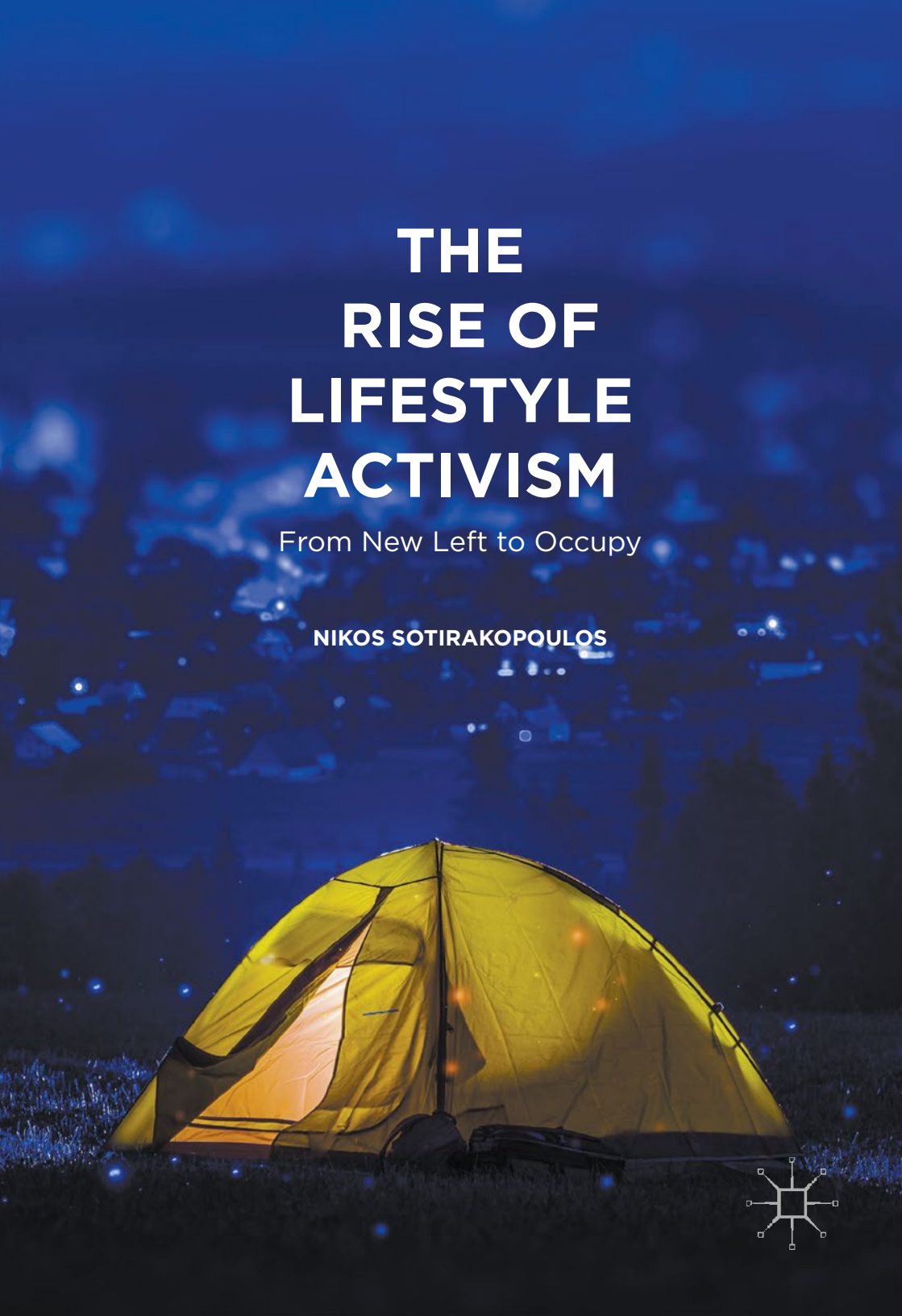
THE RISE OF LIFESTYLE ACTIVISM

From New Left to Occupy

NIKOS SOTIRAKOPOULOS



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palgrave
macmillan

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ISBN 978-1-137-55102-3 ISBN 978-1-137-55103-0 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55103-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016947743

Cover image © Tomasz Zajda / Alamy Stock Photo

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Macmillan Publishers Ltd. London

Acknowledgments

There are various people to whom I owe a debt for completing this book. First of all, to my parents, who taught me the importance of ideas and good education, and who helped me pursue it. Friends and loved ones have also been generous in their encouragement and appreciation throughout the past few years. Since the book is related to my PhD work, I would like to thank my supervisor Chris Rootes, who has been more than a mentor to me. The whole community at the University of Kent has been conducive to the generation of good ideas; but special thanks are due to those who trusted me with the various jobs that helped me make ends meet. Also, I need to thank the people in the Sociology team at Loughborough University, who, by being excellent colleagues, made the final months of the writing of this book as comfortable as possible for me. I am also indebted to the research participants at Occupy London, who generously offered me their time and their thoughts. Also, many thanks to Gerard Casey for being generous with his time and reading a draft on a very short notice.

The ideas in this book are a product of my interaction with people who took me out of my intellectual comfort zone and made me question my certainties: friends and scholars like Ashley Frawley, Frank Furedi, Philip Cunliffe and the numerous out-of-the-box thinkers in and around the Institute of Ideas and the Battle of Ideas. More generally, the intellectual milieu championing freedom, progress and humanism has, in one way

or another, contributed to my view of the world that is expressed in this book; of course the final result and any shortcomings are my own. Last, but not least, I must acknowledge a debt to Olga Ntalaka, not only for her love and support, but also for putting my ideas to the test, and for providing an actual 'refuge' in Canterbury at various times during the writing of this book.

Loughborough, Spring 2016

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Introduction

Capitalism, Anti-Capitalism and the Battle of Ideas

In the future, the historian of ideas will have a hard time in assessing the period in which we live. It has been only a couple of decades since the 'end of history' was declared: that is, the triumph of liberal democracy, signalled by the fall of its opponent, state socialism in the Eastern bloc in 1989–91. Supposedly, we are living in the times of TINA (There Is No Alternative) and the 'neo-liberal' consensus, though never defined, casts a heavy shadow. Yet, a reality test some years after the financial crisis of 2008 shows that these assumptions, while popular (especially in academia and in leftist circles), are neither self-evident nor necessarily correct.

Therein lies an intellectual mystery: to a significant extent, the left has managed to popularize a narrative on the supposed causes of the crisis, while at the same time it has a hard time bringing about any positive change in the sphere of politics. An interesting fact is that the steady victorious advance of the left in the realm of ideas is hardly ever recognized. Yet someone trying to think of the most popular explanation for the social and economic problems of our times, would find that—from the

N. Sotirakopoulos, *The Rise of Lifestyle Activism*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55103-0_1

President of the USA Barack Obama to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and from Pope Francis to several Nobel Prize laureates—the answer was almost unanimous: what brought us here was the free-market system and greedy bankers, running amok after deregulation and taking advantage of a retreat in state control. Few pause to think that this narrative, while appealing to large numbers of people across political divisions, is problematic. After all, the banking sector has been one of the most strictly regulated fields of the US (and the European) economy, supervised by more than 115 regulatory agencies (Yadav 2010, p. 323). Also, it is fairly doubtful that the de-regulation that actually took place in the last decades in the banking sector had anything to do with the 2008 crash (Calabria 2009; Gramm 2009). Strong evidence for the roots of the crisis that go against the narrative of the left, such as the politically motivated encouragement of subprime mortgages by consecutive US governments, practically forcing banks to provide loans with questionable security to poorer families, and with the mortgages secured by the quasi-governmental enterprises of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, are hardly mentioned in mainstream debates on what went wrong in the period leading to 2008. The success of the leftist narrative in explaining the 2008 meltdown is also evident in the attention that the 2011 Occupy movement has attracted from the media, despite its relatively small size. It is also telling that Occupy's message was addressed with sympathy, even among the establishment, including unlikely figures such as the 2012 Republican Candidate Mitt Romney (Geiger and Reston 2011), the US Federal Reserve's Chairman Ben Bernanke (Coscarelli 2011) and the UK Business Secretary Vince Cable (*the Guardian* 2011).

But the success of the leftist ideology in the public sphere goes beyond outlining a convincing narrative for the 2008 crisis. Issues such as environmentalism and the construction of income inequality as a social problem, which used to be predominantly on the agenda of the left, are now almost unanimously adopted by the political establishment. In July 2015, Pope Francis issued the 'Encyclical *Laudato Si'* on the Care of our Common Home', a document that could be read as a manifesto for sustainable development and global justice, effectively condemning some of the core elements of capitalism, such as individualism and consumerism (Holy Father Francis 2015). The US President Obama has named climate

change as the biggest challenge humanity is facing and income inequality the biggest domestic challenge for the US economy (Harwood 2015; Park 2015). The UK's Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, in his first months after assuming leadership of the Tories, and perhaps in an attempt to distance himself from the Thatcherite image of rigid materialism and individualism, declared that 'it's time we admitted that there's more to life than money and it's time we focused not just on GDP but on GWB—general wellbeing' (BBC 2006a). He also characterized consumer culture as problematic, for failing to 'meet the deep human need for commitment and belonging' (BBC 2006a). The Conservative Party even changed its logo to a tree, with Cameron launching the slogan 'vote blue, go green', and not hesitating to use a motto of the Global Justice Movement, calling people to 'think global, act local' (BBC 2006b). Granted, these are more elements of political posturing than policy, but the mere fact that for PR reasons he had to adopt this image is quite telling about what the ideological *zeitgeist* of our times demands.

Furedi is right to mention that, despite a wave of support for the ideology of free-market liberalism (or so-called 'neo-liberalism') in the 1980s, and despite the fact that the market economy seems to be the only viable game in town today, capitalism has lost the battle of ideas (Furedi 2013). There might be a growing movement of radicals for capitalism, as evidenced by the lively Ron Paul presidential campaigns in 2008 and 2012, a surge in sales of Ayn Rand books and rapid growth of the Students for Liberty movement, but the fact remains that such voices are still considered marginal outsiders. But then, if capitalism is (falsely or correctly) blamed for the 2008 financial crisis and the slow and timid recovery in subsequent years, then why is the left not grasping the chance to fill the void, ride the tide and dominate politically? Why is it that, when it manages to gain power, as in the case of the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) in Greece, it, ironically, confirms that indeed there is no alternative and has to capitulate to the continuation of so-called austerity programmes? And if the left has succeeded in seeing some of its ideas, or at least its rhetoric, accepted by the powers that be, and if it has throughout recent decades de-legitimized some of the fundamental principles of free-market capitalism (individualism, rigid economic growth, materialism) among considerable sections of the population, but then fails to provide a

better alternative, does it have any practical political significance, beyond being 'a voice of conscience' or 'the Party of complaint'? These are the questions that were the initial inspiration for writing the current book.

The Left Then and Now

In order to solve an intellectual mystery, its nature first needs to be properly understood. If one wishes to understand the conundrum of the apparent popularity of leftist ideas in the cultural sphere today with the concurrent inability of the political left to pose a viable alternative to capitalism (or, more properly, to the mixed economy that is dominant today), what needs to be clarified is: (a) what are the ideas that characterize the left today, (b) where do they come from, (c) why are they more mainstream *now* and (d) why can't they materialize in a successful political, social and economic programme?

This book is about the changes in the philosophical orientation, the values and the ethics of the left in recent decades. Such changes have been apparent since the 1960s and that is why the term 'New Left' has been used: so as to distinguish the ideas, forms of action and cultural values of some new political and social movements from those of the so-called 'old-left', that is, the labour and socialist movements and the strong communist parties of the past that focused their struggle on class interests and were oriented mostly towards conquering political power and transforming society as a whole, based on their ideology. In this work the term 'New Left' refers to the relevant movements and ideas of the 1960s and 1970s, while the term 'new left' (lower case) will be used to refer to the broader set of movements which share common ideological roots with the New Left but have developed in different directions. Yet, the old left is in such decline (with exceptions that only prove the rule, such as the 'orthodox' Communist Party of Greece), that sometimes the terms 'left' and 'new left' might be used interchangeably.

I intend to focus in two topics that appeared with the New Left and that I consider crucial for shaping the character of the wider left in the upcoming decades: (a) a questioning of 'materialist' values, leading to a problematization of economic growth and (b) an uneasiness with 'instru-

mental reason' as a tool for understanding (and changing) the world and the promotion, in its place, of an appeal to emotionalism. These themes are key if one wants to understand the intellectual journey of the left in the last few decades: from the adoption of environmentalism as one of its more central narratives to the fellow-travelling with the so-called post-modernist school and other related philosophical/epistemological movements, to the switch from the anti-authoritarian 'it is forbidden to forbid' of the 1960s to a 'cosying up' with the welfare state and the constant calls for more intervention and regulation (from speech codes to calls for higher taxes) in the past few decades. Additionally, a third topic in the background, coming to existence as a result of the two main topics, will be the construction of a weak human subjectivity by the New Left and its heirs, often undermining individual agency and seeing a vulnerable human subject as being under constant threat from environmental, physical and emotional forces.

The themes underlying the examination of these topics are the following: (a) these changes in the left in recent decades will be seen from a critical perspective and a hypothesis will be that they might have something to do with the left's inability to form a persuadive and successful political and economic model, (b) these changes are in a dialectical relationship with the *zeitgeist* and the popular philosophical trends of each era; they bear the marks of dominant contemporary ideas and at the same time they influence and shape these ideas.

If one had to fit on a single page an overview of the historical journey of the left, the starting point would have to be the ideas of the Enlightenment and of modernity, as expressed by figures such as Francis Bacon, John Locke and René Descartes. These were the beginning of the road that led to the rise to socialism and liberalism, two forces fighting for the overthrow of the old order of religious mysticism, political oppression and social and economic backwardness. But what does it mean to speak about modernity? What are the characteristics of an era, a set of values and a philosophical outlook that can bear the title 'modern'? Hicks gives a good account of the meaning of the modern: (a) an outlook having as a starting point the natural, as opposed to the pre-modern attachment to the supernatural, (b) reason and perception as the means through which the world can be known, as opposed to faith and mysticism, (c) moral

autonomy in making one's character, as opposed to ideas of pre-given order or original sin, (d) the individual as the unit of value, not to be subordinated to a higher tribal or feudal authority (Hicks 2004, pp. 7–8). It logically follows that if humans are capable of reason and of perceiving reality, and at the same time they are ends in themselves, rather than being born to serve the needs of a master or group, then they can be trusted with political and economic freedom, and this freedom will lead to a future that will be better and more prosperous.

Bauman's poetic narration of the first steps of the communist ideal (irrespective of whether communism ever actually had anything to do with this image) as a materialization of modernity in all its glory is telling and worth of a lengthy quotation:

> Communism was made to the measure of modern hopes and promises. Socialism's younger, hotheaded and impatient brother, it wholeheartedly shared in the family trust in the wonderful promises and prospects of modernity, and was awe-struck by the breathtaking vistas of society doing away with historical and natural necessity and by the idea of the ultimate subordination of nature to human needs and desires. […] Its war cry was: 'Kingdom of Reason—now!' Like socialism (and all other staunch believers in the modern values of technological progress, the transformation of nature and a society of plenty), communism was thoroughly modern in its conviction that a good society can only be a carefully designed, rationally managed and thoroughly industrialized society. […] Communism was modernity in its most determined mood and most decisive posture; modernity streamlined, purified of the last shred of the chaotic, the irrational, the spontaneous, the unpredictable. (1992, pp. 166–7)

Thus, socialism (sometimes used interchangeably with communism by its early advocates) had one *raison d'être*: to provide even more than capitalism, minus the latter's perceived injustices. This spirit is captured by the radical suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst, who in (1923) stated what socialism stands for:

> Socialism means plenty for all. We do not preach a gospel of want and scarcity, but of abundance. Our desire is not to make poor those who today are rich, in order to put the poor in the place where the rich are now. Our

> desire is not to pull down the present rulers to put other rulers in their place. We wish to abolish poverty and to provide abundance for all. We do not call for limitation of births, for penurious thrift, and self-denial. We call for a great production that will supply all, and more than all the people can consume.

Or take the example of Trotsky, who, in 1936, in *The Revolution Betrayed*, criticizes the USSR state-controlled economy for not achieving the abundance of the USA: 'How many years are needed in order to make it possible for every Soviet citizen to use an automobile in any direction he chooses, refilling his gas tank without difficulty en route? In barbarian society the rider and the pedestrian constituted two classes. The automobile differentiates society no less than the saddle horse' (2013, loc. 595).

Thus, socialism and communism (at least as envisioned by Karl Marx and his early proponents), was built on three foundations: reason and scientific method, human agency and materialism. Humans were perceived as being at the centre of history and as capable of changing its course; God, fate or nature cannot dictate where history will go; it is only man who is in the driving seat, though limited by specific historical conditions. For liberalism 'man' is the individual and for Marx 'man' could be a social class pursuing its interests, but the essence remains: we, as humanity, retain endless possibilities for a better world of plenty. This is why, for Marx, capitalism was the most revolutionary system up to that historical point: the productive forces it unleashed could promise material abundance and total domination over nature. As opposed to the romantic anti-capitalists of the nineteenth century, who were terrified by the processes of industrialization, urbanization and of the instrumental use of nature, Marx's scientific socialism realized that these very procedures were essential for the realization of freedom as an escape from need and from scarcity. This Promethean view of man was captured in its purest form by the Soviet writer Maxim Gorky, who, dazzled by the positive vision that the Russian Revolution provided (at least in the minds of its advocates), declared that 'once the class struggle has been won, Soviet humankind will be free to engage its final enemy: nature' (cited in Westermann and Garrett 2011, p. 87). Here, the meaning of nature goes

beyond the trees or the Russian winter; nature symbolizes limits and the victory over nature would mean victory over whatever is holding back human prosperity, the aim being a continuous progress towards overcoming finite human nature itself.

An interesting thought experiment would be to look at how ideas popular among leftist circles in recent decades would be perceived by Trotsky, Pankhurst, Gorky or their comrades; ideas such as sustainability, or 'prosperity without growth' (Jackson 2011), or 'small is beautiful' (Schumacher 1993), or the pathologization of consumerism as a mental health threat in the form of 'affluenza' (James 2007), or the supposed threat to our planet's carrying capacity because of too many people living longer. Or, how would Marx himself—who celebrated in his *Communist Manifesto* the globalization brought about by the market and how 'to the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood' (Marx, K. & Engels, F. 1848)—react to the rise of the 'anti-globalization movement' and the popularity it enjoyed among leftist circles in the years around the turn of the twenty-first century. Granted, the effects of rapid economic growth on nature were, up to a point, unknown during the period in which the pioneers of scientific socialism lived and wrote. Yet it seems evident from their philosophy that their faith in human reason and scientific method to come up with solutions to pressing problems would have them adopting a more positive view, championing even better technologies and even more economic development to face challenges such as climate change, rather than viewing them as an existential threat, calling for a re-evaluation of the values of modernity.

Where This Book Comes from and Where It Goes

The fact that the new left is different from the old left, that it has adopted causes such as environmentalism and has been influenced by schools of thought that question 'modernity's' tradition of rationality, is no big news. Numerous scholars from various schools of thought have dealt with the changing nature of the left and of radical politics in general. Bookchin

(1995) spotted an 'unbridgeable chasm' between the 'lifestyle anarchism' of the 1970s and 1980s and the more focused and political movements of the 1960s. Lasch (1991) described the transition of the 1960s radicals to a defeatist and introspective 'culture of narcissism' and how this shift mirrored the dominant culture in USA at that time. Bauman (1992) described the transition to 'post-modernity' as a moving away from the ideals of faith in progress, reason and science. A similar line of thought has been shared by a number of scholars on the left, including, among others, Callinicos (1989) and Jameson (1990). Žižek (2002, 2009) and Furedi (1992, 2005) have also criticized the change in the nature and character of the left. Some useful insights could be drawn also from foes of the left. A more philosophical criticism of the new left from a pro-capitalist point of view came from Ayn Rand (1999), whereas some interesting insights were also offered by an occasional fellow-traveller of the New Left, the libertarian thinker Murray Rothbard (1961, 1965, 1970).

My research, though based on the criticisms of the various aforementioned scholars, will go further than their work: I am not merely reflecting on changes in the philosophy, values and ideas of the contemporary left; I also trace the genealogy of these changes. Where did they come from, when did they gain prominence and in what environments did they find fertile ground? I am also challenging part of the political theory and bibliography of social movements studies, which views the 1960s as a period when radical theory and action reached a peak, followed by a decline and a de-politicization in subsequent decades. As will become evident, factors that have been blamed for the decline of the political left in the 'counter-revolution' of the 1970s and 1980s, were already present in the 'golden era' of the 1960s. Most importantly, I claim that the moving away of the left from some of the core principles of 'modernity's' tradition—such as rationality, faith in human agency as bearer of change and a trust in continuous economic growth bringing more and more affluence to more and more people—can help us understand some of the recent misfortunes of the left, such as the rapid disappearance of the Occupy Movement or the inability of Syriza in Greece to meet expectations and introduce an alternative economic model to 'austerity'.

A term that needs clarification and that plays a central role in my analysis is 'lifestyle activism'. Why do I not just refer to the 'new left',

but instead introduce another term? The notion of 'lifestyle activism' has its roots in the work of left-libertarian scholar Murray Bookchin—the inspiration for my PhD thesis that is the basis of this book. A couple of decades ago, Bookchin identified some trends in radical movements that he considered new and problematic. Under the umbrella-term of 'lifestyle anarchism', Bookchin anathematized what he considered as degrading trends developing since the 1970s, mainly in the anarchist milieu, but also in social movements in general (Bookchin 1995). These trends included:

- a drift away from reason towards subjectivism, relativism and emotionalism (fused with spiritualism and what he characterized as a New Age-inspired enchantment with the self)
- a drift away from serious organizational political commitment
- an emphasis on episodic 'happenings' and protest events, rather than on a coherent programme
- a priority of means over ends, where 'the movement is the message'.
- For Bookchin, lifestyle anarchism and the tradition of social anarchism were separate by 'an unbridgeable chasm'. He identified three main characteristics in social anarchism that are absent from the newly arisen trend:
- an organizational base
- a theoretical coherence, resulting from a rational analysis
- a universalist political vision.

The elements Bookchin attributes to social anarchism could also be used to describe the old left, whereas some of the characteristics of 'lifestyle anarchism' seem to mirror parts of today's left. However, despite Bookchin's insightful contribution, I consider his notion of 'lifestyle anarchism' as quite narrow and inadequate to analyse the trends that I wish to examine in this book. To begin with, Bookchin was mostly referring to the anarchist milieu, of which he was a part. Yet some of the tendencies he described have moved beyond the anarchist movement to wider parts of the left and of social movements. Also, although Bookchin's analysis was important and pioneering, his allegiance to ecology and his rigid anti-capitalism limited the extent to which materialism and a problematization of

economic growth were part of his criticism's frame. As anti-materialist values are important in my thesis, I had to go beyond Bookchin's analysis. Thus I needed a term that would describe an 'unbridgeable gap' between the new left and the old left, as Bookchin did, but with a wider emphasis. Since this term had to signify some sort of intellectual allegiance to Bookchin's work and signify that the focus of my case studies will be mostly protest movements, I chose the term 'lifestyle activism'.

Thus, by now the structure and scope of this book should have become clearer. Initially, a more theoretical and philosophical general overview of how the new left has been different from the old left will be attempted. This will inevitably be wide in its scope. Later, this wide scope will be put to the test in specific cases of social and political movements, so as to see whether these changes in the philosophy of the left that were identified in the opening parts of the book are actually mirrored on the ground. What I will be searching for in my case studies is a set of ideas, values, cultural codes and forms of action that I have called 'lifestyle activism' and that incorporate the ideological changes in the character of the left. At the same time, two underlying questions will be gradually addressed: how do these changes in the character of the left mirror changes in the dominant ideology and the *leitmotifs* of our times and do the ideas associated with 'lifestyle activism' play any role in the 'only limited political success of the left'?

One criticism that such a work might attract has to do with the wideness of its scope. One might say that drawing conclusions and attributing characteristics to something as broad as 'the left', which could stretch from parts of the Democratic Party of the USA to radical anarchists in Greece, and from British trade unionists to the Podemos party in Spain, is bad scholarship, especially since the case studies focus on several grassroots movements that do not necessarily represent such a large non-homogeneous political milieu. There are two answers to this objection. In each era, the ideas that dominate on the political level and on the ideological spectrum, have some common background and some references in the so-called *Leitkultur* of that society. These ideas become so dominant that they

tend to be perceived and accepted automatically, with little questioning. An example of a *Leitkultur* becoming prevalent and having a huge influence on the biggest part of the political spectrum was the anti-liberalism of the period around the Second World War, where from fascism to the New Deal and from Stalinism to conservatism, the idea was shared that a *laissez-faire* approach to economic and social life is problematic and thus the state should play a central role. My point is that if ideas such as anti-materialism, environmentalism, post-modernism and the critique of instrumental reason have indeed become influential at the cultural level, then one would expect them to be influential among 'the left' as well, even if the latter is not easily defined as an homogeneous bloc.

In addition, the fact that I have examined a period of almost five decades and a variety of different campaigns to explore and illustrate the arguments of this book will hopefully prove that my theory has been tested in depth. The case studies I have chosen as examples illustrating my arguments are quite diverse in political, geographical and temporal terms. In the 1960s, I will take the case study of student radicalism and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) organization in the USA. The ideas of the New Left and the scholars behind them had a greater influence in the USA than in, say, France, where 1960s radicalism was more of a fusion of New Left ideals with the old left (partly due to explained by the prominent role of various Maoist and Trotskyist groups, but also that of the Communist Party). Thus, if the ideas and the counter-cultural values that formed the New Left as a phenomenon play a key role in understanding subsequent developments (post 1960s) in the left, then the SDS is a useful case study. Chapter 3 will deal with the supposed de-radicalization of the 1970s and 1980s. I consider the fusion of leftist ideas with the environmental movement as a key moment in grasping the change in the DNA and core philosophical premises of the wider left. Thus, the case of the German Greens, materializing the fusion of the ideas of the New Left and of counter-culture with the rising environmentalist concerns, can shed light on the ideological processes of the time. I will also examine the phenomenon of the protest camps of that period, as a materialization of the influence of

lifestyle activism. Then, in the late 1990s and early 2000s some of the core narratives of the New Left were mobilized and acquired an international scope against the process of globalization. The anti-globalization movement is an important case study, not only because of its scope and size but also because of the legacy it left and how it influenced later movements. Finally, the case study from the wave of contention that followed the financial crisis of 2008 will be the Occupy the London Stock Exchange protest, as it is a movement that I have studied in depth through ethnographic research for my PhD. Yet reference will also be made to the re-emergence of the political left, with Syriza in Greece being the best example, and whether it signifies a retreat from the limitations of lifestyle activism. The case studies will only solidify my more general arguments, which are based not only on these movements but also on the wider political ideas and mobilizations of each period.

Another potential misunderstanding of this book is that it represents a nostalgic longing for a return to the good old left or to a twentieth- (or nineteenth-) century socialist ideal. Nothing could be further from the truth. The old left, as expressed through the Marxist-Leninist communist movements of the previous century, was, beyond any reasonable doubt, a political, economic and moral failure (and the term 'failure' might be a huge understatement). Also, the old left's social-democratic Keynesian expression gradually came to feel dated as the market became more globalized, capital achieved more mobility and technology revolutionized human relations more and more extensively. This partially explains why the heirs of the social-democratic wing of the old left have for some decades now tried to distance themselves from their political predecessors (New Labour being an obvious example of that tendency). What is the point, then, in setting the old left as a point of reference? To begin with, the old left had a philosophical starting point that, as shown earlier, was linked to the spirit of the Enlightenment, of the Industrial Revolution and of modernity. It will be shown that this is not the case with the New Left; therefore, the old left can operate as a yardstick to measure the extent to which the New Left has moved away from the roots of radical movements of the past.

In addition, the old left goes beyond Stalinism and the state-bureaucratic complex of social democracy: there is a rich tradition on the left of freedom, humanism, liberalism and individual agency, from workers' mutual aid communities to the libertarian free school of the *Escuela Moderna* in Spain, and from aspects of the work of Marx himself, such as his fierce criticism of the state apparatus in *The Civil War in France* (1871) to the autonomist tradition that elements of the New Left reinvented in the 1960s. The book claims that this tradition is the one from which the New Left is mostly deviating, and it is only this tradition that could revitalize the left.

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2

From the Dictatorship of the Proletariat to Woodstock

A consistent theme in this book is that political phenomena, and their associated ideas, values and forms of action, can only be understood within the specific historical context that gave rise to their emergence. Thus, to understand the 'short summer' of the New Left, one needs to focus on the political void that made its emergence a social and political necessity. While the historical context can help us understand the New Left, the reverse is also true: understanding the New Left is crucial to understanding what has been called 'the long 1960s', that is, the period from 1956 to 1977[1] (Hooper 1999; Klimke and Scharloth 2008). This chapter will deal with the period up to 1968 and the international wave of protest culminating in the May 1968 revolt in Paris.

[1] Both the start and the end point are symbolic and for analytical use only. In 1956, at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR, Nikita Khrushchev's partial revealing of the crimes of the Stalinist era, combined with the bloody suppression of the Hungarian uprising by the Red Army in the same year, brought about a huge split in the international communist movement. In the same year, some prominent intellectuals from the British Communist Party started to question the Moscow line and published the *New Reasoner* journal, which soon became the *New Left Review*. The year 1977 was marked by the escalation of the terroristic actions and the deaths of the leading members of the Red Army Fraction urban guerrilla group in Germany, a group that for many signified the dark side of the 1960s legacy.

N. Sotirakopoulos, *The Rise of Lifestyle Activism*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55103-0_2

The rise of the New Left was a political, social and cultural reaction to two tendencies in the wider leftist milieu and in Western societies in general: the moral bankruptcy of Soviet-style communism, which still had an influence on the powerful communist parties in West European countries (notably in Italy and France) and the bureaucratic shadow of the so-called Fordist state, in which the organized labour movement and social democracy had a central role to play. Thus, it is no surprise that alienated elements from the radical wing of social democracy and Marxists seeking 'another road to socialism', far from the shortcomings of the Stalinist experience, would form the core of what soon became known, mainly in the UK and the USA, as the New Left. Another factor in the rise of the New Left was the accumulated experience and the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement in the USA, the international peace movement on both sides of the Atlantic and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in the UK. The struggle of the oppressed black population for basic democratic rights, mainly in the US South, created sympathy and support in progressive parts of the white middle classes of the country, and revitalized direct forms of political action, such as civil disobedience. Another important element inspiring the rise of the New Left was the anti-colonial struggles in the so-called Third World, with socially progressive movements of national liberation taking place in countries like Vietnam, Cuba and Algeria. Suddenly, ordinary people had developed strong feelings on these various issues and wanted to express them beyond the ballot box. Politics was happening beyond closed doors, parliaments or meetings of the political and business elites with the labour aristocracy: politics was linked with direct action in the streets, based on the participation of citizens as individuals taking their life in their own hands.

As the New Left's experience was an ideologically and geographically diverse political phenomenon, developing for more than a decade, any definitional attempt might fall short. Therefore, I will follow Horn (2007) in defining the New Left in comparison to the old left (taking the liberty of slightly expanding or moderating his table; see Table 2.1). These points will be elaborated and clarified throughout the rest of the chapter and the book).

Table 2.1 Old left and New Left

Old left	New Left
Dominance of 'orthodox' Marxism	Influence of Frankfurt School, and of minoritarian voices in the radical milieu (anarchism, autonomism, council communism, etc.)
Political parties and trade unions	Self-organization through loose networks
Change through established institutions, like parties, trade unions and parliament	Change through direct action; development of 'parallel institutions'
Working class as the revolutionary agent	Young people, progressive middle class and 'outsiders' as the radical avant garde
Improvement of material conditions	Counter-culture, alternative values, new issues (environment, peace, etc.) and solidarity with the oppressed/marginalized

Andrews (1999) provides another useful summing up of the main characteristics of the New Left. He characterizes it as: (a) a 'third way' beyond the Stalinist and the social democratic paradigms, both of which were progressively being de-legitimized and were uninspiring, (b) a political, social and cultural reaction to post-Second World War capitalism, which was characterized by technocratic managerialism, bureaucracy, consumerism and success in providing prosperity and a stable economic environment, (c) a move away from the state and its bureaucracy towards civil society in dealing with issues that the late-Fordist state struggled to cope with (equality, rights of disadvantaged groups, the environment and so on), (d) a move away from the politics of Leninist vanguardism to the politics of personal participation and responsibility, towards the ideal of a direct and participatory democracy (Andrews 1999, pp. 67–8).

This book will claim that the New Left passed on a double and contradictory legacy. On the one hand, it revitalized the left, attempted to bring it back to its pro-liberty roots and addressed some pressing issues regarding the rights of marginalized and oppressed groups. On the other hand, though, a large part of the New Left milieu descended into adventurism, violence, irrationalism and emotionalism. One could characterize the

New Left as follows: it was set up to change the world but was politically defeated and turned to introspective solipsism, yet somehow left a legacy that did, up to a point, change the world (at least in the West), though maybe not in the way its pioneers had initially envisioned.

Filling in a Political and Moral Void

As mentioned previously, it would be a total misunderstanding of this book to perceive it as a hankering after the 'good old left', as opposed to a 'decadent New Left'. It was precisely the political and moral calamities of the old left that created the fertile ground for the rise of the New Left. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the authoritarian left seemed to dominate the radical wing of the political field. The Soviet Union was seen as the heroic winner of the war and its legacy of anti-fascism boosted the legitimacy and popularity of the Stalinist communist parties in the West (Furedi 2014, p. 97). In China and Greece, communists fought the old order in civil wars, and the international communist movement appeared as an appealing ally to countries fighting for their independence and for decolonization. In France, the Communist Party, '*le parti des 75,000 fusillés*' (the party of the 75,000 executed martyrs), commanded the loyalty of the largest part of the industrial working class, whereas in Italy, the Communist Party became the loyal opposition in the 1948 elections. In the US and UK, the working class was entering the field of post-war reconstruction in a strong position, as a result of a consensus with the state that was already building up during the 1930s. More anti-authoritarian parts of the radical milieu, such as anarchists or the 'left opposition' (mostly Trotskyists) found themselves marginalized on an international level, especially after their liquidation in the Spanish civil war by Franco and the Stalinists, and mostly operated more or less as the proud conscience of a defeated movement of the past (Woodcock 1977, p. 46). Its authoritarian and bureaucratic wings seemed to be the only visible expression of the left; however, this was a historical aberration that would soon be corrected.

In the 1960s, the prophecies of the old left about the destruction of capitalism and the immiseration of the working class seemed mistaken,

to say the least. Therefore, the mission of the left was less to overthrow capitalism and more to politically control it. Thus, despite their dominance over the left-wing terrain of the political field, the Stalinist parties bore little resemblance to their incarnations during the 'heroic' pre-Second World War period of the Third International. Partly because of the geopolitical priorities of the Soviet Union and partly because of the importance that the European people placed on maintaining peace and stability, the communist parties played more of an intermediary and instrumental role in the reconstruction of their countries. According to an official of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), 'we are Italians, and above everything we pose the good of our country, the good of Italy, the freedom and independence of Italy that we want to see saved and reconquered' (quoted in Wright 2002, p. 8). Wright also quotes a Fiat worker who pointed out that 'the PCI militants inside the factory set themselves the political task of producing to save the national economy, and the workers were left without a party' (2002, p. 10).

The void was not only political, however. After all, in economic terms, the size of the piece of the pie the working class got was important. Yet, the *enrages* of the 1960s would be less the blue-collar factory workers and more the new classes of students and middle-class professionals. More importantly, their revolt would not have at its centre economics or politics, but culture. Gitlin captured this tendency: 'America was now the first society in the history of the world with more college students than farmers. The social base of radical opposition, accordingly, has shifted—from small farmers and immigrant workers to blacks, students, youth and women' (2003, p. 2). For Roszak (1995, p. xii), the paradox of the 1960s lies in the fact that the radicalization of young middle-class students was based not in the failures, but in the unprecedented success of industrial capitalism. Once the 'bread and butter' issues were more or less solved, the non-material aspects of bourgeois social life came to the forefront for the radical milieu's critique: issues such as alienation, a supposed absence of meaning in urban life, a quest for alternative ways of life and forms of communication, the relationship between genders and races, the environment and so on.

This cultural critique of capitalism and of bourgeois morals through the 1960s took various forms: from the happenings of the Provos in

Netherlands to political-artistic movements in France (notably the Situationists) to the hippies in the USA, building upon the legacy of the beats (Horn 2007; Klimke and Scharloth 2008). Eccentric artistic movements were nothing new; they were present in the pre-First World War and inter-war periods. Yet this was the first time they had achieved such popularity, with the establishment not really self-confident enough to take a stand and put forward its own values. For Furedi, this is closely related to the breakdown of old moral codes the ruling elite was facing (2014, pp. 96–106). The narratives of the old right were severely damaged after two world wars: the connotations of values such as nationalism, imperialism, military pride and racial superiority they were unappalling for a large of the population and not particularly for young people. Thus, the old right was on the wrong side of history on the issue of its morality and the old left was hardly inspiring in its role as facilitator of the smooth functioning of the Fordist capitalist model.

C. Wright Mills, addressing the New Left at its birth, was correct to spot the political and moral exhaustion of the early 1960s: 'It is no exaggeration to say that since the end of World War II in Britain and the United States smug conservatives, tired liberals and disillusioned radicals have carried on a very wearied discourse in which issues are blurred and potential debate muted; the sickness of complacency has prevailed, the bi-partisan banality flourished' (1960). Ayn Rand already in 1965 credited the counter-culture and the New Left with an early success; she saw them operating as 'trial balloons' to check the defences of the old establishment and its faith in itself. The result had been, according to Rand, that the 1960s rebellion 'has not any *ideological opposition*, that the implications of the rebels' stand have neither been answered nor rejected, that such criticism as it did evoke was, with rare exceptions, evasively superficial' and that 'the road ahead is empty, with no intellectual barricades in sight' (1999, p. 36). Such arguments are echoed by Bell (2000), who places the exhaustion of a clear ideological and philosophical divide even earlier, in the 1950s.

Having established the historical context in which the New Left arose, and how it expressed a reaction to both the old right and the old left, the double-legacy of this political phenomenon will now become clearer. By rejecting the values of the old right and of the Stalinist ideology, it

promoted freedom. But at the same time, it threw the baby out with the bathwater, eroding the spirit and the values of modernity that had operated as the *raison d'être* for progressive politics for more than 150 years.

Reinventing a Tradition of Liberty

A really interesting and yet under-rated and forgotten analysis of the genealogy of the left comes from libertarian scholar (and fellow-traveller with the New Left in its initial stages) Murray Rothbard. To understand one of the main characteristics of the New Left, its pro-freedom outlook, one needs to locate it in a wider tradition of liberty, of which the left has been an advocate from its early days.

For Rothbard, the historical period that includes the Enlightenment, modernity and the Industrial Revolution has shaped two opposing political camps: liberalism, 'the party of hope, of radicalism, of liberty, of the Industrial Revolution, of progress, of humanity' and conservatism, 'the party of reaction, the party that longed to restore the hierarchy, statism, theocracy, serfdom, and class exploitation of the Old Order' (2010, p. 9). As Long (2006) mentions, the historical roots of the left lie unambiguously in the liberal camp. He reminds us how 'the great liberal economist Frédéric Bastiat sat on the left side of the French national assembly, with the anarcho-socialist Proudhon. Many of the causes we now think of as paradigmatically left-wing—feminism, antiracism, antimilitarism, the defense of laborers and consumers against big business—were traditionally embraced and promoted specifically by free-market radicals' (Long 2006).[2]

Even though the socialist movement rose as a distinct political pole, Rothbard classified it as a misguided relative of the liberal tradition. For him, socialism:

> was essentially a confused, middle-of-the-road movement. It was, and still is, middle-of-the-road because it tries to achieve liberal *ends* by the use of conservative *means* […]. Socialism, like liberalism and against conserva-

[2] It is interesting to note that Bastiat was the first person in the French Legislative Assembly in 1849 to campaign for the right of the workers to strike (Revel 2000, p. 38).

> tism, accepted the industrial system and the liberal *goals* of freedom, reason, mobility, progress, higher living standards for the masses, and an end to theocracy and war; but it tried to achieve these ends by the use of incompatible, conservative means: statism, central planning, communitarianism, etc. (Rothbard 2010, p. 15)

For Rothbard, this libertarian tradition on the left was already eroded towards the end of the nineteenth century, a process that escalated around the First World War with the alignment of the socialist parties with their nation-states (with a few notable exceptions, such as the Bolsheviks). As we saw before, in the period before and after the Second World War, almost all varieties of the left internationally were significantly statist; the communists following the Stalinist model and the social democrats following the corporatist model of the New Deal and the interventionist welfare state. Thus, the fact that the New Left, at least in its initial steps, reinvented some of the libertarian traditions of the left, was a significant political development.

The libertarian tendencies in the New Left could be summed up as:

(a) Participatory democracy. The New Left had some notable groups and organizations (such as the SDS in the USA or the 22 March movement in France), but they were mostly loose non-hierarchical networks, based on individual responsibility and participation. As de Koven mentions, 'the communal "we" on the New Left and the counterculture was always an aggregate of consenting, actively participating individuals', with only a few exceptions such as some ultra-leftist groups (2004, p. 130).
(b) Civil disobedience. Motivated by earlier mobilizations, such as the Suffragettes, the New Left took to the streets and put forward a new kind of radical politics, based on the direct action of the citizen who acted not as a pawn in an army but as a conscious individual. A libertarian tradition of civil disobedience going back to Henry David Thoreau revived with the Civil Rights Movement and escalated with the Free Speech and anti-war mobilizations after 1965.
(c) Anti-militarism. The major success of the New Left was its mobilization against the Vietnam War, imperialism and conscription. The

importance of this mobilization becomes even more evident if two factors are taken into account: (i) how central the anti-communist Cold War narrative was within US society and (ii) how the old left in the USA had an embarrassing record of either supporting or anaemically opposing previous wars, such as the First World War or the intervention in Korea in 1950.

(d) Individual liberties. The New Left moved beyond economic grievances mediated by the state and its institutions and demanded more individual freedoms. The Free Speech Movement in Berkeley in 1964–5 and the campaigns for sexual liberation and equality of the sexes were something refreshing for the left, which also built its legacy as the champion of oppressed minorities and social groups.

(e) Anti-statism. As opposed to the old left, the New Left (in its early years) did not see the state and its institutions as the place to take its grievances. It attempted (with only limited success) to build parallel institutions, especially in the field of education, such as the Free Universities. The influence of left-libertarian thinker Paul Goodman and his work against mass compulsory education were central in these developments.

The reuniting of the left with the ideas of freedom and individual agency, and the break with the state and its bureaucracy that took place in the 'short summer' of the New Left in the 1960s was perhaps circumstantial, not always principled and soon proved unstable. However, it is of critical importance for understanding the historical route of the wider progressive milieu. It was a reply in a window of opportunity that opened due to a political void created by the morally exhausted old right and the integrated and uninspiring old left. After decades of being crushed in submission to a collective (nation, class, race or party), the individual rose again as a political agent, and the values and forms of action of the New Left (horizontal networks, participatory democracy, parallel institutions, direct action) created a legacy. However, as will be shown later in this book, although the horizontalist forms of organization and the ethos of participatory democracy are now considered trademarks of the modern left, the anti-statism, the longing for liberty and individual agency do not enjoy much affirmation.

Thus, the strongest and more lasting legacy created by the New Left was not anti-authoritarianism and individual agency. Therein lies the contradiction of the New Left: although it revitalized the libertarian ethos of the left, some of its values and its philosophical underpinnings would not only undermine this legacy but also change the DNA of the left and jeopardize its roots as a champion of Enlightenment values and of modernity. The following bitter comment from Murray Rothbard, made when he became disillusioned with the disintegration of whatever he saw as worthy in the New Left after 1968, is quite telling:

> But the New Left leaves also an unfortunate and negative tendency in American Life, and one that shows every sign of spreading through the country even as the political revolution goes to its grave. I refer to the so-called 'cultural revolution', or 'counter-culture', that blight of blatant irrationality that has hit the younger generation and the intellectual world like a veritable plague. (…) Instead, the New Left wished to emphasize individual or personal liberation. But instead of arriving at a philosophy of individualism and rationality, the form of 'personal liberation' which it came to adopt was the counter-cultural 'liberation' from reason and the consequent enslavement to unexamined whim (Rothbard, 1970).

Moving the Goalposts: The Problematization of Capitalist Prosperity

In the previous section, it was shown how the libertarian tendencies of the New Left were partly a return to some of the fundamental historical principles and values of the left. However, some other intellectual tendencies floating around during that period contributed to the New Left creating a break with the historical continuity of the radical tradition. Those tendencies have to do with the problematization of the prosperous and affluent way of life that capitalism was offering to widening parts of the population, the philosophical and epistemological challenging of some of the Enlightenment's core values, and a distrust of individual agency and, thus, of the capacity of the masses of ordinary people to act as rational political agents. These developments were, predictably,

crystallized in new modes of political expression, which will be examined later in this chapter. I choose as my starting point the problematization of economic growth and consumerism, not because I necessarily believe it is temporally and in terms of significance the most important new trend, but because it offers a framework through which the rest of the changes can be better understood.

The problematization of capitalism as a system that produces too much and thus disturbs the individual psyche and communal values is not something new; it started with the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century and marginal artistic and counter-cultural groups in the first half of the twentieth century. Roszak, one of the main voices of the 1960s counter-culture, recognized that the critique of the achievements of industrial capitalism 'stemmed from a dissenting sensibility as old as the lament that the romantic poets had once raised against the Dark Satanic Mills' (1995, p. xiv). However, the old left rarely embraced such a criticism *en masse*. This was mostly a conservative critique of aristocratic origin (Furedi 2014, p. 146). For scientific socialism, the problem with capitalism was first and foremost economic and had to do with what were considered as the system's inherent limits; with capitalism, the sky was not the limit, with socialism it would be. After the Second World War, this narrative was slowly eroded. The economic critique of the system would give way to a cultural and moral critique that basically accepted that capitalism delivers the goods (at least in the Western world) and is the most productive system; yet, now this was considered problematic due to a series of counter-effects that such affluence triggered. One could argue that when the left realized that it was losing the game on the economic field, it found convenient to move the goalposts, or actually, move to a different field altogether.

This tendency was captured first and foremost by scholars around the Frankfurt School, with Adorno and Horkheimer already, in the mid 1940s, setting the tone of the critique. They argued that capitalism had managed to become a very productive system via rationalized technology, science and a network of technocratic and bureaucratic controls, and that this has been a rising tide, lifting up all boats; yet the price to be paid was the enhanced power in the hands of the capitalists, the technocrats and the planners, and an alienated lack of control in their lives for the workers. 'On the one hand the growth of economic productivity

furnishes the conditions for a world of greater justice; on the other hand it allows the technical apparatus and the social groups which administer it disproportionate superiority to the rest of the population' (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, p. xiv).

This period of capitalist affluence also had political implications, as the working class seemed to be less fit to deliver its historical revolutionary mission. Already, from the 1930s, Adorno had serious questions on whether the working class could still be the revolutionary subject (Arato and Gebhart 1982). Already in the 1940s, he and Horkheimer had predicted that the economy would recover and this would have an influence on the potential of the masses to rise up as a radical political subject. For them, 'the city housing projects designed to perpetuate the individual as a supposedly independent unit in a small hygienic dwelling make him all the more subservient to his adversary—the absolute power of capitalism' (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, p. 120). In the 1960s, their prediction was verified: the post-war boom made the working class a partner in enjoying the benefits of capitalism to a degree unprecedented in the past.

For Marcuse, perhaps the most prominent Frankfurtian as far as his influence on the New Left is concerned, the economic prosperity under the Fordist model of technocratic capitalism was politically problematic from a radical's point of view:

> If the worker and his boss enjoy the same television program and visit the same resort places, if the typist is as attractively made up as the daughter of her employer, if the Negro owns a Cadillac, if they all read the same newspaper, then the assimilation indicates not the disappearance of classes, but the extent to which the needs and satisfactions that serve the preservation of the Establishment are shared by the underlying population. (Marcuse 1991, p. 10)

Indeed, some of the anti-capitalist themes that today are taken for granted and accepted as *prima facie* radical and progressive, such as anti-consumerism and the unmasking of the supposedly alienating effect of the abundant society, have their roots in the 1960s and the New Left. 'Getting, having, owning: that was what life was all about', complained Roszak (1995, p. xvii). 'The people recognize themselves in their

commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment', added Marcuse (1991, p. 11).

Interestingly, the critique of alienation and the political conformity produced by the mechanized and rationalized form of production of the post-war period was not necessarily an anti-capitalist critique, as it included the bureaucratic authoritarian socialist regimes. This was emphasized by another influential intellectual of these days, Cornelius Castoriadis. He was also eager to attack some of the old left certainties, claiming that the industrial proletariat was not only diminishing as a percentage of the working population, but also that there was no good reason to conceive of it as a class willing to accomplish any historical mission for the radical transformation of society (Castoriadis 1997, p. 26). Castoriadis examined Western capitalist societies in parallel with the socialist states of Eastern Europe and drew the conclusion that the workers were similarly oppressed by a seemingly politically neutral rationalized scientific technocracy inside the workplace under both capitalist and socialist management. For Castoriadis, therefore, the main issue was no longer poverty or the struggle of the working class for material subsistence, nor was it the control of the means of production; the real political challenge was alienation.

Roszak took the critique a step further, claiming that the problem was actually industrial society itself: 'It is essential to realize that the technocracy is not the exclusive product of that old devil capitalism. Rather, it is the product of a mature and accelerating industrialism. The profiteering could be eliminated; the technocracy would remain in force' (1995, p. 19). It becomes clear how such an attitude would lay the ground for the forthcoming merger of leftist ideology with environmentalism. Roszak was right to point out that 'the environmental movement would surely never have gotten beyond its conservationist orientation if there had not been those who were willing to ponder the limits of urban industrial society' (1995, p. xxvii). The instrumental exploitation of nature, rather than being celebrated for advancing human prosperity, would now be problematized. Capitalism and industrialism were not only bad because they exploited and alienated the masses, but also because they degraded nature. Further, rationalist control over society and a scientific control over nature would be linked in the narrative of the New Left. Already,

from the 1940s, Horkheimer was claiming that 'domination of nature involves domination of man. Each subject not only has to take part in the subjugation of external nature, human and nonhuman, but in order to do so must subjugate nature in himself' (2004, p. 93). For Marcuse, 'the scientific method which led to the ever-more-effective domination of nature thus came to provide the pure concepts as well as the instrumentalities for the ever-more-effective domination of man by man *through* the domination of nature' (1991, p. 162). This is not to say that there would have been no rise in environmental consciousness without the New Left. Factors such as the actual degradation of the environment, increases in the levels of pollution, events like the London smog in 1952, the advancement and popularization of science were all factors that gave a boost to environmentalism (Bell 2011; Hannigan 2006). But the narratives of the New Left problematizing industrial capitalism and the societies of consumption and affluence would fit perfectly with the rising environmental narrative.

Thus, one can observe a twofold critique by the scholars who shaped the narratives of the New Left on the issue of post-Second World War capitalism. On the level of production, with the advanced mechanized rationalization of production, it alienated the labourers even more from the labour procedure and from the final product of their labour. On the level of consumption, the high output, a result of the efficiency in the sphere of production, led to a consumerist society of affluence that weakened the class consciousness and the radical potential of the working masses. It also shifted the class composition in favour of white-collar workers and an expanded middle class, which was, by its nature, more integrated into the capitalist system.

Yet this narrative, taken for granted since then by almost all the fractions of the leftist milieu, is open to criticism. The advanced administrative factory systems of the late-Fordist period could indeed result in the labourer having less control over the process of production, but this is not in itself a negative thing as, at the same time, the productive process became less back-breaking and more effective, resulting in cheaper products that were more accessible to the masses. In a way, labour thus became less alienating, as the worker in a Fiat factory could have reasonable expectations of driving that Fiat one day. What is even more problematic

is the criticism of the behaviour of the working masses in the sphere of consumption. The critique of consumerism was on a purely normative basis (as opposed to the last couple of decades, when it was dressed up in the language of mental health), and yet the moral basis of this critique never becomes clear. Why is it a bad thing that the worker in the West has access to numerous consumer goods, can choose from a variety of entertainment spectacles and that the mass culture has become more and more diverse? In addition, as will be shown later in this chapter, this criticism quickly took another twist: from a narrative claiming that 'consumerism is bad and mass culture is alienating' to 'the masses buying into such a culture are inherently irrational and not trustworthy'; an argument that has elitist undertones and a strongly undemocratic potential.

The strongest criticism of the narratives of the New Left problematizing affluence, alienation and consumerism has to do with the lack of a positive proposition. What was the alternative to rationalist technocratic industrial capitalism? It was definitely not socialism, in terms of the state owning the means of production and planning the economy. Also, none of the main theoretical influences of the New Left seemed to advocate a return to a pre-industrial small-scale economy; a tendency that only attracted some limited sympathy in the 1970s. Castoriadis provided a vague alternative, based on workers' councils and the self-management of the factories by those who work in them. The main idea is that the capitalist is at best a parasite and at worst a burden on the productive process; thus, a productive unit would be best run by the workers, without the capitalists and without the central planners of a socialist bureaucratic state.

> The idea that socialism coincides in any way with the nationalization of the means of production or with planning, that it basically aims at […] increasing production and consumption are ideas that must be mercilessly renounced. Their basic identity with the underlying orientation of capitalism must be repeatedly shown. Workers' management of production and society and the power of workers' councils as the necessary form of socialism should be demonstrated and illustrated […]. It ought to be shouted from the rooftops that socialism is not a backyard of leisure attached to the industrial prison, or transistors for the prisoners, but the destruction of the industrial prison itself. (Castoriadis 1997, p. 131)

Thus, Castoriadis seems close to the tradition of left communism, following figures such as Otto Ruhle, Paul Mattick and Anton Pannekoek (Landmann 1977, p. viii). Indeed, self-management, as tried in a 'light' form in the case of Tito's Yugoslavia, proved more effective than the centrally planned economy of the Soviet-style economies, as some form of market operated. Yet it could not compete with the genuinely freer markets in the West and did not save Yugoslavia from a deep economic crisis in the 1970s, as some of the problems inherent in non-capitalist economies were still present (Steele 1992, pp. 323–50).[3] Thus it seems that the plea for workers' management is vague and problematic. On the one hand, although it could have worked for some time during the Fordist period, it would be unsuitable for more flexible models of production, based on small units, specialization, and the need for sharp and quick decision-making. In addition, it could work, at least for a period of time, in an existing facility that has been abandoned or taken over by force. What about new enterprises? Where would the capital and the entrepreneurial risk come from in a non-capitalist environment? In addition, issues of ownership seem unclear. Would the workers simultaneously be shareholders? If yes, this presumes that they will be able to sell their shares. But this is capitalism in everything but name. In addition, workers' self-management is not necessarily politically edgy, as it can also be materialized in capitalism, in the form of co-ops (a business model that has had some limited success).

The possible alternatives are even less clear in the sphere of consumption. In what kind of society will the people not fall for 'consumerism' and the 'alienation of mass culture'? Even if somehow the profit-motive is taken away, who could restrain the production of soap-operas or westerns and their 'consumption' by the masses? This would demand either a complete moral transformation of the masses, which is more of a utopian religious project, or an authoritarian central planner to dictate what constitutes good art or the 'real' needs of the consumer and to discourage consumption of commodities or spectacles by coercion, censorship or indirect means, such as heavy taxation.

[3] Mostly, a lack of motive in reinvesting capital in the firm itself, as the profit margin was limited (Barger 1988; for more information on the motivation problem in socialism, see Mises 2009).

Therein lies a major defect of the New Left, that would accompany the wider leftist milieu in subsequently to the present day: its focus was on a reactive critique to capitalism, lacking the proactive element that would present a viable alternative, beyond vague references to a 'socialism with a more human face'. It must be made clear that the problem is not only that the critique was not proactive but also that it was not necessarily progressive. It mostly targeted the success of late-Fordist capitalism (or, properly put, of the mixed economy), rather than the system's shortcomings. As we have already seen, the New Left was correct to oppose bureaucracy, imperialism and social injustices such as racism. Yet, on a theoretical level, its criticisms seemed to be focused mostly on the issues of alienation and consumerism, effectively turning back the clock of the critique of capitalism to the romantics of the late nineteenth century and the eccentrics of the inter-war period.

An important question that needs to be asked is why this development took place and why it happened in the period around the 1960s. A plausible answer is provided by pro-capitalism and anti-leftist voices such as Ayn Rand: namely, that this was a manoeuvre out of necessity, since socialism had obviously lost the battle with capitalism in terms of producing effectively and of providing goods to the working masses. In her usual aggressive tone, Rand stated:

> Old-line Marxists claimed they were champions of reason, that socialism or communism was a scientific social system, that an advanced technology could not function in a capitalist society, but required a scientifically planned and organized human community to bring its maximum benefits to every man, in the form of material comforts and a higher standard of living. They predicted that the progress of Soviet technology would surpass that of the United States. […] That mask crumbled in the aftermath of World War II. […] The old-line Marxists used to claim that a single modern factory could produce enough shoes to provide for the whole population of the world and that nothing but capitalism prevented it. When they discovered the facts of reality involved, they declared that going barefoot is superior to wearing shoes. (1999, pp. 167–8)

In another text, she adds: 'Instead of promising comfort and security to everyone, they are now renouncing people for being comfortable and secure' (1999, p. 281). Yet this is only part of the explanation for the

anti-materialistic turn of the New Left. Beyond opportunistic political reasons, this shift also signified a wider trend in the ideology of the times. The ruling elites themselves were feeling less and less confident about their ideas, and were less and less eager to support capitalism (Furedi 2014). Thus, an anxiousness about the consequences of unbridled economic growth and an elitist disdain for mass culture and the consumerist habits of the masses would soon be included in the frame through which the political and cultural elites in the West viewed the world, as it will become clear in the next chapter.

It is interesting to note, though, that the intellectual heritage of the New Left still has one foot within the modernity's tradition, though paving the way for the tendencies that would later be understood as post-modernism (de Koven 2004). Thus, Marcuse did not abandon the prospects of technology; on the contrary, he saw its potential for liberation. The key for such a prospect would be the almost full automation of productive technology, reducing labour power to a minimum (Marcuse 1991, p. 18). This is a theme to which he returned many times in his works and he saw reason as the means for such an achievement, linking himself with the project of the Enlightenment that the Frankfurt School seemed ambiguous about: "Civilization produces the means for freeing Nature from its own brutality, its own insufficiency, its own blindness, by virtue of the cognitive and transforming power of Reason. And Reason can fulfil this function only as post-technological rationality, in which technics is itself the instrumentality of pacification, organon of the 'art of life'" (1991, p. 242). Yet for Marcuse this next stage in human liberation would not come through capitalism. But then what system would deliver such a breakthrough? Definitely not the productively inferior socialism. But Marcuse never answered that question. The only hint he gave was that only through a politically motivated breakthrough in technology could the new productive forces, in a dialectical way, undermine the existing status quo. In perhaps the most interesting part of *One-Dimensional Man*, he states:

> The technological transformation is at the same time political transformation, but the political change would turn into qualitative social change only to the degree to which it would alter the direction of technical progress—that is, develop a new technology. For the established technology has become

> an instrument of destructive politics. […] such a new direction of technical progress would be the catastrophe of the established direction, not merely the quantitative evolution of the prevailing (scientific and technological) rationality but rather its catastrophic transformation, the emergence of a new idea of Reason, theoretical and practical. (1991, p. 232)

In a way Marcuse's prophecy has been materialized, but in a radically different way than he expected. Technological developments such as the internet, peer-to-peer technology, 3D printing and the so-called sharing economy are indeed undermining the status quo, challenging monopolies and established economic institutions. Yet, they did not arise on an anti-capitalist platform but rather organically, from within the free market, which could explain the contemporary left's scepticism towards some of their aspects (mainly against the sharing economy), a theme to which I will return later in the book.

Summing up, this section was quite lengthy, but is considered of great importance for understanding later trends in leftist thought and politics. In the years leading to 1968, there was a significant shift by large parts of the left, as far as their criticism of capitalism was concerned. What they focused on was not the Marxian polemic against capitalism as an inherently oppressive system due to the extraction of surplus value from the workers' labour, nor the supposed economic and productive superiority of socialism/communism compared to the free-market system. The focus was on a moralistic and cultural critique of capitalism, the success of which was allegedly attributed to the alienation of the workers in the productive process and their lack of consciousness by the lures of consumerism and affluence. This view, predictably, had further implications for the way the left viewed the world. Because if the masses were alienated and without the right consciousness, then maybe the masses were no longer to be trusted.

The Masses: Agents of Change or Part of the Problem?

One of the most progressive claims put forward by the Enlightenment project was the belief that the average person is a reason-driven subject with the agency to lead his/her life. This had huge political implications,

as it paved the way for the maturing of calls for democracy and self-rule. If the masses—that is, the common people forming the demos—were not unthinking and easily manipulated brutes, as the feudal aristocracy considered them, then they needed no despots or kings to rule them. This fundamental principle of democracy, which had its roots in classical liberal thought, was embraced by the left throughout its formation as a mass movement in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. However, such a narrative regarding the ability of the common people not only to lead their own life, but also to be a political, social and economic agent would soon find itself under attack, not only by regressive conservatives (who never gave up on their smearing of the masses), but also from large parts of the New Left.

A philosophical history of elitist scepticism regarding the ability of ordinary people to lead their lives in a rational way goes way beyond the scope of this book, as it could bring us back to Plato and his notion of the philosopher-king, who is in a better condition to grasp reality than the inhabitants of the cave (the common people), who could only see reflections and shadows. After all, whether one trusts the average Joe as an autonomous agent is not only a political, but also a philosophical and epistemological question: can reality, if such a thing exists, be grasped, and if yes, how? Is reason a tool for grasping what is true and what is false? Or does truth reveal itself in a different way: perhaps through intuition, or out of a participation in a specific group (as for example the working class, women, or intellectuals mastering historical materialism)?

The philosophical approach of the left (and especially of Marxism) on the topic is ambiguous. Concepts such as the organic intellectual, alienation or class consciousness could be read in different ways that produce different answers to the epistemological question of the capability of the masses for self-rule. Yet, as a political project, there is little doubt that socialism, communism and anarchism were promoting the political agency of common people. Yet the traumatic experience of two world wars, which saw the masses falling for the ideologies of nationalism, imperialism, fascism, Nazism and Stalinism, put into question that faith. As with growth-scepticism, it lead to a loss of faith in the political potential of the masses, as they saw that the population was not responsive to their ideals, but rather to tyrants and statesmen who promised national glory, or to

lead them to a paradise on earth, along paths flowing with blood. Furedi sums up this historical shift quite accurately:

> Through the construction of a narrative about a highly volatile, self-serving but easily manipulated 'mass', elite theorists sublimated their anxiety about the loss of their authority through devaluing the moral status of the public. The public now constituted a problem rather than a solution. The masses were deemed far too unpredictable and irrational to serve as a reliable partner in the maintenance of constitutional democracy. The Enlightenment ideal of an active, responsible and above all rational citizen was now habitually castigated as an illusion exposed by the behaviour of the masses before, during and in the years following the Great War. (2014, p. 46)

This tendency became clear in some of the dystopian novels of the era around the end of the Second World War, such as in Orwell's *1984*, where this is how he described 'the Proles':

> They were born, they grew up in the gutters, they went to work at twelve, they passed through a brief blossoming-period of beauty and sexual desire, they married at twenty, they were middle-aged at thirty, they died, for the most part, at sixty. Heavy physical work, the care of home and children, petty quarrels with neighbours, films, football, beer, and above all, gambling, filled up the horizon of their minds. To keep them in control was not difficult. (1987, p. 75)

Such ideas about the role of the easily manipulated masses in the catastrophes of the twentieth century were also studied through the prism of psychology. Wilhelm Reich took such an approach, with works such as *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* and his most well-known book, *Listen Little Man!*, a polemic written in the second person and accusing the 'common man' of giving up his individuality and blindly following leaders who managed to boost the people's ego and megalomania. Such works can be understood as an agonizing attempt to understand and cope with the horrors of totalitarianism and of two world wars. Yet Reich, in a way, remains within the liberal Enlightenment tradition, still considering the individual as an agent capable of reason; this is why he assures his imaginary 'little man': 'I know you and understand you. I'm going to tell you

what you are, little man, because I really believe in your great future. Because the future undoubtedly belongs to you' (Reich 1948, p. 6).

Scepticism about the role of the masses became more institutionalized in the writings of the Frankfurt School scholars. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1997), Adorno and Horkheimer openly attack the masses, not only for their political but also their alleged cultural decadence. What is new compared to previous conservative anti-masses sentiments, is that, for the Frankfurt School scholars, technological innovation and advanced capitalism consider the masses even more easily manipulable. Thus, they start their examination with 'the enigmatic readiness of technologically educated masses to fall under the sway of any despotism' (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, p. xiii). Soon, they turn to the social and cultural level, linking the masses' gullibility with consumerism, claiming that 'the impotence and pliability of the masses grow with the quantitative increase in commodities allowed them' (1997, p. xiv). The language is interesting here: commodities are merely 'allowed' to the masses. Any sense of agency is lost. An optimistic outlook would see the productive classes as achieving an unprecedented level of productivity that benefits (though unequally) everyone. But this sense of agency is totally lacking in Adorno and Horkheimer. A demos without agency is also expected to lack any artistic taste and the ability to discriminate between the beautiful and the ugly. Thus, mass culture was the next target of the Franfkurters' critique: 'Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth is that they are just business made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce' (1997, p. 121). One would expect radio to be celebrated as linking even the remotest areas and group of people with what has been the cultural heritage of humanity, such as classical music, opera or even jazz (towards which Adorno was ambivalent, if not hostile; see Adorno 2000). Actually, they were highly critical of radio, arguing that it 'turns all participants into listeners and authoritatively subjects them to broadcast programmes which are all exactly the same' (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, p. 122). Such criticism might have some grounds when discussing totalitarian regimes such as the Stalinist USSR, but seems quite harsh for capitalist democratic societies, especially the part referring to programmes that are 'exactly the same'. Further, the aspirations of the common people for success and material improvement were

not something to be celebrated: 'the deceived masses are today captivated by the myth of success even more than the successful are. Immovably, they insist on the very ideology which enslaves them' (1997, p. 133). Again, the language is quite telling. The masses are not only considered 'deceived', but are also 'enslaved'; stripped of any agency and autonomy, reduced to a level of mere survival that might be more comfortable, but it only perpetuates their 'enslavement'. What is of interest here is how the critique of mass culture, resembling an aristocratic elitism and soon turning into a loathing of the masses themselves, would become more central in the narratives of the left in decades to come.[4]

Such criticisms went beyond the Frankfurt School already in the early 1960s. Andrews points out the shift in the articles appearing in the *New Left Review* in the early 1960s regarding the revolutionary potential of the masses (1999, p. 74). An initial humanist optimism and trust in the 'common people' who won the Second World War and rebuilt Britain was followed by a deep pessimism and scepticism. For Andrews, it is not a coincidence that this was the time when interest in the work of the Marxist Italian intellectual and political activist Antonio Gramsci resurfaced. Gramsci pointed out the important role of the 'organic intellectual' in awakening and guiding the masses. In the 1960s this thesis would undergo a subtle shift: the intellectuals were now to *substitute* for the masses, who were not to be trusted anyway. For Andrews, such intellectual processes shed light on how the left, in the decades to come, became more of a middle-class movement, with a greater appeal to intellectuals than the working class or 'the masses', specifically in the Anglo-Saxon world. It needs to be mentioned that the anti-mass sentiments were not an intellectual product of the New Left. As mentioned before, such sentiments were already around, but mostly in conservative circles. In the upcoming decades, they would be more and more central to the mainstream political field. The rise of more technocratic forms of governance, the over-regulation of everyday life and even institutional projects such as the European Union have are, at least to some extent, based on the idea that the people, if left alone, will fall back to irrationalism, self-

[4] A good example of that would be the cultural wars of parts of the left in the UK against tabloid newspapers (Hume 2012).

destructive behaviour, and even support nationalism or forms of totalitarianism. What began in the 1960s as a marginal intellectual critique soon established itself as the mainstream; therefore, this section is considered important for the understanding of tendencies that will be further elaborated in the next chapters.

It has been already mentioned that the way the scholars that influenced the New Left perceived the masses is closely linked to the epistemological tendencies of the time. Central to this are questions around reason and objectivity, and whether these are notions accessible to any individual. After all, they are notions closely linked to the emancipatory heritage of the Enlightenment. This heritage has never been unchallenged by traditionalist and conservative forces; yet, in the 1960s, the historical marriage between the left and the legacy of the Enlightenment and of modernity came under serious challenge.

From an Age of Reason to the Age of Aquarius

In presenting the changes in the ideas and values in the leftist milieu around the 1960s, the questioning of materialism and economic growth, and the suspicion regarding the political potential of common people were presented first, as the most obvious and 'loud' examples of a new narrative. Yet, in the background, a quiet and yet significant shift was taking place; a shift that operated as a motive force for altering the character of the left and which became even clearer in subsequent decades. This tendency has to do with questioning some of the cornerstone beliefs of the Enlightenment that had shaped what was understood as progressive politics for more than a century. I am referring to the questioning of the notion of reason as a tool for grasping reality, and as a guarantor of progress and of being able to get away from a past of ignorance, misery and savagery. Reason and rationality were linked in the narrative of the New Left with technocracy, bureaucratic administration and the warfare-industrial complex. Thus opposing rationalism seemed in harmony with opposing capitalism and the consumerist society, in the background of which war and domination were allegedly hidden.

The first thing to be done is to define what is meant by terms such as 'reason' and 'the Enlightenment project'. Reason will be defined as the capacity which identifies and conceptualizes all that human beings receive through their senses. Thus, reason is a means of coping with reality based on objective evidence, as opposed to, for example, an epistemological relationship with the world based on faith or intuition. With reason, humans safely pass from the perceptual to the conceptual level. Rationality is nothing more than the acceptance that reason is the only tool of knowledge guiding humans in coping with reality; a reality that exists independent of anyone's will and needs to be grasped as it is (Peikoff 1993, ch. 5). The Enlightenment is often called the Age of Reason because, for the first time in human history (with the possible exception of ancient Athens), the idea that human action should be led by reason and not simply follow religious dogma or the whims of a master, gained ground. Such a belief in reason had its corollaries: (a) as each individual was capable of reasoning, individuals should be free to pursue their life as they wished, provided they did not hurt others; (b) since humans had the capacity to understand (and thus, modify) the world around them, the future would become even better and the human condition would continuously improve. The world was to be shaped in a way that would accommodate human prosperity. There were no inherent limits and no gods or original sins to hold us back. Even nature, for centuries mystified as a scary burden to be overcome or as a deity to be appeased, had very specific laws that could be understood and be made to operate to our best interest.

It is obvious that the basic epistemological and existential theses of the Enlightenment cannot be easily attacked directly. Especially among secularists, it would be bizarre to argue that one's actions are guided not by reason but by faith, or by listening to inner voices, or by contacting the spirits of dead ancestors. The premises of the Enlightenment used to come under attack mainly from conservative religious circles and traditionalists. Yet a left-leaning attack on the Enlightenment project took place in the first two decades after the Second World War, with a strong reference point: the traumatic experience of two world wars, claiming more than 70 million lives, culminating in the horror of the Holocaust.

For the Frankfurt School scholars, all the technological achievements that made life easier and glorified the industrial/capitalist way of life came with a huge 'but': they were products of the same womb that gave birth to gas chambers, nuclear bombs and B-52 bombers. 'Auschwitz continues to haunt, not the memory but the accomplishments of man—the space flights; the rockets and missiles; the 'labyrinthine basement under the Snack Bar'; the pretty electronic plants, clean hygienic and with flower beds; the poison gas which is not really harmful to people; the secrecy in which we all participate', said Marcuse (1991, p. 252). Yet, one could argue that such a critique is not well-aimed. Yes, technology has given a capacity for more destructive warfare. But to claim that there is a line, even a non-straight one, linking the Enlightenment with two world wars is to miss the point regarding the nature of the forces that made such disasters possible. The Enlightenment preached individualism: dealing with each human being as an end in itself and on the basis of what he/she stands for. Nationalism, fascism and Nazism are all expressions of the worse kind of collectivism, and thus antithetical to reason and individualism. The Enlightenment taught that one should lead one's life having reason as an absolute; Nazism and collectivism dictated leading one's life having as guiding principle the German destiny or the whims of a leader. The Enlightenment taught that reason is the faculty of the individual; collectivism taught that there is such a thing as national or class wisdom. The philosophy of the Enlightenment taught that the pursuit of happiness is the individual's aim on Earth; for collectivism in all of its forms, the ultimate virtue was sacrifice for a collective.

Thus, the dramas of the first half of the twentieth century, such as the world wars and the rise of totalitarianism, should be better understood as a derailment from the principles of the Enlightenment, rather than as the logical conclusion of that project. Yet this was not the intellectual message that dominated. If reason, rationality and scientific progress were no longer to be celebrated for their emancipatory potential, then concepts antithetical to them would gain momentum: emotionalism, faith, mysticism and a longing for a past that allegedly seemed simpler and more humane. As Lasch put it, 'the twentieth century finds reason […] a harsh master; it seeks to revive earlier forms of enslavement. The prison life of the past looks in our own time like liberation itself' (1991, p. 99). Bloom (1987) also spotted the tendency in the 1960s to blame reason

and rationalism for taking passion and character away from politics, and to blame capitalism for alienating humans through a hedonistic and self-destructive individualism. Bloom is also spot on in observing that these were hardly notions discovered by the New Left; they were present in previous thinkers with a conservative attitude to capitalism, such as Weber, Nietzsche and Heidegger (1987, p. 150).

Roszak proudly declared that 'what the counter culture offers us, then, is a remarkable defection from the long-standing tradition of sceptical, secular intellectuality which has served as the prime vehicle for three hundred years of scientific and technical work in the West' (1995, p. 141). He also recognized that these anti-modernist tendencies were not something new. But the new element in the 1960s is the easiness with which they became widespread. 'Theosophists and fundamentalists, spiritualists and flat-earthers, occultists and satanists … it is nothing new that there should exist anti-rationalist elements in our midst. What is new is that a radical rejection of science and technology values should appear so close to the center of our society, rather than on the negligible margins' (1995, p. 51).

The radicals of the New Left and the counter-culture were to attack anything that resembled the norms of the capitalist society. In the place of the clean-shaven and well-dressed bourgeois, the radicals promoted the messy and hairy look of the hippy. In the place of melodic music, the absurd sounds of psychedelic rock. In the place of science, mysticism and Eastern spirituality. In the place of self-discipline and soberness, drugs and alcohol. In place of this reality, the world of LSD. In the place of the metropolitan centres of the industrial societies, a retreat to nature and to (usually short-lived) communes. In the place of strict sexual norms, experimentations with various forms of sexuality. For Roszak, it was worth questioning even the notions of rationality and sanity: 'the capacity of our emerging technocratic paradise to denature the imagination by appropriating to itself the whole meaning of Reason, Reality, Progress, and Knowledge will render it impossible for men to give any name to their bothersomely unfulfilled potentialities but that of madness' (1995, p. xli).

It needs to be clarified that the rejection of the project of modernity was not unanimous among the New Left. Also, some of its most extreme expressions, such as primitivism, only established themselves as distinct movements in later decades. Yet, the ideological base was set in the 1960s.

And since time travel to the past was not possible, an escape to places, real or imagined, where modernity did not yet have a full grasp became a popular choice. Roszak counts the number of middle-class Western youngsters who travelled to India and the Near East (among other reasons, for easier access to drugs) in their thousands (1995, p. 33). At the same time, Eastern spiritual philosophy (and a set of ideas that later would become known as the New Age movement) were flourishing in the metropolitan centres of the West: Roszak celebrates 'the strong influence upon the young of Eastern religion, with its heritage of gentle, tranquil and thoroughly civilized contemplativeness. Here we have a tradition that calls radically into question the validity of the scientific world view, the supremacy of cerebral cognition, the value of technological prowess' (1995, p. 82).

Predictably, in an intellectual environment where progress, science, reason and rationality are gradually seen through a prism of scepticism, then pessimism will also flourish. A quasi-apocalyptic attitude of 'the end is nigh' was becoming widespread in the 1960s, even before the spread of fears about an environmental breakdown that dominated Western societies in subsequent decades. The nuclear threat and the prospect of the Cold War escalating to a new world war definitely had something to do with such anxieties, but there seemed to be a wider, unspecified atmosphere of doom. Adorno and Horkheimer saw the world and mankind 'sinking into a new kind of barbarism', which they failed to name or describe (1997, p. xi). This gloomy atmosphere was also evident in pop culture. The lyrics of the song 'Eve of Destruction' by Barry McGuire, which became one of the 1960s counter-culture anthems and the fastest rising song in the charts in the history of rock up to that time (Gitlin 1993, p. 195) are quite telling:

Don't you understand what I'm tryin' to say?
Can't you feel the fears I'm feelin' today?
If the button is pushed, there's no runnin' away
There'll be no one to save with the world in a grave
Take a look around you boy, it's bound to scare you boy
And you tell me
Over and over and over again my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve of destruction?

It is quite interesting how two intellectuals with opposite ideological convictions and views on the New Left and the counter-culture, Theodore Roszak and Ayn Rand, came up with similar metaphors to capture the difference between the New Left's emotionalism and anti-materialism and capitalism's materialism and rationality: the antithesis between the virtues expressed by the ancient Greek gods of Apollo and Dionysus. Apollo was considered the god of beauty, symmetry, order, wisdom and achievement; Dionysus, on the other hand, as the god of festivities, orgy, mess and of instinctive whims. For Roszak, the New Left and the counter-culture represent the effort to introduce some spontaneity and colour to the grey Apollonian ideology of industrial capitalism. Yet he considered the bourgeois ideology too powerful to be defeated: 'An Image comes at once to mind: the invasion of centaurs that is recorded on the pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. Drunken and incensed, the centaurs burst in upon the civilized festivities that are in progress. But a stern Apollo, the guardian of the orthodox culture, steps forward to admonish the gate-crashers and drive them back' (1995, p. 42). For Ayn Rand, the highlight that captures the philosophical battle in the 1960s took place in the summer of 1969, when hundreds of thousands gathered in Cape Kennedy in Florida to witness the launch of Apollo 11 carrying astronauts to the moon, whereas a month later some 300,000 of people gathered in Woodstock for the three-day music festival. The participants in these two events personify the Apollonian and the Dionysian tendencies in American society. For Rand, those at Cape Kennedy were 'starved for the sight of an achievement, for a vision of man the hero', whereas the campers in Woodstock and the joyful chaos during the three days of the festival embodied the Dionysian attitude, seeking 'an escape from reality they are unable to deal with, and from a technological civilization that ignores their feelings' (1999, pp. 101–2).

The important role of emotions and feelings in the 1960s mobilizations (and in the social movements that sprang up in the following decades), characterized by Peter Schwartz as 'militant emotionalism' (1999, p. vii), is quite interesting. My thesis does not imply that the use of emotions had to do with the activists of the New Left being irrational or overtaken by a mob mentality, as some early conservative social movements' theories argued (Le Bon, Smelser 1968). My claim is that,

for one reason or another, the use of emotions and the attachment of a political status to feelings constituted a central choice of the New Left. In placing emotions at the centre of a campaign, activists formed identities, sent a message about who they are and what they stand for, and aimed to evoke specific reactions from their audience (Goodwin et al. 2004, p. 413). These points will be elaborated in the next section, where I present examples of mobilizations in the 1960s in which these elements were in play. Predictably, an emphasis on emotions and on feelings was about forming a link to the playful and the juvenile part of the human psyche. For Roszak, this playfulness of the counter-culture is to be celebrated. He sets up the archetypical figure of the hippie-looking radical as standing 'as one of the few images toward which the very young can grow without having to give up the childish sense of enchantment and playfulness, perhaps because the hippie keeps one foot to his childhood' (1995, p. 40). Rothbard, on the other hand, is more dismissive of this culture that celebrates childish playfulness, as he links it to passivity, anti-intellectuality and ignorance, as opposed to the more demanding 'dare to know' motto of modernity (Rothbard 1970).

To sum up, an intellectual uneasiness with the notions of reason and rationalism, and a questioning of the Enlightenment-inspired optimism that they would lead to a future of ever-growing progress was another element of the 1960s that signified a change in the character of the left. Bloom spoke about the 'Nietzscheanization of the Left', where suddenly modernity did not appear as something progressive and revolutionary, or a tide to be ridden towards a future full of possibility. On the contrary, modernity appeared as alienating and threatening; thus maybe what was needed was a retreat to more organic and communal forms of interaction and socialization. As Bloom ironically pointed out, 'Rousseau can still overpower where Marx fell flat' (1987, p. 217). Yet, he had also the insight to realize that this uneasiness with modernity was an ideological phenomenon going beyond the New Left. He referred to a 'germanization' of the ideological sphere in the USA, where figures such as Freud, Weber, Nietzsche and Heidegger gained significant popularity and influence, displacing figures such as Locke or the Founding Fathers, with their faith in reason, science, progress and freedom (1987, p. 150). This intellectual atmosphere paved the way for the triumph, during the next couple of decades, of what became

known as 'post-modernism', which built on the narrative problematizing reason and universalism described in this section. Yet it needs to be made clear that most of the thinkers mentioned in this chapter, such as Marcuse, Bookchin, Castoriadis, Horkheimer and Adorno, still saw themselves operating within the wider scope of modernity. This can also explain their faith in technology as a tool for delivering a post-scarcity future, where the organization of a more humane (according to their standards) society would be possible. As Adorno and Horkheimer state quite early in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 'social freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought' (1997, p. xiii). Yet many radicals and activists in the 1960s went beyond this frame, in extreme forms of emotionalism, which can be blamed partly on the attitudes within the New Left and partly on the wider intellectual environment of scepticism and pessimism.

The 'Walking Embodiments of the New Left's Philosophy': 1960s Radicals

Ayn Rand, when criticizing the New Left, pointed out that the radical activists of the 1960s were actually a materialization of ideas that were floating around and gaining ground over the previous couple of decades. As she lyrically mentioned: 'If a dramatist had the power to convert philosophical ideas into real, flesh-and-blood people and attempted to create the walking embodiments of modern philosophy—the result would be the Berkeley rebels' (1999, p. 15). Of course, this is true for every epoch. Even the most radical ideological or political pioneers operate in an existing environment of values and norms and are, thus, up to a point influenced by the *zeitgeist* of their era. In this section some of the most prominent expressions of New Left activism will be examined, in order to see if and how their ideas and forms of action fit together. I will mostly refer to the USA, which is an interesting case study. It was the most affluent country in the world, and served as a political and cultural paradigm for a large part of the international community (and especially young people), with the glory of the victory in the Second World War still fresh, and having achieved two decades in the course of which life seemed to be getting better and injustices of the past were (slowly) being recognized.

And yet, a tiny minority among students (let alone the general population) managed to shake the country to its core, showing that it had only little faith in its values and beliefs. Since in the USA the political activism of the New Left is inseparable from the popularity of the counter-culture, these two phenomena will be examined in parallel. What will become obvious is that the double philosophical legacy that was mentioned in previous sections, on the one side celebrating freedom and autonomy, and on the other focusing on a moral and cultural critique of capitalism, will be also apparent in these movements' ideas and forms of action.

The New Left in the USA needs to be understood first and foremost as a reaction to what one could describe as the American way of life; yet a reaction that is expressed in quite an American way. The 'beat' generation of artists had captured this tendency already in the 1950s: a rebellion against bourgeois conformity, against the life in the city, work in an office, careerism, and the consumerism and rationality of the world of the grown-ups. Yet what more American way to express this disengagement than by embracing the freedom of the highway and 'going West', to experiment with one's individuality? Jack Kerouac captures this spirit in his semi-autobiographical novel *On the Road*, which, unsurprisingly, could be perceived both as the expression of an un-American attitude and as an American classic. Alan Ginsberg, in his much-quoted poem 'America' (1956, p. 39), expresses this reaction against almost everything: the supermarket, the 'machinery', the media, the businessmen and the military-industrial complex. This reaction is expressed in subjective terms, with references to Ginsberg's experimentation with drugs and psychoanalysis. The soon-to-come easiness of the New Left with Eastern spirituality and mysticism, together with some proto-environmental sensitivities and a search for 'authenticity' away from the paradigm of modernity, was already there in the beats. The tone of not only the poem, but of the counter-culture that was being born, was already set in the first four lines:

> America two dollars and twenty-seven cents January 17, 1956.
> I can't stand my own mind.
> America when will we end the human war?
> Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb

Interestingly though, this rebellious tendency, with a strong element of a childish innocence and a resistance to the 'corruption' of bourgeois life, goes beyond the margins of the counter-culture. How else is one to perceive iconic pop culture figures in the 1950s, such as James Dean portraying a mis-fitting *Rebel without a Cause*, or Marlon Brandon in *The Wild One*? One of the most famous of Marlon Brando's lines in that film (cited in Gitlin 1992, p. 32) is quite revealing for the confused state of the youth's cultural rebellion.

– What are you rebelling against?

– Whadda ya got?

Fast forward a decade, and in 1967, we find Abbie Hoffman, the iconic figure of the Yippie movement (a loose group merging New Leftist and counter-cultural themes), having a similar dialogue with a reporter:

– What do you want?

– To win.

– To win what?

– Fuck you! (1989, p. 27)

This counter-cultural tendency, which yet had an appeal beyond the counter-culture, can be seen as the background canvas on which the New Left appeared. Though it could make sense to view the counter-culture without the New Left, the opposite is almost impossible. Gitlin portrays the way politics and culture fused to produce something new in the 1960s: 'In 1958 and 1959, in coffeehouses and student unions scattered across the country, beat talk, pseudobeat talk, avant-garde talk, political talk, sex talk, and literature and art talk were buzzing and mingling, not always logically, at neighbouring tables' (1993, p. 53). It is no coincidence that University of California, Berkeley, a stronghold of the beats, would soon become a stronghold of the New Left as well (Steigerwald 1995, p. 132).

The New Left in the USA had various expressions which are not easy to codify, due to their weak organizational structures and also due to

the overlap in the members. In this section, I will try to focus on its more 'formal' product, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), but there will also be references in other expressions, such as the Youth International Party (Yippies) and the 1964–5 Berkeley Free Speech Movement. The theme will be that the inherent contradictions in this movement led to decay and retreat to the margins or splits that produced decadent groups such as the Weather Underground. Taking two snapshots of the New Left in the USA in, say, 1964 (what Gitlin [1993, p. 26] called 'the old New Left') and in 1969, one would see a different image. The theoretical analysis of the preceding sections will frame the description of this shift.

Gitlin (1993) and Steigerwald (1995) more or less agree on who the young men and women who would form the initial core of the New Left in the early 1960s were. They would, up to a point, correspond to the typical image of the liberal leftist of that era: often Jewish, middle-class and sometimes 'Red-diaper kids' (i.e. from a family with a background of communist activism or communist sympathies), inspired by the Civil Rights Movement and its methods, without much contact with the traditions of the old left (due to the period of McCarthyism, among other reasons) or the old right, and thus with an open mind on many issues, including the Cold War and American imperialism. Their readings, beyond the beats, involved some of the pioneers of the New Left, such as Marcuse and Charles Wright Mills. Since the stigma of being characterized as a communist was still quite powerful, initially these young progressives would be engaged in single-issue campaigns, related to the Civil Rights Movement, or with projects in less developed communities (Gitlin 1993, p. 83).

The birth certificate of the New Left as a distinct movement could be dated to various moments, but June 1960 was definitely a landmark (although no one at that time could understand it as such). Then, a small leftist group, the League for Industrial Democracy, reorganized its student branch and renamed it as Students for a Democratic Society, which at that moment had no more than 250 affiliates in the whole country (Steigerwald 1995, p. 124). Within four years, the SDS group would 'secede' from the parent organization, as there were disagreements over approaches to several issues (or, perhaps, a crucial generational gap).

Gitlin, having experienced the movement from within, described the SDS as a much-needed community of people who shared personal bonds and had some similar cultural and moral value systems, around a vague reformist centre-left outlook (1993, p. 107); Steigerwald characterized the same phenomenon a bit more cynically as 'existential radicalism', expressing a 'white middle-class guilt' (1995, pp. 130–1). Although the SDS was in many ways distinctively American, its participants would see themselves as something bigger and as participating in an international campaign for peace and justice; something quite understandable, if one takes into account the centrality in domestic politics of the Cold War and, later, of the American escalation of the Vietnam War (Isserman and Kazin 2008, p. 177).

The SDS put its own mark on the US left with the now famous Port Huron Statement of 1964, which operated as the 'declaration of independence' for the movement and as a presentation of its values and worldview. That text encompasses the beliefs, the hopes and the contradictions in the ideas of the New Left discussed in the previous sections. The opening lines provide the middle-class credentials of their authors and their uneasiness with the prospects lying ahead: 'We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit' (SDS 1962). They recognize that the struggles of black people in the South and the Cold War are what politicized them and shaped the core of their ideas (and also their forms of action, such as civil disobedience). The rise of the New Left as a reply to a political vacuum and an uninspiring bipartisan technocratic conformity already presented in this book is also named by the SDS as a reason for its creation: 'It has been said that our liberal and socialist predecessors were plagued by vision without program, while our own generation is plagued by program without vision' (SDS 1962). The Frankfurtian undertones of the SDS are clear in the Port Huron Statement, as issues such as alienation, apathy and loneliness in advanced industrial capitalism are presented as central in their agenda. They also pick issues that were then only marginal, but would soon become central in the narrative of the left, such as over-population, over-consumption and 'super-technology' (SDS 1962). The SDS analysed the military-industrial complex and its contribution to US imperialism, and argued

that issues around the Cold War and the threat of a nuclear catastrophe were interrelated with injustices within the USA. The big idea that came out of Port Huron was that of 'participatory democracy', where society would have some form of enhanced control over the processes of production, distribution and of social life in general. However, the SDS failed to successfully define or explain participatory democracy, remaining at the level of general statements, such as that 'corporations must be made publicly responsible' and that 'the allocation of resources must be based on social needs' (SDS 1962).

Scholars such as De Koven (2004) and Steigerwald (1995) have an argument with which this book agrees: the 1960s were a transitional era. Some core values of modernity were under question; yet such a challenge remained within a universe of meaning created by this very modernity. This is also evident in the Port Huron Statement. Despite questioning technology, industrial capitalism and technocratic rationality, the SDS is faithful to the intellectual tradition running through the Enlightenment project, liberalism and through the humanist left. The statement declares that 'We regard men as infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom, and love. In affirming these principles we are aware of countering perhaps the dominant conceptions of man in the twentieth century: that he is a thing to be manipulated, and that he is inherently incapable of directing his own affairs' (SDS 1962). Today, such a statement, especially its second part, would be met with scepticism by many on the left, who consider that human beings have a limited capacity to stand up to pressures from, say, the media, the advertising industry or populist politicians. The Port Huron Statement also offers an optimistic account of the possibilities for a different technology in a different society that would liberate the productive capacities of humanity towards a future of post-scarcity (SDS 1962).

Thus, the New Left seemed to start as a movement with a message that was maybe not very coherent, but had a certain amount of insight into what had to be changed and also expressed the need to engage more people to achieve results. Yet, as the SDS and the movement grew bigger, mainly due to the escalation of the US involvement in Vietnam, the message was more and more diluted and gave way to what we could call the activism of performance, materializing the then-emerging ideology that

I described as lifestyle activism. The popularity of the counter-culture and the ground it was gaining within the SDS and in its political, social and cultural 'ecosystem' had a role to play in this. Having abandoned rational political analysis, soon the worry about existing social problems became an indiscriminate rage against society in general. The Berkeley Free Speech movement is a good example. It began as a genuine struggle for the right to free expression in an academic environment, but soon its character changed. Leading figures in the movement, such as Jerry Rubin and Mario Savio, in a way introduced the model of the 'celebrity activist', whose personal charisma and image counted for more than the quality of their thought (Steigerwald 1995, p. 133). The Free Speech Movement was soon accompanied by a 'Filthy Speech movement', with an aim more to provoke and test the limits of the authorities, using obscene words in signs and in speeches, rather than to achieve specific goals.

Provoking the public and creating images (or 'situations', as the French counter-cultural activists would say) was central to a group that became quite popular towards the end of the decade, the Yippies. They took the anti-modernist and anti-rational tendencies of the counter-culture and applied them in their politics; or, put properly, in their street-theatre. The group's ideas and forms of action can become clear in the writings of one of its leading figures, Abbie Hoffman: 'Once one has experienced LSD, existential revolution, fought the intellectual game-playing of the individual in society, of one's identity, one realizes that action is the only reality; not only reality, but morality as well. One learns reality is subjective experience. It exists in my head. I am the revolution' (1989, p. 3). In four lines, the epistemological universe of Hoffman becomes apparent. Reality is not what it is; it is more of a subjective experience, driven by consciousness (rather the other way round, as in the rational paradigm). Ideas about right and wrong, true and false, are just an intellectual game. Thus, the guiding principle is not reason, but feelings and action. Action directed by what? Nothing specific, as this would constitute a commitment undesirable for Hoffman. 'The reluctance to define ourselves gives us glorious freedom in which to fuck with the system. […] We are theatre in the streets: total and committed. We aim to involve people and use (unlike other movements locked in ideology) any weapon (prop) we can find. The aim is not to earn the respect, admiration, and love of

everybody—it's to get people to do, to participate, whether positively or negatively. All is relevant, only the "play's the thing" (1989, p. 17).' Thus action was not oriented to specific goals; such goals would anyway presume the acknowledgment of the existence of an objectively perceivable reality, something that Hoffman's epistemology was uncomfortable with. Thus, the only related tools are whims and the drive of the moment. 'Don't rely on words. Words are the absolute in horseshit. Rely on doing—go all the way every time' (1989, p. 19).

If reason is the arbiter of right and wrong, the lack of objective standards releases one from the need to be taken seriously. Even the name of the Yippies was chosen as something that did not mean anything specific, as a gesture that they were not to be taken seriously. Their clownish actions were similar to those of the Provos, a counter-cultural quasi-political group in the Netherlands. They chose provocative forms of action (hence the name 'Provo'), playing with the mass media and being fully aware that they would not change much. Thus, what mattered was creating spectacles, such as their attack with smoke bombs at the Dutch royal wedding of 1966 (Pas 2008, pp. 15–17). Fully aware of the lack of gravitas of their existence, the Provos had set an end date for their action, which, naturally enough, took the form of a public 'happening' (De Jong 1971, p. 172). The Yippies were not much different. Provocation was central in their forms of actions, such as the throwing of dollar bills in the stock exchange or mocking a Miss America contest (Isserman and Kazin 2008, p. 246). Their actions were intended to mock not only the powers that be but also the supposedly deluded masses, which brings us back to the point made in the previous sections regarding the anti-masses elitism in parts of the New Left. Protest theatre and playful irrationalism reached a peak in October 1967, when an anti-war protest outside the Pentagon had as its declared aim to levitate the building through meditation and thus exorcize the evil spirits (Gitlin 1993, p. 234; Roszak 1995, p. 124). Another famous moment for the Yippies was when, during the protests against the Democratic National Convention of 1968, they leaked rumours that they would attempt to mix LSD with the water supplies of the city; of course this would never happen, but the group wanted to mess with the worry its presence had caused to the authorities and the security services' infiltrators (Steigerwald 1995, p. 141).

Although the Yippies' imaginative forms of action were innovative and based on the communicative charisma of Hoffman and Rubin, their not-to-be-taken-seriously anti-hero juvenile attitude was already prevalent in a part of the American culture that was uncomfortable with the rational world of the 'grown-ups'. Interestingly, the grown-ups were essential for the counter-cultural's mere existence. Rand mocked the chaos that took place at Woodstock, where the organizers and participants of the 1969 music festival were unable to provide for themselves even the very basics, such as food, water and sanitation (1999, p. 110). Also, Hoffman wrote a book on how to steal effectively or how to abuse the welfare and the unemployment system, called *Steal this Book*. He justified this ethos of looting, by claiming that 'It's universally wrong to steal from your neighbour, but once you get beyond the one-to-one level and pit the individual against the multinational conglomerate, the federal bureaucracy, the modern plantation of afro-business, or the utility company, it becomes strictly a value judgment to decide exactly who is stealing from whom' (1989, p. 189). This passage sums up Hoffman's relativism, subjectivism and pragmatism, where action in the here and now appears as the ultimate horizon.

Beyond the Yippies, who never claimed to be a purely 'political' movement, the character of the New Left was changing as the 1960s evolved. The SDS was moving to more and more militant positions. This could have something to do with the fact that the struggles of black people in the USA were becoming more radical, including, at times, the use of weapons. The mild and universalist message of Dr Martin Luther King Jr had given way to the black nationalism, fused with revolutionary socialism, of Malcolm X. The white movement felt that it somehow had to follow that radical path, but was not sure exactly how to do so (Isserman and Kazin 2008, p. 187). In the SDS, the Maoist Progressive Labour Party had an important influence, which created a backlash that was also militant and at odds with the rest of the American society. The old guard of the Port Huron Statement were losing control of a group that was growing beyond recognition, reaching 100,000 members by 1969 (Steigerwald 1995, p. 134), This shift in the SDS became apparent in some of its central documents in the years following the Port Huron Statement.

In 1967, two documents were produced from within the SDS, where the shift in the character of the movement was visible. Greg Calvert, National Secretary of the SDS, in February 1967 in his manifesto 'In White America: Liberal Conscience vs. Radical Consciousness' used a tone significantly different from the relatively moderate language of Port Huron. Marxian jargon and a sense of detachment from the rest of society are clear throughout the text. In a way, Calvert acknowledged the impossibility of the radical message of the young radicals having any influence on US society, turning his gaze to other people out there. 'If a mass movement cannot be built in white America, then individuals with revolutionary hopes and perspectives must orient themselves toward Third World revolutions and develop those methods of activity which will maximize the impact of peasant-based revolutions on the structure of the American imperialist monster' (1967, p. 12). This was not attributed to anything the young radicals had done wrongly; the convenient explanation for this withdrawal was false consciousness and the failure of the people to recognize their own oppression and unfreedom (1967, p. 16). In the same year, a cadre of leading SDS figures produced the Port Authority Statement, where the radicalization and further detachment of the group from mainstream society were confirmed. An elitist view towards the supposedly brainwashed masses, called 'the Pepsi generation', becomes clear in the following statement: 'The passive consumer is none other than the "mass individual", manipulated, brutalized, and addicted to the needs of capitalism: production for the production's sake, and the manipulation of society into a state of compulsive consumption, all grown out of the needs of profit and accumulation' (Gilbert et al. 1967, p. 62). In 1969, when it was becoming apparent that the Maoists of Progressive Labour were taking over the SDS, a group of members seceded, creating the Weather Underground Organization, that would move outside the law, become an underground sect and, for the next eight years, undertake arson and bombings, while also experimenting with sexuality, communal living and so on. The document that expressed the group's orientation was called 'You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows' after a lyric from Bob Dylan's 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' (Ashley et al. 1969). The document reveals an almost delusional detachment from reality, as the group saw itself as a Marxist-Leninist

revolutionary organization preparing 'the destruction of US imperialism and the achievement of a classless world: world communism' (Ashley et al. 1969).

Gitlin offers a useful insight into the decadence of the New Left: 'the movement oscillated between narcissism (imagining itself to be the instrument of change) and self-disparagement (searching for the real instrument of change), eventually succumbing to the false solution of Leninism, which was the first in the guise of the second' (1993, p. 6). By Leninism, Gitlin refers to the sectarianism and retreat to pseudo-revolutionary action by groups such as the Weathermen. But the question remains: why did such tendencies find fertile ground in the American New Left? Steigerwald provides an explanation that has to do with the epistemological outlook of the radicals. For a significant portion of the movement, putting aside reason in favour of emotionalism and following instincts and whims was considered a virtue, and a reaction to the artificial and alienating technocratic world of rationalism. From there, it is just a short step until the voluntarism of the feeling gives rise to violence: 'where reason is tossed aside and the instincts were unleashed, after sex and drugs, there was not much left but violence and destruction' (Steigerwald 1995, p. 177). The reason the violent action of these groups seemed disoriented and unfocused is that the target had become quite vague; for alienated subjects, the 'enemy' is not necessarily the military-industrial complex or oppressive institutions, but society in general.

Of course, it has to be made clear that the percentage of the New Left radicals who turned towards terroristic violence formed a tiny minority (not only in the USA, but also in countries such as Italy and Germany). Even though its ideas were not realized, and even though its significance in the political sphere, as became apparent in the 1968 elections, was non-existent, the New Left had put its signature on a period that saw the bettering of the position for significant parts of groups that were not participating on equal terms in the American Dream, such as black people and women. In addition, the counter-culture managed to liberalize the attitude of parts of the American society on issues around sexuality. Also, the New Left produced spin-off movements, such as the environmental, feminist and gay liberation movements, which would have a strong presence and gain political importance in subsequent decades. Indeed, what is of particular interest for this

book is the rest of the disillusioned elements of the New Left and their shift in the 1970s from trying to change the world and 'asking for the impossible', to either retreat to the self or to social causes with smaller horizons. In the last chapter, it was shown how some philosophical, epistemological and ideological values of the New Left had a profound impact in giving rise to new political phenomena that inherently contained contradictions that, within the course of a decade, had exploded. These ideas, though, would continue to play a prominent role in shaping social and political movements in the 1970s and beyond; this time, though, getting closer to the political mainstream, and this is the period to which our focus will now shift.

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3

The 1970s and Beyond: A Counter-Revolution of Capitalism or the New Left Fears Going Mainstream?

Lasch tried to capture what he saw as the end of an era of radicalism and new ideas, by pointing out how 'if the sixties were the Age of Aquarius, the age of social commitment and cultural revolution, the seventies soon gained a reputation for self-absorption and political retreat' (1991, p. 237). His view is shared by most scholars, as in the public imagination the radicalism of the 1960s was followed by a reorganization of capitalism that gained much of the ground it had lost in previous decades, a process culminating with the 'neo-liberal counter-revolution' of Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s. Yet I will argue that the picture is more complicated than this. True, the 1970s was an era of political disillusionment and retreat on the left. But this can be read in two ways: either as a retreat of the radical ideas of the 1960s or as a period of calm in the battle of ideas, as the anti-materialist and pessimistic philosophy of the New Left drew closer – up to a point – to the narrative of the ruling elites. Both of these tendencies will be further examined.

For Murray Bookchin, the radicalism of the 1960s fragmented in the 1970s, as a result of disappointment over the political defeats of various radical movements of the 1960s. On the one hand, an extremely

N. Sotirakopoulos, *The Rise of Lifestyle Activism*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55103-0_3

minoritarian part of the movement ended up resorting to what Bookchin calls 'terroristic adventurism' (1999, p. 82), isolating itself politically and becoming an easy target for state repression; the Weather Underground in the USA and the Red Army Fraction (RAF) in Europe presenting characteristic cases. A second stream found refuge, according to Bookchin, in a 'spiritualistic narcissism' and a form of protest that focused 'more on single issues rather than challenging society's basic institutions and economic relationships' (1999, p. 163). This stream experimented with a form of escapism, in the absence of any positive vision, and tended to retreat from the political to the personal and from the social to the individual (1999, p. 163). The question is, why did such a process take place? The often used argument of 'disillusionment after the defeat of the 1960s' is hardly convincing. To begin with, the various expressions of the New Left had not really set up tangible targets on which to judge their success or failure. Sure, France did not turn into a country run by soviets of students and workers after May 1968, but both the students' and the workers' movements earned important concessions from the Pompidou government. And in the USA, the movement managed, beyond the various cultural shifts it had facilitated, to blast a major hole in the legitimization of the Vietnam War, the end of which was more or less visible. Also, in 1973, the draft was ended, which signified a huge victory for one of the most persistent demands of the New Left (though the left was not alone in opposing conscription). So why have the 1970s (and 1980s) passed into the public consciousness as a period of political defeat for the left?

From the 1970s onwards a shift has been taking place in global capitalism, which was, up to a point, a reply to the enhanced power that the working class had acquired in the post-Second World War consensus. Organized labour in the 1960s had reached a point where it could effectively block the productive process in the factory, costing capital a lot of money in terms of lost working hours, strikes, sabotage and so on. Marxists of the autnonomist tradition, such as Antonio Negri, had grasped early on that the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist capitalist production—the latter based on small, decentralized and internationalized production—would have significant effects on the political power of the workers. Thus the elements that gave the working class its bargaining

power and its ability to block the production process (such as big production units with the concentration of large numbers of well-organized industrial workers), were seriously eroded (Negri 1982). The traditional trade union, organized according to field of production, became more and more incapable of representing the interests and organizing the struggles of the precarious, superfluous and non-homogeneous 'post-Fordist' workers (Hardt and Negri 2006, p. 136).

Thus, the workplace now seemed unlikely to be a significant field for the flourishing of political organization and radicalization. In addition, as capital's mobility and convertibility (e.g. to financial capital) was enhanced, the reproduction of capital became less and less dependent on the working class at the national level. Put simply, Fiat needed less and less a big Italian working class to produce, or buy, its cars. In addition, institutions of mediation between labour, the state and capital, such as trade unions, which experienced a period of high influence in the decades following the Second World War, were now weakened. This whole process was clear in the UK with the retreat of the political power of the working class in the years of Margaret Thatcher's governments.

It is true, then, that the conjuncture in the 1970s was not advantageous for the political project of the left and for organized labour. Yet I will claim that this only partially explains the feeling of retreat and pessimism of the time. What mostly characterized the 1970s as a period of low expectations was the wider ideological climate and a deep questioning of the possibility of capitalism to provide a future of continuous prosperity and progress. Ironically, what marked the era that the New Left experienced as a retreat was the sharing of its worries and of its anti-capitalist critique by a wider part of the population and, mainly, by a large part of the political and ideological elites. Of course this does not mean that suddenly the leaders of the Western world became anti-capitalists. If nothing else, the strong ideological element of the Cold War would prevent such a development. What happened is that, although the Western elites still opposed a political alternative such as socialism, they gradually started questioning the merits that stand at the core of capitalism: a reason-guided self-interest, leading not to conflict but to a society that gets better and better through the use of science and technology, offering more and more opportunities to wider parts of the population, in a

process that inevitably spreads internationally and offers such advantages to the less developed world. All these premises would be put to the test in the 1970s.

This chapter will focus mostly on two developments: (1) the rise of environmentalism as an ideology that solidified the anti-growth and anti-consumerist trends of the New Left and (2) the codification and affirmation of the questioning of modernity and of the role of reason in human progress through the stream of thought that could be empirically referred to as 'post-modernism'. Then we will see how these ideas materialized in the case study of the German Greens as a movement that encompassed many of the ideological tendencies of its time.

Environmentalism: A New Mega-Narrative for Anti-Capitalist Worries

The 1970s saw environmental concerns increase. The possible explanations for this vary, and have to do with objective developments and ideological shifts. Most scholars (see, for example, Bell 2011; Hannigan 2006; Rootes 2007) dealing with the issue more or less agree that the rise of environmental concern in the decades following the 1960s had to do with some, or all, of the following factors:

(a) Environmental hazards that made clear the extent to which human intervention had a negative effect on their ecosystem. Examples of such hazards could include the London smog of 1952 and the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in 1979. The Chernobyl disaster of 1986 would also be an example, but environmentalism was then already a popular concern.
(b) Some influential individuals and their work, such as Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring* in 1962.
(c) Scientific developments, leading to a better understanding of some of the environmental risks related to industrial growth, such as the hole in the ozone layer and acid rain.
(d) The emergence of mass media that could popularize science and also bring everyday people into contact with the beauties of nature.

(e) The rise of a well-off middle class, which had, more or less, secured its most urgent material needs and would shift its attention to what have been characterized (not without objections) as 'post-material issues', such as the environment or minorities' rights.
(f) Closely linked to the above point, an ideological or 'cultural' shift has been traced by various scholars, where people in the West see themselves as part of a natural environment the protection of which is high in their agenda, while they appear ready to sacrifice some part of their material comfort for the sake of a more ecologically balanced society.

Even though all these points are quite valid, environmentalism goes beyond our relationship with our natural environment. It has developed into an overall ideology, linked with not only the natural environment, but also with how we evaluate concepts such as humanity and progress. It has also had a significant influence on the character of a large part of the left, which, after the soul-searching of the 1960s and the new prism through which it viewed the world, found a unifying cause that would become a mega-narrative to accommodate their worries and their anti-capitalist sentiments.

Lomborg (2013) is correct to mark 1972 as a significant turning point in the way capitalism and material progress were viewed in the West. It was the year when the highly esteemed think tank Club of Rome issued its now infamous *Limits to Growth* report (Meadows et al. 1972). For Lomborg, what this report did was to put together fears and worries that were previously seen as independent issues and link them in a unified narrative. The concerns over pollution, a new rise in concerns over the world population and the issue of resources' depletion were now seen as parts of the same problem: the assault by capitalism and industrial progress on the environment. *The Limits to Growth* report was drafted with modest calls for treating the evidence with care by its authors, as it was based on computer modelling that took into accordance five trends: industrial development, population growth, malnutrition, depletion of renewable resources and environmental deterioration. Yet the report had an appeal and impact larger than what was perhaps warranted by the scientific evidence it put forward, as it sold more than 9 million copies and was translated into

29 languages (Ben-Ami 2012, loc. 763). Its impact had to do perhaps with its gloomy conclusions: 'If the present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years', leading to 'a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity' (Meadows et al. 1972, p. 26). The predictions about the possible depletion of specific resources were even gloomier: copper was likely to run out after 21 years (in 1993), natural gas in 22 years (1994) and petroleum in 20 years (in 1992) (1972, pp. 56, 58). Since 1972 the population has almost doubled and the world has witnessed the unprecedented economic leap forward of China and India; yet, these resources are not only not extinct, but will actually be comfortably available for the foreseeable future. In any case, the spectacular failure of the report's predictions did not prevent it from being considered a moment of awakening for the alleged catastrophic prospects of industrial growth.

There is little doubt that *The Limits to Growth* report just solidified worries that were already around. In 1962, with the publication of *The Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson questioned not only the use of DDT but also how agricultural procedures using synthetic pesticides pose great health and environmental hazards (Carson 2000). Carson's message was met with success, delivering changes at the level of policy and, mainly, appealing broadly to the US population, as it became a bestseller. Beyond the many questions as to the arguable merits and unintended consequences of Carson's argument (Meiners et al. 2012), what is important and indisputable is that while *Silent Spring* was not the first publication to raise questions about specific agricultural techniques, it did manage to express an atmosphere of distrust and scepticism towards technology. And if 1962 was too early for such worries to become mainstream, by 1972 the voices questioning whether and technology was making our life better had broken through.

Around the same time, an old fear made its reappearance, this time with a new outfit: worries around the issue of the increase in the human population. In 1968, a biologist, Paul Ehrlich, published a

book that would soon become a bestseller, called *The Population Bomb*. In the prologue, he makes the thesis of the book clear: 'the battle to feed all of humanity is over. […] At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate' (1971, p. xi). The front cover of the English edition portrays a smiling baby seated inside a bomb, with the subtitle 'while you are reading these words four people will have died from starvation. Most of them children.' The increase in population, especially in developing countries, is not viewed as a positive outcome of rising life expectations and a fall in infant mortality, but as a cause for concern. The key factor in Ehrlich's thesis had to do with his belief that the available resources would not be able to keep pace with the increase in human population. The author reveals the incident that made him realize the urgency of the problem: a visit to New Delhi, India: 'People eating, people washing, people sleeping …. people visiting, arguing and screaming. People thrusting their hands through the taxi window, begging. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people, people … since that night, I've known the *feel* of overpopulation' (1971, p. 1). Later in the book, he characterized 'the right to limit our families' an 'unalienable right' (1971, p. 119).

Concerns over an increase in the human population are not new and go back as far as Ancient Rome, before entering the mainstream with the theories of the Reverend Thomas Malthus in the late eighteenth century, when, promoting his conservative agenda against social reforms, he advanced his thesis that the population would increase geometrically, surpassing the arithmetical increase in subsistence resources like food. His theory was not borne out by reality and overpopulation worries, though always present on the margins of the public debate (Desrochers and Hoffbauer 2009), only made a comeback with Paul Ehlrich. The difference was that, this time, overpopulation was repackaged under the cover of an environmental narrative. This was quite effective, as Furedi claims, because now overpopulation in one area of the world was not only perceived as a burden for these specific societies but also seen as a factor leading to accelerating depletion of resources, and thus having an impact on the whole of the

planet (Furedi 1997, p. 143). A welcoming and fertile ideological ground is the only plausible explanation for the fact that Ehrlich, despite being proven wrong time and again with his ultra-catastrophic predictions—including that the United Kingdom, by the year 2000, would be a small group of impoverished islands, accommodating some 70 million desperately hungry inhabitants (cited in Dixon 1971, p. 606)—was taken seriously by parts of the opinion-making elites. His numerous appearances on the popular *Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson (Hymas 2011) is a testament to how appealing his gloomy message was in pessimistic times. Ehrlich's appeal was more the symptom of a society that had lost its positive outlook and faith in its values, rather than the cause of its pessimism.

Many of the ideological heirs of the New Left took the message of environmentalism to an extreme. Thus the radical anti-imperialist magazine of the 1960s *Fifth Estate* gradually turned, during the 1970s and the 1980s, into a pessimist technophobic forum (Millett 2004). Such an attitude was also promoted by the sociologist Lewis Mumford (1967, 1974), whose theory of the 'megamachine' saw technology as a force in society with the capacity to autonomize itself and exert power for the benefit of its own apparatus. And beyond technophobia lies the philosophical stream of Deep Ecology that found fertile ground in the early 1970s, mainly through the ideas of the Norwegian philosopher and activist Arne Naess. He defined Deep Ecology as a shift going beyond 'shallow ecology', as the latter was seen as an anthropocentric movement targeting mostly the preservation of the environment for human ends, and thus having a rather instrumental outlook (Devall and Sessions 1985). For Naess, the main principle of Deep Ecology was a state of mind, understanding humanity as part of nature and not above nature. He called for a new appreciation of nature as having intrinsic value, that is, a value irrespective of its instrumental usefulness to humans. Naess rejected the modern social paradigm of industrialism and economic growth and instead pointed out the importance of decentralization and the organization of life at the level of 'bioregions': small units that would be more or less materially autonomous and self-reliant (Merchant 2005, pp. 92–5). Ideas around social organization allow us to link the minoritarian tendency

of the Deep Greens with the narratives of the New Left. The popular ideal of small autonomous communities, in which direct political and economic democracy could flourish, would, supposedly, find fertile ground more easily in a small-scale society, where the capitalist values of consumerism and economic expansion would be inconsistent with the overriding environmental concerns. Predictably, the Deep Greens joined the overpopulation bandwagon and radicalized its message, claiming that there is a need not only for stabilization but also for a reduction of human population (Bodian 1995, p. 29; Morris 1997, p. 40).

Such tendencies, while being quite revealing of the surrounding intellectual and philosophical climate, did not become majoritarian and were met with various criticisms in the radical milieu; criticisms, though, that rarely went beyond the surface to question the metaphysical assumptions of the radical environmentalists. The concept of nature's intrinsic value, in particular, is quite problematic from an epistemological point of view. As Ayn Rand pointed out, 'Value is that which one acts to gain and/or keep. The concept 'value' is not a primary; it presupposes an answer to the question: of value to whom and for what? It presupposes an entity capable of acting to achieve a goal in the face of an alternative' (1964, p. 16). Put simply, nothing can have 'intrinsic value', as value is a human-made concept. Bookchin understood this and his criticism of the philosophical foundations of radical environmentalism is spot-on:

> nature still remains a realm of ethical vacuity. This vacuity can only be filled by the rights and obligations that humans consciously deliver to it. […] No nonhuman organism 'respects' 'Mother Nature'– or even knows that 'she' exists as anything more than a habitat. […] Wolves would devour the last caribou alive if they were hungry, and ungulates would nip away the last remaining patches of vegetation on earth if they required food. […] We as species are the sole ethical agents on the planet who are able to formulate these rights, to confer them, and to see that they are upheld. […] With the disappearance of human beings, value too would disappear, and the biosphere would be left with no basis for any ethical evaluation or discussion of 'intrinsic worth'. […] If the reader chooses, as our 'deep ecologists' do,

> to respond to my humanistic observations by sneeringly asking 'Who says so?' I can only reply that their ability to ask such questions is evidence of the view I have advanced. (2005, pp. 37–40)

I mentioned earlier my agreement with the thesis that the environmental movement is the most successful and long-lasting heir of the 1960s radical ideal. This can be attributed to two reasons. On the one hand, it has been a response to real and pressing problems, such as pollution, that threaten the health and well-being of a large number of people and cut across borders and social classes. However, environmentalism as an ideology goes way beyond that. A large part of the Green milieu (and definitely not only its radical strand) calls for a re-examination not only of our relationship with nature, but of our more fundamental values. Problems related to the environment are not seen as practical concerns to be solved, but as existential issues that call on humanity to fundamentally change its course. This tendency has reached its peak with the debates around climate change in the last three decades. The focus on the moral argument for changes on the individual level, together with top-down measures to hold back economic growth based on cheap energy, raises questions. There are claims that the overall effect of such changes could be minimal (Lomborg 2007, pp. 22–3). At the same time, more drastic solutions, such as an expansion in the use of nuclear energy, large projects for the production of hydroelectric power, or the absorption of carbon from the atmosphere (referred to, usually with disdain, as 'geo-engineering') are not popular among the Green milieu. This shows that the whole movement, beyond addressing existing threats, is also popular, even among the elites, because it mirrors an intellectual atmosphere of low expectations, of scepticism towards technology and a move away from embracing risk. Though it is a mere hypothesis, even if Western societies had the scientific knowledge about the counter-effects of rapid industrialization 150 years ago, it seems quite unlikely that environmental concerns would have had such an influence and be framed in the anti-materialist way they are framed today. Also, the reason why the left progressively embraced the environmentalist narrative becomes clear: lacking an effective or appealing alternative to capitalism and the free market, it moved the goal-posts and adopted a narrative according to which capitalism's destructiveness was based in its own nature and had to do not

with the system's failure, but with its success. Capitalism was portrayed as a system having inherent in it the germs of not only financial crisis but also ecological crisis. In addition, this anti-capitalist narrative was more welcome in parts of the middle and of the upper classes than the economic and materialist narrative of the old left.

New Trends in Philosophy

Trying to define some new trends in philosophy, literary theory and aesthetics under the umbrella term of post-modernism, or post-structuralism, or deconstruction, or critical theory is quite risky. It is putting together different thinkers, such as Foucault, Lyotard, Deleuze and Rorty, whose differences are notable and would not necessarily see themselves as part of the same ideological stream. The reason I decided to attempt a grouping of these theoretical streams and their examination as part of my work is twofold: (a) on a philosophical, metaphysical and epistemological level, they do share some common attributes, the understanding of which is important if one wants to grasp the wider philosophical atmosphere that has had a notable presence in Western academia and the world of ideas in recent decades, (b) the allegiance of almost all of the so-called post-modern thinkers to a leftist agenda is interesting. In a way, one cannot understand the post-1970s new left without understanding these theorists and their influence on how radicals view the world and themselves. Therefore, I will allow myself the risky attempt to use a concept such as 'post-modernism' and attempt to examine it in relation to the development of a new left.

The first thing that needs to be examined has to do with the name itself. Why 'post-modernism'? Few such theorists would accept that title, which has its origin in the writings of Jean-François Lyotard and his work *The Postmodern Condition* (1984). Yet, for Stephen Hicks (2004, pp. 6–7), this title is suitable, as it links together theorists whose approach places them philosophically, epistemologically and historically at odds with the tradition of modernity. In his work, he comes up with some central themes that justify this gap between the philosophy and epistemology of Enlightenment and modernity on the one side, and post-modernity on the other:

(a) Modernity has reason at the root of its epistemology; the idea that there is an objective reality out there that can be perceived by our rational minds. For the post-modernists, reality is perceived in a heavily constructed way, mediated by language that is the field of power-relations.
(b) If reason is an objective measure of reality, then there are some universal values on whose characteristics all people can agree. Yet challenging reason as a universal reality-perceiving tool means that universal concepts are also challenged. For Lyotard, '[T]he grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation' (1984, p. 37). Thus, in the place of the universal schemes of modernity (man, reason, science, progress and so on), post-modern philosophy places various subjectivities that have to do with linguistic, ethnic, racial, sexual or other identity. Notions such as false and correct or good or bad are supposedly different for a white male CEO and a working-class woman of an ethnic or sexual minority, even if they share neighbouring seats in the London tube.
(c) According to modernity's premises, there should be no conflicts of interest among rational human beings. The fictional arch-rationalist hero of Ayn Rand, John Galt, elaborates on this principle in his infamous long monologue in *Atlas Shrugged*, where he sums up Rand's philosophy championing modernity:

> When I disagree with a rational man, I let reality be our final arbiter; if I am right, he will learn; if I am wrong, I will; one of us will win, but both will profit. Whatever may be open to disagreement, there is one act of evil that may not, the act that no man may commit against others and no man may sanction or forgive. So long as men desire to live together, no man may *initiate*—do you hear me? no man may *start*—the use of physical force against others. (Rand 2007, p. 1023)

For Hicks, the post-modern tradition rejects such a premise as simplistic. To begin with, the world cannot be understood as relationships between rational individuals, but as relationships between different groups with unequal power. In addition, power goes beyond physical

force and is invisible and inherent not only in social structures, but also in all human relationships. Foucault is possibly the most well-known among the new philosophers for his work on power and on its ever-present and also constructive and proactive dynamics (Foucault 1994). However, Hicks points out, if relationships of power are everywhere and reason is no good arbiter, then society has to be in a constant situation of conflict and of win-lose interactions (2004, p. 7). In addition, according to Foucault, concepts such as knowledge, far from serving a neutral role of establishing a firmer grasp of reality, are tools in this everlasting social struggle of groups with unequal power.

Hicks adds that in such conflicts, adherents of post-modern philosophy tend to take the side of the weaker part, irrespective of where the right objectively stands. He gives as an example the various conflicts (that today are reaching a peak) over issues around free speech and the so-called political correctness and culture wars, which he considers the predictable outcome of applying post-modern epistemological principles:

> Having rejected reason, we will not expect ourselves or others to behave reasonably. Having put our passions to the fore, we will act and react more crudely and range-of-the-moment. Having lost our sense of ourselves as individuals, we will seek our identities in our groups. Having little in common with different groups, we will see them as competitive enemies. Having abandoned recourse to rational and neutral standards, violent competition will seem practical. And having abandoned peaceful conflict resolution, prudence will dictate that only the most ruthless will survive. (Hicks 2004, pp. 82–3)

Hicks' analysis of post-modernism as a school of thought negating some basic premises of modernity is interesting. However, it opens up questions about the meaning of modernity itself. A theme of his book is that post-modernity did not come out of the blue, but is the intellectual heir of an anti-reason tradition that could be traced back to specific elements in the work of Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Wittgenstein, Nietzsche and Heidegger. Yet, even if Hicks' criticism is fair and these thinkers are considered as having anti-Enlightenment idealistic premises, the question that needs to be asked is whether there is such a thing as a

pro-Enlightenment and pro-modernity intellectual tradition. Because if the philosophical and epistemological standards of the Enlightenment are met by only a handful of prominent thinkers in a period of many centuries, such as Thomas Aquinas, John Locke, René Descartes, Francis Bacon, Adam Smith, the Founding Fathers and Isaac Newton, then one could claim that modernity is basically a concept 'invented' *a posteriori*. If this is the case, then any diversion from modernity and its values should be considered the rule, rather than a noteworthy development. This discussion, however, goes beyond the scope of this book.

Coming back to the theme of this section, the fact that the success of post-modern ideas in the public sphere provides a fertile ground for relativism and subjectivity has given rise to concern for various scholars. For Alex Callinicos, the abandonment of big ideologies has as a consequence a political fatalism. If reality cannot be grasped in its totality, then it is impossible for human beings to control their individual or collective fate (1989, p. 17). Luhmann agrees that 'since, because of its structural novelty, we cannot describe the society in which we now live […] this means that no one is a position to claim knowledge of the future, nor the capacity to change it' (1991, p. 48). Bauman elaborates on this point:

> How ridiculous it seems to try to change the direction of history when no powers give an inkling that they wish to give history direction. How empty seems the effort to show that what passes for truth is false when nothing has the courage and the stamina to declare itself as truth for everybody and for all time. […] How idle it seems to exhort people to go there rather than somewhere else in a world in which everything goes. (1992, p. viii)

However, relativism and intellectual uncertainty is not exclusively a characteristic of theorists who would be linked to post-modern premises. For Furedi, the lack of firm convictions is a wider attribute of a society that has lost the faith in its values. He defines relativism as 'an all-purpose concept that denies that any morals or values represent universal truths. This concept is also used to suggest that there are only subjective interpretations and no objectivity or objective truths' (1992, p. 14). In a later work, he points to the epistemological malaise of relativism, where any objective standards are undermined and 'truth is in the eye of the

beholder' (Furedi 2004, p. 4). We will later see how relativism finds fertile ground in modern social movements that celebrate 'diversity' and 'inclusiveness' as values in themselves, and how such an attitude tends to undermine their effectiveness, at least in the long term.

The merits and disadvantages of the philosophers and thinkers who share some or more 'post-modern' premises have been exhaustively analysed in the literature. The final point that will be of interest for this book is whether post-modernism and the new left are intellectual and political fellow-travellers. Hicks' answer is in the affirmative, following an interesting rationale. He draws attention to the fact that, although epistemologically subjectivism and relativism are present in post-modernism, there are derivative and not primary characteristics. Had they been primary characteristics, according to Hicks, then one would expect to see post-modern scholars and theorists adopting a diversity of positions in the political spectrum. Yet the vast majority of them tend to adopt positions towards the left or even the radical left (Hicks 2004, pp. 185–6). Thus, he claims that post-modernism is basically a political project, marrying a left that has lost its faith in presenting an alternative to capitalism in the material world with a sceptical epistemology that challenges our notions and certainties about material reality (2004, p. 90). Is such an argument valid?

It must be clear from the analysis in the previous chapter that within the New Left in the 1960s, some ideas were popularized that were not too distant from the premises of 'post-modernism'. Scepticism towards instrumental reason, a shift in the criticism of capitalism from a mainly material field (a system creating poverty, war and economic instability) progressively towards a more blurred narrative centred around alienation, boredom, culture and consumerism; from an objective definition of exploitation to a vaguer notion of power being present in structures such as the lecture theatre or the pop magazine; from a vision celebrating human beings as rational agents set to change to world to a sense of suspicion regarding alienated masses with false consciousness.

Another common element in the narratives of post-modernism and the new left, as seen in my analysis up to this point, is their emphasis on deconstruction. For Hicks, this has to do with an anti-reason epistemological shift in philosophy. Already since Kant, some of the big

metaphysical questions were declared unanswerable by the human mind (Hicks 2004, p. 79). If this is the case, then philosophy faces limits on how much it can help us understand or change the material world. What it can do, though, is to offer a critique on how we perceive the world, what we mean when we say X, or how layers of power have an influence on how we receive ideas that we thought are universal. At the same time, philosophy can be a powerful tool in the fierce struggle of narratives and meanings. It would not be a stretch to claim that such an attitude resembles the shift in the ideas and forms of action that I am describing in this book as lifestyle activism. The new left has not managed, as we will see, to produce a coherent economic or political response to capitalism. It has failed to come up with an alternative way to organize production and social life that will lead to more freedom and prosperity. Yet, what the left has really been consistent on, is its criticism and a deconstruction of capitalism. As an analogy, one could say that if philosophy is no longer trusted to understand the world, but only to interrogate it, then the left does not seem to be in the business of offering a new vision of the world any longer, but sticks to criticizing the existing state of things.

Could one then claim, as Hicks emphatically does, that the new philosophical trends of deconstruction and so-called post-modernism are first and foremost political projects, trying to create a privileged terrain for the success of the ideals of the new left? It is difficult to answer positively without entering into psychologizing, as the scholars of these schools have a diversity of philosophical, metaphysical, epistemological and political opinions, despite the fact that most of them would not champion free-market capitalism or some of the premises that one would associate with modernity. More importantly, as we have already seen, scepticism towards reason, rationalism, capitalism, individualism, technology and science is anything but exclusive in the leftist milieu. Such scepticism was always around within more conservative ideological circles (something emphasized by Hicks himself), and in the 1960s gained ground within the mainstream of popular culture and was becoming part of the *zeitgeist*. Thus, it would be better to claim that conservative anti-capitalist and anti-modernist trends were gaining ground and so provided fertile environment for the expression of these tendencies in philosophy, rather than to argue that such a philosophy was a conscious 'political' project.

This is not to negate the fact that the expansion and popularity of such philosophical trends in academia and in the wider culture does provide an intellectual atmosphere close to the ideas and values of the new left. Armed with these theoretical tools, the new left, despite being more vocal and gaining ground even within mainstream culture, has been progressively turning away from being *proactive* and from trying to offer a political and economic alternative, to being *reactive*—a development that is quite ironic, given how derogatory the term 'reactionary' used to be for the old leftists.

The Case Study of the German Greens

The German Greens are one of the most representative phenomena of post-1960s politics within the new left milieu. They are a focal point where new ideas, forms of mobilization, counter-culture and new social movements meet together and attempt to find a political expression. In addition, in the German Green Party and in the milieu surrounding it one can find the positive individualist liberating message of the 1960s fused with the pessimism and the anti-modernist tendencies that were gaining ground in Western culture, as well as in Germany, during the 1970s. Rather than dealing with the history of the Green Party, its internal dynamics and its electoral ups and downs, this section will mostly deal with it as a condensation of historical and ideological trends of its time.

One of the main reasons for the appearance of the German Green Party was the political opportunities (or lack of them) offered in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) around the 1960s. The Communist Party had been declared unconstitutional in 1956 and there was no real political representation on the left of the Social Democrats (SPD). As in the USA, the ideas of the New Left were expressed via the counter-culture and the student movement; especially with the small but radical group Socialist German Student Union (SDS), similar not only in its abbreviation, but also in its ideology to Students for a Democratic Society in the USA. The group, besides its small size, took quite visible and radical actions, especially against the Vietnam War. It needs to be

kept in mind that, due to its geopolitical position, Germany would be quite vulnerable to any escalation in the Cold War; therefore the peace movement was strong and appealing (Markovits and Gorksi 1993, p. 22).

After the decline of student activism, the wider movement in Germany faced the same dead-ends as in the USA: on the one hand the futile and suicidal terrorist acts of groups such as the Red Army Faction (aka 'the Baader-Meinhof group') and, on the other, alternative lifestyle experiences, attempting to create counter-examples to the modern way of life in the capitalist metropolis, such as squats, alternative medicine and organic farming communes. Often, the radical political and the alternative lifestyle milieus would mix together, such as in the urban squat Kommune 1 or the Spontis group, which, as their name suggests, experimented in a spontaneous way with activism and alternative ways of forming interpersonal relations (Markovits and Gorksi 1993, pp. 58, 62). As already discussed in previous chapters, the counter-culture had operated as a gesture of dropping out and turning one's back on society. This meant that there was an inherent tension between the New Left—so heavily influenced by the counter-culture—and its will to operate as a catalyst for social change. An SPD commentator, reflecting on these years, highlighted the gap between the counter-culture and the mass of the common people:

> The differences are so great that I have to speak of two cultures. It is as if Chinese are trying to communicate with Japanese … The one side lives in a subculture within the university, reading only their own fliers and informational materials…. And then there exists the totally different culture of the many, who read their mainstream newspaper no matter whether the paper was produced by the Springer media conglomerate or someone else … (cited in Dirke 1997, p. 105)

For Markovits and Gorksi (1987, p. 99), the New Left, middle-class young voters, the counter-culture and the various grassroots alternative movements in Germany needed an umbrella cause under which they could be united and could retain a *raison d'être*. This cause was environmentalism. As Germany was a country where anti-modernism had a considerable historical presence in conservative and philosophical circles, the ecological message also had an appeal among Protestant circles and

especially among idealist religious youth (Ingolfur Blühdorn et al. 1995, p. 18). The 'cells' that were later formed into the Green Party, beyond the counter-culture and the spin-off groups of the 1960s New Left, were mostly grassroots initiatives that had been mobilizing since the 1970s through non-violent direct action against nuclear plants (1993, p. 99). These early mobilizations were a testament to the success of the New Left's and the counter-culture's message. There were nuclear stations already from the 1950s and no significant change had taken place in terms of the risk they posed, nor had any major new scientific knowledge been generated about them within these two decades. And yet, these very same nuclear plants, in the 1970s were seen as a moral and a practical hazard for German society by ever larger parts of the population (Poguntke 1993, p. 27).

Despite sharing most of the ideological and philosophical premises of the New Left, especially regarding the destructive potential of industrial capitalism and economic growth, more factors were needed for the various groups, communes, initiatives and individuals to come together and form the Green Party in 1980. Some local electoral successes by candidates from within the movement in places close to nuclear plants were promising, but due to the high barrier of 5 % for entrance in the Bundestag (the lower house of Parliament in West Germany), the formation of a political party was considered necessary (Scharf 1996, p. 134). When they won 5.7 % and 27 parliamentary seats in the federal elections of 1983, the German Greens were not the first Green party in Europe to gain parliamentary representation (the Greens in Belgium did so in 1981); yet, they were the most successful long-lasting Green party and, one could claim, the most successful ideological heir of the New Left in the political arena. Thus, a further look in their ideas and politics is of great interest.

For Markovits and Gorksi, the ideological platform of the Greens was quite simple to grasp: ecology, plus a reformist kind of New Left-inspired socialism (1993, p. 116). For Poguntke (1993), the Greens stood as a new political paradigm against the 'old politics in Germany'. For the political elites of the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, the fundamental premises not to be compromised were economic prosperity, political order and national security. The Greens stood for placing ecological

considerations over economic interests, widening political participation to previously less privileged groups, together with more direct public involvement in the public life, common affairs, and a foreign policy based on unilateral disarmament and solidarity with various minorities in developing countries (Poguntke 1993, pp. 9–10). Even within the party, organizational structures would be less hierarchical, more open and more participatory; what the leading radical figure of the Greens, Petra Kelly, would envision as an 'anti-party Party' (Scharf 1995, p. 135).

As with the 1960s New Left in the USA, the German Greens present an ambiguous message. On the one hand, they were in favour of enhancing individual rights, granting more personal liberties and autonomy on issues such as drugs' legalization and health; they even argued for the creation of social spaces that would be considered 'state-free zones' (Poguntke 1993, pp. 36–7). This possibly was to do with the existence of a more libertarian fraction within the party, that was less influenced by the socialist message within the wider milieu, and called for the protection of the environment within a liberal democracy that would promote individuals' rights through the operation of a relatively open market, free from the control of a strong state bureaucracy (Markovits and Gorksi 1993, p. 145). But, as will be shown, the constant calls from the socialist-leaning camp within the Greens for intervention of the state in the economy and in social life unavoidably undermined this pro-freedom and pro-autonomy stance of the Greens.

Due to the centrality of the ecological narrative in the Green Party, its anti-materialist tendencies were way more prominent, than among the 1960s New Left. For Blühdorn, German environmentalism and the ideas that constituted the foundation for the Green Party could be understood as a 'fundamental criticism of the industrial and technocratic system' (1995, p. 172), whereas for Markovits and Gorksi they were 'a head-on attack on the very premise of industrial modernization such as economic growth, bureaucratic authority, representative government and the logic of rationality' (1993, p. 26). The tendencies I have associated with lifestyle activism were more prominent among the 'Fundis', the more fundamentalist and radical fraction of the party, where anti-modernist romanticism would meet New Age spirituality and utopian visions for an

ecologically harmonious future coincided with the fear-mongering of an upcoming apocalypse (1993, p. 125).

The anti-modernist narrative of the German Greens, reflecting ideas that gained ground within the wider radical milieu in the 1960s, were expressed in a concrete way by the German philosopher Rudolf Bahro, who was not only a theoretical influence but also a leading figure in the party. For Bahro, the goal of the Greens had to be the rolling back of the industrial system, rather than its advancement. This would have severe practical consequences. On the issue of employment, Bahro argues: 'The creation of new jobs is not our actual goal even where the restructuring of the economy will in fact lead to that. For us, the main point is to withdraw investments and the deployment of human energies from all large-scale projects' (1986, p. 13). What would happen to those who, as a result of the massive contraction of the economy would lose their jobs? For Bauer, this was a great opportunity for them to withdraw to the margins of the society and start building small sustainable communities, where Green ideals would be promoted (1986, p. 26). This might sound quite unreasonable, but for Bauer, although reason is metaphysically a valid concept, in our current society the mind is corrupted and a product of the hegemonic ideology (1986, p. 98).

Bahro is by no means a representative case of the new left, as he was radical even within the Green Party. However, the mode of thinking of the German Greens illustrates the problematic nature of the new leftist narrative when translated into an actual political programme. Emotionalism, playfulness with the irrational and lifestyle choices based on a non-materialist mindset could operate well within a marginal milieu or within a protest camp; however, when they have to be translated into a political programme for a party wishing to have some serious appeal, the limits are obvious. A look at the various policy proposals of the Greens shows the anti-economic growth attitude and an urge for more state intervention in various aspects of life. Among others, the Greens proposed (Markovits and Gorksi 1993, pp. 156–80):

- tougher measures, ranging from higher taxation to outright bans of substances having the capacity to pollute
- outright abandonment of nuclear energy

- a re-evaluation of energy, that would no longer operate as a commodity, but as a service. It becomes obvious that higher taxes on fossil fuels and an immediate ban of nuclear energy would push up energy prices and create conditions of energy poverty
- speed limits of 100 km per hour for cars, a ban on supersonic speed air travel, a ban on air travel for distances less than 800 km and a moratorium for some years on genetic engineering
- working hours would be reduced, by law, to 35 and then 30 hours per week
- the state would intervene to impose affirmative action and guarantee that 50 % of positions in new jobs would be taken by women. There would also be three years of paid leave for both parents.

The fact that such measures would wreck any industrial economy must have been obvious even to the radicals within the Green Party. Yet they tried to justify their choices by claiming that, although they did not want to abandon growth altogether, they intended to 'redefine' it (Markovits and Gorksi 1993, p. 131). Yet, this seems to be merely word-play. It would be impossible for an economy with expensive energy, with the transport-sector being over-regulated and with people being prevented from working more than a specific number of hours, while being able to withdraw from work for periods as long as three years, to show any kind of growth, if the term is to be understood with its conventional meaning. In addition, the masses of working people would be highly unlikely to follow such a political programme. The Greens were aware of that and this is why within their narrative, the working class was seen as alienated, falling for false needs and as being part of the 'growth-coalition' (1993, pp. 147–8).

Poguntke offered an interesting explanation for the choice of the Greens to adopt a political programme that would disregard the needs of the economy and would alienate the largest parts of the working and productive population. For him, this had to do with the formation of the party supporters from mainly young, middle-class people. Due to the expansion of the state in Germany, a large percentage of the social strata supporting the Greens (and many among the party's leading figures) had little or no experience out-

side the public sector. Therefore, the smooth running of the real economy was either a non-issue or something they lacked the capacity to understand (Poguntke 1993, p. 21). It cannot be denied that the Greens are an example of growth-scepticism that is not present among other parts of the new left. However, as we will see later with the cases of the Occupy campaign or with the Syriza government in Greece, there is an inherent inability of the left to translate its narrative into a realistic economic programme.

Yet, the Greens managed to survive politically, especially since the internal power struggle between the moderate fraction of the party and the 'fundamentalists' was won by the former, and in recent decades they have even become partners in federal government twice. Their radical narrative was silently sidestepped by reality; but this was not the only reason the Greens became more mainstream. In a way, one could argue that the political elites in Germany became 'greener', simultaneously with the Greens moving towards the centre. Already from the mid 1980s, the SPD would cooperate with the Greens on a local level (Scharf 1995, p. 134). By the end of the decade, an environmental narrative, though milder than the Green Party's version, was present in most of the leftist and centre-left parties in Europe (Poguntke 1993, p. 4). In the economic field, the Greens agreed more or less with the new left and social democracy on a Keynesian basis for state intervention in the economy, although the degree of that intervention would differ among the various parties (Markovits and Gorksi 1993, p. 274). Moderate environmental groups would team up with big business, such as the case of the German branch of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), which had throughout the 1980s as chair of its managing committee a former chair of the managerial board of Volkswagen (Blühdorn 1995, p. 179) At the same time, green consumerism had been on the rise and large parts of the movement lost their radical edge, to the point where Blühdorn referred to them as more like consumer advice agencies, rather than pressure groups (1995, p. 211).

For Markovits and Gorksi, the Greens changed the German left and the notion of progressive politics once and for all (1993, p. 266). They are a good example of the new values and the new

narrative that the new left would bring forward in Western Europe (and in the USA). This political message had an appeal within the young educated middle classes, but it faced two limitations. On the one hand, it failed to inspire and include large parts of the working class. Despite the fact that the trade unions, especially in the public sector, had since the late 1980s a more harmonious cooperation with the Greens compared to the early days, the more traditional parts of the industrial working classes did not feel at home with the new left's narrative. This could be one of the reasons explaining why they abandoned the left for more conservative or even populist right-wing parties, not only in Germany, but also in France, the UK and the USA (1993, p. 266). This transformation and reorientation of the new left, which was a result of its new values and narrative, that started on an ideological level around the 1960s and materialized politically around the 1980s, is of such a great importance, that one could claim that we are dealing with an entirely new political ideology, rather than the adaptation of the old left to new circumstances and challenges.

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4

De-Universalizing Political Subjects: Neo-Tribes and New Forms of Action

It is evident that as the analytical appeal of the universalist ideals of modernity, such as freedom, progress, the people, the working class and so on, was losing ground, the field of radical politics would also change. It is easy for people to come together in large masses when they feel they have many things in common and when they fight for something that is, more or less, understood in a similar way, such as the overthrowing of an oppressive regime or the gaining of national sovereignty. Yet, in societies that understand themselves as fragmented, where terms such as progress and freedom are contested and where the tools for grasping reality vary, then the way in which the citizens become mobilized will be also diverse and fragmented. The rise of the new social movements is a good example of these trends, as a significant element of them involves the construction of identities and the emotional bringing together of people. This is not to say that such factors are absent from more traditional forms of 'mass politics'. Yet in a society where ontological certainty of one's place is less strong, common denominators such as skin colour, gender or sexual orientation provide a more secure base for affiliation. This partly explains the success of the feminist and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) movements and the large numbers they have attracted; it has to

N. Sotirakopoulos, *The Rise of Lifestyle Activism*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55103-0_4

be kept in mind, though, that the main mobilizer for such causes was mainly the very real challenges that these groups faced in their societies. But political mobilization could also be based on the construction of an identity based on moral values, or even one's lifestyle. These are also the conditions that gave rise to what I have called lifestyle activism, where emotions and identity-building tend to take precedence over the specific objective orientation of the mobilization. A field where these trends are quite obvious is the protest camps: a form of action that has been gaining momentum since the 1970s and remains relatively under-researched in the political theory and social movements literature. The Understanding of the phenomenon of the protest camps is important for two reasons. On the one hand, they were fields in which a crucial mobilization factor was enhanced: the construction of identities that operated as a resource of resistance. In addition, as radical mobilizations in recent decades had more and more to do with the expression of a different set of values and a statement of a moral 'superiority' by activists, rather than the pursuit of a concrete set of political goals, the protest camps became more central to the repertoire of action of the new radicals.

By 'protest camp', I mean the occupation of a piece of land, of public space or of a building for a short or prolonged period by a group of people sharing a common identity and/or a common belief, or a negative value consensus, with the intention to push forward a demand, raise awareness on an issue or make a value-driven statement by their mere existence and lived experience in that place. By 'occupation' I mean the settling in a space which can be either public or private, but in any case does not belong to the protesters. One could see 'trespassing' as a first subversive gesture in the protesters' action. Occupation can take place on a piece of land in the countryside, private or public (as for example the anti-roads protest camps in the UK in the 1990s), or an urban, public or private, space or building (as for example the camps in London during the Occupy London Stock Exchange in 2011).

As far as a common identity and a sharing of common belief systems are concerned, a good example is the Greenham Common Peace Camp of the early 1980s, where some values (feminism, anti-hierarchy, anti-patriarchy, anti-militarism, opposition to nuclear weapons) could be considered to be common among almost all participants. Another important

element is the notion of the 'negative value consensus' as a glue holding together participants from different walks of life. By negative value consensus I mean a situation where participants in a movement might not necessarily agree on what they stand for, but do share a consensus on what they stand *against* (Pakulski 1991, p. 209). A good example of a protest camp based on negative value consensus is the climate camps in the 2000s, where one could find people of many different socio-political beliefs (from anarchists to Labour Party voters and from student activists to Green authoritarians) who were brought together by their opposition to what they see as the degradation of the environment and the destabilization of our climate by modern industrialism. They all knew that something was wrong, even though they could not necessarily agree on what should be done.

The aims of a protest camp are not always clear. Even in a case such as the anti-roads protests of the 1990s, where there was a clear target to be fought (the construction of new roads) and thus the yardstick for measuring the success or failure of the movement was clear, the activists also saw their protests as a moral gesture, putting forward with their action and their everyday life in the camp a statement about how they realize and envision their values and social relations. As will become clear when we examine the Occupy London Stock Exchange campaign of 2011, protest camps recently tend more towards raising awareness and making value-driven statements, rather than achieving specific targets.

The above definition of protest camps is obviously wide, as it could stretch from biblical communes and Pythagoras' school in southern Italy around 525 BC (Dawson 2006, p. 15) to the alternative communes set up by utopian thinkers such as Charles Fourier and Robert Owen in the nineteenth century. Of more interest for this work are the communes that sprang up from the 1960s onwards, as part of the counter-cultural values gaining ground at the time. For Rigby, a commune is a group of people who voluntarily come together for some purpose, 'in the pursuit of which they seek to share certain aspects of their lives together and who are characterized by a certain consciousness of themselves as a group' (1974, p. 3). For Abrams and McCulloch, communes should be understood as 'withdrawn fellowships' and as the 'concentrated expression of some particular values' (1976, p. 2). Members of these communes, in their

majority middle-class youth alienated from the consumerist industrial capitalist society, considered themselves as making a statement through their withdrawal. They considered their actions a challenge to an ethos of individualism, conformity and materialism. They wanted to experiment with new forms of personal and social relations, hoping to realize their values not at some point in the future, but in the present (Rigby 1974, pp. 1, 2; Abrams and McCulloch 1976, p. 2). Abrams and McCulloch saw communes as 'entities in which people can possess themselves as full, rich and unique beings' (1976, p. 201). They have been a wide and diverse phenomenon, as one could find communes of hippies and of spiritualists, communes where therapeutic techniques and alternative medicine were practised, polyerotic love and group-parenting communes, and also anarchistic, Green and activists' communes (Roberts 1971). It is estimated that in the early 1970s there were more than 30,000 rural communes in the USA, most of them short-lived, accommodating something close to 700,000 people. Interestingly, some of them survived longer by turning to a business mode and operating as bed-and-breakfasts for alternative tourists (Isserman and Kazin 2008, p. 170).

Gitlin (1993, p. 424) explains the rise of such phenomena as part political and part personal reaction by disillusioned activists to the collapse of the movements of the 1960s. If society was beyond change, then the change could take place within one's self or in a small community of like-minded individuals. A sense of losing control over one's life and a lack of a political vision can be amended by small-scale change in here and now. 'The fault, they felt, must not be in ourselves but in musculature (thus "Rolfing" to realign the body); bad diet (thus vitamins and organic food); bad breathing from early psychic trauma (thus Wilhelm Reich's original version of bioenergetics); bad karma from previous lifetimes (thus various forms of meditations). However you defined the problem, the task was to "work on yourself"' (1993, p. 425).

Pessimism, ontological uncertainty and the search for identity and belonging lead us to the notion of the 'neo-tribe'. Maffesoli and Hetherington see neo-tribes as a product of an era where the decline of class identity has led to the need for alternative forms of identification, linked with personal values, cultural trends and lifestyle attitudes (Hetherington 1998; Maffesoli 1996). Neo-tribes need to be understood

as affectual moral communities. They are affectual because they are maintained by a solidarity created not necessarily by ideological links, but by a feeling of belonging to a community where one is accepted based on the merits of their moral code and value system. This is contrasted with a supposedly alienating world out there, where achievement and appreciation are measured in more materialistic terms. Members of a neo-tribe identify themselves with those inside the tribe, among other things, by how they differ from those outside the tribe (Gitlin 1993).

Due to participants' disillusionment with the social reality, they choose a retreat to an *other* place, a 'heterotopia', where they can shape a new and shared identity. Melucci explains how this identity is formed: (1) Members of the neo-tribe construct a 'cognitive framework' about who they are and what they believe in. (2) Actors become involved in close interpersonal affectual relationships. (3) Such an 'emotional investment' creates a sense of belonging, under which individuals recognize themselves and other around them as part of a group (Melucci 1989, p. 35). A crucial difference with traditional tribes or with small-scale indigenous societies is the fact that in a neo-tribe one is not born in it, but joins voluntarily, this being the reason why Hetherington (1998, p. 49) characterizes such communities as *elective*.

For Hetherington (1998, p. 5), neo-tribes share some characteristics, which I am here analytically expanding. The themes should be already familiar from the previous analysis of some trends popular among the new radicals.

1. A search for authentic experiences and personal enchantment. As modern capitalist society is considered artificial, it follows that 'original' experiences that will bring out one's true self must be sought on the margins or outside of this society.
2. Empathy, admiration and identification with the marginalized and oppressed groups, within one's society or internationally. This can partially explain the influence of aboriginal and indigenous cultures among wider new leftist circles and in the counter-culture.
3. The establishment of a distinct space for groups and networks of like-minded people. This territorial dimension is important for the understanding of all protest camps.

4. Unlike other political movements, a uniting ideology is missing; thus, an emotional and moral solidarity is needed in order to hold the group together.
5. The notion of the body plays a central role. Experimentation with sexuality and alternative lifestyles or therapies were quite usual in such small communities, bringing to mind the New Age influences on the counter-culture already discussed. Alternative knowledge attempts to pose a challenge to established science and its institutions, such as established medicine, or mainstream religions.

Skalkos (2008, p. 56) adds another interesting dimension to the rise of neo-tribes. In a more complex and individualized world, the condition of freedom could become uncomfortable for some. The responsibility of choice, when it lies solely with individuals, can overwhelm them with anxiety, doubts and insecurity. In an intellectual environment where universal certainties and the self-confidence that the belief in reason provides are fading away, then the premises of individualism seem even scarier. Thus, neo-tribalism could be understood as a fear of the responsibility placed on individuals by freedom, capitalism and individualism.

I referred to the importance of the territorial dimension, as the place where the aforementioned identity is articulated and preserved (Hetherington 1998, p. 17). Foucault's notion of heterotopias is relevant in the understanding of how space is essential for neo-tribes to materialize their identity. For Foucault, besides utopia, a pure and idealized, yet unreal place, there are also actually existing heterotopias: 'places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted' (1967). Foucault himself never elaborated on the notion and it was mainly used in personal notes (Soja 1996, p. 154), yet it does capture the urge of some activists to 'escape' to the margins in search of meaning and purpose. Heterotopias could also be perceived as a retreat and as an acceptance of defeat—a recognition of the fact that, since changing society 'out there' is inconceivable and impossible, idealists can at least 'be the change they want to see in the world' and change themselves, living their ideals in heterotopias outside of mainstream society.

A reference needs to be made to Hakim Bey (pseudonym of Peter Lamborn Wilson), as his notion of the Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) would have an influence that is still present among radical circles. Bey came up with his notion of the TAZ in the early 1980s, influenced by ideas around anarchism, Situationism, spiritualism, Sufism and primitivism. He defined his TAZ as 'an uprising, a guerilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to reform elsewhere/elsewhen, before the state can crush it' (Bey 2003, p. 99).

A TAZ is supposed to be special because it happens contrary to the daily routine and hence it is remembered and the next event is anticipated with longing. 'Like festivals, uprisings cannot happen every day, otherwise they would not be "nonordinary". But such moments of intensity give shape and meaning to the entirety of a life' (Bey 2003, p. 98). However, TAZ could be not only temporary, but also periodic or even permanent (a PAZ). A squatted building, for example, could be a permanent TAZ or, better, a PAZ.

However, material substance is not a necessary condition for the existence of a TAZ. As Bey claims, making clear his spiritualistic influences, a TAZ is also 'a psychospiritual state or even existential condition' (2003, p. x). A TAZ epistemologically is about the primacy of consciousness, where one's inner psyche is seen as directing reality, rather than the other way around. 'If rebellion proves impossible then at least a kind of clandestine spiritual jihad might be launched' (Bey 2003, p. 18). Ideological doctrines and scientific analysis are, thus, of limited value. Bey's hippyism considers music, mysticism, the carnivalesque and sexuality more important than reason and theory, celebrating the liberatory potential of chaos (2003, pp. 62–63). Despite his total theoretical incoherence, Bey is credited as someone who, in the mid 1980s, foresaw the importance that the internet would have for the organization of radical networks, although he considered the actual computer activists of his time as mere 'hobbyists' (2003, p. 111).

As mentioned above, the idea of TAZ has proved really influential. Squats in Italy and Germany were already popular in the radical milieu from the early 1970s (Katsiaficas 2007). However, there was a qualitative difference in the squatting movement of the 1980s onward. As

Velissaris (2004) points out, the squats and the communes used to have a functional role, facilitating existing political movements. However, in recent decades, squats became ends in themselves, rather than means towards achieving a political end. As it will be shown in the next section, in the era of the anti-globalization movement, the temporary or permanent liberation of space became quite popular, drawing inspiration from the Zapatistas' uprising and the liberation of the Chiapas province in Mexico.

Lifestyle activism clearly links with phenomena such as the protest camps and neo-tribalism. The set of ideas that gave rise to the various communal experiments and lifestyle activism both have their roots in the same philosophical, social and political transformations in Western societies. Phenomena such as protest camps would materialize in a more concrete form the wide set of ideas and values that I called lifestyle activism, whereas at the same time lifestyle activism would offer an ideological toolkit for subsequent movements, in a spiral and mutually reinforcing relationship.

In the UK, protest camps were among the main expressions of the counter-culture and of radical politics from the 1980s. A good example would be the quasi-environmental and quasi-counter-cultural Green Gatherings, and also the gatherings of politically engaged New Age travellers, such as the Convoy for Peace (Taylor and Young 1987). These phenomena also had a political edge; for example, in 1982, the Peace Convoy made it to Greenham Camp and met the women who were camping and protesting outside a US military base against the installation of Cruise missiles (Hetherington 1992, p. 83; McKay 1996, p. 57). For Hetherington, such events could be understood as a Bakhtinian apotheosis of mess, dirt and excess, through which participants felt they overthrew the cultural norms of the industrial bourgeois society (1992, p. 86). The anti-modernist element was also dominant in such mobilizations, as the various groups often adopted symbols of medieval festivals, celebrated as a temporary loosing of the established norms and as a temporary zone of liberation (idem, p. 83). The adoption of medieval rituals and symbols was a cultural influence that was also passed to the anti-roads protest camps of the 1990s, as we will soon see with the case of the Dongas Tribe at Twyford.

The peace camps were perhaps the most consistent expressions of protest camps in the UK, giving them a legacy in the history of the new social movements. Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, set up in 1981, operated for almost two decades and was celebrated as a 'school' for non-violent direct action. It managed to bring together elements from the peace, anti-nuclear, feminist and Green movements, and, according to Wall (1999, p. 33), it was one of the first times that such a campaign was not dominated by the traditional left. The movement gained momentum with the installation of Cruise missiles, with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND; one of the first expressions of the new left in the UK around 1960) attracting more than a thousand new members weekly in early 1984 (Taylor 1995, p. 165).

The diversity of actors at Greenham is something to be expected, taking into account the ideological disorientation of the time within the left and within grassroots radical networks. Among the leading activists of the camp, one could find 'an anarchist-feminist artist, a Christian feminist, a woman involved in a peace centre, a woman who owned a radical bookshop, a woman from the Centre of Alternative Technology in Wales, a man from Creches Against Sexism, a radical midwife, a woman Quaker, a woman from the Liberal Party, and an anarchist-feminist band, the Poison Girls' (Roseneil 2000, p. 43). This is a testament to the aforementioned importance of the negative value consensus for the new left; that is, the common opposition to something, binding together people with otherwise diverse and loose ideas and values. The role of identity-building in those camps, their operation as a living expression of a moral gesture and a reluctance regarding a specific ideological identification can explain why such campaigns have always provided fertile ground for lifestyle activism.

At the same time, the 'Round River Rendezvous' were taking place, in the USA, celebrating nature, promoting a sustainable culture and challenging the premises of industrial capitalism. They were organized by the radical environmentalist group Earth First!, an unusual mix of new leftists and more conservative counter-cultural environmentalists, influenced by the philosophy of Deep Ecology. The ideal of a revitalizing retreat in nature was among the fundamental cultural myths of Earth First!, providing 'a leave-taking from traditional society, a journey into

an unknown and difficult wilderness, and a return to society with knowledge of the political good' (Lee 1995, p. 32).

Round River Rendezvous, usually week-long events, took place annually in the American Wilderness from 1980. The flyer advocating the first Round River Rendezvous described it as a chance 'to reinvigorate, enthuse, inspire […] to bring passion, humor, joy, and fervency of purpose back into the cause; to forge friendships, cooperation, and alliances throughout the West; to get drunk together, spark a few romances and howl at the moon' (cited in Zakin 1993, p. 142).

It is clear how lifestyle activism found a fertile ground in the Round River Rendezvous. Mysticism, paganism, playfulness, irrationality and the discovery of a new identity were flourishing in an environment where established cultural norms and rationality were temporarily overturned. The recollections of two participants in Round River Rendezvous from the early 1990s are enlightening on how the aforementioned elements were dominant.

> Ashley: Later in the day, we separated and spent an hour or so alone, with the intention of coming back into the circle representing another being in council. I was a butterfly. In council, I spoke of metamorphosis. I spoke about how I could be seen as a teacher to humans if they would only listen.
>
> Patrick: I had never felt so close to a group of people, and I had just met them. I had never felt so close to the Earth and to the cosmos. I became the spirit of Time. I felt anger from the universe at humans for making such a mess of our time here, especially when we could have had it so good. (*EF! Journal* 2000, p. 42)

Besides the radical environmentalists' gatherings in the US wilderness, much of the inspiration and the know-how for the protest camps was drawn from the Green camps in Australia. For Wall (1999, p. 173), the history of direct action could be understood as a chain, having as its starting point the Civil Rights Movement, continuing with the anti-nuclear and peace movement, having as an intermediate link the Australian rainforests campaign and leading to the UK protest camps. Australia has been a pioneer in environmental activism and it was the place where the first Green

protest camp was set up, in 1979, protesting to save the Terania Forest in New South Wales. Forms of action that later became widespread in the direct action movement, such as tree spiking and 'manufactured vulnerability' with the use of tripods, together with the inclusive and non-hierarchical ethos of the new left, were present in the campaign to save the rainforests in Australia (Doyle 2001, pp. 52, 58; Wall 1999, p. 173).

The anti-roads protests in the UK in the 1990s are also worthy of mention. They defined a new generation of radical activists and they have left a legacy that has inspired campaigns such as the climate camps and the Occupy protest two decades later. The 1980s and the early 1990s were a time in the UK where a quasi-political counter-culture and 'Do It Yourself' direct action, expressed by the punks, street parties, urban squats and so on, were flourishing (McKay 1998). The publication by the Department of Transport of an assessment for the building of new roads in 1988 was met by the creation of ALARM (All London Against the Road Menace), a network by 150 local groups from all walks of life, campaigning against the plan. The campaign had some initial results, but government came back in 1989 with the Roads for Prosperity White Paper (Wall 1999, p. 35). Within two years, ALARM UK had become a national network, mobilizing resources from the Green movement and the left (Doherty et al. 2000, p. 8).

At Twyford Down, the first protest camp of the anti-roads movement was established, attempting to physically prevent construction work. It was initiated by Friends of the Earth, but then they had to leave because Department of Transportation issued an injunction against them (Wall 1999, p. 67). However, the camp was re-established by the Dongas Tribe, a group of New Age travellers named after the trackways existing in the area in medieval times.

The Dongas Tribe are of interest for this work mainly due to their cultural codes. According to Doherty:

> Dongas Tribe […] used dragon symbols, and drew boundary circles, invoking the power of magic to defend their site. It was argued by some in the group that rediscovering indigenous Celtic and earth-based spirituality would help to restore the balance of nature. Adopting a tribal identity, and in the case of Dongas, even a nomadic way of life, was also a means of situating themselves in the global struggles of indigenous peoples against ecological destruction. (2000, p. 65)

Interestingly, the adoption of a tribal identity was a conscious decision by activists in order to minimize their 'contamination by modernity' (idem 2000, p. 65). What one can find at play here, besides lifestyle activism and anti-modernism, are also the characteristics that Mafessoli has attributed to the neo-tribes, such as the urge to build an identity, New Age spirituality, a search for authentic experiences and the promotion of non-established knowledge. An activist described a ritual in Twyford, where they 'had a meeting and passed a little totem pole around. We declared it an autonomous territory and called ourselves—loosely, all this collection of different people—"the Dongas Tribe". […] At the beginning anyone who came to Twyford Down and did anything, you know, was a Donga … I think, now, it has been recuperated into a fashion statement / identity / ideology' (cited in Wall 1999, pp. 69–70).

As already seen, pagan rituals have been often present in the radical environmental movement. An Earth First! activist from the US explains: 'Ritual is the basis of pagan spirituality. Ritual unlocks the rigidity of the rational observing mind and requires our physical participation. It is how we connect with and pay respect to our place in the world, and it connects us to the biotic community that sustains us' (cited in *EF! Journal* 2000, p. 75). Another American activist adds that:

> We have rationalized ideals, rationality and a limited kind of 'practicality', and have regarded the rituals of those other cultures as, at best, frivolous curiosities. The results are all too evident. We've only been here a few hundred years and already have done irreparable damage to vast areas of what we call the United States. As Gregory Bateson notes, 'mere purposive rationality is necessarily pathogenic and destructive of life'. (*EF Journal* 2000, p. 75)

The mysticism of the Dongas also had practical effects on the everyday life of the campaign. A more urban group of radicals, Earth First! UK (EF!) got involved in the campaign and their relation with the travellers was problematic. An activist described a story where 'EF! got told to leave by the Dongas tribe … because they were upsetting the karma of the place' (cited in Wall 1999, p. 70).

The campaign at Twyford Down did not succeed in preventing the construction of the motorway, as activists were evicted. However, it created

strong images and gave birth to a legacy that would boost the anti-roads movement for years. It even attracted a lot of sympathy from the political mainstream; it is quite telling that when, after an injunction, seven activists were imprisoned for a short period, they were visited in prison by the former Environment Commissioner of the European Community, Carlo Ripa di Meana (Wall 1999, p. 73). In addition, the campaign has shown the importance of the protest camp as a tactical weapon. Protest camps were also set up as part of many other anti-roads campaigns, including Solsbury Hill, Glasgow, Manchester and Devon, often with support from the local community.

I will now turn to an evaluation of the tactic of the protest camp after the rich experience of the anti-roads movement. A protest camp can acquire three functions. To begin with, there is a practical element as, with its mere physical presence, it can obstruct a construction project. Also, it can prolong the protest for as long as possible. This might give time to the movement to proceed with other forms of legal action, such as injunctions against the project. Also, a camp becomes a distinctive centre and a reference point for activists who might be arriving from different places to participate in a campaign (Doherty 2000, pp. 62, 71).

In addition, a camp, being different from the usual protests and demonstrations, attracts extra attention. Thus, 'simply by being there, protest camps escalate the political conflict over the particular project and bring it into the public eye. Activists normally realise that the particular sites that they occupy in this fashion are unlikely to be saved, but the physical process of eviction required to remove them is often photogenic and newsworthy' (Seel and Plows 2000, p. 119).

Third, a camp operates also as a prefigurative example. Besides its practical function, a camp is also the creation of an alternative community, with its own codes and values (Doherty 2000, p. 72). In the camp, the activists attempt to directly materialize their ideals. For Purkis (2000, p. 104), participating in a protest camp indicates a desire to realize oneself in a different way, making a lived statement about how the personal is political. For Plows and Seel, a protest camp, by placing 'symbolic challenges to non-quantifiable, but widely held, assumptions or dominant "codes"', at the same time shows what 'could have been', the alternative

utopia that it is no longer a utopia, as it is realized in the here and now (2000, pp. 120–1).

Besides the aforementioned tactical and psychic advantages for the participants, protest camps also have quite a number of problematic elements. A more in-depth critique will follow at a later point of this work, when I examine the Occupy London campaign. At this point, it is worth mentioning how demanding participation in a protest camp is for an activist, as was shown in the case of the anti-roads campaign, and thus how it can become a factor guaranteeing that such a phenomena have little capacity to become large-scale.

For McAdam (1986), direct action entails costs and risks. Costs have to do with the expenditure of time, money and energy on the part of the activist, whereas the risks include anticipated social, financial, legal and physical dangers (1986, p. 67). The cost and the possible risks in participating in a disruptive protest camp can be considerable. The average participant in a high-risk campaign needs to be experienced, with strong commitment to the ideas and goals of the movement, already integrated into activist networks, and relatively free of personal / social / professional constraints (1986, p. 71). Even for participants in a non-disruptive protest camp—usually not a high-risk setting—one would still expect to find at least the last element, that is, the lack of serious commitments and the luxury of time. Indeed, as Wall has verified with his research, activists in the anti-roads campaign did share a minimal ideological frame, did have prior activist experience (especially in the radical Green milieu), did develop strong personal bonds and also had what he calls 'biographical availability' (1999, p. 113).

Thus, Doherty is right when he refers to a professionalization of activism, its tactics being 'the property of a specialised sub-culture' (2000, p. 74). Clearly, these elements, together with the special cultural codes within these networks, set limits upon the movement's possibilities to inspire mass engagement. 'Protest camp tactics, dependent as they are on maintaining a full-time presence, technical skills which take time to master and are learnt by living on site, and high levels of personal discomfort and risk, all seem unlikely to be used by other groups in society' (Doherty 2000, p. 75).

The prevalence of lifestyle activism in the protest camps becomes obvious. They are protests where what is put forward is not only a political

demand (such as the stopping of a construction), but also a set of values, ways of interacting with each other and a whole cultural code, giving rise to a sense of identity. The elements of a new identity and of cultural practices that bond people together in ontologically uncertain times indicate to why the protests camps are a suitable habitus for the emergence of what Hetherington called neo-tribes. They are products of a time when universal identities were no longer appealing to people and when a return to a more pre-modern form of life and community was considered as politically radical. Interestingly, as will be shown in the following chapters, in later protest camps in the UK, such as the Camps for Climate Action and Occupy London, the element of political demands is withering away and the prefigurative lifestylist element is becoming more central.

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5

Linking Two Eras: The Anti-globalization Movement

In this chapter I will deal with the period around the turn of the twenty-first century and the movement that emerged as a reaction to the phenomenon commonly referred to as globalization. It is important to understand the anti-globalization movement for three reasons. First, it is the link bridging the radical mobilizations of today with the values and the ideas of the new left, as they developed in previous decades. Second, in a period of soul-searching for the left in the political arena, especially after the collapse of the socialist states in Eastern Europe and the move of social democratic parties towards more pro-market positions, it gave a *raison d'être* and a cause to a new generation of activists. Third, the international movement that sprang up set the tone for the radical campaigns of today in terms of ideas, mentalities, beliefs, values and forms of action. Without understanding the nature, scope and character of the anti-globalization movement, one cannot fully grasp phenomena such as the Occupy movement. At the same time, one can gain an insight into the anti-globalization movement's narrative only with reference to the ideological characteristics that the new left had progressively adopted since the 1960s, which I have covered in the previous chapters.

N. Sotirakopoulos, *The Rise of Lifestyle Activism*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55103-0_5

Globalization and 'Neo-liberalism'

The meaning of the term 'globalization' has sparked much debate and has been the centre of much discussion in the last twenty years throughout the social sciences. Following Cohen and Kennedy, the term 'globalization' mainly refers to (2007, pp. 44–54):

- A new concept of space and time, where both are significantly shrinking. Countries, institutions, traders and individuals come closer and need less time to reach one another.
- Increased immaterial interactions and flows, leading to a spread of information, science, habits and cultural norms.
- The sharing of risks and problems, some of them viewed as unsolvable on the local level.
- Tighter interconnections and interdependencies.
- Higher importance of transnational players and organizations, such as the European Union, the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and multinational corporations.
- The aforementioned dimensions of globalization interrelate and reshape one another and, at the same time, the global community.

Beyond the economic element, many commentators emphasize the cultural globalization and the spread of common values, lifestyles and consumption patterns across the world, such as people in Moscow eating MacDonald's or girls in India listening to Lady Gaga. For many critics on the new left, this is about the Western consumerist ethos taking over diverse and precious local cultures. Yet, Kiely is right to claim that the leftist critique of a supposedly cultural imperialism is, first, objectionable on an empirical basis and also tends to romanticize local and indigenous cultures (2005, p. 170). Look at any high street in a Western city and the diversity of ethnic shops and cuisines shows that globalization is a process opening space for various cultures to interact and take their share, rather than a one-dimensional expansion of a Western or American lifestyle. Actually, any kind of homogenization is a barrier that capitalism will try to overcome, as diversity means more entrepreneurial opportunities. This has been understood by insightful scholars even within the new left,

such as Hardt and Negri who point out how 'marketing itself is a practice based on differences, and the more differences that are given, the more marketing strategies can develop' (2001, p. 152). In addition, as has been shown in previous chapters, the trend in the narrative of the new left for a nostalgic idealization of traditional cultures and a search for the original and the indigenous has nothing inherently progressive in it.

Globalization is also related to a downgrading of the importance of nation-states in regulating national economies. With capital and labour being freer to move inside or outside a country, governments can take fewer measures to protect national production and national standards in employment. This has influences on both the developed countries, where jobs are lost and an attempt to retain competitiveness puts downward pressure on wages (especially in the area of industry) and in developing countries, where the entrance of capital changes the established norms of work and life. Investment in factories in developing countries is the obvious examples, creating a concentration of labour in urban centres, with working conditions that are often harsh and low wages; yet such a situation tends to constitute an improvement compared to the alternatives these workers have available to them, such as in the agricultural sector (Powell 2014). Many of the actions of activists in the anti-globalization movement have targeted the so-called sweatshops and the demeaning conditions of workers in developing countries selling their labour, usually to Western companies or these companies' sub-contractors (Broad 2002).

Although globalization tends to be treated as a distinct phenomenon characterizing our times, it is quite interesting that Marx and Engels had already captured the essence of the process as early as in 1848, when they wrote in the Manifesto of the Communist Party:

> The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. […] The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation. The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to

> adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image. […] In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. (Marx and Engels 1848)

The reason the communist theorists managed to 'predict' with such accuracy the process of globalization is because they considered it an inherent element of capitalism. While many in the new left consider globalization as a distinct historical phase of capitalism, elements of which need to be opposed, for Marx and Engels capitalism is 'globalizing' the world from its very beginning; the only thing changing is the tempo and the degree of such a transformation. What would come as big a surprise to many in the new left is how Marx and Engels saw the process of globalization positively, characterizing those opposing it as 'reactionaries'. There are two possible explanations. On the one hand, the universalization of the capitalist mode of production would supposedly create a universalized political subject, a global proletariat that would realize its common political and economic interests. Yet, there seems to be a more fundamental reason, which has less to do with political tactics. Marx and Engels actually expressed admiration for the productive capacities of capitalism. They saw the system of the free market as 'the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades' (Marx and Engels 1848). For the pioneers of scientific socialism, such a system expanding through the globe and replacing parochial forms of production (that were accompanied by conservative social relations and backward ideas) was a positive historical step. Granted, the plan was to replace capitalism with a system even more productive and liberating for the creators of wealth; yet attempting to hold back history was never an option for Marx or his early followers.

Even more surprisingly, compared with the standards of today's left, Marx was in favour of free trade and opposed any tariffs or protective measures. In the late 1840s, Marx was active on the Free Trade Congress, for which he published a passionate pamphlet, where he claimed that: 'The system of protection was an artificial means of manufacturing manufacturers, of expropriating independent laborers, of capitalizing the national means of production and subsistence, and of forcibly abbreviating the transition from the medieval to the modern mode of production' (cited in Engels 1888). One could argue over whether Marx supported free trade for reasons of principle or merely because it would accelerate the revolutionary process. In any case, it seems that the fierce opposition of the new left towards the globalization of capitalist production is based on principles differing from those of the pioneers of scientific socialism.

We have already seen how scepticism as to the desirability of economic growth has been a major characteristic of the new left. This was mirrored in the narrative of the anti-globalization movement. There was an effort to shield developing countries from burgeoning capitalist development and campaigning for fairer deals on an international level. It is unclear what such protection would look like and whether it would be an old-fashioned protectionism or the much-celebrated but rarely defined model of 'sustainable development'. It is interesting to note that the majority of the developing countries did not share the growth-scepticism of the anti-globalization movement and welcomed the removal of trade barriers (Revel 2000, p. 284). As will be seen later in the chapter, there were serious questions to be raised as to whether the anti-globalization protesters were representing those in the name of whom they claimed to speak. Again, it needs to be emphasized that such a movement against the rapid modernization of the developing countries would be quite alien to the old left; after all, one of the greatest appeals of socialism during the anti-colonial struggles of the twentieth century was the prospect it offered for these societies to move towards advanced industrialization.

It is common, especially among the left today, to claim that globalization goes hand in hand with the predominance of 'neo-liberalism', that is, a model of de-regulation pushing for the retreat of the state from its current role in societies and for the promotion of free markets. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that 'neo-liberalism' is the number

one villain in the narrative of most leftist scholars and movements in the last two decades (see, for example, Brown 2015; Chomsky 1998; Harvey 2007; Klein 2008). The term is used to describe the ideas of figures as diverse as the economist Milton Friedman and former dictator of Chile Augusto Pinochet, the economic reforms of Chinese President Den Xiaoping and the administrations of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and of Ronald Reagan in the USA in the 1980s. The notion of 'neo-liberalism' tends to be overused to such an extent and is so central in the narrative of the new left, that some further insight in its use and dominance would be useful. Is neo-liberalism a dominant political phenomenon, 'the most successful ideology in world history', according to Perry Anderson (2000, p. 13), or is it a convenient straw man created by the new left in order to score political points and de-legitimize opponents as diverse as the Blairite Third Way social democracy and pro free-market philosophers like Ayn Rand (Llossa 2000)?

Venugopal (2015, pp. 165–6) observes the impressive rise in the use of the term neo-liberalism in the titles of articles appearing in Google Scholar: from 103 between 1980 and 1989 (the period when supposedly the 'neo-liberal revolution' of Thatcher and Reagan was at its peak) to 7,138 between 2000 and 2009. Even more interestingly, despite the fact that the term is used mainly to characterize ideologically driven economic policies, its appearance in economic journals and in the economic literature is quite limited; it is mostly referred to in non-economic disciplines, such as the social sciences, the humanities, law and in the various strands of critical theory (Venugopal 2015, p. 180). Boas and Gans-More (2009) carried out a very useful content analysis of articles using the term 'neo-liberalism' and verified its problematic nature, focusing on three elements: (a) the term is asymmetrically used across the political spectrum. It is mostly used by opponents of the free market, but rarely, if ever, by its advocates. Put simply, though a huge variety of scholars and politicians receive the label of 'neo-liberal' as an accusation, hardly anyone uses the term to refer to himself/herself as a 'neo-liberal'. (b) The term is rarely defined. Approximately seven out of ten articles use the term without offering a definition; and those that do offer one rarely agree with each other. (c) It is applied to a wide variety of distinct phenomena, from economic policies to academic paradigms and discourses. Thus, while the

emergence of a 'neo-liberal theory' is implied as self-evident, Venugopal seems right to dismiss it as 'an artifice willed into existence not by its theorists but by its critics and can as such be cut to shape to fit whichever conceptual variant serves their purpose' (2015, p. 181).

The left has been very keen to construct 'neo-liberalism' as its main ideological opponent in the twenty-first century. It is quite telling that the Coalition of Radical Left in Greece (Syriza), the first self-proclaimed radical new left party to come to power in the Western world, in one of the documents establishing its political principles, mentions the term 'neo-liberal' or 'neo-liberalism' 10 times in 13 pages. At the same time, the term 'capitalism' is used only 9 times, in 4 of which it is used together with the term 'neo-liberal' (Syriza 2013).[1] The construction of the neo-liberal straw man, mainly by the left, could be explained taking into account some themes discussed in previous chapters. The new left is weak in proposing an alternative economic model to capitalism. Thus, what is more convenient is to oppose a specific expression of capitalism: so-called 'neo-liberalism'. To do so is much easier; one need only cling to a more redistributive model of social democracy, rather than having to come up with a radically different model of production. It becomes clear, therefore, that in the last decades, what passes for anti-capitalism is mostly an opposition to the further liberalization of the economy and an attempt to halt it by a mixture of protective measures, further regulations and higher taxation. This is actually not a conflict between different political models, but a negotiation within the paradigm of a mixed economy. This crucial argument will be further clarified in the remainder of this book.

The Anti-Globalization Movement

Ayres agrees that neo-liberalism was the crucial point of reference for the new left to spark a round of mobilizations in the 1990s: 'The record of neo-liberalism has given activists a wealth of shared experiences from which to

[1] It is interesting though, speaking about Greece, that the centre-right conservative party of New Democracy, in the official document presenting its principles, also keeps its distance from 'neoliberalism', considering it an ideology that facilitates the 'arbitrariness of an omnipotent private sector' (New Democracy http://nd.gr/h-nea-dimokratia).

fashion a meaningful and increasingly transnationally shared understanding of the perceived negative effects of such policies' (2004, p. 13). Thus, at a time when the left was in soul-searching mode, the cause of global inequalities and of resisting a new opponent, 'neo-liberalism', led to the building of a global movement targeting the perceived malfunctions of globalization: the so-called 'anti-globalization, or 'alter-globalization', or 'Global Justice' movement.

One main characteristic of this movement is its diversity and the multiple forms it took. Carter and Morland describe it as a heterogeneous network, linking local, national and international campaigns and addressing a variety of issues (2004, p. 86). This multiplicity has to do with the fact that the movement, rather than having specific tangible goals, aimed to oppose the various alleged evils of globalization, which according to Kiely are the following (2006, p. 166):

(a) intensified exploitation of labour (an alleged global 'race to the bottom' in terms of wages and social welfare)
(b) increasing social inequality
(c) political inequality (within a state and among states)
(d) cultural homogenization, based on the Western consumerist model
(e) increased environmental degradation.

Setting a date for the beginning of this movement is a difficult task; however, since the Zapatista uprising in the Chiapas province of Mexico against the NAFTA agreement has been iconic for a new generation of activists, one might identify 1994 as the symbolic starting point. In 1995 the Corporate Watch network was established in the UK as a watchdog for the activity of multinational corporations, in order to raise awareness and organize campaigns and boycotts on a global scale. In the following two years, the Zapatistas called two international meetings (*encuentros*) for diverse groups of people, institutions and politicians opposing 'neo-liberalism' to gather, join forces and multiply power through a global solidarity network (Wall 2005, pp. 5–6).

The anti-globalization movement made headlines for the first time because of the protests that took place at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Seattle in late 1999. There, a wide

coalition of anarchists, leftists, trade unionists, environmentalists, religious groups, NGOs, local and international activists, violent and non-violent protesters, managed to obstruct and finally block the WTO meeting (Graeber 2009, pp. 18–23). Protesters in Seattle faced a considerable police backlash; however, through the three-day 'Battle of Seattle' the movement acquired a point of reference and a symbolic identity. The legacy of Seattle has been so powerful that events as remote in time as the December 2008 riots in Greece, in the wake of the shooting by police of a 15-year-old student, have been considered part of the cycle of struggles that started in Seattle (Kioupkiolis 2011, p. 61). Huge protests by the so-called 'anarchist travelling circus' (as it was described by Tony Blair) accompanied further gatherings of the political elite, such as the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) summit in Prague in September of 2000 and a Quebec meeting on the creation of an American free trade area (Wall 2005, p. 8). As the movement established itself, the backlash it faced escalated, climaxing in the events of the G8 meeting in Genoa in 2001, when protesters (many of them non-violent) were attacked by the police and the young anarchist Carlo Giuliani lost his life, after being shot in an encounter with the police.

The movement experienced a pullback after 9/11, but then had a comeback with the worldwide demonstrations on 15 February 2003 against the war in Iraq. One could argue that such an event should better be linked with the legacy of the peace movement. However, the emphasis on the global character of action and the role of international networks such as the World Social Forum, allows us to consider such mobilizations as part of the anti-globalization movement. Since 2003 the movement has been less visible, mainly due to changes in the political agendas of the activists, together with some internal disputes (Callinicos and Nineham 2007). Kiely (2005, p. 160) claims that although the movement would become visible in the media in central events, such as world summits (Seattle, Genoa, et al.), it had also been active at many other levels, such as protests and campaigns on the local or national level, dealing with issues such as international debt, the rights of indigenous people, environmental protection, anti-construction mobilizations, internet activism, setting up co-ops, alternative media and so on.

Despite its diversity, it is possible to spot some common qualitative characteristics in the anti-globalization movement. Immanuel Wallerstein, described the World Social Forum (a loose umbrella group and an unofficial coordinator of the movement), as trying to:

> bring together all the previous types—Old Left, new movements, human-rights bodies, and others not easily falling into these categories—and includes groups organized in a strictly local, regional, national and transnational fashion. The basis of participation is a common objective—struggle against the social ills consequent on neoliberalism—and a common respect for each other's immediate priorities. (Wallerstein 2002)

It has already been mentioned that 'neo-liberalism' had been the basic reference point for what the anti-globalization movement stood against. Yet the conception that this was an anti-capitalist campaign needs to be challenged. The plurality of the movement and the fact that even institutional players were among its participants (social democratic parties, non-governmental organizations [NGOs], activists working on single-issue campaigns and so on) places the movement more towards the wider left, although it is true that parts of the movement were indeed anti-capitalist (Farnsworth 2004). Beyond the negative consensus against globalization and neo-liberalism, it is not clear whether the movement had a positive political agenda. Many actors within the movement, such as political parties of the left, socialist governments, political organizations and groups, did indeed have a political message, though not a coherent one. Generally, the movement had a reformist character, trying to 'democratize capitalism' and achieve a fairer distribution, significant aid to Third World countries, the elimination of developing countries' debts and so on. The best known of such efforts is perhaps the ATTAC network (Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financière et l'Aide aux Citoyens'—Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens), or the support for a 'Tobin tax' (again, a tax on financial transactions). According to its organizers, ATTAC fights 'for the regulation of financial markets, the closure of tax havens, the introduction of global taxes to finance global public goods, the cancellation of the debt of developing countries, fair trade, and the implementation of limits to

free trade and capital flows' (ATTAC n.d). Though many of the activists participating in the movement (especially its anarchistic radical wing) would not agree with such a characterization, it seems that the ideology of such campaigns mirrored the lack of a distinctive political alternative put forward by the new left and operated more as a radical flank of social democracy.

For Morland, radical campaigns like the anti-globalization movement, mirror many of the characteristics of new social movements, focusing on action and putting forward an alternative model more on the level of culture and personal behaviour, rather than on politics; thus, they are anti-political by their very nature (2004, p. 32). Depending on how one defines what is political, such a characterization might be unfair; yet Morland is right that such movements tend to be more active on the level of expressing grievances and creating spectacles, rather than putting forward alternatives. For Furedi, such a lack of a will for political engagement and the introspection of celebrating the form (the anti-hierarchical organizational model, inner-diversity, etc.) over the political essence, something quite common among the anti-globalization movement and the new left in general, are signs of disengagement and defeat. Performative protests putting forward the emotion and one's moral superiority (sympathy for populations in other continents, condemnation of big corporations, etc.) operate more on the level of inner fulfilment than as commitment to a political cause that can bring actual change (Furedi 2004b, p. xiv).

The anti-globalization movement makes visible another interesting contradiction within the new left: its ambiguous relationship with state power. On the one hand, most of the grievances of the protesters, such as higher taxation and more regulation of big multinational corporations can only materialize with the intervention of a stronger state. At the same time, Kioupkiolis is right to point out that many modern movements suffer from what he calls a 'puritanism of power', that is, the belief that engaging with mainstream politics or acquiring power and influence could betray the integrity of the campaign (2011, p. 135). John Holloway, a scholar who has been influential among anti-globalization activists, is famous for his claim that the radicals of the twenty-first century should abstain from political power: 'For what is at issue in the

revolutionary transformation of the world is not whose power it is, but the very existence of power' (2005, p. 17). For Chandler, though, this 'puritanism of power' could be explained by the realization on the part of the new left that winning over a majority of voters is highly unlikely. 'Once the struggle for representation, for winning a broad base of societal support, was given up, social power appeared to be threatening rather than potentially liberating' (Chandler 2009, p. 20). Thus, large parts of the new left and of social movements have to balance in the narrow space between escapism on the one hand and absorption by the mainstream narrative of social democracy on the other.

A solution that has been proposed as a way forward from this conundrum is the creation of Temporary Autonomous Zones, which, as we saw, are among the trademarks of lifestyle activism. Torney argues that the challenge is not to put forward a programme for a better world, but rather to create the autonomous space where such a world would be able to materialize. He also refers to the famous motto of Subcomandante Marcos (the iconic leading figure of the Zapatistas), according to which the object is the creation of a world 'where all worlds are possible' (cited in Thomassen 2006, p. 114). As Kiely (2005) notes, Zapatistas are the supreme model of autonomy for post-modern anti-authoritarians and the anti-globalization movement in general. Through limited use of armed resistance, horizontal non-hierarchical organization and a mobilization of a global community of supporters, the Zapatista army (EZLN) has indeed managed to declare the Chiapas province in Mexico an autonomous zone. Yet, in a way, this has happened with the silent approval or lack of interest shown by the Mexican government (Kiely 2005, p. 210). Therefore, such autonomy could be revoked at any moment. The Mexican state is still out there and could crush the Temporary or Permanent Autonomous Zone at any time. Even Holloway, a prominent advocate of autonomous spaces, had to admit that such liberated spaces are always at the mercy of the authorities, or, as in the case of Chiapas, of the Mexican army (2005, p. 237). The yardstick for measuring whether such acts of liberation are successful is given by Žižek: 'So when is subtraction really creative of a new space? The only appropriate answer: when it undermines the coordinates of the very system from which it subtracts itself, striking at the points of its "symptomal torsion"' (Žižek

2009, p. 409). One could add that another test for the success of such autonomous zones is whether they could attract a critical mass of people to leave behind their life under the state power and capitalism and move to the liberated space. Very few, if any, of the autonomous spaces created by modern social movements would even come close to passing such a threshold. It must be acknowledged, though, that within Chiapas, the fact that the villagers have been feeling more secure from the harassment of the army or of paramilitary groups is a huge success for the EZLN; there are doubts, however, as to the significance of this event as a model for Western urban movements, or for a wider political change beyond the particularities of the Mexican jungle.

On a different issue, whereas in a mobilization within a country the audience and the recipients of the grievances are clear, this is not the case with 'de-territorialized' campaigns such as the anti-globalization movement. To whom do the activists address their protest? One popular answer would be the notion of a global civil society. For Anheir et al., in recent decades, and as a by-product of globalization, we have experienced the 'emergence of a supranational sphere of social and political participation in which citizens, groups, social movements, and individuals, engage in dialogue, debate, confrontation, and negotiation with each other and with various governmental actors—international, national, and local—as well as the business world' (2001, p. 4). For Ayres, such a global civil society is an open field, where what takes place is a struggle between contested narratives; a 'ferocious contest over people's interpretations and understandings of the supposed benefits of neoliberal economic policies' (2004, p. 11). For Kinna this very 'mobilization of popular opinion' against neo-liberalism is the most successful weapon and the biggest success of the movements of the early twenty-first century (2005, p. 196).

Yet not everyone agrees on whether this global civil society actually exists. The emergence of a global civil society would mean that the idea of civil society is expanded from individual states to a global level (Rootes 2002, p. 413). At the national level, civil society is linked with notions such as the demos, democracy, accountability and sovereignty. These elements are lacking in the international sphere. Chandler is another scholar who views with suspicion the construction of a global civil society, as in it he sees a rejection of the 'politics of representation', that is, politics that

has as its target the winning over of people's hearts and minds towards forming a majoritarian political subject. Instead, the emphasis in the anti-globalization movement lies on the collective expression of moral grievances that do not translate into forming a political programme (Chandler 2007, p. 151). For Chandler, global activism of the kind of the anti-globalization movement is seen more as a sign of disengagement from actual politics, rather than as a return to internationalism. As he mentions, the iconic figure of the Zapatistas movement, Subcomandante Marcos, might claim to represent the poor and the oppressed of the developing world and the excluded of the developed world, but no one actually voted for him or summoned him as their representative (2007, p. 159). Thus, for Chandler, being an activist beyond the level of the state tends to be a 'liberation' from the uncomfortable demand to answer to the popular will and of measurably influencing specific people within one's community (2007, p. 160).

Chase-Dunn and Gills sum up the ideological characteristics and values of the anti-globalization movement (2005, p. 53):

(a) a struggle for social justice
(b) inclusiveness and a willingness to include as much as possible minorities considered as marginalized
(c) solidarity
(d) equality
(e) diversity and unwillingness to adopt a single identity
(f) peace and non-violence
(g) loose organizational networks
(h) a spontaneous nature.

What is really interesting to notice is how the ideological characteristics of the movement have more to do with the character of its members and the inner organization of the group rather than with its politics. Notions such as 'equality' and 'social justice' are quite vague and do not offer much information about what the movement wants to achieve and how. Such elements are not something new; it has been shown how they have been consistent in the history of the new left. Such characteristics are expected to be seen in a prefigurative movement, where protest is not

a means towards a specific end, but the staging of a moral statement that takes precedence over the construction of a political alternative. There is little doubt that the anti-globalization movement could be easily considered a good example of prefigurative politics (Carter and Morland 2004, p. 87; Gordon 2008 p. 34). As Graeber (2002, p. 70) mentions, in prefigurative types of protests, the organization of the movement reflects its ideology, and sometimes *is* its ideology. Such predominance of practice over theory is distinctive in 'post-modern' social movements. In addition, Gordon (2008, p. 48) points out that for an anti-authoritarian political theory, the 'obvious' place to begin a discussion is the inner relations and organization of the movement itself. But the lack of a coherent political philosophy and of a rational analysis of means and ends, combined with placing the movement as the central point of reference, can only lead to misjudgements. Thus, Graeber (2007) did not hesitate to claim, regarding the anti-globalization movement: 'it's true that we didn't destroy capitalism. But we (taking the "we" here as the horizontalist, direct-action oriented wing of the planetary movement against neoliberalism) did arguably deal it a bigger blow in just two years than anyone since, say, the Russian Revolution'. In the same text, which he titled 'The Shock of Victory', he claims that the main problem of the anti-globalization movement is the fact that it achieved substantial victories really quickly, and thus failed to manage such a huge success (Graeber 2007). The exaggeration of such statements is a testament to the disorientation that the abandonment of rationality and objectivity from a movement's strategy can bring.

Graeber also claims that the consensus-building decision procedures that have arisen out of the anti-authoritarian and feminist tradition and have been transplanted to the anti-globalization movement are 'the biggest contribution in revolutionary practice in the last centuries' (2009, p. 75). But such a statement makes little sense. How can a decision-making process, which has to do with how a handful of activists organize their interpersonal relations, be declared the most significant contribution to revolutionary practice in recent centuries? An internal organizational procedure could indirectly contribute to revolutionary action but it cannot be revolutionary practice in itself. Most importantly, such a revolutionary practice is almost nowhere to be found.

Graeber celebrates the novelty and the imaginative aspects of the movement as paving new ways forward for activism. He sees:

> a rich and growing panoply of organizational instruments—spokescouncils, affinity groups, facilitation tools, breakouts, fishbowls, blocking concerns, vibe-watchers and so on—all aimed at creating forms of democratic process that allow initiatives to rise from below and attain maximum effective solidarity, without stifling dissenting voices, creating leadership positions or compelling anyone to do anything which they have not freely agreed to do. (2009, p. 71)

Yet, most of these elements are inward-looking; they tell us more about the ethos of its activists and less about how the developing countries, which the movement aims to support, can attain a future that will be more plentiful and humane. In what possible ways have all these workshops, facilitation tools and consensus decision-making helped the great majority of people not involved with them? It seems that this radical culture is mainly a form of inspiration and a means of inner fulfilment for their own members, rather than having to do much with all those 'outside'. Such a preoccupation with a psychic improvement at the level of the self/group, rather than on a wider scale, is at the core of what I described as lifestyle activism.

Sure, the anti-globalization movement has given some momentum back to the new left, as it triggered an international wave of protests which, although short-lived, was noteworthy as far as its geographical expansion and its visibility are concerned. Whether this movement has yet to present any tangible success, though, is quite arguable. For Graeber the movement had aspirations on three levels (2009, p. 29). In the short term, the challenge was the blocking of elite conferences (IMF, WTO, G8, etc.). This partially succeeded, but in practical terms this victory was unimportant. The elite summits continue, but are now hosted in places such as Qatar or the Bavarian Alps. The second, mid-term, target that Graeber mentioned was the destruction of the consensus around neoliberalism and the de-legitimization of organizations such as the IMF; this he considered a work in progress. Although 'neo-liberalism' (whatever that term actually means) has been under attack, and not only by the

left, after the crisis of 2008, institutions such as the IMF had acquired an advanced role, as in the case of bail-outing the restructure of failed economies like Greece. The long-term challenge for Graeber would be the smashing of capitalism and the state, but it is obvious that the anti-globalization movement would never be able to gain such a significance so as to threaten the political and economic status quo.

It has to be added that the anti-globalization movement has avoided the task of seriously measuring its impact and its efficiency. Resistance was celebrated as an end in itself, without evaluating what kind of resistance this was, against whom and what it actually achieved (Kiely 2005, p. 214). As Day mentioned, 'these movements/networks/tactics do not seek totalizing effects on any axis at all. Instead, they set out to block, resist and render redundant both corporate and state power in local, national and transnational contexts' (2005, p. 45). Measured by this standard, the anti-globalization movement had little success, as it is not evident how and in what cases it posed an alternative to state or corporate structures. What will probably remain as a memory from the movement were the huge mobilizations at the meetings of the global political and economic elites, or what Gordon called 'summit hopping' (2008, p. 3). Yet, such image-making tactics had their limits, as recognized even by one of the iconic figures of the movement, author Naomi Klein, who characterized, though in a sympathetic tone, the 'summit hopping' activists as 'a movement of meeting stalkers, following the trade bureaucrats as if they were the Grateful Dead' (cited in Kiely 2005, p. 215).

For a movement that is, to a degree, self-referential and dealing with the construction of an alternative moral identity for its members, expressive politics of the self and of the body are expected to have a visible role. Thus, for Bowen and Purkis, 'the body becomes a focus and a vehicle for identifying and contesting power and oppression', even by means such as escaping capitalist reality by the use of narcotics (2004, p. 17). Postmodern anarchism, which was quite popular among anti-globalization activists, has been seen by activists as 'an art of living', with Moore even claiming that there exists an anarchist *savoir vivre* (2004, p. 55). This is lifestyle activism at its purest.

In addition, the carnivalesque aspect in protest is an element of the lifestylist tactics of the past that has been transferred to the modern

anti-capitalist and anti-globalization campaigns of the new left. Carnival, since medieval times, has always had a superficially radical element, as the status quo was temporarily overturned and the prevailing norms and symbols that sustained a social system were ridiculed and exposed in a 'Dionysian break' (Langman and Halnon 2005, p. 205). We have seen how carnivalesque elements have been present in radical movements since the 1960s, beginning with the Provos in Holland. Graeber, celebrates the carnivalesque elements of the anti-globalization movement, seeing them as a continuation of the tradition of the Yippies or the Metropolitan Indians of the 1970s in Italy (2002, p. 68). Carnivalesque action has gained popularity in recent decades as shown by events such as the yearly 'Carnival against Capitalism' in London and the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) group. A member of CIRCA celebrates the playfulness of the clown cult, as 'without real names, faces, or noses, the spectacle of celebrity was refused' (Routledge 2009, p. 83). He considers himself and the group to be radicals because they 'celebrated life, happiness, and continuous rebellion more than "revolution"' (2009, p. 84). In addition, he considers that nothing undermines authority so much as ridiculing it (2009, p. 84). Roddick sums up the irrational arguments in favour of carnivalesque protest: 'Perhaps the real threat to corporate globalization is the irresistible appeal of carnival as a tactic of resistance and dissent. […] Imagine fifty thousand Indian farmers from the state of Karnataka spending an entire day laughing outside the state government offices. (The government collapsed the following week)' (2005, p. 395). Governments around the world have not collapsed after systematic ideological effort and after protests by millions; why a government would collapse because of people laughing outside its offices remains unclear. Frawley (2010) adds that the politics of the grotesque and the carnivalesque not only lack any practical positive outcomes, but they could even jeopardize the message of the protest, as their image could soon become a caricature and bring about a loss of respect on the part of third parties. She also adds that when the carnival-protest is over, and 'when the abandoned placards have been swept up and the first cars and pedestrians are released from the bottleneck to take back the formerly "liberated" streets and town squares, the city seems to breathe a collective sigh of relief as the normal routine resumes unscathed' (2010).

A conclusion drawn from this chapter could be that there seems to be a dialectical relationship between lifestyle activism and the Global Justice Movement. It seems that the limits of lifestyle activism are also the limits of new social movements in general. It was a movement that managed to mobilize a significant number of activists, but due to its inherent characteristics, did little to actually translate its narrative to a political programme. As mentioned before, this chapter operates as a bridge, linking the rise of the new left in the 1960s and its adventures in the 1970s and 1980s with the social movements and radical campaigns of today. Ideas, values and forms of action that were developed from the 1960s onwards, such as the significance of means over ends, playfulness, emotionalism and growth-scepticism, now seem to gain relevance and are becoming more visible. In addition, the anti-globalization movement would be proved influential for the future as it established ideas, forms of action and organizational structures that would henceforth be taken for granted and would have significant influence on the movements of today.

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6

From Lifestyle Activism to Left-Wing Populism: The New Left in Times of Crisis

From 2010 onwards, a wave of protest has been unfolding throughout large parts of the world. The most distintive moments in this cycle of contention have been the Arab Spring, the anti-austerity mobilizations (mainly) in Southern Europe and what became known as the Occupy Movement in the United States and the United Kingdom. These protests could be understood as a by-product of the global financial crisis of 2008 and of the unsettling of the political consensus in many of the countries influenced by the economic turmoil. The crisis has been a political opening and an opportunity for the contemporary left to try to push forward its narrative at a time when so-called 'neo-liberal' ideas were increasingly questioned, even by parts of the political and economic establishment. In February 2009, *Newsweek* magazine had as its front page the headline 'We are all socialists now', reporting on the Obama administration's colossal stimulus bill (of almost $800 billion). A leading article mentioned: 'If we fail to acknowledge the reality of the growing role of government in the economy, insisting instead on fighting twenty-first century wars with twentieth-century terms and tactics, then we are doomed to a fractious and unedifying debate' (Meacham 2009). This, of course, is not to say that the political establishment has suddenly turned towards the left. But

N. Sotirakopoulos, *The Rise of Lifestyle Activism*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55103-0_6

it goes to show that the way the political and economic elites handled the crisis—that is, by bailing out failed banks, printing huge amounts of new money and imposing harsh taxes in order to avoid structural reforms (as in the case of Greece)—is much closer to a economic model with a strong redistributive state, and miles away from what Friedman, Hayek or anyone else who, in the popular imagination, represents the ideas of 'neo-liberalism', would support. Thus, in an ideological atmosphere where banker-bashing and blaming the 'uncontrolled market' was almost the official narrative in most Western countries, the new left was knocking on an open door by grasping the chance to prove that history is not over and that its ideas could make a comeback.

A BBC (2008) article informs us that in the first months of the crisis, the sales of Karl Marx's book *Das Capital* in Germany have gone up by 300%, and a similar interest was evident also in the UK and other Western countries (Jeffries 2012). It is quite natural that at times of crisis people re-examine (or reinforce) their previous political beliefs and this did not only happen with the left. In the first four years after the financial crisis of 2008, *Atlas Shrugged*, Ayn Rand's *magnum opus* that envisioned a world where an ever-expanding government would only deepen the crisis and destroy the great minds and the great producers, sold 1.5 million copies; this is, more copies than the book sold when it was published in 1957 (ARI 2012). In retrospect, it is clear that the crisis did not give momentum only to left-leaning movements, such as Occupy, the *Indignados* and the Outraged, but also to the Tea Party, the libertarian presidential campaigns of Ron Paul in 2008 and 2012, right-wing populism, as in the case of the Front National in France (though one could claim that its agenda went way beyond issues around the economic crisis) and even neo-fascism, as in the case of the Golden Dawn in Greece.

This chapter focuses on the leftist narratives that arose as a response to the many questions Western societies were facing in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis. As we have seen in previous chapters, the ideas of the new left, which I labelled with the umbrella term 'lifestyle activism', had acquired an ever-increasing reach within the wider milieu. Yet, such a narrative had inherent limits, especially in harsh economic times. When millions of people were struggling with lower living standards, mass unemploy-

ment and an economy that was in urgent need of a boost and revitalization, then an anti-materialist narrative focused on a cultural critique of capitalism is hardly a convincing answer. Thus, in the years since 2008 we have seen an interesting process within the leftist milieu: the inheritance of previous campaigns, such as the anti-globalization movement, is in play, this time mobilized within a different political environment and in need of a new message that would appeal to the masses of people that were left behind by the crisis. The answer to this conundrum was the rise of a peculiar leftist populism, standing with one foot in lifestyle activism and the other in a quasi-socialist, quasi-Keynesian statism.

This chapter will engage with these tendencies among the contemporary left. It will initially deal with the Occupy campaign and its English 'branch', Occupy London Stock Exchange. Occupy London could be a useful source for understanding the state of radical grassroots activism in the UK today. It gathered activists of various political beliefs and it gained the support of diverse groups, parties, non-governmental organizations and trade unions. Thus, up to a point, Occupy London possibly mirrored trends and tendencies of the wider leftist, Green and radical milieu in the UK, making its study as a phenomenon an important area for scholars of social movements. Then, I will examine the slightly different agenda of left-wing populism, drawing from the example of Syriza in Greece, as the most successful case of a new leftist party capitalizing on the disarray caused by the financial crisis.

The Background: An International Wave of Contention

A Economic crisis is expected to entail social dislocation and political contention, and just as the economic turmoil associated with the global financial crisis of 2008 has been international, so has the contention. At the same time, the recent cycle of contention can also be understood as a climax of mobilizations that have been going on for almost a decade, linking this chapter with the preceding ones on the protest camps (especially in the case of UK) and the anti-globalization movement.

There have been two different forms of discontent globally in the last years. The less usual has been a pure political reaction, with the forming of a political subject with an agenda that somehow attempts to materialize popular anger. The obvious example here is Syriza in Greece, a party which skyrocketed from 4 % in the 2009 elections to 16 % and 27 % in 2012 to finally acquiring political power in 2015 with 36.3 %. The second umbrella category, which is quite broad and on which I am focusing my attention, includes grassroots protest movements of complaint or of direct challenge to the political elites that vary significantly in size, orientation, methods and character. In this category one could fit the protests of Arab Spring and Tahrir Square (though the role of the left in these campaigns was not central), the Indignados movement in Spain, the Outraged of Syntagma Square and the Occupy campaign, in its various versions. Some of these movements managed to articulate a political narrative that later tried to be transported to the central political arena, thought in the case of the Occupy trend, they would mostly stick to a more prefigurative character.

The internationalization and diffusion of protest since 2011 conforms to the model proposed by Kriesi et al. (1995, p. 182): issues shared on an international level—in our case the financial crisis and the alleged malfunctioning of democracy—triggering mobilizations that then gain their own dynamic and influence one another. Della Porta (2008) talks about 'eventful protest', which produces its own dynamic that not only gives birth to new forms of organization, narratives and repertoires of action, but also challenges and transforms the existing dominant structures. One might say that the recent wave of contention was not about movements that gave rise to protests; what happened is that protests sprang up as a reaction to the crisis, gained their own dynamic and only then gave birth to movements, some of which later gave rise to (or enhanced already existing) political entities, such as Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece.

Taking into accordance McAdam's and Rucht's work on diffusion, we could identify Tahrir Square and the Arab Spring of 2010–11 in general as the 'transmitter' (1993, p. 59), that is, the event that was the 'trademark' of this wave of contention, especially regarding the symbols and forms of action. The forms of non-hierarchical organization and values such as solidarity and equality seemed to be present in most of the fields

of protest. Another common element was the form of action chosen: the occupation of a space and persistent protest I that space was spreading like a 'meme' according to Mason (2012a, pp. 150–1). 'Time and again, the impulse to create areas of self-control has led, in the past two years, to an almost mystical determination by protesters to occupy a symbolic physical space and create within it an experimental, shared community' (2012a, p. 84). This does not come as a surprise, as it has already been shown how the setting up of protest camps, where strong ties of a common identity are built, operate conveniently in an age where political identities are fluid and are based more on sentimentality and moral values, rather than deeply held ideological convictions. According to Hardt and Negri (2012, p. 39), occupation is an appropriate form of protest in a society based on networks and the communication of individuals, as such a communication in a square takes a physical form: like-minded people with whom one interacts within the various virtual networks where new movements are born meet in the square and form temporary or longer-lasting political bonds. Indeed, building upon the legacy of Tahrir Square, from Puerta del Sol to Syntagma and from Zuccotti Park to St Paul's, the coming together in squares marked the 2010–12 wave of protests. The initial success of such a protest in Egypt promoted this form of action as a potentially successful model: if it worked in overthrowing a despot like Mubarak, it could also work in toppling the government in Greece or in Spain; or so the protesters hoped.

A call for equality and democracy was the main theme in this wave of protests (Tejerina et al. 2013). Yet, what strikes the eye is how general and non-specific these themes are. For example, the level and quality of democracy in Greece and Spain is significantly different from that in Egypt. Equality and democracy are slogans that can operate as unifying factors, bringing together heterogeneous people with different political beliefs and aims; yet, they mean completely different things to different people. In the case of Greece, for example, what does a call for democracy mean? The Greek governments that accumulated the public debt and the deficits enjoyed vast popular majorities. In addition, looking at their electoral behavior, the Greek people seemed to be on board with a state with an ever-expanding budget. Thus one could easily assume that a call for democracy in times of austerity was actually a call for a return to the good old days; a

return that the harsh economic reality has made impossible. In a different social context, Occupy Wall Street had as one of its rallying cries a demand for addressing inequalities; , yet it did not say much about what kind of inequalities it was referring to or how it hoped to address them (Rowe 2011; Žižek 2012). At the end of the day, it all seemed to come down to an implied demand for higher taxation of the richer. In any case, Castells was right to claim that Occupy 'presented more grievances than demands' (2012, p. 186). One could claim that the same applied to most of the protests of 2011 on an international level. Again, this is something that has been emphasized time and again in this book: the new left has been quite successful in mobilizing people and in making its presence visible, but when it comes to offering specific solutions or novel policy approaches, it struggles to go anywhere beyond social democratic recipes for more state intervention, dressed in a language of radicalism.

Occupy London: Moderate Radicals

Occupy London Stock Exchange (or Occupy London, as it became commonly known), could be considered as the expression of the 2011 global wave of contention in the UK. As will become clear, it was a phenomenon inspired by movements taking place at that time throughout the world, while mirroring the special circumstances of the society in which it materialized: a the UK which, although stuck in a circle of economic slowdown and welfare cuts, was affected to a far lesser degree than probably any other place where such movements emerged. At the same time, Occupy could also be understood as a link in a long chain of direct action grassroots protests in the UK, having as its predecessors movements such as the anti-roads protests of the 1990s and the climate camps of the late 2000s.

My research on Occupy London Stock Exchange was enhanced by my participant observation in the protest and by conducting semi-structured interviews with 40 participants.[1] My presence in the field throughout all the different stages of the campaign gave me the opportunity to acquire first-hand experience of the camp's procedures and gather sufficient research material, not only from interviews, but also through observation,

[1] All names in interviews are pseudonyms.

unofficial conversations, photos and so on. In addition, I interviewed some key activists after the occupation was over, so as to gain a wider understanding of the situation, with the advantage that a small distance of time offers. Some material will be drawn also from the literature regarding the Occupy phenomenon in the USA, in cases where I consider the similarities between these events to outweigh the differences.

Occupy was a protest event which lasted for almost three months, having as its main venue the square outside St Paul's cathedral in London and also an abandoned UBS building outside Liverpool Street and the nearby Finsbury Square. Throughout its life, it did not manage to gather more than some hundreds of activists, nor did it engage in any violent confrontation with the police. In addition, despite its radical vocabulary, its actual narrative was quite moderate. And yet Occupy London managed to capture the attention (and, up to a point, the imagination) of the media, the political elite, the Church and of parts of the general public. The economist and author Ha-Joon Chang talked about Occupy as a 'catalyst for a radical rethink' (2011), while the journalist/author Paul Mason claimed that 'Occupy has created a new Zeitgeist' (2012b). These claims were proven to be exaggerated; however, the mere fact that Occupy, in its day, created such a momentum and expectations indicates the importance of analysing the phenomenon.

Occupy London definitely did not come out of the blue and was not unexpected. In 2010, student protests and the anti-cuts networks challenged the freshly elected Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government. The British government's strict and tight economic agenda, some cuts in welfare and the gloomy international economic environment, together with the London riots, led many (even among the state and the elites) to expect a new 'winter of discontent' for 2011–12, fuelled additionally by the international wave of contention that was already unfolding. In the end, all they got was the three months of the Occupy encampment.

In October 2011, the Occupy movement on the other side of the Atlantic, having at its centre the occupation of Zuccotti Park in New York, had already been going for almost a month. It was just a matter of time before a similar movement kicked off in the UK as well. The time came on 15 October 2011, when there was a call for a 'World Revolution'

spread through the electronic media. When setting up a camp outside the London Stock Exchange proved impossible, some 70 tents were pitched on the flagstones outside St Paul's cathedral. Wikileaks' founder Julian Assange gave an 'opening speech' on the steps of St Paul's, lending some extra gravity and publicity to the protest. Life in the camp was quickly organized through work teams, as among the pioneers were activists already experienced from previous movements, such as the Camp for Climate Action (fieldwork notes). There was an initial statement, agreed by an assembly of almost 500 protesters, focusing on the unsustainability of the present system in economic and environmental terms, their opposition to the cuts, their commitment to diversity, their solidarity with those who struggle at the national and international level, and their belief in the cause of equality (Occupy London 2011a). The line for the months to follow was already set.

The organization of everyday life in the Occupy London sites had considerable importance for the participants—something that we have seen as a recurring theme in prefigurative protests. Decisions were taken by a general assembly, via consensus, and open discussion was facilitated by hand gestures. There were various thematic working groups which would deal with some issues and introduce others for discussion in the general assembly. There was a 'tranquillity team' to prevent tensions and make sure that the 'safe-space' policy was respected. Housekeeping duties were organized through a rota. Groceries were freely available thanks to donations, which seemed to be quite generously provided by various individuals, groups and even the Church (fieldwork notes).

Speeches by prominent figures of the left, activists and scholars were among the highlights of Occupy London. Besides Assange, the Marxist geographer David Harvey, professor and leading figure in the Socialist Workers Party Alex Callinicos, author John Holloway, the—then—Green Party leader Caroline Lucas and the American preacher and longtime activist Jesse Jackson were only some of those who appeared in the University Tent or in the yard of St Paul's to address the campers and sympathizers. The campaign also attracted some celebrities, such as Thom Yorke from the rock band Radiohead and 3D (Robert del Naja) from Massive Attack, who appeared at a Christmas party in the Bank of Ideas and performed as DJs (Martins 2011). Occupy London came to an

end on 28 February 2012, after the City of London won a High Court order for the forcible eviction of the camp. Limited violence had to be used by the police during the eviction, as the remaining activists refused to leave (BBC News 2012). The camp in Finsbury Square survived for some months to come, but Occupy London was essentially dead.

It should be mentioned, however, that the court injunction was not the only factor that brought Occupy London to its knees. The tough nature of a protest camp during winter, the natural fatigue and the exhaustion of initiatives had already severely weakened Occupy long before 28 February. After Christmas, fewer and fewer activists were staying at the camps. Fuzzy, in an interview, described general assemblies with eight people in the first months of 2012 in Finsbury Square (int. 1). Homeless people were now a large proportion of the camp's inhabitants. Brendan O'Neill reported in February 2012 that 'Occupy London is now effectively a holding camp for the mentally ill, a space where the psychologically afflicted and deeply troubled can gather to eat, drink and be unmerry' (O'Neill 2012a). Even a more sympathetic commentator, Laurie Penny, reported in January 2012 that:

> the protest has become a network of mutual support for the lost and destitute. […] The people who live full or part-time in the camps can now be divided into roughly three categories: those who were homeless before the occupations, those who will shortly be homeless, and those who merely look homeless. Three months of sleeping in tents, washing in the bathrooms of nearby cafes and working around-the-clock to run a kitchen feeding thousands with no running water and little electricity will transform even the most fresh-faced student into a jittering bundle of aching limbs and paranoia. (Penny 2012)

Boni adds that with protests such as Occupy, it is never easy to call it a day. 'Yes, at some point we became something like a refugee camp, as most of the people with some politics had already gone home. But you could not easily end it. Some people will always stay on' (int. 2). Decades ago, Parkin was already discussing movements with 'high survival value' (1968, p. 39), that is, movements that, due to their lack of a clear political objective and because their activity is an end in itself, find it hard to realize when they have had their time and need to withdraw. Occupy

London is a good example of this ongoing tendency of a movement losing the focus of its existence as a means towards a specific ends and thus becoming an end in itself. The limitations of a self-sustained protest camp became evident in the case of Occupy London. Even if a protest can overcome legal prosecution or police harassment (which were factors in bringing Occupy Wall Street to an end, for example), its very nature will predetermine its limits as narrow and short term.

In phenomena like Occupy, which lack a central political line or orientation, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the protest, up to a point, is the people who participate in it. This was a protest of mainly young people and students, and it comes as no surprise that most of the people who were 'full-time' members in the protest had the luxury of time. On the cause that made people take the square, the theme mentioned by most interviewees was that a sense of injustice and inequality triggered a feeling of personal responsibility to address what was perceived as a crisis not only in the field of economic and politics, but also of values (Sotirakopoulos and Rootes 2014). As Spiter mentioned, 'I feel strongly against inequality and I'd feel a hypocrite hadn't I got involved in this' (int. 3). The fact that people participate in social movements or protest events fuelled by feelings of injustice is not something new. Something that seems to be changing in recent years, however, is that this protest of feelings seems to become more and more an end in itself. Furedi has elaborated on this issue, focusing on the mobilization against the Iraq War in 2003 and it slogan, 'not in my name'. Although more than a million people participated in these mobilizations, Furedi considered them as a 'personal protest':

> 'Not in my name' is self-consciously framed as a personal proclamation. It is not a political statement designed to involve others, and does not seek to offer an alternative. It does not call on anyone to choose sides or even insist on a particular course of action. Insofar as it represents an attitude, 'Not in my name' is a statement of individual preference and represents an opt-out clause, rather than an attempt to alter the course of events. (Furedi 2004c)

Even if one does not agree entirely with Furedi on these points, it seems that the idea of a 'personal protest' was an evident tendency in Occupy.

The 'we are showing them we are unhappy' was a theme repeated time and again in the interviews outside St Paul's. What comes as a surprise, though, is that the expression of such a deeply held moral dissatisfaction was not followed by a political message on what was to be done to end the injustices or whatever was causing the protesters' indignation.

Beyond indignation for the present, carrying the torch from the past was another mobilizing factor for Occupy. Daniel, an activist with experience from climate camps and the Global Justice movement, confirmed that 'this form of protest goes back to the anti-roads movement. […] The alter-globalization movement created a space within activism for people doing things in the streets and for its norms and values to become the accepted way of doing protest—consensus in decision-making and occupying a physical space. This is like a second generation thing' (int. 5). Charles, an activist in his late 40s who had experience in direct action since the anti-roads protests of the 1990s, shared these views: 'Roots of Occupy lay not only in climate camps, but go further in the past, on the peace camps, the anti-roads movement etc. […] Movements come to full circle or reach their limits. But then they re-emerge in different conditions and with different characteristics' (int. 6). Another key activist, Fuzzy, on the remark that previous direct action protests with characteristics similar to those of Occupy had disappeared, and on whether the same thing would happen with Occupy (as it actually did), replied that 'it's like waves. When you are wrapped up in a wave, it's impossible to know whether it's high tide or low tide and whether or not this particular wave or this particular tide will be the one that pushes everything over the edge. But what you can always rely on is that there will be a next wave' (int. 1).

It seems, thus, that a sense of urgency is lacking in the narrative of the direct action networks' protesters. Each campaign is seen as part in a long chain, rather than as necessarily a specific political battle that needs to be won. Another trend that came out of the interviewees' answers is how an object for Occupy London was to prolong the protest for as long as possible. 'The mere fact that we stand here is a success, as we are promoting radical ideas in the heart of the City', said Toby (int. 7). For Carmel, the best way for Occupy to achieve its goals would be to attract more and more people as time passes, and probably even expand protest camps in empty buildings etc. (int. 8). 'As cuts will hit, more and more people

will attend and occupations will spread' (int. 8). Bill thought along the same lines: 'we should keep the Bank of Ideas occupied and try to occupy more buildings' (int. 9). Other protesters held more pragmatic views: 'The objective is not to come here and occupy a square for the sake of it, but build a movement. We won't change Britain by camping here, we need to reach people out there who support us', said John (int. 10).

The conclusion that we could draw is that when a campaign is lacking a clear objective, this gap needs to be filled by the perpetuation of action for as long as possible. Žižek is quite critical of activism-centred campaigns that disappear and reappear with a different face, accusing them of 'pseudo-activity', operating so as to 'mask the nothingness of what goes on' in actual political terms (2009b, p. 183). Furedi has also been critical of Occupy for lacking a specific political message and for popping up as a theatre of activism: 'The protesters appear to be very time-rich; they conspicuously lack any sense of urgency about achieving tangible results. Historically, grassroots protesters measured success by the speed with which they successfully realised their objectives. But the passion and anger that once fuelled grassroots movements are absent today' (2011c).

Moving on to the ideological characteristics of the movement, according to the statement appearing on its website, 'Occupy London is part of the global social movement that has brought together concerned citizens from across the world against this injustice and to fight for a sustainable economy that puts people and the environment we live in before corporate profits' (Occupy London n.d.). This short passage reveals a lot about Occupy's character. Beginning from the end, big corporations are framed as an opponent, with their hunt for profit framed as responsible for the aforementioned injustice. The reference to a 'sustainable economy' and the 'environment' reveals the Green credentials of Occupy London and hints towards their stance on growth as being problematic, something emphasized also in many of the activists' interviews. In addition, its tendency towards being a moral gestures are prefigured by the reference to 'concerned citizens'. Again, soon we will see how a big part of Occupy's narrative was about the perceived 'apathy of the masses' and how the protest camps tried to inspire an awakening, obviously of those not so 'concerned', bearing in mind the points made in the second chapter about how the masses of common people tend to be problematized by the new left.

In its first statement, Occupy London focused on a variety of issues: from targeting the 'unsustainable system', celebrating their diversity and inclusiveness, placing themselves against the cuts, declaring solidarity with the oppressed around the world and denouncing the environmental degradation caused by the present economic system (Occupy London 2011a). Here, we touch upon a crucial element of Occupy: its vague and all-encompassing nature. There are millions of people from all walks of life and throughout the political spectrum who believe that budget cuts can be painful, bankers are 'greedy', destroying the environment poses dangers for our future and that the oppressed of this world deserve our sympathy. But a message that plays with such generalizations, instead of putting forward an agenda regarding what is to be done to address such concerns, flirts with populism. The vague character of Occupy introduces the discussion on the protest's impact on the media and on people's imagination.

Rochon (1990, p. 108) considered size, novelty and militancy as factors that can offer publicity and coverage by the media to a movement. As already mentioned, Occupy's size was particularly small (compared to other mobilizations in the UK, such as protests by trade unions) and there were few elements of militancy, despite the fact that a protest camp in the centre of the City of London is unusual. However, I will claim that Occupy's appeal lies elsewhere. It is precisely the aforementioned vague and unclear message of Occupy that allows the movement to enjoy a considerable degree of acceptance from the general public. For Gitlin (2012), in times of crisis, when the public is full of worries and anticipates some form of reaction, a movement that offers a vague and open-ended narrative can be quite easily accepted by a wide range of people. This was the case with Syriza in Greece and its simple but effective populist narrative.

For O'Neill (2011), Occupy London's indistinct and vague message makes it possible for other subjects, and mainly the media, to project onto it their own worries and agendas. Thus, instead of a movement using the media to put forward its message, the opposite could be happening in the case of Occupy. He also claimed that Occupy's promotion by the media was unusual for a protest of such a small size (O'Neill 2011). Prominent Occupy activist Naomi Calvin agrees: 'I am extremely pleased by the coverage we've got from the mainstream media. Some of the people in

the media team are from UK Uncut and they've been staggered by the amount of attention we've had' (2011). Calhoun (2012) is more sceptical and draws the attention to the fact that movements or campaigns with an unclear narrative are proven to have weak foundations and fail to meet the test of time. In the case of Occupy, this became evident with its rapid disappearance from the public sphere. Jenkins (2011) had already predicted this while the protest was at its peak: 'With no leaders, no policies, no programme beyond opposition to status quo, they must just sink into the urban background.'

On the question of how Occupy protesters define themselves politically, interviews were of no great help. Among the few who answered the question in a specific manner, the majority were activists with past or present participation in the Green movement (Sotirakopoulos and Rootes 2014). The vast majority of the interviewees declined to define themselves politically; some of them actually commented that this question was of little importance. It is interesting how this inability to establish a political stance was celebrated as a virtue by many in the campaign. Not being attached to any ideology is considered an element enhancing the protest's diversity and efficiency in representing the '99 %'. Furedi is not convinced:

> Of course, sometimes it is difficult to find the right words to formulate policies and objectives relevant to our times. Even the most far-sighted political leader would feel severely tested by the scale of the problems thrown up by the current global crisis. […] While the political elites pretend to have a plan and avoid facing up to the consequences of the fact that actually they lack ideas, their opponents in the Occupy movement make a virtue of having literally nothing to say. (2011b)

However, although Occupy's narrative was wide, covering issues from tax inequality to global warming, the initial set of demands was much less ambitious. It was focusing mostly on a reform ensuring transparency in transactions in the City of London and personal liability of big players in the financial sector (Occupy 2011b). One of the usual elements that the media would highlight was what they considered a lack of concrete and intelligible demands by Occupy London. After speaking to camp activists,

the aims and targets that the campaign could actually achieve remained rather unclear, with many different answers being given. However one theme that often came up, especially from those having an 'official role' in the institutions of Occupy, was the shifting of the agenda and the introduction of issues of inequality into the public debate. For Natalia, part of the Media Team in Finsbury Square, Occupy is first and foremost a space of debate, which could not only generate ideas, but also establish a momentum: 'Debate in the media and rhetoric of politicians was on a status quo track, but now this is gradually changing. It's not a massive shift, but it's a shift. In that sense we have achieved something already' (int. 11). For Obi from St Paul's Information Team: 'the important thing is that already, after some weeks of the protest, people know more about the City of London and how powerful the Mayor has become. We know more about capitalism … finally politicians and archbishop talk about equality and justice' (int. 4).

Yet one could claim that a debate on the greediness of financial institutions or widespread inequality is already present in the narrative of the elites, as it has been shown earlier. Pope Francis, following the steps of his predecessor Pope Benedict, has repeatedly pleaded for a more sustainable financial system which will not promote the 'greediness of the few'. Referring to the Bible, he recently claimed that 'the "worship of the golden calf" had found a new image in the current cult of money' (Milligan 2013). Further, Andrew Haldane, one of the Bank of England's executive directors, claimed that Occupy London was right to focus on inequality as the catalyst for the financial crisis of 2008, and on the need for stricter regulation in the banking sector (Inman 2012). One wonders whether there is still any radical edge in a narrative that is easily adoptable by the '1%', Occupy's (imaginary?) opponent.

To sum up, one could claim that Occupy London was a more or less reformist movement of complaint, wishing to change a few specific things here and there, mainly through more government intervention, rather than radically transform society as a whole. In addition, from what one could make of Occupy's demands, the addressee seems to be the state, which should take positive action to bring about more transparency in the City, to impose a Tobin tax or tax more heavily the profits of big corporations. It is quite interesting that the double legacy of the new left

that we spotted from the 1960s on also appeared in Occupy London: on the one hand, an instinctive anti-statism and a quasi-libertarian will for people to organize their lives beyond the boundaries of the state, even if just in a small protest camp. Yet, these libertarian germs were overshadowed by a leftist rhetoric and demands, such as for stricter taxes or environmental regulations, that required the intervention of an even more powerful state.

A Theme Park of Lifestyle Activism

Occupy London was a clear example of a prefigurative protest, operating as a living example and a model for how a society/community ought to be organized and putting forward the ethical compass of its members more than ideological specifications. A hypothesis that could be formed is that a movement lacking a clear political orientation will more easily develop a prefigurative character, as the latter will provide it with a *raison d'être*. As one might predict, in a protest with the prefigurative element dominating, lifestyle tendencies will also be present.

Occupy's prefigurative character is reflected in its initial statement. Point number 10 declares: 'This is what democracy looks like. Come and join us!' (Occupy 2011a). This idea of Occupy as a 'theme park' of direct democracy was strong on both sides of the Atlantic. 'New structures are constantly being explored, so that we may create the most open, participatory, and democratic space possible. We all strive to embody the alternative we wish to see in our day-to-day relationships' (Sitrin 2011). For Graeber, one of the thinkers whose ideas were most influential among modern activists, 'the camps were always primarily an advertisement, a defiant experiment in libertarian communism' (2012, p. 427). Paul Mason also considers Occupy 'a new form of utopian socialism, or utopian anarchism' (2012b).

This prefigurative ethos was also evident among activists interviewed in Occupy London camps. For Carmel, a cook in the Finsbury Square group kitchen, the best thing the movement can achieve is to 'operate as a model and show the world how well a society can work if we all cooperate together'. She also stated that this role-modelling of Occupy is the

element in the protest that fulfils her the most (int. 8). George said that he participated full-time in Occupy 'to show them that we have created a viable alternative, a system where there is no higher state authority or monetary system and which nevertheless functions perfectly well' (int. 12).

There was a direct question to the interviewees about whether they saw Occupy London as a consciousness-raising moral protest or as a political movement. Predictably, some answered it was both. What might come as a surprise is that only one person explicitly considered Occupy first and foremost a political protest (Phil, int. 13). However, he was quick to add that 'it goes beyond political discourse as we knew it in the twentieth century. It opens up new ways of communicating, organizing and new ways of making decisions'.

Most Occupiers saw the campaign as a moral cry and a protest, making a statement in terms of consciousness. 'Actually very little needs to be changed in the system. It's the mindset of the people that's the problem. I see this as a movement of consciousness. How can people do these things?' said Adrian (int. 14). Katie spoke on the same lines: 'This is a movement of consciousness. From the relationship you have with people to the furniture you buy … everything is linked. Bankers and the 1 % don't realize that what they do is bad and they think they deserve what they earn' (int. 15). Ginder emphasized: 'People have to change their consciousness. […] If they decide to change the way they are, for example buy locally, this system will cease to exist because this mass number of people will stop feeding it' (int. 16). For Tom, lifestyle choices are the key for change: 'Get away from multinational companies and get neighbours shopping together, make food cooperatives and put the money together. This will scare them more than any political change' (int. 17). Chucky agrees that politics come second when it comes down to a change of consciousness: 'People need to change their minds first. Human greediness is the main problem, not capitalism' (int. 23).

Interestingly, although Occupy London claimed to represent the 99 % and the common people, these very people were also identified by many activists as at the root of society's problems, traced to a 'false and materialistic consciousness'. As the t-shirt of a protester declared, 'your ignorance is their power' (fieldwork notes). This finger-pointing goes hand to hand

with an uneasiness with the modern way of life, which is considered, again, materialistic and alienating. Dan sums up this tendency:

> 'We don't need a lot of the comforts that we've become accustomed to and through understanding that, they then cannot be held against us. We don't necessarily need all the technological advancement, as useful as it is, in order to live. The fear of having these things taken away stops us from considering any other options that we have' (int. 18). 'We don't need that much … they make us believe we need all these things. We don't need economic growth. What we need is to spread out what we've got. We don't need to keep making stuff, but spread out what we've got, 'cause we've got enough, we just need to share them. Share, cooperate and do not destroy the environment', was Chloe's opinion (int. 19). Inca also points to the 'Average Joe' as the addressee of some of Occupy London's grievances: 'There is a spiritual apathy towards fellow men and women. This protest is a plea to people: we are in tents, we are freezing. Take courage from what we sacrifice and do something! […] We are trying to inspire a new kind of consciousness that does not need as much material things and does not equate happiness with an enormous amount of material wealth' (int. 20). There was also a colourful banner urging 'Don't take pictures, take action … give a damn … change your mind' (fieldwork notes).

The above is a very interesting narrative, which equates radical consciousness with the appreciation of non-material values and the dismissal of money or other physical possessions. 'The idea of having fun because you have a lot of money needs to change. People need to stop being materialistic', said Katie (int. 10). There were posters and banners in the camp advocating 'care for the planet means less consumption', groups with posters calling for 'de-growth', praising self-restraint and so on (fieldwork notes). The notion of happiness is also interesting, as it had a significant presence in the narrative of Occupy, from stickers and posters to the interviews of participants. The de-linking of happiness from material wealth could represent a trend which, interestingly, also seems to find fertile ground in radical movements, as well as in the discourse of political and cultural elites (Frawley 2015).

From the aforementioned quotes it is apparent that a significant number of activists saw Occupy more as a moral cry and a plea for a change

on the level of consciousness, rather than as a movement with any political orientation. I claim that this tendency was so prevalent that it set the tone for Occupy London. One could pose two objections here. The first would be that I chose these specific interviews which would conveniently support the above argument. My answer would be that from those interviews that had something more to say than some general pleas for equality, where the activists were willing to elaborate on the discussion, the moral character of the protest was perhaps the most visible trend. Thus, the argument for Occupy London being a protest based more on moral sensationalism, rather than on politics, is not a straw man, but mainly based on a clearly identifiable trend from the interviews. It also needs to be added that there was no opposing narrative, no visible counter-pole of interviewees claiming that Occupy was mostly a political protest, or expressing concerns about the prevalence of moralistic pleas and gestures in the camps.

A second objection to my conclusion would be that the interviewees expressing these more or less a-political views were individuals who did not actually represent Occupy's actual narrative. After all, one could argue, in its official statement Occupy London calls for a 'structural change' and does not reflect moralistic tendencies to the same extent as the interviews (2011a). I would argue that this claim is misleading. As mentioned before, a non-hierarchical network with such a loose agenda such as Occupy London did not have a central line. Nor could one claim that only the movement's 'officials' represented the protest's line. Thus, I claim that it is credible to argue that when opinions by a significant proportion of Occupy's activists form a trend, this trend more or less represents the movement itself. Therefore, one would be entitled to argue that Occupy London, to a significant extent, was a prefigurative protest putting forward moral claims, whereas the elements that would give the movement a more political edge were missing. Further, these anti-materialistic, sensationalist and anti-masses views are by no means unique to Occupy; they have been present in the narrative of the new left from the 1960s onwards. What has changed is that now, at least in the UK and the USA, they have moved from the margins to the forefront of the narrative of radical campaigns.

A question that needs to be asked is about the chances of Occupy's message having a wide appeal in society, pushing the movement towards

numbers beyond a couple of hundred people. One can safely claim that, in times of austerity and crisis, a campaign putting forward moral messages rather than political solutions, and a narrative advocating values such as the questioning of economic growth and materialism, is doomed to have only a marginal influence. Activists seemed to be aware of such limitations. 'It's one of those things which is hard to communicate …', said Calvin 'It's a participatory movement and the best way of understanding it is to join in' (int. 21). However, there is a contradiction here. Occupy claims to speak on behalf of the '99 %'. Yet, one of Occupy's key activists claims that if one is not there—that is, present at a protest that, by its nature, is quite challenging for an ordinary person with average work/family commitments—it is difficult to get the message.

As mentioned earlier, the fact that a prefigurative movement with not much to say on the level of demands or recommendations would place emphasis on its internal organization and processes is no surprise. However, in Occupy London it looks as if procedures had taken on a momentum of their own. Workshops, sub-working groups, safe-space rules and a an insistence on doing things in the most 'politically correct' way possible in the harsh environment of an urban square in winter could be exhausting for even the most enthusiastic activist.

On an average day in the Bank of Ideas, there were almost 20 working groups at work, dealing with all sorts of issues, from outreach and maintenance to space allocation. There was even a working group dealing with 'process/conduct'. Then sub-working groups would have their own meetings with own agenda. Decisions would be brought back to the general assembly and would then have to be implemented. Bearing in mind that decisions were reached by consensus, it becomes evident how exhausting the whole process was.

What is interesting to focus on is Occupy's 'Safer Space' policy, a list of ground-rules whose function was supposed to be ensuring movement's inclusiveness and that procedures take place 'in a safe anti-oppressive space—whether offline or online—that is welcoming, engaging and supportive' (Occupy London 2011c). Safer Space rules of conduct exhaustively regulated various aspects of everyday life in the camps. On language and how the debates were held, Safer Space dictated:

> 3. Be aware of the space you take up and the positions and privileges you bring, including racial, class and gender privilege. 4. Avoid assuming the opinions and identifications of other participants. 5. Recognize that we try not to judge, put each other down or compete. 6. Be aware of the language you use in discussion and how you relate to others. Try to speak slowly and clearly and use uncomplicated language. (Occupy London 2011c)

The above points—signs of a wider relativist culture of subjectivism—would basically preclude someone from having strong opinions and could lead to non-judgementalism. From personal experience during my fieldwork in Occupy camps, I realized that emphatically stating a disagreement or a disproval was discouraged as being offensive to other participants. At some point I was present at a workshop on spirituality. The 'guru' leading the group would go through a procedure, such as making us close our eyes, put our hands forward and feel a pulse in our palm. He would make us repeat the ritual and then declared we were now free and that the outside world cannot any longer affect us. My kind comment that nothing had actually changed out there, as unemployment, poverty and debt continued, and that the whole procedure had little to do with a wannabe radical movement, was met with unease by the rest of the group. Interestingly though, afterwards there were people who told me they found the whole procedure unbearably irrational and infantilizing; they did not speak out, however, so as not to offend others (fieldwork notes).

Safer Space Policy regulated not only speech but also interpersonal relations. Rule no. 2 stated: 'Respect each other's physical and emotional boundaries, always get explicit verbal consent before touching someone or crossing boundaries' (Occupy London 2011c). This over-regulation could even influence normal social interaction, as taking this rule literally would mean that one would have to ask for 'explicit verbal consent' in order to hug someone or to express love to another person. Organizers insisted that such policies were necessary in a public space where different people from different backgrounds mix and interact. However, for some critics, this Safer Space policy was evident of a paternalistic tendency that did not trust people's abilities to manage even simple day-to-day interactions (Hayes 2011).

The inner bureaucracy of Occupy and the energy it absorbed was recognized and criticized by scholars and commentators positively inclined towards the protest (see for example Gittlin 2012; Penny 2012). Furedi, characterized Occupy's protest as 'process-driven' and claimed that Occupy's obsession with procedures and rules mirrors the '1 %' the activists so fiercely despise: 'Although it is outwardly radical, contemporary protest culture has in fact adopted the procedure-oriented approach of the very establishment it claims to be protesting against. Paradoxically, it has embraced one of the least attractive features of contemporary Western public life, which is the tendency to look for organisational solutions to what are in fact political and moral problems' (2011b). Taylor points out a symbolic aspect of how Occupy was more of a process-driven movement. He reminds us how, in earlier times, movements' names signified their character and aims, such as Students for a Democratic Society or Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In recent years, to the contrary, often movements' names highlight their tactics, for example the Direct Action Network or Occupy Wall Street. The difference is not only cosmetic, but clearly reflects a change in the character of movements (2013, p. 22).

I have presented the way Occupy London celebrated diversity and an atmosphere of non-judgementalism. Predictably this combination would soon lead to the thriving of irrational opinions, projects of doubtful seriousness, anti-intellectualism and conspiracy theories. A sense of an apocalyptic atmosphere was present in Occupy London, particularly as time went by and fewer activists would stay behind on a full-time basis. The slogan 'the end is nigh' was quite popular in stickers and signs, and the feeling of gloomy pessimism, without much of a positive vision for the future, was felt in the air. The slogan on the entrance to the media tent, claiming 'we are the prophets of the present day' just added to the apocalyptic and messianic atmosphere of the late days of Occupy London. The proximity of Occupy to the cathedral gave a new dimension to the campaign, stimulating the articulation of a strong religious and moral appeal. There were plenty of signs asking 'What would Jesus do?', or declaring things like 'Jesus would be with us'. There was even a guy dressed like Jesus holding a sign stating 'I threw out the moneylenders for a reason' (fieldwork notes).

However, I claim that proximity to St Paul's cathedral was not the only factor producing a religious element in the Occupy protest. In previous

chapters, it was shown how spirituality tends to play an important role in protest camps, fused with New Age elements of self-fulfilment and experimentation. This was also the case in Occupy London. In St Paul's square, there was a tent for a meditation/inter-faith prayer room, advocating events such as Buddhist chanting, and nearby one could find a tarot-reading tent. In the Bank of Ideas, there was a meditation/prayer/relaxation room and a 'multi-faith guide for community cohesion'. It is also interesting how some activists spoke the language of spiritualism. 'Humanity is detached from itself, no longer self-aware, instead of operating on a level of feeling, we get lost in a mindset of alienating structures, and the more we do that, the more psychopathic in nature we become. It's a mindset', said Adrian (int. 14). Sandy answered the question on whether she saw Occupy as a political movement with an interesting twist: 'This is a spiritual movement. We are focusing on the now. Living in the moment is more important than making long-term plans. Forget fear and remember love' (int. 22). Asked about her ideological beliefs, Inca answered: 'I believe in the strength of inner spiritual radicalism. I believe in spiritual activism … we need to take responsibility for the lives that we live' (int. 20).

How Occupy London promoted the ideas of self-discovery and a feel-good esotericism, will become clearer if I present some of the workshops taking place in Occupy London camps (fieldwork notes):

- Monday 5 December: Homeopathy and Alternative Healing workshop—Bank of Ideas
- Firday 9 December: Vinyasa Yoga / Yoga for pregnancy —Bank of Ideas
- Monday 19 December: Shamanic Drumming and Journeying Circle—Amber's Circle—St Paul's
- Tuesday 24 January: Hula hoop/Poi workshop—Bank of Ideas
- Monday 30 January, Nichiren Buddhism—a practical Buddhism for the twenty-first century—St Paul's
- Tuesday 31 January, Inner Change, Outer Change, Meditation—Bank of Ideas

The above tendencies hint towards the therapeutic ethos of Occupy London, which is also a prominent characteristic of modern lifestyle

activism: a language of emotionalism is prioritized over socioeconomic analysis and individual feelings and perceptions are becoming core tools for making sense of the world (Furedi 2004d). There was a campaign run by Occupy Wall Street where one could understand even better what I mean by therapeutic ethos. The call from the website wearethe99precent.tumblr.com stated: 'Let us know who you are. Take a picture of yourself holding a sign that describes your situation—for example: "I am a student with $25,000 in debt," or "I needed surgery and my first thought wasn't if I was going to be okay, it was how I'd afford it." Below that, write I am the 99 percent.' This Oprah-style confessional ethos is a strong element of therapy culture and goes beyond lifestyle activism. As Furedi mentions, 'the act of 'sharing'—that is turning private troubles into public stories—strongly resonates with current cultural norms' (2004d, p. 40). As one might guess, the website was flooded with sad and tragic stories, such as 'I have a neurological disorder, I'm on disability and medicare … I am the 99 %', or others claiming they are considering suicide. One could not but feel sympathy for these people, but the fact remains that, as far as the protest's narrative is concerned, it is far from empowering. In such an atmosphere, a group of activists in Occupy St Paul's offering 'free hugs' must have not felt out of place (fieldwork notes).

The way a campaigner described her experience in setting up the Occupy Philly camp, although coming from the other side of the Atlantic, sums up the claims I have made in this section regarding the lifestylist tendencies of the Occupy protest: 'It was, for hours, beautiful chaos. From that moment on until the end of our physical home some two months later, I heard the phrase "I've never felt so alive" repeated ad nauseam, largely because of how empowering it felt to constantly turn that chaos into our own makeshift self-creations, only to see them become chaotic again, and so begin the cycle afresh' (Milstein 2012, p. 296). Emphasis on the form rather than the content, the therapeutic language of 'empowerment' and 'feeling alive', focus on the individual experience rather than the practical outcome, a celebration of 'chaos', diversity and inconsistency: these were the characteristics of Occupy protest that constitute it as the phenomenon par excellence where the ideology of lifestyle activism has set the tone.

The overall conclusion regarding Occupy London in relation to lifestyle activism is not difficult to draw. Occupy London did not have a coherent narrative. It failed to formulate demands. It never managed to attract a significant mass of people and there is serious doubt whether protests of this kind even aspire—or have the potential—to do so. It was less a political and more of a prefigurative gesture; a staging of the activists' values in the little society around St Paul's. The protest camp was 'doomed' to be removed and disappear from the public sphere. The prevalence of lifestylist tendencies alone cannot be blamed for Occupy's limited impact. The reasons are more general, having to do with elements such as the relatively mild character of the crisis in the UK, the absence of a strong leftist milieu and various other factors that go beyond the scope of this work.

An interesting process can be seen to be in place. A protest like Occupy London comes to surfaces, as it reflects actual social problems, operating as a symptom. However, lacking a narrative and a political orientation, it needs to fill this void with something that will provide the protest with meaning. This meaning is provided by elements of what I have described as lifestyle activism. These tendencies acquire a momentum of their own, bringing about the degeneration of the political elements of the protest. Exhaustion and a sense of aimlessness sooner or later prevail and then the protest passes into history, only to resurface at a different time and place, and with a new agenda. This scheme reflects the clear limits of lifestyle activism and the limits of the movements where such an ideology is prevalent.

The New Left in Government: A Greek Outlier?

The analysis in the previous section, but also throughout the book, makes clear the fact that the lack of coherent ideas and of a distinctive political programme among the new left seriously diminish its chances of intervening in the political field in a critical way, at least in a Western country. Yet, there has been at least one exception: Greece. After the financial crisis and the austerity imposed since 2010, the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) made a political breakthrough, their popularity increasing from 4.6 % in 2009 to 16 % in May and 27 % in June 2012; the party then

won the elections of 2015 with 36.3 % of the vote and nine months later retained power, winning another electoral battle, this time with 35.5 %. Yet, two points need to be made: (a) Syriza won by leaving behind some of the elements of a typical new leftist party and by adopting a more populist profile (which is evident in Syriza's decision to pick the populist right-wing Independent Greeks party as their partner in two coalition governments), and (b) despite Syriza's multiple electoral successes (if one includes the referendum of July 2015), the lack of a plan for the productive reorganization of Greece has forced the party to make a huge U-turn on almost all of the promises and the slogans that helped it along the road to power. Syriza not only did not overturn austerity but went on to push through measures that might well prove even more detrimental for the Greek economy than those of the first five harsh years of austerity. Such a defeat might possibly have a deterrent effect on other ambitious new leftist parties that have risen out of the reactions against austerity, such as Podemos in Spain.

To understand a huge political surprise, such as the rise of Syriza to power, one needs first to grasp the structures of Greek society and the political system. From the restoration of democracy in 1974, after seven years of political dictatorship and decades of political turmoil following the civil war of 1946–9, Greece was governed, in succession, by two large parties, the social democratic Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and the centre-Right New Democracy (Nea Dimokratia). Yet, according to Kaluvas (2014), the political system in Greece was dominated by a narrative that was expressed by PASOK, but went beyond the left and also engulfed parts of the conservative right, seeing the country as constantly under threat from without ('US imperialism', 'Turkey', 'capitalist globalization', 'Europeans alien to our culture and values') and from within ('the capitalist elites'). This created a quasi-nationalist and quasi-populist narrative which Syriza managed to connect with and express, when the two previously dominant parties were de-legitimized after the crisis. Such a narrative also requires a strong and paternalistic state, which plays central role in the Greek economy. The characteristics of the Greek economy, crucial for understanding Greek politics, are according to Doxiadis (2013) as follows: (a) an enlarged middle class of public servants, self-employed or small business-owners, in a client relationship

with a state that provides either employment in a huge public sector or protectionism and a safe, strongly regulated economic environment; (b) a relatively small in numbers big national capital, which, again, is in close cooperation with the Greek state (Doxiadis 2013). In short, it would be not an exaggeration to characterize Greece as an example of a weak and introverted system of crony-capitalism. Such a social formation has managed to appear economically successful mainly due to short-term advantages, such as the availability of cheap credit, being part of the European Economic Community and later of the eurozone (Trantidis 2016). After the 2008 international economic crisis, when the credit flows towards Greece dried up and the country (suffering at the same time from a huge fiscal deficit and an unsustainable national debt) had to resort to the so-called Troika of the European Union (EU), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the biggest loan that a state has ever received in the last half a century. Yet, the continuous bailouts from the Troika were accompanied with economic measures—mainly rises in taxation and public spending cuts—that accelerated the downward spiral of the Greek economy, leading to an unemployment peaking at 27 % and a shrinking of national gross domestic product (GDP) by almost 25 %.

The reactions in the social base towards these traumatic changes in Greek society have been fierce. Kousis (2014) has measured 32 large protest events (LPEs) from 2010 up to the end of 2012, with participation ranging from a minimum of 5,000 to a maximum of almost half a million people, and deploying a wide range of actions, such as strikes, demonstrations and occupations. According to an impressive statistic, 35 % of the respondents in an opinion poll claimed that they had participated in one way or another in the mobilization in the squares throughout Greece (the so-called 'Outraged') in the summer of 2011 (Public Issue 2011). After some failed previous attempts to initiate mobilizations that would have a sense of continuity in a square (on the model of the Tahrir Square protests of early 2011 and of the Spanish Indignados that had kicked off earlier in May), on 24 May 2011 a call via social media for an 'occupation' of Syntagma Square materialized. The 'Outraged of Syntagma Square' (the square opposite the Greek parliament) protest spread throughout Greece and the movement lasted for almost two months. The mobilizations could

not merely be characterized as a protest camp. Although there were tents, most protesters would gather early every evening and leave at around 23:00, after the daily general assembly. In addition, the number of the protesters, especially every Sunday, was unprecedented for a protest camp, reaching at times the hundreds of thousands. In addition, the protests had a clear target: the blocking of the vote by the parliament of a new package of austerity measures on the 29 June. Despite the large mobilizations, parliament voted in favour of the measures while, at the same time, the protesters faced a heavy police repression.

The ideological characteristics of the protests were not clear. It could be claimed that three narratives were present in the anti-austerity camp (Sotirakopoulos and Ntalaka 2016). The first framed the crisis as a result of the austerity imposed by the Troika (rather than the other way round, which was the dominant narrative of the Greek political elites). The solution proposed was a political shock to the 'neo-liberal' EU and to the advocate of fiscal discipline, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The main representative of it was Syriza, who used it for the electoral battles of 2012 and 2015. The second narrative, which had as its main advocates the Communist Party and the extra-parliamentary left (and later, after Prime Minister Tsipras' U-turn in the summer of 2015, the left fraction of Syriza), saw capitalism, the eurozone and the EU as responsible for the Greek crisis. This tendency had only a marginal electoral presence, with the Communist Party floating around 5 % in consecutive electoral battles, but refusing any cooperation with Syriza. The third narrative had a quasi-nationalistic and populist air, portraying the crisis as result of corruption and betrayal among the Greek political elites. The political representatives of this tendency, without claiming that there is any other similarity between them, were the Independent Greeks (who had split from New Democracy) and the neo-fascist Golden Dawn, who skyrocketed from 0.3 % in 2009 to 7 % in 2012 and 2015.

Many claimed that there were actually two squares in Syntagma square: the 'lower square', formed of mostly politicized people leaning towards the left, and the 'upper square', following a more a-political narrative and mostly cursing all politicians as traitors. Whether such a distinction between upper and lower square actually existed or whether it was a convenient and simplistic scheme is a debate that goes beyond the scope of

this book (see Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013); yet the cooperation in government, four years later, of Syriza and of the Independent Greeks (seen as representing the 'spirit' of the lower and the upper square respectively) proves that the gap between the left-wing and the right-wing anti-austerity narratives was not unbridgeable. According to Kaluvas, if one adds up the different narratives in the anti-austerity camp, the result is the quasi-leftist, quasi-patriotic populist narrative that had been prevalent in Greece since 1974 (Kaluvas 2014). The big success of Syriza, leading the party to the electoral victories in 2015, besides inspiring hope among the masses of the young and unemployed, also had to do with expressing this populist narrative in a successful way using a radical rhetoric. According to Cas Mudde (2015), Syriza could be considered an example of left-wing populism, as it created a convenient dipole between the innocent and betrayed people on the one side and the corrupted and vicious elites within Greece and in the 'Merkelist EU'.

Yet, if Syriza managed to gain power based on a populist narrative, then why is it addressed in this book and how is it relevant in my analysis? The answer is that Syriza used to be a party influenced by the ideas of the new left. For years it operated as a loose coalition of small leftist parties, having as its base Synaspismos, a party that is the offspring of some historical schisms within the Greek communist movement and of the tradition of Eurocommunism (which in many aspects is an ideological relative of the New Left). The field in which Synaspismos met the other small left-wing and environmentalist groups that later formed Syriza was actually the anti-globalization movement and the European Social Forum, with its members seeing themselves not only as participants in a party but also in a diversity of movements formed around issues of social justice, the environment, and the social and individual rights of minorities (Mason 2012c; O'Neil 2012b). Alexis Tsipras, the leader of Syriza who would become prime minister in 2015 at the age of 40, had himself participated in the anti-globalization mobilizations in Genoa in 2001, as documented in some pictures that would go viral in Greek social media 14 years later (*The Telegraph* 2015).

Yet, when the political opportunity arose, what boosted Syriza towards becoming the political expression of the rage of a large part of the population with the established political parties was not its new leftist credentials, but the construction of an engaging populist narrative. It is

no coincidence that, after the 2012 elections, when it became clear that Syriza would sooner or later come to power, the political confrontation was mostly transferred from the streets and squares to parliament. This was not necessarily a bad thing; the occupied squares and the protests managed to give birth to a political phenomenon that was clearly on the road to power. Syriza ticked the boxes that would lead it to success in the heated political atmosphere in the years of the Greek crisis: (a) it was a party that had not governed before and thus could claim that the crisis was the result of mistakes by the two established parties, PASOK and New Democracy; (b) it appeared radical enough to express the populist narratives of the Outraged and of the people that took the streets *en masse* in 2011; (c) at the same time, it managed to appear as institutional enough and thus 'electable', making it clear that, although it would put a lot of pressure on the Troika and Germany, it would nevertheless not risk the participation of Greece leaving the eurozone and the EU, as this would be contrary to the will of the vast majority of the population in Greece (Sotirakopoulos and Ntalaka 2016). Most importantly though, what drove Syriza to the political breakthrough from 4 % to 36 % within six years was the void that was created when the old established parties, and especially PASOK, were unable to play their mediating role in the Greek clientele system any longer. Syriza attracted many young people with its radical rhetoric, but also absorbed a large chunk of the vote among public servants and the middle classes, as it appeared as the next intermediary between their interests and the Greek state. There was only one problem: Syriza's two major promises, for a better deal with the debtors and the kicking away of the Troika on the one side, and for a generous social policy within Greece on the other, were both beyond its grasp. It is unclear why the Troika would succumb to Syriza's demands (setting a 'dangerous' precedent for other countries of the European South with rising leftist movements, such as Spain) and it was also obvious that the Greek state had run out of resources to fund a generous redistributive policy.

Another interesting question has to do with how radical Syriza's programme actually was, when one leaves aside the leftist rhetoric. Time and again in this book we have encountered the same conundrum: movements or parties inspired by the ideas of the new left that either cannot translate

these ideas into a political programme or whose ideas cannot actually be distinguished from—or go beyond—social democratic and Keynesian recipes. A key figure in the first Syriza government was the finance minister, the well-known economist Yanis Varoufakis, a self-described 'erratic Marxist' (Varoufakis 2015). Despite the image he acquired as a hard-liner and a radical, he made some interesting remarks on the status of left-wing politics in general: 'the question that arises for radicals is this: should we welcome this crisis of European capitalism as an opportunity to replace it with a better system? Or should we be so worried about it as to embark upon a campaign for stabilising European capitalism?' For him, the task for the radicals should be the latter, as the only alternative seemed to be a right-wing reactive populism (Varoufakis 2015). Such a cautious approach was also visible in his 'Modest Proposal' (Varoufakis et al. 2013), where he proposed a pathway towards overcoming the crisis within the mechanisms of the EU, having as vehicles a different policy by the ECB, the European Investment Fund, the European Investment Bank and the European Stability Mechanism. It was a more or less modest, indeed Keynesian, approach that would supposedly provide money for productive purposes to the crisis-ridden countries of Europe without putting pressure on the tax-payers of the wealthiest countries, such as Germany or Netherlands: a new European 'New Deal'.

Practically, Syriza had built its success on a narrative that constructed a Troika-imposed austerity as a main aspect of the Greek crisis. Yet, once the party made it to power, the principal aim seemed to be to persuade the Troika to keep the life-support funding for Greece, yet on more convenient terms and this seemed to be a futile attempt to square the circle. As months passed and little progress was achieved in the negotiations with the Troika, Tsipras and his government were cornered. The referendum of July 2015 was the completion of a fiasco: the Greek people backed Tsipras and voted *en masse* (61 %) against a proposed plan by the Troika (a plan that was not even on the table any more). Yet with the banks closed due to lack of liquidity and with capital controls imposed on economic transactions, reality kicked in. Syriza had no viable Plan B and only a few days after the referendum, Tsipras sealed a new unpleasant deal with the Troika, creating a split in Syriza and a feeling of disillusionment.

The situation is still fluid and it is difficult to appreciate the amount of damage that the capital controls, the economic uncertainty and the new regressive reforms (mainly, even higher taxation) will inflict on the Greek economy. Yet one conclusion quite important for the thesis of this book has already become clear. Although a new leftist party managed to find a way to move beyond the margins of the political scene (mainly through a less ideologically rigid, more populist and highly emotionalist narrative), the absence of any plan whatsoever for the productive reorganization of Greece made its time in office futile and could seal the fate of the left for the years to come, at least in Greece. A claim that 'Syriza was not really a leftist party' is hardly convincing; the extra-parliamentary left or the radical fraction of Syriza did not propose a viable alternative, beyond the call for a return to a national currency. But such a currency would be massively inflated, making the import of goods on which the Greek economy is highly dependent (such as energy, drugs and meat) even more expensive. How would a country with constant deficits cover its needs when no one would be willing to lend it money, at least without unreasonably high interest? What solutions could be found to the structural problems of the introverted Greek economy, such as its lack of dynamism or the inability to attract foreign investment? And if such investment was rejected as a 'neo-liberal recipe', then what would be the plan for dealing with an unemployment rate of over 25 %?

Syriza and the new left in general have little to offer towards solving these problems because such issues have not been at the centre of their political orientation for some decades now. Cultural criticism, emotional appeals to justice and grassroots mobilizations can build a narrative and attract some appeal. In periods of crisis, such an appeal, with an added dose of populism, can even lead to political victories. But faced with the problem of what is to be done, or with what Žižek likes to call 'the day after', when passions have calmed down and the time comes to put forward an actual programme for the running of the economy, redistributive policies and higher taxation seem to be the sole horizon. Especially in times of crisis though, such policies are either unfeasible, or will soon drain the economy even further.

The lessons from the adventure of Syriza are quite important. There is a possibility that the limits of lifestyle activism have been indeed

realized by large parts of the leftist milieu. The common themes in Syriza's road to power, Jeremy Corbyn's win in the battle for the leadership of the Labour Party in the UK, Bernie Sanders' campaign in the Democratic Party's primaries in the USA and, to an extent, the rise of *Podemos* is that there is an attempt to return to a more universalist message, with categories such as 'the people' and claims for economic growth and the bettering of the condition of the 'average Joe' making a slow return. In a way, it could be argued that the new left is having some impact, but dressed in the clothes of the old left. Although such an argument might be premature and only time will tell, one thing seems to be evident: the decades of the detachment of the left from envisioning an alternative economic system that would be able to challenge capitalism on the grounds of offering more economic abundance, higher productivity and a world of more rapid scientific and technological development, have left quite a mark. The left may be able at some point to go beyond the drum-circles, the self-referential prefigurativism and the introspection of identity politics; but its inability to combat capitalism in the economic field seems to be detrimental to its future as a viable political alternative.

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7

Conclusion: Conundrums and Opportunities for the Left

In this last chapter of the book, the aim is two-fold. On the one hand, I will try to sum up the argument and the thesis put forward in the previous chapters. Namely, I will remind the reader what have been the main intellectual trends within the left in the last few decades and also how these trends reflect philosophical and ideological tendencies that have gained ground in Western societies. Finally, I will attempt to examine whether and how the left could stand up to the challenges of our times, which would require it to find a way beyond the conundrum of lifestyle activism on the one side and statist social democracy on the other.

One ideological trend in the new left on which the book has put some emphasis is the questioning of materialism and unhindered economic growth. This is perhaps the most important distinguishing characteristic of the new left in comparison to the ideological and political tradition of the old left. The philosophical fellow-travelling of the left with the narrative of environmentalism is a testament to this fundamental shift. Of course very few would openly claim that economic growth is bad. Especially in times of economic crisis, where lack of employment opportunities and the need for economic recovery is high on the agenda for many countries, the left tends to present itself as the solution to auster-

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DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55103-0_7

ity. Yet some decades of focus on a cultural critique of capitalism and of neglect or problematization of the issue of economic development means the contemporary left has no convincing remedy for austerity; or at least, none that goes beyond the simplistic idea of more public spending. But even in the narrative of the majority within the political elites, economic growth no longer appears as something good in itself. It usually comes with preconditions, the most obvious expression of such a trend being 'sustainable development', a notion that has had a central role in global politics in recent decades. Thus, the promise of an ever-growing material affluence for all seems quite unlikely today. This could be due partly to the lack of dynamism and ambition that the Western economies have been showing. On the other hand, on the level of ideas, the fact that materialism, consumerism and modernization have been so fiercely problematized by the new left and its scholars in universities and in the public sphere could also be a factor shaping the low horizons of politics today; the left, after all, has always been among the forces in society advocating progress and everyone reaching a higher potential.

An unwillingness to engage with a systematic and serious economic and political analysis, combined with a tendency towards relativism, was a trend persistently encountered in the campaigns and movements analysed in this book. On a general level, the 'action speaks louder than words' mantra has become quite dominant, often in a counter-productive way. Mick Hume (2001) considers the prevalence of direct action in recent movements as being 'substitutionist', as he sees it as a self-righteous gesture which usually implies that it has been impossible to persuade a critical mass, which therefore is 'represented' by a small group of activists. This action-oriented tendency could prove successful in campaigns with a very particular object (such as a local development), but has proved problematic in movements aspiring to become something bigger.

There is not much point in elaborating further on the discomfort of large parts of the modern radical milieu with theoretical and analytical coherence, as this trend must have become clear throughout this book. What is interesting is how this tendency is not limited to activist circles but is a more general trend in modern society. Furedi points out how the notion of ideology as a strict theoretical commitment was denounced first and foremost by conservative circles during the Cold War in order

to undermine communism, picturing the ideologist as a utopian or a fanatic (1992, pp. 168, 210). It is usual to blame post-modernism for the abandonment of grand narratives and of the '-isms', but in fact a scepticism towards firm convictions had been present even before the 'counter-revolution' of the 1970s, as we saw in previous chapters.

New Labour could be a successful example of a party that attempted to leave behind some heavy historical and ideological baggage (as the party of the working class) and make it in post-Cold War era with fewer theoretical commitments. Yet, the same could be argued regarding the Conservatives and their uneasy relationship with their Thatcherite legacy. New parties that wish to adopt a subversive profile, such as the Pirate parties in various countries, are quick to clarify that they are beyond left and right. Even in the recent wave of contention, as we saw in the previous chapter, the absence of political conviction was noteworthy. The Spanish Indignados claim in their manifesto: 'Some of us consider ourselves progressive, others conservative. Some of us are believers, some not. Some of us have clearly defined ideologies, others are apolitical, but we are all concerned and angry …' (Democracia real ya! 2011). Emotion substitutes ideas, which is problematic; strong feelings can mobilize individuals and put forward procedures for change, but in the absence of specific solutions, such a change cannot come.

A lack of firm convictions goes hand in hand with a relativistic attitude. We have already seen how relativism finds fertile ground in modern movements in the guise of 'diversity' and 'inclusiveness', which have as a starting point the lack of any strongly held theoretical convictions and sometimes could end up in an 'anything goes' ethos. As we saw in the case of Occupy London, the well-meaning theoretical diversity played a role in actually weakening the protest. Simplistic narratives that came close to conspiracy theories seemed to gain ground, which disappointed some of the more politicized activists. When these activists left, the irrational voices dominated (which was only to be expected in a protest lacking an initial narrative) and this, in turn, weakened the protest even more.

In an intellectual environment where things happen more or less haphazardly, it is not a coincidence that the modern radical milieu places so much emphasis on the supposed virtues of spontaneity. Also, it is no surprise that concepts having their root in religion or mythology thrive:

terms such as 'Empire' (Hardt and Negri 2001), 'Exodus' (Hardt and Negri 2009), p. 152), or 'Temporary Autonomous Zone' (Bay 2003) have a quite mystical and unclear meaning and yet have proven to be quite popular among radicals in the last decades. For Bookchin, the pretentious jargon of many in the post-modern milieu tends to immunize them from any genuine critique (1995b, p. 199). Chomsky accuses even scholars such as Žižek, who on paper are committed to the importance of a coherent theory, of posturing with fancy words and complex analytical schemes that are impossible to follow in order to hide the lack of any 'principles from which you can deduce conclusions and empirically testable propositions' (2012).

Predictably, a drought at the level of ideas and a loss of faith in grand narratives substantially weakens the sphere of the political. For Furedi, politics is about putting forward alternative visions of the way society ought to go. With a lack of any big ideas and the blurring of the traditional distinction between left and right, he sees modern political life as a 'vision-free zone' (2005, p. 5). Žižek agrees and characterizes the modern liberal political consensus as 'the Party of non-Event' (2002, p. 151). And when politics are no longer about radically alternative visions for the future of a society, emphasis is given to highlighting trivial differences, sometimes on issues that are mostly in the realm of culture or lifestyle. Sennett highlights how:

> in Britain, the parties have differed passionately on whether or not hunting foxes with dogs ought to be allowed; approximately seven hundred hours of Parliamentary time were recently allotted to this issue, whereas the creation of a Supreme Court for the United Kingdom was debated for eighteen hours. […] The marketing of political personalities comes increasingly to resemble the marketing of soap in that the gold-plating of small differences is what the advertisers hope will grab the public's attention. (2006, p. 165)

Of course the two major parties in the UK have more things separating them than fox hunting; however, the fact that their differences lay mostly in non-fundamental and 'cultural' issues, rather than in grand visions, is something more or less true for the majority of the Western countries. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to argue that this ethos of 'low-intensity

politics' was also evident in Occupy London, where, as we saw, more time was spent discussing secondary issues such as internal organization, procedures and safe-space policies, than issues of strategy (or even tactics).

For Furedi, what has taken the place of politics is 'the rhetoric of process. Terms such as empowerment, support, inclusion, exclusion, transparency, accountability or best practice all refer to institutional and organisational matters' (2011d). We have seen how recent grassroots protests such as Occupy place disproportionate emphasis on process, perhaps to the detriment of practical outcome. It is also interesting to point out the vocabulary of 'engagement', also influential in the radical milieu. In the absence of clearly defined politics, process and 'engagement' aim to fill an ontological gap. Thus, in the call for a day of direct action by UK Uncut, one could read: 'We want to make this a family-friendly and accessible action. There'll be plenty of activities on the day to keep people entertained and engaged, including bedtime stories for the kids!' (UK Uncut 2013). If politics have little meaning and low aspirations, then it is no surprise that the shift to the self is a current tendency not only in the radical milieu, but also in the general *zeitgeist* of our era. In short, this tendency could be described as follows: loss in the faith that things can be changed fundamentally 'out there', leads to a shift towards changing things 'inside here'.

Another trend that we have identified throughout this thesis is the aestheticization and depoliticization of protest. Lasch, already in the early 1970s captured this tendency, when he saw the left as being imprisoned 'in a politics of theatre, of dramatic gesture, of style without substance—a mirror-image of the politics of unreality which it should have been the purpose of the left to unmask' (1991, p. 82). Harvey draws attention to the effort by the left to try to oppose the ruling elites on their very own terrain of image production and the 'spectacle' in general (1990, p. 354). Bosteels is also critical of the modern spectacle protest, characterizing it as 'the melodramatic moralization of politics', expressed in 'events of self-congratulatory good conscience' (2010, p. 43). For Furedi, this is a more general trend, as 'self expression is validated as a genuine and authentic act and is often favourably contrasted to what is perceived as the estranged artificial world of politics' (2005, p. 46).

Predictably, when emphasis is placed on the self and the ethos of 'the personal is political' is constantly reaffirmed, everyday practices and

lifestyle options acquire extra importance, way beyond the actual difference they can actually make. Throughout this book, and in the various movements and campaigns that have been reviewed, we have seen how alternative lifestyles and an ethical approach to issues of everyday life have played an important role. Recycling, composting, organic farming, leaving a small carbon footprint, veganism and ethical shopping were practices advocated from the anti-roads struggles of the early 1990s to Occupy London. However, what is of great interest is the relationship of such trends to the dominant culture and ideology, an issue approached by a variety of scholars in the last two decades. There are two forms of critique of alternative lifestyles. The first, as advocated by Taylor (2013), Hochuli (2008) and Pupavac (2010), argues that, by focusing on lifestyle choices, the individual adopts even more the identity of the consumer, despite their supposed anti-capitalist edge. Furedi (2008) adds that, at a theoretical level, ethical consumption is quite interesting as it tends to reinforce so-called 'commodity fetishism' by attributing an intrinsic moral value to products. However, I do not claim that ethical consumption is wrong. It is interesting, though, how there seems to be a shift in the focus of many political campaigns more towards the conditions of production, or towards consumption, and away from the old left's focus on the ownership of the means of production. This tendency could be related to the fact that the new left has shown an inability to provide an alternative model for the sphere of production, different from either old-fashioned socialism or a redistributive and interventionist social democracy.

In any case, alternative lifestyles, despite being popular among grassroots radicals, seem to be progressively losing their 'subversive' edge, as they are easily incorporated by capitalism. This leads to a bigger argument, as put forward by a number of scholars (Boltanski and Chapello 2007; Frank and Weiland 1997; Heath and Potter 2005), that capitalism is thriving and evolving by incorporating the critique of radicals, which, as far as its cultural expression is concerned, tends to become the next new fashion. Taylor reminds us how in the Seattle anti-globalization protests in 1999, issues such as veganism, local/bioregional/organic food, sweatshop-free products, DIY and handcrafted goods were high on the radicals' agenda. Fourteen years on, 'ideas

like voluntary simplicity, alternative energy, carbon footprint tracking, local/organic/slow foods, and various other practices pioneered by social movements have become part of mainstream political discourse and consumer habitus' (Taylor 2013, p. 8).

Modern forms of identity politics have a new element, which could further undermine their political edge. It is an identity striving more for passive recognition, rather than for an active intervention in society (McLaughlin 2011). How important this notion of recognition is was proven in the case of Occupy London, where the fact that 'we are here' and that the protest had acquired visibility in the media and from parts of the political elite was celebrated as a victory in itself. Of course all movements need to be visible. However, when a political purpose is lacking, such recognition could become an end in itself. For Furedi, though, the problem with recognition is that it is granted by someone else, rather than acquired on its own terms by the action of the individual. The fact that playing the vulnerability card is usually crucial for such recognition makes the adoption of such identities less empowering than one might have thought (Furedi 2002).

Žižek elaborates on the issues of recognition and vulnerability, spotting 'an attitude of a narcissistic subjectivity which experiences the self as vulnerable, constantly exposed to a multitude of potential "harassments"' as an important characteristic not only of the new left, but of mainstream culture in general (2009b, pp. 35–6). We have seen how this became obvious in the case of Occupy Wall Street, with the campaign to post a photo with a statement of one's sufferings on the group's webpage. It is true that the recognition of injustice has always been a powerful tool in social movements and a first step to mobilize at least the sympathy of the public. However, constructing the identity of a victim could also prove to be a disempowering method, as it portrays individuals not as subjects capable of shaping their fate and making changes, but as fragile and in need of someone to help and guide them. Irrespective of what one thinks about such an approach, it is a relatively new trend, as nowadays this exhibition of one's vulnerability is not necessarily accompanied by the reassurance of one's strength. In the past, the labour movement would protest for higher salaries or against the harsh conditions of work, but at the same time it would emphasize elements such as the strength it acquired through organization and solidarity. The latest element seems to be missing in the new left's and identity politics' narrative

of the people's alleged vulnerability. However, such an approach seems to be in accordance with the therapeutic prism through which many today tend to see themselves, as exposed to myriad risks and unable to cope with them, psychologizing what could very well be social or political problems (for more on that see Furedi 2004d; McLaughlin 2011). The construction of a weak subjectivity is also behind a worrying trend today, especially among student radicals, of problematizing freedom of speech as potentially emotionally harmful for students and especially minorities. Thus, there are all sorts of calls for banning supposedly sexist songs, no-platforming speakers with different opinions (even though some of these speakers have been life-long crusaders for causes such as feminism or minorities' rights) and providing 'trigger warnings' for potentially disturbing material. The idea that young adults cannot cope with words or with the lyrics of a song is a testament to a worldview that sees the individual as weak and in constant need of therapeutic intervention from above (Hume 2015). Needless to say, such an individual is highly unlikely to gain political agency and to radically change the world.

There are two final trends identified throughout this book, which are interrelated: the abandonment of the vision of any grand-scale change in society and pessimism about the future. Since the idea of historical agency and a theory of social transformation do not fit into the 'post-modern universe', the resulting lowering of political expectations and a return to small-scale projects are the natural order of things. Localism, the 'small is beautiful' ethos and the will to bring small changes in the here-and-now have been prominent during recent decades in the radical milieu. This has happened for reasons that are understandable: the historical defeat of socialism and weak ideological convictions leave little ground for big ideas.

Pessimism about the future is also linked to all the previous trends explored in this thesis. We have seen how it was present in the Occupy London protest, with the slogan 'the end is nigh' and its apocalyptic tone creating a gloomy intellectual atmosphere, especially in the last stage of the protest. This pessimism is reflected also in modern capitalism's culture and ideology in general. Environmental catastrophe, a new economic crisis, a pandemic whose spread is always possible—the modern *zeitgeist* seems to be governed by a sense of fear, known or even regarding know or even, as

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld reminded us in 2002, with his famous statement regarding the alleged threat of Saddam Hussein. Such fears might be based on real and actual threats; what has changed, however, is a sense that there is little that can be done by human agency to gain control of these situations. As Furedi mentions, change is then experienced only passively (1992, p. 260); the human is the subject who merely observes rather than shapes history. No wonder that, through such a prism, the future appears gloomy and few are able even to envisage an alternative.

Not only does the world seem to be full of 'unknown unknowns', but society appears less confident that, through the application of reason, science and human agency, such uncertainties can be dealt with. Since political grand narratives with robust subjects at their centre as history-makers seem to be out of place, it is up to the individual to answer the ontological and practical fears and doubts to which life and society give birth. Bauman has described this procedure as post-modernity 'privatizing' the fears of today's man, which leads to a 'privatization of escape routes and escape vehicles. It means a DIY escape' (1992, p. xviii). This leads to the curious situation where there are more 'escape routes' than ever (from spirituality and New Age self-improvement to yoga and the obsession with a narcissistic self-discovery) and yet Western societies seem less self-confident and more pessimistic about the future.

However, here is where the relevance of prefigurative politics lies. As I have shown, many activists today claim that the usefulness of the protest camps and 'liberated spaces' is to provide a vision for how human relations and the organization of society could work in an alternative way. Prefigurativism is supposed to be the antidote to the 'TINA' (There Is No Alternative) argument. Yet, prefiguration does not indicate a radically new vision for society, nor does it inspire a critical mass of people to give their support to these campaigns. Prefiguration is a way radicals try to challenge society, yet they are using elements that are already widely present in that society. Campaigns such as Occupy London merely *mirror*, they do not prefigure. They would prefigure if they presented something radically new; if, in a society comfortable with the ideas of sustainability and caution, they proposed a plan for a world of plenty and of abundance; if, in the place of a weak human subjectivity, they championed a robust individual able to take hold of reality in its fullness and go on changing it; if, in an

intellectual atmosphere of relativism, they advocated coherence and strong convictions; if, in a world suspicious of autonomy, they advocated freedom.

Although lifestyle activism reflects tendencies that are answered in mainstream culture, its political limits are obvious. Especially at times of crisis, when the field is open to alternative narratives, the contemporary left has tried to grasp the opportunity and make a come-back in the mainstream political scene. This come-back has taken various forms, from the populist governmental alliance under Syriza in Greece to the rise of Podemos in Spain, and from the surprising win of Jeremy Corbyn of the leadership of the Labour Party in the UK to Bernie Sanders' campaign for the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party in the USA in 2016. Yet, although the left seems to be back in the game, it runs the risk of being exposed as a visionless 'party of complaint' that lacks the tools to guarantee better solutions to the pressing problems of today. This became evident with the failure of the Syriza-led government in Greece not only to overcome austerity and leave the crisis behind, but even to maintain the limited positive momentum it inherited from the previous government; a bar that was anyway far too low.

The left, old and new, rarely accepts its ideological defeats and reconsiders some of its ideas. Every defeat is attributed to the harsh objective conditions, the people who 'just don't get it' or the powers that be. Thus, the fundamental premises of the left are never questioned; the ideas are good, but something goes wrong every time in the real world out there. This also provides an immunity for the premises of the left, which are considered a priori correct and thus do not need to be challenged (Revel 2000, p. 40). Yet the question has to be asked: what are the actual ideas of the left when it goes beyond protesting and pointing at the malfunctions of 'neo-liberalism'? What is its programme for the economy and how does it plan to boost productivity and economic growth? Does it even wish to do such a thing?

No matter how positively one is inclined towards the left, it is difficult to give a positive answer. The left nowadays appears mostly as a defender of gains, such as universal health care, public education and the welfare state that were achieved decades ago and were the result not only of a positive political momentum, but also of a flourishing economy. Thus, redistribution, which is the contemporary left's major call to

arms, requires first a vibrant productive base. As was proven in the case of Greece, no matter how radical a government claims to be, it cannot redistribute something that does not exist. In addition, there is a limit to which taxation could be the panacea for redistribution. Capital and individuals can move to more welcoming environments and the giving away of 50 % or more of one's income—Piketty (2014) actually suggested 80 % for the very rich—does not sound an appealing prospect for capitalists and entrepreneurs. In addition, the model of piling up a national debt of hundreds of billions and even trillions of euros has its limits, as can be seen in the recent financial crisis. A left that sticks to supporting the models of the past seems to be at a disadvantage in facing the challenges of today. Even worse, it will not be able to deliver its promises to parts of the population that are left behind and look to it to improve their position, as was the case for the hundreds of thousands of unemployed and young people in Greece let down by Syriza, after supporting the party *en masse* in the elections of 2012 and 2015.

Interestingly, there still could be some hope and a *raison d'être* for the left and this prospect comes from none other than Marx, although in an unlikely manner. A return to Marx is important, not so as to storm Winter Palaces waving the Communist Manifesto, or to make complex calculations so as to estimate the amount of surplus labour a capitalist is exploiting. Rather, Marx had a quite optimistic view of the future, based on two factors: human ingenuity and the development of productive forces. The first is always there, as long as it can find an environment of freedom in which it can be expressed and thrive. The latter offers an emancipatory potential that is now more promising than ever. Not only that, but through entrepreneurship and new economic models, some of the old ideals of the left could now be more realistic than ever.

Horizontal networks, Peer-to-Peer (P2) communication, digital platforms and the 'sharing economy' are interesting developments and potentially open up some possibilities. They can bring back some of the spirit of the emancipatory libertarian message of the Enlightenment-inspired early leftist scholars, of the autonomist tradition and of the pro-individual freedom New Left. Marx predicted that the means of production would be developed to such an extent, that they would no longer fit under capitalist relations. He was partly right; they

did develop up to a point where the existing relations of production were considered superfluous, but this is an outcome in which the bells toll for the obsolescence not of the free market but for the centrally planned economy and the interventionist state. With developments such as 3D printing, the sharing economy and with freely available digital platforms for the spread of knowledge, production can be more socialized, but not in the way many Marxists expected. More 'means of production' are available to more and more people, but have at their root individual control, rather than a central plan. These individuals then go on to forming spontaneous and voluntary networks by using commercialized or free platforms, from Wikipedia and Airbnb to Kickstarter and car-sharing schemes. Thus, they can earn money, mobilize under-used assets, but also develop not-for-profit endeavours, help those in need and provide education and health care at low prices (or even free).

Marx came close to describing communism twice in his work. In *The German Ideology*, he envisioned a world where the individual would be able 'to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic' (Marx 1845). One could claim that this is not far from materializing already today: one could be a taxi-driver in the morning (using one of the numerous car-sharing schemes, such as Uber), a 'hotel-owner' in the afternoon (renting a spare-room via Airbnb), a producer of real material commodities in the evening (via a 3D-printer) and a teacher at night (uploading courses on the various virtual learning platforms, such as Udemy). Even if, for some reason, people feel uncomfortable with the commercial nature of most of these platforms, no one (except perhaps some intrusive state-regulators) is prohibiting individuals or communities from developing similar platforms on a non-commercial basis.

The second time Marx describes communism is in volume one of *Capital*, where he envisions it as a free association of producers (1990, p. 171). Again, historically this can become real only in an environment of liberty, where individuals, co-ops or commercial enterprises are free to communicate, trade and interact with each other. If one takes Marx and his historical thinking seriously, it is easy to see that what the productive

forces are unravelling after the current socioeconomic model of the mixed economy, is not socialism, where means of production are commonly owned, but an economy of free autonomous producers, connected to each other, where the notions of space and time are almost disappearing. This model provides the possibility for values such as solidarity, togetherness and community to flourish.

Yet there seem to be a refusal within the contemporary left to embrace such a progress. Decades upon decades of a strong condemnation of commercial activity, of free enterprise and of services provided beyond the formal state sector lie heavy on any attempt to come to terms with new forms of economic and social organization. The fierce reaction among various leftist commentators and politicians against the car-sharing scheme Uber is quite telling, as it has been characterized 'the closest thing we've got today to the living, breathing essence of unrestrained capitalism' (Leonard 2014), 'just capitalism, in its most naked form' (Asher-Schepiro 2014) and 'enriching Silicon Valley's billionaires at the expense of drivers, delivery folk, and all manner of service workers' (Rozworski 2015). There may be legitimate objections to specific practices of Uber or of other big companies in the so-called 'gig economy'. Also, such low-scale economic endeavours on their own are by no means sufficient to kick off the productive boom that the West, and especially developing countries, need. The sharing economy will not build bridges, energy infrastructure, highways and airports; at least not for now. Yet, such an uncritical rejection by the majority of the left (though with a few notable exceptions; see Mason 2015) is revealing of an intellectual attitude uncomfortable with the idea of individuals having more responsibility for themselves, taking risks and grasping opportunities.

Many claim that we are living in a post-political era, where everything has supposedly already been tried and the political consensus is confined in a quite narrow frame of allowable ideas. According to a quote attributed to Gramsci, 'the old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters' (cited in Žižek 2010, p. 95). In our case, the 'time of the monsters' is an era of intellectual uncertainty, suspiciousness towards human agency, pessimism about the future and lack of conviction about what should be done and on what values it should be based. This might sound disheartening, but it also presents an opportunity. There is plenty of room for the emergence of an ambitious

economic and political paradigm. Economic growth, achievement, risk-taking and an ambitious view of the future need to be embraced again as the progressive causes *par excellence*. Ideas around individual subjectivity, free will and the capacity of the human to become an agent of change need to become the philosophical premises on which such a truly progressive paradigm will be built. Of course, criticizing lifestyle activism and the new left, which was the aim of this book, is not going to change the world. However, leaving behind ideas that do not have at their heart human agency, freedom and progress is a necessary start. Chandler is right to mention that 'if the only alternative to the political "game" is to threaten to "take our ball home" […] the powers that be can sleep peacefully in their beds' (2007, p. 164). For one thing, the ball needs to be put back on the field and into play. But this field is not the glorious field of an idealized past, with its emotionally appealing old slogans and symbols. The new left has been successful on that field, but the game is played elsewhere. The Marxist scholar Nikos Poulantzas said four decades ago that 'socialism will be democratic or it won't be at all' (1978, p. 265). To paraphrase him, progressive politics today must have as their starting point freedom and the individual, or they won't be at all.

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DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55103-0