The Madness that Is The World: Young activist's emotional reasoning and their participation in a local Occupy movement

Abstract: The focus of this paper is young people's participation in the Occupy protest movement that emerged in the early autumn of 2011. Its concern is with the emotional dimensions of this and in particular the significance of emotions to the reasoning of young people who came to commit significant time and energy to the movement. Its starting point is the critique of emotions as narrowly subjective, whereby the passions that events like Occupy arouse are treated as beyond the scope of human reason. The rightful rejection of this reductionist argument has given rise to an interest in understandings of the emotional content of social and political protest as normatively constituted, but this paper seeks a different perspective by arguing that the emotions of Occupy activists can be regarded as a reasonable force. It does so by discussing findings from long-term qualitative research with a Local Occupy movement somewhere in England and Wales. Using the arguments of social realists, the paper explores this data to examine why things matter sufficiently for young people to care about them and how the emotional force that this involves constitutes an indispensable source of reason in young activists' decisions to become involved in Local Occupy.

Keywords: young people, emotion, social movements, Occupy, reason, reasoning

In his rapid response to the international emergence of the Occupy movement, Manuel Castells (2012) begins with a lament for the categorical exclusion of individuals from studies of social movements. His concern is that to locate Occupy's origins in the humiliation precipitated by the global crisis of 2008/09 (Gitlin, 2013, 2012; Calhoun, 2013; Chomsky, 2012) is insufficient to answer questions of how its multitudinous and varied constituent parts came into being. To satisfy questions of what precisely brought hundreds of thousands of people, many of them young, to give their active support to Occupy, Castells (2012: 13) asserts that there is a need to

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give careful attention to the lives of those individuals ultimately responsible for its existence, to those persons who took to the streets 'in their material flesh and mind'.

The precise target of Castells' vexation remains curiously unspecified, but his frustration with the neglect of the people who comprise social movements resonates with critique elsewhere. Specifically, James M. Jasper (2011, 2010, 2006) has written extensively on the limits and decline of the 'big structure' accounts of social movements and their categorical neglect of the motivations, meanings and understandings possessed by activists. In concentrating on organisational factors like staffing and fundraising, and external circumstances like resources and repression, Jasper is concerned that the study of popular protest has lost touch with those 'individuals ... along with their decisions, dilemmas, defections and so on' (Jasper, 2010: 967) who make up these movements. Echoing Castells' exasperation, his concern is that without taking seriously the 'grievances and attitudes' (ibid.: 966) of activists, those people ultimately responsible for creating and transforming social movements will be taken for granted as passively awaiting their mobilisation, or activists *in potentia* awaiting the structural conditions necessary for their radicalism to come fully formed onto the historical stage.

Of course, neither the model of the activist as cultural dope or its flipside, qua the structurally overdetermined activist, is adequate. Both positions offer little means of understanding what connects people to the social movements in which they become involved or, indeed, why young people would want to become involved in a movement as inchoate and lacking identity as Occupy was in the late summer of 2011. It is therefore significant that both Castells and Jasper give considerable analytical significance to emotions as a way of comprehending individuals' motivations for engaging in social protest action. For Castells (2012: 13), protest movements are at root emotional movements where, '[...] the big bang of a social movement starts with the transformation of emotion into action'. For Jasper, too, not only are 'emotions [...] present in every phase and every aspect of protest' but they should play an essential part in any theory of social movement action: 'virtually all the cultural models and concepts currently in use (e.g. frames, identities,

narratives) are mis-specified if they do not include explicit emotional causal mechanisms' (Jasper 2011: 286).

How best, in turn, to specify these 'causal mechanisms' without returning the emotional dimension of social movement protest to associations with the irrational is less clear, however. To point to the 'untenable contrast of emotions with rationality' (Jasper, 2011: 286) is a necessary first step to take, one that allows the reason-emotion, fact-value dualities to be deconstructed in ways that show how feelings can and do exert a considerable force on how people reason about the world and how to change it. What is rarely considered, however, is the reverse of this, where facts are recognised as integral to the creation of values and evaluations, and emotions constitute a form of human reasoning (Sayer, 2011). Yet, this reciprocal deconstruction is necessary if emotions are to be regarded as having more than subjective significance; that they are something more than personal standpoints that have little to do with reason. By failing to permit emotions to enter the realm of reason(ing) the risk is that they are treated, at worst, as the preserve of an individual's irrational drives or, at best, as a source of individual taste or preference. Equating collective protest with the irrational has rightly been a long-discredited approach to understanding social movements (Le Bon, 1960); and, for similar reasons, youth studies too has done much to extricate understandings of youth from its 'bio-political' reduction to adolescent storm and stress (Cohen, 1997). Personal taste and individual preference may be the stock in trade of rational choice theorists of political action, but their crude reduction of human agency to instrumental self-interest cannot account for the substantive rationality of voluntary collective action and the conditioning influence of social values and ethical norms on political protest (Archer, 2000).

It is in recognition that modes of feeling can be culturally defined that some social movement analysts have turned their attention to the normative dimensions of emotions, but this too risks another form of subjectivism. It is clearly the case that social movements look to arouse and shape emotions 'as a way to get things done' (Jasper 2011: 148) and that all sorts of rhetorical displays, visual tactics, modes of

encouragement and persuasive techniques are arrayed to provoke and condition activists' emotions. It is also the case that 'people learn cultural norms to interpret their affective states and learn to name their feelings with specific labels' (Ruiz-Junco 2012: 46), and that social movements too look to mediate, frame and structure feelings along these lines. 'Regardless of the stance on social constructionism that analysts [of social movements] adopt', Ruiz-Junco continues, 'they generally assume that the fluctuating, ever-shifting and heterogeneous emotional lava that we experience hardens into feelings that people interpret, name and oftentimes, subsume under normative feeling rules'. Yet, if matters are left here this argument provides little scope for comprehending why some things matter enough in the first place for people to become sufficiently emotional about them to join a political protest or, for that matter, why they would want to work on ('harden'?) their emotions by consciously 'naming' and 'interpreting' them; including accommodating their emotions to those normative patterns of feeling characteristic of political protest and social movements. Without an understanding of why young people care enough about something for it to have emotional significance, the danger is that these social constructionist accounts of human feelings will also lead to a subjectivist reading that equates activist emotions with the unthinking (and thus irrational) response to a culturally constituted emotional rulebook.

Commentaries on Concerns

To avoid these subjectivist pitfalls there is much to be gained by foregrounding the reasonable qualities of activists' emotions through treating them as a constituent of human reasoning; that is, as a fundamental part of the powers and properties of human beings that are neither solely irrational nor simply the product of normative expectations. This is a position advanced by social realists and their consideration of emotions as integral to human reasoning, rather than as marking a threat to it (Nussbaum, 2001; Williams, 2001). As 'commentaries on our concerns' (Archer, 2000: 195, 193), the contention is that emotions are among the main constituents of the rich inner lives of human beings, 'properties of people that are intertwined with their sociality, but irreducible to it'. As attributes specific to humans but nevertheless

inevitably entwined with their sociality, emotions are clearly matters of culture, but it is a non sequitur to regard how humans feel as the bequest of society or of the specific cultures into which they enter. People may well interpret their emotions through normative frameworks, but it does not follow that what they feel is unrelated to anything independent of these. More specifically, to accept that activists may learn to name their feelings in line with the 'rules' of their movements does not mean that they cannot do anything but accept these culturally proscribed 'labels', as if the only things that mattered enough for activists to become emotional about them were the product of social conventions. It has been pointed out that people can and do find their emotional responses unhelpful or unsatisfactory, precisely because emotions have as their object things with properties and powers beyond how conventions may define them (Sayer, 2011). To think otherwise would be to entertain the absurd position that what activists become most emotional about – degradation, discrimination, inequality, abuses of power – are only conventionally defined and so are capable of being wished away.

For these reasons the realist emphasis is on the relational nature of human emotions and how they relate to objects that exist in the world, including culture and normative conventions. Clearly of subjective importance in that humans feel them in body and mind, emotions are thus treated as more than just individual standpoints; states of affect that are produced by individual humans but which are not readily susceptible to the influence of evidence and evaluation. On the contrary, 'emerging from situations to signal their import for our concerns' (Archer, 2000: 196), realists emphasise emotions as affective modes of awareness of situations, a means of identifying and selecting what it is about one's circumstances that provides the basis for one's feelings. To do so requires acknowledging distinctions between emotions of and about something, where the former points to emotions as the human experience of feelings and the latter relates these feelings to the concerns that people hold. In affording a means to identify what it is about a situation that provides the grounds for such feelings, emotions play an indispensible role in human reasoning as a 'form of evaluative judgement of matters affecting or believed to be

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affecting our well-being and that of others and the other things that we care about' (Sayer, 2011: 36). Without this emotional inner life constituted in and through its relation to a world of concern nothing would matter to people, certainly not the substantive issues and ideas that animate social movements but not even the normatively constituted rules and cultures that social constructionists see as defining the range of emotions accessible to political activists.

Seen in this way, emotions are not only essential to human reasoning, but they are both a requirement for human well-being and form a basis for social action. To flourish, human beings, including children and young people (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013; Bluebond-Langer and Korbin, 2007), require the permanent monitoring that emotions provide in the form of a 'continuous running commentary (that is something we are never without) and therefore it is only in sudden or urgent contexts that we are aware of a specific emotion' (Archer, 2000: 197). The realist focus, therefore, is not the presence or absence of emotions, nor how they help or hinder human action under particular circumstances, such as participation in social movements. Rather, 'as a highly discriminating and valuable response to the flow of experience' (Sayer, 2011: 36), attention is directed to the 'emotional reasoning' and 'emotional intelligence' involved in the continual monitoring of the things that people care about. It is in these reasonable and intelligent qualities of emotions that hurt or harm may be discerned and, consequently, from which the desire to bring about change or to prevent others from doing the same may emerge. It is these qualities to emotions that may further allow nuanced assessments of situations and sources of empathy capable of leading to social critique. These reasonable and intelligent qualities of emotions are far from fallible, but then again neither is the hard headed rationality more commonly associated with reason. Moreover, as commentaries on the things that people care most about, emotions find significance as the 'shoving power' (Archer and Tritter, 2000: 6) or 'force of ought' (Sayer 2011: 140) capable of animating the actions of people above and beyond their normative obligations.

Researching Local Occupy

This concern with the emotions of social movement activists was explored through case study[1] research of young people's participation in a Local Occupy[2] group. Unlike many of the high profile Occupy protest groups and encampments established in major world cities in the late summer and early autumn of 2011 – e.g. New York (Gitlin, 2013, 2012; Calhoun, 2013; Chomsky, 2012), Los Angeles (Uitermark and Nicholls 2012), Boston (Juris *et al*., 2012), Madrid and Barcelona (Abellán *et al.,* 2012; Castells, 2012) and Amsterdam (Uitermark and Nicholls, 2012) – these smaller Occupy groups and demonstrations received little publicity and have not featured significantly in subsequent research (c.f. Smith and Glidden, 2012; Smith *et al,.* 2012; Alimi, 2012). It was to address the existence of these smaller but numerically more significant Occupy groups that almost two years of fieldwork began with Local Occupy shortly after it was created on the 15th October 2011, the designated Occupy global day of action.

The research was conceived of as a dialogue with a purpose, a term that borrows from Burawoy's (2007) commitment to dialogue as the basis for a reflexive ethnography. Throughout the fieldwork, attempts were made to establish and maintain an iterative relationship with participants in Local Occupy through regular visits to the camps[3], participation in discussion and debate, and attendance at associated protests, demonstrations, workshops and other related events. During this time a significant programme of data collection took place through field observations, individual interviews and participation in group discussions, both recorded and unrecorded. Much of this research activity was based at the Local Occupy encampment, but it also continued with individual activists long after the camp was voluntarily discontinued some six months or so after it had been first established. Particular attention was given to those constituting the 'inner movement of core activists' (Gitlin, 2013: 3), people who (had) either lived at the camp for significant periods, slept there regularly or who visited on an almost daily basis while their involvement lasted.

It is this self-defined 'core' group that thus feature most significantly within an extensive and unique data set of a local Occupy movement. This comprises records of individual interviews and discussions with 36 activists, including 19 respondents who participated in a recorded interview at least once. From this figure of 19, nine respondents participated in two or more recorded sessions, four in three or more and one who participated in five. Also included in the data set are records of group discussions, a small number of which were recorded. The shortest recorded interview lasted for just under half an hour and the longest, a group session, for just under three hours, and in total they comprise approximately 290,000 words of verbatim transcripts. A field diary containing extensive observational material and notes on unrecorded interviews and discussions, of approximately 25,000 words, further supported the recorded interview data. In addition, the researcher took approximately 110 photographs and collected many others taken by participants or posted on the internet. Further context and detail was garnered from websites and Facebook walls, including the closed Local Occupy Facebook planning group to which the researcher was given access. Also collected were examples of artwork, pamphlets and other printed material, as well as several hours of video that the group, its supporters and other casual visitors had uploaded to the internet.

One of the rationales for identifying Local Occupy as a case study within the wider MYPLACE project was the expectation that significant numbers of young people[4] would be involved. Writing about the upsurge in political protest prior to Occupy, the journalist Paul Mason began his explanation of *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere* by pointing out that, 'At heart of this is a new sociological type: a graduate with no future' (2011, no page number). In a similar vein, Todd Gitlin notes of his involvement in Occupy Wall Street (hereafter OWS) that, 'By inspection, they are largely young ...' (2013: 15) and Castells cites research on OWS showing that, 'as in similar movements in other countries, the Occupy participants appear to be relatively young, educated people whose professional expectations are limited in the current economy' (2012: 167). It was not being claimed that Occupy was a political movement of the young, or that it lacked wider social, ethnic and gender diversity,

but that young people were involved as vigorous advocates of the movement's passionate indignation.

This impression of Occupy as a relatively youthful movement was confirmed during initial fieldwork visits. Nevertheless, as the research progressed so did awareness that the composition of Local Occupy was more complex than these claims to its inherent youthfulness allowed. Young people frequenting the camps did assume significant roles and were well represented within its 'inner movement', and they were also much in evidence in more marginal roles, such as around the fringes of meetings, casual visitors to the camps and non-active supporters at demonstrations and other actions. Yet the participation of the young turned out to be only one part of what was a much more socially diverse movement in which the young took part alongside older people. This diversity was accordingly reflected in the collection of fieldwork data and will no doubt form the subject of future analysis. However, it is attention to the emotional reasoning involved in the young activists' decisions to become involved in Local Occupy that this paper is primarily concerned.

Coming Out of the Concrete

> But how did it spread, Phil? How did it spread from Wall Street to all
> these nations? Was it people communicating on the web? Err, I don't
> know, don't know how, how it spread, whether it was a zeitgeist feeling
> and everybody just turned up and went, 'well, they're in Wall Street,
> we're gonna turn up' and then it just spread [...] (Alex, late 20s/early
> 30s)[5]

Alex's surprise at how Occupy seemingly spread from nowhere is one that is shared more widely. 'Spontaneous' is Gitlin's (2013: 5) favoured description for Occupy Wall Street's sudden appearance on 17th September 2011, while Castells remarks about Occupy's global attraction that 'no one expected it [...] it just happened', (Castells 2012). Occupy was no rootless movement, however, and its origins have been

located in the great upsurge in popular discontent following the global financial crisis of 2008. However, to locate its antecedents in Tunisia, Iceland, Egypt or Spain (Mason, 2012) does not really answer questions of what brought people to the point where they were prepared to mobilise in support of something that possessed little in the way of history, definition or organisation (Gitlin, 2012).

Yet people did turn out for Occupy and in numbers that were matched only by the equally unexpected breadth of its appeal. Calhoun writes of 'an extraordinary 6 weeks in 2011' (2013: 27) when at least 600 spontaneous occupations broke out in cities and other locations traversing the entire landmass of the United States following the creation of OWS. It was the October 2011 day of action when Occupy went global with spontaneous demonstrations recorded in more than 950 cities in 82 countries. In the United Kingdom, attention was focused on Occupy London Stock Exchange and its large and vibrant tented encampment outside St Paul's Cathedral. Scores of protests invoking the Occupy mantle also appeared elsewhere, most of which petered out in a matter of hours or days (Abellán *et al.,* 2012). Many of these fleeting or small-scale protests received minimal publicity and knowledge of their existence was often limited.[6] Nevertheless, one sympathetic mapping[7] of Occupy's presence conservatively estimated the creation of 52 lasting camps and demonstrations stretching the length and breadth of the United Kingdom.

Why, then, did people come out to support such a little known entity and in such large numbers? What accounts for the apparent spontaneity of Occupy's emergence? More specifically, why did, as one (middle aged) activist put it, 'people start […] to come out of the concrete, not the woodwork, out of the concrete' (Robbie) to give their active support to Local Occupy? What brought those many young people who actively supported Local Occupy to the point where they got actively involved in something so hitherto ill defined and potentially provocative?

Spontaneity suggests impulse and whim rather than calculation and rationality and at one level this does describe the beginnings of some young activist's lengthy involvement with Local Occupy. This did sometimes involve spur of the moment

decisions that had hinged on chance encounters or a precipitate response to the unexpected. For all the considerable interest generated by the popular protest in the Middle East, Southern Europe and North America, first encounters with Local Occupy could happen with little or no knowledge of these larger developments; and certainly nothing in the way of direct engagement with the internet buzz and chatter that Occupy began to generate. Some would speak of literally stumbling upon what was then a rudimentary assembly, a curious but unanticipated break to journeys embarked upon for other reasons. Alex, for instance, had come upon Local Occupy on its first day by chance, while the then two tents and excited voices had attracted Robbie during the early hours of its second morning while making his way home from a party. Rose also spoke of knowing nothing of Occupy before her chance encounter during its first days while strolling through the area. In contrast, Heather's curiosity had been stirred sufficiently to actively seek out the camp on its second day, but only after she too had learned of its existence by chance from a fellow college student.

Chance and happenstance may thus seem appropriate explanations for how some young people came across Local Occupy, but this fails to account for why they didn't then move on. Part of the explanation for this lay in the immediate and compelling intuitive force that these first contacts with Local Occupy could generate. In Robbie's case 'optimism', 'joy' and 'beauty' combined with the serendipity of his discovery to convince him that this was where his immediate destiny lay. Alex couched his explanation in similarly fated terms, while Heather too spoke of her initial response as one of powerful and absorbing influences. 'I think it comes back to not being able to do anything else [...]', was her explanation, where this 'amazing' experience exerted a natural and compelling force. As she continued, 'I had this, you know, this urge to be there, like I knew that it was the right place for me to be, like, I, I couldn't have thought of doing anything else' (late teens/early 20s).

For all the intuitive appeal, at another level the stream of emotions of excitement and necessity could also be highly discerning. Felt as much as articulated, these young people nonetheless described how their initial feelings had connected with

some of their deeper concerns, 'sentiments' (Joe, late 20s/early 30s) laid down over time that could be directly related to previous situations and circumstances. Often this relation was only hinted at, like in Alex's asides to the restlessness he felt with his unsatisfying work and unfulfilling personal relationships, and how these had in turn explained his need to wander the city. Robbie too alluded to how his first experience of Local Occupy brought to mind the considerable anxieties he carried from his earlier life and how working in a cynical and exploitative profession had been responsible for the serious erosion of his self-belief and purpose. Describing her involvement as 'by chance', Rose too connected the force of her encounter to the 'proper despair' she was then feeling, a sharp sense of despondence and vulnerability that she linked to 'personal things in my life like my, my housing, money, blah, blah, blah, not having a job, all of this.' Compared to her anguish and anxiety, Local Occupy had quite literally stopped her in her tracks.

> I was walking through town really upset and I see, and, and I met Robbie
> and I see tents and I thought, what's going on here, what's this? He's like,
> ah, and he's explaining it to me about Occupy and whatever. I said, do
> you know what?, I'm coming, I'm staying here. Yeah. (Rose, late
> 20s/early 30s).

Elsewhere, the discerning force of their emotions was much more clearly apparent. Here the insights offered by their emotions related more clearly to a slowly accreted and brooding disquiet with life, and the possession of a sometimes ill-defined but keenly felt awareness of becoming progressively troubled by the world around them. The development of these perceptions could be a long and gradual process, like when Heather traced the sudden impact of Local Occupy to sets of concerns that had emerged some years earlier. In our conversations together she spoke of her agitation and anxiety and how from an early age she had been troubled by a persistent and sometimes unsettling unease. Fixing these feelings to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and then their disastrous aftermaths, Heather recounted her mounting discontent and alarm with the drawn out conflicts and how this disquiet had moved her to go online in the search of more information. Then aged 13 or 14

she 'just stumbled across these forums and blogs because, well, I have no idea why, but I, I just, I was just looking into all this stuff … about war, about oil and money'. The 'conspiracy theories and all of the sort of subversive like subjects' she discovered 'sort of sparked in my mind', moments of luminosity that then faded away but which were rekindled again with far more strength. '[When] I started Occupy it started off those feelings again of, you know, the world's corrupt, um, now everybody knows […] it was real [i.e. her former unease] but it was in the back of my mind, I was asleep.' What she felt when first attending Local Occupy had been familiar, but its force was likened to being shaken awake, '[because] when it came to Occupy it was something fierce. As soon as you find out, it's something fierce inside you and you want people to know.' (Heather, late teens/early 20s).

Learning from A to B

For other young people the paths to Local Occupy were more deliberate and calculated affairs, but ones in which their emotions played equally discerning roles. These were young people more likely to possess a history of activism or prior experience of protest. They also watched events leading up to Occupy with growing interest and excitement, and steps to become involved were actively pursued. For these young people, their emotions not only provided good reason to act but they also constituted a source of judicious reflection and re-evaluation. No less passionate or moved by what they did and the situations encountered, these young people spoke of their coming to Local Occupy as the consequence of long-term feelings and reflections, as what had once felt right no longer seemed to be the case and as previously satisfying courses of action in turn became the object of newfound discontent.

This was demonstrated in how Laura traced the possession of her long-standing concerns to her decision to turn up on the day of action. Describing herself as 'politically aware' from an early age she too linked this awareness to the alarm she felt as a teenager while watching the build up to the war in Iraq and how this then turned to anger following the invasion and its bloody aftermath. Speaking with

gentle eloquence and her customary understatement, she recounted her indignation at the death and suffering the war was causing, and the craven disregard for human life displayed by a self-serving elite responsible for the debacle. It was this indignation and anger that had moved Laura to protest in London alongside hundreds of thousands of others and then to focus her concerns through giving her active support to the Stop the War movement. Significantly, however, this first serious commitment to political activism had provided a salutary lesson and Laura became dissatisfied with the course of action she had undertaken. Epitomised by the proclivity of anti-war protest for what she called 'A to B marches', Laura found that her discontent only deepened. 'I always got really frustrated that it was, like, for this one day everyone cares about this stuff and you feel like you're doing something important.' She continued, 'And I've always found it frustrating that it's, you know, one day and that's it, then you've got to wait for your next protest' (early/mid 20s).

Whatever the normative force and rules of feeling that these protest movements looked to exercise upon their members, Laura's was a much more troubled experience. Instead of learning to identify her feelings within their normative framework, she found in its place an even deeper sense of disquiet. This found a particular focus on their *modus operandi* where having to wait for the 'next protest' alone was inadequate, a feeling that surfaced once again when her anger at the financial crisis of 2008 and consequent political embrace of austerity led her again to protest. Once again the object of her 'frustration' was the resort to 'A to B marches', together with the ineffectual campaigns and lobbying of the public sector trade unions that she had hoped would provide a more meaningful source of opposition. Attending sporadic and often poorly attended demonstrations, Laura also spoke of her concerns about the deadening effects of mass culture on the willingness and ability of people to offer dissent: 'When I walked, when I walked through towns like [name] or [name], it's just like consumerism, consumerism, shopping, shopping, get drunk, blah, blah, blah.' What these experiences told her was that there was pressing need for sustained and immediate action against a world that was profoundly unfair and unjust. It was for this reason that Laura became interested

and then involved in the politics and practices of anarchism, to which she had come to feel a passionate commitment. It was this conviction that had also alerted her to the grassroots and popular upheavals now taking place across the world and in which she sought participation online. For her, the subsequent calls to Local Occupy marked an expression of this reason, a discerning emotionality that had culminated in her decision to become one of instigators and (to begin with) key protagonists.

Laura's example demonstrates the continuous commentary that emotions contributed to young people's reasoning about the world and their eventual decisions to commit themselves to Local Occupy. Moreover, it further shows that not only did their emotions provide a constant source of reason, but they also contributed to these young people's deliberations and reflections in sometimes complex and intricate paths to Local Occupy. This was again the case with Joe who, like Laura, felt in Occupy the expression of something that was both different and profound.

> So, I turned up on that first day and when I left the house after watching
> the news, sort of having this idea what was going to happen, I says, I said
> to my mum and dad, I took a [sleeping] bag and I said, 'I gonna, I'm going
> be camping out all night' (late 20s/early 30s).

Joe's excitement and optimism thus certainly involved impulse, but it too expressed a more deeply held set of concerns. In talking at length of how he came to be involved on that first day, Joe too recounted the discontents and unease he felt about the world from a young age and how significant to these were a series of encounters with the state and its clumsy and ineffectual intrusions into the fabric of his family life. Watching with discomfort and annoyance how health and social work professionals dealt with the needs of his loved ones, Joe spoke of how he too became the object of their attentions when he dropped out of school aged 14. School for him had been unrewarding and this sense of dislocation only grew as his attempts to find meaningful work and then live independently met with limited success. For Joe it was these experiences that produced what he described as

feelings of 'a raw righteousness' whose object was 'the madness that is the world'. It was this powerful indignation and sense of legitimate anger had moved him to seek self-education in Marxist and radical socialist writings, and their associated parties and movements. Having already found the promises and practices of the social democratic left unsatisfying, Joe nevertheless became progressively disillusioned with the revolutionary left and the dissonance between its ideas of freedom and democracy and its insistence on the conformity of its activists. It was this disquiet that provided the basis of Joe's growing interest in social and community action and its seemingly more satisfying connections with the lived experiences and daily needs of his friends and family, and in its commitment to open and free association. Together with a very close friend, Joe was thus moved to begin 'several open projects', small-scale schemes and minor initiatives that also fed upon the inspiration provided by his mother and her own experiments in working class community activism. For Joe his burgeoning friendship and its associated projects were a tangible expression of his growing conviction to the intrinsic worth of self-directed activity:

> […] the things that we used to talk about made me think that what gave us any meaning to any of our conversations or our own feelings of what life was all about was that, you know, if you do what you're interested in … then you know, that's good enough, you become productive and we sort of, we felt like we could achieve a lot me and my friend by just, just, just working on the things that were, we felt, felt were meaningful.

These 'hobbies', as Joe termed them, expressed both his unease with the world and his corresponding belief in the necessity of alternative ways of living. For Joe, the worth of his 'hobbies' lay in their collaborative and convivial nature and the satisfaction he derived from actions whose means were as significant as their ends. Joe's good friend nevertheless died unexpectedly about a year before his involvement with Local Occupy and alongside his shock and grief, Joe grew concerned that something of greater significance might also be lost. It was this concern that Joe identified as directly instrumental in his decision to grab his

sleeping bag and head for the planned Local Occupy gathering. 'What brought me to the camp was, was just a feeling that I'd been sobered by the loss of my friend, my good friend', is how he put it. 'I liked the conversations I had with [friend's name], I learnt a lot from him, he taught me a lot about the world and I just wanted to keep that reciprocal learning going'. Full of optimism and hope, as well as filled with righteous anger, it was Joe's conviction that helped

> […] creat[e] a space where people can ask questions of themselves and
> the world and may be create a synthesis […] whereby […] they're giving
> something and taking something and may be helping to create a better
> world and that was really, really a massive thing that was central to my
> life after my friend died […] you're better doing the things that you love
> and enjoy for yourself, than being a sort of a tool, or a cog in a machine.

Fearing Nothing But Fear

Contained in Joe's emotional reasoning was also the presence of fear and his anxiety that his cherished values might pass along with the death of his friend. Yet fear is more likely to figure in analysis of emotions and social movements as an obstacle rather than a spur to action, where '[…] a key question to understand is when and how and why one person or a thousand people decide, individually, to do something they are repeatedly warned not to do because they will be punished' (Castells, 2012: 13). This fear of reprimand and possible punishment was certainly apparent in the reasoning of core Local Occupiers, but not always with the degree of salience that Castells suggests. Some protestors like Ray (late teens/early 20s), for instance, saw in their fears little reason for concern beyond the possession of mild anxiety that once elaborated and reflected upon was insufficient to muster a deterrent. 'The worst thing they could do us for was, um, aggravated trespass', was Ray's reflection, 'which when it comes to a group of say 40 people, they're not likely to take you to court'.

For others, in contrast, fear provides a much more significant source of reasoning. In these instances, it is in the intelligence of their emotions that good cause is found to overcome the dread of force and fear of repercussions that their activism may

provoke. Adamant that, '[g]enerally, I don't fear things […] I feared nothing', Heather too conceded her anxiety about participating in Local Occupy but the object of her fear was not so much authority, but her understanding of her own vulnerability. As one of the few young women to participate in Local Occupy's inner movement and to live at the camp for months at a time, Heather was alive to the possible perils of taking up residence in such a relatively unregulated space 'in the middle of town, in a tent, [where] anyone can walk in, anyone can take an opposing view to you […]'. Yet importantly these fears only served to strengthen her resolve. To succumb to 'the fear of like, oh if I talk to him what if he […] [puts her in peril]', would necessitate relinquishing some of the things that she had come to care most forcefully about. 'I've never been scared of wandering into the unknown because what, what are we here for other than to learn from each other, learn new things?' She continued, 'if you don't talk to that person, or if you don't engage with someone you don't know […] then you're never going to know anything outside of what other people are telling you'. For Heather, the force of this reason was significant enough to overcome both her own reservations and those of her father and college teachers.

> I, I, I couldn't have, you know, cowered back, I couldn't have worn a mask [i.e. hidden], I couldn't have, you know, shielded [myself] because that was […] I had this, you know, this urge to be there, I knew it was the right place for me to be, like I, I couldn't have thought of doing anything else, I couldn't have shut my mouth […]

If Heather's fears dwelt on her understanding of her own frailty, others did locate the object of their concerns at more of a distance. In participating in radical social movements in general, and Local Occupy in particular, it was acknowledged that they would come under the scrutiny of the police and the security services. Several participants spoke of examples of attempted infiltrations of the camp but their concerns also emanated from how their own and others' previous activism had exposed them to the attention of the authorities. For Clive and Laura this meant the uneasy acceptance that their earlier activities had attracted the attention of the police and their participation in anarchist organised demonstrations had been

closely monitored through the various paraphernalia of modern surveillance: afar from circling helicopters and the watchful eye of telephoto lenses, and up-close via hand-held video cameras and police spotters. They had, they insisted, found themselves literally caught in the crosshairs when protesting at a major political event, '[…] snipers trained on us as we walked past […] the police came over with their cameras, filming our group, so we put a flag in front of their cameras and they all ran round us about to kettle us.' (Laura, early/mid 20s). Both found these encounters unsettling, moments of concerns about their personal welfare and which, for Clive, had contributed to his decision to '[…] mask up quite a lot' (early/mid 20s). He continued, 'I'm not out to cause trouble but I know that, you know, our little group, when we go out on a protest, we're going to be watched […]'. For his partner, Laura, the experience of being monitored in such a close and intrusive fashion was felt in similarly discomfiting terms, but she took from this a characteristic source of defiance. Keenly aware of how her distinctive deportment made her presence at any demonstration a conspicuous one, Laura nevertheless held her style and manner to be a visible expression of her commitment not to let the fear of authority deny her the inalienable right that 'everyone should be able to be in a protest however they want.'

In this respect, fear of one's own vulnerability in the face of power is part and parcel of the unfolding emotional reasoning that led to participation in Local Occupy. Yet, in the testimonies of Laura, Heather and the others we also find some of the answers to Castells' question of how and why activists come to commit themselves in the face of such fears. If emotions provide an intelligent commentary on well-being and the things that one values, then it is in these that young people also find good reasons to confront and then transcend their fears. This is certainly evident in Laura's defiant style of dress and refusal to succumb to what she regarded as blatant intimidation. It is also glimpsed in Heather's determined efforts to overcome her real concerns about her safety derived from the desire to know about things she cared about for herself. As she summed up during one of our lengthy conversations, '[…]

with the fear thing, like I, I forget to, like, to be fearful, like I, I literally have a drive and I'll just do it.'

Conclusion

The argument advanced in this paper is that emotions are a fruitful object of analysis in the study of young people's participation in social movements. Protest and movement activism necessarily involve an emotional dimension, not least because feelings have to be sufficiently strong for young people to become active, while the arousal and organisation of feelings are a necessary activity if social movements are to form and develop. The problem, however, is that this focus on emotions can lead to subjectivist understandings of this significance. If, on the one hand, emotions are regarded as solely the instinctive preserve of individuals then they remain susceptible to equations with irrational and unreasonable behaviour, accusations that take on further significance when equated with a view of youth and adolescence as one of psychosocial turmoil. More important for sociological concerns, on the other hand, is the current importance given to the normative significance of emotions in processes of social movement formation and development. The problem here, however, is that a different form of subjectivism may be embraced. This is one that risks regarding emotions as the unthinking product of normative constraints, where young activists unthinkingly identify and interpret their emotions according the structures of feeling put down by the movements of which they are a part. To avoid such subjectivist understandings of young activists' emotions this paper has advocated a different approach. This is one that draws upon the arguments of social realists and the stress they give to the reasonable qualities of emotions and to their objective dimensions. Thus emotions are understood here as part of young people's reasoning activities undertaken in relation to those things that they care most forcefully about.

These themes have been explored in relation to data from research with a Local Occupy movement and specifically to how young people first became involved. Tracing through in considerable detail their feelings and sentiments, it has been

argued that emotions do play a clear and decisive role in these young people's evaluations of the world and their understandings of their relations to the things that they care most forcefully about. Accordingly, not only do young people care about people, places and events sufficiently enough for them to provide the 'shoving power' required to animate their participation in Local Occupy, but these processes of emotional reasoning can take complex and nuanced forms. Young Occupy activists can and do, moreover, engage in constant deliberation with the concerns that they come to hold. It is this evaluative component of their emotional reasoning that explains how courses of action first embarked upon are then found unsatisfactory and thus are modified or abandoned. In this respect Local Occupy's creation by young people was neither the product of emotional irrationality nor a normatively constituted affair. On the contrary, it has been argued here that the making of Local Occupy emerged from young people's long-standing concerns about the world, together with the emotional intelligence accumulated from the experiences of the practical successes and failures involved in trying to do something about them.

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[2] It is recognised that the term Local Occupy may be misleading because all Occupy demonstrations were by definition locally anchored. However, Local Occupy is used simply to locate the case study within the national and international movement of which it was a part and to highlight its existence as a smaller, regionally based example. The term Local Occupy also safeguards the confidentiality and anonymity of its participants, as does the removal of all identifying names and places.

[3] There were two Local Occupy camps following the voluntary relocation of the first camp to a second site.

[4] The research design defined young people as those under 30 years old in-line with the parameters of the MYPLACE project more generally. It must be noted that a small number of respondents who satisfied this requirement when the research began had passed the 30 year old threshold by the time the fieldwork had been completed.

[5] All quotations are verbatim and all names are pseudonyms. The ages of respondents quoted are left purposefully ambiguous to ensure anonymity and are intended to convey simply that a respondent is a younger young adult or an older young adult.

[6] Occupy camps were created near to the Hinckley Point nuclear reactor in Somerset and the intelligence base at Menwith Hill, for instance, but neither achieved much publicity.

[7] http://www.occupyuk.info [last accessed 28th November 2013]