million for the railway area redevelopment, and £2 to restore the historic buildings in the town centre. I would not be in favour of public money being spent on that if there wasn’t a serious, good public benefits for the wider population. So what I am doing is developing a serious heritage learning programme which will take root because it is from here {green space}, but if it was from here {the blue space) it will not take root. So 2-3 years after the projects, sponsored by the bureaucratic angle are over, you cannot find a trace. So this will take root. So I am developing personal working relationships with every level of the educational system from primary to postgraduate that are all around here. And after 5 years of the [NAME] Initiative, we will have new curricular, educational material for all these institutions will be given and we can keep it up to date because it will be digitized. And we will have an organizational form, which will take responsibility for that. We are working with a primary school to develop a local history book about [NAME] for 9 year olds. That will be up and running in September, and it is done with no public money. I work entirely voluntarily. I will NOT put myself in hock to this lot. That isn’t to say we don’t get money. We got £800 to do a 3-day exhibition here [the waiting station] about the town centre.

Another thing is [NAME] will develop an A level course in Geography about the regeneration of [NAME] Town Centre. We are talking to South London Art Gallery about partnering with about their informal work using art. And we are talking to [NAME] of how to engage their students in the restoration work. I work through anything if it will forward my work.

Without changing the conceptual models of how people think about the way the world works, we will go on reinventing the failed wheel. I think we are at the beginning of a new ENLIGHTENMENT. And I seriously mean that. One major thing that is happening, which happened at the beginning of the last enlightenment 300 – 400 years ago is new scientific understandings of the physical world and this is why I bring my Higgs Boson metaphor. The concepts behind the way in which the professional technical world organize themselves were created in the 19th century at the height of the British imperial period which was part of the Industrial Revolution which thought that if we could knew everything we could organize and control it. So there was this mechanical image of how the world worked, the physical world, the living plant world, human social world and that is what’s been proved inadequate. It works for some things but not everything. And all the new science that has been developed since then, the intellectual framework for this [her model] to get the message across is complexity theory. Complex systems is one thing which is coming into the intellectual and academic field is how things work in a dynamic fashion, it is non-linear, non-predictable which is the e[name] act opposite of what this world [the blue sphere] think it is. So that is why the economic and financial world is going belly up, because they think they get into power and they want to press buttons and pull levers. You can hear it in their language, it is so incredibly primitive! So it’s all got to change, dramatically! But we can’t do it overnight otherwise we’ll let the psychopaths in, by that I mean the people who are ego-driven politically interested in power and this is linked to corporate power.

I see the military corporate dictatorships on one end of the spectrum and the most liberal democracies on the other end. And it’s the same continuum because it’s a corporate stranglehold by the professional technical world. I am not a conspiracy theorist; I am a ‘cock-up’ theorist [i.e., explaining why things don’t work]. And most of the people involved in the anti-cuts campaigns are conspiracy theorists and I can’t stomach it because I know how the system works, its incompetent. This doesn’t mean that people are not wielding power in small ways to affect things, and this is sometimes for the good. There is Bill Gates and Prince Charles because they understand this [the green space]. So there are people with money and power who are open to what we are talking about, and if we didn’t have that then what a mess it would be! I haven’t got the time inside foundations, but my paper has taken off because the [NAME] Research Centre is funded by some foundation and it was funded under New Labour. Because the foundation was supporting the [NAME] research centre, they also had a stream, a strand inside it that is called Below the Radar and I am an associate fellow because they like my paper, and they liked the work I was doing. It’s my only leash to this [blue] world, but the rest of the [NAME] Research Centre that others are interested in it.

The [NAME] waiting room is over 150 years ago and which had been bricked in for the past several decades. [NAME] succeeded in opening it up and now is trying to finish the renovations in order to turn it into a cultural and community space. We had the interview sitting at the red table, it was freezing cold and there were trains running along both sides of the room, but it felt appropriate to have the interview here as she could stand up and point to places / sites on which they are campaigning (including the multi-story car park, etc.)

1. *What does civil society mean to you?*

I like the phrase civil society better than the 3rd sector. Because that was one of the problems of the Labour party and that is why I left the Labour Party in 1974, when they thought the solution to problems was more of the civil service. I had been in the civil service at that time for 16 years and I thought they were mad! That is why I left the Labour Party. That was 30 years ago.

Of course I am part of civil society. All of this is civil society. But there is a difference between civil and civic. Civil is the green party and the things that emerge from it. Civic, is the interaction [in white part? In complexity terms, that this is the space for possibilities. I view these as organic entities, so that is what I take from complexity theory and complex systems. So these are living systems, which are interacting with each other.

END

**Ln13, Oliver and Olivia**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Oliver – individually I am nowhere near the activist I was. I more stir things nowadays rather than go out and do things.

Olivia– I tend to be uncomfortable with categories per se which is why one of the reasons the [NAME] came to be. It was a resistance to pigeonhole oneself, one’s group or one’s environment. And it was an attempt to say we are human beings first and foremost.

1. *Is civil society a meaningful concept for you? Do you consider yourself part of civil society?*

Both – No, not at all.

Olivia - Civil society doesn’t come into the equation at all. It's not part of the discourse at all. As a foreigner (from Serbia), I am much fussier and much more strict about the language. So if there is a civil society, then what is an uncivil one? It just doesn’t figure anywhere in our thinking.

Oliver– that language of ‘civil society’ reminds of what is called ‘mixed communities’ in planning speak. What is a ‘mixed community’? Its planning talk for absolutely nothing. It’s double speak.

Olivia - The main idea was to stir and provide a platform to share. To say this is what we are doing and we can learn from each other. That was the original idea five years ago to literally spread out and to connect and to provide temporary spaces for the others to create with each. One of the first things we did in [NAME] 6 years ago was Freecycle and I had been in touch with people in North London. So we held the only ever Freecycle event in August 2008 and then spent the whole year travelling around the borough to create free shops. We either did this in public spaces or where people opened up venues for us. The best event was in [NAME] , they had music and lovely vegan food. A French TV came and recorded it. That was us creating those temporary spaces and it was quite inspiring to hear how chuffed people were to have time to pause and to turn off the madness all around them and to just spend time with people.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular? What previous experience did you build on?*

*Oliver –* being a twat! Mine is entirely personal. I didn't get on with my parents. My father is one of those people who went to [NAME[ and he did[DEGREE]. So he was going backwards and forwards to the Middle East, all petro chemical and heavy machinery. So I decided to go in the opposite way. And the only way I communicated with my father was to write letters to agricultural magazines to slag off the articles he had written for them.

I was in Germany for a while and involved in Green politics because that was what my father was opposed to.

*Olivia* – my own consciousness evolved when I came over in 1991 from [NAME], just as [NAME] was starting to fall apart. Officially the society was fairly compact and there was no official class distinction and it didn't matter which part of [NAME] you came from. Then [NAME] came and stated saying these are your enemies. Back in 1991, sitting in [NAME] and having army tanks was kind of it. So I left and came here. Then when I came to England I realised that the only difference between England and [NAME] was that we did things with much less subtlety. Here you were as much brainwashed and the propaganda was identical but done in a much subtler way. And I kept banging on from 1991 and that the media is completely complicit and there is no independent media. And I went to every anti-war protest that there was while trying to survive and to conform to the 9 – 5. Then I met Oliver 5 – 6 years ago and a few months later we went to the Heathrow Climate Camp and spent a single night there. And it was the Climate Camp experience and the gardening training, which was for free locally, something just fell into place. I said we need to press a pause button because everything was rushing all around; the traffic was rushing and people rushing.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

*Olivia* - Yes, and it's on our little card. Because every single one of us is fighting neoliberalism. And it's going to be a long and bloody battle. Change isn't going to happen easily.

1. *What is your slogan?*

Olivia - Connecting the Dots.

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

*Oliver* – we're still working on it. One of the things I used to do and I want to do again is to teach adults. I am working on a 3-D animation and it takes a sort of general junctions in roads and re-arranges them so you can have segregated cycle lanes.

*Olivia* – for me, every single human connection is a high light. And it can be positive and it can be negative, but it’s a ripple.

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

*Oliver*- Olivia, with some of the others, has arranged space and someone from [NAME] London came and they started working on core strategy.

*Olivia* – a group of us read the documentation and we survived the examination in public, so we went to speak for the [NAME] cyclists. Significant amount of what we do is finding things out and pointing and putting things in the public domain. Involvement with the local anti-cuts and benefit justice and housing campaigns. We are also involved in the [NAME], which is a fairly new initiative which emerged from the organisers of [NAME] in 2012.

*Oliver* – that planning thing, we started it but it carried on once it got started because we don't do planning. We were not organisers, we let other people to take it on. So we stir and spark.

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

*Olivia* –my [LANGUAGE] is poor now because I haven't been back home in the last 20 years. I once made an attempt to go to a [NAME] meeting and I could make out the Spanish.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

*Olivia* – I personally keep it to a minimum. But we know several [NAME] Party people locally who are really lovely. As for the unions and the formal charities, I can’t deal with the structures. It's really difficult to get through sometimes, no matter how hard I try and God knows I've tried.

*Oliver* – we tried engaging with the formal voluntary sector in a premises working group, but they kept on not representing our views because they are sponsored by [NAME] Council. So 90% of their funding comes from the Council so they wouldn't take up our criticisms.

*Olivia*- and locally, to be really bitchy about it, THE local official voluntary organisation is called Community Action [NAME] is never about action. All they ever do is to support the Council. Whatever the Council needs doing they tell them and [NAME] will do it.

*Oliver*- the other thing is we can't make formal links because of the nature of the group. I mean just to get that card [he points to their logo postcard] has taken five years. It was like what sort of paper can we use or can we use paper at all? Or who is going to design it? Then it comes out that somebody across the road said we can't just focus on bicycles on the card, because we have motorists. So it took us years just to design this. So joining another group isn't feasible. The only group we have been meaning to join and it isn't really about joining, but it’s a website created by the lead singer of System of a Down [Serj Tankian]. This website allows community groups to put themselves on there. He is Armenian, but anybody from around the world who has any sort of leftish views can put their name there. And we keep on thinking "yeah, we are going to do this one day."

*Olivia* – yeah, but you just remember it Oliver and it's been a year or more! Just to go back to the formal groups, what I can't deal with is the formal hierarchy. Because to me another human being is always a human being. They could be yellow, orange, whatever, but there is no hierarchy between me and them because every hierarchy is artificial.

*Oliver* – another reason why we don't have links with charities is that they can't do things politically because getting funding is even harder now. But the fight is now political. So we put Freedom of Information requests in our name for them because the charities can't do political things.

*Olivia* – we also have some links with Occupy, but not directly because of time constraints.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

*Olivia* – Electronically is the easiest form. We wake up and plug ourselves in and connect with other people. If we have to meetings then we will.

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?*

*Olivia* – locally people are struggling and [NAME] might get there because it is specifically focusing on evictions and trying to transform empty commercial spaces into liveable spaces. For years I kept saying, what is it with the English? Because it takes so little for the French to come out into the streets and the same for Serbians or other Yugoslav people or Spanish. But I still don't know why the English are not taking to the streets. But now things are finally changing and ironically, it's good that the current is so shit because it shows that not only is this government shit but the alternative is just as bad. And people have been coming out, maybe 1, 5, 10 but they have been coming out.

*Oliver* – one of the things we tried to do was to take over an underground car park and create a community space. We know some planning people and there this company that does environmentally sound solutions and they offered to do our car park for cost because they thought it would be a good advert for them. But the Council wouldn't give us planning permission.

*Olivia*- in terms of solidarity, the media is so guilty. Every other day you get something in the Guardian and even the Daily Mail about the horrendous policies. The divisive policies are there and so sickening and it's going to be a long fight.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

*Olivia* – apart from visiting and checking out our website, no, we haven't had any direct experience yet. But we keep a close eye and about every other month we publish something in our monthly newsletter about the constraints on our civil liberties.

*Oliver-* I've got mental health problems so I have had some experience. I have stood in front of the riot police with my hands in the air when they come charging up like at Climate Camp. A few years ago at a May Day demonstration, the police were shoving us around but the blokes in the suits were left alone.

*Olivia –* locally, surveillance is an issue like CCTV cameras. There is no evidence that CCTVs cut crime, but [NAME] Council keeps telling us that they will increase the number of cameras.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

*Oliver* – yeah we have. I know Jenny Jones [Green MP] has had experience from them. They blame us of being Satanists.

*Olivia* – there is the [NAME] Society and they live in on one particularly road where the properties are in the millions and they sent me a really obnoxious email. They are trolls. And so class is another issue where there is divisiveness.

*Oliver*- one of the big divisions I am thinking of is a big church group that bought a bingo hall and along with other groups we said the Council should use a Compulsory Purchase Order and buy it for a couple million quid as it is a Grade II listed building and they could use it as secular community space. But the Council said, no, no, no. The Council just let them [the church group] have it. So they created a big divide because a lot of the church community is not [NAME] based. They are against people with mental health problems and they say you can be cured if you pray.

*Olivia* – a number of these evangelical churches are very homophobic. As for UKIP they haven’t come around here.

1. *Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement*

*Olivia* – definitely. There is nothing more to say, it just is.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

*Olivia*- um, a tricky question. The first thing I thought of was egalitarianism between people and the nature. And the end of political parties. There isn't a democracy in Britain. If you have property you have a right to say what you want.

*Oliver* – it doesn't mean anything anymore. People don't do a classical Greek education anymore.

1. *Who do you demand democracy from?*

*Oliver-* you don't demand it because you have to change the structure. Democracy only works with 250,000 people. I think it would be great to work in small localities. But if you have some system, you need some force to get people to pay taxes. The big thing is that we want to be heard. Like on the issue of the Elephant and Castle, we aren't entirely around it but we haven't been heard. The Council doesn't want to hear us.

*Olivia* – you don't demand it, you make it.

1. *Is [NAME] democratic?*

*Oliver-* [NAME] is consensus based. It's not just about making a decision, it's about getting people involved.

*Olivia* – and it doesn't matter that it takes us years to make a decision. I am always split between thinking the revolution needed to happen yesterday and knowing that the seed takes time to grow. And being content with letting it, whatever that IT is, to organically grow. So for me it's always a schism with getting things done and waiting for things to develop on their own.

1. *Social justice meaningful?*

*Oliver*- we'd like it to be, but it's not happening. They keep decanting people from council houses to other areas. They aren't moving people from [NAMVE] village.

1. *Who do you demand social justice from?*

*Oliver*-we are trying to demand it from the council. There is a lot of social injustice in the sense of deliberately treating people differently.

*Olivia* – but it needs to be spelled out because when you point out injustice, people say that is a political thing. But a helluva lot of the time it's just stating the obvious.

*Oliver* – like today when HMRC accused UK Uncut of politics by other means. But HMRC is using politics to support George Osborne's policies. But because UK Uncut took HMRC to court they are the ones who get accused of playing politics.

1. *What do you make of individual responsibility?*

*Oliver* – you have more Afro-Caribbean people in jail than others but that is because they target more Afro Caribbean people. So there has been no prosecutions of the LIBOR and why is there no undercover police in the banks. They refused to look into LIBOR and to make prosecutions. The banks are financial institutions and the government is still on their side.

1. *Dignity – is it meaningful?*

*Olivia* – no, I just don't think about it. But we are now being asked to prove that we are worth it to be alive.

*Oliver* – it's an individual thing isn't it?

1. *Is London unique and is it different from the rest of the UK?*

*Oliver* – yes.

*Olivia* – but not from the rest of the world because of the flows of money.

1. *Do you have connections with other austerity groups in England or London?*

*Olivia* – yes, Occupy London, DPAC and now there is the People's Republic of Newham.

1. *Global connections?*

*Oliver* – yeah, next week we have an meeting like this one with French students.

*Olivia* – yes, I wish I could fly to wherever things are happening. I am in particular keeping an eye on Spain because they are inspiring and they take no prisoners. And Berlin because they are also taking no prisoners and they have saved social housing from the global developers. And in Spain they are also stopping evictions which is really inspiring and South America is bloody inspiring and we get information from the local Latin American groups.

1. *Do you see similarities between the anti-austerity and the pro-democracy groups?*

*Olivia* – my own knowledge is weak on Egypt and I am not clear as to what is happening.

*Oliver* – it's completely different there. It's about moving away from anarcho-capitalism. I see the battle against Coca Cola and McDonalds everywhere.

1. *Any other observations?*

*Oliver –* yes, people should listen to us because we have been right on a lot of issues like universal credit and the [NAME]. We've had to report [NAME] Council to the Information Commissioner because they haven't responded to the second Freedom of Information request on the same issue.

END

**LN 15, Oscar**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

I think I would, but in quite an uncomfortable way because I guess that whole critique of “give up activism” in which there are people who see themselves as specialized activists. They have a weird dichotomy between activists and the rest of society. But, um, but yeah, I guess I would see myself as an activist and I wouldn’t say I am not an activist. Something that has come up recently, and there has been a bit of a shift with some people with whom I do activism. It’s a shift in what we’re doing and it’s a shift between activism and organizing. Where activism is about using your own power and organizing being about facilitating the power of other people.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular? On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*

My own personal background in activism has been largely around climate activism. I was involved in Climate Camp. And a strong of Climate Camp that was quite important throughout the time it was going and in its eventual decision to stop, was the critique of trying to be spectacular and media friendly activisms that were one-off events that drained a lot of energy. And were cast as some people that was in conflict of doing things that were more rooted in communities and were linked with more on-going projects. So since Climate Camp, quite a few people, myself included have tried to be more active in this way. And Fuel Poverty Action actually came out of that process.

1. *Are you part of civil society? Is civil society meaningful concept?*

Its meaning in so far as I know what it means. But it's not meaningful, in that I would see what we’re doing as part of civil society. In my experience it's not a concept that used a lot by people I organize with. Even though there is no reason to say that we’re not part of civil society, but it's just not phrased like that. So would describe ourselves as a social movement.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

The idea behind [NAME] was how can you do climate activism in the contex t of austerity. How can you make it relevant to austerity and to the more immediate problems people in the UK are facing as a result of austerity. And the most obvious link seemed to be fuel poverty because there you have the intersection how cuts and the energy system are both interacting and affecting people’s lives. So that is where [NAME] came out. And the hope is that we intersect the anti-austerity and climate movement.

1. *What were the main slogans of the movement?*

We don’t have one. We don’t have neat, we are the 99% slogan. Obviously there are key messages that we talk about. The first thing is we talk the impact of fuel poverty on people’s lives and the slogan that comes out of that is the ‘Heat or Eat’. In that people face a choice to either eat or to heat their homes. And then we talk about the causes of fuel poverty and when we do that we are targeting the Big 6 energy companies. So we talk about how the Big 6 are trying to rip us off and when we do that we are trying to tap into the popular narrative about the energy companies.

Then we also talk about cuts and we talk about the sources of fuel. That is where we get the climate change in. We talk about gas and how gas prices are pushing prices of energy up. We talk about alternatives, like renewable energy and also Energy Democracy or decentralized energy. And that is big thing that we are working on.

Energy Democracy is this idea that we don’t want energy to be in private hands. We don’t want energy to be privatized. But at the same time we are not calling for top down, state nationalized energy system. So it’s a concept that’s coming up a lot in Germany and also in the global South where people are talking about energy in the hands of communities, and direct control over energy. Energy sovereignty is also being talked about. It's really interesting and we are working on how can we start communicating that to people. Because Energy Democracy doesn’t mean much to people at the movement. So as for slogans that wasn’t neat and catchy.

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

The key aim of the group was to bring organizing out of the circle of the usual suspects. A big criticism of the climate movement was that it was a white middle class movement. And [NAME] is an attempt to move beyond that. There were a lot of white middle class people involved in setting it up, a lot of people who were not white middle class were also involved. So now we organize with pensioners groups, with disabled activists, asylum seekers, with women’s groups. The aim was to get outside of that [white middle class] ghetto and also to take a lead and direction from people who are worst affected by fuel poverty. And in terms of the concrete high point was that we had a demonstration outside the Department of Energy and Climate Change which was in mid-February 2013. We framed this as a fuel bill assembly and the idea was to give people a chance to come and speak about how high energy bills were affecting their lives and the problems they were having with their energy suppliers and any other issues they wanted to bring in. and then it ended with a blockade of the Whitehall main road with pensioners and wheelchair users.

So the highlight for us is that we want to do this radical form of action, but we want to do it in solidarity with the people who are affected by the issue. And so this demo did just that.

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

So we do demos and direct actions and we do a limited amount of practical support. We haven’t found the right word for it yet, but you could call it case work. We advertise ourselves that if you are having problems paying your bills or problems with your energy supplier or have draughty home, then get in touch. We always say that we are not an advice service, but that we will try to support you in any way possible. So people get in touch and we meet with them and share our limited knowledge and we signpost to other groups who have more expertise. And our aspiration is to get better at that.

And we also go around pensioners’ groups in London and we talk about the dash for gas and renewable energy for climate change. As part of the idea of getting climate activism outside of its comfort zone. I guess you could call that education work or awareness-raising.

We do also a lot of media commentary because it's such a big issue at the moment. There is a story in the paper every week about a scandal of energy companies.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

We are an anti-hierarchical organization. So there are formal leader figures, there are few people who are media spokespeople. Not because they are a leader but because they like doing media work while other people like doing other work. So at Climate Camp there was also a debate. Climate Camp was from a more anarchist section of the movement and a focus on anti-authoritarianism that came from re-claim the streets, the alter-globalization part of the movement. So our movement was founded in an anti-authoritarian process.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

Yeah, we use Twitter and Facebook. We have growing followings, but we’re not like UK Uncut. We have an email list that people can sign up to and we have a website. But a lot of what we do is getting in direct contact with groups. We go to their meetings, we have coffee with them and to build a relationship with them.

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

Only English. We don’t have international links. We are in contact with people in Germany but we communicate with them in English.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

We have good working relationships with [NAME] and [NAME]. The relationship with [NAME] is because we have quite good friends who work at the organization. And with [NAME] is because they have a fuel poverty campaign. But it's all very informal and there’s obviously issues in terms of its difficult to get [NAME] to sign off on supporting direct action because of the constraints of being a big NGO. But they will support us in other ways. For instance, they’ll give us embargoed reports so that we are aware of the policy stuff. And we also go to this big civil society coalition called the [NAME] Coalition and there’s unions, NGOs, consumer groups, big groups like [NAME]. We’re not formally signed up, but again mutually we don’t want to formalize our presence there. We don’t want to be signed up to that and they don’t want us to be signed up to that, but actually they probably quite like us to be there at meetings because we probably get the media more than they do. We’re interested in what they do and they’re interested in what we do, so basically it’s an informal relationship sort of thing.

In terms of political parties, we are not affiliated with a political party and we would never have a political party’s name on anything. But we have worked with sympathetic politicians like [NAME] from the Labour Party and [NAME] from the Green Party, like when they got in touch with us and wanted to come to our demo. And we said, sure you can come and speak.

But we don’t lobby them and we are not invited to consultations.

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?*

So that is the kind of thing we aspire to do [reconnect electricity]. But we’re not in that position at the moment. But our ultimate aim is exactly that sort of solidarity, mutual aid based, radical form of action around reconnection and sharing skills on how to fiddle your pre-payment meter so you can pay less. And also around non-payment, so you cannot pay your bills. But we’re not quite there yet. We’re only a year and a half old and at the moment we are trying to build links and to build power so that we can be in that position a good few years down the line.

But that kind of stuff does happen. Obviously people who are in severe situations find a way to survive. A lot of people aren’t paying their bills because they can’t and it’s not been organized by a political campaign, but it’s a necessity thing. But yeah, our aspiration is to try and support and facilitate that and to become a larger political intervention that could highlight those issues.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

One of the key reasons why we are doing what we are doing is because one of the strong narratives around this issue of why our bills are going up is to pay for renewable energy. That is just not true. All of the evidence shows that’s not true. And all of our work is to undermine that false argument. So in our media commentary we say that green energy isn’t putting up our bills, it’s the cost of gas. And we need renewable energy to bring bills down. That is our key message.

Alongside that there is an attempt to make the climate movement more orientated toward social justice in the UK and to not fall into the trap of a “green austerity” approach which won’t make anyone any friends and it's just horrible and it isn’t what we want to be doing.

“Green austerity” is people who are saying that it's good that there is higher energy bills because it will reduce demand and reduce emissions. That is actually a lot more common than you would hope. So we are trying to combat that. We want to re-frame climate activism and to base climate politics in pressing everyday issues.

1. *Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement*

Definitely. Obviously cuts affect women are hit the hardest. In fuel issues, its mothers who go without food so they can pay for heating so the kids are warm. We work with a group called [NAME]. It's like everything women are the hardest hit and because fuel poverty and energy are issues of budgeting and women tend to do budgeting, they are sacrificing their own needs for the rest of the family. Fuel poverty also affects pensioners and women tend to have less generous pensions than men because they did unpaid domestic labour throughout their lives.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

Climate Camp was always subjected to a lot of policing and the more pressing issue is under cover policing of that section of the movement. The whole Mark Kennedy case. So that has had catastrophic effects on the climate movement, on trust and organizing and we are still reeling from the aftermath of that. And it's interesting to see the response of police when we blockaded Whitehall with a group of pensioners and disabled people. They didn’t know what to do and didn’t want to go anywhere near it. And having done similar demos with a group of young climate activists, you saw how this was very different and there was less police violence because of that.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

Definitely seen the rise of that. But this has nothing to do with our group. But at the same demo at Whitehall, was attacked by a bunch of drunk [NAME] people. It was because we were at the wrong place at the wrong time. They were at a Weatherspoon’s across the road and they were all outside and they started shouting abuse at the [NAME].

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

Me personally, it means a critique of representative democracy and ideas of direct democracy being important. It means people having control over the things that affect their lives and being personally invested in those things to have more power.

There is also resource democracy and democracy beyond the economic sphere. So there is economic democracy and then democratic control over energy, food, and key basic needs. And also democracy is something that is in conflict with capitalism.

1. *Who do you demand democracy from?*

For me real democracy, there is not institution in the world that could institute that. It would be more widespread. I am more comfortable of making demands of the state and local government than others in the movement as immediate steps and goals towards something bigger. It's not inconceivable that [name] can come out with a demand to nationalize an energy company, but that wouldn’t be our ultimate goal.

1. *Is [NAME] democratic?*

There is always an aspiration of democracy, it's never perfectly realized. We are anti-hierarchical and we operate by consensus. But you get the same hierarchies of power around gender and class and race and experience, and commitment. These were brought to people’s attention through Occupy. So a big shift, that came out of Climate Camp, which was non-hierarchical and we have no leaders. We say we are anti-hierarchal and that this is what we are striving for, and we wouldn’t say we are non-capitalist because we are opposing capitalism. So the difference is between being ‘anti’ or ‘non’.

In terms of the core people, some work for NGOs, some are from trades unions. So are doing temporary work, others are out of work. Beyond the core group, the supporters are less middle class than the core group.

I am a paid worker for the group, which started in November 2012. Because we had a massive problem of capacity, because everyone had jobs. So we decided to get funding to pay someone to be there froe 3 days a week. We go that money from [NAME] and they fund a lot of the movement. A lot of it is not public, but some of it is. It is public that we are getting money from [NAME]. [NAME] was set up by [NAME] who used to work at [NAME]. It's good that [NAME] has been set up.

*25. What does social justice mean to you and who would you demand social justice from?*

Real social justice can’t be demanded from anyone. But I’d still be making them same arguments that stop the cuts. I am comfortable making that demand from the state, even if I don’t think that that is a politically feasible option.

*26. Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

Dignity is not part of the UK discourse and certainly not to the extent like in Spain. It's something I could *see us* talking about, but it's not a core thing we talk about.

*27. In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

I guess the media talk is about shifting responsibility from the structures and people with power that are responsible. It’s a political tactic and you see that a lot with fuel poverty with people saying that “people have a responsibility to pay their bills. Why are they paying for Sky TV when they can’t pay their bills”. But that is ridiculous. And responsibility is a massive thing in the environmental movement, where people say we should recycle and use less. And without saying those things aren’t important, we have to recognize that it is being used strategically.

1. *Do you see what you are part of as a London movement, a British movement, or a European or global movement? Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones?*

We have all ink to Germany through a friend who has links to groups in Berlin. If you are interested in Energy Democracy you should check them out because they are a group that wants to buy back the grid from private hands and return it to local control.

[NAME] is mainly based in London. There is a group up in [PLACE] we’re affiliated to. At first there were aspirations to make it a national movement, but it hasn’t taken off. We still have national links through Climate Camp, but it hasn’t taken off yet.

1. *Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?*

Yeah, I see similarities but I haven’t spent time in those countries and don’t have personal contacts. But I see it as one struggle, but I see the level of struggle in London isn’t like Athens, but I am sure there are different problems. But energy access is happening in Europe and the idea for a commons or energy commons, is in fashion at the movement and that is coming from the South, I think.

1. *Do you think there unique things about the London movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?*

In terms of the issues facing people, housing is an urgent issue facing people and rents are very high. A lot of attention in the movement is turning to housing because of the high rents. And the makeup of the movement is there is a lot more people who work in NGOs, because all of the NGOs are in London.

There would be criticism from a lot of people in the movement about the influence of NGOs in the movement. Which is legitimate but from my experience people in NGOs bring quite a lot to the movement, like experience of campaigning, and facilitation. In [NAME] people who work in NGOs bring a lot from their experience. And also things like resources, like they can print for us, they book a room for us. So when you find a friendly NGO its quite a big thing .

1. *Is this help done officially?*

No, it comes from a desire of NGO people to support grassroots organizing. But it's not formalized because it wouldn’t work for either party. We wouldn’t want [NAME’S] name on our stuff because it would de-radicalize what we are trying to do and they wouldn’t want our name on their stuff because it would de-legitimize what they are trying to do and it would raise legal and funding questions.

END

**LN 15, Chloe**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Yes, I would use the word activist. I don’t think traditionally I would have considered myself an activist but I think now I can quite rightly claim the word activist to describe who I am.

1. *Is civil society a meaningful concept for you? Do you consider yourself part of civil society?*

I think civil society is used interchangeably to mean lots of different things and I think [name] is considered certainly to be part of civil society in the UK.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular? On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*

I have always been politically active from very young age. One of my earliest memories is of the Berlin Wall coming down as a kid. And I come from South Wales where Thatcher had a massive impact on our communities and so I was always very, very aware of that as a young child. And then the Iraq War was a huge thing for me and feeling powerless after the Iraq War. Being one of many people who marched against it. And then I think I really became politically active around asylum and refugee issues and did lots of campaigning at my university around asylum and campaigning issues. And then after university I joined a [name] where I was director of policy and communications where I basically had a campaigning role where I lobbied politicians.

One of the things that I like about [name] is that it is quite diverse. There are people of all sorts of backgrounds. There are people from think tanks, people who have come straight out of university, some with PR background, but I do think that a lot of the staff members have worked in the [name] and NGOs before.

[*And private sector?]*

Well certainly, lots of us have had private sector experience.

1. *Do you consider yourself part of the wider anti-austerity movement?*

Well [name] campaign on many issues and we are completely member led so we campaign on whatever our members want us to do. And just in the last few weeks we’ve done a lot of anti-austerity campaigning like cuts to [name] and other things. So yes, absolutely [we are part of the anti-austerity movement]. I think [name] members have an appetite to campaign on not just national cuts to services but also on local cuts, such as library closures, and local hospital closures.

1. *What were the main slogans of the movement?*

People, Power, Change. And I think that things that I often write in an email is “People power works!” or “Together we could do this!” It's all about lots of people making lots of small contributions.

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

Ooh, there’s been lots of high points at [name]. It's kind of the best job in the world because you see something in the paper which you think is absolutely appalling and you come into the office and put it up on Facebook and you see that other people also think it's appalling. Then you get to send out an email to 1.5 million people to do something about the thing you think is truly awful. So there’s lots of highpoints. Every day is a highpoint.

But as far as a victory which was huge success, was around the [name] campaign that we did. That was brilliant because before some of the awful stuff going around on phone hacking, we just didn’t think that we’d win that. We just that it would be a done deal and that [NAME] would simply take over [name]. But that all changed and we managed to mobilize very successfully and quickly.

But I think the campaign I feel most emotional about is our [name] because we fought such a good fight. But unfortunately we lost, so that wasn’t a high point. But in terms of our contribution, every single [name] member worked to make it as hard as possible for the government to privatize our NHS. Gosh, I’m proud of that, it was brilliant.

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

It absolutely depends on what the campaign is. [name] members get involved with a [name] of tactics and strategies. We often use petitions or email your MP actions or email the boss of a company action. We obviously use Twitter and Facebook as well. But we also work quite a lot offline. So for example, after we lost the [name] we set up lots of different groups around the country where lots of [name] members got together at the pubs and local community centres to try and pressure local clinical commissioning groups to try to adopt important amendments into their constitution.

So it absolutely depends on the campaign and what strategy is right for the campaign. And sometimes that is not a petition, sometimes it is a face to face meeting. And sometimes it is a [name] of different things. Sometimes it is a petition, emails to MPs, face to face meetings, local meetings, local adverts, national adverts, legal opinions. It all depends on what we have to do to win.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

Our primary way of communicating with [name] members is still email, but lots of [name] members don’t use FB and Twitter. But [name] has grown to the size it has because of lots of people [name] campaigns that they’re involved in. And that’s on FB and Twitter, but that is also equally by forwarding an email and getting someone to take an action by that.

But undoubtedly social media play a role. Like for example today, there is a vote on the energy bill and we’ve all [name] member that we know is on twitter to email their MP or key target MPs to get them to vote for de-carbonization target to be included in the energy bill and we’ve had 100s and 100s and 100s of Tweets in just a few hours. And that’s just been crucial in switching a few target MPs to vote for the de-carbonization target. So FB and Twitter have a key role in spreading the word. And also for funnelling the pressure at those key moments.

And also for creating this AMBIENT NOISE around an issue. Someone doesn’t [name] have to take part in an action without talking about it. You’ll see that a lot around the [name] or other issues as well, like ta[name] dodging. The noise around ta[name] dodging and how people are really getting pissed off with big companies are getting away with avoiding paying huge ta[name] , while they themselves are experiencing cuts and some people are without job. Huge amount of noise has been created around big companies avoiding tax dodging. And all that ambient noise is helped by social media.

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

I speak a little bit of [LANGUAGE] and a little bit of French, but one of my new year’s resolutions is to improve that.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

We have a really great relationship with loads of [name].] [name] way we can campaign on a [name] of actions is because we don’t make policy. So often we rely on and work with [name] and NGOs to provide that policy insight. And also, [name] role is really about ramping up the pressure at key moments. That is what we are really good at. And often [name] and NGOs see us as being really great at that.

They [NGOs] will call us at a key moment when they think we can play a role and we are being seen in that arena far, far more. [NAME] are a really great example of that. They will give us a call and say ‘there is an urgent vote in Parliament. We know that you can get the numbers out. Can you get involved?” And we say, “yes, absolutely!”.

In terms of political parties[name] is not party political and we are not aligned with any political parties. And so it's really important that we are neutral, well not neutral, but not aligned with any political parties. So I think that although we have worked with politicians form all sorts of political parties to try and win a campaign, as I said before we are not party political so it's difficult for us.

And trade unions, we haven’t really worked much with trades unions before but I think that you can never say never. It's of course very difficult, because they are aligned with the Labour Party, but you never say never. And they’ll still call us up and say ‘there is this key movement’. And the unions campaigned on the [name] and we worked alongside them.

Yeah, like the 18 May 2013 protest on the NHS, local [name] groups were involved in that. We were really involved in the Save the Lewisham A&E protest and we will be involved in protests in the future. They are one tactic in trying to win a campaign.

I am not aware of [name] being involved in anything like that. But we could be. So say for example, after the riots happened in London 2 years ago, there was riot clean-up action that I am sure lots of [name] members got involved in cleaning up after the riots. I am sure [name] members would want to get involved in those kinds of actions in the future, but I am not aware of [name] doing anything like that.

1. *Where do you think the movement stands now?*

[name] is a people powered movement and that is what we are trying to create – a people powered movement. I suppose a year ago we were getting ready for any kind of campaign thrown at us. I think that it will be e[name] citing to see what [name] role will be in the ne[name] t general election. We have 1.5million members across the UK and this is a huge number of members in some constituency. At the national level I hope we can help shape policy manifestos. I am e[name] cited to see what our role will be in the general election.

We’ve also launched a platform called ‘[name] where [name] members can launch their own campaigns. And I think that will grow. Campaigning on local issues is something which members have a huge appetite for.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

Lots of civil society occupy that space. And Occupy was a leader a year or so ago and UK Uncut certainly are in the press lots and lots. Our membership is huge, so we play a role in that too.

But there is no individual person and I think that is cool. Obviously there are press people who are more visible involvement, but I can’t think of any leaders. But maybe that is a problem. But on the other side you can’t identify any civil society that is pro-cuts.

1. *Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement*

It's not my area and I don’t feel I can give a very good response to that. The research shows that women are worse affected by the austerity cuts. Our membership is pretty even, but I think that women are more in the number of [name]. But I’d love to do some more campaigning on women’s issues, but we don’t have much on that. We have a campaign on domestic violence or rape centres, but I can’t answer that question.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

No I haven’t seen it. When we were on the [NAME] march, some police came up to us and I had loads of placards. I was waiting on the corner for [name] members to come and collect them. Two police came over to me and I thought, “Oh crap, I know what this is going to mean. They are going to take away all of my placards because of the experience that I have had before.”

But then they said “Can we take one of the placards? We want to put it in the back of our van.” So they took it and they put it on the back of their van. I’ve got a picture of it.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

It’s a difficult question to answer that as a [name] member. But when we regularly poll our members they care about tax dodging, the [NAME] and local cuts. These are the things they care about. They don’t talk about immigration as much as the media narrative would like us to believe. They talk about education, they talk about protecting the NHS, local cuts, tax dodging. They don’t talk about UKIP’s policies or immigration.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

I suppose democracy means that everyone has a voice and that everyone can do something to make a difference on the stuff they care about.

1. *Who do you demand it from?*

It's something all of us have to care about

1. *What is democratic practices and is [name] democratic?*

Yes, I think we are. It's really important to [name] members that we are democratic because we are completely member led. But staff take a position of steward leadership in the organization. We take the role like in community or town hall meetings it’s the role of facilitator. It's important to members that we are member led, not only on the issues, but also about the tactics. So recently we did an [name] campaign.

During the [name] campaign we did a lot of polling during it. We asked members should we accept a 1 on 1 meeting with the chief executive and our executive director. Or should we turn down the meeting if other [name] members can’t be involved. Should we launch a switch from [NAME]. Ad that is such an important part of what we do and as a [name] campaigner I am so grateful to that because in really difficult movements of ‘what the bloody hell do we do nex t?” The answer is always is to poll members and ask what they want to do. So I think [name] is democratic. Transparency around money is also really important to us. And we are completely member funded which makes us more democratic. We are not funded by big business or government, so we can campaign independently which is really important.

1. *What does social justice mean to you and who would you demand social justice from?*

I think for me social justice means that everybody no matter who they are, what colour they are, what gender or age they are part of an equal society.

I think that legislation plays an important role in providing social justice. But I don’t think that is the only answer. It would be silly to say that the government doesn’t have a role to play. But often legislation is slower than the culture so I think we all have role to play in that.

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

I think in some campaigns it does, but it's not a word that resonates with me more broadly. I think some cuts around disability are a matter of dignity. But it's not a word that resonates me widely.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

I think lots of [name] members would have an opinion on individual responsibility. In Britain, and I can only speak for Britain, I’ve only lived in the UK, we have a great tradition of volunteering and working in our communities. But as soon as the government put a label on that, everyone thins, “oh, bugger off! Like seriously, you’re not telling me to do this.” I felt the response negative towards Big Society” but I think community is really important to [name] members protecting what is great about our society.

1. *Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones? Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?*

I could be completely glued to the news like movement around Egypt, Libya or Syria or like America with the Occupy movement or today in Turkey its fascinating to watch and to be part of. I think the [name] s come from lots of people working together to make change and that is important. One of the imprint principles of [name] is people power that will make change happen and not a conversation in a smoke filled room in Parliament.

In terms of the [name] in the [name] of the movements that was important, like in Egypt and also Occupy.

1. *Do you think there unique things about the London movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?*

I think we have got a very strong tradition of very vocal civil society in the UK that other countries don’t have. Well in terms of London, we don’t feel that the financial crisis as in other parts of the UK. That is a huge risk to us campaigners in London. But when I go home to South Wales I see the shops closed and lots of unemployment. So what we feel in London is different from the reality. There is a big North South divide e in terms the crisis caused by the banks.

END

**LN16, Luke**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Yeah, definitely.

1. *Is civil society a meaningful concept for you? Do you consider yourself part of civil society?*

I think it is a meaningful concept. But I don’t people talk about it like that. We are people who are interested in our community so in that sense it is about civil society. The motivation is political and social. But the term ‘civil society’ isn’t a phrase that is used. I would describe ourselves as a social movement, because I know a bit about social movement theory, but I don’t know if others would.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular? On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*

It’s got a long lineage. The reason its [name] sustained itself is because it isn’t just a reaction to the most recent government austerity programme. It goes back a long time. There are other reasons for it such as the leading politician in this area [NAME] is [NAME]. He has been the MP since [DATE]. But he is on the left of the [NAME] Party. So he attracts the support of the Party and in fact everyone else in the borough. Me personally, I am [naming several function in parties and organisations].

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

We still believe in networking with other groups to see what they’re doing. This includes supporting [name] campaigns or [name]. Individual members of [name] do that. But what I have been clear about is that the cuts groups were set up in the boroughs and then some tried to create a London Anti-Cuts Federation but it never came to anything because people look to use these things for their party political objectives. But we’re all so experienced that we can see through it. Of course we want to work together but not if someone from some obscure party want to exploit it. In my view these things [London Anti-Cuts Federation] are set up by obscure parties who don’t engage with the community and they just want to associate with other leftists.

We went to a meeting the other night and you had a whole ragbag of leftists talking leftist talk and wanting to call a general strike tomorrow. These people don’t live in the real world. They don’t represent anyone and they don’t have grounding in work places. They just talk leftist talk and I’m not into that. That is a waste of time. You get a lot of that going on.

And another example of that is the [NAME] Coalition. But the [NAME] Coalition was set up by local trades councils. But the group is headed by [name] from the [NAME]. She is a really good person. They have sustained that, but the point I want to make is that it is successful because it was set up to save the A&E. It worked because it was just before the 2010 general election. But subsequently once it saved the A&E, the organization went on but they didn’t have an issue to address. The point I want to make is that this was a success because there was a local problem, 100s of people come to meetings and 1000s of people go on marches. But then on 18 May you had the Save the [NAME] march in London, but it wasn’t very big because all the leftist groups were trying to use that. I was at the [NAME] biennial meeting and we said we wanted to support the London demo. We were surprised because we knew the [NAME] was organizing it. And people knew that that march was an [SWP] front, so people didn’t turn out for that march. I am not running the [NAME] down, because we work with them locally, but there are people in the [NAME] whose politics is theoretical and isn’t about action. All they do is organize the next march and the next meeting to talk amongst themselves.

The [NAME] is always going around trying to convert people and they are evangelical. They don’t approach me because they know I am [NAME’S] right hand man.

So in [NAME] we have people coming at things from different positions, but they generally support the Council in [NAME] because they see the Lib-Dem Coalition is the main enemy in this.

I am a sort of bridge. Because I am in the [NAME] Party and in [name], I bridge between all those people and the council. My position is called Council Coordinator. So I’ve got a position of reconciling the leftist groups in [name] and the Councillors in [NAME]. Like on the bedroom tax we did a discussion with the councillors of what we wanted. If we didn’t work together antagonisms could develop. So I’d like to think that because we have got people working together antagonisms don’t develop. The councillors aren’t Labour left-wingers but they are committed to this Fairness Commission.

1. *Social justice meaningful? Who do you demand it from?*

Well that gets used to, but the focus is on fairness and we focus on this through the Fairness Commission.

1. *Impact of [name]?*

I think the Council would’ve done it even if [name] wasn’t involved in it because those people who are involved in [name] are already active people. A number of the people in [name] are also active in the [NAME] Party and so we work through that to try to make changes in that as well.

I don’t want to make any great claims that we have had an impact. I think like on the bedroom tax , they would’ve taken that decision anyway, we were just there to firm it up a bit more. Like on housing they are already doing it, they are building houses.

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

Leafleting, demos and we have held two high level conferences. Both times it was around what the council was doing. We had breakout groups to discuss what the council were doing on things like disability, care, housing. On the first conference, we prepared a report and sent it to the council. We have had an influence in what’s going on. We don’t just do street campaigning, we do policy work too. But I don’t profess that we changed things, it just shored up what’s already going on. I know what’s going on in the Labour Party because I am involved in that, so I don’t think we changed the policy, but firmed it up.

[name] is all done on a volunteer basis.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

We use email; Facebook but we don’t use Twitter at all. Face to face is important, but we don’t do enough of it. I’d like [name] to be more grounded in the community. We are actually into going into a local group and we make friends with them, but can’t say we have achieved it in all senses because we just don’t have the resources for it. If I had an organization, then I’d do it more systematically. But you have to be careful because people in local groups are very precious about their local issues. They won’t give you the list of the tenants associations because it doesn’t work like that. They are all separate entities and its sort of good in a way, but it's bad because they don’t coalesce together.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

Only in the sense that we work with [NAME], but that’s not a charity is it? No, there is no direct links with charities. I mean we also have links with [NAMES OF OTHER ANTI-AUSTERITY GROUPS]. But we have lots of people who work with charities but we don’t have formal links with charities. But we have very good links with the council.

It's about social networks, you have to know people. I like social network theory because it works in practice.

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?*

I don’t see it. Hand on heart I couldn’t tell you if there is something. But I was saying the other day, that the BNP did a stunt with the food bank with a big union jack on it. I was telling people, is this something we should be doing? I said, “Yeah, we could do it once, but it would be wrong if we couldn’t sustain it and people come to rely on it.” It's irresponsible if you only do it once. I don’t know if the council do food banks, but I don’t know about it.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

Yeah, we’ve got a structure. Because I’ve got a lot of experience in the trade union movement, I supported that we have a structure. It might not have had such a structure if I wasn’t involved in it. I sort of like structures.

When we set up [name] up, we didn’t want sectarianism. So we created a constitution, which says that [name] is a local group set up to oppose cuts to public services. Some people came and said [NAME] is to oppose all cuts. We said, ‘No’ that is not realistic, that is never going to happen. So we set it up on a constitutional basis and it’s all laid out. And if the constitution is going to be changed it’s going to happen at an AGM. At first we set it up with three co-chairs, but it didn’t work out because you do need leadership. No one is going around saying, “I am the leader” but the Chair leads. The reality is that Chair does it all, they arrange the meetings. But there are other individuals like me, who will cover for these people. We all have positions and I drew up the structure, but they weren’t really contested and we just fit people in where they fit best. This is mature politics we’re doing in [NAME] because we don’t want people to come and spoil it. But there are others who come to meetings and have leftist arguments with other people. But they stopped coming after the first couple of meetings.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

Nah, there hasn’t been anything like that.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

In the borough we haven’t seen any of it and historically haven’t seen it. I am not saying there is no racism, it is latent, but they don’t organize in this borough. Only in the last local election we found some BNP leaflets but that was the only. They hardly got any votes. You don’t see UKIP either, because they probably don’t think it’s worth it.

This sort of situation is fertile ground for them [the right]. We had a report that on last Saturday the EDL did a demo on [NAME], but people from [NAME] went down and had a picnic there and were questioning them.

Look, there are lots of people living on these council estates who are very isolated and very angry. These forces could easily organize them. It’s ripe for organizing. Some people in [NAME] are what I call ‘bleeding heart liberals’ and they don’t see any of that. But I am from a working class background and I know that it could happen. I just hope it never does happen.

1. *Does the crisis have a gender dynamic?*

I haven’t seen it but I could see that it could be. Because of bedroom ta[name] , and other cuts but I don’t have empirical evidence. And also people from ethnic minority communities. But white working class people also suffer, but they suffer in silence and they never say anything. And this is one of the problems that I am quite passionate about. But I am always careful with that because people might misconstrue it because everyone is suffering.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

It means like people cooperating together that is how I have always seen. I do believe in representative democracy and I do believe that you need leaders and I believe in elections. And I really believe in it even though I have lost a few elections. And I know that representatives don’t always go away and do what you want. There should be good mechanisms of accountability and I want to be accountable to people. I want to do a good job and not go away and not be accountable. I do listen to people, and representatives do listen but they don’t do it because it might not be the best way to do it. I don’t believe in an elitist hierarchy, but I do believe that people in positions of power do have more knowledge and information and they can make a better decision. It might not be the decision that people in the bottom would make. And that power can be abused as well.

1. *Who do you demand democracy from?*

Well, you’ve got to have a structure and the democracy is about being able to change the structure. I certainly don’t believe in royalty and monarchy that shouldn’t be there. That is one of the problems in society because the monarchy is not based on democracy. There is no democracy there. It’s all based on something someone decided long ago and it’s all corrupted.

1. *Is [name] democratic?*

Yeah, we have had votes. But we do not vote on everything. You have a chair and it's not going to be everything one segment of the group wants.

*What does social justice mean to you and who would you demand social justice from?*

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

I think indignation definitely. We just don’t like what’s going on, its people’s lives so of course there is indignation. But indignation on its own isn’t good enough. It isn’t enough to get angry. Over the years, I have stopped getting angry because I just expect it more of a game of chess for me. When I got involved in politics I used to sit around and swear at the telly at what the Conservatives are doing. Because of my academic education in later life, I realize that that is what conservatives do because that is their philosophy. They think that is the best way of life.

But we don’t use the word dignity. And even with indignation we’d say appalled or disappointed.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

I think I was brought with the Protestant Work ethnic even though I was working class. I know that it isn’t the best way and I work on things like that. I am a strong believer in individual responsibility but not individualism at all even though it’s on the rise. For me it’s about social responsibility and it’s about cooperation. You cooperate with me and I cooperate with you. Like Marx said, each according to their means, and each according to their needs. It's not because I swallowed *Das Capital*, but because I believe in fairness. I don’t like individualism at all.

1. *Do you connect with groups beyond [NAME]?*

Without a doubt. I am an internationalist through and through. We struggle to do it and we do the best we can. But the way I see that the power structures are International and global and they have frameworks that goes on locally. So any influence we can have is important. I spoke at another meeting where the main speaker was speaking against the EU. And they are totally against Europe, I don’t agree with him but I left it and didn’t engage with him. What about health and safety regulations or the European Charter of Human Rights. So I am not against Europe, but my question is how we make it a material fact. So you have to engage in things. But we don’t have any influence internationally.

1. *Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones? Do you see similarities with the anti-austerity movements and the movements of the Arab Spring?*

I guess standing against injustice. People know what is wrong. But how do we get it across to people that they are systematically being exploited. And that the people who are exploiting them are accumulating a vast wealth with massive growing inequality. With the share of income to labour going down and these are long-term trends. That is injustice and it's not good for anyone. It puzzles me on tax dodging, I thought we should campaign on that but people like going on the benefits scroungers footing. I certainly feel that progressive taxation is important and it should be in your policy programme. I think the trouble with our society and it's so hierarchical, people say that is how life is and I want to be there, I want to earn that amount of money.

There is a decline in collectivism is happening because the trade unions are weaker. They are weaker because industry has changed and harder to recruit people. But it’s also because of ideology. To me what drives it is the dominant ideology. So you’ve got Thatcherism arising out of Friedman and Hayek. Then we saw New Labour and Tony Blair there is a sort of lineage there and we still have a decline in collectivity and a rise in individualism. Because they are promoting neoliberalism which is about individualism. Which is about having competition. That is where I go to when I look for the explanation. But I do appreciate it is more complicated than that. Even down to individual agency and how that may affect it. It's very complex and everyone is trying to untangle what the truth is.

1. *Do you think there unique things about the London movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?*

Only geographically. We are in much smaller area and our target audience is closer to us. So it’s easier to organize. And this area has always been on the left, so it’s been easier to organize here. But I was a parliamentary candidate for [PLACE NAME] and it’s a totally different world out there! I lost, but it was a good experience.

END

**LN 17, Jessica**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Yes, I would definitely call myself an activist. I was raised a [NAME] and was raised to have a social conscience. Charity has always been an important part of my life. My granddad was a [NAME] MP and my mother was also an activist. It has always been a part of my life and it has continued to be.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular? On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*

I have been involved in activism from an early age. I got involved in the CND and the campaign against nuclear weapons when I was 14. Also, there was a time I was quite engaged in the campaigns against the cuts in the 1980s. All of these things contributed to my current activism, and I feel that I have now narrowed the focus of my work to something that I am deeply involved in, my work.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

All these things we now see, the cuts, the austerity, the protests for a different way of life, all of these things are linked to capitalism. They are linked to the greed that is inherent in the current system. I wouldn’t say I am involved in a “wider” movement in a conscious way, but I do have a personal activist stake in activism that is related to where I work and have worked for so long. I can’t stretch myself too thin, so even if I agree with things like Occupy and their concerns, I stay focused on my involvement with [name].

1. *What were the main slogans of the movement?*

I suppose our slogan is in our name! We are anti the dismantling of the [NAME] as it is being undertaken. I mean, there have always been elements of the system that have been private, e.g. GPs and private contracts, etc. However, we are against the destruction of a system that was created and has existed on the basis of a fundamental principle - the duty of care to everyone. There are radical changes that are being implemented that will change that completely!

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

I think there were many potential high points! There has been a rear guard action against the [NAME] since 2006, but I became involved in 2010. The coalition government came into power in May 2010, and by June there was a White Paper. Then [NAME] kicked into action to stop the proposed legislation from being passed, i.e. the Health and Social Care Act. Campaigners need to have goals, and it helps us to focus. I mean, just look at the numbers who protested the passage of the health care bill versus those who protest particular hospital closures. People want to get involved in something tangible, something specific. If they see a positive outcome, they grasp that it can be done. It is much more difficult to achieve a more diffuse goal if people don’t understand the significance and the effects that will occur. The government has made it difficult, they purposefully use language that which ‘common’ people don’t understand. I mean look at all the jargon we have. How is a lay person supposed to understand CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups) and how they work? It is so complicated that even most doctors don’t understand it. Once it is enacted, it is hard to repeal.

We had a major landmark a month ago. On the 24th of April, there was a small demo in front of the House of Lords to protest Section 75 of the Act. This would mean that [NAME] services would not be considered public services, but would become ‘economic entities’ to be traded and open to EU competition law. This is outrageous! This takes away the human right to health. So there have been potential highs but have we really achieved anything?

1. *What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?*

Are demonstrations really helpful? Really? The protests against hospital closures have been conflated with the anti-legislation campaign, and they are two separate, but of course linked things. I mean, we struggle with how to pitch the campaign in a way that will get people involved, to figure out what works. We do:

I. General consciousness raising.

II. Leaflet in the streets.

III. Using the media in a media savvy way.

You see the massive impact that [NAME] has had by knowing how to work the media! [NAME] carried out an action together with [NAME], where we were chained outside the House of Commons in February 2012. We try to conduct a regular set of events, which are democratically decided amongst us, and respond when something happens that we feel we need to say something, like when [NAME] says something stupid! You need media attention to keep the conversation going. Many people who are involved in [NAME] are semi-retired and want to do something. So many are constantly burnt out just trying to keep body and soul together when they are working that they cannot get involved in activism.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

I don’t use social media myself, but see the advantage of it. It’s not institutionalised, but some people in [NAME] use it. In general we communicate by email. People use social media to advertise events. A reflection of what social media means to people is in the age group that uses it the most, the younger members and activists!

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

In general, no. But we are trying to get together some Portuguese/Spanish leaflets in Lambeth as there is a big community of workers there. There is a Latin workers association called [NAME] who looks at the needs of that community.

*Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement*

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

Yes, we are very involved with all sorts of organizations, most of them in health related fields. We have people who work with UNITE and are members; we also have worked with [NAME] regularly. As for political parties, there are many who are staunch supporters of the [NAME] party. This is a difficult area, as we are not supposed to be party political. But, I mean, we can’t not work with the [NAME], can we? We do have good links with [NAME] and so on. There is a [NAME] , which was founded by [NAME]. Access to health will be key issue in the [name] t general election.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

I would definitely say Dr [NAME] , who is prepared to stick her neck out for what she believes in and to say what she thinks about what the government is doing. She works for both [NAME] and also is the Chair of the [NAME] campaign. Also, there is Dr [NAME] an activist. He has run 160 miles from [NAME] the birthplace of the founder of the [NAME] , [NAME] , to raise money and awareness for the [NAME] . Another person is [NAME] , who is now president of [NAME] . She was a national figure in the 1980s. She does a lot of public speaking on this issue. There is also [NAME] , Co-Chair of the [NAME] and also a member of the [NAME] .

I think that [NAME] is part of a huge movement, that is very necessary at the current moment. But, because the issue is so huge and so complex people don’t want to or don’t know how to go out and talk about it! So, I applaud the people that attempt to do so. By the way, it’s the 65th birthday of the [NAME] on 5th July!

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?*

I don’t come across people who are suffering the most from the cuts to be honest. They are struggling; they are just trying to survive. I often feel like I am one step removed from that. The danger with campaigning is becoming detached from the real world and how things are. I recently visited a hospice and was reminded of the reality of health care for people.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

I guess at the political level, we have achieved consciousness raising. I mean, the government was shocked about the reaction to Section 75, they didn’t think that there would be any fuss if they slipped it in under the radar. The passage of it makes it subject to the US-EU trade agreement and will give the US market access to the NHS. Given that it has happened, we have to consider to what extent that can be repealed? There is a battle going on in the Labour party regarding whether they really want to disengage from privatisation, i.e. what is politically possible and what is legally possible may be entirely different. We are stuck and we have to rely on the Labour party, we really don’t have a choice. Even [NAME] has voiced his concerns over the impact of the US-EU trade deal and what that will mean for health services. I mean, none of this was democratically decided by the people, and the government did not and does not have a mandate for it as they specifically said this was not a campaign issue.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

Personally, I don’t have any [name] experience of it. I mean, the police are being supportive of it as they are [name] experiencing cuts as well, to their forces, to their pensions. We are all in the same boat, aren’t we? So they are practising restraint policing. We were lobbying Lords outside parliament regarding Section 75 and we weren’t supposed to be there, but the police didn’t say anything. A police van even displayed a sign supporting the [NAME] that someone had given them!

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

I don’t really see a right wing backlash that is very noticeable, no.

1. *Meaning of democracy and who do you demand it from?*

For me, it means that people are able to express their views, that dissent is tolerated and people are listened to. Do we demand democracy from elected officials and politicians? I am very cynical about politicians, you know, the things they say when they are campaigning. The line between what they say they can do when they speak and what they can and actually do. But also, there is a very thin line between what people expect to do for themselves and what they [name] the state to do for them. The [NAME] is a good example, people have a great affection for it and a desire to protect it.

Parliament is the ultimate seat of democracy, but there are aspects of it above and below parliament. People can’t be passive; they have to take responsibility for their own democracy. I wonder if parliamentary democracy doesn’t have power anymore, given the suprastate of the EU that we are now subject to. Now multinationals have become part of the government and struggle for power alongside the elected officials, and sometimes have more power than them.

1. *Democratic practices?*

Democratic practices are that the [NAME] should be entirely funded through taxes. There should not be a link between what you put in and what you get out, but you know, the old adage “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need”.

1. *Is the movement/organization democratic?*

We are structurally democratic and try to be so as much as possible. We are seemingly a London centric organization, but we do have a federation of local groups. But of course, there are more people who come in from the London groups. Does that matter for the organization itself? Does that make it undemocratic? I mean, we have active local groups and we are democratic in that people within them are autonomous.

1. *Unique about London?*

Well, you have parliament here and this is where legislation gets passed, so it is inevitable that we London centric. But even within London and beyond it’s a federation of local groups.

I would say that this is an English movement, given that we are subject to laws and policy and legislations that is being passed here.

1. *Contact and connections with other movements?*

We have sent representatives to other European movements, but our resources are limited. However, these connections are really important. I mean, the stuff going on in Spain is very relevant to us. There is austerity going on at a Europe-wide level, and there is greater privatisation going on in general, and there must be common cause and battles. Given the free trade aspect, though, the UK is a little different in the degree and means of privatisation.

1. *What does social justice mean to you ?*

It means that people have a minimum, all people. That they are not denied basic needs.

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

Dignity has resonance in terms of health, i.e. the dignity of individual care. Nurses are blamed for not providing care that is good enough. But how can you provide care that is dignified if there aren’t enough of you, or if you are not empowered to take decisions at our level that will help you to provide that quality of care. People don’t take the next step and see what is really happening, they like to blame people. And governments are the same; they are all about saving money and then not dealing with the consequences of that. What is missing is the setting of the right priorities in care provision and the energy to implement these. Nurses are too busy just managing with the scarce resources that they have to just do their jobs the best they can.

I didn’t mention the levels of work that [NAME] does at all the different levels. I mean, it is an important question how far local groups should be resisting competitive tendering and how they’ll go about it. We try to spread as much information as we can. We engage with [NGO], which is about [NAME]. We also try to engage with the [NAME], which are run by the Local Government Authority (LGA). These do have influence over CCGs, but how much and for what? Also, we engage in the debate about “What is public health?” In future, we have to decide how [NAME] will work more locally and regionally, and we need to work out how to influence politics at the local level. Now that the act has passed, we need to work towards changing how it will be implemented in the future and how we can minimise its effects.

END

**LN 18, Alice**

1. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

I guess I use it now. I found it very strange at the beginning when people defined themselves as activists.

1. *Is civil society a meaningful concept for you? Do you consider yourself part of civil society?*

Could you e[name] plain what you mean by civil society? [Interviewer provides a brief definition of civil society] If I would consider myself as part of civil society then I see civil society as a group of concerned citizens who are dedicating their time to trying to improve the world we live in. But on the other hand I am not part of any NGO or any group. Ok, you could define as a group, but it’s a very amorphous group.

1. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?*

Well, I was very politically active when I was in high school and I grew up in Italy and you’re quite politicized when you are at school. You organise and occupy when you are in school and take part in protests. And I would say that that is when it started. Then when I started university I travelled a lot and I changed countries quite often and I found it difficult to engage with the political activist groups in the different countries where I was. So for quite a long time I was not politically active, even though I was reading and going to marches. Occupy started on the 15th of October 2011 and on the 15th of October I was there. I was following from home and then going down in the evenings. Then two weeks in I made a decision that I was going to be in the camp full time. I wasn’t sleeping there, but I would go down in the morning and dedicate all my time. But of course at that time no one expected that things would last until February. We thought we’d be evicted after 3 or 4 days. So it wasn’t like I am going to commit next of my six months to this. It was like a crucial moment in time and I wanted to be a part of it.

1. *On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*

I think Occupy brought together an incredibly diverse group of people. So there are people that were clearly active and who defined themselves as activists long before Occupy, then there were people who had some engagement and then there were people who had never taken part in a march or written a letter to an MP or anything. But I would say it had people who had some sort of awareness or consciousness that joined. I have heard a lot of people say that when Occupy happened they had reached a level of frustration in which they felt they wanted to do something and they didn’t know how to. So that is something I sort of feel that could be common between people.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

I think the anti-cuts are a very specific part of the current protest scene. Because we see the cuts as the symptoms and personally I am someone who doesn’t engage so much on that because I am much more interested in the causes behind and I am much more interested on working on those things. But definitely there are people, especially in the beginning; there were people who came to Occupy from the anti-cuts movement. It came on the slogan of the 99% and the consciousness that a very, very small portion of the population was gaining from this crisis and the rest of the population wasn’t. And also in some ways it was highlighting the structures of the capitalist system. When things were ok people weren’t noticing the problems, but suddenly with the crisis, everything became apparent and so that is what Occupy is. It is in some ways it is an anti-system movement. But not necessarily, when I say that I don’t mean everyone in Occupy things that the system should be completely changed but they do think that the current system isn’t working so it should be changed.

1. *What were the main slogans of the movement?*

I think the starting point was very similar [to Occupy Wall Street and the We are the 99%]. Some of the slogans were “Capitalism iS Crisis” or “Capitalism iN Crisis”. There was a big debate whether to use one or the other. There was also “Capitalism isn’t working”, “Another World is Possible” and these were the kind of slogans. But London came straight after New York, so the “We are the 99%” was the strongest slogan.

1. *What would you say the high point of the movement was?*

I guess the first day! If you ask anyone, it was a very memorable day. The first day when people engage with Occupy it’s a memorable day.

I think something that is often missed is that from the 15th of October to the middle of February a lot of people put on hold the rest of their lives. A lot of people who were doing university courses decided to stop their courses for a year. People put their jobs on hold, relationships were broken, and people lost their homes. It was really for 5 months, people put their life on hold. So when the camp was evicted there was definitely a moment when people had to sort out everything in their own lives. So this had an effect on the movement. So I would say that what we see now [2013], is the recovery. People have managed to get back to their normal lives and to find an equilibrium and to find time to come back to dedicate time to Occupy. This has also meant that people have gone in different directions according to their personal life. I can talk about myself. I have had to leave the UK for 5 months and I just got back now. Because I had work in Italy but that meant my focus was on the international and online part of Occupy because that was the way I could continue to work on it online.

1. *What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?*

When there was the camp, the main form of communication was face to face. We would see each other everyday, 24 hours a day. There was also online communication at the same time. So online and face-to-face communication was simultaneous. Now it’s a lot online. Email, Facebook and Twitter. But also regular meetings.

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

I speak [NAME], a bit [NAME] and I understand [NAME]. And that is the advantage I have in the Internaitonal level of things.

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

I think the UK is very different form other countries, like Greece or Spain, where formal organisations have still some power. Form what I understand the trade unions aren’t as strong in the UK as they are in other countries. In Spain it was about trying to protect the movement from these forces. In the UK it has been the opposite. Where Occupy is reaching out to a certain part of society, but it isn’t reaching out to others so it’s worth engaging with these actors. So not much has happened, but the first of May, the Unions asked us to speak at the rallies in 2012 and 2013 [on 1 May]. And we’ve gone to marches that they’ve done. But it’s been a contrast with the [NAME] and that is mainly because a lot of people think a [NAME] should be free. But you have to pay, even though it’s not a lot, for us the concept of a [NAME] is something that everyone should be able to participate in. Also the fact that the word [NAME] is something we are not sure how horizontal the event will be. But again Occupy is very diverse and there will be people from Occupy doing workshops or events in the [NAME] and then there will be people from Occupy who will be protesting against it.

As for the NGOs, there are those that we work very closely with such as [NAME] and [NAME] Campaign. I think the fact that they have specific structures, they have accumulated knowledge, they can support us with things that we don’t have the time to dedicate to so the map we created for the 12 May that was done by [NAME] . I think they have their own infrastructure so they are able to produce certain kind of material. We can’t afford to have people doing research.

In terms of meeting space, it was a big problem when we lost the camp. So we mainly meet in cafes.

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?*

I think the camp was the biggest experiment from this point of view. It was criticized a lot because it attracted homeless people, but I think that it was what made it also powerful that we were able in the middle of the city to sustain such a big group of people without any rules or structures. So I think that was the biggest experiment. I would say now, that a lot people in Occupy are part of the squatting movement and they live off of skipping or sharing resources between them. They have a network of eviction resistance, so when people are evicted they support each other. So these things are happening, but they were also there before Occupy.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

The biggest achievement for me is the awareness people have now. I was thinking of the protest that happened yesterday [against the G – 8 summit]. Two years ago that would have been described in a completely different way – violent anarchists running in the road, whereas yesterday you could perceive that people were understanding that being against the system is so controversial anymore. I would say that the awareness that people have of the effects of the capitalist system. I don’t know if you came to the event at the Friends House where Haldane came to speak and he gave a speech saying Occupy was right. The room was divided into half bankers and half activists so it was very interesting. But the questions people were making I think you wouldn’t have heard it 2 years ago. Just ordinary citizens were making very good questions to the governor of the Bank of England and he agreed that if he’d made the speech two years ago that would not have been the case.

1. *Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

I think during the camp probably not. Its something I quite often says that there was a lot of aversion and resistance to structure. So there were attempts to create structures that would avoid creation of leaderships. As these structures weren’t really put in place, some informal leaderships have formed. But they aren’t leaderships that people recognise theme s leaders. But often the leadership is based on people who have more time and can get more things done and can progress more things in the movement. So this means people who are living outside of the system, like squatters or people who are living in the system, but have the time to help. It’s also about expertise. People who feel comfortable speaking in public, or writing or facilitating, or tech skills. That is why I try to put a lot of energy in skills sharing because I think it is fundamental in maintaining the horizontality.

At the same time whenever there was a perception that someone was trying to take leadership, there was so much resistance to it. I don’t you can identify leaders.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

The police were actually not violent at all. In the US it was very different. It wasn’t that they weren’t violent at all, of course there were situations that for us felt violent, like being dragged by 4 policemen and put somewhere it is violent. But the strongest affect of police violence was on the activists, its quite traumatic once they’re arrested and I am still shaken by what happened yesterday to see your friends dragged into a police van, because it could be you ne[name] t time. Police surveillance is very worrying and it stresses us a lot.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

Yes, definitely, in last week after Woolwich event it’s been very sad to see the right wing groups reacting in that way and coming out into the streets. There was a big protest last Saturday and what worries us is that 60 of the anti-fascist protestors were arrested while no one from the extreme right was arrested. And yesterday, there were so many police for a peaceful, anti-G8 protest and I heard terrible stories of people fearing for their own safety because of the fascist marches going on over the last month.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

*It means a lot. But I guess people have the possibility to make choices on things that effect them directly. That* they are included in the decision making on the things that affect them directly.

1. *Who would you demand democracy from?*

I don’t know if you demand it from anybody. I think it is something we need to build together, to create.

1. *Is Occupy democratic?*

Yes, I think so. It is an experiment in participatory democracy. Because what is very interesting that is a movement that is not based on pre-defined ideologies or conceptions of ‘this is the right way to do it’. So we know we don’t have the right way of doing things so we’re experimenting and learning through the process.

1. *What does social justice mean to you?*

For me it all goes together, it’s about equality and we’re all the same and everyone should have the same rights, both economically and politically.

1. *Who do you demand social justice from?*

Again, these are my personal views; I think it’s about creating the kind of world we’d like to see. These transformations can also come into the institutions. But again its not that we have the solutions. Of course we would expect that the current democratic systems would work toward social, economic and political justice. So I guess there is a demand from the current political system.

I think if you look at our statements what we want is really clear and it’s just a media tactic to say that we’re not clear. There are so many things that aren’t working so you can’t have one demand. What you need is a really radical change. But our statements are really clear. One thing that is missing is how we think we could get there. But that is something no one is putting forward any alternatives other than austerity, which we know isn’t working.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

I do think individuals should be responsible and that is the kind of future that I imagine. That we live in a society where we manage our resources and we are responsible for them in the same way. But in the current situation the inequalities are so unbelievable to ask for the same responsibilities from someone who can barely sustain their normal life I think its ridiculous and it makes me very angry.

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

Yes, there was very strong anger and indignation. I mean we talk about human rights and human dignity, but dignity is not a word we hear often.

1. *Are others connected globally?*

I would say you could divide Occupy into two parts. There are people who are completely English and have never left the country many times. And then there is a very big international community in Occupy London. There were a lot of people from Spain at the camp and they were also active in the 15M movement in London. So I think it really depends on whom you talk to. Some people who identify as English don’t feel as connected to what is going on elsewhere, but the internationals definitely are. I think that has a lot of potential because in a city like London, we have so many people with connections to so many different countries and these days there are things going on in Turkey and then there is a protest to support Greek people. It allows us to support Turkish activists and to learn more from them. What I’ve been privileged compared to others is that I’ve travelled a lot this year and meeting people from other countries is really good.

1. *Similarities to the Arab Spring?*

Definitely. I find it interesting with people commenting that Turkey isn’t the same as Occupy. What is fascinating is that we feel the same. The Turkish activists are writing to us and we are trying to sustain them and help them. So of course, everything is localized and what is happening is connected to the local struggles. But its all concentrated in such a moment of time that there must be some connections and to me it’s the really practices in which its happening. The fact that you have a camp and all the camps form in a same way. And you have a library, the school, the canteen; it’s all the same.

1. *Was anything unique about Occupy London?*

It’s very similar to OWS. Compared to other occupations around the world, we are in the centre of power. That is what makes it unique. But at the same time by being between the States and Europe, it’s an important place from an international point of view. It has huge inequalities in the UK with the richest and poorest boroughs.

END

**LN 19, Mia**

1. *Is civil society a meaningful concept for you? Do you consider yourself part of civil society?*
2. *How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?*
3. *On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?*
4. *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Absolutely, yes. Well, going back how many decades I was involved in the student movement. I wasn’t exactly brought up in an activist family, but my parents were active and we were quite political. We opposed apartheid very strongly and in that boycott campaign. And I grew up with politics and a strong sense of justice. So I guess that is why as a secondary school pupil I was involved in student council and the student union at art school. So I guess I have always been active in one way or another supporting social justice campaigns. When I was a teenager I was active in the youth section of the Labour Party. But I left the Labour Party quite long time ago. So I have been active in one shape or another.

I am the co-founder of [NAME] Two of us founded [NAME] But before founding [NAME] I have been a trade union activist for 20 years in the [NAME] and also in the [NAME] . I am a member of the [NAME] Committee. I am a vice-president in one of our groups in [NAME] .

The reason we founded [NAME], with [NAME] , who comes from a community activist background. It was in the lead up to the election, in the summer, when the Lib-Con Coalition made the first announcements about austerity measures. I already had concerns and had been campaigning for years previously around the disproportionate impact of cuts on black workers in particular because of [NAME] and other works outside of London. So with the impending cuts I could see the wider and deeper impact that would bring. I realized that what I could do in my trade union was very limited and what I could do in [NAME] was very different. So the same time I was thinking this and getting really worried of what was going to happen, Lee had put out a request stating he wanted to set out a monitoring measure to see how the cuts were impacting black people. So I responded and said we need to go a lot further than monitoring. We need to campaign.

We know the cuts are going to be disproportionate, we know that they are going to impact on black communities. When we say black we mean in a political sense to encompass everybody African, Asian, diaspora, etc.

I don’t like the term ‘BME’ or ethnic minority. I had set up an organization in a previous union because they didn’t want to use the word ‘black’ and so I set up an organization called Ethnic Majority. We are not a minority if you look around the world.

So through that conversation, [NAME] and I founded [NAME] and that was in 2010. So [NAME] very much came from a community background and I came from a trade union background. And this was quite important in that we could bring together the different organizations and structures.

[NAME] is a national campaign and you found that after [NAME] got formed. . So the purpose of it is to campaign the disproportionate impact of cuts on black workers and communities. So we focus on black communities and we know that those issues also impact deprived community. So we brought up structures, we’re everywhere in the UK but we have a Scotland [NAME] We’re working to set up a Wales [NAME] We have structures in Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol. So really what we do with those regional structures is that black people come together and create their local [NAME] so they can address the issues they are facing that are impacting them.

1. *Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? What would you call the movement? How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?*

Yes, I think we are part of a wider anti-cuts movement which is made up of communities, trades unions and anti-cuts groups but we have got a specific focus at the same time that other groups don’t have in terms of austerity. Other organizations focus on race and racism, but I think we are quite unique in that we focus on both race discrimination and on cuts. What we found as we gone on, as our focus was on austerity and cuts, but what you actually find under this government is that racism is increasing. They have taken race off the agenda, but racism is on the agenda. They say we live in a post-racial society, but in reality its becoming more and more racist every day. And black people and black communities are scapegoated by the far right. And we’ve seen what’s happened after Woolwich, the response of the far right. So its tackling of the racism that’s fallen off the government’s agenda and at the same time its tackling the disproportionate impact of the cuts.

1. *Does [NAME] have a slogan?*

No specific slogan. The other groups you’ve mentioned we work in partnerships.

1. *The high point?*

It's not a single high point. It's about insuring that race is on the agenda in the anti-cuts movement, because the anti-cuts movement is quite white. We want to ensure that we have a voice and sometimes we have to fight for that voice. Because some organizations always invite us and include us, while others we have a bit of battle to be on the agenda. So it's about the consistency. But we are speaking out about the issues, we are campaigning.

One of the things that we did that we did in the first year when we started up was to run seminars and workshops. Which was really about arming at individuals and groups with the knowledge to go back in and campaign against the cuts. So it's not a highlight that we’ve achieved this, but it's about keeping it on the agenda.

1. *What other repertoires of action?*

We are about people power and using our voice. It's about mobilizing people. One of the things that we’re doing at the movement is we’re running a campaign in 2013 is running a campaign called [NAME]. the question we are asking, which we know the answer to, is have we achieved equality 50 years on from that speech. In the UK and the USA and around the world the answer to that is no, we don’t have. But it's about creating a dialog about race and racism but using different methods.

So one part of it we’re organizing a march on Westminster because it is a combination of cuts but also about justice, the stop and search tactics. And we are also organizing a residential conference which is focused on the issues. Its aimed at bringing together community, trade union and just activists who are concerned. But we will also focus on young people and children. We’ll have crèche that will teach children about black people and their contribution. We are also organizing Question Time events and we want to get stuff televised to have that dialog up and down the country to get people talking about what is affecting our communities. We are also doing comedy show called ‘Racism? You must be Joking!” So it’s a humorous way of getting that message about racism out there. So it’s a combination of things that we are doing. Ideally what we want to do is to make the conference and the march an annual event. To say that we have not forgotten about the issues. We are using our voice, we are using our people power. We are mobilizing people to speak out about what is happening.

1. *Modes of communication?*

We use social networking a lot. There have been quite a lot of campaigns around racism. I don’t know if you know about the campaign I ran last year which succeeded in overturning the Olympic Committee to give The Voice newspaper accreditation. It’s the biggest black newspaper in Britain and yet there were no British black news organizations that were given accreditation. But at the same time the BBC had 200 passes, but they wouldn’t give one to the [NAME] [NAME] newspaper. So I launched a petition and within 2.5 days the decision was overturned because politicians got involved, like Boris Johnson, Tessa Jowell and all sorts of celebrities. Because a petition is an easy way of getting people engaged. We were about to do more to campaign on it, but on the 3rd day they did a U-turn on it so we didn’t need to do more. So that is an example of how an online petition can have an impact and we got national news coverage on that.

Social networks are important. There is the website but we also use our FB page and Twitter to advertise to publicize what we are doing. But we also think face to face meetings are important so we have done meetings and workshops up and down the country. Also speaking at other anti-cuts and trade union events, and not just our own events. So we set up a steering group in [NAME] which meets regularly and we have a coordinating group for [NAME] which also meets regularly to take forward decisions.

I don’t do this full time, this is an addition to everything else that I do. I have my trade union role and I am also a performance poet and an artist. There is a lot of things I am involved in. Of course we could do with a full time administrator, but we can’t afford that financially. I don’t know if we could get sponsorship for that from the trade unions, but trade unions are pretty hard hit financially at the moment.

1. *Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than English?*

Only communicate in English.

*Have new leaders emerged from these movements?*

*Do you think the crisis has impacted on women in a different way from men?' 'Have there been specific gender dynamics in the movement*

*Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

*Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

1. *How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?*

There are several trade unions that are affiliated nationally with [NAME] and then there are branches that are affiliated with regional [NAME] My union, because it is my union, [NAME] has been very involved. Members of the [NAME] Committee are also involved in [NAME] .

There also community activists are involved and other anti-cuts groups are involved, we’ve also done stuff with [NAME] and [NAME] . Also [NAME] is a key organization, and the other groups I mentioned earlier such as the [NAME] , the [NAME] , too.

As for political parties, there have been projects I have been involved in such as ‘[NAME] ’ campaign in which a [NAME] was involved. We’ve also had meetings with [NAME] about an initiative. But all these contacts are at an individual basis, project by project.

1. *We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects in other countries, are there social solidarity projects in the UK they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?*

Well, look at David Cameron’s idea of Big Society which is wanting more people to do something for nothing which is actually they should give funding for and have jobs to do. It’s a false economy actually, because making everything voluntary then everything comes to a standstill and what the country needs is development, growth and jobs. And jobs cut in the public sector have an knock on effect in the private sector because you don’t have enough money coming in you can’t spend.

But in terms of Big Society as people volunteering themselves, we actually see more and more people volunteering than ever before. Because I go to a lot of meetings for example I am part of a campaign group challenging the bedroom ta[name] in my local authority. And there are people who are definitely not activists but they come along because it is impacting on them individually. But because they are coming along, they are getting active. I think there are more and more people becoming active and volunteering and doing things which they wouldn’t have done before because of austerity. And a lot of that is because of necessity and need. Would they have done it before? There are lots of people who are doing okay and have a nice income coming in and are not interested in getting involved.

1. *What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?*

*I* think the Occupy Movement has been important. The direct actions taken by [NAME] which have highlighted and e[name] posed what’s been happening by huge companies not paying their taxes. In fact it was my union which first highlighted that issue and we produced documents on ta[name] havens and ta[name] evasion. Because our members are based in [NAME] so we got a sense of this very early on.

So I think there have been various direct actions which have been very successful in highlighting issues and bringing them to the media spotlight. But I think there are lots of small wins which people don’t see. Like Strike Action, which people might say “well what did it achieve?” Under the Labour Government we were able to stop changes to our pensions. But if people weren’t doing anything things would be a lot worse than they are now. So the fact that we have the ability to mobilize, to speak out and to challenge what’s happening and to campaign and be visible all has an impact on things. But I think that there is a lot more that we need to achieve. But it's not been easy. But you can imagine if we weren’t doing this how things would be. Of course we haven’t gotten to the point of other countries, where they are really out there [protesting in the streets]. We haven’t achieved that yet. The nearest we came to that was in the riots. A lot of people don’t recognize that the riots are a form of uprising and that they are a response to austerity, but I believe that they were. They weren’t in the structured or organized fashion that activists that I work with would recognize, but I think it was a response to austerity.

In fact [NAME] was speaking at public meetings about the riots and research done by the TUC and Guardian demonstrated what we said in that the riots took place in areas of the UK that are officially recorded as deprived. Where there was the highest rate of school dinner rates and highest rate of uptake of EMA before it was scrapped. Which all shows that it happened in the deprived areas of the country which were disproportionately black. We saw young black people demonized by politicians and the media. Why are they disproportionately black? Because black people are disproportionately concentrated in the deprived areas in the country because of the discrimination we face in society, in the workplace, and in everything else. So we end up living in the poorest areas because we have less income and we’re more likely to live in social housing because we can’t afford to get a mortgage. In fact the deepest cuts have been made in the poorest boroughs. And where everything kicked off in Tottenham, it wasn’t about austerity, it was about another murder of a black man by police. Actually [NAME] is an area where they closed down 17 youth centres and all the resources had really deep cuts.

1. *Racial diversity in the anti-cuts movement?*

Well, there isn’t racial diversity in the anti-cuts movement. That is the very short answer, which I think makes [NAME] existence even more crucial as we are able to mobilize and to be a voice for black people. Actually, historically, it's not as easy to get black people to come out and to do the protests. So sometimes it's about doing things differently and finding different ways to engage and participate. Some of that might be through the arm-chair activism and social networking and that sort of stuff. As well as getting people along and out there and visible.

What we have sought to do is to ensure that black people have a voice in all of the activities that have gone on. With the [NAME] , we’ve had the same struggle whereby when the [NAME] called the second march, they weren’t going to have any black speakers. They didn’t come and consult the [NAME] Committee about who should speak, so we made representations and said we would want to speak because we are the only national anti-cuts group that is focused on black workers and black people and this was what the march was about. And we were rejected as speakers. Then they got a celebrity at the last minute.

Unfortunately this is what we’ve seen in the anti-cuts movement. When we have made a noise and threatened to expose them and to write open letters that is when that they run around and think “Right we need to have a black face around”. Eventually they invited [NAME] who runs [NAME] . But when Simon made his speech, he said “It shouldn’t be me speaking, it should be [NAME] and [NAME] from [NAME] that are speaking because they are the ones doing all the work on this issue.”

It’s almost like if your face doesn’t fit, then you are not going to fit in with what they want you to say and to do. Then they might not necessarily want you there. But that said, it's ridiculous how many speaking requests that we get. We could be speaking every day. And we are struggling to fill those. So it isn’t a case that we’re silenced.

1. *Why is it difficult to get black people protesting?*

I think it is quite complex because black people have been on the side-lines of those movements so they don’t see those movements as representing them and their needs and views. And unless they see that those organizations are speaking out for them or that those organizations are represented by people that look like them, that are going to speak about the issues then it's not an attractive option to get involved.

Also, there is a lot of young, white middle class people that are involved in a lot of these movements who perhaps have richer mummies and daddies who can take a few years to get go around and get involved. We have the same thing in the anti-fascist movement; yes there are black people involved. When you are black you are visible, so when you are going to a counterdemonstration against the far right, you are visible target, so that puts some people off because you are a target. Whereas if you are white, you are just part of the mass of people and you are not going to be singled out and targeted. But also black people want to see the trade union movement, the anti-cuts movement or whoever it is addressing everyday racism they face. People are already struggling to keep a roof over their head and to keep a job going. There are more black people working in temporary or casual jobs, so they don’t have a steady income so if you are struggling against the everyday racism, then you don’t have a lot of energy or time left to go out and do the other stuff. So the majority of the black people you see involved, are black people who were already activists whether community or trade union activist. So they were involved anyway.

1. *Have new leaders emerged?*

Rather than individuals yes you have [NAME] and [NAME] that are recognized. You also have Queers Against Cuts and Women Against Cuts, but they are not as recognized as we are. I don’t know how visible they are.

Interestingly the [name] Newspaper published an article about me and they said I was a leader and they defined what a leader is and gave the attributes of leaders. You can probably access it online. It is titled [NAME] , the article says is that leaders are not those people who say “I am a leader” but its defined by their actions who can get large numbers of people on board to participate in the activities and campaigns they are doing. Which I think is true.

But if you ask me for names, then I wouldn’t be able to name one person. But perhaps it is different for [NAME] because people would probably be able to name me and [NAME] . In trade unions, definitely, there are leaders against the cuts, like [NAME] . Our union has been at the forefront of campaigning and speaking out against the cuts.

1. *Disproportionate impact of the crisis?*

There are so many tiers and layers. The cuts to the public sector have had a disproportionate impact on black workers. Because the public sector is the biggest employer of black people. The reason why there is such a high concentration of black workers in the public sector is because of the discrimination in the private sector meaning that they couldn’t get a foot on the ladder in the first place. The public sector is seen as a fairer employer with more equality policies and so on, so people see that they have a chance of getting work there. And those policies came about after the Scarmer Report, after the Bri[name] ton Riots. That is going back quite some time as to why black workers are concentrated in the public sector. But having said that, they’re in the lowest grades and often on the lowest pay and the most vulnerable to cuts. So when its frontline jobs that they’re cutting, then its more likely to be black workers that go. At the same time there are a high proportion of black workers that work in temporary work and that is again because of discrimination. It particularly impacts on more recent migrant workers that work for agencies or temporary jobs. So they haven’t got that same financial stability. So that this the sort of issue with jobs. We’ve also had our pay frozen for the past 3 years. The contribution to our pension has been tripled, but if you are on the lowest pay, then that is going to have a deeper impact on you. So many of our workers that work in the [NAME] claim some of the same benefits they administer because their income is so low that they are entitled to benefits that can back them up.

I mentioned before that the deepest cuts to local authorities on services such as youth centres, have been in the poorest areas and the poorest areas are where there is the largest concentration of black people. Because of all the funding cuts that come from central and local government and voluntary sector. Because the other place where there is a large concentration of black workers is the voluntary sector. We have seen loads and loads of race advisory services, interpretation services, and specialist services that have ended up having to close their doors or are hanging on a shoe string budget where they can barely survive. That has a knock on effect on the black workers and also the communities they serve because specialist services for black people are all in areas where black people live. And then you’ve got the impact on young black people. There is data that shows that 1 in 2 black people are unemployed and that the tripling of tuition fees and the scrapping of EMAs has a disproportionate impact on black people and they are less likely to go to higher education and universities because their parents who they are relying to fund their living costs are impacted by the unemployment. So what’s happening with the bedroom ta[name] and the transferring of black families who are living in communities in London where they feel secure and supported, where they have services, facilities and friend and family they can rely on and transferring them to an area where they don’t know anybody and where they can become the victims of a hate crime and have even more difficulty getting work. Because in a rural and more white area they will find it even harder to find work, because there will be less equal opportunity employers. This means they will be in even worse positions. So there are so many different layers, but the reality is that whatever aspect of cuts you look at, there is a disproportionate impacts on black communities. Because if black people are made redundant and lose their jobs that is going to take them longer to get back into work because of the discrimination in the labour market already e[name] isted before cuts and austerity. Then we’ve got the scapegoating of black and migrant people by the far right and a Government and a media that are quite racist and they fuel that.

1. *Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?*

That is interesting because the BNP, we managed to get rid of them through effective campaigning because they did win seats and we campaigned robustly against them. But now they have the far right, like the EDL, and splinter groups coming out. You’ve also got the nasty fascists in other European countries, like Greece. If you look at what’s happening across Europe fascism is growing. People might not think the EDL is much of a threat, they are just football hooligans on the street, but actually they are growing as a result of the crisis. They are allowed to promote the hatred out in the street, they are given lots of air time on TV, especially by the racist BBC who love UKIP and love having Tommy Robinson [from the EDL] and whoever else on their programmed all the time. What that does is fit into people who already have racist views who are looking for someone to blame because their job has been cut and their home is under threat. They are struggling and things are hard, they are looking for a scapegoat. And that is what happened with the BNP in Barking which was a traditional Labour voters, they are the ones who voted the BNP in. it wasn’t Tories, it wasn’t right wing people that voted the BNP in because they felt disenfranchised, they felt isolated and they felt that their needs weren’t being addressed or taken care of. So we’ve seen in the last couple of years the racist outbreaks on public transport that have been recorded on YouTube. I think that the far right visibility empowers those with racist views to e[name] press those racist views.

1. *Has the use of police violence affected the movement?*

*W*e are involved in joint actions, so at Occupy at St Paul's we did a Martin Luther King event and we brought Jesse Jackson twice to meet with them. We also had an event at Occupy with a gospel choir and black singers, so we could bring the black community together with Occupy. We are often on people’s committees.

With police violence, where do you want me to start? I have been in a head lock, I have had my head wrap ripped off, and nearly killed and trampled to death by a mounted police so I have had it all. And this is me alone with these experiences. But we have seen that at protests it seems that black people are targeted by the police and we know that black people are generally targeted by the police with stop and search and racial profiling and so on. It does seem like that at protests where black people are singled out and targeted by the police. The experiences I have had of being charged at by the mounted police are just things that happen to all of us. I have a disability that affects my leg so protests are a bit of struggle for me. But it was the treatment afterwards that was bad. So I was stood by the side with my cousin, who is black, and the police tried to move us on and I said I have an injury to my foot and I just need to rest for a moment. But they were just trying to move us on and it was just push, push, shove, shove. So I put in complaint to my PCC and [NAME] came along and he is very well known to the police because of his previous job. And we set out concerns about the duty of care and we’ve done that previously when they are kittling people and people are contained in a tight area for a long period of time with no water, no toilet facilities, no food, and in general they target anti-racist when there are counter demo like we had the other day with the BNP. So 58 anti-racists were arrested by the police. Because the police said they were going to end all the protests. Actually there were three at the time with the BNP, the anti-racists and the badger culling protest which is quite funny with badger masks and they started chanting “Badgers are black and white!’. So the police announced that all protests were going to end at 4 pm except the BNP who could have another hour for themselves. So why is special treatment being given to a nasty, fascist group. So some people stayed around that area and the police just went for them suddenly. They had announced that people should disperse, but they charged and they broke a woman’s leg severely in two places and people were hurt, some had their clothing ripped off. Then at 2 or 3 in the morning they released them on bail. They don’t need to release them at 3 am to release them, but do it on purpose so people are stuck and won’t be able to go home. So I think they do target and look at what they did to students.

1. *What does democracy mean to you?*

I come from a trade union movement so democracy is very important, but democracy in that respect is about having a voice, voting, participating in policy and decisions and its very much the same in the wider world except you may not have the same democratic structures in which to participate in. when it comes to our politicians and people making decisions on our behalf, we don’t have that voice. It's more difficult. There are less black MPs and that is reducing each year. There was an increase in black MPs by Lib Dems and Tories.

One of the things we are trying to do with the [NAME] campaign is to encourage people to be involved in democratic structures and politics. But that is difficult to do because people don’t think they have a voice or that the main political parties represent them and their concerns so they are less likely to exercise their vote.

The other aspect of democracy in the wider anti-cuts movement is that to ensure we have a voice and that our concerns are acted on. So it's all very well the rhetoric and people doing grand speeches, but it's important what is happening on the ground and what are people doing to engage with the communities that are hardest hit. I think that is an important part of it.

1. *Is [NAME] democratic.*

Interestingly [NAME] doesn’t have democratic structures. Whoever wants to be involved is involved. The people who want to be committee chairs are the people who put their hands up and want to be involved. We had discussions about having democratic structures and elections and AGMs, but we purposely did not do that after discussions because the time the bureaucratic stuff would take away from the time we need to be out there fighting the cuts. We didn’t want to be bogged down by that. So it isn’t that we don’t believe in democratic structures, because we all come from backgrounds where democratic structures were present.

1. *What does social justice mean to you?*

I don’t know what social justice really means. I suppose on one level, yes the state has the responsibility for setting out what should happen but we all have a responsibility in ensuring that it happens. But at the moment, black people are experiencing social injustice, the complete opposite in every aspect of life.

1. *Does the word dignity have resonance in the UK content of activism ? Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?*

It's not a term that we use. We speak of dignity at work in the trade unions movement. And actually it is relevant because if you are homeless. We have done surveys of our PCS members and found that they are worse off now. People are skipping meals to feed their children. We have people that are going to get food parcels just to survive and people don’t have dignity in terms of what they are having to face. And look at how black people are demonized. We are told that black people are taking all the jobs and social housing. Unemployed people are called scroungers and disabled people are called lazy and just taking benefits and not working. None of that is dignified because they are labelled. They have other people saying and thinking that about you, because that is what the media is saying and the Con Dem Coalition, so that is not a dignified way to live.

1. *In the content of austerity, there has been much talk of ‘individual responsibility’ what would you say to that?*

Sod off. We have got individual responsibility which is why people want dignity and want to earn enough to live off. Nobody actually wants to claim benefits. But if you are forced into that situation, you are forced into that situation. What most people want in life is to earn enough money to put a roof over their head and to support their children. To live comfortably, and I am not talking about a middle class comfortably, and that is not much to ask for. And that those things have been stripped away by a Con Dem Coalition of millionaires who have never had to live through a day of hardship because they have been born with a silver spoon in their mouth and have lived life of lu[name] ury. And they don’t actually need the wages they are earning because they already have millions. But it isn’t just the Con Dem Coalition, look at the Labour Party, they are all coming from O[name] bridge background and a lot of them are from professional backgrounds. So they don’t understand the hardship that people are going through.

1. *Anything unique about London?*

[NAME] is a national organization and if we speak to our counterparts in Europe and the USA black people suffer pretty much the same as here and it might even be worse in other countries. But because Lee and I are based in London, we end up being London centric. So our residential workshop is being organized in Manchester. The reason why we hold events in London is because we don’t have the money to make it wider. There is also a large concentration of black people in London and that is where we are trying to build the [NAME] in the large cities.

There is a lot of movement all over the UK. Sometimes they are replicating the big London events. Also, because it’s the capital city it’s where the money is, and it’s where the headquarters of large organizations, including the trade unions, are located. We rely on the trade union movement for support for our activities. It happens in a lot of capital cities.

1. *Links with other movements in other countries?*

Its links with individuals. We have a strong link with Jesse Jackson and he came over to support us and he can headline the letters we send to newspapers. The other day one of our [NAME] members had a [NAME] on TV. How I got involved with US activists was because of [NAME] campaign and I did lots of interviews. The media organizations got in touch because black media also face the same issues in the US. We had a lot of solidarity support from around the world on that campaign. Through social networking I speak to a lot of activists in the US, but I think we could do more to reach out to our counterparts in Europe. We don’t do enough on that front. There is an organization called [NAME] in Europe, we have had some involvement with them. Also the [NAME] has links across Europe. There is a lot more we could be doing, but it's about time and resources to bring people over. Finance limits what we could do. I think it's better we are doing things more creatively, and I am glad we don’t rely on donations.

END

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)