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Chapter 2

Realising the common: the assembly as organising structure¹

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Introduction

In the fallout from the financial crisis of 2008, there was a moment of silence. When global financial services firm Lehman Brothers folded, filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the wee hours of 15 September 2008, it seemed that the left held its collective breath. And as the financial crisis – coming on the heels of a burst housing bubble in 2006 and a global food price crisis in 2007 – spiralled, the imagined spontaneity of multitude that Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) had ecstatically theorised at the turn of the century did not immediately appear. History, it seemed, was not on the radical left's side. Or perhaps the left simply lacked organisation, the appropriate structures to realise its politics at this adventitious moment. Indeed, it is neither unkind nor unfair to assert that in the aftermath of the economic crisis, for a period, all was quiet on one front of the class war. Labour did not engage while capital furiously raged against the working class, reshaping the world in its own favour even as it entered the twilight of neoliberalism.

In times past, until the 1980s and the neoliberal reordering, the unions had provided the dominant mode of organisation for the left; however, this was rooted in heavy industry and the composition of the working class in previous eras. Now, by 2008, thrust into the interstices of a crumbling economy, many

of those living in the United States and Canada were struggling to survive on low-paid part-time jobs in the retail and service sector and in an ever weaker labour movement (indeed, many more quickly became part of this increasingly disposable working class in the economic aftermath of the financial crisis). Thus, while the decade leading up to the crisis, and its aftermath, had seen cycles of struggles – including the 2006 immigrants’ rights marches that brought half a million demonstrators onto the streets in Los Angeles (and more across the US) and an anti-war movement that brought millions of people onto the streets on a single weekend² – these were generally not driven by or even had the mass participation of organised labour or radical parties of the left as an institutional bedrock. In fact, something new and experimental was emerging, something that also finally enabled the radical left’s response to the post-2008 period, which began with the Occupy Wall Street protest.

In many ways, the Occupy movement that grew from the Wall Street action epitomised the experimentation with new forms of organisation. Centred on shared labour and struggle, this was an amorphous body attempting to challenge the hegemony of financial capital whilst simultaneously attempting to create a reproductive common.³ Occupy was both the result of transformative politics coming from the struggles of 1968 and earlier experiments in bottom-up organising and also a particular response to the shifting political and technical composition of the contemporary North American working class, referred to by terms such as the ‘global worker’ (Dyer-Witheford, 2010) as well as Hardt and Negri’s (2000, 2009) ‘multitude’.

The Occupy movement was only one example of a proliferation of experiments in organisational structure that have been

taking place quietly – and not so quietly – across the landscape of North America, Europe, North Africa and Latin America over the last several years. In this chapter, because it is the context in which I live and work, I will focus my attention on the experiments taking place in North America.⁴ This is not, however, to mistake the North American situation for an isolated or even unique one. From the international exposure and extension of Occupy in 2010–11, the model of the assembly has been expressed globally, in projects of a similar infrastructure in the squares, for example, of Athens and Madrid, and outside the West.⁵ In short, the radical proliferation of assembly projects across the globe points to an emergent mode of organising in a new era of class composition. Appearing to prefigure a possible infrastructure of the common, this asserts a new organisational form with historical precedent but unique to this particular historical conjuncture.

The assembly as the organising model of the common escapes the nexus of party/union that is particular to most organising throughout the history of capitalism – which is not to suggest that these models are dead, but rather that new experiments are necessary to bring new subjects into revolutionary organising. In this contemporary moment, old political concepts and practices – such as the vanguard party and the masses – may *not* be permitted to re-emerge as hegemonic and disrupt or co-opt the struggles of the working classes from below. This moment allows us to examine that which Negri sought to illuminate in his discussion of the transition from the mass worker to the social worker in his analysis of class composition: a framework of incipient new values, existing at a mass level, able to repurpose dissent into a new model for the construction of a communist

future (Negri, 1989). In this article, I propose that the assembly is an emergent mode of organising in the contemporary class composition. I seek to analyse this emergent mode in detail through the model of the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly (GTWA), as an example of a political organisation attempting to contend with the changed class composition of the contemporary mode of capitalist production.

Class composition is a dissident adaptation of Marx's organic composition of capital, as discussed in Volume 1 of *Capital*. The organic composition of capital is the ratio of constant capital to variable capital in production or, more clearly, the correlation of materials, tools and machines for production and the labour power or workers necessary in that production.⁶ Class composition, however, represents at a theoretical level the central, historical importance of class struggle. It is the combination of political and material characteristics that make up, on the one hand, the historically given structure of labour power as configured by the productive forces and relations occurring within capitalism, and, on the other that working class as a dynamic subject and antagonistic force, which is 'tending towards its own independent identity in historical-political terms' (Negri, 1989: 209). It refers to 'the process of socialisation of the working class, and the extension, unification, and generalisation of its *antagonistic tendency against capital*, in struggle, and *from below*' (Negri, 1991: xi); and it defines the power and organisation of labour as it is configured antagonistically in relation to capital.

Class composition is also the way in which the technical composition of labour (the capitalist organisation of labour power) corresponds to various behaviour patterns constituting particular openings amongst workers, which then permits a

reading of the forms of action and organisation possible at various historical conjunctures (Negri, 1991; Cleaver, 1998; Nunes, 2007). It follows, therefore, that forms of struggle are expressed in terms of a particular composition of the working class, and that the specific historical forms of struggle depend upon the conditions of production. For activists, this means that the form or structure of organising class struggle changes alongside changes in the composition of the working class – how one can organise is itself dependent upon the primacy of certain configurations of capital within capitalism. Class composition and the attendant modes of organising are transitory. As struggle pushes capital to change, so class composition and organisational models change with it.

In certain transitory periods, workers go beyond old organisational models – for example, with syndicalism in response to Fordism – but in the still current period of neoliberal globalisation, they had not, until recently, ‘reached a new organisation in a vacuum of political organisation’ (Tronti, in Roggero, 2011). Now, at the present conjuncture, I suggest, previously prevailing modes of organising the class struggle – particularly the party model, both revolutionary and parliamentary, and the bureaucratic trade union model – should no longer be considered the exclusive representative or hegemonic form of working class struggle. We have passed through the ‘vacuum’ stage of political organising and a new political institution, that of the assembly, is emerging.⁷

The assembly as it is constituted today – especially in the various Occupy movements, the Quebec student strike, square seizures and public protests against austerity and state power – is explicitly *not* the general assembly of various institutional (e.g. state and parliamentary) bodies, for those are the forms of representative

politics; nor, for that matter, is it the assembly of the union, which also operates in terms of power exclusion (with a hierarchy of representation). The contemporary assembly rejects the politics of simple representation and rather seeks to describe and build an actually existent political organisation of the common; it moves beyond multitude, what Hardt and Negri saw as the class composition in a regime of biopolitical production – the new nature of productive labour, which moves away from mass production in a factory setting and is centred around more immaterial modes of the production of surplus value (Hardt & Negri, 2000) – but which was, I believe, a phase of transition.

Multitude as described by Hardt and Negri is lacking. I contend that a description of and impetus to class struggle through a detailed discussion of the assembly form can flesh out, expand and move beyond multitude as a concept by providing us with a framework for thinking new modes and forms of class struggle in the present. In an era of ever-increasing austerity and intensified class warfare, the attempt to evince a coherent, non-authoritarian communism capable of producing the common must be simultaneous with the search for a new institutional and political form that is up to the task of such a long-term project and programme. This new political form must be able to reconstitute and organise the nodes in varying circuits of struggle, so that they are robust enough to become the channels for the circulation of the common. The assembly as a political formation can provide both the means for beginning to seriously engage with the production of the common and the organisational terrain for the common politics to come.

In order to demonstrate the value of the assembly as an organisational formation in the contemporary context, we need first

to establish the theoretical terrain on which to situate it. Here, we can state that the political and theoretical tradition of *operaismo* or autonomist Marxism contributes to an understanding of revolution as, by necessity, driven by the producers and reproducers of the social and economic realm – workers, broadly construed. Then, the specific historical and contemporary instantiations of the assembly as a constituted political organisation of the common can be clarified. It is here that the possibility the assembly form holds for potential models of post-party politics comes to life. In the following, I will briefly outline some of the historical lineages of the assembly form and then focus on a contemporary example – the Greater Toronto Workers’ Assembly – in order to elucidate the historical connections and political possibilities, with a focus on rethinking working-class organising as a project of political experimentation that can contribute to the creation of spaces for networked entities to struggle for a shared, common world.

Theoretical lineages: operaismo, autonomism and the ancestry of multitude

Autonomist Marxism concerns itself with the autonomy of human subjects. It is a Marxism centred on the conflict between producers and appropriators, between labour and capital, with labour being the active subject in the relation. In elaborating on Marx’s account of the relationship between labour and capital, Western Marxisms have tended to focus on the dominant logic of capital itself, but autonomists sought to affirm the power of labour and the subsequent responses of capital to class struggle, inverting the dialectical relationship between labour and capital. This Copernican turn (Moulier, 1989: 19), first theorised by

Tronti (1979), sees all changes in the mode of production within capital as an outcome of workers' struggles. Thus the perspective of autonomist theory is located in the struggle of the worker and the political history of capital is the 'history of successive attempts of the capitalist class to emancipate itself from the working class' (Tronti, 1979: 10, quoted in Trott, 2007: 205). For this reason, autonomism provides us with the best vantage point from which to examine critical modes of organising in an era of austerity where the common cannot come soon enough. Additionally, an autonomist perspective is crucial to understanding new modes of worker organising that rely not on the state, or on parties, or on top-down bureaucratic union structures, but which are rather self-generative, autonomous and developed horizontally through networks both technological and biological.

Class composition is also a concept derived from autonomist Marxist theorising, with specific forms of struggle developing according to variations of class composition. In response to these forms of struggle, capital attempts to impose several changes designed to restore discipline; this discipline forces a 'decomposition' of the class, which then gives rise to new struggles and a new class composition (Trott, 2007). In this way, class composition is connected to the circulation of struggles and how these struggles are organised. Multitude is the political composition of the working class within biopolitical capitalism, as elaborated by Hardt and Negri in their trilogy (2000, 2004, 2009).

In terms of its depiction of the contemporary working class, the concept of multitude and its attendant descriptors has been thoroughly critiqued. The concept evacuates work, and especially reproductive work, of its gendered character, for example, while its connecting notions of affective and immaterial labour

imagine that contemporary labour requires emotions but not materiality, something Federici excoriates when she states that, for example, elder care ‘demands a complete engagement with the persons to be reproduced, a relation that can hardly be conceived as “immaterial”’ (Federici, 2012: 122). Furthermore, notions of multitude are characterised as the composition of the class in a contemporary regime of biopolitical production.

The notion of biopolitical production is important for conceptualising the new assembly movements because it signifies a new spatial locale for resistance: no longer situated exclusively in the factory, the sites of resistance become the workers’ very bodies, the home, the social realm. In a regime of biopolitical production, all labour is immersed in the relational elements that define the social but simultaneously activate the ‘critical elements that develop the potential of insubordination and revolt through the entire set of labouring practices’ (Hardt & Negri, 2000: 28). It is both production and reproduction. It is also, however, employed by Hardt and Negri in their assertion that the technologies of the present movement create a spontaneous communism, ignoring ‘the cooperation we can develop among ourselves, starting from those of us who must face the most vulnerable time in our lives without the resources and help they need, a hidden but no doubt widespread form of torture in our society’ (Federici, 2012: 125).

The inadequacies of multitude are manifold, then, but can also be helpful in leading us to consider more expansive and directional forms of struggle, such as those we find in the assembly. In order to understand the contemporary moment in the light of the past, a working through of the phases of class composition, as outlined by Negri, will prove helpful. The first composition of the class under capital is identified as the phase of large-scale

industry, the late industrial revolution. In this phase, the skills and activities of a previously artisanal workforce were beginning to be narrowed and subordinated to the functioning of machine technologies and the 'professional worker' constituted the hegemonic working class subjectivity. The interests of this industrial proletariat were represented by the vanguardist workers' party (Bowring, 2004), an organisation with a mass membership and an intellectual leadership.

Capital responded to the class struggle of the 'skilled professional worker' through a decomposition of the workforce with the introduction of Taylorist production practices and Fordist regulation. These practices subdivided labour into simplified, deskilled and individualised tasks that only together formed a complex whole, making the worker a mere human appendage of the assembly line and giving rise to what Negri called the 'mass worker' (Negri, 1992; Bowring, 2004). The mass workers' labour was truly that of the 'abstract labour' of Marx – 'labour which is independent of the particular concrete form it takes at any given time' (Bowring, 2004: 106) and, divided and separated from the end product created, 'reduced to mere abstraction and activity' (Marx, 1973: 693).

The machine rose to new heights of importance in production. As Marx notes, it is not 'as with the instrument, which the worker animates and makes into his organ with his skill and strength, and whose handling therefore depends on his virtuosity', but rather 'it is the machine which possesses skill and strength in the place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical laws acting through it' (Marx, 1973: 693). Increasingly moved into densely populated urban environments and concentrated in large factories, workers

became newly empowered with a class subjectivity. From this, novel forms of class organisation developed and new, radical workers' movements came to the fore – anti-reformist trade union groups and militant workers' associations arose alongside older formations such as the Communist party.

The general strikes and mass movements of the mass worker were managed by capital through crisis and the attempt to 'revalorise work through *social command*, i.e., to enforce the wage-work nexus and unpaid surplus work over society by means of the State' (Negri, 1992: xii). Responding to the growing power of the mass worker, capital aimed to destroy its political composition in two ways: one, by the introduction of more machine technologies and automated production, minimising human labour needs and leading to further deskilling and proletarianisation; and two, by capital extending itself outside of the factory walls, beyond the boundaries of the workplace (site of commodity production) and into the sphere of the social reproduction of capital, into reproduction itself, wherein social relations as a whole become increasingly subordinated to a capitalist mode of production.

First, as Marx has it, labour became merely a 'conscious organ', something 'subsumed under the total process of the machinery itself' and becoming 'only a link in the system' (Marx, 1973: 393). Then, according to Tronti, this system expanded beyond the factory and into the very realm of social life. The social itself emerged as a plane of capitalised activity in the development of the 'social factory' and 'social worker':

The more capitalist development advances, that is to say the more the production of relative surplus value penetrates everywhere, the more the circuit production-distribution-

exchange–consumption inevitably develops; that is to say that the relationship between capitalist production and bourgeois society, between the factory and society, between society and the state, become ... more and more organic. At the highest level of capitalist development, social relations become moments of the relations of production, and the whole society becomes an articulation of production. In short, all of society lives as a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination over all of society. (Tronti, 1962, cited in Cleaver, 1992: 137)

With increasing technological advances and decreasing geographical space for capital to colonise, the social and even the biological realms of life became sites of valorisation for post-Fordist capital. Labour became even more abstracted (in the Marxist sense), with its focus turning to high-tech communication, transportation and information, and with the withdrawal of the welfare state (which in some ways had socialised elements of reproductive labour). The mass worker of the Fordist era soon became the ‘social worker’ of post-Fordism.

The social worker was defined by Hardt and Negri (1994: 274) as ‘characterised by a hybrid of material and immaterial labour activities linked together in social and productive networks by highly developed labouring cooperation’. Today, capital draws upon a ‘basin of immaterial labour’ which ‘dissolves back into the networks and flows that make possible the reproduction and enrichment of its productive capacities’ (Lazzarato, 1996: 136–7). Again, the notion of immateriality is something roundly critiqued by feminist theorists as ‘sidestepping the rich problematic that the feminist analysis of reproductive work in capitalism uncovered’ (Federici, 2012: 122). This is not to say that value is

no longer created at the point of production, but rather that the point of production is spread out through the circulatory networks of capital, expanded into widely varied areas of life, including even the production of life itself – although, from the perspective of labour, the reproduction of human beings differs from the production of commodities.

With capital thus moving the point of production beyond the factory in ‘capturing’ surplus value in every realm of life that it can, so too is the mass of people who are considered workers expanded far beyond the traditional scope of ‘worker’. Negri argues that as the process of capitalist exploitation now takes place society-wide, socially and economically marginalised groups such as students, the unemployed and casual labourers are also part of the proletariat. For workers in the new class composition of the social worker, battles circulate around ‘anything which bears the work relation without the wage’ (Negri, 1992: xii). For feminist theorists critical of the ease with which this ‘multitude’ drops commitments to gender, race, age and class, the force of understanding reproductive labour as a productive moment for capital but not to be confused with production commits us to shifting our very social relations so that the valorisation of capital ‘no longer commands social activity and reproduction becomes a collective process’ (Federici, 2012: 122). This is the power that assembly experiments can bring to new understandings of organisations – the demand that the work of politics begins with the ways in which we *are* together; how we *practice* the common in our very organisational structures.

Of course, the three distinct phases of class composition as outlined here are never so smooth or distinct. Distinguishing characteristics of one phase flow into the next, just as many of

the practices of earlier forms of production find themselves in later instantiations, while new characteristics, compositions and practices of both class and capital also emerge. Sergio Bologna (cited in Bowring, 2004: 113), for example, has criticised Negri's 'tendency to ignore counter-trends and exaggerate class unity'. The shifts and waves and changes within the working class and leftist political organising are important to note and key to an argument wherein these organisational forms have traded places back and forth, often in line with changes and shifts in the modes of production. Just as elements of industrial production techniques coexist with biopolitical production regimes, so too, I argue, is it necessary to consider some elements of earlier, more vertical organisational tactics in respect of contemporary, horizontal organising. At the present juncture, we can see lines of organisational development converging in a less dialectical and rather multilateral movement towards some sort of organised yet diffuse, structured yet flexible affinity.

As noted, the claim is that multitude, through the cooperative nature of its labouring self, will give way to spontaneous and elementary forms of communism as it is itself a 'form of political organisation that, on the one hand, emphasises the multiplicity of the social singularities in struggle and, on the other, seeks to coordinate their common actions and maintain with equality in horizontal organisational structures' (Hardt & Negri, 2009: 110), which is problematic and unconvincing. One failing seems to be an underestimation of capital, or non-reckoning of its well-established dynamic. While seemingly cooperative, even in an era of production that requires greater degrees of communication and collective labour, capital continues to divide workers

through 'an unequal division of labour, through the use of the wage, giving the waged power over the wageless, and through the institutionalisation of sexism and racism' (Federici, 2012: 92); the realities of contemporary work-life simply cannot be ignored.

Much like Marx, who in some ways saw technology as a liberating force for workers, conceptions of multitude rely too heavily on a technologicistic concept of revolution – working classes brought to a revolutionary moment through the cooperative uses of digital technologies and not through their embodied togetherness in organising structures and the process of commoning. Because recent years have shown general increases in inequality, overwork, unemployment and personal debt, while migrant workers, students, youth and women bore the brunt of cascading economic crises, it is difficult to assume the optimism of Hardt and Negri and the theory of multitude which argues that 'the new forms of production the global restructuring of the economy has created already provide for the best possibility of more autonomous, more cooperative forms of work' (Federici, 2012: 106). What this autonomous cooperation is meant to look like remains unclear, and the need to devise a theory of the assembly as the political formation of a common struggle becomes ever more urgent.

Contrary to the spontaneity that Hardt and Negri espouse, an examination of past and present political movements makes it clear that any political formation – any movement with political directionality – does not arise from nothing, but rather must be consciously moved in this activated, revolutionary direction. Indeed, the liberatory possibilities of multitude have already been thoroughly discussed in critiques of immaterial production (Nunes, 2007; Trott, 2007), and it is evident that multitude

is not *necessarily* emancipatory, but must be *made* thus. New figures of struggle, new subjectivities, are produced in the latest phase of struggle and capitalist response, but they do not in and of themselves necessarily possess any greater impetus to coalesce and transform into communism. Although effective communication, coordination and collaboration may be a source for radically new forms of democracy (Hardt and Negri, 2004, 2009; Virno, 2004), that these conditions are totalising and already immanent to the practices of labour today ‘appears as nothing more than a tragically flawed proposition’ (Trott, 2007: 226).

Furthermore, it is important to remember that mass manual labour in the automated production context still exists alongside distinct modes of production, the immaterial labour associated with the tertiary sector, even if obscured in today’s ‘technological age’. From this it follows that the politics implied in the era of the mass worker remain useful, including, of course, its organisational forms. The continued performance (exchange) of this labour points us to the absence of a sharp contrast between phases of class composition and regimes of production, and highlights the need to invoke internally heterogeneous practices of politics and organising.

The common may arise through struggle and the production of alternatives, as Hardt and Negri themselves suggest, but the requisite subjectivities and organisations can only materialise through more directional, defined structures. The assembly stands as one of these, a radical left institution that does not become the ‘Modern Prince’, the erstwhile party or the tired vanguard. Riding a line between Leninist discipline and late-autonomist spontaneity, the assembly suggests itself as

the form through which the flaws of multitude can be repaired and its potential realised. To deny this possibility, to carry on practising the same old politics, to avoid invigorating experimentation in the face of life as a mix of powerlessness, confusion and fear, to concede power to the usual agents at their usual sites – this simply promotes the continuation of that combination of anarchy and oligarchy that marks the rule of capital. In promoting assembly, however, it is important also to understand the contemporary class composition as maintaining within it elements of the old and to see our tactics, strategies and structures as both innovative and connected to, as a development of and within, a historical lineage of struggle.

The common as a political concept redefines the terrain of contemporary struggle, breaking through the duopoly of public versus private, state versus market. The statist model of revolution ‘that for decades sapped the efforts of radical movements to build an alternative to capitalism’ (Federici, 2012: 139) has waned, while the neoliberal impulse to subsume every form of life to market logic is increasingly and actively resisted. Indeed, it is in the very (neoliberal) attempts to enclose commons where we find that ‘new forms of social cooperation are constantly being produced’, including ‘in areas of life where none previously existed’ (Federici, 2012: 139). As an alternative to the state–market duopoly comprising both ‘the common wealth of the material world’ (Hardt & Negri, 2009: viii) and the sociality necessary for production in post-Fordism, are things such as knowledge, culture, language and historical remembrances (Mattei, 2011) – the common is not imagined with humanity as a separate entity outside of nature. Moreover, humanity is not seen as the exploiter or caretaker of the common, natural or social.

This is not a conception that posits a subject (a human, corporation or government) that rules over an object (a good, organisation or territory), but rather one that sees human beings as integrally networked into the world around them, as entities inhabiting a shared world. No longer specified by a particular life sphere (the natural commons) that can be set aside and preserved, the common as an idea confronts the ways in which the whole species is subsumed within capital and looks to how this is open to various practices of resistance. Ultimately, this goes beyond conflict with the expression of accrued surplus held by the few and extends to an exploration of our humanity. It is thus a fitting political project for the multitude.

This is a seductive notion, asserting as it does that the common is immanent in our contemporary ways of being, including labouring in post-Fordism. What it neglects, however, is where the possibility of creating the common comes against its limit. This is first, Federici (2012) suggests, in its effusive belief in the technological foundation of common politics – that digital labour is inherently cooperative and thus leads us fairly directly to instantiation of the common. Focusing on the technological ignores the material basis of Internet technology – the rape and pillage of the planet necessary to extract the rare earth minerals used in digital technologies and the obscene labour conditions in both the raw-material mining and product manufacture (of computers, smart phones and tablets, etc.). This may seem a relatively minor and certainly conditional matter, but it represents just the kind of material consideration that the common/multitude thesis stands accused of overlooking.

Then, fetishising technology, information and knowledge production as the basis of the common makes invisible the

reproduction of everyday life and the important role that this plays in alternative political and economic projects. Federici notes that this is not unusual to common discourses, which are often not written from a feminist perspective, and thus generally focus ‘on the formal preconditions for [the common’s] existence but much less on the possibilities provided by existing commons, and their potential to create forms of reproduction enabling us to resist dependence on wage labour and subordination to capitalist relations’ (Federici, 2012: 142). Again, however, this critique provides points of entry for the assembly as an organisational form, with its emphasis on embodied being-with as the foundation of its trust and solidarity, and with that embodiment as the foundational ground for the creation of the common.

Instituting the common is a fundamental task in the era of neoliberal globalisation as the common (ecological and social) becomes increasingly obscured through the dominant capitalist ideology and hegemonic state policies. In today’s politics of privatisation and austerity, liberal notions of the commons that do not break with the established duopolies risk reproducing ‘the traditional mechanistic view, the separation between object and subject and resulting commodification’ (Mattei, 2011). While overwhelming empirical evidence shows that cooperative property arrangements, for example, do not bring about Hardin’s *Tragedy of the Commons*, since such organisations among individuals have actually been quite successful (Ostrom, 1990), what liberal conceptions of the commons do not contend with is that corporations and states *do* behave in ways that produce the tragedy of over-extraction and exploitation.

It is markets and states that produce the tragedy of the commons, markets and states that ‘tend to operate as relentless

and merciless maximisers of short term interest' (Mattei, 2011). It is the conventional governmental forms of shareholder control and nation-state democracy that organise this to the common harm, with property laws, public and private alike, mere justifications for and expeditors of the power of 'dominant sovereigns over weaker subjects in a process of brutal exploitation' (Mattei, 2011). As a result, liberal notions of the commons such as those forwarded by Ostrom do not overcome commodification, but, on the contrary, contribute to the lineage of modernist thought that denies the possibility of the radical break from commodification ever occurring and thereby materially assists the further destruction and erosion of the common.

It is my contention that a politics of the assembly can help us find an organisational form for the new epistemic and political projects of emancipation. The idea and practice of the common lies in the terrain where we see ourselves as the common, as part of an environment, natural or cultural. In this conception of the common, we can see what has been called 'multitude' as inseparably linked to communities, to ecosystems, to knowledge and to political institutions. The assembly as a political form allows us to do just this – to cut across competing political ideologies, to understand the common as something that develops together through collaborative efforts that are a part of our labouring conditions, but also from our resistances to that dominant ideology and our creative expressions in these anti-capitalist political projects, and from our lived experiences as workers sharing and collaborating with each other in ways that are outside the officially sanctioned paradigm of work. In fact, it is my contention that the assembly as a form contributes to bringing about the common but also *is* the common itself, becomes the common in its very constitution.

The assembly past and present

The assembly as a means of forging political directionality for groups of workers is not new. The contemporary incarnations of assemblies such as in the Occupy movement, or in the GTWA, carry with them a long history of other experiments in workers' democratic control and working class self-liberation. From the early soviets of the first and even second Russian revolutions through the factory councils in Turin in 1918 to the assembly movement in Spain in the 1970s, organisational forms have existed which, in their very construction, resisted the top-down politicking of parties, vanguards and parliamentarianism. As a form of decision-making, assemblies were often a component part of anarchist and Marxist traditions like the Council Communist movement. And like 'council' then, 'assembly' now can be considered something of a catchall term for a 'form of organisation renewed at different times and across different countries by groups of workers often unaware of this kind of structure or of previous historical precedents' (Cohen, 2011: 48).

Workers' councils and assemblies have tended to operate with directly democratic decision-making structures focusing on the self-activity of workers and building unofficial and cross-union forms of worker organisation. These assemblages of workers also helped to forge class unity in that they often incorporated unionised workers with their non-unionised counterparts. Indeed, assemblies are, broadly speaking, a form or mode of organisation that prioritises and is a direct vehicle for class struggle. Forms of direct democracy are fundamental to these movements, and can be seen in the mass meetings, delegate structures and, occasionally, the creation of accountable, revocable 'local leaders'. Features of direct democracy have been seen in even the earliest workers'

uprisings under capitalism, for example in the Chartist movement (1830s and 1840s Britain) and even in the earlier tradition of ‘cross-trade conferences’ held as early as 1810 (Cohen, 2011). Directly democratic structures were often threatening to traditional, bureaucratic trades unions as they allowed decision-making to take place at the site of labour, by workers themselves, and did not require waiting for directives from labour’s leadership. This is evident, for example, in the Great Upheaval of the 1870s in the United States (Brecher, 1999), wherein railroad workers walked out in a mass strike action against wage cuts and developed delegate committees ‘ignoring the leadership of their national unions’ (Cohen, 2011: 49).

The assembly form is simple in that it develops out of the material conditions of workers – it is not ‘plucked from thin air’ (Cohen, 2011: 48) – while in practice it remains work. There are claims to the naturalness of this form, as councils and assemblies have been repeated throughout various cycles of class struggle, often in movements with little knowledge of past precedent. The combustion of radical energy from workers in the form of councils, soviets and assemblies should not necessarily be considered a spark which ignites a fire, but rather a fire that grows out of embers already lit – this is to say that ‘workers independently and repeatedly learn and put into practice class-based lessons’ (Cohen, 2011: 54), and the practices that arise develop out of the concrete needs of workers over long periods of both struggle and stagnation. While there is spontaneity, then, there is also coordination – the long smouldering embers of workers’ discontent eventually burst into flames, usually after the assembly form has already been constituted in a specific location.

As political structures for the emancipation of labour, councils and assemblies strive to overcome the division between the economic and political spheres – they make struggles over the wage not simply an economic struggle but also a political one.⁸ This makes them inherently revolutionary, insofar as this division between the economic and the political means ‘in fact, overcoming the capitalist state itself’ (Bonnet, 2011: 66). While unions had historically struggled in the economic sphere and (left-wing/socialist) parties in the political sphere – pitting each against owners/managers and (right-wing/conservative) parties – councils resisted this ossified dualism and worked to overcome the division. This desire for innovation in form helps explain why councils and assemblies as movements that condensed power into the bodies of workers themselves have historically been so stalwartly resisted by labour unions and traditional left-wing parties, as much, almost, as by those on the right.

That said, there has always existed a minority current into which assemblies and council movements have fitted, from the Paris Commune as depicted by Marx, through council communism, elements of Trotskyism, anarcho-syndicalism, *operaismo*/autonomism and other ‘heretical’ left-wing currents that have seen ‘workers control and councils as the basis of a self-determined socialist society’ (Ness & Azzelini, 2011: 2). The assembly movement in Spain during the 1970s provides an example of the use of assemblies as an experimental, directly democratic organisational form resisting more authoritarian organising measures that has recent historical relevance and also serves to illustrate some of the dynamics in play within the left as a whole.

The workers’ assembly movement that arose in Spain during the waning of Franco’s dictatorship described itself as the

'independent manifestation of the proletariat' (Amoros, 1984). Catalysing resistance to anti-Franco opposition groups, this was not simply a movement against the Franco dictatorship or merely in support of his replacements, however, but an 'uprising against all forms of exploitation that escaped the narrow framework of bourgeois politics intended for the containment of workers' (Amoros, 1984). Rejecting vanguardism, electoral politics and trade union reformism, these assembly movements sought rather to invoke practices of solidarity, self-defence, direct dialogue and the general strike as their specific methods of struggle. Although they did not begin as a particularly coherent movement, the assemblies soon forged ahead as institutions for the defence of the everyday interests of different workers, serving as spaces to discuss labour problems and strategies around employment issues. They formed in different domains of public life, taking the shape of meetings and colloquiums, street occupations and public engagements and actions.

Through the process of self-education and expansion, the Spanish assembly movement eventually shed its purely spontaneous character and was able to sharpen itself in a necessary evolution from the previously fragmentary politics into a coordinated self-defence body, with aligned activities and actions. Through a commitment to horizontal, democratic engagement and diverse memberships, locations and tactics, the Spanish assemblies of the 1970s never developed into the strict, inflexible party structure of the earlier political mobilisations of, say, the soviets under the Bolshevik party. For a moment, workers' assemblies in Spain became a true counter-power, independent and with enormous force, and full of apparent possibilities. In fact, even as it lost energy, 'worn down, without general goals,

without being able to deliver decisive blows [and lacking] a definite revolutionary current', the movement served to define Spanish democracy post-Franco as 'all the existing political forces that attained influence [did so] precisely by virtue of their struggle against that movement' (Amoros, 1984) – and this included the trade unions and the Communist party, as well as centrist and right-wing organisations and groupings.

In the same way that Hardt and Negri discuss multitude as the new, creative social subjectivity of the post-Fordist era of biopolitical production, so too are assemblies and councils about the unleashing of human creativity in the search for and discovery of new ways of being – and producing – together, in common. Councils and assemblies as organisational forms and structures of working class power came from the shared experience of the early capitalist labour process, from the unity and solidarity forged through work, often factory work taking place in the same geographical space. That spatial unity, that locational solidarity, is not as totalising today – which is not to say that it does not exist at all, but rather that older forms of organisation need to mesh with and blend with the newer forms, so as to develop a politics capable of creative resistance.

The reinvigorated assembly contains within it the lineage of those earlier assemblies of the era of the mass worker. The contemporary assembly as an organisational form also speaks to those engaged in the locationally specific, industrial-scale work that does still exist today in the West, as in urban environments worldwide. Contemporary assemblies are heterogeneous; they do not seek to eradicate difference, as did the philosophy of unity that drove much of the Leninist-style organising of earlier eras, but rather use the sectarian, gender, racial and class differences

contained within the assembly as a creative force for the advancement of a dialectical political vector. Thus can the assembly model be seen as an institution of simultaneous dissent and action that may manifest the common. Characterised by inclusiveness, non-sectarian identity and a horizontal, participatory structure, the assembly registers the dissent of growing numbers of people dissatisfied with hierarchical modes of organisation and politics, and thus, albeit slowly and often clumsily, builds a new politics and society that can be considered an emergent common.

The Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly

Formed in the autumn of 2009, the GTWA was developed out of a series of consultations with a variety of differently situated activists and organisers on the anti-capitalist, labour and social movement left. These consultations were aimed at illuminating the differences between, on the one hand, various activist projects and, on the other, the labour movement (in particular, they sought to bring together labour organisers based in auto factories with activists in the social movement-oriented Ontario Coalition Against Poverty). The intention was to build strong relationships of solidarity between these two often opposing forces, in order to highlight and examine the relationship between class and other forms of oppression and social determination. The tensions between labour bureaucracies and activists that had existed throughout the history of radical movements⁹ were also at play in left-wing organising in Toronto.

The GTWA is imagined as a place where tensions on the left can be sorted through and alleviated. It is narrow enough to limit its membership to those identifying with the anti-capitalist left, but broad enough to encompass anarchists and socialists,

labour activists and social movement organisers, autonomists and communists, Trotskyists and dissident members of Canada's social democratic party, the New Democratic Party. As a space of reflection and action for disparate and often disconnected actors, the assembly hopes to defragment struggles and build larger collectivities for work that might address the limits of earlier modes of organising. This opens the assembly up to the possibility of realising itself as a living body engaged in the creation of the common, even if it does not directly self-identify thus. Much of what connects the assembly to the concept of multitude is largely unrecognised by the organisation (as autonomist thought is not the prevailing political tendency within the project), but it is these connections that, if deepened, may best support and nourish the development of the GTWA as a radical and revolutionary institution.

The Occupy movement, too, used the model of the assembly in unique and important ways – the General Assembly (GA) was the centrepiece of most Occupy encampments, with GAs often taking place twice daily during the active occupations. The complexity of Occupy's engagement with the assembly process points us to some of the difficulties embedded within the notions of both 'the common' and 'multitude'. General assemblies in various Occupy sites were points of contention, and varied sites took different approaches to the use and structure of the GA. The New York City General Assembly, struck before the Occupy encampments began, agreed upon the following definition of the General Assembly on 3 September 2011:

NYC General Assemblies are an open, participatory, and horizontally organised process through which we are building the

capacity to constitute ourselves in public as autonomous collective forces within and against representative politics, cultural death, and the constant crisis of our times. (Quoted in Holmes, 2012: 152)

Occupy sites used GAs as decision-making bodies and information-sharing sites over the course of a spatial occupation – they were open to anyone at any time without any specific membership criteria, thus often involving actors with competing politics and priorities. By October, however, when the Occupy Wall Street encampment was just a month old, some argued that the ‘General Assembly was becoming a form of entertainment’ and that it ‘could not withstand the pressures of a constant public and permeable space’ (Holmes, 2012: 155). Contrary to its original intentions, the GA was becoming a ‘machine of the mob’ (Holmes, 2012: 155).

Another assembly movement, the coalition of student associations, CLASSE,¹⁰ which drove much of the 2012 Quebec student strike (against a hike in tuition fees), imagined the assembly as the political space in which organisers and participants would come together, discuss politics, debate and decide upon strategy in a movement of diverse political actors grounded by a shared political demand. Here, while the assemblies were open for observers, votes could only come from those affiliated with member organisations. For example, only members of the Geography department at Concordia University could vote in the assembly held by that departmental association.

The differences between these three examples are subtle but important – together, they can be characterised as illustrating the difference between the assembly as a tool and as a

mode of being. There is a distinct difference between the use of assemblies, as by Occupy and CLASSE, and the assembly as the predominant form of a political body on the left centred around a baseline of generally shared politics, as in the case of the GTWA. For the GTWA, the assembly is the form through which a non-sectarian, open and heterogeneous politics are conducted by political actors of varying tendencies for which strategies and tactics form the largest deviation. In attempting to think through new forms of left-wing working class organising in Toronto, the GTWA has begun the process of creating a new organisational common; it has taken initial steps forward in expanding and deepening processes of struggle in the city through attempted convergences of competing and differing visions of radical left organising. It has raised the level of discourse and debate alongside the level of collaboration.

Protracted internal debate is an essential component of an assembly. This commitment to debate and dialogue can make conclusions slow to arrive at, but this does not have to derail the process of decision-making entirely. GTWA meetings are forums for debates that are otherwise not had on the left in general. With just over 300 members, the assembly does not operate on the basis of consensus, and instead uses voting as its decision-making tool. The GA is the highest authority of the GTWA, and no decisions can be made or passed unless they go through discussion, debate and voting by the assembly as a whole. In this way, assembly politics can begin to actively rethink the dichotomy between vertical and lateral organising in favour of more hybrid models, recognising the necessity of working with diverse subjects and groups, while maintaining a commitment to continued struggle through practice, debate and

action. An assembly, therefore, attempts to strengthen political communication for the multitude.

If we are to see networking and dialogue as a series of situational negotiations based around the possibility of changing both one's own viewpoint and that of another, an assembly offers a foundation for this with a spatial and temporal togetherness yet without the necessity of drawing clean demarcation lines. Inevitably, disagreements do arise, and the GTWA has not yet discovered ways to move forward in the face of serious political polarities. As time goes on, certain positions within the assembly harden, certain tendencies calcify and certain segments of the GTWA population – mostly more horizontal activists, anarchists and autonomists – feel less 'at home' within the greater body, due to concerns over the direction of the body as a whole. But many of these activists still feel a commitment to the work they carry out in the committees or campaigns where, after all, the main part of their activities are centred. This opens up a serious issue with regard to the level of democratic engagement on the part of the membership and impedes any easy understandings of the assembly as a model simply for improving democratic organising. However, provision of a space to begin to work through these disagreements – to talk across tendencies – is an important first step in building mass movement organisations that can avoid re-inscription of the oft-committed errors made by more vanguardist-type organising models.

As noted, most of the GTWA's action-oriented work takes place in its various committees and campaigns which include the Public Sector Defense Committee (PSDC), the Feminist Action Committee, the Internal Education and Political Development Committee, the Culture Committee and the Free and

Accessible Transit Campaign. These committees and campaigns have autonomy to carry out political activity in the way that they deem most valuable, and their actions then lay the foundation for broader political debate and commentary. For example, in the winter of 2012, the Public Sector Defense Committee intervened in a dispute between a labour organisation and a social movement organisation.

As Toronto's city council prepared to vote on a highly contentious austerity budget that would see cuts to social programming and the outsourcing of many unionised jobs, social movement activists sought to take action, organising a demonstration outside City Hall on the evening of the vote. The labour organisation initially did not respond to calls for collaboration, and when finally it did, it attempted to control the planned demonstration. The social movement activists sought to enter City Hall and engage in a process of non-violent disruption of the council meeting. The labour organisation disagreed with these tactics, but went further, attempting to thwart the social movement activists and community members from proceeding with their action by threatening to take over the rally and cut social movement activists out. The (GTWA) PSDC felt it inappropriate for organised labour to dictate the terms of protest to social movement and community groups, but remained cognisant of the fractious history in activism that this conflict was replaying – a history of disagreement around tactics between labour unions and social movements that is in no way limited to organising in Toronto.

As a clarification of its own politics, and through long discussions, the committee drafted a letter to the labour organisation highlighting three issues at the heart of the current manifestation of the conflict between social movements (less hierarchical) and

unions (more hierarchical), including (a) the legitimacy of certain social movements as a significant community voice, (b) the role of certain social movements in rallies, protests and demonstrations and, most importantly, (c) labour organisations' claims to unilateral authority in determining the tactics of others. The committee felt that the conflict between the labour organisation and the social movement was a key sticking point in a history of struggles as they have manifested in varying geographic locales, and it needed resolution.

Whenever there is collaboration between more horizontal and more vertical organisations, there is a question of surrendering some autonomy in the name of common strategy, and this needs to be respectfully negotiated. One group cannot assert dominion over the tactics of others, and the committee felt that limiting class struggle to 'polite' tactics is neither effective nor in tune with the ways labour has acted in the past, nor with the prevailing political conditions, such as the recent actions of Occupy, which helped to inaugurate bold and audacious actions onto a mainstream political stage. This intervention led to conflict within the broader organisation as a whole – some members agreeing with the committee's intervention, others virulently disagreeing. The end result was a fruitful, powerful and important political debate and discussion that helped the assembly further delineate its own politics and positions, bringing not unity to a multitude, but rather the negotiation of difference.

For Hardt and Negri's multitude, there is no unity, no centrality, no homogeneity. Multitude is heterogeneous, the opposite of previous forms of communism which relied on a homogenous subjectivity around which the politics could cohere. A contemporary politics of the common relies on a rather different social

subjectivity, an internally differentiated but unseparated heterogeneity. In a way that the concept of multitude is unable to, the notion of an assembly as a coming together of bodies and subjects into politicised space creates a *form* of unity without necessitating an absolute unity of agreement. In the GTWA, debate rages over structure and practice regarding the future directions of the project. Should the assembly intervene in electoral politics or develop a political platform? Should it become a more active force in organising or focus on strengthening political debate and changing political conversations? As these debates are resolved or not – and yet regardless of which – the important work is already underway: creating the common space for these conversations to take place.

The GTWA also represents a common politics by bringing together different segments of the working class, segments that have been divided by ‘the pressures of neoliberal policies and labour markets’ (Rosenfeld, 2011) and isolated both in their workplaces and in their homes. Isolation is a large part of post-Fordist capitalism, as workers are less and less convening in large factories but are separated in precarious work conditions (labouring on contracts, working from home or in others’ homes, often located in alienating suburbs).¹¹ But the isolation of workers in post-Fordist capitalism is not only spatial, since the divisions that are part and parcel of the new, post-Fordist workforce have created rancour within the working class itself.

Now, workers are pitted against other workers for jobs and, in times of austerity, those perceived members of the labour aristocracy with union protection who labour for higher wages and greater benefits are taken by many members of the non-unionised working class to be an obstacle to greater wealth

distribution and thus a different kind of class enemy.¹² In Toronto, for example, the working class is very mixed, with a dramatically declining industrial base and the financial sector, real estate and public services as the economic drivers of the city. The working class itself is divided into 'highly segmented clumps of concentrated numbers: construction; upper-end manufacturing; lower-end manufacturing; servicing the financial services cluster, as well as the retail centres and the entertainment complexes' (Rosenfeld, 2011). Deeper internal divisions within the working class continue with the trajectory of neoliberalism. Such divisions reveal themselves to be highly gendered and racialised in Toronto. Real wages across the city, meanwhile, have declined over the last decade (see Hulchanski et al., 2010), as much work has been consistently outsourced, privatised and restructured. Transnational immigrants – of whom there is a high density in the Toronto population – make up key elements of the commercial capitalist class, but these communities also make up 'an increasingly cheapened and precarious segment of the working class' (Rosenfeld, 2011), this being particularly true in the case of migrant women.

Conclusion: multitude and the assembly as common

What we are seeing, then, is less the autonomist circulation of struggles than the segmentation of struggles amongst disparate groups. The concerns of the employed are counterposed to those of the welfare recipient; a white middle class positioned against new immigrants; the taxpaying private sector maligns and competes with a public service perceived as parasitic; the fully contracted become a salaried elite for those in precarious labour conditions. This momentum does not recompose struggles in circulation, as

earlier autonomist theories suggested took place in the era of the mass worker, for example. Rather, a de-compositionary antagonism of struggles (Dyer-Witheford, 2012) is underway, and it is into this trajectory that the assembly – assemblies of the multitude in general, and that of the GTWA in particular – can intervene and serve as a new political force for the creation of the common.

The assembly is and can be the organisational mode and conceptual framework for a politicised multitude, one with a strong commitment to class analysis that simultaneously recognises the differing experiences of those interpolated into the body of the working class/multitude. As outlined here, the GTWA, especially through the work of its committees, exemplifies the taking of the first steps towards the creation of an organisation of the common that is centred in a class analysis of capital, but able also to see the tendrils of capitalist exploitation that radiate outwards, throughout the social factory.

This base-building through action is integral to the longevity of assemblies as political movements. Such bases make the assembly an institution of the common that can develop and maintain a circulation of struggles long past the invocation of a revolutionary moment but throughout the very core of a new common social future. Earlier movements of multitude, in particular the anti-globalisation movement of the late 1990s, were mostly unsuccessful in the Western context of creating long-lasting institutions – but this was not, generally, their aim. Rather, as some have suggested (Katsiaficas, 2002, 2006; Nunes, 2007), the movements of the 1990s were meant to be momentary, spectacular, tangential – and then dissipate. With movements as moments, the main ‘institutions’ that arose were largely in the ephemeral, virtual world of the Internet.

With its multipolar means of production and circulation, the Internet was a way to massify information and open movements up to horizontality and transparency. As Nunes (2007: 301) notes, 'it is only within the horizon of a social life that has become networked that a politics of networking as such can appear'. Moving beyond the thrill of late 1990s organising around the Internet and then recent ecstatic claims of Facebook and Twitter revolutions, the GTWA marks a turning point in the relationship between communications technology and radical political organising.

In its monthly coffeehouses, which offer space for members and the general public to discuss a specific theme or issue in its campaigns and general membership meetings, the GTWA attempts to create new spaces for people to meet together in person, to create the persistence and physical connection which seemed to be missing from overreliance on virtual communication. At the same time, the assembly pursues very sophisticated digital communication strategies, using the Internet for flexible and quick decision-making, communication and promotion, but without losing sight of the importance of face-to-face contact and debate. It is this strategy of melding the concrete and the virtual that operates to overcome the ephemerality and temporality of anti-globalisation movements, and yet still permits the flexibility and spontaneity that were smothered by inflexible party structures of older forms of organisation.

In the era of crisis and austerity and uncertain 'recovery' in which we now find ourselves, devising new political strategies and experimenting with new political forms is not only beneficial but a necessity. Developing tactics and movements from below will be the only way to bring about the common and challenge

what has been called the revolutionary potentiality of multitude. The assembly as a political form can be seen as that structure through which radical politics, politics of the common, can be formulated and developed. Certainly there is much to be learned from past movements, and as political subjects we must be aware of these histories; the assembly form takes us a stage further, allowing us to remain sufficiently flexible to adapt to contemporary conditions, respond to contemporary crises and allow space for a diverse range of subjects and actors so as to make radical social change – the coming of the common – a true possibility.

Notes

1 An earlier version of this essay appeared in *Interface* 4(2) as 'A Common Assembly.'

2 CNN.com: <http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/05/01/immigrant.day/index.html>; BBC.co.uk: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2765215.stm>

3 While Hardt and Negri (2000, 2009) utilise the common to mean the networks of knowledge and communication that reside at the centre of many contemporary modes of production and shape the capacity to think and communicate, to reproduce the social, Federici (2004, 2012) argues that the reproductive labour in which we are engaged requires a concrete engagement with one another, something material, and thus a reproductive common requires a coming together, a being-with in space that Occupy and assembly politics attempts to emulate (see also Caffentzis, 2012).

4 A partial list of recent North American experiments in assembly politics could include the People's Movement Assemblies growing out of the World Social Forum and US Social Forum, the Southern Movement Assembly, the Southern Workers' Assembly, the People's Assemblies Network alongside the better known Occupy assemblies, the student and neighbourhood assemblies in Quebec's

'Maple Spring' and the assembly under discussion here, the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly.

5 Acknowledging the dangers of overgeneralisation, this can be argued *because of* rather than despite some very different contexts (e.g. those centred in Cairo, Budapest, Rio and Kiev), where assembly has emerged in battles against state authority defined by a wide range of sociopolitical and economic issues, fissures and fault-lines but nevertheless structured by the same neoliberal(ising) class framework. In Istanbul, for example, following the police suppression of the protests in Gezi Park and Taksim Square, which largely originated in marginalised opposition to neoliberal government policies, a series of open, unled, generally unstructured discussion gatherings was held at night in parks across the city.

6 See Chapter 23 of *Capital* (Volume 1), 'The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation'.

7 Actually, we could say that the assembly is *re-emergent*: assemblies are not a new form of organising political struggle. There are, though, considerable differences between today's assemblies and their historical forebears (below).

8 For elaboration on this, see Negri (1989).

9 Much of which is outlined in Ness and Azzelini (2011).

10 *Coalition Large de l'ASSE* (the Broad Coalition of Associations for Student Union Solidarity).

11 This is most especially the case for women, often racialised women, engaged in care work. Much of this has been discussed by autonomist feminists such as Dalla Costa, Rosa and James (1973), Fortunati (2007), Federici (2012) and the Spanish feminist collective, Precarias a la Deriva (2009).

12 This can be seen in the comments sections of newspapers on a regular basis.

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