



# CREaTE

Canterbury Research and Theses Environment

Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

<http://create.canterbury.ac.uk>

Please cite this publication as follows:

Bates, D., Ogilvie, M. and Pole, E. (2016) Occupy: in theory and practice. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 13 (3). pp. 341-355. ISSN 1740-5904.

Link to official URL (if available):

<http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2016.1141697>

This version is made available in accordance with publishers' policies. All material made available by CReaTE is protected by intellectual property law, including copyright law. Any use made of the contents should comply with the relevant law.

Contact: [create.library@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:create.library@canterbury.ac.uk)



**PRE-PROOF VERSION**

**OCCUPY: IN THEORY AND PRACTICE**

**David Bates, Matthew Ogilvie and Emma Pole**

**Biographies**

**Dr David Bates** is Principal Lecturer in Politics and International Relations at Canterbury Christ Church University, and Director of Politics and International Relations programmes. His work focuses on the following interrelated areas: first, the constitution of modes of political subjectivity (in 'radical', liberal, neo-liberal and conservative forms), and the relationship with dominant economic structures and forms of social identity, and second, the philosophical understanding of social movements (including anti-globalisation, anti-capitalism, Occupy, etc.) with specific reference to Marxist, post-Marxist, post-anarchist, and autonomist perspectives.

**Correspondence address:**

School of Psychology, Politics and Sociology,  
North Holmes Road,  
Canterbury Christ Church University,  
CT11QU, UK.

**Phone:** (01227) 782388

**Email:** [david.bates@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:david.bates@canterbury.ac.uk)

**Dr Matthew Ogilvie** is a political sociologist within the School of Psychology, Politics and Sociology at Canterbury Christ Church University. He previously worked at the University of Kent as a sessional lecturer and undergraduate tutor. His current research interests include social movement theory, community protest against wind farms and fracking developments, and the Occupy movement.

**Correspondence address:**

School of Psychology, Politics and Sociology,  
North Holmes Road,  
Canterbury Christ Church University,  
CT11QU, UK.

**Phone:** (01227) 782370

**Email:** [matthew.ogilvie@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.ogilvie@canterbury.ac.uk)

**Emma Pole (corresponding author)** is a DPhil Researcher in Politics and Sociology at Canterbury Christ Church University. Her research interests include social movement theory, Marxism and anarchism. Her thesis focuses on a theoretical and empirical investigation of the Occupy movement.

**Correspondence address:**

School of Psychology, Politics and Sociology,  
North Holmes Road,  
Canterbury Christ Church University,  
CT11QU, UK.

**Phone:** 07525 020816

**Email:** [e.pole160@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:e.pole160@canterbury.ac.uk)

**Word Count:** 7,752

## **Abstract**

This paper situates the discourse of the Occupy movement within the context of radical political philosophy. Our analysis takes place on two levels. First, we conduct an empirical analysis of the ‘official’ publications of Occupy Wall Street (OWS) and Occupy London (OL). Operationalising core concepts from the framing perspective within social movement theory, we provide a descriptive-comparative analysis of the ‘collective action frames’ of OWS and OL. Second, we consider the extent to which radical political philosophy speaks to the discourse of Occupy. Our empirical analysis reveals that both movements share diagnostic frames, but there were notable differences in terms of prognostic framing. The philosophical discussion suggests that there are alignments between anarchist, post-anarchist and post-Marxist ideologies at the level of both identity and strategy. Indeed, the absence of totalising anti-capitalist or anti-statist positions in Occupy suggests that - particularly with Occupy London - alignments are perhaps not so distant from typically social democratic demands.

**Keywords:** Occupy, collective action frames, Marxism, anarchism, anti-capitalism

## **Introduction**

Occupy is a broad movement that emerged in 2011 in New York in response to the financial crisis of 2008. In July 2011, Canadian-based online magazine *AdBusters* circulated a call to “flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street” (AdBusters, 2011). The *AdBusters* call had set the movement in motion - a Facebook group was subsequently set up for Occupy Wall Street (OWS), calling protesters to take part in a General Assembly. The

format of this General Assembly would become a signature feature of the Occupy Movement worldwide (Caren and Gaby, 2012). In August 2011, a group of long-time New York activists came together with activists from Tunisia, Egypt and Spain (Graeber, 2013), to discuss how the success of movements such as the Arab Spring and the *indignados* could be brought to America with a discourse that was relevant to the American people (Fault Lines, 2012). The date set by the AdBusters' call, 17 September 2011, would be the start of a 60-day encampment at Zucotti Park in New York City.

It is important to note, however, that Occupy was more than just the Wall Street movement. In October 2011, almost a month after the start of OWS, a group of activists assembled on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral in London, expressing solidarity with its Wall Street counterpart. Though smaller in size, at approximately 200 tents, the Occupy London (OL) camp remained until late February 2012, far longer than its American equivalent. A short distance away, an additional camp in Finsbury Square remained until June 2012.

Although it was a diverse movement that materialised in 1,518 occupations worldwide (Occupy Directory, n.d.), in this paper we focus on two particular instances: OWS and OL. Both OWS and OL were English-speaking manifestations of Occupy and, as such, the documents could be analysed without translation. In addition, several prominent scholars, theorists and figures aligned with the political Left (such as Chomsky, Žižek and Tony Benn, to name a few) spoke to activists in the camps, raising the question about whether Occupy could be seen as an expression of the revolutionary left.

Existing literature concerning Occupy consists of extensive journalistic commentary, as well as academic analyses and conference proceedings (Calhoun,

2013; Gamson and Sifry, 2013; Gitlin, 2013; Goodwin, 2012). There is considerable focus on Occupy's engagement with new social media and its impact on the movement (Caren and Gaby, 2012; Rushkoff, 2013), and there are many articles based on participant observation, either in a journalistic (Schneider, 2012; Taylor, 2011) or academic style (Donovan, 2012; McCleave Maharawal, 2013; Sitrin, 2012). Other significant contributions to the field include Welty et al.'s (2013) collection of critical political science essays, Sotirakopoulos and Rootes' (2014) study based on interviews with activists at OL, and Grusky et al.'s (2013) discussion of Occupy and its areas of concern. Yet, there remains an absence of empirical analysis regarding the collective action frames (CAFs) of Occupy, and attempts to situate such frames within wider political and philosophical theories. Our research aims to fill this gap in the literature.

We have two aims for this paper. First, we conduct a descriptive and comparative analysis of the CAFs of OWS and OL in order to identify the narratives operating within each. Second, we explore the extent to which contemporary radical left political thought speaks to these framing narratives. As such, the paper begins by offering a descriptive-comparative analysis of the CAFs of both movements. We then draw on key areas of the analysis (namely identity and subjectivity, and strategy and tactics) and situate these within a wider philosophical discussion.

## **Research, Theory and Methods**

### *Collective Action Frames*

Collective action frames relate to the ideational aspect of mobilisation and can be defined as systems of shared beliefs that underpin social movements (Benford, 1997). They are concerned with the mobilisation of 'consensus' and 'action' amongst

movement adherents and participants (see Klandermans, 2007, p. 369-370). Both are necessary conditions of mobilisation: the mobilisation of consensus refers to the development of a shared sense of understanding in relation to an issue, while the mobilisation of action involves people becoming actively involved in collective action (Benford and Snow, 2000). The mobilisation of consensus is a precondition for the mobilisation of action, for people generally will not act if they do not identify with a movement's cause (Klandermans, 2007). Although the mobilisation of action is an important consideration for social movement analysis, we are primarily concerned with the mobilisation of consensus in this paper, not least because the aspects of contemporary radical-left political thought we are most concerned with speak more directly to constituent elements of this broad framing category. The mobilisation of consensus thus provides richer veins of analysis than the mobilisation of action here.

The mobilisation of consensus involves diagnostic and prognostic framing processes (Benford, 1993). Diagnostic framing relates to the process of identifying and defining an issue as a problem, ascertaining its source, attributing blame or causality, and delineating collective identity boundaries between 'us' and 'them' (Benford and Snow, 2000). Prognostic framing aims towards establishing both solutions to problems and the means of realising those solutions (McCarthy et al., 1996; Snow and Benford, 1988). Importantly, this relates as much to broader societal solutions to identified problems, as it does to the internal practices of movements geared towards bringing about sought-after outcomes (Benford and Snow, 2000).

In order to analyse the CAFs of OWS and OL, we conducted a discourse analysis of the 'official' publications of both movements. In the selection of our sources, we were guided by statements on each movement's website, which stated:

Any statement or declaration not released through the General Assembly and made public online at [occupylondon.org](http://occupylondon.org) should be considered independent of Occupy (Occupy London, 2011)..

Any statement or declaration not released through the General Assembly and made public online at [nycga.net](http://nycga.net) [(Occupy Wall Street)] should be considered independent of Occupy (Occupy Wall Street, 2011).

Given the strength of these statements, we chose to limit our sources of data to those publications that had been released through respective General Assemblies on both websites, while not selecting other sources on those websites, such as blogs, webpages and discussion boards. Additionally, we did not include the comments sections on the documents themselves, as there was a clear demarcation between the consensus-agreed document and personal opinion. On both websites, these 'official' publications were clearly identifiable. At [occupylondon.org](http://occupylondon.org), these were found under the 'Occupy London Statements' tab. At [nycga.net](http://nycga.net), they were located under the GA-Consensed Documents tab. In total, there were twenty sources in these two tabs, eight from Occupy Wall Street and twelve from Occupy London. Publications were of varying lengths, ranging from small book size to articles of a few pages. All publications were analysed in full.

This purposive approach seemed a sensible way to access the collective action frames of both movements given the manner in which the documents were formulated. Both OWS and OL place significant value on the use of consensus as a decision-making process. During their occupations, each movement sought to formulate ideational consensus via processes of deliberative democracy within working groups. These processes of discursive framing led directly to the publications



approved, again through consensus, by general assemblies. This served to reinforce our belief that the documents analysed are representative of the collective action frames of both movements.

The framing processes identified above provided the analytical categories through which to interrogate identified publications. Under diagnostic framing, we looked for text relating to grievances, their cause, and the delineation of identities (i.e. 'us' and 'them'), while under prognostic framing we sought to identify text relating to movement strategy and tactics, and the sought-after direction of societal change to address identified grievances. Sources were coded via these categories in NVivo. We then looked to describe similarities and differences across both movements in relation to each framing category. This analysis has allowed us to consider whether there is a consistent collective action frame across both expressions of the Occupy Movement, and to inform our efforts to situate frames in the context of radical political philosophy.

### *Framing analysis*

Our framing analysis of the published documentation of OL and OWS reveals clear discursive similarities across the two movements. However, we also identify notable differences, particularly in relation to prognostic framing, which perhaps problematises the possibility of speaking of a coherent collective action frame across both movements.

In terms of diagnostic framing - that is, describing and explaining grievances, and framing identity boundaries between 'us' and 'them' -, the content of frames was largely similar. Both movements draw attention to the social, political, economic and environmental problems facing their respective societies and the world more

generally, and both see economic (and, to a lesser extent, political) actors and structures as the predominant factors explaining such problems. Thus, OWS writes: “we come to you at a time when corporations which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, oppression over equality, run our governments” (OWS, 2011a); while OL asserts that “the Occupy movement has identified the current global economic system as being the disease behind [the] many different symptoms that the 99% suffers” (OL, 2011a). In terms of social issues, these symptoms include inequalities of pay, housing, living standards, and access to public service provision. In terms of the environment, they range from the “destruction of the natural environment” (OL, 2011b) to “hazardous and poisonous [...] by-products of production” (OL, 2011c). Political problems centre on the ‘subversion’ of democracy by economic forces leading to additional political and economic concerns, including government debt (OL, 2011d), colonialism (OWS, 2011a), bank bailouts and bonuses (OWS, 2011a), and limited corporate accountability (OL, 2011e).

For both movements, the economic subversion of the ideals of political democracy lies behind the majority of the problems identified, and it is ideas of political and economic power that serve to structure notions of boundary framing within the movement. Perhaps Occupy’s most significant outcome has been the insertion into public consciousness of the idea of the 99% vs. the 1% (Pickerill and Krinsky, 2012). In this respect, OWS and OL have made consistent efforts to support these ideas. Though there is some variation in terms of the language used to conceptualise these notions across the two movements, the basic principle is the same: the 1% are the “power elite” (Mills, 1999), that is, “corporate forces” (OWS, 2011a), “financial institutions” (OL, 2011e), “the government” (OL, 2011c), “banks” (OL, 2011c), and “the military” (OL, 2011f), while the 99% are everyone else, those

oppressed and exploited by this power, and on the receiving end of many of the problems identified by the movement.

In the boundary frames of OL and OWS, it is worth noting the efforts made to delineate who is included within the 99%. Here, both make similarly explicit efforts to distance themselves from formal political organisations (OL, 2011g; OWS, 2011b), therefore making the movement accessible, in principle at least, to people from different ideological stances. Both movements also seek to set out in positive terms who the 99% encompasses. For OL, “we are of all ethnicities, backgrounds, genders, generations, sexualities, dis/abilities and faiths” (OL, 2011a), that is, “people from all walks of life and backgrounds” (OL, 2011c), while for OWS the 99% are “one people” (OWS, 2011a) and a “people’s movement” (OL, 2011g; OWS, 2011b). As a precursor to the discussion below, it is worth remembering Hardt and Negri’s argument that this is a true example of a new politics of the multitude. Such broad categorisations serve to reinforce the inclusivity that is explicit in the notion of the 99%, although it is not enough to clarify who ‘we’ are: movements must also consider ‘what is to be done’.

In terms of prognostic framing, both OWS and OL frame the practices of the movement in similar terms. Here, a strong emphasis was placed on the need for peaceful assembly, direct democracy, information provision, education, the dissemination of knowledge, occupying public spaces, mutual respect, inclusiveness, tolerance, non-violence, direct action, and decentralised organisational practices in attempting to realise aims. However, if the means through which change is to be realised is shared between OWS and OL, there are notable differences in the ends towards which such action is directed.

The main prognostic difference between the two movements seems to lie in a framing of prefigurative politics by OWS in contrast to OL, and how far this form of prefiguration relates to the idea of the state. With prefigurative politics, there is an effort “to create and sustain within the lived practice of the movement, relationships and political forms that ‘prefigure’ and embod[y] the desired society” (Breines, 1980, p. 421). For OWS, the idea that the movement should adopt certain practices seems to prefigure sought after social ends, such as “the human race [requiring] the co-operation of its members” (OWS, 2011a), “empowering one another against all forms of oppression” (OWS, 2011c), “redefining how labour is valued” (OWS, 2011c), “making technologies, knowledge and culture open to all to freely access, create, modify and distribute” (OWS, 2011c) and “daring to imagine a new socio-political alternative that offers greater possibility of equality” (OWS, 2011c).

In contrast to OWS, and in spite of prefiguration also being a feature of OL on the ground, by appealing to individual change at the level of consciousness (Sotirakopoulos and Rootes, 2014), at OL there was a greater emphasis on direct demands being placed on the state, many of which reflect the four diagnostic categories (political, economic, social and environmental) identified above. These include such objectives as “an end to global tax injustice” (OL, 2011e), “an end to democracy representing corporations instead of the people” (OL, 2011e), “regulators [...] be[ing] genuinely independent of the industries they regulate” (OL, 2011e), “defend[ing] health services, welfare, education and employment and [stopping] wars and arms dealing” (OL, 2011e), and “the world’s resources [...] [going] towards caring for people and the planet, [and] not the military, corporate profits or the rich” (OL, 2011e).

In spite of these differences, it is also worth noting that there was a slight shift in the prefigurative anti-statism of OWS in a more recent document. In *People Before Parties*, which details the political alternatives that could be brought about, OWS emphasise: bottom-up democratic self-government; small, localised political districts; an expansion of the franchise, including prisoners; proportional representation; and alternatives to plurality voting. At least some of these ideas can be seen as demands placed on extant political institutions.

Having summarised our empirical analysis of the diagnostic and prognostic frames of OWS and OL, we now move on to consider how those frames might speak to radical left political thought. Here, our central questions are: to what extent can Occupy be situated within the context of historical and contemporary radical political philosophy? And, what are the important similarities and differences of OL and OWS in relation to these traditions?

### **Identity and Subjectivity**

We have seen earlier in the article how diagnostic framing is concerned with the delineation of identities; that is, with how the types of ‘us’ and ‘them’ come to be discursively formulated such that radical political action becomes possible. In the field of political ideology, identity formation is a central category that relates to wider issues of political subjectivity. The understanding of forms of inclusion and exclusion, which are integral to the constitution of political identity, has been explored from within the tradition of the radical left.

Cruder Marxist variants regarded political identity as a unitary phenomenon, conditioned by the exploitative other of the bourgeoisie. The capitalist economic system and the bourgeois class were the fetter to historical development, which could

only be overcome by the collective action of the working class. To this extent, the very identity of the proletariat was bound together with a teleological conception of history - the proletariat carried the torch of universal human emancipation. Such an understanding of revolutionary subjectivity was developed in the context of the nineteenth century social (workers') movements. It also shaped radical left understandings throughout the twentieth century, mainly as a result of the re-articulation of Marx's theories in that curious historical moment that we now know as 'Marxist-Leninism'.

Occupy's understanding of the formation of radical political identity is not without history. Graeber (2011), for example, notes that the conscious association has been with a form of 'anarchism'. Anarchism has historically adopted a somewhat different understanding of the ideational formation of political identity than Marxism and many other aspects of the socialist left. Anarchists such as Bakunin rejected the Marxist understanding of the proletariat. Whilst the 'bourgeoisie' remained to an important extent the constitutive enemy, Bakunin also considered that large sections of the proletariat had been co-opted; they had become a force of reaction that could not be mobilised for the cause of social transformation.

Bakunin famously turned from the proletariat to the *lumpenproletariat* or, as he put it, the "flower of the proletariat" (Bakunin, 1990, p. 48). The revolutionary potential of the *lumpenproletariat* was a result of their outsider character, rather than any sense of teleological identity; they could not, therefore, be bought off by reformism. They were the limit of the system and the basis of its refusal. As such, the "urge to destroy" was "also a creative urge". Anarchists have tended to follow Bakunin's line of reasoning. Moreover, we can find its presence in Occupy, though often without explicit reference to the historical basis of the idea.

How do these traditional understandings of class politics speak to the idea of the 99%? It should be noted that they do not do so directly, for Occupy is neither grounded in the traditional politics of class struggle - for Callinicos (2013), this is precisely its limit - nor a movement of the violent margins. To this extent, it might be argued that the 99% operates more like a popular democratic concept in the post-Marxist (and post-anarchist) sense.

It is worth therefore exploring in a little more detail the post-Marxist and post-anarchist terrain. Both post-Marxism and post-anarchism avoid the 'essentialist' teleological form of thinking that is typical of Marxism and, indeed, of classical anarchism. The forms of radical identity with which they claim to engage are not so much grounded in historical movements, as they are open and fluid. They both tend to regard identity formation as the result of complex discursive practices. For post-anarchists, politics becomes an oppressive discursive practice that must be refused. For post-Marxists, politics is a crucial part in the constitution of all political identities (Arditi, 2012). Laclau and Mouffe (1985) are advocates of a form of agonistic politics, or 'radical democracy': here, revolutionary identity is neither a product of economic necessity (Marxism), nor spontaneity (anarchism), but a product of politics, not teleology. Political identity is unstable: its fixity is partial, and is constituted only via the process of the discursive articulation of the 'Other'. This is, in a way, a process of 'othering' that makes no recourse to history. To this extent, it has been argued that both Laclau and Mouffe's thought speaks well to those approaches of new social movements, of which Occupy might now be regarded as one (Savage, 2014).

It should be pointed out, however, that the influence that this approach may have had on Occupy is not clear, though Laclau's work has been incredibly influential on, at least, the more theoretically-aware aspects of global social movements. Indeed,

one social theorist who participated in Occupy Wall Street remarked, “Laclau deeply influenced my own thinking about how subjective political actors (e.g., social movements) frame their political projects in relation to broader political alignments and society” (Smucker, 2014).

This is interesting because, even though Laclau’s work may enable us to think about the realities of new social movements, his collaborator, Chantal Mouffe, has been somewhat critical of the democratic potential of Occupy. Mouffe (2013) regarded the discourse of Occupy as lacking an adequate conception of politics and the ontological character of the political. To this extent, Laclau and Mouffe, perhaps surprisingly, rearticulate old Marxist orthodoxies: the occupiers are simply utopian anarchists.

Despite such explicit condemnation of the ‘politics’ of Occupy, it is not difficult to understand how their theory can, at least, speak to Occupy’s understanding of identity formation. One could suggest that ‘we are the 99%’ is not well aligned with any idea of a foregrounding historical teleology. There are few ‘subjectivities’ more open than the 99%. Indeed, the 99% embodies a rhetorical move through which a new political reality is configured. To this extent, the 99% would seem to function as an empty signifier. If we make this move, however, we would conclude that the 99% might have no reality outside of the ordering of the hegemonic moment of politics.

To put this in the way of the post-Marxists and post-anarchists, the identity of the 99% is simply the product of ‘articulation’. As such, there must be no essential relation of antagonism between the project of the 99% and the agents of capital that might be termed the 1% (or between Wall Street and Main Street). Indeed, it is interesting to note how difficult the post-Marxists and post-anarchists find it to



discuss any object that might be termed 'capitalism', an object that comprises the target of any radical politics and the basis of the constitution of a political identity.

We might detect another moment through which Occupy has constituted itself ideologically, such that it has pointed to a form of delineation of political identity. Here, we witness an operation of a form of anti-politics in Occupy, where transformational identity is regarded not so much as a product of power, but as an energy, a force of desire that refuses power (we will qualify this argument below). Indeed, this is precisely what writers such as Mouffe have found so problematic about Occupy. It is interesting to note that the failure to understand the hegemonic moment comprises also the basis of the Leninist critique of Occupy, though of course this line of critique is based on a quite different account of identity and transformative subjectivity. Callinicos (2013), for example, has noted the centrality of the Party in articulating the 'us' and 'them' relation necessary to the constitution of political subjectivity.

So, if the post-Marxist and the Leninist approaches do not resonate at this level with the ideational framing of Occupy, can we look elsewhere for a 'better fit'? Perhaps, then, we should face the Marxist and Post-Marxist critiques head on and consider Occupy as predominantly anarchist. And, indeed, perhaps anarchism speaks better to the realities of new social movements, for at the heart of anarchism is a refusal of politics.

Here, revolutionary identity is largely a product of anti-systemic negativity, that is, outsider status. Is this not a better way to understand Occupy considering that, even though the 99% are the majority, to the elite they are outsiders. The very idea of hegemonic strategy, in whatever form, comes to be rejected. Identity is the product of a violent rejection of the system. The attempt of anarchists to capture Occupy within

its discursive horizon is perhaps best typified by the work of the scholar and activist David Graeber. Graeber (2011) writes about “the refusal to recognise the legitimacy of existing political institutions”. He argues that “one reason for the much-discussed refusal to issue demands is because issuing demands means recognising the legitimacy - or at least, the power - of those of whom the demands are made”. For Graeber, this approach typifies Occupy.

This seems problematic for a number of reasons. First because, as stated above, the understandings of identity constitution at the heart of Occupy differ substantively from those that are typical of anarchism. Second, and directly related to this point, the approaches of the occupations are much more nuanced and indeed contradictory than that of simple refusal. The very political identity associated with the discourse of Occupy is not simply anti-political. Rather, Occupiers identify themselves often as being opposed to ‘politics as usual’.

In addition to scholars such as Graeber, Hardt and Negri have set out to speak directly to Occupy. In terms of the theoretical narrative outlined in this paper, it is possible to regard Hardt and Negri as post-anarchists (Bates, 2012). As authors, they refuse what we have termed the ‘political moment’, that is, the moment of hegemony. Moreover, they claim to reformulate the idea of identity in a way best fitted to new social movements in general, and Occupy in particular.

For post-anarchists such as Hardt and Negri, ‘radical’ identity is understood in a broader and more open sense than perhaps any of the approaches we have discussed so far. In radicalising Spinoza’s conception of the multitude, they would seem to speak to the idea of the 99%. The traditional working class may not play a discernible role in Occupy - but for Hardt and Negri, this would not mean that Occupy must be regarded as non-proletarian in character. Rather, the idea of the proletariat needs to be

broadened out to encompass all of the exploited. As such, the proletariat and the *lumpenproletariat* are brought together in the same category: the 'multitude'. What is the 'multitude' and who is part of it? At once, it becomes "the class of those who refuse the rule of capital" (Hardt and Negri, 2005, p. 106). They maintain that "the concept rests [...] on the claim that there is no political priority among the forms of labour [...] The multitude gives the concept of the proletariat its fullest definition as all those who labour and produce under the rule of capital" (Hardt and Negri, 2005, p. 107).

The 'multitude' is the multiplicity of exploited groups who nevertheless have the potential power to *refuse* the rule of capital. At one point, Hardt and Negri insist that "all of the multitude is productive and all of it is poor" (Hardt and Negri, 2005, p. 134). Elsewhere, they argue that "not only is the poor in the world, but the poor itself is the very possibility of the world. Only the poor lives radically the actual and present being, in destitution and suffering, and thus only the poor has the ability to renew being" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 157).

The multitude is not outside the system, as are the exploited, they are the very conditions of possibility through which the system functions. When Hardt and Negri state that 'we are the poor', the 'poor' are not the dangerous classes of Charles Murray's underclass (or indeed Marx's *lumpenproletariat*). Hardt and Negri (2009) note that the 'poor' "refers not to those who have nothing but to the wide multiplicity of all those who are inserted into the mechanisms of social production regardless of social order or property" (p. 40).

Hardt and Negri (2011) directly align this idea of the multitude to Occupy. Thus they write:

These movements have all developed according to what we call a ‘multitude form’ and are characterised by frequent assemblies and participatory decision-making structures. (And it is worth recognizing in this regard that Occupy Wall Street and many of these other demonstrations also have deep roots in the globalization protest movements that stretched at least from Seattle in 1999 to Genoa in 2001) (p. 2-3).

Perhaps we have now arrived at the key mobilising slogan of Occupy: ‘We are the poor’ - We are the 99%. They are the 1%. They are Wall Street. It is the case, then, that Hardt and Negri’s thought speaks well to this slogan. To this extent, the traditional working class are part of the multitude. Those who perform domestic labour - women in the household - are part of the multitude. The health care worker is part of the multitude. The sex worker is part of the multitude. Victims of the sub-prime crisis are part of the multitude. Clearly such sentiments resonate with the identity frames of both movements, with their focus on a radical inclusivity of genders, sexualities, ethnicities, faiths and dis/abilities. We are ‘one people’. We are the multitude.

There is undoubtedly a *prima facie* alignment between the 99% and this idea of the multitude. However, Hardt and Negri’s understanding of this concept is too closely connected with an anti-capitalist framework, a framework with substantive differences to that of Occupy. Indeed, our empirical analysis found that references to (anti)capitalism within the documents we analysed were notable by their absence. Put another way, the 99% are not necessarily those who ‘refuse the rule of capital’.

It is worth noting that Occupy’s framing demands align with the demands for social justice. Indeed, this is particularly important for the formation of political identity in Occupy, for Occupy’s identity comes to be closely associated with a

moralised idea where the other is the exploiter that they seek to oppose. The other is the minority. The other is the 1%. Thus - in varying forms - they oppose 'corporations' and 'captured' governments, polluting oil companies, irresponsible commodities traders and wealthy elites which operate beyond democratic control. This is not necessarily a refusal of the system as such, but a refusal of its corruption and the utopian hope that things could be organised in better ways. To bring this discussion together, we might remark that the open conception of radical political identity and subjectivity that largely grounds the pre-figurative politics of Occupy is both its condition of possibility and its limit.

### **Strategy and Tactics**

Earlier in the paper, prognostic framing was firmly located in the domain of the strategic and tactical, as prognostic framing is concerned with identifying both solutions to specific problems, and a path to the realisation of those solutions. When exploring issues of ideational alignment, this presents some interesting issues and challenges.

It has often been suggested (see May, 1994; and Newman, 2010) that Marxist writers and activists have typically prioritised - to use the contemporary language - 'strategy' over 'tactics'. In other words, Marxists are interested in setting out predefined political strategies - often based on a series of *apriori* assumptions - concerning how to get from position 'a' (the problem) to position 'b' (the solution). In doing so, it has been argued that Marxists reify the organisational form over the movements with which they claim to engage. In contrast, anarchists regard their orientation as primarily a tactical one. Refusing the oppressive structures of politics and the state, their prognosis sees the path to societal transformation as unfolding as

activists actually walk along it (Holloway, 2010). This might be regarded as a resolutely prefigurative politics.

To what extent do these categories speak to Occupy? The strict ideational conception of strategy, typical at least of orthodox Marxism, sits clearly outside the explicit discourse of Occupy. As can be seen from the discussion above, the 'capture' of the state cannot be regarded as a prime motivation of Occupy - though there are substantive differences within each manifestation of the movement in relation to the state. Anarchism, as we have seen, advocates a form of prefigurative politics, and prefigurative politics clearly forms part of Occupy's prognostic framing. Nevertheless, we have challenged the idea that Occupy's particular mode of prefiguration is necessarily anti-statist.

It is worth moving on at this point to consider what might be regarded as more contemporary ideational alignments. May (1994) and Newman (2010) have articulated a theory of what they term 'post-structuralist anarchism'. Central to the work of both these writers is a continuation of what they consider to be the anarchist rejection of 'strategy'. For May:

The anarchist rejection of representation and strategic political philosophy is an invitation to a widening of the field of politics [...] The picture of power that emerges in the anarchist perspective is one of intersecting networks of power rather than a hierarchy. Concomitantly, anarchist struggle is conceived not in terms of substituting new and better hierarchies for the old ones, but in terms of getting rid of hierarchical thinking and action altogether (May, 1994, pp. 30-31).

This raises some important issues. It is clearly the case that OWS and OL depart from the form of 'strategic' thinking typical of at least a Leninist form of Marxism. Yet, at

the same time, this does not mean that Occupy aligns so easily with a post-anarchist form of thinking. To this extent, we must challenge the work of Graeber and, indeed, other post-anarchists amongst which we include Hardt and Negri. OWS makes demands on the state form, but these are relatively rare. Rather, OWS's demands appear to be prefigurative and, to this extent, tactical. Yet, these demands also move into the domain of metaphysics. Thus there is evidenced a concern for cooperation as a precondition for human flourishing, the creativity of human labour, the virtues and values of solidarity, respect and peaceful engagement. Indeed, these are often virtues that can only be articulated through practice – a practice in which Occupy calls us to engage. Hardt has spoken of the importance of love in the context of prefigurative politics. Thus he states:

In part it starts with a recognition that in certain political actions, in certain political demonstrations - the really good ones - you do have a feeling of something really like love. And so, it's partly a way to theorize that recognition of this feeling of ... let's call it a 'collective transformation' that one experiences in certain kinds of political action (Hardt, in Schwartz, 2008-2009).

So this is an affective moralisation, that is, the development of an affective ethics of solidarity in the context of the creation of new modes of politics. To this extent, Žižek is mistaken to claim that Occupy articulates a form of empty moralism, just as he is wrong to equate Occupy with a politics of nihilistic hedonism.

The demands of OL are perhaps more substantive and strategic vis-à-vis the state. Their discourse is littered with democratic demands on the state, calls for ethical regulation of the economy and, as noted above, arguments for a new form of politics rather than the end to politics as such. Once the possibility of bringing about social

change through a re-articulation of the state form is recognised, we clearly move beyond the terrain of anarchism, and into the domain of European social democracy. It seems clear that, though the demands are manifested differently in these national contexts, what Occupy London and Occupy Wall Street were attempting is a discursive mobilisation of a new politics.

This is a mobilisation that opposes the particularity of the current economic subversion of the political. This is one of the contexts in which we need to understand the 99% versus the 1%. This is not simply an empirical category. Rather, the 1% represents the corrupting limit, the very boundary of the possibility of democracy. Put another way, the colonisation of politics by corporate interests and power elites can only serve to produce a particular configuration of the political which undermines the possibilities for collective representation of the 'multitude'. Conversely, despite what we have said so far about Laclau's arguments, perhaps there is an extent to which this might be regarded as a mobilisation of the populist moment (Laclau, 2005).

What is the character of this mobilisation? This is a largely peaceful politics, based on a re-articulation of discursive democracy to the demands of the twenty-first century. The moral values are those of common space, mutual respect, inclusiveness, tolerance, non-violence and decentralised organisational practices. Often prefigurative, these demands are frequently ethical rather than anti-statist. They might also be regarded as having something of the status of empty signifiers: that is, they can be filled in with a range of differential contents from across the ideological spectrum. These are also demands that articulate a constitutive outside: an outside to the ethical, an outside occupied by unethical forms of subjectivity as embodied in the idea of the 1%. One can see this in the imagery of Occupy - including cartoons of fat cat bankers and bloated, corrupted politicians.



It is also the case that this new politics does not reify organisation, and yet there is a focus on what might be regarded as prefigurative organisational forms. Though not well aligned with Marxism, neither is this an alignment with anarchism. Occupy may not have a blueprint for a future utopian society, yet it is far from unorganised. As Klein (2011) has argued, “being horizontal and deeply democratic is wonderful. But these principles are compatible with the hard work of building structures and institutions that are sturdy enough to weather the storms ahead. I have great faith that this will happen” (see also Chomsky, 2011).

Even Hardt and Negri write that “there is no revolution without organization [...] there [...] is no rational design that invests and involves the moments of rupture with the power of organization” (Negri, 2010, p. 161; see also Negri, 2007). Indeed, this is an argument that Hardt and Negri (2012) have set out in their recent text *Declaration*. Despite this focus on organisation, there is nevertheless a naïve utopianism in their reading of Occupy. Yet, in a more modest way, they may be onto something, as it seems clear that this is a form of organisation beyond tactics, an organisation that either seeks to articulate new ethical standards, or - in the European context - invokes (and indeed demands) the very possibility that the state can be reformed. This is clearly not always an anti-statist politics, in contrast to what anarchists such as Graeber, and post-anarchists such as Hardt and Negri would maintain. Hardt and Negri’s (2000) characterisation of the politics of new social movements as a politics of ‘exodus’ in which “a new nomad horde, a new race of barbarians, will arise to invade or evacuate Empire” (p. 213) is little other than a flight of fancy.

## **Conclusion**

Authors such as Graeber (2011; 2013) argued that Occupy represented a crucial political moment: a hope for a new form of politics. This aspiration is clearly discernible in the frames adopted by OWS and OL, as well as in the ideology of the radical left (broadly defined). Given these alignments, a consideration of the extent to which these ideologies talk to contemporary social movements - which purportedly gain their ideational force from them - is warranted. Such a consideration has been the central purpose of our paper.

Our empirical analysis shows that OL and OWS share similar discursive orientations in terms of the collective action frames they deploy. At the level of diagnostic framing, both movements express similar grievances and similar understandings in terms of the attribution of blame. Moreover, both movements start to articulate a conception of transformative identity based on dichotomous boundaries of the 99% vs. 1%. However, such ideas have a problematic alignment with traditional left discourse.

If there are clear similarities in terms of diagnostic frames, this is not the case at the prognostic level, where frames are articulated quite differently. Take, for example, the differing understandings of the relationship between prefigurative politics and the role of the state. OWS largely expresses a form of ethical prefiguration, focusing on directly changing societal practices and directly bypassing the state. Given the demands placed on the state, by contrast, OL should be more firmly situated within the wider tradition of politics of European social democracies. Such differences clearly problematise the extent to which we can talk of Occupy as a coherent social movement.

This leads to another important conclusion. Traditional and contemporary radical left thought fails to speak directly to Occupy. There are a number of reasons

for this. Some of these result from concrete historical tensions between philosophical traditions. Others may be the result of specific contingencies. Whatever the reasons, radical left political philosophy would benefit from a much more meaningful conversation with emerging social movements on the ground, of which Occupy is one.

## References

- AdBusters. (2011). #OccupyWallStreet: A shift in revolutionary tactics. *AdBusters*. Retrieved from: <https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>
- Arditi, B. (2012). Insurgencies don't have a plan - they are the plan: Political performatives and vanishing mediators in 2011. *Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies*. Retrieved from: [http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/jomecjournal/1-june2012/arditi\\_insurgencies.pdf](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/jomecjournal/1-june2012/arditi_insurgencies.pdf)
- Bakunin, M. (1990). *Statism and anarchy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bates, D. (2012). Situating Hardt and Negri. In A. Prichard, R. Kinna, S. Pinta and D. Berry (Eds.), *Libertarian socialism: Politics in black and red* (pp. 275-293). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Benford, R. D. (1993). You could be the hundredth monkey. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34 (2), 195-216.
- Benford, R. D. (1997). An insider's critique of the social movement framing perspective. *Sociological Inquiry*, 67 (4), 409-430.
- Benford, R. D., and Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611-639.
- Breines, W. (1980). Community and organisation: The New Left and Michel's 'Iron Law'. *Social Problems*, 27 (4), 419-429.

Calhoun, C. (2013). Occupy Wall Street in perspective. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 64 (1), 26-38.

Callinicos, A. (2013). Is Leninism finished? *The Socialist Review*. Retrieved from: <http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=12210>

Caren, N., and Gaby, S. (2012). Occupy online: How cute old men and Malcolm X recruited 400,000 US users to OWS on Facebook. *Social Movement Studies*, 11 (3-4), 367-374.

Chomsky, N. (2011). The Occupy movement is unprecedented. *Greenleft*. Retrieved from: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/49270>

Donovan, J. (2012). How Occupy birthed a rhizome. *Waging Nonviolence*. Retrieved from: <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/how-occupy-birthed-a-rhizome/>

Fault Lines (2012). History of an occupation. Retrieved from: [www.aljazeera.com/programmes/faultlines/2012/03/2012319152516497375.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/faultlines/2012/03/2012319152516497375.html)

Gamson, W. A., and Sifry, M. L. (2013). The #Occupy movement: An introduction. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 54 (2), 159-163.

Gitlin, T. (2013). Occupy's predicament: The moment and the prospects for the movement. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 64 (1), 3-25.

Goodwin, J. (2012). Occupy the media. *Mobilising Ideas*. Retrieved from: <http://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/2012/01/16/occupy-the-media/#more-1261>

Graeber, D. (2011). Occupy Wall Street's anarchist roots. *Aljazeera*. Retrieved from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/11/2011112872835904508.html>

Graeber, D. (2013). *The democracy project: A history, a crisis, a movement*. London: Penguin.

Grusky, D. B., McAdam, D., Reich, R., and Satz, D. (2013). *Occupy the future*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Hardt, M., and Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Hardt, M., and Negri, A. (2005). *Multitude*. London: Penguin.
- Hardt, M., and Negri, A. (2009). *Commonwealth*. Massachusetts: Harvard.
- Hardt, M., and Negri, A. (2011). The Fight for 'Real Democracy' at the Heart of Occupy Wall Street. Retrieved from: [http://www.e-flux.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Hardt\\_Negri\\_Ows.pdf](http://www.e-flux.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Hardt_Negri_Ows.pdf)
- Hardt, M., and Negri, A. (2012). *Declaration*. Retrieved from: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Declaration-Michael-Hardt-ebook/dp/B00816QAFY>
- Holloway, J. (2010). *Crack Capitalism*. London: Pluto.
- Klandermans, B. (2007). The demand and supply of participation: Social-psychological correlates of participation of social movements. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule and H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (pp. 360-379). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Klein, N. (2011). Occupy Wall Street: The most important thing in the world right now. *CommonDreams*. Retrieved from: <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2011/10/07/occupy-wall-street-most-important-thing-world-now>
- Laclau, E. (2005). *On populist reason*. London: Verso.
- Laclau, E., and Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: New Left Books.
- May, T. (1994). *The political philosophy of poststructuralist anarchism*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- McCarthy, J. D., Smith, J., and Zald, M. N. (1996). Accessing public, media, electoral and governmental agendas. In D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy and M. N. Zald (Eds.),

*Comparative perspectives on social movements: Political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framing* (pp. 291-311). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCleave Maharawal, M. (2013). Occupy Wall Street and a radical politics of inclusion. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 54 (2), 177-181.

Mills, C. W. (1999). *The power elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mouffe, C. (2013). A vibrant democracy needs agonistic confrontation- an interview with Chantal Mouffe. *Citizenship in Southeast Europe*. Retrieved from: <http://www.citsee.eu/interview/vibrant-democracy-needs-agonistic-confrontation-interview-chantal-mouffe>

Negri, A. (2007). What to do today with what is to be done?, or rather: The body of the general intellect. In S. Budgen, S. Kouvelakis and S. Žižek (Eds.), *Lenin reloaded: Towards a politics of the truth* (pp. 297-307). Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Negri, A. (2010). Communism: Some Thoughts on the Concept and Practice. In C. Douzina and S. Žižek (Eds.), *The Idea of Communism* (pp. 155-165). London: Verso.

Newman, S. (2010). *The politics of postanarchism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Occupy Directory (n.d.). World-map. Retrieved from: <http://directory.occupy.net>

OL (2011a). Occupy Everywhere. Retrieved from: <http://issuu.com/occupylondon/docs/occupyeverywhere?e=6250440/1627838>

OL (2011b). Corporations Statement. Retrieved from: <http://occupylondon.org.uk/about/statements/2843-2/>

OL (2011c). Little Book of Ideas. Retrieved from: [http://issuu.com/occupylondon/docs/occupy\\_little\\_book\\_of\\_ideas?e=0](http://issuu.com/occupylondon/docs/occupy_little_book_of_ideas?e=0)

- OL (2011d). Economics Statement. Retrieved from:  
<http://occupylondon.org.uk/about/statements/statement-on-economy/>
- OL (2011e). About. Retrieved from: <http://occupylondon.org.uk/about-2/>
- OL (2011f). International Statement. Retrieved from:  
<http://occupylondon.org.uk/about/statements/international-outreach-statement/>
- OL (2011g). Statement of Autonomy. Retrieved from:  
<http://occupylondon.org.uk/about/statements/statement-of-autonomy/>
- Occupy London (2011). <http://occupylondon.org.uk/>
- Occupy Wall Street (2011). #OccupyWallStreet. <http://www.nycga.net/>
- OWS (2011a). Declaration of the Occupation of NYC. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.nycga.net/resources/documents/declaration/>
- OWS (2011b). Statement of Autonomy. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.nycga.net/resources/documents/statement-of-autonomy/>
- OWS (2011c). Principles of Solidarity. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.nycga.net/resources/documents/principles-of-solidarity/>
- Pickerill, J. and Krinsky, J. (2012). Why does Occupy matter? *Social Movement Studies*, 11 (3-4), 279-287.
- Rushkoff, D. (2013). Permanent revolution: Occupying democracy. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 54 (2), 164-173.
- Savage, R. (2014). Reflections on Laclau. *Occupy Wall Street*. Retrieved from:  
<http://occupywallst.org/article/reflections-laclau/>
- Schneider, N. (2012). Occupy after Occupy. *The Nation*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.thenation.com/article/169761/occupy-after-occupy>
- Schwartz, L. (2008/2009). A conversation with Michael Hardt on the politics of love. *Interval(le)s*, 2(2)-3(1), 810-821.

Sitrin, M. (2012). What does democracy look like? *The Nation*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.thenation.com/article/166824/what-does-democracy-look#>

Smucker, J. M. (2014). Thank you Ernesto Laclau. *Devolve the Apocalypse*. Retrieved from: <http://devoketheapocalypse.com/2014/04/14/ernesto-laclau/>

Snow, D. A., and Benford, R. D. (1988). Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization. *International Social Movement Research*, 1, 197-217.

Sotirakopoulos, N., and Rootes, C. (2014). Occupy London in international and local context. In D. della Porta and A. Mattoni (Eds.), *Spreading protest: Social movements in times of crisis* (pp. 172-192). Colchester: ECPR Press.

Taylor, A. (2011). Occupy and space. *n+1 magazine*. Retrieved from:  
<https://nplusonemag.com/online-only/occupy/occupy-and-space/>

Welty, E., Bolton, M., Nayak, M., and Malone, C. (2013). *Occupying political science: The Occupy Wall Street movement from New York to the world*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.