

“Yes, we camp!”: Democracy in the age of Occupy

ŽIGA VODOVNIK & ANDREJ GRUBACIC

ABSTRACT This article explores the global mass assembly movement, focusing on its redefinitions of democracy and political membership, where one of the most interesting and promising aspects is reaffirmation of spatiality. In a way, the so-called Occupy Movement imagined new concepts of democracy and political membership worked out on a more manageable scale, that is to say, within local communities. We build on the recent scholarly attention given to the notion of nonstate spaces, which we chose to call exilic spaces because they are populated by communities that voluntarily or involuntarily attempt escape from both state regulation and capitalist accumulation.

KEYWORDS: • occupy • democracy • citizenship • infrapolitics • city
• exilic space • social movements

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS: Žiga Vodovnik, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Kardeljeva pl. 5, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia, email: ziga.vodovnik@fdv.uni-lj.si. Andrej Grubacic, Ph.D., Associate Professor, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1435 Mission Street, San Francisco CA 94103, USA, email: agrubacic@ciis.edu.

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1 Introduction¹

"The city is a space where the powerless can make history. That is not to say it is the only space, but it is certainly a critical one."

- Saskia Sassen (2011: 574)

"Democracy is not based on any nature of thing nor guaranteed by any institutional form. It is not borne along by any historical necessity and does not bear any. It is only entrusted to the constancy of its specific acts."

- Jacques Rancière (2014: 97)

When Occupy Wall Street initially burst onto the political scene in September 2011, igniting approximately 1400 occupation encampments across the globe – from New York City to Frankfurt, from Ljubljana to the docks of Oakland – it reminded us once again that we should understand social movements as something more than just "orgasms of history" (Fremion 2002). As Raul Zibechi points out, in relation to recent revolutionary movements in Latin America:

in the daily life of divided societies, public time dominates the scene; the only audible voices are those of the economic, political and union elites. For this reason the Argentine insurrection was both "unexpected" and "spontaneous" to those elites, who could not hear the underground sounds, despite the fact that for more than a decade the voices had been echoing from below anticipating the approaching event (2010: 213).

Social movements are always in the making for a longer time than we can see (or want to see), and we are therefore always surprised by their sudden "eruption." In this "becoming" even the symbolism is not missing. It was definitely not missing in front of the Ljubljana Stock Exchange (*borza*), where the vibrations of the 150 protests caused the letter R to fall off the façade of the building, to be replaced only moments later by an improvised letter J. The message of this *détournement* was clear: *borza* (stock exchange) was transformed into *boj za* (struggle for).

The Newest Social Movements (NSM), a term coined by Richard J.F. Day (2005) to distinguish the new incarnations of social movements which began to emerge around the turn of the millennium, are assessing political choices – both tactical and strategic – following a new logic. If in the past their actions and choices were organized toward producing effects on the powers that be, today their actions and choices consider the impact on themselves. It is not, therefore, struggle against (*boj proti*), but increasingly struggle for (*boj za*). If we are concrete, it is a struggle for a new "democratized democracy" which is both plural and inclusive.

Although local circumstances, grievances, and idiosyncrasies varied from encampment to encampment, there was nevertheless an overarching context in which the occupations were emerging: the current economic moment, in which politics and democracy are being forced to redefine their position and purpose. The structure of the global economy, based on Western hegemony in the interstate system, appears to be in a serious crisis. However, as many commentators have already pointed out, what Occupy activists shared was more than just the rejection of a particular economic model (cf. Eisenstein in Kennedy, 2012: xiii). Specifically, the occupations were not inspired by the narrow economic reductionism and determinism which results in the fetishization of economic exploitation and class antagonisms. Rather, they were putting emphasis on the crisis of representative democracy at global, national, and local levels. Their tactics highlighted the presence of hierarchy and domination that run throughout all of these levels, and consequently addressed forms of exploitation that may not necessarily have any economic meaning at all.

We build on the recent scholarly attention given to the notion of nonstate spaces, which we have chosen to call *exilic spaces* (Gray, 2004; Grubacic & O'Hearn, forthcoming) because they are populated by communities that voluntarily or involuntarily attempt escape from both state regulation (the focus of much anarchist analysis) and capitalist accumulation (the focus of Marxism). Exilic spaces can be defined as those areas of social and economic life wherein people and groups attempt to extricate themselves from capitalist economic processes, whether by territorial escape or by attempting to build structures that are independent of capitalist accumulation and social control. This is important because of the centrality of the spatial aspect of occupations – i.e. the idea of occupying public spaces, symbolically proclaiming: "This country is for everyone" (Eisenstein in Kennedy, 2012: xiii). Saskia Sassen (2012) agrees that the question of public space was central for the politics of Occupy, since "to occupy is to remake, even if temporarily, territory's embedded and often deeply undemocratic logics of power, and to redefine the role of citizens, mostly weakened and fatigued after decades of growing inequality and injustice." We will return to the exilic politics of Occupy later on, but here we can point out that, in Bookchin's (2007) terms, the occupations raised much broader and more important questions related to understanding social change as something that should transcend the standard ways we live, work, make love, and collaborate.

The exilic character of occupied spaces was not something that was immediately understood. After the occupation of Zuccotti park and the first encampments of the 150 protests, occupy soon became a buzzword, a hashtag. So much so that the American Dialect Society named it "The Word of the Year" for 2012, while in Germany the term *Wutbürger* (angry citizen) became the word of the year in the Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprach. But despite the vast amounts of media coverage and books and articles on the various "Occupy" movements, we argue that the movement's most important political (exilic) aspirations have still not been

properly addressed. To some degree we can understand epistemological myopia, since reflecting something so recent and dynamic as Occupy is always an optical challenge par excellence (cf. Appadurai, 2002; Tormey, 2012). As Saul Newman (2014: 94) points out, political theory has to catch up with this new terrain, since it "generally looks for visible, representative identities situated on an ontological field organized by sovereign power; it is concerned with how we are governed, or with the normative principles or constitutive logics upon which political power is founded."

Indeed, we argue that the new politics of Occupation reveals the need for a wider epistemological and methodological transformation. Too many theoretical concepts and political praxes invented by these new unruly subjects are too elusive for traditional disciplines, theories, and epistemologies. Therefore, their analysis must be founded on a new, more flexible epistemology and methodology. Paraphrasing Eduardo Restrepo and Arturo Escobar (2005), such an epistemological transformation calls for a critical awareness of both the larger epistemic and political field in which disciplines have emerged and continue to function, and of the micro-practices and relations of power within and across different locations and traditions of individual disciplines.

In our reading of occupations we will follow James C. Scott's theory of infrapolitics, but with some important modifications. In Scott's terminology, infrapolitics is "an unobtrusive realm of political struggle" (Scott, 1990: 183) that includes a "wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name" (ibid., 38). Infrapolitics is essentially a strategic form of resistance that subjects must assume under conditions of great peril (ibid., 199). They provide a "structural underpinning for more visible political action, not as a substitute, but as its condition" (ibid., 58). We believe that infrapolitics should be understood as a political process articulated on two distinct levels. In its "micropolitical" sense, infrapolitics can assist us in highlighting how many aspects of the politics of Occupy were overlooked, or marginalized at best, since, "like infrared rays," they were "beyond the visible end of the spectrum" (ibid., 201). Michael Greenberg (2012: 271) argues that "occupation presented politics not as a set issues but as a way of being. It offered a release from subjectivity." For the political Right and Left, advocating real political action means action via political parties, protests or other conventional forms of collective action. They do not find alternative political praxes such as occupations fascinating and tend to dismiss them as: (1) unorganized, unsystematic, and individual; (2) opportunistic and self-indulgent; and (3) lacking in real potential/consequences. Furthermore, their own solutions always imply accommodation with the existing system of domination (Scott, 1985: 292). Following Scott we will try to recuperate "subaltern" aspects of occupations as providing "much of the cultural and structural underpinning of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally been focused" (Scott, 1990: 184). Our suggestion here is that we must shift our attention from the most visible - and consequently the most

mediatized - aspects of Occupy to redefinitions of democracy and political membership that lie in the "immense political terrain ... between quiescence and revolt" (ibid., 200).

On the "macropolitical" level, infrapolitics is a process of producing forms of place-based politics within cracks of the global capitalist system. Infrapolitics of the capitalist world economy describes the effort of breaking from systemic processes of state and capital. It is a process of (self-)organization of relatively autonomous and only partially-incorporated spaces, and the resulting antagonistic relationship which emerges between exilic spaces and the hierarchical organizations of a capitalist world economy. It is also a predictable response to an enduring logic of exit and capture inscribed in the *longue duree* of historical capitalism. Instead of ruptures and breaks, we see a long-term, large-scale historical process of state making and state breaking, of state formation and state de-formation, of ongoing and uneven incorporation and exilic re-appropriation and recovery. The rise of the global mass assembly movement and the politics of occupation, should be understood in this larger historical context.

The purpose of the article is twofold. First, we examine political practice and imagination of Occupation, focusing on redefinitions of democracy as practiced in encampments and squares, where various collectives and movements developed a genuinely new political alternative, and with it also a new understanding of politics that is worked out on a more manageable scale, that is to say, within local communities. We start from the supposition, that in the Occupy Movement we can find the beginning of a trans-local yet truly global network of direct democracy that, in its struggle against social exclusion and the trivialization of citizenship, recuperates an idea of prefiguration and direct democracy. We will explore further Newman's (2014) suggestion that we should understand Occupy as a distinct form of politics and a new mode of democratic organization, involving the creation of autonomous spaces, rather than a distinct social movement.

Finally, we consider the intersection between political/democratic and physical/spatial aspects of occupations. We examine the reaffirmation of spatiality and, with it, a redefinition of political membership as one of the most important aspects of the politics of Occupation.² In a way, the movements of Occupation initiated a paradigm shift in political thought and practice, especially if we bear in mind various debates on global/cosmopolitan democracy from the mid-90s onwards. We argue that Occupy imagined new concepts of political participation constituted beyond the nation-state, sometimes in opposition to it, but always transcending the parochial forms of political membership that make global connectedness impossible.

2 Becoming political

We can agree with the thesis that two main discourses can be found in contemporary discussions on democracy. The first understands democracy as a word whose roots lie in Ancient Greece and whose etymological origin poses new dilemmas, while the second examines democracy as an egalitarian decision-making procedure and everyday practice which in antiquity gradually became labeled "democratic" (Graeber, 2007: 340).³ The results of this dualism are "diachronous" discussions on democracy and, ultimately, a series of debates on the level of democracy of institutions and institutes which by their very essence counterpoise democratic practices. These and similar misconceptions also gave rise to a hegemonic notion of democracy which only recuperated the word while rejecting its contents.

What was genuinely new about Occupy, were in fact distinct forms of politics, involving the creation of autonomous spaces. Occupy should be, according to Newman, seen not so much as a movement, but "as a tactic, a practice, a mode of organisation and rhizomatic mobilization, one that spreads spontaneously throughout the nerve centres of capitalist societies, involving the occupation and transformation of physical, symbolic and social spaces." (Newman, 2014: 94; cf Smucker, 2012). Whether in the US, Slovenia, or elsewhere, what we have seen is a collective re-imagining of democracy.

Since one of the key features of Occupy was the link between political struggle and its objectives—"the means are the goals in the making"—it is not surprising that the theory and practice of prefigurative politics developed as a new democratic spirit of encampment. Prefiguration means an attempt to use methods of political organization and action to create the future in the present, or at least, to some extent, foresee and manifest the social changes we are striving for. As explained by Tim Jordan (2002), it means acting in the present the ways we would want to act in the future, or acting as if the world in which we aspire to live has already materialized. It is a brief attempt to delegitimize the existing system and to build up its alternative from the bottom up. In this perspective, the encampments were not important only for their physical disposition, but rather as symbolic spaces for acting out new political structures and norms. For Peter Marcuse (2012: 16), an occupied square offers "a physical presence, a locational identity, a place that can be identified with the movement that visitors can come to, and where adherents can meet. It also has a second function: it is an opportunity to try out different forms of self-governance, the management of a space and, particularly if the physical occupation is overnight and continuous, of living together."

In the case of Occupy Wall Street, a small and rather uninviting park in New York City's Financial District was transformed into a permanent tent city, thereby reclaiming the commons and inventing new modes of political membership. Same holds true for the platform in front of the Ljubljana Stock Exchange, where tents,

sleeping bags, and tarps signaled a lively community space which enabled a different kind of socializing, and the formation of a real community. What was common to all encampments was that – visually and spatially – they represented a microcosm of a different polity, where a new form of citizen(ship) successfully challenged, *inter alia*, private property, atomization of (domestic) arrangements, and exclusion of minorities.⁴

In our analytical context, the critique of economic reductionism does not go far enough. In exilic spaces, the conceptions “economic” and “non-economic” may even be redundant. Turner suggests that, “[one] would do better to start from Marx’s and Engels’ programmatic ‘anthropological’ definition of production in *The German Ideology*, in which production is said to comprehend, not merely the production of the means of subsistence, but of human beings and families, social relations of cooperation, and new needs as well” (1986: 100). And, as Graeber (2001) notes, “economy” in many pre-capitalist societies included all of those things that were “valued” in the sense that people were willing to expend their energies and time in doing or making them. Often, they were not merely self-provisioned, but actually given away (Mauss, 1954). Perhaps more importantly, when one observes non-market societies it is apparent that the things on which people expend most of their energies are not even the subsistence activities that one might define as economic according to a substantive view of economy, but rather activities of socialization (producing children, people, and social relations as well as things).

Clearly, economy in its broader definition involves time, effort, and commitment. Effort is connected to commitment since intensity, creativity, attention to detail, and quality are all impacted by alienation and force as well as positive forces like solidarity, empathy, and hope. When one brings time into the equation, an interesting result emerges: workers struggle to reduce the working day when effort is regulated by a boss or manager and is tied to wages; yet effort is intensified and time lengthened when it is regulated by interest, creativity, and solidarity. “Development” has a vast impact on the allocation of time during the day, and, combined with the degree to which work and life are separated, it fundamentally changes not just how we spend our “working day,” but how we spend our whole day.

Komlosy (2014) argues from a world-historical perspective that the meaning of “work” has been changed since the thirteenth century so that it now refers only to those things that produce exchange values or, at best, directly support the production of exchange values through reproducing labor. The exertion of energies in ways that do not directly support the production of exchange values, by being redefined as non-work, are thus devalued, and rather than simply being rendered worthless, or even invisible, they become negatively valued as “time wasting.” Moreover, it was only under capitalism and colonialism that work became associated with pain (disutility). According to the work ethic,

expenditures of energy in ways that are fun cannot be work.⁵ By contrast, indigenous people have specific terms for each activity they engage in, but no general term to denote work and differentiate it from non-work.

To the extent that it is based on mutual aid, the work of making exilic society is not just the household chore of producing children, but the joint chore of producing community. This involves a great deal of cultural work that should not surprise us: it takes us right back to "value" as the regulator that determines where people exert their physical, emotional, and spiritual efforts, at least in the absence of capitalist labor regulation and consumerist alienation. Outside of capitalism, once subsistence is achieved, the center of economy/value is the production of people and community, often through collective joy. "Development" may be seen as the attempted replacement of public joy by commodity production. Is there a dialectic, parallel to Kropotkin's struggle between mutual aid and possessive individualism, where exilic actors invest great time and effort into expressions of collective joy and the work of building community while capital and state institutions support the development of what Crary (2013) calls "24/7 capitalism," a regime where leisure and joy are increasingly subsumed by capitalist work relations?⁶

In this respect, our analysis diverges from the theories of Foucault (2007) and Agamben (1998). Several critics have argued that Agamben and Foucault lack a theory of "emancipatory possibilities" (Ziarek, 2012). They (correctly) ask whether the state of bare life could create common grounds for a movement against state power, biopower, or economic subjugation. Yet even these critiques dissatisfy. Ziarek, for example, puts forth hunger strikes as an example of how prisoners may use their "bare life" conditions as a weapon of voice and emancipation (we shall return to hunger strikes in chapter five, although in a different context). Yet her case, suffragettes attempting to achieve the right to vote, narrows the definition of emancipation to inclusion within the polis. She thus, like Foucault and Agamben, accepts a narrow definition of the "good life" as participation in polis, and consequently fails to recognize alternatives that are not only about direct democracy, but also about other forms of "life" including contemplation, leisure, and, importantly, the production of collective joy. To use our terminology introduced above, this critique of Agamben and, by implication, Foucault, fails to recognize the importance of exit. Exilic communities, as we have defined them, consist of parallel practices and institutions of life that do not mimic those of mainstream societies. Not only do exilic communities practice the "art of not being governed," more precisely, they govern themselves and practice mutual aid.

When "we are the 99 %" became the main slogan and meme of Occupy, it was often misinterpreted exactly when using the old political grammar. "The 99 %" was certainly not an announcement of a new subject to be included in polis, but rather a reminder about heterogeneity of its composition and sheer contingency of

the status quo. In *La mésentente*, Rancière admits that politics "happens very little or rarely," and only by realizing the presumption of equality – i.e. when acting as subjects that don't have the rights that they have and have the rights that they don't have.⁷ Political activity starting from the axiom of equality confronts the police by revealing its contingency "because, or when, the natural order of the shepherd kings, the warlords, or property owners is interrupted by a freedom that crops up and makes real the ultimate equality on which any social order rests" (2004: 16). For Rancière politics entails not only declassification of the order, but also political subjectification – i.e. recognition of the political existence of part des sans-part. Subjectification can mean the assertion of a new identity, but it can also mean the refusal of imposed identity, as "any subjectification is a disidentification, removal from the naturalness of a place, the opening up of a subject space where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted, where a connection is made between having a part and having no part" (ibid., 36).

With the Rancièrean reading of Occupy we can understand occupations as one of those rare instances of politics that disturb the hegemonic (police) order. With the inscription of the part that has no part (yet), the "community of sharing" transcended the "political agoraphobia" – as Dupuis-Déri (2011) defined fear of the masses – of neoliberal representative democracies, and called for a new democratic politics. After all, politics arises when (mis)count – to be more precise, "the gap created by the empty freedom of the people between the arithmetical order and the geometric order" (ibid., 19) – leads to the assertion of equality of anyone with anyone else, reminding us that democracy is nothing else than "anarchic 'government,' one based on nothing other than the absence of every title to govern" (Rancière, 2006: 41).

Although Rancière started to systematically examine theories of democracy relatively late (we can probably trace the beginnings of explicit interventions to *Aux bords du politique* [1992] and *La mésentente* [1995]), and while there have not been any meditations on the global Occupy initiative, we can still find, in his older works, a conceptualization of democracy that without doubt speaks to protesters in the here and now:

Politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by the fact of placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation, the contradiction of two worlds in a single world: the world where they are and the world where they are not, the world where there is something "between" them and those who do not acknowledge them as speaking beings who count and the world where there is nothing. (Rancière, 2004: 27)

Unknowingly, the activists shared a similar understanding of democracy: not merely as a set of institutions, certain constitutional regimes, economic models, and the rule of the law (that is in fact always the rule of a law), but rather as the

institution of politics itself, acknowledging logos – not only phone – in their slogans and chants. With the Occupy initiative, democratic politics is once again interpreted as a free and creative activity in everyday life, not limited to the sphere of politics (an achievement of the eighteenth century), as it must necessarily encompass all social and economic life. We could say that it is understood as the Ancients understood it – as an art of living together.

3. "Whose streets? Our streets!"

In recent years there has been increased interest in new conceptions and practices of citizenship that digress from the nation-state (e.g. Soysal, 1994; Isin, 2000, Carter, 2001; O'Byrne, 2003; Delanty, 2006), with notions of post-national citizenship and de-nationalization of citizenship as two major theoretical orientations. Gerard Delanty (2007: 25) maintains that, in a global age, political, social and economic transformations "have brought in their wake responsibilities that go far beyond duties to the state." Ksenija Vidmar Horvat (2010: 205), on the other hand, asserts that national citizenship no longer represents the only form of political membership, because the accelerating trend of multiculturalization and denationalization of societies makes obvious that national citizenship can't accommodate demands for proper civic participation and democratic control.⁸ For Vidmar Horvat (2011: 10), the tension between a "territorially defined nation-state on the one hand and deterritorialized rights on the other" is only an additional reason for imagining a new model of political membership that exists independently of the nation-state.⁹

A growing number of authors posit that cities are, once again, becoming strategic sites, where not only new kinds of politics are made, but also new political subjects, new norms, and new identities. When Sassen examines "spatialization of global power projects," she concludes that one of the major advantages of city-ness is that "the space of the city is a far more concrete space for politics than that of the nation. It becomes a place where nonformal political actors can be part of the political scene in a way that is much more difficult at the national level" (2001: 19). Because of its immediacy and concreteness, urban politics enables that "those who lack power, those who are disadvantaged, outsiders, discriminated minorities, can gain presence in global cities, presence vis-a-vis power and presence vis-a-vis each other. This signals ... the possibility of a new type of politics centered in new types of political actors" (ibid.) Hence, cities with the politics built in their very physicality are the most appropriate sites for occupiers to re-politicize society and re-invent democracy.

The occupations revealed the insufficiency of the nation-state as the only center of sovereignty and space where key political decisions can be made, or paraphrasing Sassen (2012), at the very least signaled "the emergence of different territorial vectors." Maybe the most subversive aspect of the Occupy Movement was re-appropriation of public space as a new spatial format for political inclusion.¹⁰

Occupiers redefined territory as the "global street" in a way that "has freed up territory both as category and as capability; it has turned it into a space for remaking the social and the political by those who lack access to the established instruments of power within the frame of national sovereign territory" (ibid.). Of course, encampments should not be perceived as physical sites only. Because space is produced – both its physical disposition and its social meaning – by the very activities that can/can't realize there, camps were as important also as symbolic sites of contention over the meaning of (public) space (Juris, 2012: 268; Hammond, 2013: 500).

According to Pleyers (2010: 40), reclaimed spaces become "places sufficiently autonomous and distanced from capitalist society and power relations which permit actors to live according to their own principles, to knit different social relations and to express their subjectivity." In encampments a different understanding of polity developed throughout the occupation: that community should not be based on the vague notion of identity (no matter how inclusive), but rather on a concrete relationship and common action. In times of intensified migration flows and unprecedented mobility of the demos, the idea and practice of municipalized citizenship as demonstrated in encampments and squares across the globe can indeed be understood as a much needed panacea for the shortcomings of national citizenship.

Reflecting the organizational and decision-making practices developed around Occupy Slovenia, Razsa and Kurnik (2014) assert, that these praxes enabled not only a radical break with the representative liberal democracy, but national citizenship as well. An indefinite encampment in front of the Stock Exchange, with general assemblies and workshops following what activists called the "democracy of direct action", opened "a space for minority participation, not only in regard to ethnic or racial minorities, but other groups as well – the homeless, LGBT, and those labeled mentally ill – in short, the heterogeneous and plural subjects that characterize Slovene society today" (Razsa & Kurnik, 2014: 223–224). The occupied plaza in the center of Ljubljana was fomenting new forms of collective action and new forms of political membership better suited to intercultural dialogue and inclusion of migrant communities than are nation-states. Political practices of Occupy, according to Sassen (2011: 574), aim toward "the production of 'presence' by those without power and with a politics that claims rights to the city and to the country rather than protection of property. What the two situations share is the notion that through these practices new forms of the political (for Weber, citizenship) are being constituted and that the city is a key site for this type of political work."

Chris Carlsson (2008: 82) argues that in exilic spaces – communal gardens, for instance – "time opens up for conversation, debate, and a wider view than that provided by the univocal, self-referential spectacle promoted by the mass media." Similarly, camps soon became the source of power, identity, occupation, and,

needless to say, knowledge. It became a place of experimentation, innovation and prefiguration. The (infra)politics of Occupy thus comports with Gerard Delanty (2007: 24) when he argues that citizenship also "takes place in communicative situations arising out of quite ordinary life experiences." For Delanty, citizenship is no longer "realized ... as a condition secured by the state but is also pertinent to subnational levels, such as local and regional levels. In this regard, what is particularly important is the level of the city as a basis of citizenship" (ibid., 26). Even more, for Manuel Castells (1994), nation states have been witnessing, in recent decades, a slow erosion of their power, as cities replace them as "a driving force" in current and future political developments.

As we have written elsewhere (Grubačić, 2010; Vodovnik, 2012a), we can find similar instances of exilic spaces in many urban projects that became "catalysts of community development, as the networks and other social capital formed ... are deployed to ... serving other community needs" (McKay, 2011: 182). For instance, in the case of the Loisaída – a migrant pronunciation of Lower East Side – community gardens in New York City, the project triggered interaction and cooperation amongst various migrant communities whilst preserving their migrant culture. For the Latino communities, small garden houses (casitas) are a symbol of their culture and lifestyle. In the interplay between various communities, the casitas received new features and design, and very often were built or maintained by groups from different cultural backgrounds that have nevertheless kept up the original spirit of the casita.

Ashram Acres in Birmingham (UK), a community garden started in the early 1980s, is also praised as an example of intercultural dialogue and empowerment of migrant communities that successfully surpasses the limitations of narrow multiculturalism. This exilic space does not place civic practices within the framework of the nation-state; it does not aim towards the integration of "others" that can, at the same time, lead to their exclusion or subjugation; and it is not apolitical, which would merely ignore the problems of power relations, inequality and exclusion. The garden, which was initiated by a local community activist working with a local migrant population, empowered groups otherwise marginalized by the mainstream society, and allowed them to "reconnect to their own cultural identity through the crops they grow, and ... work across cultures by co-operating with people from different parts of the world growing different things. Nobody gets any 'wealthier' – but everybody is enriched" (ibid., 181–82).

4 Political geography of citizenship

When reflecting on encampments and occupied squares as novel spatial formats for political inclusion, Sassen demarcates them from the "more ritualized" spaces for public activity. What makes occupied – ergo reclaimed – spaces different is not their physical or topographic aspect, but rather the political: "The Street can, thus, be conceived as a space where new forms of the social and the political can

be made, rather than a space for enacting ritualized routines. With some conceptual stretching, we might say that politically, 'street and square' are marked differently from 'boulevard and piazza': The first signals action and the second, rituals" (Sassen, 2011: 574).

To be clear, localism in the politics of Occupy should not be understood as a novum. Citizenship per definitionem was never related to the state, but referred solely to a specific "urban relationship" between rights and duties in the city (Delanty, 2006: 12). Although the etymological origin of the word citizenship – from *civitas*, *civitatus*, to the modern *citoyen* – always linked political membership to smaller and more fluid polities, we still encounter problems in understanding citizenship in societies where the equating of political membership to national category results from a linguistic or semantic similarity between both concepts. Citizenship meant political membership in a city and existed independently of the state.¹¹ It is thus erroneous to talk only about a "citizen of the state" since we can also identify other types of citizenship that are built on different – e.g. territorial or functional – criteria.

Citizenship as redefined in occupations nevertheless represents a significant departure from classical theories and praxes of citizenship because it builds on inclusion and participation rather than on identity, and, instead of emphasizing equality, it accentuates differences, or "equal differences." Yet redefinitions of citizenship in occupations should also not be understood as another postmodern conception of political membership characterized by relativism and particularism that, according to Rizman (2008: 37), only detects diversity, difference, fragmentation, conflict and opposition, but not also commonality, equality, integration, consensus and integration.¹² This is why, Newman asserted, that here

we are dealing with a different dynamic in which identity and its representation is no longer operative or important. Rather than making identities and interests – whether class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality etc – visible to power through the articulation of demands, we see instead a convergence of people who no longer identify themselves in specific ways but who come together as singularities (2014: 94).

New citizenship can thus be understood as a performative citizenship that goes beyond citizenship as a normative disposition, since it is grounded in an actual political practice (cf. Slaughter and Hudson, 2007: 9). We can agree with Ruth Lister (1998) when she writes that to avoid a partial integration of a new political subject into the polity – and therefore rising numbers of denizens or margizens – we should once again understand citizenship not only as a legal status (citizenship-as-status), but also as a practice (citizenship-as-activity).¹³ We would like to refer to this model of citizenship as "exilic." Citizens of the encampments extended practices of citizenship to include health, ecology, urbanism, knowledge, food production, culture, sustainable development, architecture, etc. They did not

perceive their political activation as something that concerns an alteration in hegemonic economic and political arrangements only, but rather – if we borrow from Zinn – something immediate, something we must do now: where we are, where we live, where we work. It means starting in this very moment to do away with authoritarian, cruel relationships—between men and women, between parents and children, between one kind of worker and another kind. It takes place in a hundred thousand places at once: in families, on streets, in neighborhoods, in places of work. Squelched in one place, it springs up in another, until it is everywhere. Such a revolution is an art. That is, it requires the courage not only of resistance, but of imagination. (Zinn, 2009: 712)

4 Conclusion

The politics of exilic spaces are usually not regarded as relevant to our understanding of democracy, nor of capitalist development and change. These territories are, after all, often spaces of refuge for bandits, primitives, illegal immigrants, outside agitators, anarchists, outcasts, and “villains of all nations.” Therefore, much of the historical experience of exilic spaces is lost. This is an important oversight. Seen in this way, exilic spaces are part of the making and remaking, the economic structuring and restructuring, of the capitalist world economy and political power. Exilic spaces are always in process, they are always being made and remade, composed and decomposed. But like Kropotkin’s (1998) institutions and practices of mutual aid, they never go away. There is nothing spontaneous or surprising, for instance, about the emergence of the Mexican Zapatistas or Spanish indignados as an example of an exilic re-appropriation. The research we proposed examines the limits of those possibilities, in their full variation and regularity.

In the article we have argued that the global mass assembly movement enabled new democratic practices by recuperating structures that are autonomous of capitalist processes of accumulation and social control. It perceived “hegemonic democracy” based on majority voting not only as an inherently oppressive anomaly resulting in a tyranny of the majority, but (paradoxically) also as an extremely disuniting and homogenizing institute leading to unstable and one-dimensional polities. For occupiers, majority voting should not be respected for itself alone. After all, numbers and quantities have nothing to do with the truth and democracy (Bensaïd, 2012). Unlike the *monos* of monarchia indicating the rule of one, the *hoi oligoi* of oligarchy indicating the rule of few, the *demos* of democracy indicates the power of anybody (Ross, 2012: 89). With this reminder alone, Occupy unmasked the oligarchic tendencies of the hegemonic political model based on representation and the virtue of the men of substance or excellence.¹⁴ In other words: Occupy showed that the political model based on the rule of *aristoi*, political representation, and a specific economic outlook counters the democratic idea of process (an “endless meeting” according to Francesca Polletta), and is, in fact, much closer to typical monarchical arrangements. Since *demos* as *gens de*

rien is not a singular subject, but only a political name for "part of those who have no part" (Rancière), the encampments - as exilic spaces - prefigured new forms of citizenship. The exilic citizenship practiced during occupations did not represent the depoliticization of political membership, but instead offered a substantive understanding of the concept that, in past decades, has too often been reduced to a legal or contractual status that does not anticipate political activity.

To sum up, our research of the exilic politics of Occupy focuses on democracy and citizenship as the most widely shared aspirations of occupiers. Our suggestion here was that – in the Rancièrian sense – Occupy reinvented politics not because it heroically clashed with the police and artfully blocked downtown traffic, but rather because it attacked relationships of authority, and disrupted the hegemonic order with the assumption of equality. After all, politics is not made up of power relationships, but rather of "relationships between worlds," addressing again and again a simple question of why only one particular activity is visible (while another is unseen) and why only one particular speech is understood as discourse (and another as noise). Finally, "occupied" politics goes beyond the restricted meanings usually ascribed to these categories, as they are not only affirming direct democracy, but also other forms of "life" including contemplation, leisure, and, importantly, the production of collective joy (Federici, 2012).

Post scriptum

Attempting to write an accurate genealogy of the Occupy Movement was not our objective at any rate. Above all, because it would be a pretentious task. By analogy with Subcomandante Marcos' definition of Zapatismo, one could say that the new politics of Occupy "is not a doctrine. It is an intuition. Something so open and flexible that it really occurs in all places. *Occupation* poses the question: 'What is it that has excluded me?', 'What is it that has isolated me?' In each place the response is different. *Occupation* simply states the simple question and stipulates that the response is plural, that the response is inclusive" (Marcos in Vodovnik 2004: 45). Prefigurative politics of the NSM should only be understood as a tendency in the history of human thought and practice, a tendency which cannot be encompassed by a general theory of ideology, since its contents, as well as manifestations in political practice, change with time.

This might be one of the reasons why the Occupy Movement faded from the media coverage in the aftermath of the eviction of Zuccotti Park in November 2012, although the context and the conditions that gave rise to the occupation encampments have not changed much. But as Milkman, Luce and Lewis (2013a) suggest in their bottom-up account of Occupy Wall Street (OWS), the political legacy of Occupy will continue to reverberate for many years to come. They argue that "[n]ot only did the movement succeed in focusing the national political conversation on economic inequality and the growing concentration of wealth and power, but it also gave birth to a new generation of activists with a political vision

and collective identity that will continue to orient many of them for the rest of their lives ... The eviction of Zuccotti Park may have made the blocked economic and political aspirations of the Millennial generation less visible, and fragmented the movement they began to build there. But those who participated understand that their problems are not the result of bad individual choices, but instead a broken economic and political system. They may have lost the futures they imagined, but they have discovered what could be a lifelong calling." (Milkman, Luce & Lewis, 2013b)

The movement was able to make new alliances between veteran activists or activist scenes and other participants who had little or no experience with political activism. Occupy was in fact a crossbreeding of different microcosms that confirmed Rancière, when he argues that the wrong can never be settled by some accord between the parties: "[T]he subjects a political wrong sets in motion are not entities to whom such and such has happened by accident, but subjects whose very existence is the mode of manifestation of the wrong" (Rancière 2004: 39). Occupy brought about the most humane gesture – especially if we consider the original meaning of the Latin word *humando* – of burying old political imaginaries, grammars, identities, and strategies, which then gave way for new inventions and discoveries. Therefore, it is no surprise that in the aftermath of brutal removals from the encampments, Occupy participants have prefigured their political goals in a myriad of new contexts. For instance, some are active in anti-TTIP campaigns, some in the anti-fracking movement, some are doing eviction defenses or workplace organizing. In New York City, ex-Occupiers successfully revived the OWS network with Occupy Sandy that organized solidarity work after Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast in late 2012, and Strike Debt's Rolling Jubilee has continued to raise funds to first buy up personal debt on the secondary market only to abolish it later. Of course, we should not forget other (post-)Occupy projects not explicitly covered in our "transatlantic" dialogue – e.g. Occupy Gezi in Turkey or Occupy Central in Hong Kong, to name only two striking examples. These initiatives are further confirmation of unprecedented geographic and epistemic diversity found in the politics of Occupy, and yet another reason why the spirit of Occupation will keep resurfacing also in the future.

Notes

¹ We are grateful to John Ryan Karlin for his comments and assistance with this article.

² Greenberg suggests that "one of the chief appeals of Zuccotti Park and the other encampments was their gritty communalism, their primal physicality, the spontaneous, live-action experience they offered" (Greenberg, 2012: 265).

³ It comes as no surprise therefore, the theoretical "radicalism", which renounces the simplified treatment of democracy as an invention, and which instead of a legal dimension, analyzes the genealogical dimension or the roots respectfully (lat. Radix) of democratic praxis. Cf. Vodovnik 2012b.

⁴ If we paraphrase Colin Ward, we can describe encampments as "a free society in miniature, with the same tensions and ever-changing harmonies, the same diversity and spontaneity, the same unforced growth of co-operation and release of individual qualities

and communal sense, which lie dormant in a society devoted to competition and acquisitiveness" (Ward, 2011: 44).

⁵ Komlosy says the association of work with pain is reflected at least in the German usage by the replacement of *werk* (creative autonomous vocation, leading to opus) by *arbeit* (painful, hard labor). Of course, the absurd yet obvious end of this dissociation was seen in the signs above the entrances to German concentration camps: *arbeit macht frei*.

⁶ See Grubacic & O'Hearn forthcoming. *Living at the Edges of Capitalism: Studies in Exile and Mutual Aid*. University of California Press.

⁷ Rancière demarcates *la politique* and *la police*. What we normally understand, examine and study as politics (*la politique*) are rather highly problematic systems of distribution and legitimization that he calls police (*la police*).

⁸ We should not forget other loci of citizenship challenges. For instance, how in modern (post)democracies citizens can have their rights and citizenship only as workers, but to work, they must continue to give up an ever-increasing range of rights (Rancière, 2004: 111). At the micro level, this means that citizens retain their political identity only through work, otherwise the only thing left for them is a mere sociological identity. At the system level, this leads to the end of politics, as citizens are included in the political project only through their a priori exclusion, through the creation of a polity and a separation of proletariat-y at the very same time. As a result, Corcoran (2010: 5) argues, a "worker, precisely, is not a political subject struggling for equality; he/she is a worker who has rights only insofar as these rights accord with the factual status of the function performed, rights which must be continually eaten away at to 'ensure' job protection, that is, so long as the objectivity of the situation permits it- those who then fall outside of the preserve of worker identity (the unemployed, 'illegal' immigrants, etc.) are no longer excluded; they are simply drop outs."

⁹ Here Vidmar Horvat is elaborating on Kwame Anthony Appiah's concept of "cosmopolitan patriotism" that is – in comparison to the traditional cosmopolitanism – not caught in the in-between spaces and consequently not separating itself from the local life to "preserve its cultural distinctiveness and uniqueness of identity" (Vidmar Horvat, 2010: 210).

¹⁰ Of course, spatialization of democracy, as practiced by the Occupy Movement, can also lead to "fetishization of space", as defense and care of the occupied space become "the overwhelming goal of the movement, at the expense of actions furthering the broader goals that that space is occupied to advance" (Marcuse, 2011).

¹¹ Political membership beyond the state, what we might refer to as exilic membership, is, according to James C. Scott (2009: 3–4), the regularity of history, despite the inscription of the nation-state on the political map and the consequent sedentarization or administrative, economic, and cultural standardization of fluid political entities. An important example is presented by the contemporary Zapatista movement in Mexico. Exilic membership was extended widely to exiles who self-identified with the project of autonomy (Zapatismo) and the community of exiles. The Zapatistas replaced the state with an exilic administration of justice, education, democratic organization, production, and health. "Being Zapatista" gave self-confidence and a sense of belonging to an insurgent community that transcends ethnic difference and was constructed in opposition to *mal gobierno*. This form of identification includes a change in gender relations and a new definition of exilic citizenship: a multivalent insurgent identity that challenges neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale 2002). Exilic membership is a process of re-appropriation and recovery of traditional customs and culture, and a critique of inherited authoritarian and patriarchal elements. A key role belongs to indigenous women. Zapatistas offer a third way "between-and-against" assimilationist and multiculturalist ideologies and governing techniques. Their exilic

membership pivots on linking insurgent political identity to self-governing institutions and substantive economic practices.

¹² Referring to Darren O'Byrne (2003: 227), it "embraces plurality without being relativistic, universality without being deterministic, and identity without being unduly subjectivistic".

¹³ We should add, however, that the performative dimension of the occupied citizenship should still be understood as an objection to the republican interpretation of citizenship as a universal office, conscripting rather than mobilizing the demos to participate in the *res publica*, and epitomized in the *Levée en masse* (1793) and *La Marseillaise* ("Aux armes, citoyens!") (cf. Walzer 1995: 211–212).

¹⁴ For interesting study on the problem of corruption and distrust in political institutions in Slovenia see Haček, Kukovič & Brezovšek (2013).

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