

# TODAY



Anna Galkina, *Burial*, collage, 2011 - Courtesy of the artist

# TODAY

tragicoptimist

*Do Do Not*

Francesca Martinez Tagliavia

*Poème de l'Occupation Infinie*

Federico Campagna

*I am not the 99%*

Franco Berardi Bifo

*Mantra del Sollevarsi*

Paolo Mossetti

*Los Indignados en la Cueva de Platón*

Aaron Peters

*Reproduction of Movement(s) Without Organisation*

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## DO DO NOT

do what you want. do not do what you do not want. you do what you want. you do want what you want. you do not want what you do not. do not do what you do want not. do what you do want not what you want not.

do not what you want not. do not want you what you want not. want you what you do want. you want. you do want. you do want what you want. what you want do that. do that what you do what that you do not that what you do not. want that what you do that you want. you do that what you want not that what you want not.

do what you do. you do what you do. you do not do what you do not do. you do that what you want that what you do. not what you do not do. want that what you do what you want you do. do not want that what you do not want. not what you do not.

do you want that what you do. do that. want that what you do. you what you want do that. want that. not that what you do want not. not that. do want that what you want. do not that what you do not. do want that what you do. do not do that what you do not do.

do that. do what you do not. do that what you do not do. that what you do when what you want that you do you do. do that when that what you want when you do that that you want that you do. do that when you do not do that what you do not do. do that what you want when you do that what you do when you want what you do then do when you do that what you want do that. not that what you do not want when you do that what you do when you do not do that what you do want when you do what you do not what you do not want. do not do that. do not do what you do when you do not want what you do. you do not do you when you do what you do not want when you do want not. you do not do what you do when you do not do that what you do not want then you do do that what you do not want. you do that do do. you do not want what you do do when you do do that what you do not want when you do do do. you do do when you do not do that what you want when that what you do do do when you do that what you do not want that you do not do do.

do not do do. not do do when you do what you want when you want. not do do that you do when you do that what you want that you do. not do do when you do not do what you do not want that you do. do do when you do what you do not want what you do. you do do when you do that what you do not want when you do not do what you want then you do that what you do not want that you do do. do not do do do. you do not do do do not when you do what you do. you do do do when you do not do do do when you do not do do do do you do what you do. you do what you not do do when you do what you do want not do do. do do what you do do. do do want what you do do want. do want what you do do do you. you do.

do do not do not do do. do do you not you do do you do do do. do do not. do do not. do not do that do do that you do do when you do what you do not do when you do do. you do do when you do when you do not want that what you do do do do you do that. do not do that do do. do do you what you do. do that do not do do do. do do do not do do do not. do do you do not do do. do you.

## POEME DE L'OCCUPATION INFINIE

1.

occupons les fraises sauvages  
occupons les langages  
occupons le sel  
occupons les discours  
occupons de manière chaotique et organisée un mur  
occupons une discothèque  
occupons une piscine  
occupons un bar  
occupons une scène  
occupons un appartement  
occupons quatre sièges d'un train  
occupons une image  
occupons un corps  
occupons les espaces entre les organes  
occupons un pont  
occupons l'arc en dessous d'un pont  
occupons une arche  
occupons cette paume  
occupons un geste  
occupons le concert  
occupons le vol océanique

2.

occupons le rondeau en polonaise  
occupons l'Allegro assai  
occupons l'Andante cantabile con espressione  
occupons la Comédie Française  
occupons la Sonate n°5  
occupons The Revolution Will not Be Televised  
occupons Le temps des cerises  
occupons rue Gay Lussac  
occupons les Jardins du Luxembourg  
occupons le parvis de la BNF  
occupons le bar de la BNF  
occupons la salle des profs du Département de Cinéma de Paris 3  
occupons l'administration de Paris 8  
occupons un immeuble à Gambetta  
occupons un squat à Montreuil

occupons l'AFTAM  
occupons le siège de l'RCD  
occupons La Défense  
occupons le Pont d'Avignon  
occupons les marais du Midi  
occupons Télécom France  
occupons occupons EDF  
occupons la Mairie de Montreuil  
occupons un beau visage  
occupons le Ministère de l'Education Nationale et occupons le Ministère de la Jeunesse,  
occupons la Kasbah 5  
occupons Place Tahrir #11  
occupons l'Antarctique  
occupons la Montagne Sainte-Geneviève  
occupons les tambours dans la nuit  
occupons la terreur et la misère  
occupons l'exception et la règle  
occupons les bonnes-âmes  
occupons le vol océanique  
occupons le black-bloc et le journaliste  
occupons la loi  
occupons la révolte  
occupons un mètre  
occupons le parasitisme  
occupons le mensonge  
occupons les drapeaux  
occupons l'occupation

3.

occupons la liberté guidant le peuple tunisien  
occupons le Centre d'Identification et d'Expulsion  
occupons Moby  
occupons Lampedusa  
occupons Hammam Lif  
occupons piazza Garraffello  
occupons Cannes  
occupons les rédactions françaises des journaux et tv  
occupons la presse  
occupons un garage  
occupons une image  
occupons les roses  
occupons un t-shirt

occupons l'intérieur et l'extérieur d'une statuette  
occupons l'intérieur et l'extérieur d'un masque  
occupons la paresse  
occupons une femme coquette  
occupons Charlotte et son Jules  
occupons les carabiniers  
occupons la bande à part  
occupons le bandit de onze heures,  
occupons le masculin et le féminin  
occupons le trans  
occupons le queer  
occupons l\* LGBT\*  
occupons alphaville  
occupons l'amour, la rage et l'Evangile

4.

occupons la nouvelle police militaire européenne  
occupons l'Empire, la nation et la citoyenneté  
occupons l'espace entre le doigt et le ciel  
occupy the storm  
occupons 232BF37D  
occupons le vieux livre retrouvé  
occupons des visages enthousiastes  
occupons la neige  
occupons la mutation des saisons  
occupons la dialectique  
occupons des chaussures pratiques  
occupy everything  
occupons Syntagma, Iphone  
occupons facebook, l'Eurozone  
occupons des espaces politiques vastes comme des prairies  
occupons les mégaphones humains  
occupons la solidarité  
occupons nos vies  
occupons les murs de la nouvelle Géricho  
occupons Banques Etats Autorité  
occupons « J'entends encore le cris des morts »  
occupons 100 euros pour avoir échappé aux flammes  
occupons la femme qui se penche pour s'embraser une dernière fois  
occupons le cyberspace



OccuponsLaDéfense de celui qui se lève

5.

#saleelsol

occupons l'aube

occupons le Sancta Sanctorum

occupons Moody's

occupons Goldman Sachs

occupons la BCE

occupons l'IMF

occupons LSX

occupons l'LSD

occupons la Direction du Pôle Emploi

occupons la Val Susa

occupons le parvis des cathédrales

occupons la bourse

occupons le Reichstag

occupons chaque jour

occupons Dale Farm

occupons le Vatican

occupons Hard-Core

occupons le centre de rétention temporaire

occupons le centre de gravité permanent

occupons la Méditerranée

occupons l'Elysée

occupons la violence

occupons les blancs et les noirs

occupons Cuba

occupons le blues

occupons le sol

occupons à bout de souffle

occupons Mountain View

6.

occupons le www

occupons l\*

occupons les régimes capitalistes

occupons les coupes

occupons la guerre

occupons la pauvreté

occupons UK, US, Fr, All States

occupons revolution every where  
occupons Anonymous  
occupons DémocratieRéelleMaintenant  
occupons 99%  
occupons 1%  
occupons les Banksters  
occupons le monde en fragments  
occupons la télé  
occupons la marche  
occupons le CROUS  
occupons trucs astuces et coins  
occupons la salle de bain

7.

#RedCross  
#Russia  
#Syria  
#Rotterdam  
#sidibouid  
#Palestine  
#IsraeliState  
#channel4news  
#eresimbecilsedices  
#TheOnion  
#LaCarezzaDelCelerino

8.

occupons la violence de la critique  
occupons la critique de la violence

9.

occupons une montagne de feu  
occupons la souveraineté de l'Etat-Nation  
occupons la crise et la lutte  
occupons les paradis artificiels  
occupons votre tank, mon général  
occupons tout l'espace des possibles  
occupons the outer space (all those planets and stars and shit)  
occupons le soldat auquel la victoire n'apporte rien  
occupons exultations, *umbra*, foule, vague  
occupons notre rais



occupons la précarité  
occupons la dette  
occupons le commun  
occupons ce que tu sais aimer

10.

occupons le 15O, le 14J et le 10.000.000 #  
occupons le blindé  
occupons Gaza  
occupons l'abstraction  
occupons l'argent  
occupons le passage  
occupons le flux  
occupons la circulation  
occupons la démesure  
occupons l'excédance  
occupons le galet sur la plage de la Petite Sicile  
occupons WallStreet  
occupons Bankitalia  
occupons LaDéfense  
occupons Steve Jobs  
occupons Steve Workers  
occupons occupons le fond du fleuve Sand Creek  
occupons autre chose  
occupons leurs affaires  
occupons The World Wide Commons  
occupons mon amour

11.

occupons amis camarades et frères  
occupons encore

## I AM NOT THE 99%

Numbers are the essence of our times. Science, technology, economics, even the education system of most Western countries understands its own performance in numerical terms. Anything that escapes the visual field of mathematics simply lacks the requirements to properly exist. Obversely, the more something is measurable, the more it can aspire to become a crucial element at any level of today's life. And the bigger, the better. As if expressing the insecure masculinity that still governs the West, contemporary society seems to still be trapped within the obsession of 'size matters'. It's for a reason that some people call it 'number porn'.

The magical power of (big) numbers is well reflected in today's dominant political regime, liberal democracy. Following the Anglo-Saxon model of bi-polar parliamentary politics, the democratic rule of majority increasingly translates as the ethical primacy of big numbers over small numbers. Even in countries such as Italy, in which complex historical reasons have created a network of balancing minoritarian powers, the dictatorship of the majority (albeit often narrow) is becoming more and more evident. Long gone are the times of endless negotiations, which would take into account even the tiniest local demands in the name of national reconciliation. A topical example is the events of Summer 2011 in Val di Susa, northern Italy, when the governmental decision to build a high speed railways through uncontaminated mountains was enforced with the use of heavy handed police against the opposition of small local communities. The majority had decided, and the minority had to accept it. The court of the majority does not accept appeals. Like in the times of the Soviet NEP, nothing else is allowed for the minority but silent submission.

Interestingly enough, the idea according to which the reasons of the bigger numbers are indisputably more ethically grounded than those of the minority seem to have extended well beyond the boundaries of today's political Western majority. Indeed, it was with a shiver that I witnessed the sudden popularity of the most famous slogan coming out of the Occupy Wall Street movement. 'We are the 99%' they said, leaving implicit in this short sentence that the demands of the 99%, by definition, have an ethical legitimacy that those of the 1% do not have. If the 99% wants it, the 1% has to accept it. Numbers spoke.

Observed simply under a linguistic lens, this slogan appears to focus on the sheer power of numerical proportions, while lacking any mention of what are the claims of the movement. Translated in explicit terms, it simply says: we are the overwhelming majority, thus everything we want or decide is naturally legitimate and has to be given to us. Seen in the negative, it also says: they are the 1%, thus anything they want or demand has less (if any) legitimacy and has to be conceded to them only inasmuch as it is approved by the 99%. This emphasis on the almightiness of the majority has clear totalitarian echoes, also in its reinstatement of the presence of a public enemy (the 1%), which is minuscule, yet

still threateningly present. To a malicious mind, the 99% rhetoric could remind one of the usual results of elections under dictatorial regimes, in which the number of 'votes' to the ruling party is always around 99%, such as during the infamous 1934 elections in Fascist Italy, where the Partito Nazionale Fascista had a 99.24% landslide. The 1% was still there, lurking in the dark, justifying the paranoia of fascism.

One could also question the internal consistency of this supposed 99%. Are factory workers, night-time cleaners, prostitutes, lawyers, dentists, teachers, soldiers, generals, prisoners and prison guards all part of the same 99%? Ernesto Laclau would answer that this issue does not really matter, as the 99% is indeed an empty signifier that functions as a pole of aggregation for different groups and demands, towards the creation of a populist movement. As long as it works for the achievement of emancipatory aims and the improvement of social justice, Laclau would claim, populism is a useful political tool. I have serious doubts with regard to this, and especially on the necessity of enforcing the fictional unity of the populist discourse in order to achieve emancipatory aims. What kind of emancipation are we to expect, if what we are trying to emancipate is the abstract fiction of a non-existing 99%?

It is interesting how, alongside these populist elements, the 99% movements is also renowned for its implementation of anarchist decision-making organizational strategies. Indeed, the anarcho-populist blend has been around for some time now, beginning with the explosion of the consensus practices among environmentalist groups in mid-2000s. As opposed to the democratic tyranny of the majority, consensus decision-making privileges a unanimous approach. No decision is taken until everyone involved in the process agrees, that is, not until the content of the decision has been re-shaped through long discussion into a form that is able to satisfy everyone's demands. Apart from the obvious paradox of the use of consensus within the movement and of democratic tyranny outside of it (against the mythological 1%), the consensus style of decision-making bears some problematic elements within itself. In particular, the predilection for a supposed perfect unity of the group and the refusal to admit any divergence outside of it in terms of stubborn and uncompromising dissensus. Any sacrifices, as long as we can achieve the magic unity of the big number!

However, I wonder if the 99% movement (as well as similar 'indignado'-style movements in Europe) could consider another approach both to their decision-making and to their understanding of the essence of a movement as such. During the brief years of the alter-globalization alternative, for example, a large number of different groups, movements and organizations (from the north-American anarchists to the Italian Catholics to the indigenous people of Mexico, and so on) joined forces in a common battle against neoliberal capitalism. In the rhetoric of that time, such a wide federation was called 'the movement of the movements'. Far from being a unified group, the movement of movements was the

temporary federation of several entities, united in their struggle for global social justice rather than under any specific banner.

What was particularly interesting of the alter-globalization network was its – as yet underdeveloped – idea of a federation which allows the free combination and disjunction of its constitutive parts. We might call the result of this social method as a schismatic community, in which the unanimous consensus of all parts is no longer a founding myth, and individuals are able to re-group with each other at several, simultaneous and different levels in accordance to the specific aims that they are pursuing at that moment. The game of identity would explode and multiply ad infinitum, on virtually endless overlapping levels. Groups would be founded on specific necessities, painlessly split over different strategic approaches, following those different strategies alongside each other, regrouping when necessary, disappearing when they achieve their end, regrouping again on the pursuit of other needs, and so on...

Seen under that perspective, the rhetoric of the 99% would no longer be necessary, or even useful. Such a thing as the 99% does not exist, if not in the abstract world of numbers. The over-imposition of a monolithic, common identity – especially if in the terms of a mythology which echoes totalitarian rhetorics – is certainly of no use for the struggle for emancipation. Every one of us is and will always be the 0.00000001% and no equation will ever be able to compose all these minute fragments into one, unified 99% without annihilating any possibility of authentic individual or federative freedom. Just like friendships or partnerships, federations are temporary, and change continuously as their components change. Differently from contemporary network-culture, though, federations do not wish to function as permanent sub-strata for human interaction, but they are only justified inasmuch as they are useful for the pursuit of a specific set of aims. Federations are useful tools, entirely submitted to the scopes and desires of their members; the 99%, on the other hand, exists in itself as an immortal object, forever and invincibly floating above the heads of its components.

It might be time for the current protest movements across the West to rethink their slogans, and in particular their numerical flag of the 99%. They might want to look back at the rainbow flags of the alter-mundialist experiment, for example, and at their self definition of 'movement of the movements'. Or maybe, and even better, they might want to dissolve their flag and their abstract definition into the everyday practice of federative existence, which, in other words, we could define as the practice of comradeship. To the politics of comradeship, it is the efficacy of the group, and not its number, that justifies its existence. Most importantly, at the core of the legitimacy and the strength of comradeship there is the willing, affective investment of all comrades involved, rather than the *a priori* ethic supremacy of the discourse of big, unified numbers. In the 19th century, while writing

about what has long been ill-defined as individualist anarchism, Max Stirner had beautifully described it in one powerful quote: 'I shall find enough anyhow who unite with me without swearing allegiance to my flag'.

We should not forget that this issue is for us, of the essence, if we want to focus on victory, rather than on struggle. If we want to imagine what it would mean to win, instead of being forever stuck into a never-ending state of war.

## MANTRA DEL SOLLEVARSI

Il 15 febbraio del 2003 centomilioni di persone sfilarono nelle strade del mondo per chiedere la pace, per chiedere che la guerra contro l'Iraq non devastasse definitivamente la faccia del mondo. Il giorno dopo il presidente Bush disse che nulla gli importava di tutta quella gente (I don't need a focus group) e la guerra cominciò. Con quali esiti sappiamo.

Dopo quella data il movimento si dissolse, perché era un movimento etico, il movimento delle persone per bene che nel mondo rifiutavano la violenza della globalizzazione capitalistica e la violenza della guerra. Il 15 Ottobre in larga parte del mondo è sceso in piazza un movimento similmente ampio. Coloro che dirigono gli organismi che stanno affamando le popolazioni (come la BCE) sorridono nervosamente e dicono che sono d'accordo con chi è arrabbiato con la crisi purché lo dica educatamente. Hanno paura, perché sanno che questo movimento non smobiliterà, per la semplice ragione che la sollevazione non ha soltanto motivazioni etiche o ideologiche, ma si fonda sulla materialità di una condizione di precarietà, di sfruttamento, di immiserimento crescente. E di rabbia.

La rabbia talvolta alimenta l'intelligenza, talaltra si manifesta in forma psicopatica. Ma non serve a nulla far la predica agli arrabbiati, perché loro si arrabbiano di più. E non stanno comunque ad ascoltare le ragioni della ragionevolezza, dato che la violenza finanziaria produce anche rabbia psicopatica.

Il giorno prima della manifestazione del 16 in un'intervista pubblicata da un giornale che si chiama La Stampa io dichiaravo che a mio parere era opportuno che alla manifestazione di Roma non ci fossero scontri, per rendere possibile una continuità della dimostrazione in forma di acampada. Le cose sono andate diversamente, ma non penso affatto che la mobilitazione sia stata un fallimento solo perché non è andata come io auspicavo.

Un numero incalcolabile di persone hanno manifestato contro il capitalismo finanziario che tenta di scaricare la sua crisi sulla società. Fino a un mese fa la gente considerava la miseria e la devastazione prodotte dalle politiche del neoliberismo alla stregua di un fenomeno naturale: inevitabile come le piogge d'autunno. Nel breve volgere di qualche settimana il rifiuto del liberismo e del finazismo è dilagato nella consapevolezza di una parte decisiva della popolazione. Un numero crescente di persone manifesterà in mille maniere diverse la sua rabbia, talvolta in maniera autolesionista, dato che per molti il suicidio è meglio che l'umiliazione e la miseria.

Leggo che alcuni si lamentano perché gli arrabbiati hanno impedito al movimento di raggiungere piazza San Giovanni con i suoi carri colorati. Ma il movimento non è una rappresentazione teatrale in cui si deve seguire la sceneggiatura. La sceneggiatura cambia continuamente, e il movimento non è un prete né un giudice. Il movimento è un medico. Il medico non giudica la malattia, la cura.

Chi è disposto a scendere in strada solo se le cose sono ordinate e non c'è pericolo di marciare insieme a dei violenti, nei prossimi dieci anni farà meglio a restarsene a casa. Ma non spera di stare meglio, rimanendo a casa, perché lo verranno a prendere. Non i

poliziotti né i fascisti. Ma la miseria, la disoccupazione e la depressione. E magari anche gli ufficiali giudiziari.

Dunque è meglio prepararsi all'imprevedibile. E' meglio sapere che la violenza infinita del capitalismo finanziario nella sua fase agonica produce psicopatìa, e anche razzismo, fascismo, autolesionismo e suicidio. Non vi piace lo spettacolo? Peccato, perché non si può cambiare canale.

Il presidente della Repubblica dice che è inammissibile che qualcuno spacchi le vetrine delle banche e bruci una camionetta lanciata a tutta velocità in un carosello assassino. Ma il presidente della Repubblica giudica ammissibile che sia Ministro un uomo che i giudici vogliono processare per mafia, tanto è vero che gli firma la nomina, sia pure con aria imbronciata. Il Presidente della Repubblica giudica ammissibile che un Parlamento comprato coi soldi di un mascalzone continui a legiferare sulla pelle della società italiana tanto è vero che non scioglie le Camere della corruzione. Il Presidente della Repubblica giudica ammissibile che passino leggi che distruggono la contrattazione collettiva, tanto è vero che le firma. Di conseguenza a me non importa nulla di ciò che il Presidente giudica inammissibile.

Io vado tra i violenti e gli psicopatici per la semplice ragione che là è più acuta la malattia di cui soffriamo tutti. Vado tra loro e gli chiedo, senza tante storie: voi pensate che bruciando le banche si abatterà la dittatura della finanza? La dittatura della finanza non sta nelle banche ma nel cibernazio, negli algoritmi e nei software. La dittatura della finanza sta nella mente di tutti coloro che non sanno immaginare una forma di vita libera dal consumismo e dalla televisione.

Vado fra coloro cui la rabbia toglie ragionevolezza, e gli dico: credete che il movimento possa vincere la sua battaglia entrando nella trappola della violenza? Ci sono armate professionali pronte ad uccidere, e la gara della violenza la vinceranno i professionisti della guerra.

Ma mentre dico queste parole so benissimo che non avranno un effetto superiore a quello che produce ogni predica ai passeri.

Lo so, ma le dico lo stesso. Le dico e le ripeto, perché so che nei prossimi anni vedremo ben altro che un paio di banche spaccate e camionette bruciate. La violenza è destinata a dilagare dovunque. E ci sarà anche la violenza senza capo né coda di chi perde il lavoro, di chi non può mandare a scuola i propri figli, e anche la violenza di chi non ha più niente da mangiare.

Perché dovrebbero starmi ad ascoltare, coloro che odiano un sistema così odioso che è soprattutto odioso non abatterlo subito?

Il mio dovere non è isolare i violenti, il mio dovere di intellettuale, di attivista e di proletario della conoscenza è quello di trovare una via d'uscita. Ma per cercare la via d'uscita occorre essere laddove la sofferenza è massima, laddove massima è la violenza subita, tanto da manifestarsi come rifiuto di ascoltare, come psicopatìa e come autolesionismo. Occorre accompagnare la follia nei suoi corridoi suicidari mantenendo lo spirito limpido e



la visione chiara del fatto che qui non c'è nessun colpevole se non il sistema della rapina sistematica.

Il nostro dovere è inventare una forma più efficace della violenza, e inventarla subito, prima del prossimo G20 quando a Nizza si riuniranno gli affamatori. In quella occasione non dovremo inseguirli, non dovremo andare a Nizza a esprimere per l'ennesima volta la nostra rabbia impotente. Andremo in mille posti d'Europa, nelle stazioni, nelle piazze nelle scuole nei grandi magazzini e nelle banche e là attiveremo dei megafoni umani. Una ragazza o un vecchio pensionato urleranno le ragioni dell'umanità defraudata, e cento intorno ripeteranno le sue parole, così che altri le ripeteranno in un mantra collettivo, in un'onda di consapevolezza e di solidarietà che a cerchi concentrici isolerà gli affamatori e toglierà loro il potere sulle nostre vite (anche togliendo i nostri soldi dai conti correnti delle loro banche come suggerisce Lucia).

Un mantra di milioni di persone fa crollare le mura di Gerico assai più efficacemente che un piccone o una molotov.

## LOS INDIGNADOS EN LA CUEVA DE PLATON

Imaginémonos que la protesta del 15O se hubiera desarrollado en la famosa cueva de Platón. La de la alegoría (*República*, VII). La historia es conocida: dentro de una cueva se hallan unos pobres desgraciados, con las manos y los pies atados desde siempre, que no pueden moverse sino solo mirar una pared. A sus espaldas, un gran fuego. Entre el fuego y ellos hay un entresuelo donde unas personas mueven unos títeres. El fuego proyecta las sombras de los títeres en la pared dando la impresión de que parezcan seres vivos, enormes y aterradores. Los prisioneros no conocen otra realidad que la donde se han criado y, nada más oír a los titiriteros decir unas palabras, ellos piensan que la voz salga de las sombras.

Con eso de estar sentados en el suelo, en la semioscuridad de la cueva, muchos presos se resfrían. Antes el catarro llegaba, contagiaba a alguien y luego se iba. Sin embargo, en los últimos tiempos, los resfriados y las fiebres se hacen cada vez más frecuentes. Llegan a ratos irregulares, cada vez más fuertes. Además, las sombras reiteran que por culpa de los inquilinos los recién nacidos deberían arrastrar las cadenas por más tiempo y ocupar siempre menos espacio en la cueva. Algún prisionero empieza a preocuparse: hay quién ha muerto, pero a nadie le importa mucho. El asunto no es de su competencia, y siguen mirando las sombras.

Imaginémonos que en realidad la cueva sea el sistema financiero mundial y que los indignados sean los que han entendido el engaño del fuego y de las sombras. Adelgazados por las enfermedades, han logrado desatarse, con un enorme esfuerzo, al menos de las cadenas a los pies. Empiezan a moverse en el interior de la cueva pero no pueden escapar. Andando por la caverna descubren a otros grupos de prisioneros, que llevaban ya un tiempo los pies libres de las cadenas y predicaban la revuelta. Aquí comienzan los primeros desencuentros. Algunos recuerdan como, años atrás, algunos hombres venidos por el Mundo de Fuera hayan eneseñado la “verdadera luz” y hasta un pasillo que llevaría al exterior de la cueva. Se cuenta que muchos se volvieron ciegos por aquella luz y prefirieron volver a la sombra mientras que otros hayan sido agarrados y molidos a palos. Algunos parece que lo hayan conseguido de verdad, pero ya no se sabe nada de ellos. La mayoría de los indignados, de todos modos, no cree en la historia de la luz fuera de la caverna. Ellos dicen: “Tenemos que unirnos contra el resfriado y hemos de protestar contra los titiriteros que nos han engañado”. En cambio, unos pocos sostienen que el problema es la misma cueva y que hay que primero hay que encontrar la manera de salir de ella.

Además hay que añadir que los prisioneros, sobre todo los que siguen atados, llevan tiempo divididos en dos corrientes políticas: la corrientes de los *sombristas*, desde hace mucho triunfante, dice que las sombras en la pared representan la verdad; la segunda

corriente afirma que la verdad es el mismo muro, por eso los llaman los *muralistas*. Bueno! Los indignados ya no saben que hacer con estas dos corrientes, les parece que las diferencias son mínimas. Mientras tanto los prisioneros más jóvenes han sido atados con cadenas más ligeras y a veces hasta coloradas, adornadas con flores y, cuando se murió uno de los mejores decoradores de cadenas de la cueva muchos le otorgaron un aplauso. Pero no nos liemos.

“Qué hacer?”, se preguntan los indignados. “Si damos un paseo tipo pic-nic por la cueva y esperemos que alguien nos note corremos el riesgo de que los titiriteros no nos escuchen.” Se dice que en otras cavernas hubo revueltas similares y que otros indignados hayan intentado apagar fuegos o ensuciar las paredes con garabatos: en ambos casos han acabado molidos a palos. Como para mofarse de ellos, uno de los titiriteros intervino desde lo alto: “Entiendo vuestras razones. Estoy con vosotros. Todos queremos lo mismo”. “Pero cómo?”, le contestan algunos presos. “Pero si estamos en contra de que tú estés allí arriba proyectando sombras falsas en la pared!” Otros afirman: “No! Nosotros no tenemos nada en contra de los titiriteros, lo importante es que no nos dejen enfermar aquí en la cueva!”.

Incapacez de encontrar un acuerdo concreto, pero todos unidos por un sano sentimiento de asco y rabia, los rebeldes se dividen en subgrupos y, pese a tener aún las manos atadas, se dirigen hacia el centro de la caverna para protestar con los que los detienen allí con frío y humedad. Los pacíficos, es decir la mayoría, piden que dimitan. Nadie contesta. De hecho en la caverna se siente solo un imperceptible retumbar y los titiriteros eligen las imágenes para proyectar.

La corriente *muralista*, que quiere controlarlo todo manteniéndose a distancia y pasándose de lista, intenta hacer eco a la protesta: “Cuando seremos nosotros los titiriteros os daremos sombras mejores”. “Pero cómo” dicen los indignados, “Más sombras? No estabamos de acuerdo en que las sombras son mentira?”. “Nadie lo dijo”, dicen algunos moralistas, “nosotros decíamos que las paredes son la Verdad: la idea de meterse con las sombras es peligrosa y retrógrada.

Entonces, en la impotencia general, llegan los revolucionarios más sobreexcitados, perseguidos por los prisioneros amigos de los titiriteros que por trabajo han decidido ser policías. Palos de muerte por todos lados pero sobre todo a los pacíficos indignados, que esperaban no arriesgarse demasiado en aquella protesta que quería ser un simple paseo. Otros titiriteros, menos dispuestos al diálogo, gritan: “Habeis visto? No sois capaces de nada. Ahora callad y volved a mirar la pared”.

Al final de la alegoría lo que pasa es esto: la corriente *muralista*, que iba de calmada y calculadora alejándose de los prisioneros, triunfa y se pone de acuerdo con los titiriteros

para evitar nuevos desórdenes: los más rebeldes entre los indignados serán aislados en especial manera de los que vuelven a ser atados; la humedad de la cueva disminuye porque algunos prisioneros han desaparecido y hay menos condensación; en cambio el frío aumenta. Pero los prisioneros reciben unos gorros de lana y unas mantas con muchos dibujos lindos; empiezan las discusiones sobre quien tiene las mantas más bonitas y los gorros más calientes. Nadie sabe donde acabaron los rebeldes más entregados, si han logrado alcanzar la luz natural o si han sido detenidos. Lo cierto es que ya nadie tiene ganas de hablar del Mundo de Fuera y la utopía poco a poco se deja abrumar por los bostezos.

## REPRODUCTION OF MOVEMENT(S) WITHOUT ORGANISATION

[October 15th 2011](#) saw a global mobilization of political protest. It took place using limited resources, in a short time-frame and with minimal involvement from institutional actors. Demonstrators staged rallies around the world on every major continent from Auckland to Taipei to Madrid and Seattle: in total there were some 951 actions in 82 countries.

In terms of global reach and the involvement of provincial cities (not just capitals) the scale of collective action was possibly without precedent, surpassing even the globally coordinated anti-war demonstrations of March 20th 2003. This staggering feat was achieved without institutional actors such as political parties and in some countries, including the UK, without the involvement of the organised labour movement.

In Rome there were around 200,000 protestors, thousands of whom were masked and hooded militants wearing makeshift body armor, in black bloc fashion. Elsewhere in Europe there were very large demonstrations – while Madrid's was predictably impressive after the 'Spanish summer' of the 15M movement, Germany's was particularly surprising for its scale, seeing thousands in the streets of Frankfurt, Berlin and Cologne. In New York some 30,000 protestors went to Times Square, resulting in around 70 arrests. A further 175 were arrested in Chicago and dozens elsewhere across the country.

The world witnessed a day of protest, but it is what followed at night that has attracted the attention of the media and which, more importantly, represents the broadening of a repertoire or tactic of protest - the occupation - which has been utterly re-imagined and critically adopted over the course of the last year. From the [student occupations in the UK](#) in 2010/2011 to Tahrir Square, the [15M movement in Spain](#) to the [99% movement in the US](#) and most recently the [#occupy movement](#) worldwide, online organising has resulted in the appropriation - temporary or otherwise - of offline space.

But how has this been coordinated? I believe a change in how we organise and communicate is occurring at the same time as the unfolding of an economic crisis as pronounced and sustained as the one we saw after 1929 and the Wall Street Crash.

### Movement and Memes

Paul Mason [wrote on Sunday](#) of the #oct15 movement and the #occupy movements worldwide:

*The protesters yesterday stuck a spoof street sign saying "Tahrir Square, London, EC4M". This was not Tahrir - but it obeyed the same impulse to occupy physical space...The impulse (for the #oct15 and #occupy movements) I believe, is being driven by two things:*

*first it is - as I wrote in the 20 reasons - a meme. It is an effective action that is transmitting itself independent of any democratic structures and party political hierarchies.*

This word, 'meme', has been increasingly deployed over the course of the last year - it was alluded to by Mason in his now seminal blog '[20 reasons why it's kicking off everywhere](#)' in February 2011 and was later referenced by both [this DSG blog](#) and more recently still [this Pierce Penniless blog](#) published here on OurKingdom. Both pieces follow on from Mason's thoughts on the 'meme' playing an integral role in the rise of the new social movements. As he puts it:

*...with access to social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and eg Yfrog...they can express themselves in a variety of situations ranging from parliamentary democracy to tyranny...therefore truth moves faster than lies, and propaganda becomes flammable.*

Quoting Dawkins he adds,

*"...a meme acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols or practices....so what happens is that ideas arise, are very quickly "market tested" and either take off, bubble under, insinuate themselves or if they are deemed no good they disappear. Ideas self-replicate like genes. Prior to the internet this theory seemed an over-statement but you can now clearly trace the evolution of memes."*

So what is this glib, increasingly used concept - the meme?

A brief anecdote is offered by Richard Dawkins in the introduction to the 'Meme Machine' by way of an explanation:

*As an undergraduate I was chatting to a friend in the Balliol College lunch queue. He regarded me with increasingly quizzical amusement, then asked: 'Have you just been with Peter Brunet?' I had indeed, though I couldn't guess how he knew. Peter Brunet was our much-loved tutor, and I had come hotfoot from a tutorial hour with him. 'I thought so', my friend laughed. 'You are talking just like him; your voice sounds exactly like his.' I had, if only briefly, 'inherited' intonations and manners of speech from an admired, and now greatly missed, teacher.*

*Years later, when I became a tutor myself, I taught a young woman who affected an unusual habit. When asked a question which required deep thought, she would screw her eyes tight shut, jerk her head down to her chest and then freeze for up to half a minute before looking up, opening her eyes, and answering the question with fluency and intelligence. I was amused by this, and did an imitation of it to divert my colleagues after dinner. Among them was a distinguished Oxford philosopher. As soon as he saw my*

*imitation, he immediately said: 'That's Wittgenstein! Is her surname \_\_\_\_ by any chance?' Taken aback, I said that it was. 'I thought so', said my colleague. 'Both her parents are professional philosophers and devoted followers of Wittgenstein.' The gesture had passed from the great philosopher, via one or both of her parents to my pupil. I suppose that, although my further imitation was done in jest, I must count myself a fourth-generation transmitter of the gesture. And who knows where Wittgenstein got it?*

This brief anecdote explains what we all know through our everyday interactions with one another. That social behaviour, idea, practices and mannerisms are born of imitation - be it us 'imitating' our parents' regional accents in childhood or internalising ideologies while in school or in later life, the workplace. This imitation, dissemination and reproduction of social symbols and practice, some argue, is culturally analogous to genes in terms of how certain 'successful' ones are reproduced and culturally 'inherited' more than others. Within this understanding religion, as a series of social practices and ideas about the world, human agency and the 'good life' can be understood as sets of memes.

Thus we can understand memes as units "*for carrying cultural ideas, symbols or practices, which can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals or other imitable phenomena*". Elsewhere they have been referred to as the principle of 'thought contagion'. As human beings can be defined as social animals with culture that is passed from one individual and one generation to the next, so memes can be found everywhere. As Richard Dawkins elsewhere writes,

*....examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation. If a scientist hears, or reads about, a good idea, he passes it on to his colleagues and students. He mentions it in his articles and his lectures. If the idea catches on, it can be said to propagate itself, spreading from brain to brain.*

### **The Network Society; The Medium and the Meme**

One can argue that in the [network society](#) - characterized as it is by the compression of time and space under the dynamics of contemporary globalisation - the nature of how these memes are disseminated is qualitatively different to before the mass adoption of the internet and IT-mediated devices in our everyday lives. Thus we see with internet-mediated forms of collective action a massive 'speeding up' of how social symbols and practices can be produced, reproduced, adopted and internalised. This is almost self-evident; as Paul Mason puts it in his '20 reasons': "*Prior to the internet this theory*



(memetics) *seemed an over-statement but you can now clearly trace the evolution of memes.*"

On this same point, the arts/politics collective DeTerritorial Support Group (DSG) later write:

*With the development of sophisticated communicative technologies, not least the internet, the idea of memetics soon found a fertile breeding ground itself....we can think of the internet as a bank of ideas, and the really successful meme occurs when one of those ideas chimes massively with the population it encounters, summing up a shared or individual experience or viewpoint to the extent that users wish to perpetuate it as somehow representative of their position, often amending it slightly on it's way...*

*...the infectious symbolism of a "Tahrir Square" passed throughout North Africa in the spring, with the combination a central meeting point and a "day of rage" (organised with the help of Facebook) finding common popular support across the gulf states. So what was a useful tactic for the residents of Cairo has now become a symbolic action, a meme that has found resonance, from the Pearl Roundabout in Bahrain in February to the Puerta del Sol in Madrid.*

Memetics have always existed as the means by which 'culture' was reproduced and disseminated. But of course the speed of such memetic reproduction of culture was dependent upon the medium, first the oral tradition, then typographic print - and now, most recently, the internet and digital communications technologies. The argument is that internet-mediated memetics represent a fundamental shift in how social movements, as new forms of social practice, rear themselves and how quickly they spread, are adopted and reach critical mass. The answer would seem to be *much more* quickly.

## **Understanding the Social Movement as Meme**

One can understand the social movement as a distinct process through which actors engage in collective action of a socially and politically 'contentious' nature. They meet the following criteria:

*(a) an involvement in conflicting relations with clearly identified 'opponents'*

*(b) a linking together by dense informal networks (these used to be offline and now are increasingly online as well)*

*(c ) the sharing among participants, and those sympathetic to participants' demands, of a distinct collective identity*

If one accepts the premise that ideas, symbols and practices are culturally disseminated through memes, then memetics may prove to exercise an impact on how successful social movements turn out to be. If all that is required is a shared identity, a shared political antagonism, informal networks and a particular set of protest 'repertoires' (tactics) then it is possible to reduce social movements to an identity, an antagonism and a practice, all of which can be seen as memes.

With the #oct15 and #occupy movements, the tactics of square occupations have been memetically reproduced, as have a particular identity and antagonism. While all groups are heterogeneous, there are clear genealogies of practice and symbol that can be extricated from Tahrir to the 15m movement in Spain to Occupy Wall Street and finally the #oct15 movement. Likewise we have seen certain memes in student movements across the globe. This is the case in both demands over 'another education being possible' in Chile, France, Greece, Italy, the UK and the US (as well as elsewhere) and also in 'tactics', such as the paintbomb or [book bloc](#), which has been reproduced rapidly on the streets of Rome, London, Santiago, Manchester, Bogota, San Francisco, Paris and Berlin. 'Methods of best practice' (for want of a better term) in protest and political contention are quickly disseminated in the distributed networks of the Network Society.

### **UKUncut as Meme**

A primary example of how social movements as memes can operate within the network society for British audiences is UKUncut. As the 'about' blurb reads on their homepage:

*On October 27th 2010, just one week after George Osborne announced the deepest cuts to public services since the 1920s, around 70 people ran down Oxford Street entered Vodafone's flagship store and sat down. We had shut down tax-dodging Vodafone's flagship store...*

*...At that point, UK Uncut only existed as #ukuncut, a hashtag someone had dreamed up the night before the protest. As we sat in the doorway, chanting and handing leaflets to passers by, the hashtag began to trend around the UK and people began to talk about replicating our action. The idea was going 'viral'. The seething anger about the cuts had found an outlet. Just three days later and close to thirty Vodafone stores had been closed around the country.*

The claim that UKUncut was 'just a hashtag' was, although humble, fundamentally incorrect. After the first action UKUncut already possessed the elements to become a

social movement capable of imitation and reproduction. Firstly, it had a shared identity of participants - British taxpayers or those opposed to tax avoidance and who favoured progressive general taxation as the fairest way of funding collective forms of health and work insurance as well as education and elderly care.

Secondly, it had isolated a point of political antagonism and an 'enemy' - multinational companies and high net worth individuals who sought to avoid tax or minimize costs of tax through clandestine (albeit legal) means. Thirdly, it had the ability through online platforms such as Twitter to disseminate through informal networks very quickly. Fourthly, its chosen tactic of protest - closing down high street outlets of tax-avoiding multinationals such as Vodafone and Boots - was easily replicable on any British high-street.

One can easily isolate the areas that render UKUncut a social movement capable of being easily replicated. The costs of entry are low and hence high participation resulted, just like with the #occupy movement. The ease with which to replicate such action, antagonism and shared identity meant that UKUncut was, without the initial participants perhaps recognising it, the perfect example of how a social movement as meme might go 'viral'.

It is of course arguable as to whether or not UKUncut remains 'memetically' reproduced. I would contend not and would instead hold it increasingly closer to a traditional social movement organisation with a permanent secretariat. Initially, however, it was generated and regenerated in a very similar manner to the #occupy movements in Acampa da Sol, Wall Street and now London. UKUncut was a paradigmatic example of the social movement as memetically reproduced by online communication and offline affinity groups and action.

## The Internet and the Transformation of Memetic Reproduction

How the #occupy movement disseminates could well be the first major bellweather of just how quickly radical critique, symbol and most importantly **practice** spreads via online networks and is translated into offline action.

Among all the ambiguity and heterogeneous demands of the #occupy movement we should hold back from being overly critical and dogmatic in presumption and analysis. How it will unfold is anyone's guess and all I can say is that after the last year in global social movements [nothing surprises me any more](#). The changes we will see with how the distributed network impacts the existing social and political apparatus through its impact on political, cultural and social memes [could be as big as those it affected the last time the 'software' changed with the rise of typographic print](#) and the printing press. Then, too, memetic reproduction of symbols and practice qualitatively sped up - [the consequences were the Reformation, the nation-state, scientific rationalism and the formation of the](#)

[Habermasian public sphere](#). This time we may again see truly epic social change accompany the adoption of a new medium that speeds up memetic reproduction of movements. We are only at the beginning, however - bear in mind that after the arrival of the printing press the first pornographic novels came about within a few years, while the first regularised scientific journals took a little over a century.

The next few days and weeks may offer the first manifestation of just how changed contentious collective action, on a global level, becomes when mediated by [distributed networks](#) and many-to-many forms of digital communication. My impression is that the last year, as well as subsequent years to come, will show that how the 'people' make demands on political power is changing beyond all recognition. Where it ends is possibly with a challenge to national, parliamentary democracy itself. Within the information abundance of the distributed network of the internet, institutions built in previous eras of information scarcity will increasingly no longer make sense. [The software is obsolete; things fall apart, the centre cannot hold.](#)