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Abstract: If Occupy Wall Street focused attention on the transnational resistance to the imaginaries and practices of neo-liberalization, the networked protests, collectively identified as #Occupy each emerged out of particular places, contexts and histories of contestation. This paper examines the significance in one urban region, the San Francisco Bay, and especially the intersection between #Occupy and longer-term residual urban social movements. Understanding neo-liberalization as a dynamic process, I begin by mapping the vectors of contention in the regional imposition of the neo-liberal project, and especially the sectors of housing, employment, education and media representation. I then analyse the intersection of the #Occupy moment, between two different politics – the direct action and militant commons, and the longer-term subaltern counter-spheres of the residual organizations. I then identify the impact on the dynamics of mobilization and intervention, and especially the imaginaries and practices of urban space, inclusion, and knowledge production.

Keywords: contentious politics, counter public spheres, enclosure, commons

Introduction

In their 2008 article documenting the contestation of neo-liberalization in cities and regions around the globe, Leitner, Peck and Sheppard described four realms of practice. Recognizing an enormous variety, with groups simultaneously engaging in several at once, they identified "direct action, lobbying and legislative action, alternative knowledge production and alternative economic and social practices". In the United States alone, thousands of organizations had engaged in struggles over living wages, job security, affordable housing, welfare, quality education, healthcare and transportation, and immigrant rights, among many others. Although some used direct action on a small scale, the most common practice that Leitner *et al.* identified was lobbying and legislative action (18). With the notable exception of the Seattle anti-WTO demonstrations, mass protest was rare with "little public resonance and support" (p. 15).

#Occupy Wall Street (OWS) and the hundreds of linked actions known as #Occupy, seems to have changed all that, almost overnight. Although organizations in New York and elsewhere have been targeting Wall Street and the financial sector for many years, the continuous occupation of Zucotti Park, coupled with the all-important securing of the

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powerful global media centered in New York, sparked a groundswell of loosely linked actions across the U.S., Canada and other global cities and shifted the public imagination. OWS disrupted the frame of the dominant corporate media, and of the Washington neo-liberal consensus. Fingering Wall Street and the tiny minority of Americans, or "the 1%", for their responsibility for the economic and social crises affecting the great majority of people, or "the 99%" they not only expanded the collective lexicon, but put poverty and systemic inequality back on the political agenda (Stelter, 2012). OWS also shook the myth of American exceptionalism, as commentators of all hues linked the urban protests in New York and other American cities with those in the public squares of Tunis, Cairo, Athens, and Madrid. Finally, OWS not only popularized a critique of the practices of global neoliberal capitalism; it dramatically put to rest Margaret Thatcher's notorious slogan, "there is no alternative."

#Occupy in the Bay

In the San Francisco Bay area where I live, a combination of novices and political veterans from new and long-standing organizations quickly followed OWS and set up #Occupy camps in San Francisco, Oakland and Santa Rosa, which lasted until December. Since then, #Occupy has inspired a very wide range of actions, including a second mass protest, or "general strike" at the Oakland Docks, a series of solidarity protests with striking ferry and other workers; coordinated student demonstrations at campus throughout the bay; the occupation of foreclosed houses on both sides of the Bay; several day-long take-overs of San Francisco financial district streets protesting the actions of Wells Fargo, weekly protests of the Bank of America in the San Francisco neighbourhood of Bernal Heights branch, May Day demonstrations in four different sites (two immigrant neighbourhoods and downtown squares of Oakland and San Francisco), several protests against police brutality towards youth of colour, and educational events throughout the region.

#Occupy not only represented a very wide range of social sectors, action repertoires and collective imaginations. They also involved more people than any public mobilizations since the huge mass protests against the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2002 and 2003. The disruption of the dominant frame, and the scope and scale of the actions captured the imagination of many. Media activist Tracy Rosenberg told me, "the #Occupy meme of the 99% framing was powerful in attracting people into a movement. The ordinary participant wanted and needed the power of the 99% idea. People don't want to be outnumbered. Even when they fight something, they want to be in the majority and they want to have a fighting chance at winning." Although the refusal of #Occupy to list specific demands has been widely criticized, it provided an umbrella for hosting a very wide range of individuals and groups, allowing as Rosenberg (2012) said, people "to step out of their own silos, forcing more cooperation. A whole lot of cross-fertilization happened."

#Occupy represented the growing immiseration of the American middle class, and especially the youth who face a new horizon of precarity. As importantly, the movement in the bay area drew from the work of those thousands of organizations that had been contesting neoliberalization. As Maria Poblet from the Latino and African American tenants' housing rights organization, Causa Justa/Common Cause, said:

Finally the people of the US have taken issue with the corporations of the US that have done so much harm to our communities inside the US and also in other countries. I remember thinking, maybe not everybody is asleep. Maybe people have noticed what's been happening over the last 10, 20, 30 years, maybe now the US people's movements will actually show their face and show their allegiances, and their allegiances will their corps, but instead with regular everyday people. And the fact that it was just out in the streets where

nobody could deny it, and where it was control of everyday people, it was inspiring. (Holmback *et al.*, 2011: no page)

The Bay area #Occupy was and is part of a very complex, multi-scalar web, of regional, national, translocal and transnational organizations and networks. Nevertheless, it arose from, and was situated within very particular local spatio-temporal dimensions, histories of contestation and of social movement organization, partly due to the innovative decision, taken, according to Steve Williams from People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER), to call on existing "community organizations, trade unions, other affinity groups" and organizations to engage with the "99% movement" (Holmback *et al.*, 2011). My own immediate perusal identified activists from previous global protests (counter-globalization, against the war on Iraq, and the environmental summits), the student and labour movements, anti-poverty and housing advocates, youth and criminal justice organizations, and groups aligned with the Right to the City Alliance[2]. These residual organizations contributed in many different ways, providing financial and other support, lobbying civic officials to stop and/or delay police intervention, and, as we see below, contributing narratives, political analyses/action frames, organizing and media strategies and tactical repertoires.

This paper examines the impact of #Occupy on the practices of inclusion, mobilization and intervention in the San Francisco bay area. A work-in-progress, as #Occupy is still ongoing, I focus on the interplay between the emerging organizational repertoires of #Occupy, some of which were part of a larger transnational movement for the commons, and those of existing urban justice organizations, which utilized the political praxis of community organizing of counter-hegemonic public spheres. I draw from participant observation at several street events and public forums, interviews, a reading of the publicly available media of #Occupy and allied organizations, of the dominant, public service and alternative media, and academic literature. Drawing on a decade-long study of the changing media ecology of the Bay area, I begin by mapping the growing spatial, temporal and social dimensions of contention over neo-liberalization, highlighting some of the vectors of injustice, and the organizations which have emerged in response, to provide the historical context to understand the Bay #Occupy movement. I then analyse the convergence between emerging and residual forms of organization, including the political intervention of the movement of the commons, and of the subaltern counter public sphere, focusing especially on counter-hegemonic practices of knowledge production, embodiment of city space, media representation, and economic and social practices.

"It's San Francisco"

The San Francisco Bay region has long been a magnet for people from all over the world, as much for its iconoclastic identity, as its educational, employment and lifestyle opportunities, and natural beauty. Summed up by the catch-phrase, "it's San Francisco," the region is popularly imagined as socially inclusive and "diverse", with a cornucopia of meanings, ranging from tolerance of race, ethnic difference and sexual identity, to individual

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[2] These included Causa Justa/Just Cause, Chinese Progressive Workers' Association, People Organized to Win (POWER), Pride at Work/HAVOQ.

eccentricities, outspokenness and radical politics. The historical memory of the urban social movements who developed this imaginary is a little fuzzy. Nevertheless, the DNA of activism of the anti-war and LGBTQ movements, Black Panther and other African-American urban justice organizations, United Farmworkers and immigrant rights organizations, militant dockworkers, Berkeley Free Speech movement and 1960s era Diggers and other communards, is still discernible in the collective imagination, existing urban justice organizations, and, as we will see, in that of the Bay area #Occupy movement.

This practice and imagination of contestation is stickily interwoven with the libertarian ethos of the urban frontier. Often cited as a global model of entrepreneurial and informational capitalism, the ideologies of competition, risk-taking and innovation date back much further than Silicon Valley and the neoliberal project. The City of San Francisco, (known simply as "the City") emerged during the gold rush of the mid nineteenth century, and still hosts the headquarters of several large banks, financial service institutions, and corporations. The port was relocated after the 1934 General Strike across the bay in Oakland; it is still important for international trade. Although no longer a military center, which some would blame on the anti-war movement (Hooper, 2007), the extensive U.S. Government military investment in high technology is still discernible in the defense, high-technology communications, pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical engineering industries, centered in Silicon Valley, in the South Bay near Palo Alto and Stanford University, with a number of satellite start-ups, back office, web design, and web-entertainment companies in the City and other municipalities. Complementing these are several well-known private and public universities, such as Stanford and Berkeley, and vibrant cultural communities of musicians, artists, filmmakers and writers.

"The playground of the rich"

In line with many global cities, San Francisco and other Bay area cities are fast becoming "playgrounds of the rich." Jobs with Justice activist Sheila Tully (2012) used the phrase to describe the growth of upscale commercial, residential and recreational developments for a wealthy minority, rather than for working and middle class communities. The city councils of San Francisco, Berkeley and other Bay area cities have sometimes fought this trend with social policies, such as living wage and health ordinances, and support of immigrants. However, they have largely been unsuccessful at stopping the larger neoliberal shift, begun by Reagan, in which affordable housing, healthcare, and education, were clawed back, with the simultaneous introduction of an ideological imaginary that moved the responsibility for poverty reduction away from the national government towards state and municipal governments, private providers, and individuals.

Gentrification, exacerbated by the new cash-ready millionaires of the tech boom, and massive cuts in public housing, has made affordable housing out of reach for most people.[3] As a result, thousands have been forced to the outer rings of the region, disproportionately affecting Latino, African American and other working class communities of colour, as well as

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[3] Nationally, 400,000 Section 8 vouchers, the housing subsidies for low-income people were cut, and 300,000 units of public housing turned into for-profit developments, removing them from availability to low-income people (Gans and Messman, 2012).

artists, and non-profit organizations. The recent housing crisis has only made things worse, with 35,000 homes lost to foreclosure since 2007 in Oakland alone, a rate more than double the national average (Arnold, 2012). It's easy to map the resulting "territorial injustice": poor communities of color are concentrated on the flat lands surrounding the bay, with rich white communities in the hills beyond (Pastor, Benner and Matsuoka, 2009: 62).[4]

However, these crises have also contributed to the bottom-up formation of several local social justice organizations, as well as regional and national grassroots networks (Leitner *et al.*, 2007; Pastor *et al.*, 2009; Soja, 2010; Harvey, 2012). Some of these groups played active roles in #Occupy San Francisco and #Occupy Oakland as I describe below. Causa Justa/Just Cause is a merger of two groups, the St. Peters Housing Committee and Just Cause, which formed to deal with the gentrification of urban neighbourhoods, of Latinos in San Francisco, and African Americans in Oakland, respectively. They have identified the problem as "gentrification and neoliberalism." Their practice combines support of tenants and home-owners through advocacy and direct action, policy lobbying at municipal and state levels, and campaign to pressure Wells Fargo and the other financial institutions responsible for the thousands of mortgage foreclosures.

Housing activists, such as the Coalition on Homelessness and the San Francisco Tenants Association have long advocated for poor people and those without adequate housing. They have fought against the imposition of "quality of life" citations that target and criminalize poor people in the downtown core especially (Kidd and Barker-Plummer, 2009), and more recently, regulations such as the sit/lie ordinance in San Francisco (Blue, 2012). They have also spoken out against the national, and indeed global, trend in which downtown public space has been privatized, if not in Mike Davis' words, "militarized." In the bay area, this has resulted from the establishment of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), which bypass the fiscal and governance limitations of California municipalities to operate with "state-like powers in policing, sanitation, redevelopment and taxation" (Drummond-Cole and Bond-Graham, 2012). Sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and real estate interests, their aim is to create environments conducive to urban consumption (shops, restaurants and high-end services) geared to tourists and the professional class who work in downtown offices. The BIDs enclose public space by taking over the "curb to property line", employ private security, and actively shut out poor people, and youth, and anyone who didn't fit the shopping profile from the downtown core and the transit services.

The third, intersecting vector of injustice is waged employment. In the new economy of flexible capitalism, the higher paid engineers, programmers, technicians and professional staff of finance, information and communication technologies (ICTs), and education and research have a rising horizon of opportunities. However the majority of people compete for a declining number of service jobs, with precarious conditions. The Chinese Progressive Workers' Association,[5] People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER),[6] Pride at

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[4] Oakland, Richmond, Vallejo and Daly City are some of the poorer working class communities, while Berkeley, Palo Alto, Marin are wealthy.

[5] The Chinese Progressive Workers' Association was founded in the 1970s, and focuses on employment rights, and tenant rights.

[6] People Organized to Win was founded in 1997 in response to the federal government's austerity programs and especially the comprehensive slashing of welfare.

Work/HAVOQ,[7] and La Raza Centro Legal) and Jobs with Justice are all organizing for the rights of workers. The significance of the temporal shift was made visible, as we see below, in some of the San Francisco demonstrations in the downtown core.

The economic crisis has only reinforced the exclusionary employment forces by affecting education. Student and faculty organizations annually mobilize against the deep cuts in programs, and the increasing costs of tuition and fees. The foreclosure crisis eliminated the wealth of millions of working class and middle class Americans, who had invested in a home, and left many families no longer able to finance their children's schooling. At the same time, student loan costs have risen, leaving many students with enormous debts.

The final vector considered here is media space and time. The region, like much of the U.S., experienced a massive contraction of the public sphere when corporate commercial consolidation in the 1980s and 1990s led to a reduction of most investigative and labour reporting; and local sources of news and cultural programming (Kidd and Barker-Plummer, 2009; Barker-Plummer and Kidd, 2010). This severely reduced the portrayal or discussion of the role of organized publics, or citizens' organizations, in the diagnosis and remedy of social issues (Kensicki, 2004). Organizations representing low-income people of colour, Spanish or other non-English speaking people, and anti-poverty and housing advocates were the most affected, and especially those that directly challenged the commercial logic of city newspapers, whose advertising budget is dependent on the real estate industry (Kidd and Barker-Plummer 2009).

During the 1990s and 2000s, these effects were mitigated to some degree by the growth of the alternative and independent media sector, which provided programming partly in response to the freeze-out of counter-hegemonic perspectives by the dominant commercial and national public service media. These outlets included community-based media, as well as a small contingent of media projects operated by social justice organizations (Kidd, 2010: 11). This marginalization from the dominant media sphere led, in part, to the development of alternative and independent media, during the 1970s and 1980s, as a platform for subaltern counter-public expression. More recently, subaltern counter-publics themselves have created their own means of communications, for analysis of the regulations and operations of the systems in which they live, the development of common frames and identities, and alternative imaginaries, and the exchange of tactics and strategies of contention. As I argue below, one of the most significant contributions of *#Occupy* has been their own self-generated communications, often outflanking the corporate commercial and independent media. By 2012, the innovations introduced by this sector had become socialized and *#Occupy* was able to draw on the residual alternative media, as well as assembling their own communication networks.

Political praxes – the movement for the commons

Two parallel, and overlapping political praxes, help locate the direct action of #Occupy, and the longer-profiled community-based organizations. #Occupy draws from the movement of the commons, and combines direct action with alternative economic and social practices; the

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[7] Pride at Work/HAVOQ, is a self-identified collective of queers who work towards economic and social justice with a focus on issues of labor, gentrification, immigration and homelessness.

existing groups use a politics of subaltern counter-public spheres, linked to alternative knowledge production and interventions with the state.

Long evoked by organizations in counter-globalization movements, including those involved in urban justice movements in the United States [8] many #occupiers used the discursive frame of the "movement for the commons." Sylvia Federici participated in OWS and visited #Occupy Oakland:

> By "movement for the commons" I refer to the struggles to create and defend anti-capitalist spaces and communities of solidarity and autonomy. For years now people have expressed the need for a politics that is not just antagonistic, and does not separate the personal from the political, but instead places the creation of more cooperative and egalitarian forms of reproducing human, social and economic relationships at the center of political work. (Haiven and Federici, 2011: no page)

The strategic intervention of the #occupiers was not only to contest the *enclosure,* and interrupt the privatization of public land, and the exclusion of the 99% from it. Much more, their goal was to produce a collective space, which they then cooperatively tended with elaborate systems of governance, and social reproduction, prefiguring a new paradigm of alternative forms of social and economic production as a commons.

#Occupy Oakland and #Occupy San Francisco created several different working groups in the square and outside, which attended to people's daily needs, such as food, shelter, health & safety, to ongoing activities for kids, and arts, media and cultural representation. The assemblies and working groups provided extended space and times for disparate groups to cohere, providing the glue, as Right to the City advocate Peter Marcuse writes, "a community of trust and commitment to the pursuit of common goals, physical proximity to each other, the close working together over time, the facing together of common obstacles and hardships" which "fosters strong reciprocal trust and mutual support" (2012: no page).

They not only modelled a different paradigm of governance and political intervention, but an alternative form of economy and social reproduction, creating new material/immaterial values, rather than a coalition of "no's" to state or corporations. Michelle Mascarenhas-Swan, a member of the east bay group Movement Generation, adds, "This is not just about making demands on the state, but also about reclaiming our right to meet our own needs directly, in community – to restore our resilience, our ability to support one another, to look after each other, to have the means to do that collectively (Choy, 2012: 42). Kate Hegé from La Raza Centro Legal concurred "Building community together is actually part of the tactic...The process is the tactic: the demand of inclusion; the demand of non-hierarchy—of really caring for each other" (Hursley, 2012).

Sylvia Federici described the value of the working groups concerned with daily coexistence to the reclaiming of the commons (Haiven and Federici, 2012). She favourably compared the provision of free food distribution, and the organization of cleaning and medical teams to the "ethics of care and sisterhood of the feminist movement", part of an increased attention to the need for collective reproduction and mutual support…which is that you cannot separate political militancy from the reproduction of your everyday life" (no page). She noted that the feelings of solidarity, inside and outside the encampments, had not been shared in such large numbers in the U.S. since the uprisings of the 1970s. The "tolerance and

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[8] See especially Federici (2010).

patience people demonstrate to one another in the general assemblies [are] a great achievement in comparison with the often truculent forms of behavior that were typical in the movements of the '60s" (no page).

The collective activity and solidarity is especially wanting in the contemporary entrepreneurial city, in which individual and groups are forced to compete with one another for resources in places of work, education, housing, recreation and media. As Media Alliance's Tracy Rosenberg commented, the #Occupy umbrella acted against the tendency of most non-profit organizations, funded by foundations, to focus narrowly on very specific time-limited projects for very particular constituencies. In contrast, #Occupy took "people out of their own silos, forcing more cooperation. A whole lot of cross-fertilization happened" (2012).

After the encampment phase, other initiatives such as *#Occupy the Farm,* and *#Occupy the School*, took up this political practice, collectively challenging the enclosure of public space with their physical bodies, and then cooperatively mobilizing production and social reproduction. On May, about 200 people occupied 14 acres of agricultural land on the Berkeley campus, immediately seeding plants and setting up collective activities. They utilized the commons framework:

> This idea that we need to fundamentally change the tenure relationship to land and housing in this country, to take soil out of the market, to restore the commons – all of these ideas share a common history. What's interesting for us right now is that there is an opportunity to take the tactic of claiming space and connecting it with real political projects that can transform people's relationship to place. (cited in Choy, 2012)

Their vision, according to Ashoka Finley, a program assistant with Urban Tilth, which supports the teaching of organic farming with students, was to "create a sort of sovereignty and allow a space for larger political expression where people can articulate their demand for a more egalitarian, just society through work done with their own hands" (Wu, 2012). "This is the new moment of #Occupy" said Gopal Dayaneni, "not tit for tat, not cat-and-mouse games with cops, but full-scale intervention. #Occupy the Farm is one of the first to-scale interventions" (Wu, 2012).

On June 15th, a group of teachers, parents, students and supporters occupied Lakeview Elementary School in Oakland, to protest against the closure of five elementary schools. Locally based, they raise the scope of school closures as a national problem of systemic discrimination against African American and Latino communities. Supported by the #Occupy Oakland Education Committee, their political demands address the immediate problem in the language of #Occupy. For example, they not only demand the reinstatement of the schools, and more systemic support for "quality public education" rather than private charter schools. They also demand: "Bail out Schools, Not Banks" and "Repudiate the State Debt" (Save Oakland Schools, 2012). The group also started a People's School for Public Education, in addition to the sit-in that provides education in sports, arts, music gardening and social justice. As one of the volunteers said, they did not want to wait for other people to make a change. They would "build the world we want in the shadow of the old."

Counter-public spheres

Just as "direct action" needs to be complicated, so does the practice of lobbying and legislative change, particularly as it is practiced by the existing urban justice groups which are members of the Right to the City Alliance. Drawing from Nancy Fraser (1991) and Sziarto

and Leitner (2010), I suggest that they better fit the political praxis of *subaltern counter-publics*, which intervene with new social, cultural and political claims with the dominant spheres of the commercial market, and state policy-making. Fraser identified two moments of distinct, communications-centered practices, the 'politics of *recognition*' in which subaltern groups come together to create shared identity, articulate group interests and demand recognition; and the 'politics of *redistribution*', in which claims to resource redistribution are made to the dominant public spheres (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 1-5). Sziarto and Leitner further spelled out the importance of negotiation across difference, within alliances, with spatial-temporal and emotional dimensions (Sziarto and Leitner, 2010: 382).

Subaltern counter-publics are "not merely spaces for the marginalized and/or oppressed to speak in their 'own' voices and be heard, but places for developing oppositional or alternative politics, with active participation in economic and political decision-making and social change as larger goals" (Sziarto and Leitner, 2010: 383). *#Occupy* was the spark for a winter and spring of education and knowledge development. Regular forums and teach-ins at community organizations and educational institutions, and on the radio, have provided a wealth of knowledge about the operations of the capitalist system, and particularly the workings of banking, housing and educational finance, and history of social justice movements in the U.S. and internationally. They invited elders to speak, and life-long activists such as Angela Davis, Grace Lee Boggs, and the Reverend James Lawson, have shared their experiences and their strategic lessons for strategy. The community-based organizations also held forums; one of which featured a discussion with Causa Justa/Common Cause, Chinese Progressive Assocation and EBASE and underscored the need for spontaneous uprisings such as #Occupy, *and* longer term electoral and policy reforms; for innovation from young leaders *and* elders, for umbrella style convergences and more focused actions (Poblet, Liu and Anderson, 2012). The labour movement, in collaboration with MoveOn, sponsored a series of April trainings for organizers.

The #Occupy encampments, and the continuing encounters within the squares and plazas, bus caravans, and street actions, as well as social media and other digital spaces, provided long-lasting opportunities for the collective production of knowledge. The extended time and space allowed multiple counter-publics to speak and listen to each other, with relative insulation from the noise, if not the surveillance of the police and dominant media. It allowed for expression about very difficult problems that have affected individuals, and social groups, and crucially, for the articulation of these private problems as collective and public issues, making them public matters (Sziarto and Leitner, 2010: 383).

The attention to using moments of convergence for transformation drew on earlier movements such as the African American and Chicano civil rights and women's movements, which had also used music and testimonials to great effect. #Occupy re-energized their use. #Occupy provided a platform for members from the existing community-based groups to explain the difficult issues facing the 99% – such as joblessness, the decimation of the social safety net, the lack of democracy and of power to control one's own communities – from the perspective of their communities (Poblet, Liu and Andersen, 2012).

The mutual emotions that were unleashed, "creates space for new identifications to emerge" (Sziarto and Leitner, 2010: 384). Brooke Anderson, from the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBase) works with independent truck drivers at the port of Oakland, and said that #Occupy had values to share with the labour movement and vice versa:

> It's taken some of the shame and the stigma that so many folks have felt. The truck drivers I work with so many times are being evicted, foreclosed, in massive amounts of debt, having to leave their homes and whole multiple families moving into one apartment and were afraid to speak about that in public. I didn't

work hard enough. I must have been doing something wrong; and framing it as the 99% has given us an opportunity to say "no, this is a problem of the banks and the financial institutions, right?" (Poblet, Liu and Andersen, 2012: no page)

The encounters in the encampments, and in the #Occupy-inflected actions, did not remove the divisions of power in the movement. As Sziarto and Leitner point out, the politicising of "private" issues is only possible with what Coles called "receptive generosity;" "listening with an openness to engagement that creates space for new identifications to emerge" (2010: 384). There have been constant clashes over differences of tactics and strategies, of class, race and ethnicity, and especially between those stigmatized for their homelessness, and those with secure employment and housing.

Nevertheless, the #Occupy focus on the exchange of personal/political narratives provided some legitimation and amplification for the message of the existing urban justice groups (Hursley, 2012). These organizations had long been educating their members and engaging in public action to show the deep systemic connections between capitalism and the exploitation of workers in low-waged jobs, of tenants by landlords, and home-owners by the banks. #Occupy provided a platform to bring those issues to light, and to scale up their significance. As María Poblet said, we were able to connect

the dots for the privileged layers of society that are losing some of those privileges that our communities never enjoyed in the first place… In my perspective what has happened in the United States is the failure of the neoliberal economic model coming home to roost. The United States 1% created the playbook and they farmed it out to a lot of other countries. (Poblet, Liu and Andersen, 2012: no page)

The focus on testimonies, and individual story-telling, provided an opening for members of the residual community organizations. Shaw San Liu of the Chinese Progressive Association said:

Suddenly the moment exploded and we weren't just talking about income inequality and how taxes have been dropping on corporations and the rich, but we were able to show pictures and slides of protests and tumblr photos of everyday people who were putting their stories up. This was to an audience, our members, who are very wary of putting out their individual stories, and really not wanting to lose face over the fact that they're unemployed or they're poor. We got our members involved in writing their own stories, and taking their photos and uploading them as well and getting a different perspective into the mix. (Poblet, Liu and Andersen, 2012: no page)

The emphasis on articulation and recognition of different subaltern counter-public spheres, utilized by #Occupy and allied groups, strengthened the public mobilizations in their interface with the dominant public spheres. For example, I attended a demonstration in November 2011 against cuts in education, together with #Occupy San Francisco, and several different students' organizations throughout the bay at the Federal Building in downtown San Francisco. As buses brought people in from all over the bay area, the marchers arrived from the #Occupy encampment. A temporary stage was assembled. Rather than the conventional speeches, from official representatives, individuals were encouraged to get up and speak to the crowd. The organizers began by modeling the practice, selecting a diversity of speakers who began with short biographical statements that connected their life experience, or that of their community, to either the current crisis, or the future impact on education. Speakers talked of being the first from their immigrant communities to attend university, of the impact of debt on their families, or of the growing class and race inequalities in California institutions. It was a very cold day, but people stayed; providing this platform engaged many more people, from those who volunteered their stories, to those for whom the stories

resonated among the crowd. Overall, the discursive message provided a much wider horizon of experience, of those affected by the educational cuts, of the communities that were mobilizing, and of the larger societal impact on education, and our collective future.

Representational interventions: Self-generated and controlled media

#Occupy also represented a watershed in self-generated and controlled media production. Any challenge to corporations and nation states must involve building effective communications to communicate horizontally with members and allied organizations, circulate alternative knowledge and disrupt or change the dominant frame. These complex practices cannot be reduced to technology, such as twitter or facebook, but involve a whole new set of tactical repertoires. Like most other organizational aspects of #Occupy, the media working groups were seeded by media-savvy activists from previous cycles of struggle. In San Francisco, the greater role in the DIY media efforts was played by individuals from the anti-poverty, housing rights, and other community organizations with media training (Kidd and Barker-Plummer, 2009); in Oakland by the police brutality activists and to some degree the "decolonize" movement (Rosenberg, 2012).

#Occupy nimbly used social media to mobilize people. They produced a wide range of self-representation, which they were then able to circulate to a scope and scale much greater than any earlier movements. Live coverage of the local and most of all the other #Occupy activities were made available 24/7 through the web stream, first initiated in New York. Daily images, reports and analyses were also linked to a wide decentralized net of web-based sites, thus circulating them around the world. Independent and alternative media, with platforms in television, radio, and print, then re-assembled the reports and stories for audiences off the web.

#Occupy was able to transcend the long-standing monopoly practices of U.S. corporate, public service and independent media. Instead of bargaining for media coverage and then passively waiting for the mediation of their story by the dominant media, the #Occupiers reported it themselves. As Media Alliance's Tracy Rosenberg (2012) told me:

> The #Occupy media beat everyone else out in speed and accuracy. I think the major issue about weight and perspectives that was interesting was the consistency from occupiers that there were no leaders and everyone speaks for themselves…it represented a rejection of the ethos that the media reinforces the power dynamics in any structural system it encounters and it largely made #Occupy impenetrable to journalists unable to accept the frame.

Rather than complain about media coverage, a preoccupation of most social movement groups, the *Occupiers* were more concerned with a new set of problems of which "alternative voices were credible" among the bloggers, citizen journalists and social justice groups (Rosenberg, 2012).

#Occupy's success in circulating their own media messages, and garnering independent and dominant media reportage, changed the scope and scale of the message. In the San Francisco bay area, the corporate media covered #Occupy extensively. They put an individual face and story to the people affected by the mortgage crisis. This attention has carried over to the protest cycle in the spring, with much more reporting about the deeper issues such as the widespread foreclosure crisis, the impact of the fiscal crisis of the state of California on education, and employment. There have also been more stories on the role of community organizations in remedying these injustices. The attention of the corporate media to issues

that they had been raising in their organizations in turn helped organizations raise their profiles in their own communities (Poblet, Liu and Andersen, 2012).

Although much of the dominant reporting continued to focus on incidents of violence, the relative #Occupy media autonomy meant that another narrative, which spotlighted the problems of police brutality in low-income communities, was circulated. "That much got established in the public imagination", said Tracy Rosenberg (2012): "That means injustice, inequality, homelessness is not invisible and can't be swept away. The police can attack with flash grenades but we all have to see that. That makes a difference."

Interventions into the cityscape

The combination of political praxes, of commoners and counter-publics, has changed the face of the city and of who protests. During the encampment phase, and ever since, the downtown core has seen ongoing demonstrations. This kind of disruption is not all that rare in San Francisco. However, the post-#Occupy protests were different. The targeting of financial institutions in the financial district disrupted the taken-for-grantedness of the grey-suited daytime scene. As journalist Rose Aguilar told me, the professional workers in the financial district no longer could be sure when there might be a protest in very close proximity that focused attention on their work right (Aguilar, 2012).

The actions continued the long-standing "reclaim the streets" subculture that has long thrived in arts and culture movements, and also in San Francisco gamer culture, according to Tracy Rosenberg of Media Alliance (2012):

> It represents the good fusion of cultural critiques with street politics where each makes the other more potent. Occupiers #Occupy. That much got established in the public imagination, which means that social justice concerns now manifest in a direct physical impact on the physical environment in a concrete way you can see, smell and hear – whatever is being occupied in whichever way.

The broad representation of the protests has complicated the image of city contention. The demonstrations, such as the one in front of Wells Fargo, on April 24th, included the purple jackets of the members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the janitors and other workers who inhabit the city at night-time, and who have been all but invisible in the city imaginary. The picture also included other members of working class community organizations, faith-based leaders assembled to speak and listen, as well as drummers and musicians.

#Occupy everything

As I finish this account, #Occupy continues to resonate throughout the bay area. A week does not go by without a protest about the impact of austerity on health and education, a demonstration against police brutality in the city as well as the suburbs, an occupation of housing or land, or a march to the state legislature to enact reform. Local governments have shown a new willingness to challenge financial institutions, in concert with the national government (Said, 2012). Two city level politicians, in San Francisco and Oakland, have proposed different measures asking their councils to divest from the major banks. And some would argue, that the support for a new California state tax may partly be due to the 99% meme resonating with the public (Arnold, 2012). And the City of San Francisco has followed up on the pressure from groups such as the Chinese Progressive Association and announced the formation of a wage-theft task force.

All of these events have recast the imaginary, and provided a guide to alternative practices of inclusion, mobilization and intervention. The infusion of #Occupy into already existing urban justice groups has helped many groups sharpen and make their messages more effective, and has scaled up work that had already been going on. The conflicts between groups continue; however, the vision remains – of a mass of people in movement, disrupting the taken for granted narratives, and demonstrating alternative ways of knowing and of living in the city. As Sheila Tully said to me, #Occupy allowed "people to think beyond money and themselves, and to consider the "question of where *we* are going as a society. *#Occupy* provided a vision of a community who cares for one another."

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