

while facing staff and wage cuts, and increasingly told to button their lip when they demand a more robust response. Managers are torn between fighting for the next contract and fighting for people's rights. Too many are making the wrong choice and end up in a marketplace where survival and self-interested competition become the only options. The culture of faux professionalism has neutered principle, stripped out the politics, silenced workplace democracy and put distance between these "service providers" and the anger within the communities in which they work.

Such is the compliance with government that, in 2012, charity leaders felt able to tell ministers that the voluntary sector "stands ready" to implement government plans for privatisation, encourage volunteering as a substitute for public services and help those suffering increased poverty accept their circumstances.

The NCIA inquiry into the future of voluntary services is documenting this dismal picture. Thankfully, voluntary action is made up of more than the supine search for funding. Our previous inquiry into local activism and dissent, *Here We Stand*, revealed acts of resistance, which continue to multiply: a local Council for Voluntary Services formally aligned itself with local anti-cuts group; two charities in Liverpool withdrew from contracts; Lewisham Hospital campaigners exposed Jeremy Hunt's unlawful manoeuvring. The list goes on. What is needed is action on a scale that opposes public service privatisation, including the use of voluntary services for mainstream public service delivery, and the sub-contracting of charities to corporations. Beyond that, there is a need to forge working links between charities, campaigners, unions and others who are involved in the fight to stop cuts in living standards, rights and entitlements. |

Penny Waterhouse is the director of the National Coalition for Independent Action

Why Occupy lost its steam

Alasdair Roberts

It's been three years since the magazine *Adbusters* sent out the tweet that triggered the Occupy movement: "On 17 Sept, flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents,

kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street." By late 2011, many Occupiers were convinced they would change the world. Some called it "one of the most significant and hopeful events of our lifetimes". Today, however, optimism has faded. Why did it lose steam so quickly?

One important consideration was the internal logic of the movement itself. Occupy had an organising philosophy that seemed to be well-suited to the internet age. Hierarchy was passé: power was fully decentralised, so any Occupier had (in theory) the right to veto the statements or plans of his or her encampment. This made it hard for Occupy to build on early successes. Occupiers could not produce coherent statements about their goals. They could not negotiate alliances with others. And they could not control fringe elements whose behaviour undermined public sympathy.

Occupiers couldn't offer coherent statements about their goals

Occupy was also constrained because of changes in police capabilities. Since the 1990s, major urban police forces have invested heavily in crowd-control equipment and training. The goal is containment and minimisation of disruption. Because of this, big-city mayors had complete discretion to shut down the protests when public support began to wear out.

Today's globalised economy is also hypersensitive to disruption. When Occupiers briefly obstructed American ports, for example, the business community reacted fiercely. Meanwhile, Londoners and New Yorkers worried that protests would tarnish their city's "urban brand".

A final reason why Occupy failed: the emergency measures taken by the Federal Reserve and the Bank of England. If the British and American economies had continued to decline, the protest movement would have had more strength. But central bankers stepped in with experiments such as quantitative easing. In the end, therefore, the politics of the economic crisis might have been shaped more by technocrats and police forces, than by movements such as Occupy. |

Alasdair Roberts is the author of "The End of Protest: How Free-Market Capitalism Learned to Control Dissent"

The value of networks should not be forgotten

Hilary Cottam

Relationships are the key to a good old age, finding jobs, managing health conditions and to coping if you're in crisis. We intuitively understand that having a good relationship with the people we encounter makes life run more smoothly. This is something William Beveridge himself suspected, but most modern welfare institutions overlook.

At the end of his life, Beveridge, the architect of the welfare state, wrote that he had made a mistake: he had both missed and limited citizen power. While he continued to argue that the state must do more than it had in the past, he felt that "room, opportunity and encouragement for voluntary action in seeking new ways of social advance" and "services of a kind which often money cannot buy" were critical. He feared the way his institutions were designed forced citizens to become passive while others handed out welfare.

Instead of attempting to meet needs from the top down, we need to shift to fostering capabilities within individuals and their communities. For example, if you've signed on at the Jobcentre, you spend much of your time there talking to staff. But even the best advice can't do for you what a social network can – how else will you find unadvertised posts? Let's connect jobseekers to each other, as well as others who run small businesses, or want to collaborate on freelance work. Connecting with new people opens your eyes to wider possibilities and offers the opportunity to develop new skills, reconsider aspirations and help others. There's still plenty of scope for the state to be involved, facilitating these interactions and providing front-line workers who can offer practical support where needed.

Designing a relational response to our current challenges does not mean asking citizens to contribute their time to 1950s services as the state withdraws. It means designing services that combine resources in new ways and that value the relationships between people in every element of their response. |

Hilary Cottam is the founder of Participle