The Counter-Hegemonic Spectacle of *Occupy Wall Street*: Integral State and Integral Struggle

El espectáculo contrahegemónico de Occupy Wall Street: *estado integral y lucha integral*

Marco Briziarelli (University of New Mexico, USA)
[mbriziarelli@unm.edu]

Susana Martinez Guillem (University of New Mexico, USA)
[susanam@unm.edu]

Abstract

In this article, we explore the US social movement "Occupy Wall Street." First, we look at how its members attempt to construct a counter-hegemonic 'spectacle' characterized by an unstructured, leaderless and 'ideology-less' organization enacted by a series of practices that utilize communication and re-signification as the main terrain of confrontation. Secondly, we draw on Gramsci in order to stress the importance of the "integral state"—a concept that emphasizes how a successful hegemonic project achieves a "historic bloc" only when it operates both at the level of state and civil society. We claim that Occupy Wall Street's goals require an equally integral kind of struggle, one that operates at all of these multiple levels.

Resumen

Este artículo se centra en el movimiento social norteamericano conocido como Occupy Wall Street. Por una parte, analiza la intención de sus participantes en la construcción de un 'espectáculo' contra-hegemónico caracterizado por una organización sin estructuras, líderes, o 'ideologías,' cuyas prácticas se basan en la comunicación y la resignificación como principales áreas de confrontación. Por otra parte, se presenta el concepto gramsciano de "estado integral" como herramienta para enfatizar en qué medida un proyecto hegemónico se constituye como "bloque histórico" sólo cuando es capaz de integrar al Estado y a la sociedad civil. Los objetivos de Occupy Wall Street, por tanto, requieren una lucha también integral que se mueva entre estos niveles.

Keywords

Counter-hegemony, crisis, Gramsci, integral state, Occupy Wall Street, social movements

Palabras clave

Contra-hegemonía, crisis, estado integral, Gramsci, movimientos sociales, Occupy Wall Street

1. Introduction: A Creative Destructive Crisis

The recent economic crisis in the West has brought dramatic changes for a wide segment of the populations of many Western nations (Marshall, 2010), pushing them to live in precarious circumstances where taken for granted rights are no longer guaranteed, and the difference between the haves and the have-nots has exacerbated. However, differentials of conditions, wealth, and access to resources are not mere characteristics of crises, but rather constitutive traits of the capitalist game. In fact, as the etymological origin of the word "crisis" reminds us— from the ancient Greek κρίσις: a turning point, an unstable situation —destruction is intrinsically linked to its opposite, being as productive as creation. Thus, an economic crisis establishes the discrepancy between who is in need and who is not, between who sells labor and who wants to extract value out of it, making cheaper the former and enhancing the latter.

The concurrence of both reproductive and transformative elements in the current crisis has thus shown the dialectical nature of such a process, exemplifying what Schumpeter (1994, p. 82) defined as the quintessential characteristic of capitalism: "creative destruction". Consequently, as Marx remarks, "the violent destruction of capital" takes place "not by relations external to it, but rather as a condition of its self-preservation" (1973, p. 750).

Nonetheless, even if capital can still easily reproduce in times of crisis, consent to its logic should not be taken for granted. In fact, in this rapidly deteriorating economic context, an increasing amount of until now economically comfortable citizens have begun to seriously question the inherent characteristics of the current economic model. Hence, it was only when the pressure exerted by material constraints produced a dramatic shrinking of life chances that mobilizations such as *Indignados* in Spain, or Occupy Wall Street in the US, became possible. Not surprisingly, then, these movements attracted former economically integrated, even privileged actors, thus partially disrupting the typical—and maybe more socially manageable—image of the subaltern, marginalized protester.

In this article, we explore the US social movement "Occupy Wall Street" (hereafter OWS). Our objective is to interrogate this form of social mobilization regarding its ability to contribute to the construction of counter-hegemony, as well as to provide a more general argument about the perils and possibilities of social mobilization in times of crisis. We interpret OWS as embedded in a framework of multiple tensions that we explain through a Gramscian lens: tensions between identified objectives and adequate means to achieve them, between civil society and state, between the strategies of "war of maneuver" and "war of position," and finally between conventional and unconventional politics.

First, we examine how OWS members attempt to construct a counter-hegemonic 'spectacle' characterized by an unstructured, leaderless and 'ideology-less' organization enacted by a series of practices that utilize communication and re-signification as the main terrain of confrontation. In this context, we question whether those particular features of OWS serve as strategies to construct counter-hegemony, or rather as representations of the society this group aspires to construct. In the second part of paper, we use Gramsci's insights in order to advance a critical analysis of OWS. We stress the importance of producing what we define as an "integral struggle" against the "integral state". Gramsci's notion of "integral state," a synthesis of the cultural, social, economic, and political spheres, emphasizes how a successful hegemonic project achieves a "historic bloc" only when it operates both at the level of state and civil society. We claim that OWS's goals require an equally integral kind of struggle, one that operates at all these multiple levels.

2. Occupy Wall Street

After a brief introduction to the history and development of "Occupy," we explore here the main strategies and features that characterize this initiative. The movement gained media visibility on September 17th, 2011, when a diffuse group of activists organized a protest called "Occupy Wall Street" and camped in Zuccotti Park, a privately owned park in New York's financial district. Influenced by similar initiatives in North Africa and Western Europe (Castañeda, 2012; Kerton, 2012; Lawrence, 2013) "Occupiers" literally took the streets of New York, protesting against the corruption of the democratic process due to social inequality, corporate greed, and the erosion of life opportunities for the great majority of the population—as one of the group's most repeated slogans, "we are the 99 percent," clearly asserted.

The physical dimensions of "Occupy" were, from the beginning, tightly connected to the virtual spaces provided by I.C. technologies—a strategy that enabled both familiarity with and the mirroring of Occupiers' predecessors in other parts of the globe. Thus, the call to "Occupy" rapidly spread through social media, and some members were also quick to develop a website that could serve as an accessible platform for the expression of the movement's demands. On September 30, 2011 the "Declaration and Manifesto of Occupy Wall Street Movement" was added to this website. The first paragraph of this document synthesizes the main motivations behind the occupation:

As we gather together in solidarity to express a feeling of mass injustice, we must not lose sight of what brought us together. We write so that all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world can know that we are your allies. As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors; that a democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power (NYCGA, n. d., 1).

From the movement's initial stages, the police responded with tough repressions: the encampments were subject to consistent raids; the parades were obstructed and used to justify arrests (Liboiron, 2012; Taylor & Gessen, 2012). In parallel, mainstream politics tried to opportunistically capitalize on the situation. The Democrats, initially motivated by the popular appeal of OWS, timidly expressed their support, but in the end, the party considered this social movement to be a dangerous radicalizing force (Berger, 2012). The Republicans, by depicting OWS as anti-American and Marxist, instrumentalized the movement in order to exploit the residual—but still powerful—rhetoric of the "red scare" and the dangers of populism. For instance, the right wing website *The American Dream* was quick to publish an article tellingly titled "Solid Evidence that Occupy Wall Street is a Communist Movement Run by Socialists who Wish to Bring Down the Free Enterprise System" (Michael, 2012).

By the first week of October 2011, the protests occupied 7% of national news coverage, which went down to 2% in late October (Pew, 2011). In the following months, with its activists forced to leave the streets and evicted from their encampments by local law enforcement officials, OWS risked being consigned to the margins of public discourse. Between late October and December of 2011, mayors in cities across the country moved to clear encampments in places like New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Atlanta, San Francisco and Boston, among others, with several removal attempts resulting in violent confrontations between police and protesters (Moynihan, 2012).

By November of 2011, OWS moved to university campuses, mobilizing students against tuition hikes. In the spring of 2012, occupiers started to partially "re-occupy" public spaces by sleeping on sidewalks outside bank branches, as well

as organizing sleeping spots, although many of these attempts were ultimately unsuccessful. Currently, having just celebrated its third anniversary, "Occupy"-informed activism continues across the US, even though the movement has clearly lost visibility and diluted into specific initiatives. One of these is "Strike debt!" which aims at buying and cancelling individuals' debt derived from education, heath, and housing. This "resistance movement" defines itself as "an offshoot of the Occupy movement" that respects many of its principles (Principles of Solidarity, n.d., 3).

In the following pages, we examine some of the numerous ways in which OWS carried on its battle. Needless to say, it is not our goal to treat this movement as a single social body, but as a compound of different voices and contradictory positions that develops through incessant internal debates (Smucker, 2014).

2.1 Occupy's Counter Spectacle

Members of OWS present themselves as picketing against the spectacle of Wall Street through their physical and symbolic presence. In order to construct their counter spectacle, "Occupiers" draw on Guy de Bord and the Situationist International (see Elliot, 2011)—the movement that played an important role in the May 1968 uprising in France. According to Debord (1982) late capitalism presents itself as a spectacle that stands in front of us as an "immense accumulation of commodities" (p. 1), a powerful collection of phantasmagorias that limit our sociological imagination. One of the most powerful spectacles of neoliberal capitalism is Wall Street, a stage in which money, commodities, and people transit at an incredible speed. However, even more spectacular has been the crisis of such a mode of production, as Badiou acutely describes:

As it is presented to us, the planetary financial crisis resembles one of those bad films concocted by that factory for the production of pre-packaged blockbusters that today we call the "cinema". Nothing is missing, the spectacle of mounting disaster, the feeling of being suspended from enormous puppet-strings, the exoticism of the identical – the Bourse of Jakarta placed under the same spectacular rubric as New York, the diagonal from Moscow to Sao Paulo, everywhere the same fire ravaging the same banks – not to mention terrifying plotlines: it is impossible to avert Black Friday, everything is collapsing, everything will collapse (2008, p. A1).

As one of the cultural promoters of OWS, the Adbusters editor Kalle Lasn (Elliot, 2011) recommended that OWS should aim at the construction of a situation, a unity of space, time, and people that at the same time emancipates its inhabitants

and resists the pressure of the system. The movement also relies on re-signification strategies, thus privileging a culturally constructivist epistemology. Last but not least, it is inspired by the anarchy-driven idea of a structure-less and leaderless organization that refuses the calcifying implications of traditional ideologies and conventional politics (Gitlin, 2012). We develop each of these aspects below.

2.2 Constructing a situation

Let us then examine, first of all, the idea of the constructed situation, which consists of the creation of an event or place that is an alternative to the *status quo* through the occupation of a space. OWS seeks to create a dis-alienating situation that replaces representation with a real communitarian society. As such, the movement implicitly situates itself against what Marx called "commodity fetishism," seen as a misleading understanding of social relations whereby "what is, in fact, a relation between people," assumes "the fantastic form of a relation between things" (Marx, 1990, p. 165). In some of the practices of OWS, we see a clear motivation to re-appropriate a particular space—most notably, Wall Street—thus providing new opportunities for people to relate to it. As "Mark," one of the participants in the New York encampment, puts it: "the idea of the occupation is to remind everyone that Wall Street belongs to the city of New York" (Taylor & Gessen, 2012, p. 22).

Like the Epic Theater of Brecht—which tried to demystify ideological alienations through theatrical experiences—Occupiers build up their own scene as an occasion for estrangement from the everyday deceptive spectacle offered by capitalism (Debord, 1982). In this context, Zuccotti Park represented a situated space where people could concretely interact together as human beings and not commodities. OWS members thus attempt to materialize the concrete implications of the spectacle of the global stock market and the crisis, and its increasing condition of being taken for granted as, for example, a personified subject: 'somebody' who thinks, expressing judgments and emotions.

From the movement's perspective, the spectacle of Wall Street is hypnotizing enough to provide the indisputable justification for dismantling social programs, automatically validating austerity policies for the people and bailouts for banks. Occupiers try to shed light on such a spectacle by placing bodies in its way, therefore challenging its apparent sense of immediacy and substantiality. From this perspective, as Judith Butler put it when she expressed her support for the group, the important fact is having "Bodies in Public," even if these bodies make no specific demands (in Taylor & Gessen, 2012, p. 192).

2.3 Occupying through meaning

The second important aspect of OWS concerns its reliance on re-signification strategies as a way to actively shape the environment where actors operate. For Occupiers, the creation of an alternative space is both concrete—as we explained above—and abstract, since "Occupying" entails not only re-appropriating a public space, but also re-appropriating a *voice* in the public sphere through the use of images, sounds, and slogans that are publicly exposed in that space.

In this context, an important component of the strategies within OWS consists of re-signifying the discourse of capitalism, thus turning its meaning against itself. The culture jamming operation of the magazine *Adbusters* stands out as the most important representative of this technique. This outlet has produced important visual icons for OWS's imagery—such as the drawing of a ballerina dancing on the head of Wall Street's charging bull. But there are also language-based examples, especially visible in the movement's signs and slogans. In these texts, there is a constant reframing of issues that builds on and tries to ironically appropriate culturally shared meanings.

The intended effect of these appropriations, as seen in many of the posters displayed by New York demonstrators, relies on the assumed knowledge of different symbols of capital trading—as in the sign "No Bulls, no Bears, Only Pigs". Other knowledge assumptions include the dominant, neoliberal economic narrative—as in the slogans "we are too big to fail," or "Free Enterprise is not a Hunting License"—and awareness of corporate habit—as in the logos that read "Outsourced," and "USA: United Shareholder Association".

Overall, the different resignification strategies put forward by OWS show a clear emphasis on the discursive and ideological aspects of power relations. The movement thus introduces a "meta-politics frame" (Fuster Morell, 2012) that carries with it the repositioning of particular places and communication practices against, but in relation to, their original contexts—thus demystifying their society's common sense.

2.4 Organizing without leaders

The third important characteristic of Occupiers is their refusal to embrace a static ideology in order to prevent the sclerotization of the movement, and their settling for more conventional political objectives. Such a rejection also represents, for the movement, a direct engagement with a materialist argument: in other words, Occupiers reject the systematizing function of ideologies as an abstraction of real concrete life, which is instead considered to be inhabited by complex contradictions linked to people's material concerns. As one participant

in the occupation observes: "as we grow and change, our forms of organization necessarily change as well. New structures are constantly being explored, so that we may create the most open, participatory and democratic space possible" (Taylor & Gessen, 2012, p. 9).

One direct implication of not being explicitly tied to any specific ideology is the fact that Occupiers conceive the organization of their group as leaderless and structure-less. As Gautney (2011) observes, traditionally leftist social movements used to aspire to become or function as a political party. In this context, their internal debates were mostly limited to the degree of centralization or decentralization, and whether such a party should aspire to revolutionary or reformist objectives. By contrast, OWS incorporates an anarchist and Marxist autonomist component that rejects the traditional organization of a social movement (Gitlin, 2012).

OWS members claim that their movement represents the effort to create an alternative community that "eliminates hierarchy, bosses, managers, and pay differential […]. The goal is to be more participatory and more horizontal" (Taylor & Gessen, 2012, p. 10). This form of organization translates into the rejection of what Lenin (1987, p. 311) defined as "bureaucratic centralism" i.e. having a bureaucratic apparatus replacing the democratic functioning of a group. However, Occupiers' refusal to embrace the structured and hierarchic model of the political party is not only based on autonomic and anarchic principles but also, and maybe more importantly, on factual and experiential elements: for these protesters, recent history has demonstrated that conventional politics consistently fails to represent the concrete needs of the people who elect their representatives. As OWS organizer Yotam Marom stated in an interview: "We need to recognize that the institutions that govern our lives really do have power, but we don't necessarily need to participate in them according to their rules. I think Occupy Wall Street's role is to step in the way of those processes to prevent them from using that power" (Klein & Marom, 2012, 5).

The rejection of conventional political organization can also be seen in some of Occupiers' preferred forms for discussion, deliberation and decision-making. In the case of OWS, the traditional political party model for social movements has been replaced by what Kauffmann (in Taylor & Gessen, 2012) calls the "theology of consensus". In his piece in the "Occupy Gazette," Kauffmann claims that OWS—according to him, inspired by the Quaker form of deliberation—adopts a system that, through general assemblies, aims at two united but distinct objectives: unanimity and unity. This is seen as "a process through which groups come to agreement without voting" (Kauffman, 2012, p. 12). Thus, for instance, instead of voting each line of a program, the assembly refines the text until everyone finds it acceptable. Along with this method,

Occupiers also adopted a so-called "spoke council" in order to empower "ongoing operational coordination and decision making" (Kauffmann, 2012, p. 11). The "spoke council" is a kind of confederated direct democratic tool according to which each discussion sub-group entitles one "spoke person" to sit in a circle with other spokes. "Spokes" are not representative, but rather mouthpieces for their subgroups.

Associated with its non-hierarchical forms of organization is the group's attempt to operationalize the concept of "horizontal communication" (Cardoso, 2004) understood as a democratization of mediated communications. Horizontal communication implies the production of communication through inexpensive and popularly available means (not concentrated in a few hands), which allows a symmetric communication that links many to many as opposed to one to many. Such kinds of communicative practices have been described with different terms, such as "alternative media" (Atton, 2002), "citizens' media" (Rodriguez, 2002), or "radical media" (Downing, 2001). The common denominator in this terminology is the strong connection between certain communicative practices and a given set of social relations marked by the absence of vertical structures.

One example of this connection is found in the different recommendations for (future) Occupiers that appear in one of OWS's official webpages, called "how to occupy". These include combining technologies, techniques, and cultural artifacts such as Mumble, Open Space Technology, or Facebook. As the section "quick guide for a revolution" asserts:

> The net is an instant and unlimited space where millions of people can meet and organize, uniting countries and cultures, creating connections that would be impossible otherwise. The net is the only democratic, horizontal and decentralized space where huge powers are weaker than the sum of the citizens (Quick guide for a revolution, 2012, 12).

Such a multimodality of communicative practices represents a practice that contributes to constituting or re-negotiating the identity of the movement and the link each individual member establishes with the whole collectivity. Accordingly, the individual and the collective voices are given the same weight.

Occupiers also endorsed a horizontal organization through the creation of numerous spaces for expression, such as the micro-blogging service "wearethe99percent.tumblr.com," where every member of the "99%" was invited to

create a speech act describing his/her own "Story of resignation" (Taylor & Gessen, 2012, p. 27). Here, once again, the singular voices were not meant to stand alone as individuals, but as the chorus of the 99% of the people. Through this tumbler, the movement called attention to the priority of real life activity, which continually experiments and corrects itself in order to cope with material constrictions—such as student loans or health care expenses. As one participant claims through the Facebook page of "Occupy Boston," for Occupiers "the process is the message" (in Gitlin, 2012). Thus, through a reformulation of the famous quote by Marshall McLuhan, the emphasis is moved to how the ideas of OWS, instead of being fixated by abstract theorization, are embedded in lived experience (Gitlin, 2012).

2.5 'Red Ink' as social change?

On October 9, 2011, the Slovenian philosopher-scholar Slavoj Žižek spoke at Zuccotti Park, where Occupy Wall Street protests were being held. The following is an excerpt from his speech:

> So what are we doing here? Let me tell you a wonderful, old joke from Communist times. A guy was sent from East Germany to work in Siberia. He knew censors would read his mail, so he told his friends: "Let's establish a code. If a letter you get from me is written in blue ink, it is true what I say. If it is written in red ink, it is false". After a month, his friends get the first letter. Everything is in blue. It says, this letter: "Everything is wonderful here. Stores are full of good food. Movie theatres show good films from the west. Apartments are large and luxurious. The only thing you cannot buy is red ink". This is how we live. We have all the freedoms we want. But what we are missing is red ink: the language to articulate our non-freedom. The way we are taught to speak about freedom— war on terror and so on—falsifies freedom. And this is what you are doing here. You are giving all of us red ink (in Taylor & Gessen, 2011, p. 67).

Through his "red ink" metaphor, Žižek effectively describes the ability of a social movement to create what Bitzer (1968) would define as a rhetorical situation, according to which the speaker and the audience are united by a common concern. Such new language should have the ability to articulate, not just the words "freedom" and "social change" but also their actualization. But can words alone revolutionize an established system? Cuoco (1988) recounts how the

attempted 1799 republican revolution in Naples failed because an elite group of intellectuals preached the French Revolution ideals to the poor, local peasantry. On this occasion, and despite the rhetorical power of the French motto *"Liberté, egalité, fraternité ou la Mort,"* the mantra could not prevent the people from taking sides with the only authority guaranteeing their daily bread—the old regime. In other words, an elite of revolutionary intellectuals was not capable of bridging the wide gap between the Enlightenment's political ideas and the material conditions that informed the desires and aspirations of the masses.

What the Neapolitan revolutionary attempt seems to demonstrate is that the conditions for social change dictate a combination of subjective and objective factors. In our view, OWS's "red ink" represents a powerful means but not necessarily an ultimate end of the social change the movement wants to achieve. For instance, the lack of structure, the leaderless organization, or the refusal of conventional politics constitute features of "true democracy" rather than an effective means to achieve it. In the next section, and drawing on Gramsci, we explain these limitations in Occupiers' strategies and self-understanding, and stress the importance of engaging the whole of society in an "integral struggle" against the "integral state".

3. Integral State, Integral Struggle

3.1 Integral State

As already mentioned, OWS rejects the state as an antagonist model of structuration, as well as of hierarchical and asymmetric power relations. However, the rejection of political society as a model should be distinguished from the refusal to fight against it. In this sense, our goal in this section is to argue in favor of a turn toward a perspective that considers an expansive understanding of the state, and acknowledges its still relevant role in both reproducing hegemony and providing the conditions of possibility for counter-hegemony.

More specifically, we argue that the Gramscian notion of the "integral state" may serve as corrector for a currently powerful narrative that tends to diminish the agency of the state and therefore makes its contribution to the reproduction of a given social formation essentially invisible. Based on the previous examination of OWS, we argue that such a narrative not only informs the movement's self understanding, but it is also conveyed by much of the academic commentary on "new" social movements (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1991; Harvey, 2005; Messner & Rosenfeld, 1997; Weiss 1998; Castells, 1996).

The narrative of a non-interventionist state is also intimately associated with widespread claims that we are living in a "post-hegemony" social ecology (Yúdice, 1995; Moreiras, 2001;Williams, 2002; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Day, 2005; Lash, 2007; Thoburn, 2007; Besley-Murray, 2010; Foust, 2010). Thus, the position regarding the alleged decline of the state frequently derives from broader statements that consider essential traits of the Gramscian social historical context— such as class, state, political parties, Fordism— as being extinguished. The abandoning of a state-centric perspective represents the logical implication of a "new" approach to social struggles, since it rests on the assumption of a social reality in which power is diffused, immaterial and discursively constructed. In fact, as Day (2005) argues, most contemporary social movements operate in a non-hegemonic framework (rather than a counter-hegemonic one). In Day's view, many of these movements—informed by the anarchist tradition—reject the state-centric "classical logic of hegemony" (p. 14) according to which a state (such as the dictatorship of the proletariat) is needed in order to create an alternative social order.

Certainly, the state can no longer be considered as the sole locus of power in many contemporary societies. However, it is still an indispensable element in the reproduction of socio-economic relations. Thus, despite the neoliberal rhetoric that depicts the state as a neutral observer and guarantor of the self-corrective mechanism of the market, the Hegelian night watchman (Hegel, 1991), we prefer to conceptualize the state as operating both internally and externally to maintain the interests of ruling classes (Briziarelli, 2011). Accordingly, we are convinced that, even in a globalized world characterized by an increasing internationalization of civil society (O'Siochru & Girard, 2002), any movement that seeks radical social transformation should always be involved in a confrontation with capital and its most powerful ally: the state, or more precisely in Gramscian terms, the integral state.

A prevalent characteristic of Gramscian thought is the dilution of hypostatic categories— i.e. abstractions that treat social reality as being constructed by sealed compartments—into fluid social processes. As a result, Gramsci does not treat the state as a reified or crystallized set of institutions, but as a constellation of social relations that constantly navigate permeable social boundaries:

> Usually this [the state] is understood as a political society (i.e. the dictatorship of coercive apparatus to bring the mass of people into conformity with the type of production and economy dominant at any given moment) and not as an equilibrium between political and civil society (1971, p. 54).

Gramsci works with a dialectical conceptualization of social reality according to which the relationship between state and civil society must be simultaneously understood as unity and distinction. Hence, by the idea of "integral state" he conceives at the same time the broadening of the sphere of the state over that of civil society, and the broadening of the sphere of civil society over the state. Historically, whereas the unity and the mutual integration of those two provinces is more observable when a given class reaches hegemonic dominance, their distinction becomes more defined when such hegemony is in crisis.

The notion of integral state is consequently linked in Gramsci's thought to the way he conceptualizes the struggle against a dominant "historic bloc" that integrates both civil and political society in an organic relationship:

> The historical unity is realized in the State, and their history is essentially the history of States and of groups of States. But it would be wrong to think that this unity is simply juridical and political (though such forms of unity do have their importance too, and not in a purely formal sense); the fundamental historical unity, concretely, results from the organic relations between State or political society and "civil society" (1971, p. 52).

A new form of dominance that compacts together the whole of society reproduces such an organic relationship. In fact, Gramsci's idea of the integral state derived from historical shifts that in modern capitalist societies modified the relations between State and Civil Society, which the author discusses by using the metaphor of a war of maneuver and war of position. Whereas relatively rapid movements of troops characterize the war of maneuver, the war of position involves relatively immobile "troops who dig and fortify relatively fixed lines of trenches". The metaphor is used to signify that the state is not an empty shell of civil society. Rather, "the State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks" (1971, p. 244).

The notion of the integral state can help us problematize the way Occupiers implicitly conceptualized power relations and, consequently, decided to act upon them. First of all, we argue that protesters tacitly appropriated—and at the same time reduced—the idea of a "war of position". In other words, they put forward a notion of struggle as operating solely at the level of civil society. In our view, this understanding translates into an inefficient—or at least insufficient—strategy to transform society as a whole.

The option of a frontal attack, in Gramsci's view, was inadequate because it failed to include civil society as a battleground for hegemony in

Western societies—a position that Occupiers' practices certainly echo. However, we argue that, in their laudable attempt to transform society, these protesters end up underestimating the coercive function of the state in reproducing hegemony, since it is assumed that the terrain for action is *solely* grounded in civil society.

Through the preferred tactics of OWS, the struggle for equality is constantly reduced to battle within civil society, thus eliminating the goal of aspiring to control the state through, among other means, the use of coercion in order to fight coercion (Gramsci, 1971). In other words, Occupiers create their "war of position" *within* civil society, as if the winning of consent at this level could, by itself, produce the radical transformation the movement aspires to. This is clearly exemplified by the group's reticence to intervene in conventional politics.

3.2 Integral Struggle

Based on an understanding of hegemony as a combination of force and consent, (Gramsci, 1971; Martínez Guillem & Briziarelli, 2012), we argue that radical transformation needs to be intrinsically tied to the establishment of an alternative hegemonic order, which in turn implies a political engagement with the integral state. In other words, a social movement such as OWS, willing to unite "99%" of the people under its envisioning of a different world, thus "daring to imagine a new socio-political and economic alternative that offers greater possibility of equality" (Principles of solidarity, 2011, ¶3), can only achieve such goals from a hegemonic position. This entails not simply winning the consent of 99% of the people, but also being able to mobilize it as a collective will, thus engaging in the kinds of actions necessary to conduct an "intellectual and moral reform" (Gramsci, 1971, p.132). Such actions should translate into the political power needed to win and reshape the state.

Even though OWS demonstrates, through many of its official declarations, a willingness to engage in this kind of political transformation, the lack of specific initiatives that can facilitate the movement's access to a hegemonic position in society situates the movement in an intermediate, "economic" stage (Gramsci, 1971, p.181). According to Gramsci, a subaltern group such as OWS develops through three main stages. In the first stage, the group forms itself without a clear self-understanding and then develops an awareness of its own existence, like a corporation, or an association. In the second stage, a movement or an organization becomes aware that there is a wider field of interests, and that there are others who share these interests with them—and will continue to share them into the foreseeable future. In such a situation, there exists a particular sense of 'solidarity' that is mostly based on

shared economic interests, but not on a common worldview. Finally, there is a third stage in which the members of the movement act concretely to seize power and realize their hegemony.

We would argue that OWS was only able to reach an economic, and not a hegemonic stage, since the latter would imply a passage to political class-consciousness, or in other words, a universalization of its interests to the rest of the society. This would provide what Gramsci defined as a "historic bloc moment": a new economic, political, intellectual and moral synthesis. Such a moment, in Gramsci's view, would materialize most effectively via a new kind of political party that would mediate between potentially conflicting ideologies, thus achieving the interclass alliance required at the hegemonic stage (Gramsci, 1971).

In line with Gramsci's proposal, we argue that a political organization could articulate the pluralist and radical democratic project that, according to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), characterizes many social movements nowadays, thus mediating the competing discourses and identities internal to a given group such as OWS. More concretely, a party could mediate, for instance, between the leaderless and structure-less associational forms of the movement (Gitlin, 2012) and the centralized and hierarchized forms of trade unions such as USWA and AFL-CIO—arguably the biggest allies of OWS.

As Callinicos (2004) observes, such a party should not be considered as the agent of social change but as a mediator, a purveyor of revolutionary consciousness. A political party represents the materialization of an integral struggle, since it could integrate civil society and state, articulating the plural and different interests of individuals operating within civil society into one collective subject within the sphere of the state. Thus, by condensing a collective will out of the great masses, a political party growing out of OWS could help advance this project from the "economic" towards the "hegemonic" stage.

For Gramsci, there are two moments in such a passage that are worth mentioning here in relation to OWS. First, the group operates by channeling the diffused antagonism against a specific social formation into specific themes and political subjects—such as the ones of OWS. Such a moment is characterized by a fragmentary and episodic nature, subject to the constraints given by the political arena provided by the dominant group. In the second moment, the unstable nature of such a collective will is successively transcended and the movement embraces a "state spirit" (Nardis and Caruso, 2011). This does not imply the mimesis of the whole morphology of the state but, like a state, it aims at elaborating a long-term plan to stabilize the social relations Occupiers want to change. The presence of a "state spirit" is a condition of stability of the

collective will, necessary to overcome the fragmented, and reactive initiative of the masses, the 99%. This necessary condition, we argue, was not taken into account in the different practices and idea(l)s put forward by OWS.

4. Conclusions

Gramsci (1971) believed that substantial social/political change occurs only when objective conditions— the particular configuration of social relations operating in a given society in a given époque— meet subjective conditions—i.e. the formation and intervention of particular political subjects and organizations. Following such an assumption, in this paper we examined the social scenario in which OWS emerges— the crisis— and the particular practices that defined the subjective intervention of this social movement.

The general lesson we draw from our analysis is that such an intersection of historical circumstances does not automatically produce the political transformation that would lead to more equal societies. On the one hand, the so-called 2007-08 Great Recession does not necessarily need to be considered as a catastrophic crisis of capitalism. Instead, it could be understood in a capitalist framework of reproduction of the conditions that allow this political economic regime to keep functioning.

On the other hand, not all kinds of intervention by groups such as OWS can facilitate change. As we tried to show throughout our analysis, the group falls into the idealist trap of assuming that once an idea (such as "occupy," or antagonism against the 1%) is conceived, simply by virtue of its justness, goodness and elaboration, it will spread around and become a reality. However, there is a remarkable difference between the rationality of an idea and its concrete historical outcomes. As Gramsci put it:

> Clear ideas are not enough! That is an Enlightenment belief. The elaboration and diffusion of a critical consciousness cannot be simply limited to a simple theoretical enunciation of 'clear' methodological principles. It requires a complex combination of deduction and induction, identification and distinction, positive demonstration and destruction (in Buttigieg, 1991, p. 127).

With this discussion we have tried to problematize the relationship between Occupiers' goal to radically transform society, and the concrete terrain in which those goals should be fought for—or what Smucker (2014) refers to

as "strategic" versus "pre-figurative politics". The protesters participating in the "Occupy" movement lacked a consistent engagement with the crucial question of the (in)effectiveness of their own actions, refusing to explore the concrete relationship between what the movement represents, and the society that it wants to change. From a perspective that conceptualizes power as capable of articulating all spheres of society, Occupiers failed to develop an "integral struggle" which, in our view, represents the most effective form of counter-hegemony.

As the spectacle of capitalism keeps re-enacting, more and more people are finding themselves excluded from basic rights and full participation in their societies. In this context, it seems imperative to develop viable alternative ways of social organization. Undoubtedly, OWS and other similar initiatives throughout the globe need to be credited for exposing the dangerous naturalization of the *status quo*, or the spectacle of capitalism. However, and in spite of—or maybe due to—these accomplishments, one should still question these groups' logic of intervention in social practices.

Do Occupiers see themselves as a model for the whole of society, and therefore, does the adoption of particular forms of organization and decision-making represent the group's strategies, or are they their objectives? If Occupiers are mainly concerned with objectives, then how should the rest of society follow this model? If they are mainly concerned with strategies, then to what extent do they account for the violence and coercion that inhabit both state and civil society? In this sense, as Hanna Arendt (1958) so strongly stressed, the political cannot be traded for the social, in so much as the public sphere of the political arena cannot be traded for the sphere of private interests. Thus, it is in the terrain of political society, i.e. the state, where the conditions of possibility of hegemony and counter-hegemony can be produced.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, P. (1984). *In the tracks of historical materialism*. London: Verso.

- Arendt, H. (1958). *The Human Condition.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Atton, C. (2002). *Alternative media*. London: Sage Publications.

- Badiou, A. (2008, October, 17). Of Which Reality is this Crisis the Spectacle? Le Monde, p.A1. Retrieved from http://lemonde.fr

- Berger, M. (2012, May 4th). "Why Occupy can't—and shouldn't—become the progressive Tea Party". *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from www.huffingtonpost.com

- Bitzer, L. (1968). The Rhetorical Situation. *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1, 3.

- Buttigieg, J. (1991). *Prison Notebooks, V.1*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Callinicos, A. (2004). "World social forum Mumbay". *Globalise Resistance*. Retrieved from http://www.resist.org.uk/?q=node=603

- Cardoso, G. (2004). Ministers of Parliament and Information and Communication Technologies as a means of Horizontal and Vertical Communication in Western Europe. *Information Polity*, 9, 29-40.

- Castañeda, E. (2012). The Indignados of Spain: A precedent to Occupy Wall Street. *Social Movement Studies, 11*, 309-319.

- Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

- Cuoco, V. (1988). *Saggio Storico sulla Rivoluzione di Napoli*. Napoli: Itinerario.

- Day, R. (2005). Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest social Movement. London: Pluto press.

- Debord, G. (1982). *The society of spectacle*. London: Rebel Press.

- Downing, J. (2001). *Radical media: Rebellious communication and social movements*. New York: Sage Publications.

- Elliot, J. (2011). The Origins of Occupy Wall Street Explained. *Salon.* Retrieved from http://salon.com

- Esping-Andersen, G. (1991). *Three worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

- Foust, C. (2010). *Transgression as a Mode of Resistance: Rethinking Social Movement in an Era of Corporate Globalization*. Denver: Lexington Books.

- Fuster Morell, M. (2012). The free culture and 15M movements in Spain: Composition, social networks and synergies. *Social Movement Studies,* 11, 386-392.

- Gamson, W. A. (1990). *The strategy of social protest.* 2nd Ed. Wadsworth, Belmont, CA.

- Gautney, H. (2011). *Protest and organization in the alternative globalization era: NGOs, social movements and political parties*. London: Palgrave and McMillan.

- Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new Left*. Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA & London, U.K.: University of California Press.

- Gitlin, T. (2012). *Occupy nation: The roots, the spirit the promise of Occupy Wall Street*. Amazon digital Services.

- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Hoare, Q., & G. N. Smith (Eds.). New York: International Publishers.

- Greenberg, M. (2011, November 10). "In Zucotti Park". *The New York Review of Books*. Retrieved from http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/nob/10/zuccoti   http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/nob/10/zuccoti-park-?page=1

- Hardt, M. & Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude: War and democracy in the age of empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hegel, W.G. (1991.)*Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Kauffman, L. A. (2012). Theology of consensus. *Occupy Gazzette*, 2, 11-12.

- Kerton, S. (2012). Tahrir, here? The influence of the Arab uprisings on the emergence of Occupy. *Social Movement Studies,* 11, 302-308.

- Klein, N. & Marom, Y. (2012, January 16). "Why now? What's next? Naomi Klein and Yotam Marom in conversation about Occupy Wall Street". *The Nation.* Retrieved from http://www.thenation.com/article/165530/why-now-whats-next-naomi-klein-and-yotam-marom-conversation-about-occupy-wall-street

- Lash, S. (2007) Power After Hegemony: Cultural Studies in Mutation? *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, 55.

- Lenin, V. I. (1987). *Essential works of Lenin: What is to be done? And other writings.* London: Dover Publications.

- Liboiron, M. (2012). Tactics of waste, dirt and discard in the Occupy movement. *Social Movement Studies,* 11, 393-401.

- Marshall, A. G. (2010, March 30). Western Civilization and the Economic Crisis: The Impoverishment of the Middle Class. *Global Research.* Retrieved from http://www.globalresearch.ca/

- Martínez Guillem, S. & Briziarelli, M. (2012). "We Want *Your* Success! Hegemony, Materiality and *Latino in America*". *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 29,* 292-312.

- Marx, K. (1993) [1857]. Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy Nicolaus, Martin (trans. 1973). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

- Marx, K. (1990). *Capital: A critique of political economy*. Vol. 1. New York: Penguin.

- Messner S. and R. Rosenfeld (1997). *Crime and the American Dream.* London: Wordsworth.

- Michael (2012, October 17th). Solid Evidences that Occupy Wall Street is a Communist Movement Run by Socialists who Wish to Bring Down the Free Enterprise System. *The American Dream*. Retrieved from http://www.endoftheamericandream.com/

- Mills, C. W. (1940). Situated actions and vocabularies of motive. *American Sociological Review,* V, 904-909.

- Moreiras, A. (2001). *The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Moynihan, C. (2012, September 15th). Several arrests at Occupy Wall Street march. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/

- Nardis, F. and L. Caruso (2011). Political Crisis and Social Transformation in Antonio Gramsci. Elements for a Sociology of Political Praxis. *International Journal for Humanities and Social Science*, 1, 6. 1-15.

- NYCGA (n. d.). *Declaration of the occupation of New York City*. Retrieved from http://www.nycga.net

- Occupy Wall Street (n. d.). *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://thehuffintongpost.com

- O'Siochru, S. & Girard, B. (2002). *Global media governance*. Oxford: Roman & Littlefield.

- Pew Research Center (2011). Reports on News Media. *Pew Research Center*.

- Quick guide for a revolution (2012, September 5). *How to Occupy.* Retrieved from http://www.howtooccupy.org/

- Schumpeter, J. A. (1994). *Capitalism, socialism and democracy.* Taylor & Francis: New York

- Situationist Manifesto (1960, May 17). *Situationist International Online*. Retrieved from http://www.cddc.vt.edu/

- Smucker, J. (2014, October 7). Can prefigurative politics replace political strategy? *Berkeley Journal of Sociology.* Retrieved from http://www.berkeleyjournal.org/

- Taylor, A. & K. Gessen (2012). *Occupy! Scenes from occupied America.* New York: Verso.

- Thoburn, N. (2007) 'Patterns of Production: Cultural Studies After Hegemony', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24, 79.

- Weiss L. (1998) *The Myth of the Powerless State*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

- Williams, G. (2002). *The Other Side of the Popular Neoliberalism and Subalternity in Latin America*. Durham NC and London: Duke University Press.

- Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Yúdice, G. (1995). "Civil Society, Consumption, and Governmentality in an Age of Global Restructuring: An Introduction". *Social Text* (45): 1–25