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Direct Democracy and the Assembly:

Embodied Discourses of Participation and Deliberation at Occupy Los Angeles

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Applied Linguistics

by

Rebecca Lila Steinberg

2014

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2014

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Direct Democracy and the Assembly:

Embodied Discourses of Participation and Deliberation at Occupy Los Angeles

by

Rebecca Lila Steinberg

Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Marjorie Harness Goodwin, Co-Chair

Professor Charles Goodwin, Co-Chair

The Occupy movement in the U.S. is primarily associated with the occupation of outdoor public space and the iconic tents of the encampments. However, a less mediatized but equally distinctive feature of the U.S. Occupy movement is the practice of participants gathering to form deliberative assemblies. As in the occupation and square movements elsewhere, the re-appropriation of public space in the U.S. became a highly influential precondition for an emergent form of public, large-group deliberation. The General Assembly (GA), a regular event at Occupy sites in which participants engaged in forms of direct democratic practice, both produced and reflected attested ideologies of horizontalism and egalitarian decision-making.

Direct participatory democracy requires elements of process that are structured and fluid, instructional as well as receptive. In the U.S., the emergent processes of the Occupy General

Assembly (GA), a real-time interactive localized event which was a common and central feature across U.S. Occupy sites nationwide, were informed by historical elements of Quaker, anti-war movement, feminist movement, and anti-globalization movement practices, among others. Additionally, U.S. Occupy Facilitation Committees, responsible for agenda setting and group discussion moderation during GAs, worked to facilitate General Assemblies using process suggestions provided on international websites written by participants in related movements outside the U.S. In this way, locally emergent discursive practices were influenced by and then fed back in to ongoing global discourses and decision-making processes. This crosspollination of practice reinforced global solidarity and refined local systems of group communication. Participants developed and adapted specific embodied tools for assembly use, including hand signals and the *human mic* or *people's mic*, in order to facilitate a discursive praxis of egalitarianism within the context of a speech exchange system suited to a large outdoor deliberative body.

The dissertation of Rebecca Lila Steinberg is approved.

Steven E. Clayman

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Charles Goodwin, Co-Chair

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University of California, Los Angeles

2014

This dissertation is dedicated to the participants at Occupy Los Angeles,
and all who struggle to find a better way.

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It's coming from the sorrow in the street,
The holy places where the races meet
From the homicidal bitchin'
That goes down in every kitchen
To determine who will serve and who will eat.
From the wells of disappointment
Where the women kneel to pray
For the grace of God in the desert here
And the desert far away:
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.

-Leonard Cohen, *Democracy* (1992)

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Occupy movement in the U.S. is primarily associated with the occupation of outdoor public space and the iconic tents of the encampments. However, a less mediatized but equally distinctive feature of the U.S. Occupy movement is the practice of participants gathering to form deliberative assemblies. As in the occupation and square movements elsewhere, the re-appropriation of public space in the U.S. became a highly influential precondition for an emergent form of public, large-group deliberation. The General Assembly (GA), a regular event at Occupy sites in which participants engaged in forms of direct democratic practice, both produced and reflected attested ideologies of horizontalism and egalitarian decision-making.

Direct participatory democracy requires elements of process that are structured and fluid, instructional as well as receptive. In the U.S., the emergent processes of the Occupy General Assembly (GA), a real-time interactive localized event which is a common and central feature across U.S. Occupy sites nationwide, have been informed by historical elements of Quaker, anti-war movement, feminist movement, and anti-globalization movement practices, among others (Writers for the 99% 2012). Additionally, U.S. Occupy Facilitation Committees, responsible for agenda setting and group discussion moderation during GAs, have worked to facilitate General Assemblies using process suggestions provided in resource materials from such websites as the “Take the Square” website. These procedural suggestions have been implemented, adapted, and changed, and inter-Occupy crosspollination of practice has been both reported on and uploaded in video format online for wider viewing and consideration. In this way, locally emergent discursive practices have been informed by and then fed back in to ongoing global discourses and decision-making processes.

Occupy General Assemblies created opportunities for renewed, co-constructed discourses about human rights, collectivity and autonomy, and the nature of fairness. Local intersubjectivity and global solidarity, as well as the embodied augmentation of personal and group agency, were generated and negotiated in face-to-face interaction at the General Assemblies. At the center of this encounter are co-presence and face-to-face interaction. Solidarity is built interactionally through the sequential organization of linguistic and gestural actions between dyads or larger groups (Clayman 2002). Each Occupy site empowered itself to create local systems for the practice of direct participatory democratic deliberation, which included formalized agendas and proposal processes. Within these processes, proposals take forms that are influenced by the local ecology (Mondada in press) and renew and are renewed by it in ongoing negotiation.

In addition to the processual formalizations of GAs, participants developed and adapted specific embodied tools for assembly use, including hand signals and the *human mic* or *people's mic* (the practice of many repeating the floor-holder's utterances, given in short phrases, so that large groups can hear what is said), in order to facilitate a discursive praxis of egalitarianism within the context of a speech exchange system suited to a large outdoor deliberative body. These embodied practices (Goodwin 2000), situated within reclaimed quasi-autonomous space, allowed for collective and individual reevaluations of relationships between personal and political meaning. Although some attention has been paid by mainstream media to the "*people's mic*" as well as the use of hand signals, these have largely been depicted as novelties, revealed only in two or three-second video and audio clips or still images. And yet these and other emergent discourse practices are at the center of the significance of the Occupy movement. In U.S. Occupy encampments, through extended dialogue and in shared space,

preconceptions of partisan ideologies began to melt and shift as common ground (in its dual sense) was occupied, structured, restructured, and maintained.

These assembly practices and tools are at the center of the significance of the Occupy movement, as they constitute the discursive experiments in direct democracy set in motion by a shared recognition of serious social crisis and systemic injustice felt increasingly around the world. This dissertation examines the ways in which several embodied assembly tools and practices at Occupy Los Angeles (OLA) attend to participants' attested ideologies and the practical problems of open, large-group direct deliberative democracy.

1.1 Histories and Global Context of Occupy Wall Street

Occupy Los Angeles, as a social and political protest movement, emerged within specific historical contexts. The speech and embodied practices witnessed at Occupy LA were thus informed by and embedded in histories of political and economic struggle. It is necessary to provide a brief discussion of some salient aspects of these histories that led up to the embodied action that is the focus of this dissertation.

Political scientist Claudia von Werlof (2011) traces the modern roots of neoliberal economic policy as globalization to the American-backed military coup in Chile in 1973:

Neoliberalism as an economic politics began in Chile in 1973. Its inauguration consisted of a US-organized coup against a democratically elected socialist president and the installment of a bloody military dictatorship notorious for systematic torture. This was the only way to turn the neoliberal model of the so-called "Chicago Boys" under the leadership of Milton Friedman – a student of Austrian-born Friedrich von Hayek – into reality.
(Werlof 2011)

Fairclough (2010: 451) describes *globalism* as, "the global wing of neo-liberal capitalism, its central strategic goal being to extend the dominance of this form of capitalism

internationally.” Fairclough (2010:451) also addresses the relationship between the current militarism and the globalist project, writing that, “the ‘war on terror’ ...is part of a militaristic and imperialistic turn in ‘globalist’ strategy.” But as globalization (as neoliberal economics and its concomitant warfare) has spread across the globe, so has resistance to it. The first massive protest that brought together participants in a global resistance movement took place near the end of the 20th century, in Seattle in 1999.

1.1.1 Seattle 1999 WTO Protests

In a 1999 New York Times article, Naomi Klein described the Seattle World Trade Organization (WTO) protests as, “the most internationally minded, globally linked movement the world has ever seen” and explained that it was “the first movement born of the anarchic pathways of the Internet” (Klein 1999). Klein outlines an alternative vision of globalization (referred to in this dissertation as international or global solidarity) by describing how the internet and travel have brought people into closer contact:

There are no more faceless Mexicans or Chinese workers stealing our jobs, in part because those workers' representatives are now on the same e-mail lists and at the same conferences as the Western activists. When protesters shout about the evils of globalization, most are not calling for a return to narrow nationalism, but for the borders of globalization to be expanded, for trade to be linked to democratic reform, higher wages, labor rights and environmental protections. (Klein 1999)

The protest, often referred to as the “Battle in Seattle,” was staged around the WTO Ministerial Conference of 1999. Participants from around the world gathered to protest policies to which they shared common objections. It was the largest protest to that date of an international economic policy-making body with global reach (as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank). Economist Michel Chousodofsky (2010) writes that:

Seattle was an indeed an important crossroads in the history of the mass movement. Over 50,000 people from diverse backgrounds, civil society organizations, human rights, labor unions, environmentalists had come together in a common pursuit. Their goal was to forcefully dismantle the neoliberal agenda including its institutional base.

(Chousodofsky 2010)

The Seattle protests helped to forge connections and networks for anti-globalization groups from different regions and countries. The global protest movement was coming into its own. However, as Graeber (2009: 299-300) writes, “Then came September 11...[which] shocked the activist community in New York itself more than anywhere...with the added fear that their movements were about to be systematically suppressed by a new national security state.” In addition to these fears, Graeber (2009: 356) describes the difficulties faced by participants in the Direct Action Network (DAN) in collaborating with labor unions and NGOs post 911:

The final blow to all such alliances of course came with September 11, after which almost all labor unions refused to be associated with anything that could possibly be dubbed unpatriotic. Most NGOs, terrified for their funding base, pulled back as well.

(Graeber 2009: 355)

Descriptions of protests in the intervening years between Seattle, 1999 and the Arab Spring in 2010, will not be discussed here Suffice it to say that the ‘post 911’ effect was indeed characterized by a chilling of large-scale anti-globalization protest along with the emergence of a technical national security state (Graeber 2009) and new legislation (such as the Patriot Act) that began to chip away at Constitutionally-affirmed free speech rights. (Raab 2006). There are two events that should, however, be mentioned: the events in Argentina in 2001, and the worldwide anti-war protests of 2003.

1.1.2 Argentina 2001

In the late part of the 20th century and until December 2001, Argentina experienced massive economic decline, political corruption, and looting from foreign investment. As

Americans were still reeling from the September 11 attacks, the political climate in Argentina became so untenable that citizens and workers were inspired to take over the ownership and governance of their own neighborhoods and factories. Taking to the streets, occupying factories, and establishing neighborhood and workplace assemblies, their methods were guided by principles of egalitarian decision-making through a practice of *horizontalidad* (Sitrin 2006: 40), which is described as a “tool arising from necessity.” Argentina’s invention of group practices to deal with extreme political and economic conditions provided valuable insight into possible solutions.

1.1.3 Anti-War Protests 2003

Protests against the impending invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and its allied forces in the spring of 2003 involved participants not only across the U.S. but throughout the world. Despite strong global opposition, the invasion and subsequent occupation went forward, fueled in large part by the demands of a global ‘war on terror’. As this amorphous and unending war provided a ready alibi for global capital and its concomitant use of force in the years between 2001 and 2010, alliances continued to be formed through international gatherings, such as the World Social Forum, and across the globe through Internet communication.

1.1.4 Arab Spring

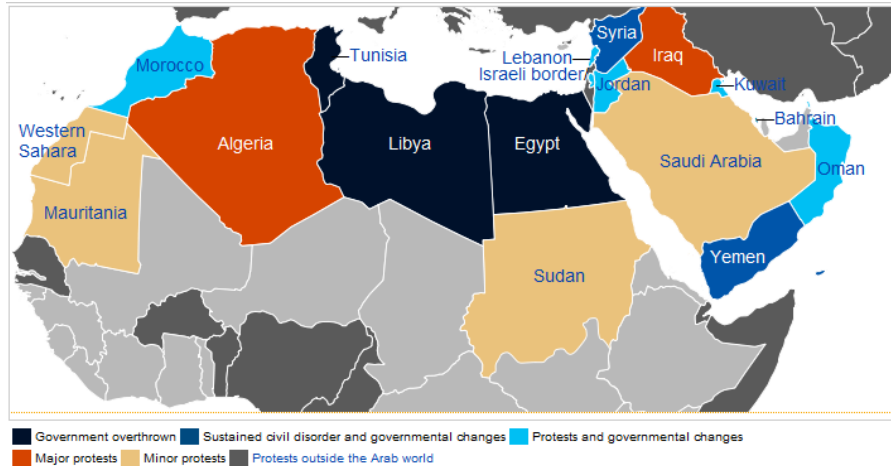


Figure 1. Map of "Arab Spring" 19 July 2013. Author Tabrisius.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Arab_Spring_map_07_2013.png.

The *Arab Spring* is the name given to complex and diverse phenomena of social and political upheaval and maneuvering that took place beginning in December of 2010, and which can be regarded as the first part of the global protests which would later fall under the umbrella (Guardian UK 2011) of global Occupy protests. These upheavals, which took place in North Africa and the Middle East, each have separate conditions and pressures applied internally as well as externally. Each nation's recent histories and ongoing activities need to be examined in light of the specific economic, cultural, and political landscape of that country with special attention to its vulnerability to the economic and military pressures of multinational bodies.

The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian food vendor who had been humiliated by police, became a famous symbol of protest internationally (Ryan 2011). Protests erupted in December 2010 and President Ben Ali was ousted on January 14, 2011. The demonstrations were preceded by high unemployment, food price inflation, corruption, lack of freedom of speech, and poor living conditions. Bouazizi is one among an estimated 107 that set

themselves on fire in Tunisia in the first 6 months of 2011. Self-immolations continued for some time at a rate of as many as four per week (Goodman 2012). Protesters in Morocco, Jordan, and Bahrain have also committed acts of self-immolation (Bakri 2012).

1.1.5 Egypt – Tahrir Square



Figure 2. Demonstrators on Army Truck in Tahrir Square, Cairo. January 29, 2011 Photographed by: Ramy Raoof. Sign reads “Go away you oppressor. Down with Mubarak.”

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Demonstrators_on_Army_Truck_in_Tahrir_Square,_Cairo.jpg



Figure 3. Protesters at Tahrir Square May 27, 2011. Photo by Jonathan Rashad. Wikimedia Commons.
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tahrir_Square_May_27_2011.png

The Egyptian uprising began in earnest on January 25, 2011. Grievances of Egyptian protesters included police brutality, state of emergency laws, lack of free elections and freedom of speech, uncontrollable corruption, high unemployment, food price inflation, and low wages (Meguid et al. 2011). President Mubarak resigned February 11, 2011 (Ghafar 2012). However, political trouble continued with military rule and subsequent leadership regarded as equally oppressive (Mungin 2011).

1.1.6 Greece – Syntagma Square



Figure 4. Demonstrations at Syntagma Square. 29 June 29, 2011. Photo by Ggia.

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:20110629_Moutza_demonstrations_Greek_parliament_Athens_Greece.jpg.

The protests that took place in Greece in 2010-2011 consisted of demonstrations, assemblies and square occupations, and general strikes. The first wave of Greek protests began on May 5, 2010 in response to Draconian plans for cuts in public spending and large tax increases as part of austerity measures to address national debt. (Fasfalis 2010). The second wave of protests began on May 25, 2011 and was organized as *Direct Democracy Now!*, which was influenced by the Spanish Indignados/ Democracia Real Ya! Movement. Mass assemblies were held at Syntagma Square (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013).

1.1.7 Spanish Indignados/15M



Figure 5. Democracia real YA demonstration in Madrid on May 15, 2011. Photo by Olmo Calvo.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Democracia_real_YA_Madrid.jpg.

The Spanish Indignados (or Indignant Ones) protests started on May 15th 2011. Rojo (in press) describes the early days of the movement:

During the months leading up to May 15, 2011, organisations such as Juventud sin Futuro (Youth with no future) and Democracia Real Ya! (Real Democracy Now!) organised a demonstration which turned out to be massive. The call went out mainly via social networks, and none of the principal political parties were involved in the rally. That night a small group of 100 protesters spontaneously began an occupation of Puerta del Sol, the main square in Madrid. They were violently evicted by the police, with several arrests made and injuries sustained. A call to retake the square spread rapidly across the internet, and the following day, thousands of protesters returned and reoccupied the square. The majority of Spanish cities also responded to this call and set up camps, whilst others were set up by Spanish émigrés / expatriates living in cities worldwide. (Rojo in press)

Esteban Gil, participant in both the Spanish Indignados movement and Occupy Los Angeles, writes that the term *indignados* (translated as ‘the indignant ones’):

...has its origins in a recently published essay by Stéphane Hessel. ... German born but transplanted to France in his early years, during World War II he refused to accept the Vichy government imposed by the Nazi occupiers. He helped to organize the French Resistance movement and was eventually captured, then tortured and sentenced to death. He survived two different concentration camps and eventually escaped and found his way to the advancing Allied front. After the war Hessel participated in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. His short essay—titled ‘Indignez-

vous!...[is a] call for outrage against the dictatorship of the market and the false representation of the elites. (Gil 2011)



Figure 6. Banner calling for occupation camping on May 15, 2011.

www.tenemosderechoatrabajar.blogspot.com.

“Occupation Camping” and tents became iconic of the Indignado movement, and later the U.S. Occupy movement. Although Indignados participants were multigenerational and heterogeneous in many ways, they shared a deep sense of not being represented by a corrupt political system, as did participants in Arab Spring nations. Pablo Ouziel writes that:

Disillusioned youth, the unemployed, pensioners, students, immigrants and other disenfranchised groups have emulated their brothers and sisters in the Arab world and are now demanding a voice – demanding an opportunity to live with dignity. As the country continues to sink economically – with unemployment growing incessantly – one in two young people is unemployed across many of the country’s regions. With many in the crumbling middle class on the verge of losing their homes while bankers profit from their loss and the government uses citizen taxes to expand the military-industrial complex by going off to war; the people have grasped that they only have each other if they are to rise from the debris of the militarized political and economic nightmare in which they have found themselves. (Ouziel 2011a)



Figure 7. Acampada Sol, Puerto del Sol, Madrid, Spain, May 23, 2011.

The Indignados movement, like that in Greece, is also inextricably linked to the European Union and its tremendous economic collapse. Ouziel (2011a) draws connections between Spain and other suffering EU countries and explains that, “Spaniards look out at a failed European project, with its borders quickly being reinstated, a collapsing Euro currency, and the examples of Greece, Portugal and Ireland.” However, Spain’s history of resistance and anarchist practices in response to extreme hardship and fascism should also be recognized. Ouziel notes this history in the context of the Indignados:

Spain is finally re-embracing its radical past, its popular movements, its anarcho-syndicalist traditions and its republican dreams. Crushed by Generalissimo Francisco Franco 70 years ago, that Spanish popular culture seemed like it would never recover from the void left by a right-wing dictatorship, which exterminated many of the country’s dissenting voices. But the protests of the 15th of May 2011 were a reminder to those in power that Spanish direct democracy is still alive and has finally awoken. (Ouziel 2011a)



Figure 8. Library at Acampada Sol, Madrid, Spain. June 2, 2011. Photo by Nemo.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Calma_y_seni_011.JPG.

During the city square occupations, Indignados created transformed city parks into acampadas (encampments) that housed libraries, kitchens, assembly and other creative spaces. The formation and further organization of working groups of various kinds designated spaces for discussion and planning. After occupying city squares, transforming the spaces, and developing assembly processes, Indignados organized mass coordinated actions across Spain, such as the boycotting and disruption of Town Halls. Ouziel writes:

Demonstrators across the country blocked entrances to Town Halls, climbed onto the balconies, blocked official cars from exiting car parks, disturbed investiture sessions with incriminating speeches, and followed politicians across cities as they celebrated their victories, shouting to them, “shame on you!...Artur Mas, the President of the Generalitat (the government of the Catalan autonomous region) was forced to arrive to parliament in a police helicopter, as thousands of ‘Indignados’ blocked the entrance in an attempt to boycott the region’s budget approval. They were shouting: “You do not represent us!” The parliamentary session began with only half of the representatives able to enter the building. (Ouziel 2011b)



Figure 9. Indignados use hand signals at Puerta del Sol during assembly in an effort to find consensus. June 2, 2011. Photo by Nemo.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Calma_y_seni_053.JPG.

1.1.8 Occupy Wall Street/Occupy Los Angeles

1.1.8.1 Adbusters magazine sends out a call to occupy Wall Street

Kalle Lasn, co-founder of the Adbusters Media Foundation, argues in his book *Culture Jam* that, “A free, authentic life is no longer possible in AmericaTM today. We are being manipulated in the most insidious way. Our emotions, personalities and core values are under siege from media and cultural forces too complex to decode” (Lasn 1999: xiii). Lasn likens mass media to the social-control drug “soma” featured in the dystopian novel “Brave New World” by Aldous Huxley, and asserts that mass media, “dispense a kind of Huxleyan ‘soma.’ The most powerful narcotic in the world is the promise of belonging. And belonging is best achieved by conforming to the prescriptions of AmericaTM” (Lasn 1999: xiii). Lasn points out that alternatives to the mass media narcotic are often difficult to disseminate. This was especially true in the era before widespread use of a relatively free and open internet.

Lasn (1999: 30-31) writes that in 1989 he and a group of associates, including a wilderness photographer, shot a “noncommercial” featuring the devastation by irresponsible logging companies taking place in the forests of British Columbia. The Canadian Broadcasting Company refused to air it, even though Lasn and his group were ready to pay the full fee for the ad. This anecdote suggests that the gated community of mass media is not solely preoccupied with individual sums of money paid for access, but rather in promoting a specific agenda and keeping out those who seek to contest it. Thus many political artists determined that if they were to gain access to a wider audience, they had to appropriate and subvert dominant media messages. *Culture jamming* was born out of a recognition of the firmly entrenched structures of media dissemination. The first line of the Culture Jammer’s Manifesto reads, “We will take on the archetypal mind polluters and beat them at their own game” (Lasn 1999:128).

Adbusters magazine features art that encourages this through a process of *détournement*, a concept associated with turning materials in order to transform them. Situationist Asger Jorn (1959) writes:

Détournement is a game born out of the capacity for devalorization. Only he who is able to devalorize can create new values. And only there where there is something to devalorize, that is, an already established value, can one engage in devalorization. It is up to us to devalorize or to be devalorized according to our ability to reinvest in our own culture. There remain only two possibilities for us in Europe: to be sacrificed or to sacrifice. It is up to you to choose between the historical monument and the act that merits it.
(Jorn 1959)

Christine Harold writes that the *Internationale Situationiste* defined *détournement* as “a detouring of preexisting Spectacular messages in an effort to subvert and reclaim them” (Harold 2007: 7). The reclaimed billboard in Figure 10 exemplifies this practice. In the Puerta del Sol in Madrid, Indignado participants hung a banner over a L’Oreal billboard in such a way as to transform the text to read “Democracia Real.” This practice of *détournement* also reflects what

Goodwin (2013) has analyzed as the capacity for performing transformative operations on a public substrate. A public substrate may be constituted of a practice or a material, or some combination thereof. The temporal sedimentations of operations performed on and with our environments, our practices, and ourselves create the transformations we see across time. By incorporating the material of the L’Oreal billboard at Puerta del Sol and adding further material, a transformed and devalorized/revalorized billboard results, which reflects more accurately the specific concerns and conditions within its environment.



Figure 10. A transformative banner, which reads “Democracia”, hangs over a L’Oréal billboard.

Puerta del Sol, Madrid, Spain. May 19, 2011. Photo by Barcex.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Madrid_-_Acampada_Sol_-_110519_213736.jpg.

Adbusters magazine, an anti-consumerist publication, features photos of just such appropriations and artwork that combines and juxtaposes elements in order to transform their meanings. However, in the summer of 2011, *Adbusters* published something rather different – a

call for the occupation of Wall Street. New York Times writer William Yardley (2011) writes of Lasn and his colleagues' contribution to the initial promotion of the Occupy protest movement, "On July 13, he and his colleagues created a new hash tag on Twitter: #OCCUPYWALLSTREET. They made a poster showing a ballerina dancing on the back of the muscular sculptured bull near Wall Street in Manhattan" (Yardley 2011). This poster (see figure 11) featured the ballerina and bull image that became iconic of the Occupy movement. The poster encouraged participants to attend on the day of the call, September 17, 2011, and promoted occupation camping with the directive "Bring tent."



Figure 11. Adbusters poster call to occupy Wall Street.

Adbusters also published a more developed, and textually persuasive call on their blog of July 13, 2011 (see detail Figure 12). The blog reads, “Are you ready for a Tahrir moment? On September 17, flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades, and occupy Wall Street” (*Adbusters* 2011).



Alright you 90,000 redeemers, rebels and radicals out there,

A worldwide shift in revolutionary tactics is underway right now that bodes well for the future. The spirit of this fresh tactic, a fusion of Tahrir with the acampadas of Spain, is captured in this quote:

“The antiglobalization movement was the first step on the road. Back then our model was to attack the system like a pack of wolves. There was an alpha male, a wolf who led the pack, and those who followed behind. Now the model has evolved. Today we are one big swarm of people.”

— Raimundo Viejo, Pompeu Fabra University
Barcelona, Spain

Figure 12. Detail from Adbusters blog July 13, 2011. <https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>.

1.1.8.2 “We are the 99%”

The terms 99% and 1%, respectively, refer to the overwhelming majority of people on earth (99%) who live in relative poverty versus the ultra-wealthy minority (1%) who control the resources and means of production. Although George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Karl Hess, and economist Joseph Stiglitz, among others, had used these terms, they did not enter common usage until the fall of 2011. The previous summer, in August of 2011, a Tumblr blog page called “wearethe99percent” was launched which featured photos and stories of from the un- or underemployed, indebted, and disenfranchised (see Figure 13). The meme of “the 99%” (also featured on a flyer for the second Occupy Wall Street General Assembly, see Figure 14) went viral as Occupy Wall Street began.

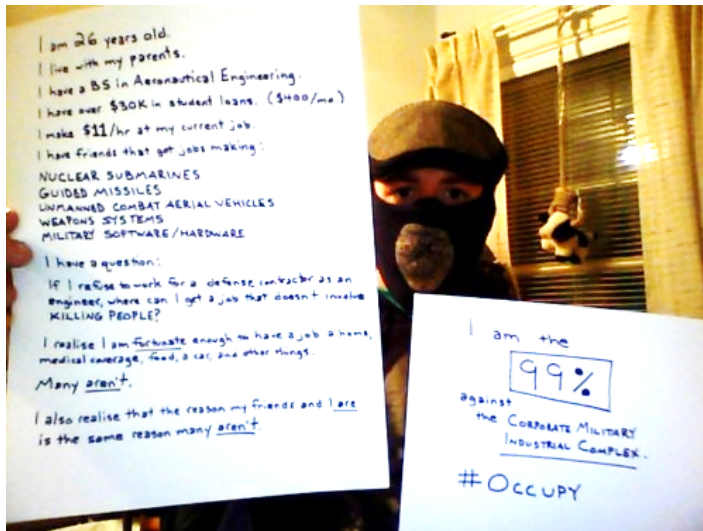


Figure 13. 99% Tumblr entry.

Text of Tumblr entry:

I am 26 years old. I live with my parents. I have a BS in Aeronautical Engineering. I have over \$30K in student loans. (\$400/mo.) I make \$11/hr at my current job. I have friends who got jobs making:
NUCLEAR SUBMARINES
GUIDED MISSILES
UNMANNED COMBAT AERIAL VEHICLES
WEAPONS SYSTEMS
MILITARY SOFTWARE/HARDWARE
I have a question:
If I realize to work for a defense contractor as an engineer, where can I get a job that doesn't involve KILLING PEOPLE?
I realize I am fortunate enough to have a job, a home, medical coverage, food, a car, and other things.
Many aren't.
I also realize that the reason my friends and I are is the same reason many aren't

If I refuse to work for a defense contractor as an engineer, where can I get a job that doesn't involve KILLING PEOPLE?
I realize I am fortunate enough to have a job, a home, medical coverage, food, a car, and other things. Many aren't.
I also realize that the reason my friends and I are is the same reason many aren't. I am the 99% against the CORPORATE MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX.
occupywallstreet.org

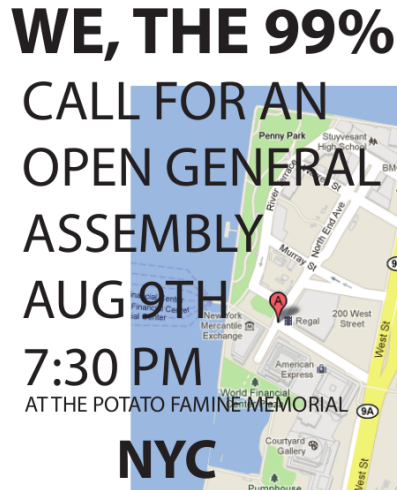


Figure 14. Flyer for General Assembly featuring 99% meme.



Figure 15. Sign at Occupy LA addressing Citizens United.

After General Assemblies in the summer of 2011 (see Figure 14), Occupy Wall Street began its encampment phase on September 17, 2011. Across the U.S., planning meetings also took place for similar protest encampments. Occupy Los Angeles began its encampment phase on October 1, 2011. Writing in 2011, Moreno-Caballud and Sitrin identified the overarching shared elements of the global protest movements:

There are three key elements that have made the global movements of 2011 so powerful and different. The extraordinary capacity to include all types of people; the impulse to move beyond traditional forms of the protest and contention, so as to create solutions for the problems identified; and the horizontal and directly participatory form they take.
(Moreno-Caballud and Sitrin 2011)

These shared features, as well as the global economic and political crises that sparked protest and the temporal connections outlined above, are what caused the social movements in the period between 2010 and early 2012 to be regarded by participants and onlookers alike as intricately interconnected. In addition to this, interconnection in the form of online skill sharing and facilitation training, helped spread ideas of horizontal and direct participation in different locales. Figure 16 contains a screenshot from a popular Spanish website which was influential in the explanation and creation of horizontal ideology and its relation to assembly process.

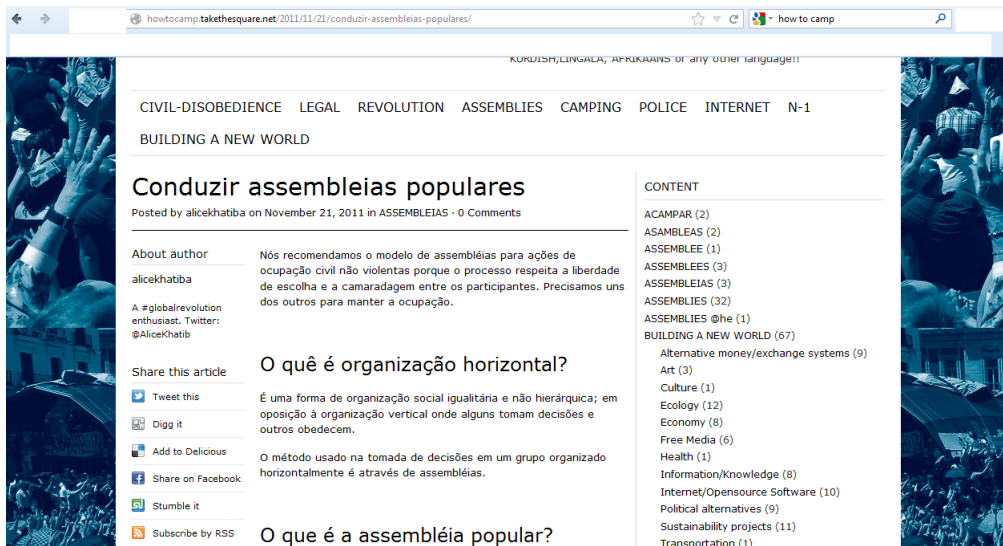


Figure 16. Screenshot from Indignado website which offers suggestions for occupation and facilitation for global protest in many languages.

1.2 Space and Occupy Los Angeles

OLA Participant: We've done something here that has not been done in a long time. We have taken the public square. The government has ceded to us the public square. The most important thing we do is keep it.

A key element of the global assembly movements has been the occupation of outdoor public space. Within these spaces, the various activities, including eating, sleeping, making signs and banners, discussing topics informally, as well as the prolonged communicative events specifically involving participatory democratic practice, i.e. assemblies, have been highly visible. The manifold implications and affordances of a physical encampment fall outside the scope of this dissertation, but a brief picture of the significant general transformation of public park space in downtown Los Angeles will contribute to an understanding of the local ecology of the Occupy Los Angeles General Assembly specifically.

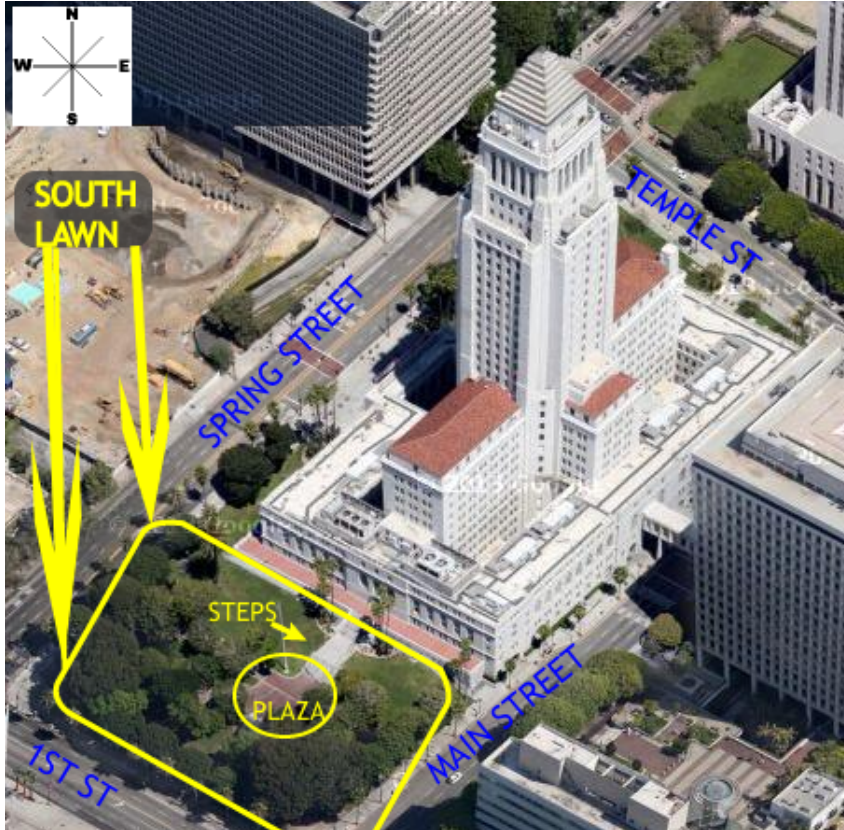


Figure 17.- South lawn at Los Angeles City Hall.

During the encampment period of October -November 2011, Occupy Los Angeles participants physically, functionally, and symbolically transformed the downtown park surrounding Los Angeles City Hall. Located across the street from the Los Angeles Police Department headquarters, this area (previous to the encampment) was frequented largely by city employees and those attending business meetings at City Hall, pedestrian commuters who worked in the downtown area, the homeless, and police. Over the last ten years, downtown L.A. has undergone a major economic shift toward high- priced lofts and expensive restaurant, gallery, and hotel business. This shift eliminated many of the smaller locally owned businesses and much of the medium-range housing, leading to further economic stratification. City Hall Park itself had not been a place of gathering so much as a manicured fringe surrounding the

imposing white-painted architecture and spired tower of city hall. Richard Sennett characterizes this type of planned urban downtown outdoor space as “dead public space” which is contingent upon motion rather than presence. Dead public space is “designed to move through, not be in” (Sennett 1992, 14). The reanimating transformation of this space from one of relative emptiness (in terms of human presence) and motion-through, to one of fullness and presence-in, constituted the primary condition for the occupation’s various activities.

This reformulation of space included erecting the (now iconic) tents on the south, north and smaller west lawns. These tents effectively covered all grassy areas of City Hall Park. Very quickly, more complex structure emerged than that of mere tents. In the center of the south lawn, just south of the assembly plaza and fountain, a functioning kitchen provided hot and cold meals and snacks throughout the day. On the west lawn, next to a meditation tent, a lending library with bookshelves and crates provided a diverse selection of free reading materials. Next to this a People’s University Tent hosted teach-ins and presentations throughout the day. A small first aid tent which initially emerged on the north lawn later became the OLA wellness center and moved to a big tent on the south lawn, expanding operations to include counseling and social work services. An area just west of the assembly plaza along a paved walkway was named Kids’ Village and hosted daily meetings and activities for and about children and the welfare of families.



Figure 18. A discussion at the OLA People's University tent on the north side of the park.

At the top of the south steps lawn, the Media tent sprawled, housing an ever-growing inventory of equipment and personnel. Just west of the kitchen, an outdoor print shop provided free screen - printed designs on shirts or scarves. At the southern edge of the south lawn along the sidewalk, the official Welcome Tent provided political literature and daily meeting schedules to passers-by, including tourists, new occupiers, and those for whom this portion of their regular walk to work had become unrecognizable. The Welcome Tent also displayed a map of this emergent tent city drawn on a large dry-erase whiteboard to accommodate the ever-changing landscape within the encampment.

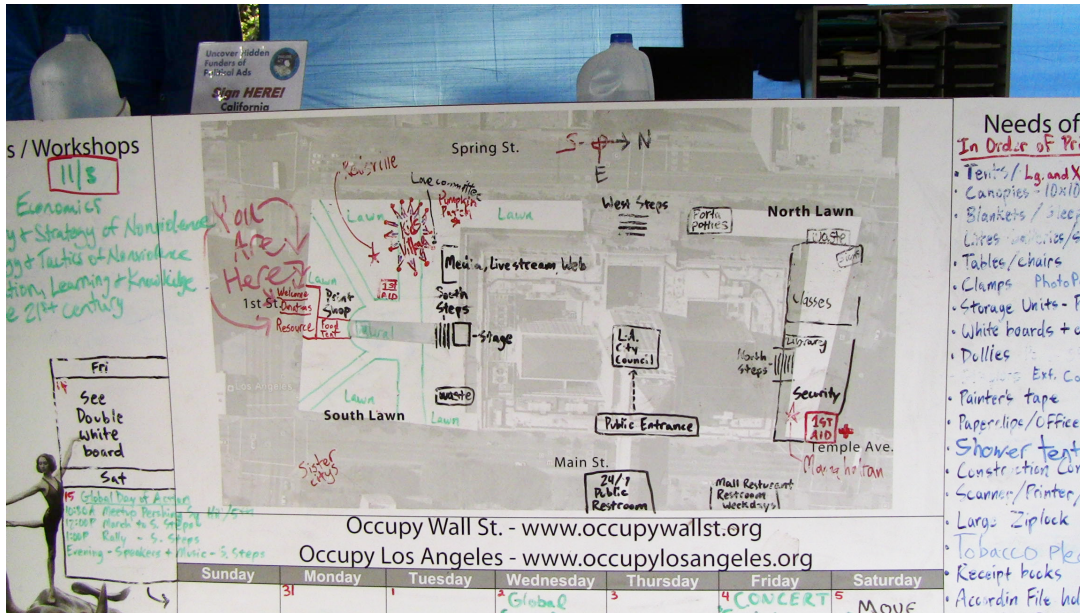


Figure 19. Whiteboard at OLA Welcome Tent featuring map of encampment.

City employees accustomed to walking uneventfully through the park areas on the their way into City Hall now made the same walk in a different space – one filled with the discourses of the occupation, both visual and audible. These discourses became available to anyone near the encampment space, and were even observable from across the street in the form of large signs and banners, often draped across tents themselves - outward declarations of the occupation and transformation of the park space.



Figure 20. Library at Occupy LA.

Goutsos & Polymeneas (in press) write that *detrterritorialization* and *reterritorialization* (terms borrowed from Deleuze & Guattari 1988, 1994) represent processes of change in established territory followed by “a return to fixed relations and connections.” Along with the transformations described above, in a linguistic act of reterritorialization, Occupy participants renamed the park ‘Solidarity Park’ by General Assembly consensus. The effective deterritorialization of Los Angeles City Hall Park and the emergence and establishment of fixed self-supportive systems by Occupiers in a process of reterritorialization certainly contributed to the urgency of planning and operationalization of the eventual massive paramilitary raid and forced evacuation of Occupy Los Angeles from City Hall Park. Aboelezz’s (in press) discussions of “symbolic space, central space, spiritual space, playful counter-space, ‘Arab’ space, and glocal space,” informed by Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) treatment of geosemiotic space and Lefebvre’s (1991) concepts of urban and social space, highlights “the relationship between the discourse of the protest messages on the one hand, and the space of Tahrir Square on the other.” In her discussion of *counter-space*, Aboelezz writes that “Tahrir Square became a thriving environment for transgressive discourses” which included singing, dancing, poetry-reciting, and mirth. These embodied practices created a “festive, creative atmosphere” which persisted despite the seriousness of the protests.

Judith Butler, reflecting on square movements and their local and embodied ecologies writes:

(W)hen we think about what it means to assemble in a crowd, a growing crowd, and what it means to move through public space in a way that contests the distinction between public and private, we see some way that bodies in their plurality lay claim to the public, find and produce the public through seizing and reconfiguring the matter of material environments; at the same time, those material environments are part of the action, and they themselves act when they become the support for action. (Butler 2011a)

At Occupy LA, drumming, dancing, poetry, sport, and discussion could be found throughout the park during the encampment period (see Figure 22). These embodied activities reterritorialized the park space and in fact created an interactive context in which the central park area, the south lawn, could be transformed into the General Assembly space.



Figure 21. General Assembly at Occupy Los Angeles, October 2011

This more inner domain of social space, directly relevant to this dissertation, is the assembly space itself. It encompasses the ways in which public outdoor space was both utilized and transformed through embodied participation during the discrete assembly event. Participants in the nightly General Assembly, focusing on plans, actions, and group stances, confronted the challenges of large-group interaction within a participatory democratic decision-making process. If the signs and banners, and even tents, of the occupation can be seen as outward-facing discourses of protest in space, the communicative processes developed at the General Assembly could be considered the internal spatial work of deliberative democratic practice. This practice involves both the creation of a space in which participants can see and hear one another and the

creation of embodied and processual systems that allow for participation to take place. This aspect is absolutely crucial to the practice of deliberative democracy as participants at OLA practiced it. Moreno-Caballud and Sitrin point out that:

The ways in which we organize in these spaces of assemblies and working groups is inextricably linked to the vision of what we are creating. We seek open, horizontal, participatory spaces where each person can truly speak and be heard. We organize structures, such as facilitation teams, agendas and variations on the forms of the assembly... always being open to changing them so as to create the most democratic and participatory space possible. (Moreno-Caballud and Sitrin 2011)

A main reason that space itself becomes a central and vital concern is that, as discussed above, representation is mistrusted and ultimately avoided; therefore the physical presence of participants becomes a manifestation of the legitimacy of the project.

As this dissertation analyzes phenomena observed at a specific Occupy site, that of Occupy Los Angeles, a description is given of the physical space in which the OLA assemblies took place. The ways in which space was adapted to the project of assembly work will be outlined in order to give a more vivid impression of the local ecology surrounding and created by participants at the OLA assembly. The ecological setting as it was adapted and created forms a central component of the analysis of the practices of direct participatory democracy at the General Assembly of OLA.

The Occupy Los Angeles General Assembly was most often held on the south lawn of City Hall Park (later Solidarity Park to OLA participants). The south lawn provided the largest open space within the encampment, and due to its concrete plaza area and steps rising to the south entrance of City Hall (see Figure 22), provided a natural amphitheater-like space in which participants could sit on the steps and have good visual and auditory access to the stage area. The use of the term “stage area” should not mislead the reader to imagine an architectural stage area. Rather, the stage area was nightly formed by the positioning of the participants’ bodies during

the assembly, and orientation of the stage varied somewhat across nights. For example, on some nights the Moderators stood closer to the center of the plaza and faced north, on other nights, the Moderators stood at the foot of the steps and faced south (see Figure 21).

It was decided very early on that the stage area should not be the elevated step and platform area for two reasons – one practical and the other ideological. The practical reason involved the accessibility of the onstage area to those for whom climbing stairs posed a significant challenge, such as those using wheelchairs. The ideological reason involved the idea that an elevated stage area promoted the idea of hierarchy, which the movement in general tried to exclude in favor of egalitarian practices and principles. Thus a literal form of horizontal ideological practice was adopted in which the facilitators or current speaker could be seen as participants without any particular or outstanding prestige that might be symbolized by spatial elevation itself.



Figure 22. The south plaza and steps of City Hall park during the daytime. Many activities took place in and around the plaza.



Figure 23. GA stage area at the foot of the south steps at south plaza. Speakers face south toward the plaza where participants sit and stand in circular formation.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The global Occupy/Indignado movement was born in response to a shared recognition of serious economic and social crisis and systemic injustice. Werlof (2011) describes the current global condition, in which political efficacy (defined in terms of representing the interests of the people) has been lost:

The primacy of politics over economy has been lost. Politicians of all parties have abandoned it. It is the corporations that dictate politics. Where corporate interests are concerned, there is no place for democratic convention or community control. Public space disappears. (Werlof 2011)

Many across the globe are facing the realization that the world's resources have been systematically concentrated and that society is becoming further stratified economically each day. The recent role of governments has largely been to contribute to this problem, rather than to mitigate it. The emergence of a massive surveillance and police state apparatus, purportedly in

response to a global ‘war on terror’, has further compounded the reach of powerful international financial entities, thus furthering the neoliberal economic project (Fairclough 2010). The current global economic crisis, centered in fraudulent banking and financial practices, propped up by state and multi-state organizations and their use of force and law, have created widespread mistrust of representational politics and current systems of governance. As the actions of representational governments are seen as more and more dubious, and as the needs and wishes of the people become obscured in paranoiac security policies and punitive austerity measures, it is inevitable that some alternative should be sought. The square movements emerged as an effort by the participants to see and hear themselves without the distortion of the funhouse mirror of many state and mainstream media outlets and the prepared speeches of political officials. The squares and parks in which people assembled were first and foremost a place to talk and act *together*.

1.4 Research Questions

This dissertation will describe specific aspects of the discursive practices of the General Assembly process at Occupy Los Angeles (OLA) and analyze how these historical and emergent elements, developed as pragmatic tools elaborated for a speech exchange system in large deliberative assemblies, produce and reflect the larger themes and goals of the movement on a global scale. These themes and goals include the production and reflection of local intersubjectivity and global solidarity as well as the embodied augmentation of personal and group agency. The uses of specific discursive practices and procedures observed at the Occupy Assembly indicate how an emergent conventionalized communicative system can both generate and emulate the goals and visions of its practitioners within a social movement.

This study is guided by questions that can be regarded as belonging to three categories.

The first category deals with interaction and embodiment and poses the following questions:

1. How is physical, embodied, and geographic space organized to facilitate direct democratic assembly? What are the embodied and processual tools participants employ to facilitate action and projects? How do participants orient to these tools and how are participants socialized to them?

The second category deals specifically with how the practices in the first category come to terms with, exemplify or challenge, the attested ideologies of the participants. They are:

2. What does direct participatory democracy look like in face-to-face interaction in large groups? How do large groups manage formal interaction locally given attested horizontal ideologies? How are these ideologies reflected or challenged in/by the practices? How is consensus or attested consensus enacted within an open and shifting participant group?

The third category, comprised of only one question, addresses the realities of modern mediums of communication and their interactions with the face-to-face interaction observed at the Occupy Los Angeles General Assembly. It is:

3. How do other mediums of communication impact the face-to-face interaction seen at the General Assembly and contribute to group projects and decision-making?

1.5 Definitions of Terms

Some key definitions of terms used throughout this dissertation should be provided here, namely *participation*, *direct democracy*, *participatory democracy*, and *deliberative democracy*.

There are, in fact, two senses of the term *participation* used herein. The first is a Goffmanian sense of participation. This sense is bound to the temporal and physical conditions of the utterance (or gesture) in real time. Thus, when an utterance is produced, “the relation of any one...member to this utterance can be called his ‘participation status’ relative to it, and that of all the persons in the gathering the ‘participation framework’ for that moment of speech” (Goffman 1981:137). It is first in this sense that persons within the participation framework of the General

Assembly meetings of Occupy Los Angeles are referred to generally as participants, and also in this sense that the more complex analyses of their various actions are described below in terms of diverse participant roles. Goodwin's (1999:177) definition of participation as referring "to actions demonstrating forms of involvement performed by parties within evolving structures of talk" rather than "more general membership in social groups or ritual activities" also fits this first sense. This conception of participation is contingent upon observed interaction and co-presence in real time.

However, there is also another sense of *participation* employed in this dissertation, which has its roots in democratic theory. Participation as a measure of how power and influence are shared and exercised has been a central question in democratic theory. In confronting the idea of participation (or lack of it), Pateman (1971:291) observes that, "the problem is that of the social pattern of political participation, and the social distribution of a low, and high sense, of political efficacy. Empirical studies show that aspects of our own political culture, such as a low sense of political efficacy, that are related to low rates of political participation, tend to be concentrated (like apathy itself) among individuals from a low SES background." Pateman resists the complacent view that these conditions are forever fossilized, and should be regarded only as given starting states for any discussion of democratic participation:

If it is assumed that the social pattern of political participation, and the culture that underlies this pattern, cannot be significantly changed, then there is no point in looking at the neglected side of the political culture/structure relationship; the features of the culture in question have already been assumed to be incapable of being 'shaped' in a more participatory direction. (Pateman 1971: 292)

Discussing democracy in the context of industry, Pateman defines *full participation* as "a process wherein each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions" (1970: 71). This is reminiscent of the types of egalitarian

decision-making processes within Argentina's worker-reclaimed factories (following the nation's economic and political breakdown) described in the Lavaca Collective's narrative anthology *Sin Patrón*. Former floor workers and former managers and office workers routinely met for assemblies in which each participant exercised equal influence over the decisions made regarding all aspects of the factories' operations, including their financial decisions. Carlos Quinimir, a reclaimed-factory worker, asserts that in the face of adversity and conflict, "the assembly, which is the maximum authority, decides" (Lavaca Collective 2007:61).

This platform for participation and the experience of political efficacy, especially among the long disenfranchised, is precisely the type of project that square movements seek to encourage. The experience of effective participation in public space and involving public matters aspires to become a type of full participation that will dissipate the apathy that is the psychological symptom of systematic exclusion.

A special problem arises regarding the above two notions of participation within any microethnographic analysis of the Occupy Assembly. That is, the activity and its political realizations in terms of shared power become tightly intertwined in the sequential course of co-present interaction. In fact, it may be useful to view the current approach as one that uses the former sense (participation in the Goffmanian sense) in order to provide a powerful lens into the actual operations of the latter sense (participation as shared power). This particular lens can be focused only through actual geographic and social space in which the bodies of participants may be observed acting within the participation framework and thus participating in the localized democratic project.

The Occupy Assembly has been referred to as exemplifying a form of *direct participatory democracy*. The term *direct democracy* refers here and generally to a political

decision-making process in which people decide policy initiatives directly (such as in the cases of the referendum, the initiative, and the recall) through some means such as voting, rather than relying on the vote or decision of a representative. Mistrust of representation was a prevalent attitude among participants at Occupy LA. This aversion to representatives extended beyond just city and state officials and bureaucrats to include aspiring representatives among Occupy participants themselves. Isabell Lorey writes that the contemporary assembly movements resist representation at three levels:

Three traditional modes of representation can be distinguished, which are rejected more or less explicitly by the protest movements of the precarious: 1. current manifestations of representative democracy (government, parties and participative pacification through elections), 2. representation as speaking on behalf of others by intellectuals and speakers, who present the concerns of the protesters suitably for the media and can function as contacts for governments, and 3. forms of organisation that form a unified 'we', an identitarian collective subject. (Lorey 2011)

Lorey provides a generally accurate description of the resistance to representation observed at Occupy Los Angeles (with some exceptions, such as spokespersons for committees and affinity groups making announcements for actions or about meeting times or specific needs). However, Lorey's third point becomes somewhat more complex in practice. The General Assembly, as the central decision-making body of OLA, took on the quality of the collective subject in the practices of proposal consensus and document production. If a particular proposed action or document found consensus approval at OLA, it took on a representational force. This fact indicates the consequential nature of the proceedings of the General Assemblies of Occupy Los Angeles. It also highlights the directness of the democratic practice, a practice in fact so direct that physical absence for one night deprived a regular participant from influencing the outcomes of that night's proposals. Although participants at OLA employed a consensus model rather than a majority voting model, individual approval or disapproval, shown through

the use of hand signals, was influential in establishing group consensus. No representational “vote” was allowed, nor were any “votes” allowed by the use of telecommunications of any kind. This last point speaks to the strictly in-person direct participatory methods of the General Assembly proceedings at Occupy LA, which, while ensuring immediacy and directness, certainly suffered from nightly fluctuations in attendance and hence inconsistencies in the content of resolutions consented to.

Participatory democracy includes a range of notions that at one extreme may sanction rational non-participation (Zittel and Fuchs 2006) and at the other extreme may indicate expanded rights of participation, as in Pateman’s full participation, which is also a form of direct democracy. The center position may involve elections of representatives, for example.

Deliberative democracy, coined by Joseph Bessette in 1980, emerged as a specific orientation to democratic practice. Chambers writes that:

Talk-centric democratic theory replaces voting-centric democratic theory. Voting-centric views see democracy as the arena in which fixed preferences and interests compete via fair mechanisms of aggregation. In contrast, deliberative democracy focuses on the communicative processes of opinion and will-formation that precede voting. (2003:308).

Dryzek (1990), using his term “discursive democracy” writes that it “charts escapes from some contemporary impasses in political arrangements, public policy, and social science” (1990: ix). Deliberative democracy provides a theory that is grounded in observation of interactive practices as they emerge in co-present communication. This interactive approach is meant to reveal *how* participants actually operationalize deliberative democracy in an attested non-authoritarian local environment.

This dissertation alternately uses the terms direct democracy, participatory democracy, and deliberative democracy, as well as compound variations thereof, because each of the essential qualities of these models outlined above is satisfied in the observed democratic

practices of the Occupy General Assembly. However, there are very real tensions both in theory and practice among these models. The most relevant for current analysis is the tension between participatory and deliberative democratic theory. Cohen and Fung (2004:27) discuss tensions between deliberation and participation. They point out that, “improving the quality of deliberation may come at a cost to public participation” and conversely, “expanding participation—either numbers of people, or the range of issues under direct popular control—may diminish the quality of deliberation.” Fishkin (2009) compares four democratic theories: competitive democracy; elite deliberation; participatory democracy; and deliberative democracy according to how each relates to four principles: political equality; participation; deliberation; and non-tyranny. In this model, both participatory and deliberative democracy are centrally committed to political equality, but differ in their respective commitments to participation and deliberation. These inherent tensions are observable in the interactions themselves, as are the efforts made by participants to mitigate them.

1.6 Significance of Study

Following deliberative and participatory democratic theory, this dissertation confronts the deliberative process itself as the central object for investigation. Rather than engaging with democratic theory and practice through the use of statistical analysis of voting behaviors and outcomes or surveys of attendance or interest in town hall and other community meetings, I focus on practices of direct participatory democracy as discernible within the embodied face-to-face interactions among participants engaged in consequential group discussion and decision-making. In this way the localized tensions between deliberation and participation and participants’ various solutions to them may be made explicit. Goodwin writes that, “when we

foreground participation as an analytic concept we focus on the interactive work that hearers as well as speakers engage in” (1999: 177).

In describing specific aspects of the discursive practices of the General Assembly process at Occupy LA, and detailing how these historical elements emerged and developed as pragmatic tools elaborated for a democratic speech exchange system in large deliberative assemblies, practical and embodied instantiations of the aforementioned theoretical tensions and their localized responses, as well as indications of the larger themes and goals of the movement on a global scale, become visible. These themes and goals include the production and reflection of local intersubjectivity and global solidarity as well as the embodied augmentation of personal and group agency. The uses of specific discursive practices and procedures observed at the Occupy Assembly indicate how an emergent conventionalized communicative system can both generate and emulate the goals and visions of its practitioners within a social movement.

1.7 Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter Two will review the background and relevant literature that informs this study. Chapter Three briefly discusses the methods used to study these phenomena. Chapter Four will analyze one of the main assembly tools – the human mic, its various applications, and its use in the production of local intersubjectivity and the embodied augmentation of both personal and group agency as well as its ability to generate what will be referred to as *interexperience*—a mutual inhabitation which exceeds that of understanding and describes a type of action in unison. Chapter five will examine key hand signals used by participants the General Assembly at OLA. This section will show how, in addressing the practical problems of large-group deliberation within an attested egalitarian and horizontal ideological framework for action, the hand signals, by including a catalog of embodied signals that amplify listener

stances, further generate local intersubjectivity and augment both personal and group agency. These practices provide visually concrete evidence of emergent adaptations for deliberative democratic practice.

Chapter Six focuses on the assembly process itself, including the structure of the facilitation roles, the typical formal agenda of GA, the sequential proposal process, as well as a description and analysis of how the process itself was contested and resisted by participants. Chapter Seven discusses the process of large-group authorship as it was realized in the creation of a specific document at OLA. This chapter acknowledges the complex interplay between online (computer-mediated) interaction and the interaction observed at the GA in the creation of a document and its passage through the consensus process of the assembly.

Chapter 2: Background/ Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 Interaction and Embodiment

Goffman (1981:144) provides descriptions of different participant roles that may be realized within the *production format* of an encounter. *Footing* involves a participant's "stance, or posture, or projected self" (1981:128). Goffman writes that:

A change in footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance. A change in footing is another way of talking about a change in our frame for events. (Goffman 1981: 128)

A *participation framework* is made up of all the participants in a gathering and each one's particular *participation status* relative to an utterance or some activity (Goffman 1981: 137). Goffman's decomposition of the speaker into various roles is useful in describing how an utterance may be produced and oriented to. A speaker whose physical apparatus produces sound and/or gesture can be called a *sounding box*, "an individual active in the role of utterance production" (Goffman 1981: 144). This Sounding Box functions as an *animator*, "a functional node[s] in a communication system" (1981:144). An *author* is "someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded" (1981:144). A *principal* is "in the legalistic sense," "someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say" (1981:144). Goffman describes how these roles may be enacted within reported speech, where a speaker may take on a lamination of another speaker in order to report his or her speech.

Goodwin (2007a: 18) writes that, "The deconstruction of the speaker offered by Goffman in Footing demonstrates the genuine power of an analytic framework that focuses on the dialogic

interplay of separate voices within reported speech.” Goodwin points out, however, that this framework does not comprehensively describe how simultaneous talk and action form an “interactive construction of meaning” that “requires a reflexive, cognitively complex hearer and frequent[ly] orientation to semiotic structure that extends beyond the stream of speech” (2007a: 46). Moreover, a speaker may also be “distributed across several participants and turns” (2007a: 46).

Gumperz (1982) recognized the relationships between changing environmental and social conditions and changes in communication situations. He writes that:

The total set of communicative settings accessible to residents in any one case make up the communicative economy of that area (Hymes 1972). The communicative economy is embedded in the socio-ecological system in which it is embedded and is directly responsive to changes in that system. In periods of relative stability, communicative situations and patterns of interpersonal contact also remain unchanged. However, when innovations occur – as when new industry creates new occupations and new forms of interpersonal relations; when new transport routes are created, changing traffic patterns and bringing locals into contact with new groups; or when new political or religious movements create new bonds among individuals who previously had little contact – novel communication situations arise. (Gumperz 1982: 43-44).

Atkinson (1982) outlines some essential features to be found in formal, multi-party, communicative gatherings with attention to considering the special conditions and requirements of such speech exchange systems in sustaining shared focused attention and fulfilling their communicative projects. He asserts that these details may have “operational importance” in “providing practical solutions to situated interactional problems” and thus “facilitating the local production of social order” (1982:110). Practices which develop in response to situated interactional problems of multi-party settings are to be found, “not only in different multi-party settings within a single society, but also (on present evidence) in all societies, independently of cultural traditions, stage of economic development, ideology, political organization, etc.” (Atkinson 1982:110). These identifiable interactional problems, such as how participants can

facilitate shared sustained attention, are, “endemic or general to certain sorts of setting” and “cannot otherwise be resolved *via* the use of conversational procedures” (Atkinson 1982:110). Conversational procedures refer to the locally managed procedures to be observed in mundane, everyday conversation. Atkinson (1982: 90) writes that, “identifying actions as 'formal' involves a form of comparative analysis in which a taken for granted knowledge of the organization of conversational interaction serves as the main point of reference.” In multi-party settings, *formality* can be produced and reflected in the special practices developed to address interactional problems. Thus, “while noticeable departures from conversational practices may provide a basis for glossing various activities as 'formal', they may also be crucially important for the orderly production and interpretation of actions by co-present parties to settings of this sort” (1982: 101).

Atkinson examines three categories of formal practice that emerge in response to the needs of multi-party settings: turn allocation; speaker identification and visibility; and utterance design and production. He observes that in multi-party settings there are, “marked departures from the way turn allocation is organized in conversation” (1982: 103). This can be recognized in the restrictions imposed through turn pre-allocation, turn mediation, and turn-type pre-allocation. Atkinson (1982:102) describes Sacks, Schegloff, and Jeffersons’s (1974) *turn pre-allocation* as, “an order of speaking...more or less known in advance of the start of some interactional sequence.” *Turn-mediation*:

...refers to practices that are involved where one participant is recognized as having special rights to decide who may speak when, what may be talked about, when a present speaker should stop speaking, etc., a chairman being perhaps the paradigm case of 'turn mediator' (Atkinson 1982:103)

Turn-type pre-allocation restricts what types of actions are permitted within a given turn. Atkinson (1982: 103) notes that, “Turn pre-allocation and turn mediation involve restrictions on

the use of self-selection as a procedure for allocating turns, while turn- type pre-allocation may seriously restrict a participant's scope for initiating actions during the course of a turn.” Atkinson (1982:103) claims that restrictions on self-selection are, “an almost universal feature of multi-party settings in which there is a shared orientation of all co-present parties to a single sequence of utterance turns”

Multi-party settings demand special considerations involving speaker identification and visibility. In large groups it can be difficult for participants to monitor the talk in progress. Atkinson (1982:105) points out that the ecological arrangements of such settings share common characteristics, such as the location of different categories of participants in different places, and the ways in which, “frequent speakers are usually set apart from those who speak less frequently or not at all.” These practices facilitate visibility of the speakers. He notes that, where seating or standing features are not built outright, as, “in the case of meetings in the open air, natural features of the local terrain may be suitably exploited” (1982: 105).

The design and production of utterances in multi-party settings differs from that observed in conversation. In natural conversation, hearers, “display their understanding of an utterance in the design of a next turn” (Atkinson 1982: 107) or simultaneously with a speaker through their actions (Goodwin 2007a). In contrast to this, “multi-party settings provide less scope for all those present to display their understanding of an utterance in the design of a next turn” and therefore, “a major incentive on parties to remain continually attentive is largely absent” (Atkinson 1982:107). Further, hearers may fail to, “hear or understand some early part of a sequence,” resulting in, “serious problems for monitoring what follows, the potential for which is likely to be particularly great during the course of very extended turns” (1982:107). Ways in which participants may deal with this problem include the use of “short turn types” (1982:107), greater

volume, slower pace, long within-turn pauses, and smoother, less perturbed speech (1982:109). Atkinson indicates that these features both allow a speaker to monitor hearers' displays of attentiveness and facilitate hearers' monitoring of ongoing talk.

Mondada (2011: 311), in her study of a series of participatory democratic meetings that brought together various participants from the local neighborhood to design a community park in France, discusses "the specific mutual elaboration of represented space, interactional space and inscriptional space." Represented space refers to space as it is "described within talk" (2011:287). Interactional space is "the relative arrangements and movements of participants' bodies, but also...their mutual glances, their embodied orientations, and their manipulations of artefacts" (2011:289). Inscriptional space is space as it is used and shaped by the public writing of citizens' proposals on a board" (2011: 288). The particular setting of the participatory democratic meetings:

(M)akes these three types of space, the represented space, the interactional space, and the inscriptional space, both particularly visible and particularly intertwined. In other activity settings, one type might be achieved independently of the others. Thus, these spatialities are very different; nevertheless they are all achieved through sequentially organized embodied practices, which exploit multi-modal resources, such as talk, gaze, gesture, posture, body movements, and so on – and the material features of the environment in a situated way. (Mondada 2011: 311)

2.2 Deliberative/Discursive Democracy

"Deliberative democracy", coined by Joseph Bessette in 1980, emerged as a specific orientation to democratic practice. Chambers writes that:

Deliberative democratic theory is a normative theory that suggests ways in which we can enhance democracy and criticize institutions that do not live up to the normative standard. In particular, it claims to be a more just and indeed democratic way of dealing with pluralism than aggregative or realist models of democracy. Thus, it begins with a turning away from liberal individualist or economic understandings of democracy and toward a view anchored in conceptions of accountability and discussion. Talk-centric democratic theory replaces voting-centric democratic theory. Voting-centric views see democracy as the arena in which fixed preferences and interests compete via fair mechanisms of

aggregation. In contrast, deliberative democracy focuses on the communicative processes of opinion and will-formation that precede voting. (Chambers 2003:308)

Following deliberative democratic theory, this dissertation regards the deliberative process itself as the central object for investigation. Rather than engaging with democratic theory and practice through the use of statistical analysis of voting behaviors and outcomes or surveys of attendance or interest in town hall and other community meetings, this study will focus on practices of direct participatory democracy as discernible within the embodied face-to-face interactions among participants engaged in consequential group discussion and decision-making. This methodology and approach will provide a view of deliberative democracy that is grounded in observation of interactive practices as they emerge in co-present communication.

This interactive approach is meant to bring light to questions of *how* participants actually operationalize deliberative democracy in an attested non-authoritarian local environment. Within this context, the processes of deliberation provide the central focus. Deliberation or group decision-making is not regarded as peripheral action leading to a binary act but rather as an unfolding process in which participants' voiced arguments, questions, and opinions may shift as new voices and ideas emerge. Hicks writes:

(T)he results of this decision-making process are not predetermined by the material interests, social status, cultural attachments, or ethical commitments ascribed to participants, but rather depend on the claims and conduct of participants in the decision-making process itself (a process open to the possibility that participants may very well make avowals of those interests, attachments, and commitments in such a way that they become relevant factors). (Hicks 2002: 230)

Thus, within this framework, a certain openness to the embodied actions and stances of participants is also possible. That is, as no a priori rigid orientations are automatically assumed and imposed upon actors, the manifested sequential and simultaneous action may be observed as it emerged.

Much of the formalized practice of the General Assembly was promoted by participants as utilizing visual, auditory, and processual resources in such a way as to best facilitate thorough and diverse participation, without exclusion. Hicks writes that “equal consideration” is defined “in communicative terms” and that:

(A)ll persons and their views...deserve an effective hearing, meaning that all deliberators should presume that each stakeholder is making a unique, valued, and legitimate claim upon the time and resources of the collective and, therefore, is deserving of a full hearing of any and all opinions, objections, and requests. (Hicks 2002:230)

However, these gatherings are constituted of real people, and not idealized orators. Some contributions may be irrelevant or non-actionable. Hicks writes that nevertheless:

All stakeholders should feel that they possess the means for turning the right to speak into the ability to exercise political agency...to be the one to say just the right thing that turns everything around, to make the contribution that causes a shift in collective judgment and thereby opens up an entire range of possibilities heretofore unimagined. (Hicks 2002: 230-231)

Much of the onus on members of the Facilitation Committee is in creating and fostering this feeling through the embodied displays and processual moves of the Moderators. Part of this responsibility is in recognizing the systemic obscurity of women’s and minority voices and views, not to mention embodied performances, and in promoting practices that seek to mitigate these forces. Hicks cautions that:

(M)inorities and women—as we all know, are simply less likely to evoke an effective hearing, even if and when they state their claims within the dictates of social convention and reason. This is in large part due to the devaluing of certain forms of articulation, body comportment, and inference. (Hicks 2002: 232)

In acknowledgement of these realities, progressive stacking, a practice in which women and people of color may be bumped forward in the lists of participants requesting the floor, was adopted at the Occupy LA General Assembly. The practice was said to address systemic

inequalities somewhat. Therefore, floor time – its attainment and immediacy – was recognized as a politically salient feature of deliberation.

The appropriateness of applying a discursive democratic theoretical framework to analyses of the embodied deliberative action at the OLA General Assembly may best be described by Dryzek's (1990) observation that "Spaces exist for the generation of discursive designs to the extent dominant political and economic institutions are crumbling under the weight of their contradictions" (1990:77). The public observation and elucidation of whole-system breakdown (felt particularly keenly by the lower economic classes) was articulated by the assembly movement in Greece, the Indignado or 15M movement in Spain, and some "951 cities in 82 countries" (Guardian UK, 2011) Occupy sites worldwide as reported and charted by the Guardian in October of 2011.

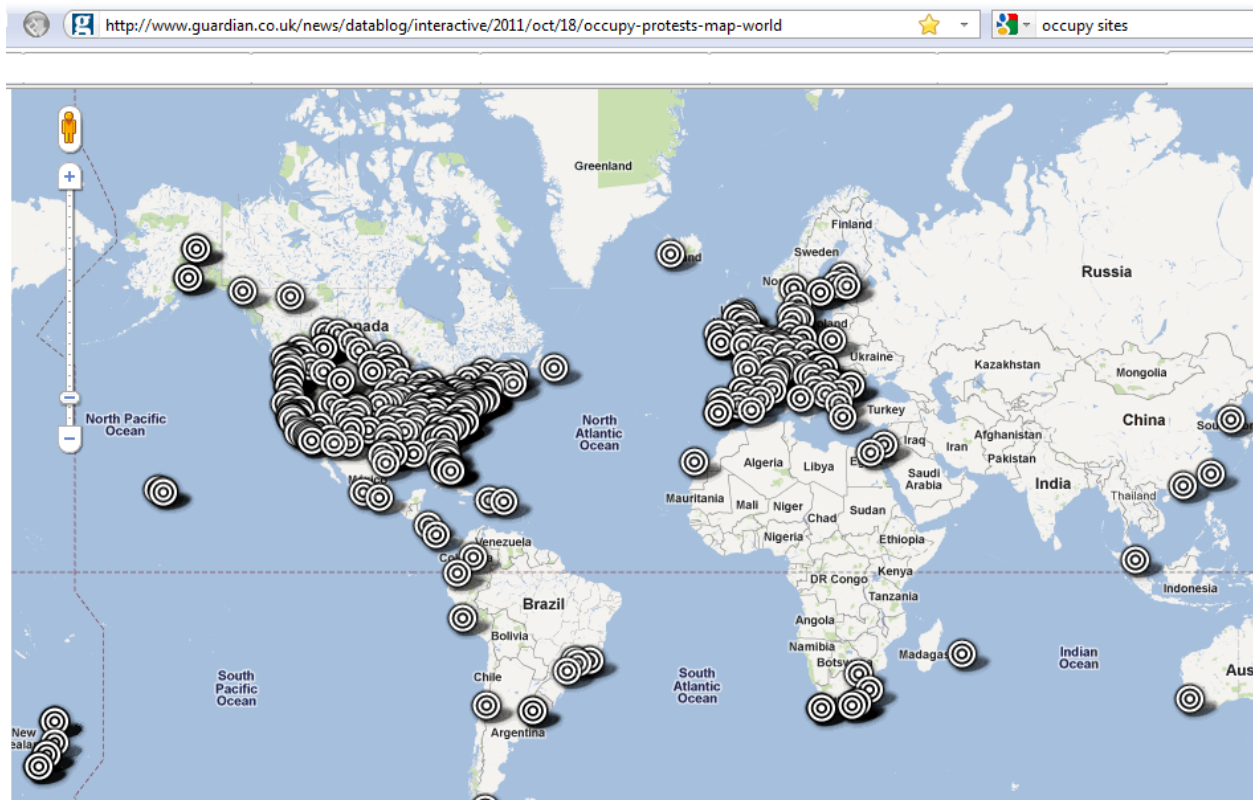


Figure 24. Guardian online interactive data blog of Occupy sites worldwide.

2.3 Crowds, Mobs

Clark McPhail's *The Myth of the Madding Crowd* (1991), calls for a more socially situated and interaction-focused analysis of crowd behavior or "temporary gatherings" which is based on observation of alternating individual and collective action rather than predictive assumptions formed from demographic information. McPhail, following Goffman, adopted the notion of the gathering, as it "implied only the copresence of two or more persons in a common location in space and time without regard to what they might or might not do with or in relation to one another" (2006:435). McPhail's (2006:455) analyses are derived from field observations. He describes assembling processes and dispersing processes under different types of conditions and in which different group actions emerged, including singing, praying, and cheering. Ultimately, the descriptive power of the terms *crowd* and *collective action* are called into question, and asserts that "symbolic interaction is alive and well in the life course of temporary gatherings and in the production of dynamic and complex forms of collective action."

Schweingruber (2000) critiques the U.S. sociological theory of the time regarding crowds, which he asserts encouraged a general misunderstanding of group behavior that contributed to an escalated force style of protest policing. Schweingruber and McPhail (1999) describe a method for "systematically observing and recording collective action within temporary gatherings" (1999: 451) that uses multiple researchers and provides a richer and more informative view of these gatherings.

2.4 Assembly/Self-Organization of Groups

Sin Patrón, a collectively-authored book which tells the stories of the 2001 Argentinian economic collapse and subsequent reclamation of factories by workers, includes descriptions of

self-organization through discussion, action, and assembly. Carlos Quiñimir, a worker at Zanón, reportedly the largest worker-reclaimed factory in Argentina, says of the importance of the assembly, “The assembly is paramount. The parties play an important role, but they are subordinate to the overall assembly...When something reaches an impasse, the assembly, which is the maximum authority, decides.” (Lavaca Collective 2007: 61).

In *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, David Graeber describes the need for an ethnography that explores processes of self-organization among groups. He proposes an ethnographic method, as “the practice of ethnography provides at least something of a model, if a very rough, incipient model, of how non-vanguardist revolutionary intellectual practice might work” (Graeber 2004: 11). As opposed to a High Theory, Graeber (2004:9) proposes a Low Theory, that is, “a way of grappling with those real, immediate questions that emerge from a transformative project.” Anarchists, writes Graeber, rather than grappling primarily with broad philosophical questions such as what the nature of commodity form may be, “tend to argue with each other about what is the truly democratic way to go about a meeting, [and] at what point organization stops being empowering and starts squelching individual freedom” (2004:6). This orientation aptly describes the discourse of and around the Facilitation Committee, and the issues of access, privilege, and everyday equality produced through the “process” at the General Assembly. Graeber’s rationale for an ethnographic, inductive methodology is consonant with the approaches of Conversation Analysis and video-based Discourse analysis. In the chapter on meetings in his 2009 *Direct Action: An Ethnography*, Graeber recounts a facilitation training of the New York City Direct Action Network that he attended in the Spring of 2000. Transcription of the ensuing group discussion is given, and many assembly issues pertinent to this study are brought up, including hand signals, stacking, moderation, and proposal process (Graeber 2009).

The discussions that are transcribed are *about* these facilitation issues, and serve as a detailed entrée into these highly specific areas of research. This dissertation builds upon this work through the analysis of video recordings of these very matters in use in face-to face interaction.

2.5 Horizontalism

Participant in the OWS Facilitators Working Group, global sociologist and lawyer Marina Sitrin, describing the popular collective and assembly movements in Argentina during the early years of the 21st century, writes that these horizontal ideologies attempt “to organize on a flatter plane, with the goal of creating ‘power-with’ one another” rather than “power-over” and that this entails a “commitment to value both the individual and the collective” (Sitrin 2006:3). In the direct participatory assembly practices of Occupy LA, these ideologies are expressed in terms of experimentation with functionally egalitarian participant roles that involve rotating and shared responsibilities and the attempt to form consensus in-group decision-making.

“The Process,” i.e. the specific practices employed during group encounters to facilitate group discussion and decision-making, although not without contestation, exemplified by occasionally shouted slogans like “People over process!”, has come to represent more than a set of tools for practically addressing group communication issues. Instead it is realized as a praxis that enacts the values of egalitarianism and horizontality. The regular communicative event of the General Assembly at Occupy Los Angeles constituted a rich site of this emergent discursive praxis.

Chapter 3: Methods

This project combines several methodologies and data sources, including participant observation, ethnography, field notes, collection of field literature (political publications, flyers etc.), communications via Occupy LA list serves, video recording, internet streaming video, websites, informal interview, conversation analytic transcription, and discourse analysis which includes visual analysis of gesture and embodied action.

The data were gathered over a period of several months as a participant observer at Occupy Los Angeles. The corpus assembled is comprised of over 200 hours of video data I filmed of General Assemblies and various committee meetings and marches held in outdoor public spaces in Los Angeles. As a participant observer, I participated in discussions and proposal processes, and experienced firsthand the use of all the specific discursive practices to be described. My approach involves microethnographic methods. I was physically present within the interaction and additionally recorded audiovisual data of the interaction for further analysis. Participants were aware that I was filming for ethnographic research. I was generally one among many who were filming at any particular moment. Cameras were ubiquitous at Occupy LA. There were typically multiple live-streamers (participants who filmed and broadcast the proceedings live over the internet, where they were also archived), TV cameras, and others who filmed regularly at the site, including at least three documentarians, as well as innumerable still photographers. Much the footage actually contains others filming within the frame, and it was sometimes challenging to avoid another cameraperson dominating the frame in my own data. An example of this is in the center image of the triptych Figure 31 entitled “Cathy’s line of sight” in section 4.7.2 of this dissertation. The silhouette seen there with gear on is one of the regular live-streamers, who filmed and streamed (live on the internet) with dedicated regularity, as did others.

Another example is in Figure 47 in section 6.1 entitled “An OLA participant sings at the General Assembly.” This image shows a man squatting near the singer with a handheld recording device recording the vocal performance. Despite the ubiquity of cameras and other recording devices, I always made it known that I would stop filming if anyone requested that I do so. Despite this saturation of filming, all the names in the transcripts have been changed to pseudonyms.

The method of video analysis is inductive. Salient phenomena emerge through data review and transcription processes. Microethnographic methods, as methods in ethnography of communication, allow larger social processes to be observed within everyday interaction. Erickson writes, “the central concern of ethnographic microanalysis is with the immediate ecology and micropolitics of social relations between persons engaged in situations of face-to-face interaction” (1992: 283). This methodology allows for the action of audiences and listeners to receive special analytical attention, and to bring multimodal or gestural discourse resources to the fore.

Streeck, Goodwin, and LeBaron write, “describing how action is built...requires an analytic framework that recognizes the diversity of semiotic resources used by participants in interaction, and takes into account how these resources interact with each other to build locally relevant action” (Streeck, Goodwin & LeBaron 2011:2). *Participation* throughout the dissertation will usually conform to Goodwin’s (1999) definition. That is, the term will refer “to actions demonstrating forms of involvement performed by parties within evolving structures of talk” (1999:177). This conception of participation as contingent upon observed interaction is additionally useful for the specific uses here, i.e. within the analysis of social action within a social protest movement. As the actors involved generally themselves avoided notions of membership, especially as participation was ever open and shifting and membership per se held

the possibility of negative consequences imposed from outside, participant in the sense elaborated by Goodwin lends itself to a more accurate description of the action involved.

Additionally, I spent considerable time with the OLA Facilitation Committee during their pre-GA agenda-planning and role-assignment sessions as well as their post-GA debrief discussions. As a result, I was able to witness emic interpretations of some of the successes and failures within certain assemblies as they were perceived by members of the Facilitation team. These occasions provided a window into the overarching attention to the production and maintenance of horizontal and inclusive facilitation practices, concerns of shared power in participation, reflecting Pateman's (1970) full participation, that were fostered and reflected upon during Facilitation Committee gatherings, as well as the breakdowns in these systems, such as the emergence of exclusion and Facilitator preference. The dissertation will focus on the ways in which the practical problems of large-group interaction, in conjunction with the attested ideologies of horizontalism and egalitarianism of the participants, inform and animate the sequential embodied interactions of the assembly process within the local spatial and political ecology of a public city park.

Chapter 4: People's Mic

This chapter will introduce the practice of the human mic (or people's mic) and discuss how its various applications promote solidarity and produce and reflect local intersubjectivity. It will also be shown how the human mic was used to augment personal and group agency and make available an embodied interexperience among participants.

The people's mic could be viewed as a formal practice with roots in everyday interaction. In large-scale interactive events like political stump speeches, musical or comedy shows, or other types of performances, an audience member may encounter difficulty in hearing a particular utterance from the speaker. The familiar "What did he say?" directed toward a fellow listener solicits a hushed repetition of the utterance delivered expressly in answer to the request for just such a repetition. Unfortunately, during the time it takes to repeat this original utterance, the speaker has uttered something else, and nearby listeners can become disturbed. The human mic represents an attempt to meet the challenges of large-scale communicative event listening, in order that all participants, not just those nearest the speaker, may be engaged fully. In the process of meeting these challenges with attention to an egalitarian realization of communicative practice, the human mic additionally indexes and embodies solidarity among participants.

4.1 Embodied Amplification



Figure 25. OWS people's mic, September 30, 2011 – Photo by David Shankbone.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Day_14_Occupy_Wall_Street_September_30_2011_Shankbone_2.JPG

As a formal practice, the “people’s mic” (or “human mic”) has a history that precedes OLA, and even Occupy Wall Street (OWS), where its current practice emerged and it first received media attention. It was also reportedly used at anti-nuclear rallies during the 1980s (Kahn 2011). Sitrin attests that the people’s mic was used in Seattle during the 1999 WTO protests not as an assembly tool but as a way of communicating information on the street. She reports that during the first OWS General Assembly at Zuccotti Park on September 17, 2011 the people’s mic proved more effective in reaching all members of the crowd than the megaphones that they had started with: “I actually hadn’t thought of it as a way of conducting an assembly. But we were standing in the center of a group of two thousand people and megaphones were not

working.” Thus the people’s mic is first and foremost an effective tool in amplifying the auditory range of speakers within large outdoor assemblies – often in cases where ambient noise, traffic, and other interference is present.

This tool is especially suited to the types of assemblies that occupy public space, such as parks and city centers. Listeners are able to hear the speaker, assist the speaker in speaking to further crowds, and signal uptake to the speaker. In turn, the speaker is able to continually monitor whether participants have heard the linguistic form of the utterance.

The production and reflection of local intersubjectivity as mutual understandings generated and displayed through sequential action (Schegloff 1992: 1325) in the large group setting is accomplished using only the communicative resources provided by the body. Sitrin further asserts that the use of the people’s mic not only served the basic function of reaching participants but that it changed the dynamics in the group: “It creates an atmosphere of active listening and participation. As soon as we started the people’s mic, the vibe and energy totally changed” (qtd. in Writers for the 99% 2012: 18).

In late October, 2011, the New York Police Department (NYPD) and Fire Department (FDNY) confiscated the gas canisters and the electric generators that had for a time powered the encampment. They also forbade the use of amplification like loudspeakers at OWS. Other Occupy sites, such as OLA, chose to use the people’s mic in solidarity with New York and also for the practicality and internal solidarity some felt it generated. The solidarity generated by the people’s mic can be accounted for in the action of group embodiment and reenactment of an individual’s utterance, and an attention to the listener as active co-participant in the ongoing co-construction of discourse during the assembly process. As an egalitarian instrument theoretically available to any participant who chooses to use it, the sense of participation as a

sharing of power and influence is evident. Further, this participation is made possible within the participation framework in which a speaker and audience take on participant roles as Author and Animators.

Deborah Tannen, (1987), discussing the forms and functions of both self and allo (other) repetition, writes that:

Repeating the words, phrases, or sentences of other speakers (a) accomplishes a conversation, (b) shows one's response to another's utterance, (c) show acceptance of others' utterances and their participation, and (d) gives evidence of one's own participation. It provides a resource to keep talk going -where talk itself is a show of involvement, of willingness to interact, to serve positive face. (Tannen 1987: 584)

However, using the people's mic requires additional time, and speakers who employ it must develop their skills in the technique of parsing and delivering their utterances in short, rhythmic sections (generally three to eight words) in order to facilitate uptake and repeat-back.

Hannah Chadeayne Appel, anthropologist, Occupy participant, and blogger for *Social Text Journal* writes:

As an inhabited practice, the people's microphone is difficult. It is strenuous and cumbersome, vulnerable to fatigue and a lack of mass participation. An otherwise brief announcement, sent over the people's mic to a large crowd, can take ten minutes or more. Attention spans wane; voices get hoarse; rhythm gets off and instead of a unison echo, people's words get jumbled into a polyphony of partial repetition. (Appel, 2011)

For these reasons the people's mic came to be used intermittently at OLA, when assembly numbers were high or ambient noise was considerable and abandoned when the group size did not warrant it or the speaker requested not to use it. However, even in this latter case, when a particular speaker requested not to "be repeated" the assembly would try simply listening, and if it became too strenuous to hear the speaker, would restart the people's mic (even to the chagrin of the speaker) in order to help the members of the assembly seated more distantly

hear the speaker's utterances. This speaks to the agency of listeners/mics who are engaged in the ongoing embodiment of the people's mic.

4.2 Parsing and Prosody on the People's mic

A speaker holding the floor and "being repeated" by an assembly that is performing as a human mic must acquire the specific skill of parsing her utterances into short, easily repeatable units. Tannen writes, "Repeating a word, phrase, or longer syntactic unit - exactly or with variation - results in a rhythmic pattern which sweeps the hearer or reader along" (1987:576). At Occupy LA, a participant especially skilled at creating short, rhythmic, repeatable units was Sunny, a member of the Committee to End Police Brutality at OLA. Speaking about the resistance she encountered to the formation and continuance of this committee she speaks to the assembly in manageable and melodic phrases. *Assem* refers to the mass of assembly participants acting as the human mic.

Excerpt 1 - OLA 10-21-11-Committee Announcements

1. Sunny: They tried to shut us do:wn,
2. Assem: They tried to shut us do:wn,
3. Sunny: BUT WE'RE STI::L he:re,
4. Assem: BUT WE'RE STI::L he:re,
5. Sunny: Speaking against police brutality.
6. Assem: Speaking against police brutality.
7. Sunny: So here's what's up.
8. Assem: So here's what's up.

However, there are many occasions when a speaker's delivery fails to facilitate uptake and repetition by the assembly, whether due to drastically low speaking volume, overly complex sentence constructions, or long strips of talk, which challenge short term memory. Additionally, a strong repetitious rhythmic element in the delivery of parsed segments increases the likelihood that participants will systematically amplify the current speaker. Speakers accustomed to

formulating lengthy and complex constructions or those who are attempting to read a piece of writing of this kind to an assembly may run into trouble or choose to abridge their speech for this reason. Judith Butler, as a speaker employing the human mic at Washington Square Park on October 23, 2011, produced carefully parsed utterances that received uptake and repeat-back with few problems.



Figure 26. Judith Butler uses the human mic at Washington Square Park, October 23, 2011.

However, despite this careful delivery, one trouble spot in parsing was made. In the extract below, JB refers to Judith Butler and PM to participants acting as the people's mic, and IN refers to an individual in the crowd who can be heard to have an especially difficult time with regaining repetition once it is lost.

Excerpt 2 - Judith Butler uses human mic at Washington Square Park – 10-23-11

1. JB: People have asked,
2. PM: People have asked,
3. JB: so what are the deMA:nds?
4. PM: so what are the deMAnds?
5. JB: that all these people are making.
6. PM that all these people are making.
7. JB: Either they sa:y [(.) there ARE no de- I'm sorry
8. PM: [Ei-

9. JB: [Either they say (*turns her back to assembly*)
10. IN: [Eithe-
11. PM: Either they say,
12. JB: (*turns again to face assembly*) there are no demands,
13. PM: there are no demands,
14. JB: (*keeping index finger extended*) and that lea:ves your cri:tics confused,
15. PM: and that leaves your critics confused,

As has been pointed out, use of the human mic is most successful if the speaker delivers her utterances in rhythmic patterns and in phrases that are easily understood by participants. Four features play a role in this: the number of syllables; the syntax of the utterance, the prosodic elements of the speaker's delivery; and the gestures and physical movements of the speaker. Generally, ten or fewer syllables per turn facilitate the human mic's orderly production. Additionally, sentences and propositions are chunked so that the early parts are often given in shorter segments than the final piece. The practice of the human mic generates new considerations in terms of where an expected transition relevance place (TRP) (Sacks et al. 1974) may occur. In line 7 above, the trouble can be accounted for in two ways. Firstly, Butler elongates the final vowel in "s:ay" and pauses briefly after that word, indicating that a human mic TRP may have been reached. Secondly, this line represents the beginning of an explanation to the question posed in lines 1 through 6, and therefore the "early part" of a sentence or proposition. As such, the typical format would predict a shorter rather than longer utterance before repetition. At the end of line 7, Butler says "I'm sorry" in recognition of a breakdown in the human mic caused by these factors. At this point, Butler incorporates more exaggerated physical cues into her role as speaker. In line 9, she repeats the utterance in its short form, ending at "say" and then immediately turns her back to the assembly, displaying next speaker selection of the human mic. In line 12, she turns again to face the assembly before delivering her

utterance. In line 14, she keeps her index finger extended during the duration of the utterance in order to hold the floor until its completion.

Butler's composite remarks appear on the website OccupyWriters.com, on which over 3000 well-known writers have posted pieces in support of the Occupy movement. Butler's page on this site features composite remarks from her Washington Square address. As can be seen in the detail of Butler's page in Figure 27, the formatting of the speech as it appears onscreen reflects the actual parsing used to deliver the address, along with the phrase "via human mic" at the top, after the place and date are given. It is interesting to note that the line that caused problems during delivery with the human mic appears in its short form on the web page.

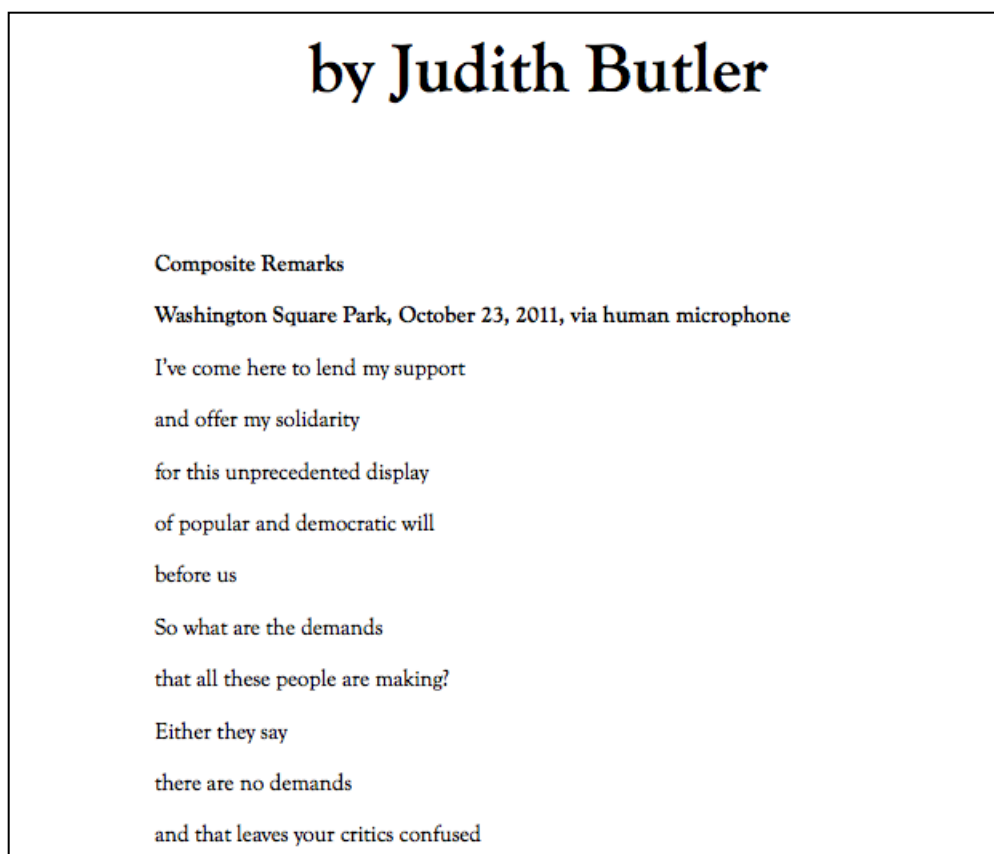


Figure 27. Detail from Butler's page on OccupyWriters.com that illustrates the way in which Butler's address was parsed for use with the human mic. (Butler 2011b)

4.3 Repetition, Not Mindless

Far from being a tool of mindless repetition which merely encourages parroting (and an assumed acceptance) of propositions, human amplifiers may, for instance, choose to change either grammatical or prosodic elements of the speaker's original utterance for humor; narrative point-of-view, i.e. first versus second person; emphasis; or even disagreement or doubt. Human amplifiers can also repair (correct) the utterance of a speaker who has misspoken in some way (Schegloff et al. 1977), expressing both agency and intersubjectivity. Irvine (1996:150) writes, "To animate another's voice gives one a marvelous opportunity to comment on it subtly—to shift its wording, exaggeratedly mimic its style, or supplement its expressive features." Thus, while generating solidarity and group cohesion, the people's mic also allows for the expression of listener assessment and personal agency. But although the repair of errors is welcomed, deletion or withholding of amplification for reasons of disagreement can be regarded as obstructionist.

Andrea Schmidt, producer of Al Jazeera English's *Fault Lines* writes:

Indeed, the ground rule for the human mic is that everyone must repeat everything that is said, regardless of whether or not you agree with it. In a group of hundreds (or thousands) deprived of megaphones and loudspeakers, it is required to hear anything at all, and thus required in order to be able disagree. So, the human mic seems to cultivate a kind of egalitarian attention to one another. (Schmidt 2011)

4.4 The Reification of Ratification

Perhaps the most salient aspect of the people's mic, however, is how it embodies and demonstrates the reification of ratification. Goffman describes the social encounter as involving "two or more persons in a social situation (who) jointly ratify one another as authorized cosustainers of a single, albeit moving, focus of visual and cognitive attention." This mutual ratification forms an "ecological huddle ... wherein participants orient to one another and away from those who are present in the situation but not officially in the encounter" (1964: 135).

Goodwin (2007b: 53) writes that the “organization of embodied participation frameworks, stance and affect” influence “how participants constitute themselves as particular kinds of social and moral actors.” At Occupy assemblies, there is a tacit understanding that anyone may step into the participation framework. A passer-by may instantaneously join the ecological huddle simply by orienting her body toward the assembly. However, during a stretch of action in which the people’s mic is being utilized, she may reify her ratification of both the speaker and the encounter by becoming a human amplifier. We cannot confuse ratification with endorsement, however. Allison Nevit writes:

If I choose who to amplify and who not to amplify, then I must expect that others will do the same. I also must expect, then, that it is possible that no one will amplify my voice when I want to speak. I really had to come to terms with the reality that amplification was not endorsement. (Nevit 2011: 59)

4.5 Mic Check

The call of “Mic check!” by an aspiring speaker can be used as a call for attention as well as ratification of both the speaker him or herself and the proposed ecological huddle. This first call could be considered a first pair part (Schegloff & Sacks 1973) to which the second pair part is a callback of “Mic check!” from the assembled or perhaps partly dispersed crowd. When this is the case, the speaker, having secured ratification, may then proceed to her announcement or message. In this sense the Mic Check, when used in this way, may be considered to function as a summoning paired exchange (Schegloff 1968), in that after the adjacency pair is performed (perhaps twice or three times to accommodate large open areas and groups of people), the communicative activity proceeds. This summoning adjacency pair mic check as call to assembly or proposed ecological huddle is perhaps necessitated more regularly in the process of assembling multi-party gatherings than in initiating dyadic conversation, where mutual focus and

auditory proximity could allow for greeting exchanges to make up the initial utterances of the conversation. This is not to say that the summons-response sequence or “attention-getting device” (Scheloff 1969:1080) is not common in dyadic conversation. Many examples exist, such as with terms of address, e.g. “Mr. Jones?” and courtesy phrases, e.g. “Pardon me” (Schegloff 1968:1080). Examples of physical summons (Schegloff’s *physical devices*) include, “a tap on the shoulder, waves of a hand” (1968:1080) or a look across a crowded room, in order to secure the potential interlocutor’s focus and assent to pursue conversation. Across wider physical spaces populated with numerous participants, however, this type of summoning sequence becomes indispensable in order to secure attention and ratification before the assembly can begin.

The summoning process constitutes a known procedure for securing the floor during assembly or other ecological huddles, such as outdoor committee meetings. The embodied performance of both personal and group agency in the immediacy and availability of call and response in group settings is a foundational practice of the human mic. Further detailed affordances of the human mic that occasion the performance of personal and group agency are illustrated below through a consideration of the difficulties with utterance production that its use sometimes poses.

Richard Kim writes that the human mic is “an egalitarian instrument” which provides a “horizontal acoustics of the crowd instead of the electrified intimacy of ‘amplified sound’” (Kim 2011). This contrast between “horizontal acoustics” and amplified sound points to the specific appeal of the people’s mic to a popular movement which claims to be responsive to diverse voices.



Figure 28. Mario Savio is tackled by police after approaching the microphone on stage at the Greek Theater, 1964.

In 1964, during a period of crisis between administration and student participants in the Free Speech movement at the University of California at Berkeley, the administration held a large event at the Greek Theater in which the University President and other representatives of the administration spoke from the podium. Mario Savio, an outspoken member of the student movement, famously approached the podium to speak before being tackled to the ground and escorted off the stage (“Berkeley in the 60s” 1990). The students claimed to have petitioned the administration to have someone among them speak at the forum but been denied. As the audience was largely comprised of students participating in free speech actions on campus, the use of the people’s mic (had it been practiced in its current form then) may have dramatically transformed this event, perhaps precluding the physical exclusion of Savio’s voice. Podiums and

microphones can be instruments of privilege which often signal a certain social capital and ratification from within a field of power.

The people's mic, conversely, offers a form of capital based on ratification through persons assembled in solidarity. This discursive resource allows for the amplification of both individual and group agency. This is especially evident in the alternate practice of "mic checking" a speaker or occasion as a form of direct action or protest. A more detailed discussion of the transitive and subversive practice of mic-checking is presented in a later section.

4.6 Repair – Agency in Amplification

An example in which the assembly acting as the human mic repair the performance or delivery of a speaker involves Joe, a speaker who struggles with the parsing of short phrases which the technique requires. In cases such as these, certain assembly participants or a Moderator might intervene, helping to parse the utterance in a way that will facilitate group uptake. In the following strip, ASM refers to the assembly members in general, that is, a large proportion of them. ASX refers to a single participant and ASY refers to another participant. Joe is speaking at the GA about the subject of the South Central Farm, a cooperative farm in Los Angeles that had been forcibly shut down several years before and which remained a salient issue and symbol for many Los Angelinos.

Excerpt 3 – Production troubles with the people’s mic

10 Joe: I would like ta ask,
 11 ASM: I would like to ask.
 12 Joe: If you would **modify number four,**
 13 ASM: If you would **modify number four,**
 14 Joe: South Central Farm to be returned to the people of Los Angeles.
 15 ASM: South Central Farm to be returned to the people of Los Angeles.
 16 Joe: And specify:: thad=is to be re- (*NSS gesture to assembly*)
 17 ASM: And specify:,
 18 Joe: Thad=is to be retu:rned, [to the people, of the communities,
 19 ASX: [that it is to be returned
 20 Joe: of Los Angeles, that had it before,
 21 ASY: =Mic check (*in distance*)
 22 ASX: thad=it (.) [people that had it before
 23 ASM: the communities of Los Angel[es that had it before

#4



18 Joe: Thad=is to be retu:rned, [to the people, of the communities,
 19 ASX: [that it is to be returned
 20 Joe: of Los Angeles, that had it be↑fore,
 21 ASY: =Mic check (*in distance*)
 22 ASX: thad=it (.) [people that had it before
 23 ASM: the communities of Los Angel[es that had it before

Joe’s inability to stop his utterance at the evident TRP (transition relevance place) (Sacks et al. 1974) for the use of the human mic in line 18 causes a cascade of difficulty throughout the sequence. ASX attempts to address this problem in line 19 by repeating the first part of Joe’s utterance in line 18, in order to make it available to the assembly for repetition. However, instead of taking this cue from ASX and beginning line 20 with “to the people”, Joe proceeds with “of Los Angeles, that had it before”, effectively skipping over part of the sequence entirely. At this point, ASY comes in with “Mic check” in an attempt to communicate the incomprehensibility of

the current sequence for assembly members. This use of the mic check is as a call for attention to the communicative breakdown that is taking place. At this point ASX tries again in line 22 to help parse and clarify Joe's utterances. However, after an initial malformed "thad=it" followed by a pause, the entire assembly (ASM) in line 23 reformulates a coherent utterance on its own, the latter part of which overlaps ASX's further attempt at reformulation. This example shows how individual participants, in performing as human mics and thereby ratifying Joe's participation, also assert their own agency as responsive listeners and affiliative co-participants. In turn, these actions taken individually support the communicative project of the group and perform group agency as a self-repairing communicative system.

Another, and very different, use of the human mic is applied when a current speaker cannot be heard by one or many participant listener(s) in the assembly either because of ambient noise, the speaker's vocal volume, or chatter in the crowd. This type is seen above in the example of Joe's human mic breakdown. The call of "Mic check!" is used by one or more listeners to alert the speaker that s/he is not being heard or to encourage other participants to orient to the speaker. This form replaces the use of common imperatives/directives like Pay attention! Speak up! or Quiet! or simply to alert the speaker that there is a considerable comprehension problem. By using the mic check in this way, a listener can signal his or her need to hear the speaker without the use of a possibly commanding or demanding register. The neutrality of this request form reinforces the egalitarian and horizontal structures of the assembly while providing a recognizable action that augments listener agency in participation.

Goffman (1981:140) warns that the array of participation frameworks to be discovered in various "podium events" (recreational, congregational, and binding) will be "different from, and additional to, the one generic to conversation." Indeed the human mic adds significant

complexity to the participation framework of the Occupy General Assembly. The many practices of the people's mic provide an opportunity to explore the participant roles introduced by Goffman (1981:145) in novel ways as they relate to questions of how and when participants are Animator/Author/Principal/etc. and what implications these possibly novel combinations have for the composition of the production format of an utterance or strip of action, as well as the building of group solidarity and intersubjectivity. Nevit describes the experience of amplifying a proposition that she strongly disagreed with:

By allowing this unappealing voice to be heard in full, I was also signaling to the person who spoke, that he would have to amplify the voices of those with whom he did not agree. He would have to let those voices into his body. We would all embody all of it together and have faith that the full experience would be beneficial.

(Nevit 2011: 59)

By letting voices into the body (even disagreeable ones), a group embodiment takes place, which reinforces group solidarity, cohesion, and intersubjectivity among participants. Simultaneously, while the official role of a human mic is to be a Sounding Box (Goffman 1981:14), the action allows for embeddings and laminations of Animator, Author, and Principal, which give rise to complex participant roles.

4.7 Orienting to the Monitor: Cathy's Story

The human mic, through its practices of participation and mutual embodiment, represents the reification of ratification. In contrast to this, the police officer as Monitor/Bystander, though within the visual and aural range of the GA, is decidedly apart from it, and remains unrati- fied as a general rule. A presence may be oriented to while being unrati- fied, and messages may be directed toward it while simultaneously broadcasting unwillingness to receive. Though this

presence is oriented to, it remains unratiſed. And yet there is a *performance of resistance* which necessitates the presence of the Monitor/Inspector whether virtually or physically co-present. In fact, however, the friction between performing resistance and engaging in a prefigurative politics was often felt by participants.

Goffman (1981: 132) writes that bystanders are the rule rather than the exception. That is, that overhearing and seeing others' talk and action is an everyday occurrence. When this happens without specific effort, these are overhearers. Those who "surreptitiously exploit the accessibility they find they have" are eavesdroppers "not dissimilar to those who secretly listen in on conversations electronically." He points out, however, that physically co-present non-ratiſed persons generally observe an etiquette of bystanders by:

...practicing the situational ethic which obliges us to warn those who are, that they are, unknowingly accessible, obliging us also to enact a show of disinterest, and by disattending and withdrawing ecologically to minimize out actual access to the talk.

(Goffman 1981:132)

No such etiquette is realized in the case of the physically co-present Monitor. Like a visually available eavesdropper, the physical Monitor is known and oriented to as attending to all of the talk and action of ratiſed participants. Further, the physical Monitor provides a physical embodiment of state interest in the actions of the participants.

Goodwin (1996) describes how a *prospective indexical* enables hearers to both align to a story in an appropriate fashion and monitor the story progression for the salient action or projected event. The story to be analyzed here takes place at the General Assembly on December 1, 2011, the night after the raid and eviction of the encampment at OLA. It is estimated that 292 people were arrested on or near City Hall on the night of the police raid. As a result of the recent prior events, this GA was different in a number of ways. The first and most obvious of these is the geographical space in which it took place. After police had forcibly cleared City Hall

(Solidarity) Park, a high fence was erected immediately which prevented any and all outside access to the entire south side of the property, including the south lawn and south plaza.

The south lawn had been the regular meeting place for the General Assembly since the beginning of the encampment. Its wide space and open plaza surrounded by grass, trees, tents, and multiple footpaths had been conducive to the operations of the GA. However, on November 25, 2011, when Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa announced the impending eviction of OLA, he designated a “Free Speech area on the Spring Street City Hall steps” (Villaraigosa 2011:1). This area along Spring Street is on the west side of the City Hall building, and is often referred to as “the west steps.”

Having no access to the south lawn after the raid and appearance of high fencing, participants began conducting the GA in this “free speech area,” despite the fact that many found the notion of a *free speech area* both absurd and deeply insulting. In the first week after the raid the police presence was extremely high in and around the west steps and Spring Street.

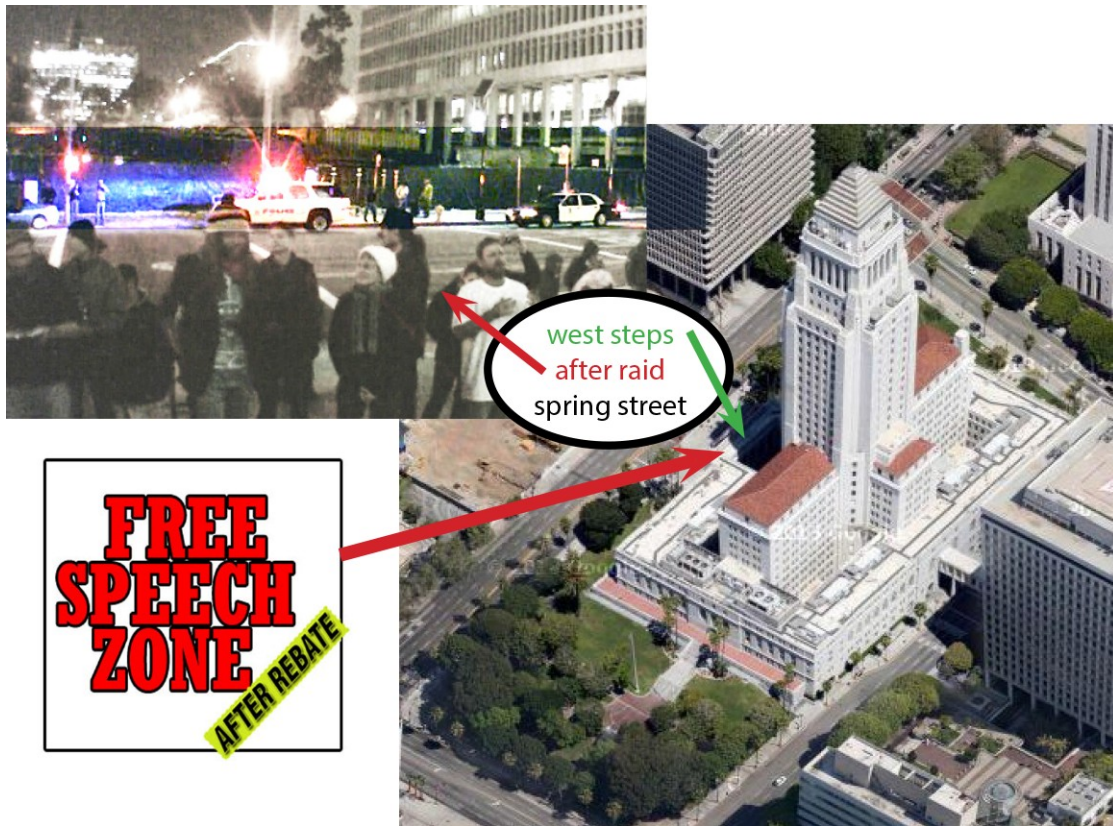


Figure 29. LA City Hall. West steps "free speech area."

Police vehicles (sedans, SUVs, motorcycles) were stationed along both the east and west sides of Spring Street, and several uniformed officers stood at the top of the west steps. Though this area had been declared an official *free speech area*, most participants attested to feeling intimidated by the standing Monitors and those in vehicles, who often ran their sirens with no discernable provocation, preventing participants from hearing the speakers at the GA.

The architecture of the west side of the Los Angeles City Hall building has three platform levels and five arches at the top of the top platform. The standing Monitors positioned themselves by twos under each archway, generally making a total of ten officers stationed under the arches. This particular configuration had interactive consequences in terms of the storytelling

that is analyzed here. By remaining in place throughout the course of the GA, these standing Monitors were able to hear and watch the unfolding action of the GA, and were also visually available to the GA participants, who were seated and standing across all the lower portions of the west steps, including the sidewalk steps, and both lower platforms.



Figure 30. West steps platforms and arches.

In addition to the location being new, the GA in the days immediately following the raid were markedly different in format. Committees, such as Legal/Bail Committee, spent a considerable amount of time making announcements, people were searched for, court support was solicited, and arrest stories were told. The section of the GA in which the narrative below emerges is during a period when participants have been invited to tell their very fresh arrest stories. As might be imagined, the stories that emerged during this activity were of a generally disfavorable nature, often including reportings of brutality, deception, and unlawful acts on the part of law enforcement.

The activity of telling arrest stories is one that has a history within civil struggle and protest movements. A 2012 post on the Oregon Indymedia website calls for submissions of arrest stories that will be compiled in a zine (short form independent magazine) and made available to the public. The post explains that:

The purpose of this project is not to minimize the traumatic nature of arrest, but rather to demystify the process. It is often easier to face a terrible event knowing what to expect rather than guessing. Fear of arrest is often a dissuading factor from acting on one's desires, and I wish to foster a climate where anarchists, nihilists, communists, and other rabble-rousers can be more comfortable acting on our desires after having adequately prepared for what is an inevitable consequence of resisting Power. (Portland Indymedia 2012)

As the Indymedia project is one for publication, and could involve any type of arrest in any number of contexts, rather than arrest storytelling in face-to-face interaction among a group arrested at the same time and in the same context, its aims and effects are somewhat different. However, one central feature is shared – that of providing comfort and comradeship, and thus increasing a sense of solidarity.

Participants are encouraged to tell details of their arrest experience to their co-participants to accomplish several goals. The first of these is to attempt to unburden the individual and reinforce solidarity. The experience of arrest can be physically and emotionally shocking and disorienting, and arrestees can come away from the experience with an internalized sense of fear and shame. Ochs and Capps (1996) write:

The narrated past matters because of its relation to the present and the future. Interlocutors tell personal narratives about the past primarily to understand and cope with current concerns...(I)n the course of their telling, portions of narratives may provoke interlocutors' concerns about the present and future. (Ochs and Capps 1996: 25)

It is important to keep in mind on this point that an arrest is merely the beginning of a longer personal involvement with the criminal justice system, which has implications for future freedom, incarceration, and financial, personal, and possibly medical consequences.

The practice of arrest storytelling projects group support for the individual and provides an interactive frame in which other participants can signal understanding, support and solidarity through the use of verbal and physical action. The second attested purpose for the telling of arrest stories is to expose the practices of law enforcement and by extension the state's stance toward the participants and their goals or messages. This is part of the many practices of exposition within protest movements to unveil and make plain the coercive strategies of the state and the inevitable inconsistencies within state systems of justice. Thus the genre of arrest stories is conformed to and further elaborated by the tellings at the GA on this night. In this sense, the opening line of the following story, "I was arrested," already serves as a prospective indexical, along with the prior sequences in which other arrest stories were told.

4.7.1 Interexperience and Intertelling

As discussed above, one important reason for the practice of arrest storytelling is in generating group support for the individual and providing an interactive frame in which others can display support and solidarity. This practice, in conjunction with the use of the human mic, amplifies this effect. Tannen (1987:584) writes that:

(R)epetition serves an over-arching need for interpersonal involvement. Such involvement may be identified with what Goffman (1967:73), building on Durkheim's 1915 notion of positive and negative rites, called 'presentational deterrence,' through which the recipient is told that he is not an island unto himself and that others are- or seek to be, involved with him and with his personal private concerns.' (Tannen 1987:584)

The highly co-constructed aspect of discourse among participants using the human mic can be heightened within specific communicative projects undertaken by the speaker. One example of this is when the speaker is engaged in a narrative that the assembled participants can not only understand, but can identify with in profound ways, having had similar or nearly identical experiences in the recent past. In this type of situation, participants animating the speaker as the human mic can perform embodied gestural, gaze, and prosodic transformations onto the speaker's utterance during repetition in order to insert themselves into the force of the narrative. This was the case in the first nights in early December 2011, just after the police raid and break-up of the encampment. The arrest narratives delivered at the following GAs by participants recently released from jail shared such emotional and descriptive similarities as to be mutually inhabitable by speaker and participants. These stories can be said to have been *intertold* through the stories' realized participant roles, the shared experience of the story-tellers, and the special interactive resource of the people's mic.

The term interexperience is used here to refer to that mutual inhabitation which exceeds that of understanding and is more rare than intersubjectivity in its strict sense as a precondition for human relation. If intersubjectivity is the primary condition for action and communication within the world, and understanding may be observed according to a next relevant action, interexperience represents not only reciprocal action but action in unison, which is informed by and informs the same set of conditions. Upon hearing an arrest story told by individual A, individual B may understand, more or less, the nature of the story as it is told sequentially. If, however, both parties have recently undergone the same experience, and then tell the story together, it can be said to be an *intertold* story. The force of the stance of the story is very much a

mutual product. The human mic, as an interactive tool for group communication, can both facilitate and amplify this phenomenon.

4.7.2 “So don’t be an asshole”

The following story, told by Cathy, was realized as an interexperienced, intertold narrative that orients to the Monitor. The Monitors in this case are the police officers standing under the arches at the top platform of the City Hall building. Although reviewing a prose transcription of the story provides some information of the story’s narrative content, reviewing only such a plain textual representation would never adequately illustrate the way in which the storytelling was co-constructed by participants. A prose transcription of Cathy’s story (without the utterances produced by the human mics) is given below. Her mention of “mic checking” refers to a different practice of the human mic that will be detailed below.

Excerpt 4 – Cathy’s story in prose transcription without the human mic

Cathy:

I was arrested, and detained, on the bus. On the bus there were about four women whose cuffs were too tight. There were a couple men. The same thing. Some of them were being cut by the cuffs. Shawna passed out from the pain and discomfort. They mistreated her when they were taking her off the bus. She was incoherent, and they dragged her from the bus, told her to stand up and walk off. When we told the deputies we had an 80-year-old woman whose handcuffs were too tight, one of the assholes said she should have stayed her 80-year-old ass at home, and we mic-checked his ass, telling him, that under California state law, every law enforcement agency

has to have a formal complaint process for citizens. And every complaint has to be investigated, and every complaint has to stay on the officer's record for five years. We also told him that we could send a complaint to the District Attorney's office, to the Grand Jury, and to the State Attorney General's office. I also told him that Councilmember Bill Rosenthal gave me his personal cell phone number and told me if we were mistreated to call him personally and he would get our complaints in front of Charlie Beck and Sheriff Baca. He apologized to the eighty-year-old woman... So don't be an asshole.

This form of the narrative certainly contains very rich and disturbing experiential information, and much could be said about the story in this form. However, this form is not how the story actually emerged, and leaves out entirely the intertold aspect as well as the fact that nearly the entire story was oriented to the standing Monitors under the arches.

The assembled triptych below illustrates the local ecology in which this arrest story was produced. The bottom panel shows Cathy and other OLA participants standing on the platform facing east, looking toward the arches. The middle panel shows the formation of the police officers under the arches as they were actually standing during the storytelling. The top panel shows another angle of the west steps at City Hall. Cathy's cutout silhouette indicates her position on the platform that night, and the red arrows indicate both her line of sight and the positions of the officers under the arches.



Figure 31. Cathy's line of sight. The arrows indicate participants' gazes and the positions of officers stationed on the platform.

The extract below contains a transcription of Cathy's arrest story as it was intertold through the use of the human mic. Cathy describes how she was arrested during the raid and subsequently put on a bus with other arrestees. She details the mistreatment she witnessed as well as her response to it during her detainment. As this story took place soon after the raid, conditions between Occupy participants and police were highly strained. Further, the story itself is highly critical of the performance of certain officers. Nevertheless, as Cathy and the assembly told her story together using the human mic, standing on the platform just above them, uniformed police officers were stationed on foot monitoring the proceedings. The officers had visual and audible access to the assembly. Through the use of gaze and vocal intensity by the human mic participants, Cathy's story takes on a group force.

The preponderance of all capital font in some sections of the transcript below is used to indicate the especially loud, screaming, and pointedly delivered sections of the story. This is an effect far beyond the usual vocal projection employed by participants at the GA and is directly related to the story's intended audience: the standing Monitors under the arches.

Excerpt 5 – Cathy's story intertold – complete narrative

1. Cathy: Um I was arres^te:d
2. Assem: I was arrested
3. Cathy: uh a: a: and detai:ned [[>]on the bus[<]
4. Assem: [and detained on the bus.
5. Cathy: um on the bus there were about fOUr wOmEn,
6. Assem: on the bus there were about four women,
7. Cathy: whose cuffs were too tight=
8. Assem: =whose cuffs were too tight,
9. Cathy: there were a couple men,
10. Assem: there were a couple men.
11. Cathy: the same thing
12. Assem: the same thing
13. Cathy: Some of them were being cu:t (.) by the cuffs,
14. Assem: Some of them were being cut by the cuffs.
15. Cathy: Shelly,
16. Assem: Shelly,
17. Cathy: passed out
18. Assem: passed out
19. Cathy: from the pain
20. Assem: from the pain
21. Cathy: and discomfort.
22. Assem: and discomfort.
23. Cathy: They mistreated her,
24. Assem: They mistrEAted her.
25. Cathy: When they were takin her off the bus,
26. Assem: When they were takin her off the bus,
27. Cathy: She was incoherent,
28. Assem: She was incoherent,
29. Cathy: and they dragged her from the bus,
30. Assem: and they dragged her from the bus.
31. Cathy: Told her ta stand up an' walk off,
32. Assem: Told her ta stand up an' walk off,
33. Cathy: When we told tha: tha: deputies,
34. Assem: When we told the deputies,
35. Cathy: That (.) we had an eighty-year-old woman,

- 36. Assem: That we had an eighty-year-old woman,
- 37. Cathy: whose handcuffs were too tight,
- 38. Assem: whose handcuffs were too tight,
- 39. Cathy: ONE A' THE A:SSHO:LES,
- 40. Assem: ONE A' THE A:SSHO:LES.
- 41. Cathy: SAI:D,
- 42. Assem: SAID
- 43. Cathy: SHE SHOULD HAVE STAYED HER EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD ASS AT HO:ME,



- 44. Assem: SHE SHOULD HAVE STAYED HER EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD ASS AT HO:ME,
- 45. Cathy: AN WE MIC-CHECKED
- 46. Assem: AN WE MIC-CHECKED
- 47. Cathy: HIS A:SS
- 48. Assem: HIS ASS
- 49. Cathy: TELLING HI:M
- 50. Assem: TELLING HIM
- 51. Cathy: >THAT UNDER CALIFORNIA STATE LA:W<
- 52. Assem: >THAT UNDER CALIFORNIA STATE LA:W<
- 53. Cathy: <EVERY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY:>
- 54. Assem: <EVERY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY:>
- 55. Cathy: HASTA HA::VE,
- 56. Assem: HASTA HA::VE,
- 57. Cathy: A FORMA:L,
- 58. Assem: A FORMA:L,
- 59. Cathy: COMPLAI:NT,
- 60. Assem: COMPLAI:NT,
- 61. Cathy: (.) prOcEss
- 62. Assem: process,
- 63. Cathy: for cItlzE:ns.
- 64. Assem: for cItlzE:ns.
- 65. Cathy: An' every complAI:NT,
- 66. Assem: An' every complAI:NT.
- 67. Cathy: HASTa be INVSTIGATED,
- 68. Assem: HAS to be INVSTIGATED,

69. Cathy: An' every complAI:NT,
70. Assem: An' every complAI:NT,
71. Cathy: HASTa STA:Y,
72. Assem: HASTa STA:Y,
73. Cathy: ON THE OFFICER'S RECO:RD
74. Assem: ON THE OFFICER'S RECO:RD,
75. Cathy: FOR FI:VE YEA:RS.
76. Assem: FOR FI:VE YEA:RS.
77. Cathy: (.) WE ALSO TOLD HI:M
78. Assem: WE ALSO TOLD HI:M
79. Cathy: that we could SEND the COMPLAI:NT,
80. Assem: that we could send the complaint,
81. Cathy: to the District Attorney's OFFI:CE,
82. Assem: to the District Attorney's office
83. Cathy: to the GRAND JU:RY,
84. Assem: to the GRAND JU:RY,
85. Cathy: and to the STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE.
86. Assem: and to the STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE.
87. Cathy: I ALSO TOLD HI:M,
88. Assem: I ALSO TOLD HI:M,
89. Cathy: that COUNCILMEMBE:R,
90. Assem: that COUNCILMEMBE:R,
91. Cathy: BILL ROSENDA:HL,
92. Assem: BILL ROSENDA:HL,
93. Cathy: GAVE ME::,
94. Assem: GAVE ME::,
95. Cathy: HIS PERSONAL CELL PHONE NUMBE:R
96. Assem: HIS PERSONAL CELL PHONE NUMBE:R
97. Cathy: AN' TO:LD ME::,
98. Assem: AN' TO:LD ME::,
99. Cathy: IF WE WERE MISTREA:TED,
100. Assem: IF WE WERE MISTREA:TED,
101. Cathy: TO CA:LL HI:M,



102. Assem: TO CA:LL HI:M,
103. Cathy: PERSONALLY::,
104. Assem: PERSONALLY::,

105. Cathy: an' HE WOU:LD,
 106. Assem: an' HE WOU:LD,
 107. Cathy: get our comPLAI:NTS,
 108. Assem: get our complaints,
 109. Cathy: in fronta Chrlie BE:CK,



110. Assem: **in FRONTA CHARLIE BECK,**
 111. Cathy: an' chie- an' sh an' Sheriff BACA,
 112. Assem: an Sheriff Baca,
 113. Cathy: He APOLIGI:ZED.
 114. Assem: He APOLIGI:ZED.
 115. Cathy: TA THE EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD WOMA:N,
 116. Assem: TA THE EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD WOMA:N,
 117. Cathy: I won't take any more time=I'll write about it or UStream about it
 118. Brett: [tell 'em tell em yeah
 119. Cathy: [when you guys (are)
 120. Brett: Tell 'em yeah so don't be an asshole.
 121. Cathy: Yeah, so don't be an asshole.
 122. Assem: DON'T BE AN ASSHOLE. (*applause*) Woo.

The intertelling of the story becomes especially salient at line 39, where the volume and force of the story increases dramatically. In line 43, as Cathy delivers the verbal offense reported speech of the officer in the story, the surrounding participants begin staring intently, glaring at the Monitors under the arches. As the human mics repeat her utterance in line 44, they shout in the same direction. This continues throughout most of the retelling, with three more especially forceful and directional moments. At lines 102 and 103, Cathy reveals she has an open invitation to call a City Councilmember. This pulling of rank and stating of legitimating connections is oriented toward the Monitors. By line 110, Cathy has started to lose energy and force in her delivery. However, she invokes the name of the Chief of Police. The assembly recycles this

utterance with added force and again a focus toward the officers. The last extremely forceful line in the story is line 122, in which the assembly delivers an admonition to the Monitors. Cathy's prior delivery of this utterance in line 121 had also been relatively quieter, but the assembly uses this line to exert great force toward the Monitors at the end of the sequence.

This examination reveals a considerable use of the embodied practice of the human mic. Tannen (1987:576) writes that, "each time a word or phrase is repeated, its meaning is altered. The audience reinterprets the meaning of the word or phrase in light of the accretion, juxtaposition, or expansion; thus it participates in making meaning of the utterances." By turning and emphatically refocusing their gazes while also animating Cathy's utterance and authoring its new accumulating illocution, participants made the police officers the audience members, recipients, and targets of the story in progress. The mic in this case can be said to have achieved an extraordinary quality of solidarity that is pitched against a present recipient or group of recipients. This intersubjective and unison co-action exemplifies the interexperience achieved during Cathy's narrative.

4.7.3 Transitive Mic Check and Participation Frameworks

A pointed and often group-directed way of using the human mic is typically found in the process of "mic -checking" a speaking event, place of business, or situation in which participants seek to either interrupt or assert agency and messages into the ongoing course of action. This type of "mic-checking" is a very different practice from the mic check as summons. The mic check as summons and response (discussed in section 4.5) can be thought of as intransitive (as a phrasal verb). That is, a summons and response are performed: the first speaker does *not* "mic check the assembly" but rather *performs* a mic check or summons and the assembly responds.

There is another type of mic check that is not a summons but rather a type of directed dressing down and floor stealing in which the group directs the power of the human mic toward a targeted speaker. This type of transitive use of the mic check, as in “to mic check X” (with X most typically being a political official, ‘authority,’ or person displaying violence or aggression) is distinguished by its adversarial stance toward the selected occasion, place, or speaker. This mic check is *aimed at radically altering the participation framework* at a scheduled event or in a place of business. This use of the mic check is often employed to assert power toward a privileged speaker or actor in situations where steep power asymmetries are perceived. Cathy’s story contains a reported example of just such a mic check.

Excerpt 6 – Cathy’s story - reported mic check

- 45. Cathy: AN’ WE MIC-CHECKED
- 46. Assem: AN’ WE MIC-CHECKED
- 47. Cathy: HIS A:SS
- 48. Assem: HIS ASS
- 49. Cathy: TELLING HI:M
- 50. Assem: TELLING HIM
- 51. Cathy: >THAT UNDER CALIFORNIA STATE LA:W<
- 52. Assem: >THAT UNDER CALIFORNIA STATE LA:W<
- 53. Cathy: <EVERY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY:>
- 54. Assem: <EVERY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY:>
- 55. Cathy: HAS TO HA::VE,
- 56. Assem: HAS TO HA::VE,
- 57. Cathy: A FORMA:L,
- 58. Assem: A FORMA:L,
- 59. Cathy: COMPLAI:NT,
- 60. Assem: COMPLAI:NT,
- 61. Cathy: (.) process
- 62. Assem: process,
- 63. Cathy: for citize:ns.
- 64. Assem: for citize:ns.

In this sequence, which continues to line 112, the arrestees on the bus repeated a speaker in order to elevate agency and solidarity. Through the use of the transitive mic check, the

arrestees were able to shift the participation framework and thus the power relationships on the bus. Goodwin (1990: 239) writes that, “The distinctive structural properties of a *story* can be used to restructure the social organization of an emerging argument.” As mentioned above, tensions between police and OLA participants were palpable on this night, and yet direct confrontation with police was avoided by OLA participants. This storytelling “expands the participation framework” as it recruits recipients into the story (Goodwin 1990: 239) The story ends with the apology of the deputy who had (allegedly) made the offensive comment.

Excerpt 7 – Cathy’s story – deputy’s reported apology

113. Cathy: He APOLIGI:ZED.
114. Assem: He APOLIGI:ZED.
115. Cathy: TO THE EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD WOMA:N,
116. Assem: TO THE EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD WOMA:N,

Following this, participant Brett suggests in line 120 that Cathy conclude her story with a moral by providing the linguistic material of the utterance. This additional element adds to the intertold nature of the narrative as it is realized among participants. The participant roles of Author, Principal, and Animator are shared and flexible. Two additional points should be highlighted here in lines 120 and 122.

Excerpt 8 – Cathy’s story – admonishing the Monitors

120. Brett: Tell ‘em yeah so don’t be an asshole.
121. Cathy: Yeah (.) so don’t be an asshole.
122. Assem: DON’T BE AN ASSHOLE. ((*applause and cheers*))Woo.

Line 120 verifies the substance of the prior emphatic gazes toward the police officers as recipients and brings into linguistic form that the audience for this story has indeed been the police officers. The word “them” expressed as “em” clearly refers to the police standing at the

top of the stairs and not the assembled OLA participants. The “moral” of the story constitutes an admonition for police to behave humanely toward arrestees. Finally in line 122, the volume and intensity of the repeated utterance is far higher than the original utterance it is repeating (line 121). Cathy does not shout in line 121, but rather speaks it at a normal volume, whereas the human mic participants take this opportunity to transform this final story line into an explosive and forceful utterance. In this case, the human mic was especially well-suited, and indeed, crafted to the communicative project of the intertold arrest narrative. Goodwin (1990: 248) describes how, “By shifting the conversational activity from a contest of challenges to *stories about contests of challenges*,” a speaker can “provide an elaborated instancing” of his opponent’s character and encourage visible participation from recipients. The story that Cathy tells is one of mic-checking a particular police officer, but the intertelling, through the use of the human mic by the assembly, becomes in itself a type of admonition to the police officers monitoring the GA from the platform. Thus, the transitivity of the mic check in the story is transferred to the occasion of the telling, creating interexperiential laminations among the storytellers and mic-checkers.

The mic checking that took place on that bus among arrestees toward the deputy who had made the callous remark consisted in Cathy delineating her knowledge of the laws and procedures of California dealing with law enforcement, as well as her attested personal connections to powerful persons in City government. She performed each parsed utterance and the other arrestees on the bus repeated each segment in turn. This is what allegedly eventually caused an apology from the deputy, thus, even for a short time, altering the perceived power structure and participant roles within that situation.

4.7.4 Subversive mic checking at formal events

The subversive (and transitive) mic check challenges the current speaker and often the event itself, and is often performed with a prepared written or agreed-upon statement. To mic check a speaker who possesses significant political, economic, or cultural capital is to demonstrate the capital available among persons assembled in solidarity. The performance of such a subversive mic check at a formal event instigates a clash between communicative genres and their social and political implications. Members of the audience, by using the transitive subversive mic check, self-select as speakers, gaining floor time and garnering attention.

4.7.4.1 Occupy New Hampshire Mic Checks Obama

On November 22, 2011, Obama was delivering his “American Jobs Act” speech in New Hampshire, when participants from Occupy New Hampshire (ONH) initiated a mic check. Business Insider’s Zeke Miller reported, “About 3 minutes into his speech at Manchester Central High School, one person shouted ‘Mic Check’ which was echoed by several voices” (Miller 2011) Video footage of this event is available from LeakSourceArchive’s YouTube channel. As seen in the still images below, Obama was stationed at a podium with many people standing behind him facing his back, as has become commonplace during political addresses. A description of the positioning of OHN participants in the hall in preparation for the mic check was posted to the ONH website: “ONH protesters were spread out throughout the crowd. The plan was to Mic Check Obama before he got into his main speech” (ONH 2011).

The mic check was performed vocally with one participant leading and the others repeating. As the initial calls of mic check rung out, two women standing behind Obama (visible in the image below to his left and right) can be seen gazing in the direction of one of the sources of the sound. In the extract below, OBM represents Obama, SPK represents the “leading”

speaker of the mic check, that is, the individual who utters each line for repetition by the other Occupy New Hampshire participants (LeakSource Archive 2011). The group of Occupy New Hampshire participants is represented as ONH. The lines of the Occupy New Hampshire Speaker (SPK) as well as the group acting as human mic (ONH) are in blue font. Members of Obama's audience are represented as AUD, and are in red font.

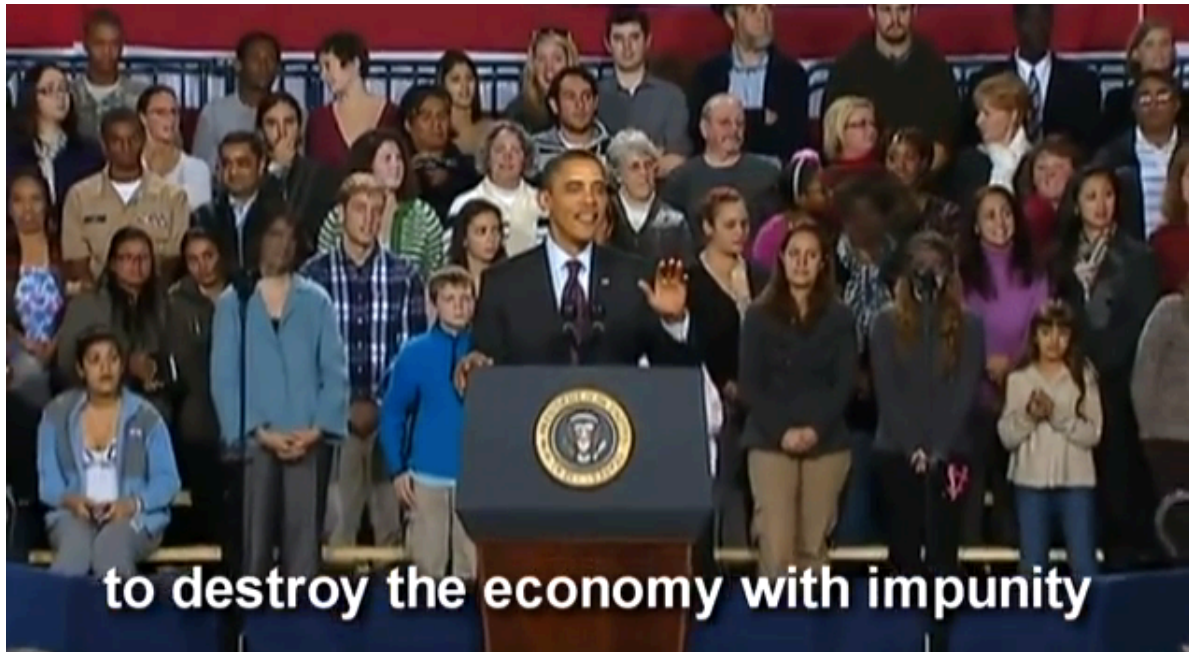
Excerpt 9 – ONH mic checks Obama

1. OBM: Well (.) before I came to school today I had- (.) u::hh
2. SPK: Mic Check!
3. OBM: [I had (.) coffee
4. ONH: [Mic Check!



5. SPK: Mic Check!
6. ONH: Mic Check!
7. SPK: Mr. President,
8. ONH: Mr. President
9. SPK: Over 4,000 peaceful protesters
10. ONH: Over 4,000 peaceful protesters
11. SPK: have been arrested
12. AUD: [FIRED UP, READY TO GO.
13. ONH: [have been arrested
14. SPK: While banksters continue

- 15. AUD: [FIRED UP, READY TO GO.
- 16. ONH: [While banksters continue
- 17. SPK: to destroy the economy with impunity
- 18. AUD: [FIRED UP, READY TO GO.
- 19. ONH: [to destroy the economy with impunity



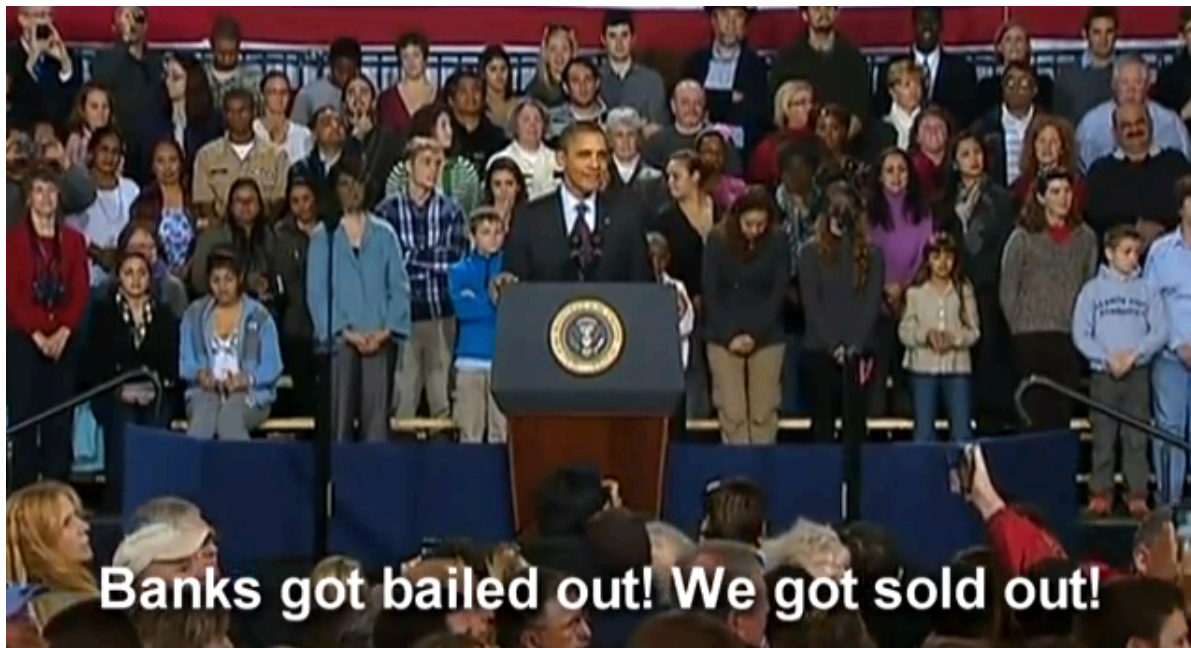
- 20. SPK: You must stop the assault
- 21. AUD: [FIRED UP, READY TO GO.
- 21. ONH: [You must stop the assault
- 22. OBM: Alrigh-
- 23. AUD: [FIRED UP, READY TO GO.
- 24. SPK: [on our 1st amendment rights
- 25. OBM: No-nu-nuh- it's OK.
- 26. AUD: [FIRED UP, READY TO GO. FIRED UP, READY TO GO.
- 27. OBM: [It's OK.
- 28. ONH: [on our 1st amendment rights



- 29. AUD: [FIRED UP, READY TO GO. FIRED UP, READY TO GO.]
- 30. SPK: [Your silence sends a message]
- 31. OBM: Alrigh-
- 32. ONH: [Your silence sends a message]
- 33. AUD: [FIRED UP, READY TO GO. FIRED UP, READY TO GO.]



34. OBM: OK guys.
 35. AUD: [FIRED UP, READY TO GO. FIRED UP, READY TO GO.
 36. SPK: [that police brutality is acceptable
 37. AUD: [FIRED UP, READY TO GO. FIRED UP, READY TO GO.
 38. ONH: [that police brutality is acceptable
 39. OBM: That's OK.
 40. AUD: [O-BA-MA! O-BA-MA! O-BA-MA!
 41. SPK: [Banks got bailed out! We got sold out!
 42. AUD: [O-BA-MA! O-BA-MA! O-BA-MA!
 43. ONH: [Banks got bailed out! We got sold out!
 44. AUD: O-BA-MA! O-BA-MA! O-BA-MA!



Occupy New Hampshire protesters were spread out throughout the crowd. Their plan was to mic check Obama before he got into his main American Jobs Act speech (ONH 2011). The full text of the message appears below:

Mic Check! Mic Check!
 Mr. President,
 Over 4,000 peaceful protesters
 have been arrested
 While banksters continue
 to destroy the economy with impunity
 You must stop the assault
 on our 1st amendment rights
 Your silence sends a message

that police brutality is acceptable
Banks got bailed out! We got sold out!
(Occupy New Hampshire 2011)

After the speech, an Occupy NH participant was able to hand the President a slip of paper upon which the text of the mic check was written. Figure 32 is a detail of that image in which the text can be seen in Obama's hand.

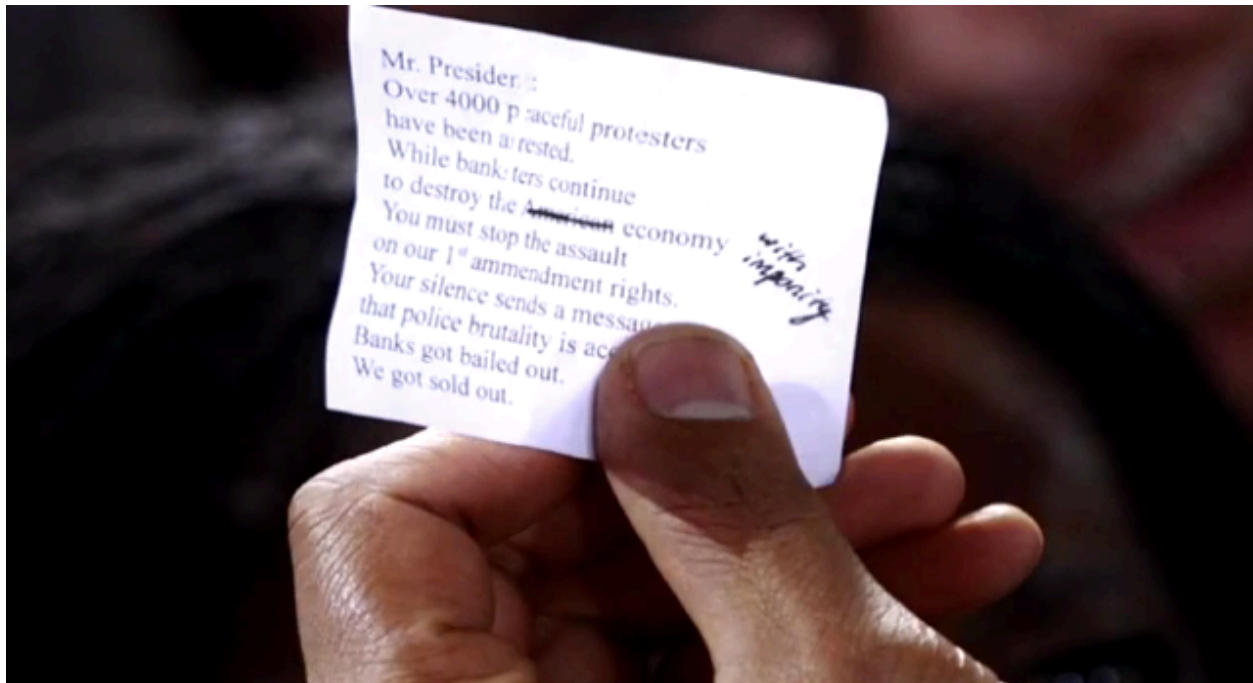


Figure 32. Occupy NH mic check text in Obama's hand.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXUYmIbLJ-U>.

4.7.4.2 Mic Checking the Mayor

This type of subversive mic checking does not always require a large group, however. It has been performed numerous times by small groups within large gatherings and even by single individuals. Such was the case during a November 25, 2011 press conference in which Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa announced the intention to shut down the Occupy Los Angeles encampment. Prior to this press conference, the OLA General Assembly had created a group-

authored document entitled *The General Assembly's Response to the City of Los Angeles*, which responded to mounting pressures from city officials to evacuate City Hall Park. In the following excerpt (video data from Axismundipost 2011a) MAY represents Mayor Villaraigosa and OLP represents the individual OLA participant who mic-checks the Mayor.



Figure 33. An OLA participant mic-checks Mayor Villaraigosa during the November 25, 2011 press conference announcement of the impending eviction of the OLA encampment.

Excerpt 10 – OLA participant mic checks Mayor Villaraigosa

1. MAY: Today, (.) I am announcing, that City Hall Park will close, on Monday,
2. November twenty-eighth, at twelve oh one a.m. -
3. OLP: MIC CHECK. The General Assembly's Response to the City of Los
4. Angeles. Para Todos Todo, Para Nosotros Nada. For Everyone
5. Everything, for Us, Nothing. As a collective, Occupy Los Angeles would
6. like to express their rejection of the City of Los Angeles' alleged proposal
7. that we leave City Hall by November twenty-eighth, 2011...

In this example, there is no actual human mic, no repetition of the speaker who interrupts the Mayor's announcement. Rather, the call of "MIC CHECK" serves as an invocation of the

participants outside on the lawn of City Hall who were denied access to the pressroom. Many of these participants were monitoring the proceedings from outside City Hall via a live FM radio feed. Even without the repetition, this interruption of a powerful figure’s amplification capital radically altered the participation framework during the press conference. Thus, mic checking is not simply about having a larger number of participants – even a small group or individual in a given setting can find alternative amplification with this practice. Still, the capital of this type of mic-check is nevertheless dependent on a perceived valid connection between the mic-checker and others who are symbolically “standing behind” or in solidarity with her. The mic check serves as an invocation of these others in solidarity who may or may not be physically co-present, indexing Occupy participants as a whole.



Figure 34. Participants react to the mic checking of the Mayor as they listen from outside City Hall in the OLA Media tent to live FM radio coverage of the press conference being held inside.

4.7.5 Mic check and Political Inscription



Figure 35. OLA participants mic-check an LA City Council meeting.

Four days later, on November 29, a group of OLA participants mic-checked an L.A. City Council meeting and read aloud the same document during the public comment section of the Council meeting. The participants followed the regulations for public comment, entering their names on a list and speaking from the designated public comment area. Each speaker read a section of the document in short phrases and was repeated by the other OLA participants (Axismundipost 2011b). Although this mic check did not officially interrupt the Council meeting, it facilitated the document's inclusion in the City Council record, which may have been impossible if the people's mic had not been employed. The presence and vocal engagement via the human mic of a large group of OLA participants thus contributed to the inscription of an OLA document into the official record of the city. This symbolic artifact entered the official record of the Los Angeles City Council through both senses of participation outlined above, in the 'full participation' sense that the document was drafted and revised multiple times through multiple mediums using open-group authorship, shared power and discussion, and finally consented upon at the GA, and also in the Goffmanian sense, in that it was recited into the record by actors embodying specific participant roles within an interactive participation framework.

**CITY HALL PARK IS CLOSED
NIGHTLY FROM 10:30 P.M. TO 5:00 A.M.
OF THE FOLLOWING DAY.**

**POLICE MAY BEGIN ENFORCEMENT OF PARK
CLOSURE HOURS WITHOUT FURTHER NOTICE.**

**PLEASE VACATE PARK IMMEDIATELY AT THE
PARK CLOSING HOUR OR YOU WILL BE
SUBJECT TO ARREST.**

Figure 36. Flyer posted at OLA following Mayor Villaraigosa's announcement.

Chapter 5: Hand Signals

5.1 The Amplification of Stance

Hand and arm gestures, spontaneous, arbitrary, and colloquial, as well as formalized and highly consequential, are an integral part of human interaction across a wide spectrum of communicative contexts. Formalized hand gestures can be found in sports, traffic-direction, classrooms, meetings, combat, music, and industrial trades – to name but a few. Each set of gestures or signals develops according to a given specific local ecology and the tasks or projects relevant to it. In the case of conducting large outdoor public meetings with shifting populations and a stated purpose of enacting direct participatory democracy, specific communicative requirements and challenges will emerge. The hand signals used at Occupy Los Angeles assemblies represent an attempt to meet these challenges in a way that provides for the amplification of listeners' stances throughout the ongoing course of action. The question for participants is one of creating a system conducive to ongoing multi-party simultaneous horizontal dialogue, and in finding ways in which hearers can participate as fully as possible. Visual displays do not interrupt talk, and allow for multiple streams of simultaneous communication, such as agreement and disagreement, and other displays of stance, among speakers and hearers in large-group communication.

One key difference here from some more traditional types of political meetings is the range of codified stances and actions available to participants through the use of hand signals that they can use even while the speaker is speaking and without interrupting the ongoing talk. In many types of traditional group decision-making or voting meetings, the two common choices for participants are “yay” or “nay,” perhaps performed through a visual, auditory or electronic

display: a card held aloft, a button pushed, a hand put up, or an utterance. The OLA hand signals, by amplifying stance, enable participants as listeners to take a more active role in the ongoing sequential action – a role that resembles that of a listener and co-constructor in natural conversation in dyads and small groups.

Goodwin (1986: 284) writes, “rather than being a single homogeneous entity, an audience can be internally diversified in ways that are relevant to the detailed organization of the talk in progress.” Further, audiences can shape not only the way in which the speaker’s talk is to be interpreted but indeed how it is “constituted within a collaborative process of interaction that includes the audience as a very active co-participant” (1986:284). Heterogeneous audience members can align themselves variously toward the ongoing course of talk through the use of participation displays and the resources provided by the body, including verbal and non-verbal embodied action. In dyads and small groups, turn-taking may take place rather quickly and subtle variations in prosody as well as embodied non-verbal participation displays such as facial expressions and gestures may be observed between or among participants rather easily, providing speakers are orienting to one another.

In large assemblies, however, the question of how to amplify the co-constructing facility of listeners becomes highly salient. This question of developing an appropriately functioning speech exchange system becomes even more pressing in the case of large gatherings in which horizontal group decision-making is taking place. A codified system of hand gestures which can be employed by listeners during the ongoing stream of talk serves to amplify the participation displays or stances of listeners, allowing listeners to display alignment, affiliation, doubt, and disagreement. These displays provide ongoing assessments which influence and shape the interaction. In *The Dummy’s Guide to General Assembly*, one finds:

Hand gestures are used instead of voices because it doesn't interrupt speech or produce a cacophony of disordered noise. It's to keep the Assembly ordered, and allow speakers to be heard without being spoken over - and it works. (OccupyLosAngeles.org 2011)

By employing different kinds of semiotic resources afforded by the body, audiences may actively participate, even vehemently disagree, without producing an auditory cacophony. Sitrin describes this as “a way of shouting out, without the shouting” (Writers for the 99% 2012: 28). The use of hand signals provides multi-directionality of resources for simultaneous monitoring: between audience members and speaker(s) and among audience members. Hand signals are specially suited to amplify the stances of listeners, and yet if listeners fail to participate, their stances will not be acknowledged in large assembly settings. Additionally, hand signals must be visually available to the speaker, and among listeners. For this reason, hand signals that employ the area surrounding the upper chest, neck, face and overhead area are favored to those that are situated in the mid-chest or torso area, which is harder to see in a large group of standing participants. Each U.S. Occupy site adapted a repertoire comprised of whichever specific signals were determined to be most appropriate or convenient to those assembled, accounting for the variation in specific hand signals at different Occupy sites.

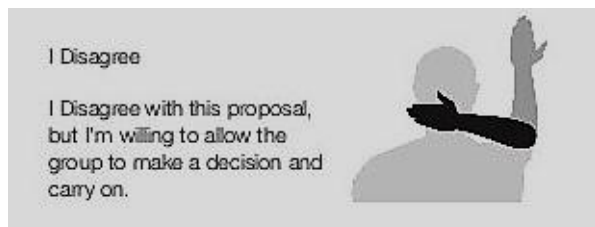
5.2 Hand Signals at OLA

The following hand signals were adopted by the General Assembly of Occupy Los Angeles and are taken from *The Dummy's Guide to General Assembly*. It should be noted that the text accompanying the following figures of hand signals indicates that the signals are to be used during proposal periods; this is not the only type of assembly project or moment in which hand signals are used. The hand signals were used by participants throughout the GA, including, for example, announcement periods and the welcoming of new participants. However, the use of

hand signals is more consequential during proposal process due to the consequential nature of proposals themselves.

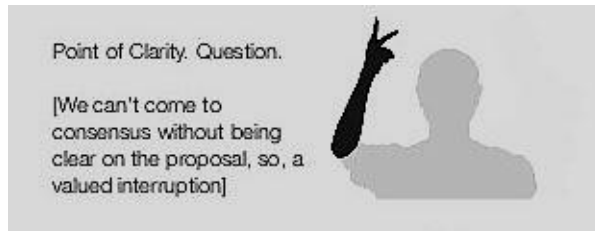


The above is probably the best known of the hand signals, referred to as *spirit fingers* or *twinkling*. The hands are held up with the fingers wiggling. This gesture is borrowed and adapted from American Sign Language, in which it expresses applause. During the 1999 Seattle protests it came to express affiliation and affect (Writers for the 99% 2012). At Occupy assemblies, twinkling has become the key hand signal of agreement and affiliation toward a speaker's expressed proposition or sentiment.

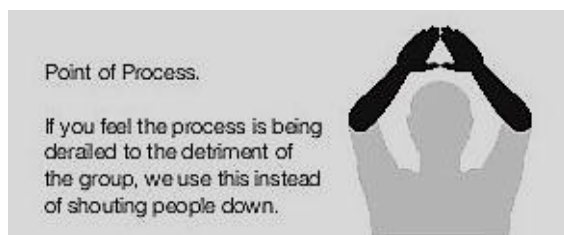


The hand signal for *disagreement* can also be referred to as *concerns* or *I don't see it*. Sometimes vehemently performed with both hands, this gesture was adopted by the assembly at OLA. It was preferred to the downward twinkling gesture used at Occupy Wall Street and other Occupy sites, as it was felt to be more visibly available to the assembled participants. This adaptation was initiated in part by a participant introducing a concern over the relative difficulty in seeing downward-pointing twinkling (glossed as disagreement) versus upward-pointed twinkling (glossed as agreement). This concern was related to the ease with which assembled participants could signal disagreement as compared to the ease of signaling agreement. The implication of

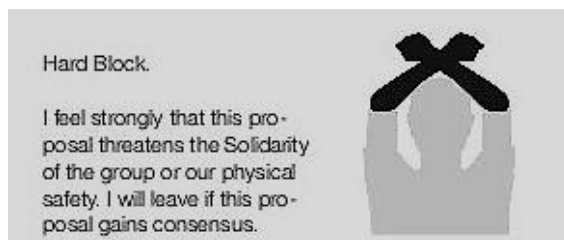
this concern was that the hand signal system be as sensitive to diversity of opinion as possible, rather than slanted toward agreement through the use of the downward twinkle, which participants felt was physically more difficult to produce and also to see.



The *point of clarity* or *question* hand signal is used when the listener intends to verbally enter the stream of talk and interject a question or clarification. By employing this signal, the listener/speaker places a high priority and urgency on her projected interjection. For this reason, the interjector usually calls out “point of clarity” while simultaneously performing the hand signal. The auditory interruption serves to further orient the speaker and assembled participants to the new speaker.



The *point of process* signal is used to call attention to a perceived disorder and orient the assembly to the sequential organization of the project currently on the floor. Process within assembly structure will be discussed further below.



The *hard block* indicates a very strong oppositional stance to the proposal, proposition, or even sentiment being discussed – although it is generally used only during the proposal process itself. It is important to note that because of the procedural implications of a hard block, it has been the most discussed and intervened upon hand signal. The text accompanying the figure above, although at the time of this writing still posted on the OLA website, is no longer accurate according to a proposal entitled *Definition of a Hard Block* which was consented to by the OLA General Assembly in January 2012. The necessity of a hard blocker to adopt a stance of willingness to leave the movement, committee, or assembly if the proposal is consented to was later abandoned:

The current definition of a hard block, is that an individual feels it threatens the solidarity of the movement and / or is prepared to walk away. The ‘walking away from the movement’ definition has proved unsatisfactory and detrimental to an individual with strong concerns who does not necessarily want to walk away. (Los Angeles GA 2012)

The hard block is highly consequential to the decision-making process of the assembled body; consensus cannot be considered to have been achieved if a participant is actively hard-blocking a proposal. As the assembly is open to any and all possible participants, the potential for trivial or insincere hard blocking is very real. The following text from the amended and consented to version of *Definition of a Hard Block* specifies the types of actions expected of a participant producing a hard block:

A hard block must be explained in terms of HOW the individual thinks it threatens the solidarity of the movement. What voices or groups may it marginalize or alienate? What principle of solidarity might it directly violate? ***How does it threaten the safety of the individual or group?*** What serious moral or ethical concern does it raise? A hard block must be explained in terms of the proposal’s perceived relationship to, or impacting of, the founding principles of the movement, and cannot simply be made because an individual does not ‘like’ something. (<http://losangelesga.net/2012/01/definition-of-a-hard-block/>)

Despite the perceived stigma of a hard block, hard blocking is an important part of the consensus-building process. Manissa Maharawal writes of her experience hard-blocking a proposal for the Declaration of the Occupation of Wall Street at OWS with her friend Hena and others. Maharawal, accompanied by participants that had just attended a South Asians for Justice meeting, took issue with a portion of the wording in the proposed declaration which seemed to them to brush aside issues of structural racism:

We did not back down when we were told, the first time that my friend Hena spoke, that our concerns could be emailed and didn't need to be dealt with then; we didn't back down when we were told that a second time; and we didn't back down when we were told that to "block" the declaration from going forward was a serious thing to do, we all knew it was a serious thing to do, and that is why we did it. (Maharawal 2011: 38)

Nevertheless, the power of the hard block essentially leaves the entire group at the mercy of one individual who may be acting upon outside orders, as in the case of agents provocateur. The special vulnerability of the assembly due to this signal and its consequences remained a sore spot for participants throughout the assembly process. The ideal social situation for the use of the consensus model and the hard block capability is within a stable and relatively unchanging group of participants – one in which all participants are known to each other and have been “vetted” insofar as is possible as sincere actors. In a completely open assembly the vulnerability to cynical tampering is extremely high. This remains an area for further research, experimentation, and analysis.

Though not nearly as consequential in terms of the larger political scope as the hard block, two other hand signals, both which deal with the element of time, came to be used frequently at Occupy Los Angeles. One of these is the *wagon wheels* or *wrap it up*. The following illustration and explanation of this signal comes from *Shared Path Shared Goal: A*

Handbook on Direct Democracy and the Consensus Decision Process, a booklet made for the Direct Action Conference (DAC) in 1995.

Wagon wheels or wrap it up

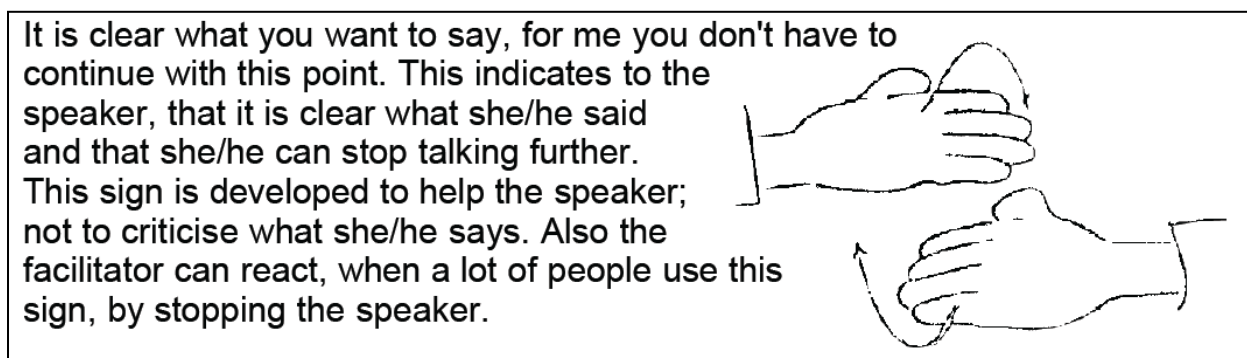


Figure 37. Shared Path. Definition of wagon wheel hand signal. (DAC 1995)

The other time-oriented signal is glossed as *out of time*, *time's up*, or even *stop talking now*. During General Assembly a Timekeeper is often asked to keep track of the length of time that speakers may hold the floor. If a participant has assumed the role of Timekeeper, s/he might produce this signal when the allotted time has expired. Alternatively or additionally, in the absence or presence of a Timekeeper, listeners may produce this signal if a speaker's turn has been disproportionally long, if the speaker has taken many turns, or if the speaker has continued to hold the floor despite previous wagon wheels signals produced by listeners.

Time's up



5.2.1 Multiple/ Compound Stances

As discussed above, participants engaged in the embodied practice of performing as human amplifiers may alter grammatical or prosodic elements of the speaker's original utterance for humor, person, emphasis or even disagreement or doubt. These alterations can add additional laminations to the speaker's original utterance, thus adding complexity to the dialogic interaction. However, the simultaneous combined practice of the people's mic and hand signals allows for double and possibly multiple (or compound) stances to be realized through the body of a single participant. For example, a participant can use the hand signal meaning *I disagree/I don't see it* while simultaneously broadcasting (uttering) the disagreed-with ongoing proposition as a part of the people's mic, thus simultaneously embodying opposing positions through voice and gesture. Or a participant can *wagon wheel* while simultaneously verbally broadcasting an ongoing proposition as the people's mic, thus both animating the current speaker's proposition while commenting that the proposition has already been adequately expressed and requesting that the current speaker conclude. Many combinations of these multiple embodied stances could be imagined and indeed have been observed. As Irvine (1996) argues, the main interest here is in the multiply dialogical character of these interactions, rather than regarding these compound stances as mere instantiations of typologies of participant roles (although the description of these remains extremely useful).

5.3 Point of Process – Changing the Signal

This section will explore a specific event that took place at the General Assembly of Occupy Los Angeles in October of 2011. The extract to be analyzed here was chosen for two reasons. The overarching phenomena that take place within this sequence can be characterized as transformative operations on a public substrate of practice. Goodwin illustrates:

how actions are built by performing systematic operations on a public substrate which provides many different kinds of resources that can be reused, decomposed, and transformed. In so far as such processes preserve with modification structures provided by the environments that constitute the point of departure for new action, this process is accumulative, something that is central to the distinctive organization of human culture and society. (2013:9)

A substrate may refer to accumulations both physical and behavioral. Practice is used here to highlight that the transformations that are taking place involve a set of specific hand signals that are used in the Occupy movements in order to facilitate group discussion, deliberation, and decision-making among large groups in outdoor space.

Jesse, the primary participant I focus on below, employs to achieve a desired transformation of one of the hand signals. The disputed hand signal is the signal that participants use to disagree with an idea being expressed onstage or a proposal or some part of a proposal being considered or discussed onstage and put before the assembly.

Jesse is not the only participant who prefers to use a different hand signal for these purposes than the one shown by the Moderator. In fact, the video shows another participant (Stan) who, before Jesse intervenes, wrongly anticipates the alternate gesture and performs it while the Moderator is introducing the signals. Stan turns in surprise when the Moderator introduces the “downward spirit fingers” as the signal for disagreement. This observation serves to show that the preference for the alternate hand signal, which in fact was adopted by the GA as the standard signal to display disagreement, was not idiomatic to Jesse but in fact that the two signals were in somewhat free variation prior to this time. For the sake of clarity the two competing signals for disagreement are shown below. The signal on the left “downward spirit fingers” is the one the Moderator in this segment uses, and the picture is taken from this very data. The signal on the right, also dubbed “concerns” in addition to “disagree” is the one preferred by many participants, and the one performed by Stan mentioned above. It should be

noted that this picture was taken from the OLA website as the “official” *disagree* hand signal, further proof of the variation in practice.

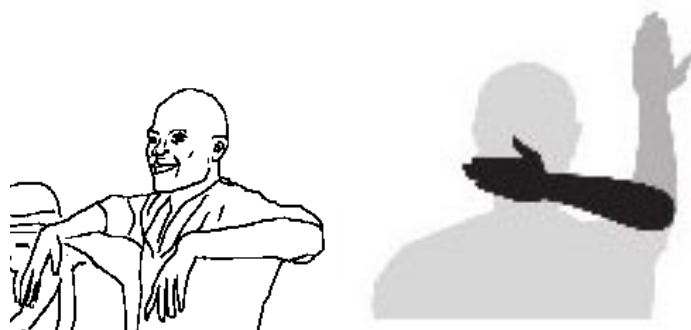


Figure 38. The two variations of "disagree" hand signal. The form on the right came to be the most popular at OLA.

Jesse’s method is itself a transformation, using what might be described as gestural rhetoric. By distorting the disputed hand gesture he wishes the group to abandon, he creates a kind of straw man of the original gesture which it is easier to dislike and eventually abandon in favor of the alternate gesture. The disputed gesture is referred to as “downward spirit fingers” and resembles a configuration not dissimilar to a scarecrow, with elbows out to the sides, and then with hands pointing down in front. Jesse distorts this gesture immensely, performing a gesture instead with arms outstretched low, palms up and fingers wiggling at groin level in something that resembles a bawdy tickling motion.



Figure 39. Disagree signal as “downward spirit fingers” on the left. The caricaturized hand signal using the “bawdy tickle” on the right.

Vološinov (1973: 120-121) writes that:

Language devises means for infiltrating reported speech with authorial retort and commentary in deft and subtle ways. The reporting context strives to break down the self-contained compactness of the reported speech, to resolve it, to obliterate its boundaries. We may call this style of speech reporting *pictorial*. Its tendency is to obliterate the precise, external contours of reported speech; at the same time, the reported speech is individualized to a much greater degree – the tangibility of the various facets of an utterance may be subtly differentiated. This time the reception includes not only the referential meaning of the utterance, the statement it makes, but also all the linguistic peculiarities of its verbal implementation.

Rather than linguistic peculiarities, Jesse implements gestural ones, thus displaying a particular stance toward what is being quoted - the “downward spirit fingers” gesture. Jesse’s performance of an exaggerated and vaguely offensive or humorous gesture in place of the actual gesture discredits and makes light of the actual gesture he is critiquing, while also exaggerating its relative lowness on the body. His simultaneous verbal critique of the gesture is that it is difficult to see (being a bit below shoulder level) but his gestural rhetoric does far more than this.

The fact that assembly participants recognize the gestural joke and bawdy quality of Jesse’s demonstration is illustrated in the facial and embodied displays of Jane, a Stacker on the Facilitation team who is standing nearby Jesse and repeating his words and actions until she displays recognition that the motion is a little vulgar/comedic. The fact that Jane repeats not only Jesse’s word but also gestures speaks to a form of the human mic not yet explored, namely, a non-verbal gestural form which will not be analyzed as such here but should nonetheless be noted.

5.3.1 Transformations in Practice and Gestural Rhetoric

This section deals with a sequence of action that took place during the demonstration of hand signals portion in the GA program. On October 20, 2011, the nightly GA on the south lawn of Los Angeles City Hall began as usual around 7:30 p.m. During the encampment period of Occupy Los Angeles (OLA) from October 1, 2011 to November 30, 2011, the General Assembly was usually held in the south plaza of City Hall Park. On this particular night, the typical order of events that comprised a GA agenda had been fairly conformed to. The transcript begins at the beginning of the demonstration of hand signals, only a few minutes in to the GA. MOD refers to the primary Moderator in this sequence, ASM refers to the assembled participants as a whole speaking together using the human mic (people's mic). JES refers to Jesse, the participant calling a particular hand signal into question, PAU to Paul, an assembly participant who comes to Jesse's aid. JAN refers to Jane, the woman standing to Jesse's left in the stage area and who repeats not only his words, but his gestures as well.

Excerpt 11 – OLA GA 10-20-2011 – MOD introduces hand signals

1. MOD: The best way to communicate
2. ASM: The best way to communicate
3. MOD: with each other
4. ASM: with each other
5. MOD: without slowin' up the process,
6. ASM: without slowin' up the process,
7. MOD: We have hand signals. [(bends, puts down papers)
8. ASM: [We have hand signals.

- 9. MOD: (standing back up) If you agree,
- 10. ASM: If you agree,
- 11. MOD: (lifts arms up high above head, wiggles fingers)
- 12. (.) Spirit fingers.
- 13. ASM: (lifting arms and wiggling fingers) Spirit fingers.



Figure 40. MOD demonstrates spirit fingers

- 14. MOD: (bringing arms down) If you disagree,
- 15. ASM: If you disagree,
- 16. MOD: (elbows out scarecrow-like, hands point down, wiggles fingers)
- 17. (.) Downward spirit fingers.
- 18. ASM: Downward spirit fingers.



Figure 41. MOD demonstrates downward spirit fingers

At this point in the proceeding Jesse speaks up and asks a question. The Moderator asks him to repeat himself and he asks again. The answer that the Moderator gives invokes the term *process*. This word is one of the most important in the lexicon of the Occupy assembly. There is indeed even a hand signal that deals specifically with Process. From the OLA website:

Point of Process.

If you feel the process is being derailed to the detriment of the group, we use this instead of shouting people down.



As seen above, the general definition or rather guideline for use of this signal has to do with recognizing when the current sanctioned project of the assembly has gotten “derailed” for some reason. However, there is a deeper and broader understanding of this signal and its possible applications. This is that it may be invoked if there is something inadequate or inappropriate about the process itself, that is, as a built-in mechanism for online critique of the process itself. When Jesse interrupt the introduction of the hand signals to question the utility of one of them, he is “officially” out of process, that is, the current project is number 4 outlined above, demonstrating the hand signals for newcomers. However, Jesse’s understanding of the Point of Process (POP) hand signal allows him to interrupt the current project because he perceives that there is something that needs to be addressed immediately about it. Nevertheless, by interrupting in this way he elicits POP signals from other assembly participants pointed in his direction. When a participant performs the POP in this way it is as an admonishment to the offender that s/he is out of process. This happens with a female participant in a red jacket as pictured below. She turns around to face Jesse where he sits on the steps and brandishes the POP at him. However, Jesse himself is performing the POP hand signal at the same precise moment. What emerges is a kind of Point of Process dueling hand signals, in which the two participants are using the hand signal in different ways, each according to their understanding of its utility.

19. JES: Why is agree up and disagree down?
 20. MOD: Say it again.
 21. JES: Why is agree up and disagree down?
 22. MOD: That's the process that was ah-
 23. That was the process that was established,
 24. ASM: That was the process that was established
 25. MOD: At the General Assembly.
 26. ASM: At the General Assembly. *(dueling Point of Process signs)*



Figure 42. Dueling Point of Process signs

27. MOD: Since the 1800s (smiling)
 28. ASM: Since the 1800s. (laughs) Ha ha ha ha.

At this point, Paul, who is standing in a crowded section of the assembly south of the stage area, comes to Jesse's aid by performing a mic check. This use of the mic check is performed to self-select the floor. If it is repeated by those assembled (as human mic), then the speaker can continue.

Excerpt 12 – OLA GA 10-20-2011 – Introduction of Point of Process

29. PAU: Mic check.
30. ASM: Mic check.
31. PAU: Mic check.
32. ASM: Mic check.
33. PAU: What the gentleman on the stairs,
34. ASM: What the gentleman on the stairs,
35. PAU: Is pointing out,
36. ASM: Is pointing out,
37. PAU: Is called Point of Process.
38. ASM: Is called Point of Process.
39. PAU: If the gentleman on the stairs,
40. ASM: If the gentleman on the stairs,
41. PAU: Would be kind enough to step up,
42. ASM: Would be kind enough to step up,
43. PAU: And explain the hand signal,
44. ASM: And explain the hand signal,
45. PAU: It would help us all tremendously.
46. ASM: It would help us all tremendously.

In lines 33-46, Paul has depicted Jesse's POP (or interruption) as part of the project (that of introducing the hand signals). Further, he has invited Jesse to take the stage, and, having done so using the human mic, coerced the assembly into animating this invitation. As Jesse comes down the steps on which he was sitting and enters the stage area, he begins:

Excerpt 13 – OLA GA 10-20-2011 – Explanation of Point of Process

47. JES: (*coming down steps*) Point of Process,
48. ASM: Point of Process,
49. JES: Is if- you-oo thi:nk,
50. ASM: Is if you think,
51. JES: That there's a point that we're MISSi:ng,
52. ASM: That there's a point that we're missing,
53. JES: In terms of the:::: u::h (.) agreement
54. that we had about our process.
55. ASM: In terms of the agreement that we
56. had about our process.

In lines 47-56, Jesse, following the depiction of his prior action and by Paul and also conforming to Paul's projection, characterizes the POP action as being appropriate "if you think there is a point that we're missing in terms of the agreement that we had about our process." This definition fits the deeper/broader understanding of the available applications of this hand signal.

At this point, Jesse begins to address his specific prior use of the hand signal, and the question he asked in lines 19 and 21, namely, "Why is agree up and disagree down?" However, this time Jesse adds the gestural rhetoric outlined above. The woman to the right (Jesse's left) is Jane. She repeats Jesse's gestures along with his words. When Jesse performs the "bawdy tickle" instead of the actual "downward spirit fingers", she also performs it. Immediately afterward she displays recognition of the salacious/humorous quality of the rhetorical gesture. For further clarity, the "downward spirit fingers are shown again below on the left. On the right is a detail of the bawdy tickle that Jesse performs. Shown side by side, it becomes clearer how little Jesse's performance of this gesture actually resembles the gesture in question. Thus the rhetorical nature of this gesture becomes apparent.



Figure 43. Disagree signal caricatured using the "bawdy tickle."



- 58. ASM: My Point of Process,
- 59. JER: Has to do with the assumption,
- 60. ASM: Has to do with the assumption,
- 61. JER: That it's easier to see an affirmation (spirit fingers)
- 62. ASM: That it's easier to see an affirmation
- 63. JER: Than a disagreement. (bawdy tickle)
- 64. ASM: Than a disagreement.



Figure 44. Jesse performs the bawdy tickle.



Figure 45. Jane displays recognition of the bawdy quality of the gesture she has performed.

Above, Jane can be seen displaying facial recognition of the bawdy quality of the gesture that she performed. This recognition display was also performed by others assembled.

The public substrate of practice of the Occupy hand signals, along with the prior action of the Moderator and Paul, provide the materials from which Jesse is able to perform structure-preserving transformations to the Disagree hand signal. The rhetorical “bawdy tickle” gesture that Jesse produces is also produced using elements of the prior action while performing transformations on the existing substrate of practice.

In large multi-party communicative gatherings, practices must be developed to resolve interactional programs and facilitate focused attention (Atkinson 1982). Hand signals are embodied processual tools that help facilitate the action and projects engaged in during assembly. The hand signals provide for the amplification of listeners’ stances throughout the ongoing course of action within a system conducive to ongoing multi-party simultaneous horizontal dialogue. The use of hand signals presents a way in which hearers can participate as fully as possible while not interrupting the stream of talk. This simultaneous visual display system allows for multiple streams of communication, such as agreement and disagreement, and other displays of stance, among speakers and hearers in large-group communication. By amplifying the stances of participants, hand signals provide a system of mutual monitoring in which the speaker and assembly participants may see each other’s stance displays. Hand signals in combination with the people’s mic also provide opportunities for multiple or compound stance displays to be observed within the body of a single participant, as when a participant performs as a human mic while simultaneously displaying a hand signal of disagreement with the very proposal she is voicing. Finally, hand signals represent a site for the observation and analysis of gestural rhetoric which can perform operations on talk and gesture.

Chapter 6: The Process



Figure 46. Occupy LA General Assembly.

6.1 Introduction to Process

William Roy (2010:4) notes that a large portion of work on social movements has focused on “why social movements arise when and where they do and why people join them” but that a more contemporary interest lies in discovering, “what social movements actually do, especially with culture, and what consequences have ensued.” Roy reminds us that participants spend significant portions of time in social movements engaged in “the mundane activities of meeting, chatting, debating, and deliberating” (2010:4). He writes that:

While social movements do mobilize organizations to recruit members and carry out collective actions, much of the time is spent hanging out and meeting. As the title of Polletta’s book on participatory democracy succinctly puts it, “freedom is an endless meeting.” Polletta shows that social movements construct their internal social relationships on implicit or analogical templates of other social relationships. American movements that intentionally organized themselves around participatory democracy evoked familiar analogies to guide their practices. For some, a social movement was like

a religious fellowship in which those with conscience were invited to deliberate until a consensus was achieved. Pacifist movements often followed this mode. Other movements followed a model of tutelage or tutorial, in which leaders or organizers elicited the concerns and aspirations of political novices to empower grassroots upheaval. Finally, many movements operated as groups of friends in which trust and personal commitment solidified the arduous work of setting goals and making decisions. (Roy 2010: 4-5)

Polletta (2002: 8) observes that shared *ownership* of group decisions heightens a sense of solidarity and commitment to the group. She writes that:

The deliberative aspects of participatory democratic decisionmaking can build solidarity by pressing participants to recognize the legitimacy of other people's reasoning. The *process* of decisionmaking makes for a greater acceptance of the differences that coexist with shared purposes. In fact, consensus often aims not to arrive at a position or policy agreed to unanimously in all its particulars but to delineate a range of individual positions that are consistent with a group position. By requiring that participants take seriously each other's concerns and priorities, the process balances individual initiative with solidarity, both of which are critical to successful collective action. (Polletta 2002: 9)

The process observed at OLA had many influential antecedents, including Quaker practice and Indignado practice. Graeber (2009) writes how the Movement for a New Society (MNS) that emerged in the late 20th century, was spearheaded by a gay rights activist and anarchist Quaker:

Many of what have become standard features of formal consensus process - the principle that the facilitator should never act as an interested party in the debate, the idea of the 'block' - were first disseminated by MNS trainings in Philadelphia and Boston. (Graeber 2009:235).

The following sections describe the General Assembly's process as it was enacted at OLA. The Facilitation team, in its various roles, moderates the assembly. Participants in the Facilitation team took turns moderating assemblies and rotated roles.



Figure 47. An OLA participant sings at the General Assembly.

6.2 Facilitation Committee

The Facilitation (Fac) Committee at Occupy LA generally met each evening on the north steps of City Hall at 5:30 (two hours before the GA) to plan the night's agenda and assign roles. If there were proposals to be heard that night, members of the Fac team would often have printed copies of the text of the proposal on hand, as at a certain point during the OLA encampment it became policy for proposers to submit proposals to the Facilitation team 24 hours in advance of the GA in which they would be presented. A certain three-part format was established for proposals, namely *What*, *Why* and *How*, in order to make them clear, and the Fac team was responsible for facilitating this format and working with proposers before a proposal came to the GA. Thus, a significant portion of the work of the Fac participants actually took place offstage, both online and in Fac committee meetings. In addition to the meeting before GA each night, the Fac team regularly held debriefing meetings immediately following the night's GA. During these meetings, participants would discuss their observations about the night's proceedings, including giving both compliments and constructive criticisms and suggestions for handling disorder,

confusion, tempers, and other difficulties encountered during assembly, including issues related to personal bias.

The Facilitation team assigned specific roles to participants for use during the GA. Assemblies were facilitated by one or more Moderators and Stackers (or Stack-takers). A Stacker keeps track of those who wish to speak before the assembly. A stack is simply a list of names of the participants who have requested the floor. Further description of the Moderator and Stacker's roles and how they may be distinct from those of traditional committee meetings appears below.

During large assemblies the Facilitation team asked one or more participants to act as Peacekeepers. The role of Peacekeepers was primarily to protect the stage space from overcrowding and thus shrinking. As participants moved ever closer to the speakers, often joining the assembly late and moving through the crowd into the center, seating themselves nearly at the speakers' feet, the stage area became closed-off and inaccessible visually to the larger group. Peacekeepers were tasked in this situation with defining a perimeter of stage space. This was accomplished with their bodies, by putting both arms out and illustrating a perimeter, and with requests to "step back," "take two steps back" etc. Peacekeepers also intervened when certain participants took the stage without Stacker and Moderator approval, thus outside of process. The contestation of a controlled process at OLA is discussed further in the section on "People over Process." Outside of the General Assembly at OLA, volunteer Peacekeepers became involved in camp disputes, often with internally controversial results. The role of Peacekeeper itself (as well as the title, with its somewhat ironic UN connotations) was fraught with controversy that centered on questioning the necessity of a specialized group assigned to use coercion in any capacity. This conversation was complicated by the suspicion and later

revelation that undercover operatives and agents provocateur were dispatched across the country to Occupy sites.

Other Facilitation roles, such as Timekeeper and Note-taker (Minute-taker), were assigned in order to help facilitate the General Assembly and maintain a record of its activities. The Facilitation Committee was an open one. Any interested participant could attend Facilitation Committee meetings and volunteer to help facilitate an assembly. A special graduated process for role-taking was developed by the Facilitation team at OLA. First-time volunteers were often asked to perform as Note-takers, Stackers, or Timekeepers. After performing in one of these capacities for one or two General Assemblies, a volunteer would be permitted to perform as a Moderator.

6.3 Moderators versus Chairmen

As Hicks (2002:231) notes, not every participant within a deliberative democratic process will contribute something valuable to others all the time. However, it is the Moderator's (or sometimes two co-Moderators' in the case of large assemblies and ample capable volunteers) job to create every opportunity for each willing participant to contribute to the discussion in a meaningful way. Unlike in the participatory democratic meetings observed by Mondada (2011), there were no Chairmen at OLA. The role of Moderator rotates among participants and is not meant to imbue the participant acting as Mod with any special authority.

The role of Moderator is distinguished from that of a Chair. The Direct Action Conference international organizers write, "Facilitators are NOT chairpersons: they do not break ties and are not the 'leader' of the group" (DAC 1995: 9). At Occupy Los Angeles, as at other Occupy sites, Facilitation Committee members were careful to emphasize this principle. Facilitators had to rotate regularly and new facilitation members were always actively being

sought. Nevertheless, Moderators organized the ongoing procedural action of the General Assembly according to an agenda outlined by the Facilitation Committee in meeting preceding the General Assembly or partially online through the special Facilitation list serve. Moderating a General assembly can be a harrowing and thankless task, especially as participants are vigilant to identify any hint of hierarchical or unilateral decision-making. *The Dummy's Guide to General Assembly* reads, rather sardonically, “The person ‘chairing’ the meeting is the Moderator and their job is to talk into the mic and suffer abuse from Trade Unionists, Subversive Intelligence, and the occasional asshole” (OccupyLosAngeles.org 2011).

The sequential progression of the assembly is dependent upon a competent Moderator making sure that all participants have equal access to the floor and that all questions, concerns, and amendments regarding proposals are heard by the assembly. Because of the difficulty of this role, at OLA an aspiring Moderator is encouraged to take a supporting role, such as Stacker, before attempting to moderate an assembly in order to become familiar with the pressure experienced ‘onstage’ during the assembly process.

In further delineating the role of the Moderator, the DAC international organizers write:

The facilitator needs to have a good enough understanding of the steps of the process and the tools of group decision making to guide the group to a consensus... Choosing to be a facilitator usually removes you from the decision making process with respect to your own views; your attention needs to be on gathering the group's views rather than your own agenda... Good facilitators gently but forcefully push the group through the steps of the process; when the group appears converging on an idea, he or she tries to draw out a proposal for it and address the most serious concerns with it first. (DAC 1995: 9).

One important feature of this role is the ability to avoid discordant actions which might threaten not only the process in progress but the trust of the participants. Clayman (2002: 249) demonstrates how solidarity is constituted through “organizational features of interaction that systematically promote solidary actions while suppressing discordant ones.” Throughout a given

proposal process, even in the case of a proposal which contains controversial subject matter, adept moderation and participants' promotion of sequential solidary actions and avoidance of discordant actions can guide an assembly to consensus.

After a proposal has passed through questions, concerns, and amendments, the Moderator can call for a *temperature check* or straw poll. This is an opportunity for participants to display, using hand signals, their stances on the current proposal. Direct interactive consensual participatory democracy is dependent on the active participation of those assembled. A Moderator's responsibilities include the monitoring of participants and ongoing verbalization of her impressions. In this way a Moderator serves as both an organizer and a mirror for those assembled. As part of this mirroring function, the Moderator is tasked with determining if the assembly has come to consensus based on her observation of all hand signals visually available during a temperature check. As the Moderator cannot determine in the case of a lack of hand signal participation how to accurately reflect the stances of participants, s/he will often enthusiastically elicit participation with directives like: *Show me how you feel! Show your feelings!* or *How do you feel about this?* Goodwin, Cekaite and Goodwin (2012: 53) focus on how emotion is organized as a social practice: "emotion and stance are not simply add-on to an isolated individual action, but constitute an inherent feature of temporally unfolding sequences of social interaction." In the excerpt below, the Moderator's request in line 3 to see the feelings of participants is a request to see the embodied stances of participants that are consequential actions that will influence the ongoing course of action. It is interesting to note that participants do not repeat the Moderator's utterance from line 3, but rather respond to its directive and perform hand signals while simultaneously uttering the enthusiastic cheer "Woo." MOD is Moderator, ASM the assembly, and ASP an individual participant.

Excerpt 14 – OLA GA 12-3-11 - MOD asks to see feelings through hand signals

- 1 MOD: And if there are no hard blocks to this proposal,
- 2 ASM: And if there are no hard blocks to this proposal,
- 3 MOD: So::::: let's show your fee:::lings.
- 4 ASM: Woo::: (*most arms up with spirit fingers, a few concern signals*)
- 5 MOD: Do we have any hard blocks? (*scanning crowd*)
- 6 ASP: Do we have any hard blocks?
- 7 MOD: (.) (*scanning crowd*) Do we have any hard blo::cks. (.)
- 8 ah-no. No:::. So we have reached consensu::::::::::s.
- 9 ASM: Ahooo:: (*applause*)



Figure 48. OLA GA 12-3-11 – MOD asks participants to display their stances using hand signals

6.4 Stackers, Progressive Stacking

The following description of the Stacker's role is found at the Cultivate.Coop wiki:

One group participant needs to fill the role of the Stack Keeper. It is the Stack Keeper's responsibility to structure and order the dialogue and the decision making process. The Stack Keeper needs a pen and a couple pieces of paper. "The Stack" is the order of participants who are speaking. If a participant raises their hand to say something, the Stack Keeper puts them on "Stack." That is, the Stack Keeper puts their name at the bottom of stack list. When the person at the top of Stack has finished speaking, the Stack Keeper crosses their names off and announces who the next two participants on stack are. (cultivate.coop 2012 http://cultivate.coop/wiki/Taking_Stack)

Progressive stack is a system for ordering participant comments on proposals that facilitates the assembly's hearing the voices of women and people of color. This is accomplished by putting those names at the head of the list. This means that the stack, or list of names, will not necessarily be followed according to the order of the participants' requests for the floor. If, for example, three men are on stack (on the list waiting to be called upon and take the floor) and a woman requests to be put on stack (on the list), she may be moved to the top of the list and called upon (selected as next speaker) before the three men. Stackers are charged with enacting this process of progressive stacking. During the early days of the Occupy Wall Street General Assembly in Tompkins Square, organizers noticed that "the majority of those taking the floor were stubbornly white and male" (Writers for the 99% 2012: 29-30). Progressive stacking was instituted to address this issue.

In many ways the complimentary roles of Moderator and Stacker combined together constitute aspects of the observed role of Chairman in Mondada's study of participatory democratic practices in the context of neighborhood park planning in France. In this series of group interactions a single Chairman was responsible for next speaker selection:

The Chairman selects the next speaker by pointing towards him or her. Once pointed, he adopts a bodily posture of reception, looking at the party selected without any more gesture. The pointing gesture is done in a visible and publicly displayed way: in this sense, it does not only give to the selected party the right and obligation to speak but also exhibits for the other co-present parties that somebody has been selected and will speak.

(Mondada in press)

At the OLA General Assembly the Stacker will often quietly tell the name of the next speaker to the Moderator, who will then loudly announce the name, often simultaneously stepping backward and orienting bodily and with gaze to the selected speaker, who in turn enters the stage space which has been created by the bodies of the participants. This process of speaker selection creates an ongoing acknowledgement of the designated physical space as the place of

speaker action. Mondada writes, “interaction and social action have multiple configuring effects on space, both adjusting to it and reflexively constituting its form and relevant features” (2011: 288). In this way the Moderator attends to the next speaker and reinforces the stage space around the speaker. When the speaker is finished speaking, the Moderator moves the process forward, perhaps in response to the speaker’s utterance, often by announcing next moves to the assembly. Mondada observes the Chairman’s influence on the types of contributions that are made during meetings:

The Chairman achieves the selection of the next speaker in a way that projects the next action and situates it as a continuation of the previous one – displaying that the expected contribution is one among others in a series. This constrains the type of contribution, shaping the type of action to come and its format. (Mondada in press)

A Stacker’s role, then, is to “deliver” an appropriate next speaker to the Moderator. During certain portions of proposal process, specific types of contributions are expected. For example, there is a designated period for questions of clarity, in which participants may ask a proposer to clarify some detail of the meaning of a given proposal. Part of the Stacker’s job is to remind participants of this when they approach him or her to be put on the stack, and in some cases even screen the question to make sure it is indeed a question, and not a concern masked as a question. Masking concerns and amendments as questions was a typical way in which participants would attempt to subvert (if only to expedite) proposal procedure, and Stackers as well as Moderators and assembly participants in general became sensitized to this tactic.

6.5 OLA Assembly Agenda/Program

General Assemblies at Occupy Los Angeles generally adhered to a formalized agenda that was planned by the Facilitation team in their meeting before each evening’s GA. The elements in these agendas shifted somewhat according to the number of proposals to be

discussed and other factors that could influence the anticipated time a GA would take. The assembly started at 7:30 PM and usually continued until at least 9:30, with some GAs stretching until nearly midnight.

Certain regular introductory portions of the GA program were performed in order to acclimate and socialize newcomers to the process of the GA and thus provide immediate access to its practices and decisions. Following these, committee and affinity group announcements were made, as well as announcements about specific actions and marches taking place and greetings from emissaries from other Occupy sites. After these, proposals would be heard. A typical General Assembly program included the following elements:

1. Mic check – Welcome
2. Asking for Spanish interpreter
3. Asking who is new – show of hands and introductions
4. Reading of the Principles of Solidarity
5. Demonstrating the Hand Signals
6. Committee and Affinity Group Announcements
7. Proposals

An outline of the typical program (as given above) highlights the types of opportunities for participation that are built into the interactive sequential event itself. Certain discussions of democracy, direct democracy or even direct participatory democracy tend to begin deductively and theoretically, and proceed to survey and statistical analysis. Although those methods unquestionably have merit, this study focuses on the real time social interaction among participants who are operating within a renewable local ecology in an effort to “do” direct participatory democracy. In the following sections, descriptions and discussion of GA program elements are given in order to provide a picture of the assembly project as a whole comprised of its sequential elements.

6.5.1 Mic check – Welcome

The General Assembly program opened with a mic check of the ‘Call to Assembly’ type. Generally participants would have gathered in and around the GA meeting area (most commonly the south steps area) prior to this. The GA was scheduled to begin at 7:30 each night during the encampment period, and so participants were able to plan their schedules accordingly. Many participants would be engaged in informal conversation, having coffee, tea or a snack and awaiting the official call to assembly. Those who would be making committee or affinity group announcements or some other announcement or proposal might be preparing notes or speaking with others regarding the upcoming performance of that task. The call to assembly was generally performed by the night’s Moderator (MOD). ASM refers below to the bulk of the assembled participants acting as human mic.

Excerpt 15 OLA GA 10-20-2011 – Welcome to GA

1 MOD: Mic check
2 ASM: Mic check
3 MOD: Mic check
4 ASM: Mic check
5 MOD: Welcome everybody
6 ASM: Welcome everybody

6.5.2 Asking who is new – show of hands

Often the early part of the program would include a Moderator asking the assembled participants who was new to the GA. Sometimes there would be an accompanying request for new persons to come to the stage area and introduce themselves. This was meant to move the new participant from mere spectator status to participant status though encouraging visibility, floor time, and personal acquaintance. New participants were routinely met with smiles, spirit fingers, and encouraging comments. In the excerpt below, the Co-Moderator (MOD1) asks for a show of hands of who is new. Several hands go up, and in line 3, an assembly participant (ASP1)

points out a new participant. In line 4, another participant (ASP2) cheers, which is followed by laughter. Then MOD2 explicitly thanks the participants for attending, which is repeated by the assembly as the human mic. Additionally, individual participants (ASP3 and ASP4) in the assembly then welcome the new participant, further reinforcing participation and solidarity for the new participant.

Excerpt 16 – OLA GA 10-20-2011 – Who’s new show of hands

- 1 MOD1: Can we get a show of hands of who’s ne:w? (.) First da:y?
- 2 ASM: Can we get a show of hands or who’s ne:w? First da:y? (*several hands go up*)
- 3 ASP1: Right here. This guy.
- 4 ASP2: Woo Woo.
- 5 MOD2: Thank you for being here.
- 6 ASM: Thank you for being here. (*applause*)
- 7 ASP3: Welcome.
- 8 ASP4: Welcome.

6.5.3 Asking for Spanish interpreter

At the start of most GAs at OLA, the Moderator(s) asked for a Spanish interpreter. Interpretation would take place offstage in whatever area the volunteer happened to be seated. Spanish-speaking participants who required an interpreter would be directed to simply sit very near the volunteer and listen. Los Angeles is home to a large number of Spanish speakers, and this regular portion of the GA program at OLA provides evidence of ways in which General Assemblies at different Occupy sites adapted process to reflect local needs and conditions. Additionally, the call for a Spanish interpreter in the beginning portion of the GA program signaled inclusion to Spanish speaking participants, a salient action in a large city attuned to the ways in which language indexes power relations.

6.5.4 Reading of the Principles of Solidarity

The *Principles of Solidarity* were written by participants in the Working Group on Principles of Consolidation at Occupy Wall Street in New York. The text came to consensus at the New York City General Assembly on September 23, 2011 (with additional text added in February of 2012). Although the text was created in New York, participants at Occupy Los Angeles embraced it and included it in the regular GA program. The Moderator would usually ask for a volunteer to read the document aloud. The text of the Principles of Solidarity is included below:

On September 17, 2011, people from all across the United States of America and the world came to protest the blatant injustices of our times perpetuated by the economic and political elites. On the 17th we as individuals rose up against political disenfranchisement and social and economic injustice. We spoke out, resisted, and successfully occupied Wall Street. Today, we proudly remain in Liberty Square constituting ourselves as autonomous political beings engaged in non-violent civil disobedience and building solidarity based on mutual respect, acceptance, and love. It is from these reclaimed grounds that we say to all Americans and to the world, Enough! How many crises does it take? **We are the 99%** and we have moved to reclaim our mortgaged future. Through a direct democratic process, we have come together as individuals and crafted these principles of solidarity, which are points of unity that include but are not limited to:

- Engaging in direct and transparent participatory democracy;
- Exercising personal and collective responsibility;
- Recognizing individuals' inherent privilege and the influence it has on all interactions;
- Empowering one another against all forms of oppression;
- Redefining how labor is valued;
- The sanctity of individual privacy;
- The belief that education is human right; and
- Making technologies, knowledge, and culture open to all to freely access, create, modify, and distribute. (amendment passed by consensus 2/9/2012)

We are daring to imagine a new socio-political and economic alternative that offers greater possibility of equality. We are consolidating the other proposed principles of solidarity, after which demands will follow. (<http://www.nycga.net/resources/documents/principles-of-solidarity/>)

The reading of the Principles of Solidarity served two key functions during GA. Firstly, it provided for newcomers an ideological set through which to interpret the unfolding action at the GA. This The second function was to focus all assembled participants on their shared values and

thus, in a kind of scriptural meditation, create an emotionally infused unity and build solidarity. This portion of the GA often quieted participants who were still settling into seating areas. Cheers and applause often followed the reading.

6.5.5 Demonstrating the Hand Signals

Demonstration of the hand signals was a regular part of the introductory portion of the General Assembly at Occupy Los Angeles. The Moderator or Co-Moderators demonstrated each hand signal with its name and/or a brief description of its facility, and assembly participants often simultaneously performed the signals to amplify the demonstration. Often during this demonstration, Moderators would explain to the assembly how hand signals provided a way for participants to make contributions to the ongoing course of action without interrupting the verbal stream of talk. New participants had sometimes heard or seen something about Occupy's hand signals in the media but lacked an explanation or any experience of the practical utility of such a system to facilitate large group deliberation. This regular portion of the GA program provided an immediate point of entry for newcomers into the community of practice of the General Assembly. Participants were encouraged to use the hand signals as a way to display their stances and visually participate in the proceedings of the General Assembly.

6.5.6 Committee, Affinity Group, and Other Announcements

Participants at Occupy Los Angeles formed numerous committees and affinity groups to address their specific interests, plan actions, and facilitate the OLA encampment and its activities. Some of the committees included: Facilitation, Resources, Media, Demands and Objectives, Stop Police Brutality and Food, among others. A portion of each General Assembly was dedicated to announcements from any committee or affinity group needing to make them. Announcements often contained information about the times and places of each group's regular

meetings and an invitation to attend those meetings and become part of the committee or affinity group. These regular invitations reinforced solidarity and encouraged participation, as well as familiarizing newcomers and regular participants with the current issues and concerns of these internal groups. During this period, announcements from outside groups, such as communiqués from unions or activist organizations about upcoming actions and requests for assistance, were also heard. Announcements provided new participants with the names of various organizations interested in the Occupy phenomenon and its participants. Solidarity between members of older established organizations and the relatively much newer Occupy participants emerged partially as a result of this process.

6.5.7 Proposals

Within the broader GA process, a crucial component of most GAs is the proposal process. First, a proposal text is read aloud to the assembly by the proposers (following the three-part *What Why How* format). The next step is to call for questions of clarity, that is, questions that participants may have in understanding the text and what the proposal is actually proposing. Participants get on stack and pose questions and the proposer has an opportunity to answer these until the entire assembly feels confident that they understand the proposal itself. After this, participants are invited to raise concerns that they might have about points within the proposal or the entire idea, explain why some piece of wording or suggested action would be inappropriate or unwise in their view. This portion of the proposal process leads to the section in which friendly amendments are welcomed. These amendments are often suggested by those who had concerns or those who heard others' concerns and developed ideas for amending the proposal based on them. Throughout the concern and amendment phases of proposal process, breakout groups may be suggested by the Moderators in order for smaller groups to discuss their concerns

and generate ideas. This series of steps may be quick or arduous depending on how controversial a proposal is. After these steps have been followed, and if it seems as if the group is moving toward consensus, a temperature check (or straw poll) is taken. The Moderators ask participants to use the hand signals to show their stance toward the current form of the proposal. If most participants are performing spirit fingers to indicate agreement and there are no hard blocks, the Moderator announces that consensus is reached. This can take place even if there are hand signals indicating concern/disagreement, provided that there are no hard blocks. If anyone hard blocks, then the proposal is blocked. Time and energy permitting, the next step is to continue discussion, for example, by having the hard blockers speak about their concerns or proposing amendments that would remove the block.

6.6 Consensus versus Voting

Thoreau, in his essay on civil disobedience, writes:

All voting is a sort of gaming, like checkers or back gammon, with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not staked. I cast my vote, perchance, as I think right; but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail. I am willing to leave it to the majority. Its obligation, therefore, never exceeds that of expediency. Even voting *for the right* is *doing* nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail. A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of the majority. (Thoreau 1962:240)

Emma Goldman (1969: 64) agrees with this assessment, writing that, “A close examination of the machinery of politics and its achievements will bear out the logic of Thoreau.” She notes further that the history of parliamentarism shows, “Nothing but failure and defeat, not even a single reform to ameliorate the economic and social stress of the people” (1969:64). She argues that a political aspirant follows:

(A) path of good intentions...full of pitfalls: wire-pulling, intriguing, flattering, lying, cheating; in fact, chicanery of every description...Added to that is a complete demoralization of character and conviction, until nothing is left that would make one

hope for anything from such a human derelict. Time and time again the people were foolish enough to trust, believe, and support with their last farthing aspiring politicians, only to find themselves betrayed and cheated. (Goldman 1969: 64)

Polletta (2002:9) writes that the critics of majority voting claim that it always “leaves losers in its wake” and that:

The next time a decision must be made, those who lost this time may forge the alliances and strike the bargains necessary to win, thus subordinating the aim of making a good decision to their own desire to gain position. Or they may withdraw altogether from an organization part of whose appeal has been the opportunity to act with common purpose. Groups that put a premium on the possibility of consensus help that not to happen, thus generating important *solidary* benefits. (Polletta 2002:9)

David Graeber (2004:89) explains how a true majority democracy requires two factors.

The first is that those in the group have the feeling that people should have an equal say in making group decisions, and the second is that there is “a coercive apparatus capable of enforcing those decisions.” He points out, however, that:

For most of human history, it has been extremely unusual to have both at the same time. Where egalitarian societies exist, it is usually considered wrong to impose systematic coercion. Where a machinery of coercion did exist, it did not even occur to those wielding it that they were enforcing any sort of popular will. (Graeber 2004:89)

Graeber (2004: 90) notes that for the ancient Greek city-state, decision-making power and influence were linked with armaments and military prowess, for “if a man is armed, then one pretty much has to take his opinion into account.” It is easy to see how this form of democracy influenced later Western states, as evidenced in the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Regarded by many as the last bulwark against tyranny, perhaps, following this aspect of the Greek model, the collateral of violence that the right to bear arms affords, forms the very weight of Western majority democracy itself.

However, this creates precarious conditions. Graeber (2004: 92-93) observes that majoritarian direct democracy, by nature unstable, “is constantly threatening to make...lines of

force explicit,” so that the forms which last are, “invariably ensconced within a larger framework of governance in which ruling elites use that very instability to justify their ultimate monopoly of the means of violence.” This state of affairs ends in “a form of ‘democracy’ so minimal that it comes down to nothing more than insisting that ruling elites should occasionally consult with ‘the public’ – in carefully staged contests” (Graeber 2004:93). This weak and highly controlled democracy, with its political theater scripted by a ruling elite, rather resembles the image of the U.S. system as depicted by Occupy participants disenchanted with representation and its feeble opportunities for participation. In the wake of the Citizens United ruling and the massive bailouts for international banks responsible for large-scale fraud, Occupy participants rejected the usual pleas and entreaties of petition-signing and endless calls to Congress members in order to voice their discontent, and instead began a project of, “reinventing the very meaning of democracy” (Graeber 2004:93). However, these emergent forms of democratic practice are perhaps not so much reinvented as rediscovered.

For many centuries, forms of democracy as group consensus process have been practiced, though many are not recognized as such (by Western scholars) because of the lack of explicit majoritarian voting. Graeber (2004:88-89) asserts that, “across the world, from Australia to Siberia, egalitarian communities have preferred some variation on consensus process.” In face-to-face community, this is accounted for in the absence of a state with a monopoly on coercive force, or a community within a state that does not meddle in community affairs. Voting in this context would likely, “guarantee humiliations, resentments, hatreds” and result in “the destruction of communities.”

One way to contrast consensus process with majority voting is as process versus product, or collaboration versus contestation. Although during a proposal’s consideration by the

assembly, forms of persuasive rhetoric can certainly be found, synthesis of ideas and the voicing of ideas are most valued. Graeber writes:

In majoritarian politics, you're always trying to make your opponent's idea look like a bad idea, so the incentive is to always make their arguments seem stupider than they really are. In consensus, you're trying to come up with a compromise, or synthesis, so the incentive is to always look for the best or smartest part of other people's arguments.
(Graeber 2009: 305)

Ultimately, consensus processes seek to foster inclusion, horizontalism, and participation. Graeber (2004: 89) writes that, "What is seen as an elaborate and difficult process of finding consensus is, in fact, a long process of making sure no one walks away feeling that their views have been totally ignored." However, this kind of democracy (as consensus process) is a time-consuming and at times emotionally draining social encounter. Assemblies can take hours of focused attention, and important or consequential proposals can wear on beyond physical endurance or mental clarity, especially in the case of assemblies being held in cold or uncomfortable outdoor environments.

Further, a proposal process can be derailed by a single actor performing a hard block. Consensus practiced by groups with regular consistent membership can identify individual participants and come to some familiarity with their reasoning. In this case of "closed membership consensus process" participants can gauge fairly easily if a block is being offered in sincerity. If the participant is expressing a sincere stance, the block can be worked through and may be surprisingly beneficial to the group. An insincere or unserious hard block, however, can disrupt the consensus process itself and cast doubts across the assembly. At Occupy LA, one of the most persistent internal challenges to the practice of consensus process was the fear and suspicion that there were those in the group acting, for whatever reason, insincerely. The openness and ever-changing constituency of the OLA GA made it particularly susceptible to this

kind of problem. Partially in response to this, changes were made to the OLA hard block procedure whereby hard blockers were asked to explain the nature of their opposition to the assembly. Those who could or would not explain the reasoning behind their opposition were deemed to have an invalid hard block. This remedy itself posed new problems, especially for those intimidated by the specific verbal genre of the GA. Participants critical of the process argued that the hard block was a right in assembly and should not require an assessment of adequate verbal explanation by a Moderator or even fellow participants. This ongoing issue was also linked to critiques about covert leadership, moderation, and class which are discussed further in the section below.

6.7 “People Over Process”

There existed at OLA a critique forwarded by many which was indexed by the oft heard call of “People over Process.” This expression reveals frustration with a process that was regarded by some as stifling, repressive, inauthentic, rigid, and even classist. Some participants at Occupy LA felt “beaten up” or excluded from the GA process or did not like the fact that the proposals passed by GA took on representational force. Some OLA participants who did not participate in GA but were living at the encampment didn’t feel that the GA’s proposals represented them or their interests. Indeed, the accusation was leveled that the GA itself functioned as a kind of rubber-stamping machine, that its important decisions were pre-made inside City Hall between the OLA Liaison Committee and Los Angeles officials, and brought to GA in a kind of political theater in which Facilitation Committee members and various organizers and leaders of interested groups would guide discourse toward the agreed-upon ends. The OLA Liaison Committee became well known and widely mistrusted by OLA participants

toward the end of the encampment period, with participants explicitly rejecting those who had been negotiating with officials. Thus, “people over process” can be seen as a critique that operated on two distinct but related levels. The first is a critique of the perceived rigidity and formality of the General Assembly process itself, including its rules regarding the attainment of floor time. As has been described, floor time at the General Assembly was highly ordered and speakers passed through both Stackers and Moderators to attain the floor. Residents of the OLA encampment who had never spoken at the GA often attributed this to the restricting procedures for speakership there.

Atkinson (1982: 114) addresses the tension that exists between formality and informality as identified by modified or unmodified practices, with unmodified (informal) practices being those discernable in natural everyday conversation. Although informality may seem appealing, he asserts that, “evaluative interpretations or policy recommendations designed to eliminate or reduce 'formality' from various settings may have the effect of eliminating or reducing the chances of certain sorts of practical tasks being accomplished at all” (Atkinson 1982:114). The attested horizontal ideology at the OLA General Assembly made these tensions all the more salient, as a perception of hierarchy or exclusion would be seen as anathema to the larger project of Occupy as an egalitarian movement. Thus, formality as the practical application of specific communicative processes for multi-party settings was at risk of being interpreted as formality that indexed more permanent asymmetries of access. These tensions were present and sometimes became explicit challenges at the General Assembly.

The second is a wider critique or accusation about the GA’s secret function as a body engaged in political theater, manufacturing consensus on pre-approved subjects in accordance with the desires of city officials. This critique reflects the weak and debilitated form of staged

democracy (Graeber 2004: 93) discussed above. The City Liaison Committee did in fact meet often with city officials, assuming a representational role that had never been explicitly consented to by the GA, and rarely reporting its activities to the assembly. The discussion below centers on a particular night at Occupy Los Angeles in late October, 2011, which exemplifies both levels of critique.

6.7.1 General Assembly versus People's Assembly

The following discussion includes excerpts and analysis of action at OLA on October 26, 2011. I have chosen to focus on this night in the discussion of “people over process” because of the dramatic and explicit example it provides. Both levels of critique outlined above are declared by participants at various points in the course of action detailed below. The action that took place on this night can be described as a type of strong internal protest that resulted in the disturbance, and eventual splitting, of the General Assembly. The GA was split into two assemblies: The General Assembly, which was forced to the north side of City Hall park; and the People's Assembly, populated by those frustrated with the usual proceedings, which took the south plaza. Before the night was through, however, these two assemblies eventually reunited, with the GA participants from the north side of the park moving back to the south plaza. The discussions below highlight central arguments participants made of the process at the General Assembly, both on a procedural level and also at a more general level in terms of power and influence. Participants were also attuned to the relationship between these two levels in terms of floor time and speakership.

On the night of October 26, 2011, just before 7:30 p.m. (the time when GA usually began) in the south plaza (where GA was usually held), a small group of OLA participants began to assemble and loudly voice their discontent with the OLA General Assembly. A tight standing

circle formed and participants offered their critiques of the General Assembly process. The initial critique involved the broad concern that the GA itself was a controlled body. The initial speaker, referred to here as REX, claimed that he had observed certain OLA participants exiting City Hall each day, presumably after attending secret meetings in which assignments were given, and then later attend GAs and manipulate the proceedings in such a way as to create disharmony and waste time. Many of the gathered participants initially booed his comments.

Clayman (1993:110) describes booing as, “perhaps the quintessential display of disapproval in the public speaking context.” His data set contained various Western speaking contexts, including, “U.S. Presidential debates, Congressional floor debates, television talk shows, and British party conference speeches” (Clayman 1993:114). This type of audience response, he writes, is socially organized on at least two levels. Clayman argues that, “Responding to a speech is, first and foremost, *an elementary form of social action* that engages the audience in interaction with a public speaker” and that, “Such actions are frequently *evaluative* in character” (1993:110). Secondly, booing constitutes *a form of collective behavior* (Clayman 1993:110). Clayman observed that, “Criticisms, accusations, or derisive characterizations of the opposition” often precede booing episodes (1993:114). Booing can be considered an “interpersonally hostile action” that audience members may be reluctant to engage in (Clayman 1993:114). However, “they are quite willing to respond in this way to hostilities initiated by a speaker (Clayman 1993:114). Thus the strong personal attacks toward certain participants and the hostility with which the accusations are leveled by REX present a likely opportunity for booing to occur. ASM is used here to refer to the bulk of participants standing in the circle. REX begins to enter the center of the tight circle as the extract begins.

Excerpt 17 – Split GA 10-26-2011-South Plaza -Boo

1. REX: They are making decisions (1.0) [They are making decisions
2. ASM: [zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz BOOOOO

Clayman (1993:117) writes that, “The onset of booing is often preceded by virtual or incipient displays of disaffiliation,” which can involve, “a variety of vocalizations - whispering or talking among themselves, talking, shouting, or jeering at the speaker - simultaneously. Depending on its loudness, the resulting sound can be characterized as a ‘murmur,’ ‘buzz,’ or ‘roar’ (designated in the transcripts by strings of ‘zzzzz.’” Following this, the transcript excerpt above displays a string of ‘zzzzzz’ to indicate a kind of roar, or sound very much like an extended “ooooohhh” which preceded the actual production of “boo” by the participants.

After the booing had started, REX continued to speak. Clayman writes that speakers can, “defend themselves against booing....For example, they may continue to talk through the booing and any incipiently disaffiliative responses that may precede it” (1993:123). Talking through booing, Clayman notes, is the “standard response” and prevents the booing from being “permitted to unfold in the clear” (1993:124). Clayman argues that this may have the effect of reducing the length of the booing sequence. Another factor that influenced the assembled participants to stop booing and listening to REX was that the crowd was heterogeneous and cries of “Let him speak!” soon rang out over the booing. Additionally, another participant who entered the center of the circle came to REX’s aid, touching others who came into the small center of the circle with soft hands extended out palms down, keeping the center space open for REX, standing near him, raising both his arms up, jumping up and down, and eventually interjecting utterances intended to secure attention for REX. This participant is referred to as NAT. NAT holds both his arms up and calls out “One second one second” in order to secure attention from the assembled participants who are booing, talking, and murmuring. Following this, he launches

into a particular kind of formalized verbal token, “We’ve assembled today” but then abruptly turns to REX and says, “alright go,” thus selecting REX as next speaker. It is in this way that NAT becomes an impromptu Moderator. This extract exemplifies how in multi-party settings practices emerge in response to interactional problems. In this case the circle was loud and chaotic, attention was not shared and next speaker had not been clearly selected. Thus, even in an impromptu forum in which participants were expressing their disapproval of the GA process, certain “formal” (Atkinson 1982) elements of that process emerged.

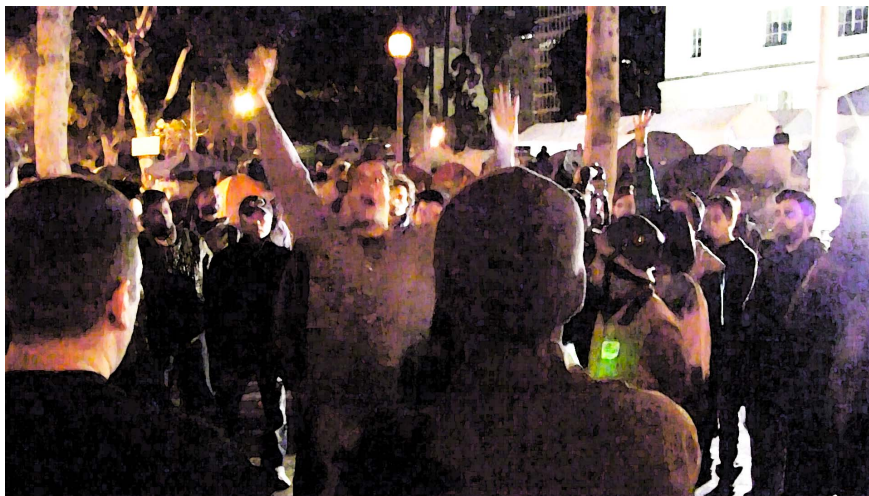


Figure 49. NAT (center with arms raised) becomes an impromptu Moderator.

Excerpt 18 – Split GA 10-26-2011-South Plaza-Impromptu Moderator

1. NAT: Wa- wa- wa- wa- wa- WAIT. (*both arms up high palms forward*)
2. One second one second one second (*claps hands together once*)
3. We’ve assembled together toda::y- to talk (*approaching REX and pointing to him, putting his hand on REX’s shoulder*) GO. (.) TALK.
- 4.
5. REX: They won’t let me talk.
6. NAT: Talk.



Figure 50. REX (left) gets the floor with help from NAT (right), who has become an impromptu Moderator

Once REX had secured the floor, with the assistance of NAT, he began to detail how he had witnessed certain OLA participants exiting City Hall, walking around the block, and later taking part in the proceedings at the General Assembly, presumably without informing those assembled of their activities. He asserts that those participants are working in collusion with officials inside City Hall to “give you somethin’ to fight over every night and break your fuckin’ spirits every night.” His performance provides a kind of testimony toward the larger project of critiquing the process of the General Assembly and questioning the power behind it.

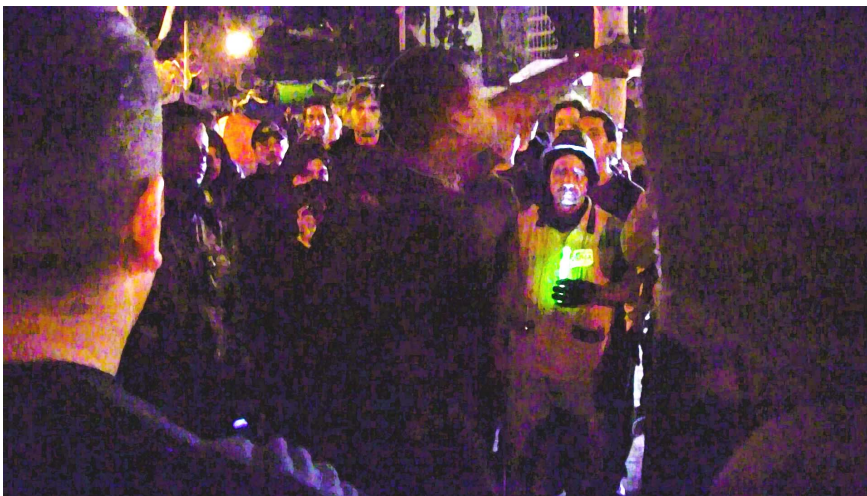


Figure 51. REX points toward City Hall and the south steps accusingly.

Excerpt 19 – Split GA 10-26-2011-South Plaza -Controlled GA

1. REX: I walked right there, (.) and I sat (.) right (.) on that step.
2. And I watched them as they march round the whole block.
3. And as people still stood here, as far as people that go up in the
4. City Council every day, and make the decisions behind your back,
5. and then come out here to General Assembly.
6. And give you somethin' to fight over every night
7. And break your fuckin' spirits EVERY NIGHT.



Figure 52. REX testifies before the impromptu assembly.

After this initial testimony and accusation, REX goes on to detail how certain OLA participants with strong political party affiliations are using OLA participants for their own purposes. Toward the end of his floor time, REX declares that he's not lying, another testimony-like feature of his performance. He concludes with the popular expression, "And if you don't know this, then now you know" which garners applause from those assembled. It is interesting to note his use of this expression as an indication of the audience's new epistemic status as a result of his speech. Thus, by using this expression, REX holds the assembled participants accountable for this testimony and thus for whatever further action its implications might require.

Two more speakers came to the center of the circle. The first was a participant who had been to other Occupy sites across the country. He admonishes participants not to act out on their

own “personality” or “ego” problems. During his talk, in which no human mic is used, a woman on the outer edge of the circle calls “Mic check!” in what can be interpreted as a request for volume or the human mic in order to hear the speaker, who is speaking rather quietly for such a large gathering. Her call is ignored, as REX had established from the beginning of the impromptu assembly that he did not want any “mic checks” and had in fact threatened to leave if the human mic was employed. Thus, within a gathering topically focused on and opposing exclusion, participants outside the closest area within the tight circle were effectively barred from monitoring the proceedings by not being able to hear the speaker.

The next speaker, JEP, who was already standing near the inner circle area, is then pointed at by NAT, who had been continuing to function as a Moderator. After he was selected in this way, he began with a call of “Mic Check!” very loudly to secure the attention of participants. Although a few participants repeat the mic check (responding to the call), others respond with a condemnation of the mic check delivered with intense antagonism. PTS below refers to a handful of participants. PT1 and PT2 are other individual participants.

Excerpt 20 – Split GA 10-26-2011-South Plaza –No Mic Check

1. JEP: MIC CHECK.
2. PTS: Mic [check.
3. PT1: [No mic check.
4. NAT: NO MIC CHECKS, NO MIC CHECKS
5. PT2: FUCK your mic check.
6. NAT: Speak, just speak.

Atkinson (1982) writes that:

(G)iven that some of the interactional details that tend to be singled out as evidence of 'excessive formality' appear to be relevant for the monitorability of speaking in public (and are to be found in a very wide variety of multi-party settings), the only practical way of achieving 'greater informality' might be to exclude the public so that participants could talk 'more conversationally'. But if there are other grounds for concern about the prospects of holding hearings behind closed doors, there may be practical limits on how

far the elimination of practices describable as 'formal' should be pursued by would-be reformers. (Atkinson 1982:114)

As participants admonished the speaker and refused the use of the human mic, many interested participants remained frustrated in the out fringes of the circle, unable to hear the proceedings going on inside. Thus, the inherent tension between formality and informality persisted. Atkinson argues that an orientation to:

... actions as 'formal' as a preliminary to constructing arguments about the 'oppressive', 'bewildering' and 'intimidating' character of such actions is likely to be stronger on recommendations for their elimination or modification than on the identification of basic organizational problems (such as accomplishing and sustaining shared attentiveness, topical relevance, turn-taking, etc.) that may nonetheless have to be resolved somehow or other. (Atkinson 1982:115)

This phenomenon can be observed in the stances taken toward aspects of process that had become standard operating procedures at the General Assembly, such as the mic check. Many participants at the impromptu assembly expressed disdain for the people's mic, but willfully ignored the visibility and audibility difficulties experienced by participants outside the inner circle of activity.

A few minutes later, as it was becoming apparent that this impromptu assembly was occupying an overlapping space and time with the scheduled General Assembly and capturing the attention of many regular GA attenders, a member of the Facilitation Committee approached. This Fac team member, referred to here as SOL, immediately upon gaining the floor, offers a gloss of his interpretation of the reasons behind the dissenting meeting.

Excerpt 21– Split GA 10-26-2011 – South Plaza – Left out of GA

1. SOL: Hey guys, hey I know I know we're all havin',
2. or you all're havin' this meeting here because you
3. feel left out of this General Assembly,
4. PT1: It's not- NO. [No, it's not that

5. PT2: [No
6. PT1: It's not that.
7. SOL: (*arms up, palms out*) Ok, OK, fine fine-
8. PT1: It's just the fact that we haven't even [had THIS MUCH CONVERSATION
9. PT3: [This is the anti-GA.
10. PT4: We've never had this much conversation since we've been here.

The participants take issue with his reductionist gloss of their stance as “feeling left out.” Rather, the grievance is given in communicative terms, in that “we haven't even had this much conversation.” This comment, uttered by PT1 in line 8, and then echoed by PT4 in line 10, interestingly uses the term “conversation” itself, indexing the informality of naturally occurring everyday conversation as opposed to the formality of practices developed to facilitate multi-party speech exchange systems (Atkinson 1982).

A moment later, SOL broaches the topic of space. As this discussion is taking place, some GA regulars are assembling at the south steps, several yards north of where their circle has formed in the plaza. Pressure is mounting in terms of who will occupy the south plaza and what activity will take place there. SOL attempts to obtain a clear statement of intent from the alternative group, despite being heckled by a few participants and the general confusion.

Excerpt 22 – Split GA 10-26-2011 – South Plaza -Taking the Space

1. SOL: We- we did- we were gonna do GA an' scheduled it
2. and I understand you guys wanna occupy this space
3. and do your meeting, I just wanna let you know,
4. if we- if you wanna participate in the GA and do it we can do that,
5. and if you stay here and occupy this space,
6. well you stay here and occupy this space-
7. PT3: Tha:::ts exactly
8. SOL: and that's BEAUtiful-
9. PT5: [This is the people speaking.
10. PT3: [Right on.
11. SOL: That's the point.
12. PT3: What's the point then.
13. SOL: And if (.) if you wanna mo:ve,
14. PT3: We don't.
15. SOL: To some other space so that some people

16. can have GA cause we do have many
17. important issues to discuss tonight regarding foo:d (.)
18. infrastructure (.) um ahh ahh umm a lawsuit-
19. NAT: OK this is the people's-
20. SOL: OK so if you wanna stay here, stay here.
21. It's a beautiful thing a beautiful thing

At this point the Fac team member (SOL) has moved several paces northward toward the plaza steps and the regular GA area. As he does so, NAT begins to draw a physical distinction between the GA and this new group. As this new group is emerging as a separate entity in the eyes of participants, NAT offers a name for this new body. At first NAT calls the new group the “people’s forum.” However, another participant (PT6) recycles part of this utterance but changes “forum” to “assembly.” NAT then repeats this utterance, raising his arms as in an announcement. It is in this way that the alternative assembly came to be called the “People’s Assembly.”

Excerpt 23– Split GA 10-26-2011–South Plaza–People’s Assembly

1. NAT: That’s the GA, this is the people’s forum.
2. This is the people’s forum. We will stay here.
3. And if you (.) want to come to the people’s forum-
4. PT6: This is the People’s Assembly
5. NAT: This is the People’ Assembly (*arms raised, as an announcement*)
6. (*to Fac member*) And if the General Assembly wants to speak
7. to the People’s Assembly, then they can have a meeting with us.
8. (*turning away from Fac member to People’s Assembly crowd*)
9. OK, don’t you realize that your decisions are being made FOR you.
10. Don’t you realize that everything is under their control.
11. We did not CONSENT to this (*arm outstretched toward plaza steps*)
12. We are the people. We will be HEARD.
13. PT2: People before process.
14. NAT: People before process.
15. PT7: Hey, I told ‘em the easiest way. Bring the fuckin’ GA to us.
16. Bring us the microphone.
17. NAT: Bring the GA to us.
18. PT7: Under our forum. Under ou:::r moderation.
19. PT5: Yeah, right. Right. That’s the only way we’re gonna build some organic
20. organization ((outta)) here.

Once the name of the new assembly is established in lines 4 and 5, NAT, who has been functioning as Moderator throughout this sequence, immediately assumes a representational role for the new assembly by pronouncing, in lines 6-7, to the receding Fac team member SOL, “And if the General Assembly wants to speak to the People’s Assembly, then they can have a meeting with us.” Ironically, immediately following this statement in which NAT has spoken for the new group without any explicit consent from the participants, he utters, in lines 9-11, “OK, don’t you realize that your decisions are being made FOR you. Don’t you realize that everything is under their control. We did not CONSENT to this.” Thus even within a multi-party setting explicitly engaged in the rejection of implicit, covert, or non-consented-to representation, representation emerges. Later in the extract, in line 13, the cry of “People over process” appears again, and is echoed in line 14 by NAT. In lines 15-18, the participants build upon various demands centering around the idea of bringing the GA and its accoutrements (both physical, as in an actual microphone and speaker system, and processual, as in *their* moderation) to the newly formed People’s Assembly.

The following discussion involves analysis of action which took place on the same night and which explicitly addresses displeasure with a particular hand signal at Occupy LA. This critique is of the narrower processual type. The critique was made some time later in the evening at the north steps of LA City Hall, where the General Assembly had moved to allow the newly formed People’s Assembly to occupy the south plaza. The hand signal that was critiqued was the signal for “Time’s Up.” The Times Up hand signal had consistently been a point of contention, with some participants preferring strict timekeeping allotment rules and some preferring the notion of a speaker speaking until he or she felt satisfied. Also, personalities, styles, stances, and alliances often came into play over floor time. If a speaker was garnering the widespread display

of spirit fingers, as well as an energetic performance of the human mic among participants, it was more likely that her going over the allotted floor time would be overlooked.



Figure 53. Time's Up hand signal

Conversely, if a speaker was propounding an idea largely disfavored by the assembled participants, it was more likely that participants would use the Times Up hand signal at or just past the Timekeeper's performance of the signal. In the absence of a Timekeeper, these preferences became even more pronounced. In fact, the Times Up hand signal would often be preceded by two other hand signals – indicating a trajectory of dissatisfaction in the displayed stances of those assembled. In situations such as these, many participants first displayed the Disagreement hand signal. After a period in which a large number of participants continued to display Disagreement, the hand signal changed to the Wagon Wheel/Wrap it Up signal. If the speaker continued beyond this point, participants would move on to the Time's Up signal.

In the excerpt below, OLA participant AMY states that this hand signal is intimidating for speakers and contributes to people not being heard properly within assembly process. She asserts that some participants are not attending the General Assemblies because of this, and not because, as had been claimed by some, they are just “a bunch of drum circle hippies that just wanna smoke weed.” KAY and PAT below refer to two other assembly participants.

Excerpt 24 Split GA – 10-26-2011-North Steps – Hand Signal Critique

1. AMY: (*walks to stage area*) Um obviously some people
2. have a problem with the process because they don't
3. feel like their voice is getting heard and obviously it's
4. not a bunch of drum circle hippies that just wanna
5. smoke weed. The reason they haven't been showing up
6. to the to the main GA -they haven't felt like they've
7. been heard. and now they're over there and their having
8. their own GA and nobody's doing this (*performing time's up hand signal*)
9. and everybody's getting time to talk.
10. KAY: Right.
11. PAT: Yeah.
12. AMY: So actually that GA's going a lot smoother than this one,
13. just so you know.
14. AMY: Cause this is very intimidating (*performing time's up motion again*) Is it not?

In line 8, AMY argues that at the alternative assembly that is taking place in the south plaza, no one is “doing this.” As she utters *this*, AMY performs the Time’s Up hand signal several times. In line 9, AMY comments that everyone at the other assembly is “getting time to talk.” Thus, the central critique AMY levels at the process involves the attainment and length of floor time, and how the Time’s Up hand signal can be used to move participants off the floor, effectively silencing them. In line 12, after two participants have displayed agreement with AMY, she adds that the other assembly is “going a lot smoother than this one.” This is an interesting assertion, as it is attuned not to the level of formality of the alternative assembly as against the perceived openness of an informal conversation, but rather makes a holistically evaluation of the overarching functioning of the alternative assembly. Her assertion that the People’s Assembly is “going a lot smoother than this one” points to possibilities for alternative organization which is based on observation of interactional function in multi-party settings rather than built as a reaction against perceived formality.

A central concern in the observation and analysis of multi-party interaction involves how participants manage the interactional problems that emerge in these settings. One concern is how

participants manage turn-taking, another involves how hearers may access the speaker visually as well as how speakers can monitor the stances of listeners and check for focused attention (Atkinson 1982). These questions become more salient still in the context of an egalitarian deliberative assembly in which participants are opposed to perceived inequities or hierarchies.

The term “the process” describes the whole set of formal (Atkinson 1982) practices which developed in response to these questions and concerns. These embodied and processual tools employed to facilitate action and projects at OLA had many influential antecedents, including Quaker practice and Indignado practice. A key component in the practice of assembly process at Occupy LA was the Facilitation team. This team was tasked with facilitating a smooth running, efficient, and horizontal assembly. The Facilitation Committee was responsible for planning GA agendas and facilitating the proposal process. The Facilitation team included specific roles such as: Moderator, Stacker, Timekeeper, Minute-Taker, and sometimes Peacekeeper. Participants rotated roles and consistently sought new volunteers to take on these roles. These roles were differentiated in their duties, with the Moderator (or Co-Moderators) performing the most labor-intensive role at the assembly. Stackers, responsible for keeping a list or “stack” of participants wanting the floor, practiced “progressive stacking,” a system for ordering the names on that list to explicitly facilitate the assembly’s hearing the voices of women and people of color.

The regular but still somewhat flexible program agenda planned by the Facilitation team each night contained elements designed to socialize newcomers, build community, and find consensus on proposals. The welcoming of newcomers and demonstration of hand signals in the beginning portion of the General Assembly encouraged participation and fostered solidarity among participants, as well as helping to socialize newcomers to the GA process. The regular

reading of the OWS Principles of Solidarity provided newcomers with an ideological set through which to interpret the unfolding action at the GA and highlighted participants' attested shared values.

Proposals brought before the GA were required to follow a basic format: a three-part *What Why How* format. The process of coming to consensus on a proposal also followed a basic format, with elaborations dependent on the particulars of its reception. First, a proposal text was read aloud to the assembly by the proposers. Then questions of clarity were asked, that is, questions about what the proposal is actually proposing, until the entire assembly felt confident that they understood the proposal itself. After this, participants voiced concerns about points within the proposal or the entire idea, explaining their reasoning. Following this, amendments to the proposal text were suggested. The proposal process was sometimes quick and often arduous. After these steps were followed, and if it appeared as if the group was moving toward consensus, a temperature check (or straw poll) was taken. Moderators solicited the displays of hand signals: agree/spirit fingers; concerns/disagree; or hard block. These displays made visible participants' stances toward the current form of the proposal. If most participants were performing spirit fingers to indicate agreement and there were no hard blocks, the Moderator announced that consensus was reached.

Consensus process is qualitatively different from majoritarian voting. One way to contrast consensus process with majority voting is as collaboration versus contestation. Consensus-seeking at Occupy LA was explicitly distinguished from voting. Participants were careful to point out this distinction and correct newcomers who used the latter term. One key difference between consensus and voting observable in OLA practice was exemplified in the hard block, a hand signal which, when displayed, enabled a single participant to stop a proposal

even if every other participant present was in support of it. Because of this affordance, reaching consensus could become “an elaborate and difficult process,” but one in which, theoretically, “no one walks away feeling that their views have been totally ignored” (Graeber 2004: 89).

Complicating this principle, the special agency of the individual endowed by the hard block made the OLA GA vulnerable to unserious or insincere blocks, which could derail an otherwise positively-received proposal. This vulnerability was heightened due to the open and shifting nature of the participant group at the GA. No membership or tenure was required in order to influence the group’s actions. A newcomer could perform a hard block on her first night at the GA. Because of this, special conditions for the performance of the hard block were developed, so that a hard blocker was required to explain the nature of her dissent to the assembly.

Despite attested and observed efforts to develop and manage large-group participatory democratic practice in horizontal ways at the OLA General Assembly, some participants resisted and contested “the process.” This contestation was expressed as “People over Process,” an expression that indexed a view of assembly process as repressive and/or inauthentic. “People over Process” indexed two levels of critique. The first involved a view of the General Assembly as overly formalized, stifling and inflexible. The second involved a suspicion that the GA itself functioned as a kind political theater in which certain participants would guide discourse toward pre-agreed-upon ends. The interrelationship between these two critiques emerges in communicative practice in terms of the attainment of floor time and the informality of proceedings. Tensions between “formality” and “informality” emerge in addressing the interactional problems inherent to certain multi-party settings (Atkinson 1982). Formality as the practical application of specific procedures for multi-party settings was sometimes interpreted as

a formality that indexed more permanent asymmetries of access. These tensions and contestations sometimes became explicit challenges at the General Assembly.

Chapter 7: Group Authorship



Figure 54. Participants hold a special meeting to brainstorm and collaborate on the Response.

This chapter touches upon some aspects of the activities of OLA that took place outside the real time, interactive face-to-face space of assembly. Online communication, such as list serves, served a very important role in the organization of the OLA GA and in facilitating general communication (including vitriol) between participants. These alternative media influenced the assembly and also comprised forms of group activity. Although this dissertation does not take electronically mediated deliberative democracy as its main focus, this field of research is growing as internet use continues to increase both in terms of the number of users and the number of activities they engage in online. As discussed above, at OLA, physical presence for consensus was observed, other mediums as well as forums were used to collaborate on actions and create proposals and other documents.

Group authorship is often viewed as an artistic endeavor or, in legislation, as a contest of wills and interests. These aspects are indeed intrinsic to any process of group collaboration toward an inscribed product. However, the necessary social sedimentation of substrates and in situ processes that facilitate such endeavors will be analyzed here. This section focuses on the combinatorial and co-operative nature of a key part of a group authorship process as it developed at the General Assembly of Occupy Los Angeles (OLA) in November, 2011.

On November 23, 2011, the night before Thanksgiving, Occupy LA participants gathered at the south steps of City Hall to hold their nightly General Assembly (GA). The nightly ritual of the GA began at 7:30 and attendance typically fluctuated between 75-400 participants. Winter temperatures (albeit LA winter temperatures) were setting in, and violent police raids on Occupy encampments had been sweeping across the country in the weeks prior. These prior events can be said to have imbued the assembly at OLA with a palpable sense of impending violence, and a seriousness of purpose. A brief selection of this context is given here: On October 25th, Occupy Oakland was raided – a raid which resulted in the critical injury of veteran Scott Olsen. Tear gas, flash bang grenades, rubber bullets, and the LRAD (Long Range Acoustic Device, also known as a sonic cannon or sound cannon and which emits pain-inducing tones over long distances) were used. On November 15th, Occupy Wall Street, New York was raided. There were media blackout zones, beatings and arrests of journalists, as well as tear gas and projectile weapons used by police. Also on November 15th, in Seattle, 84-year-old Dorli Rainey, along with many others, were tear-gassed by police – an image that sickened even the generally complacent. On November 18th the now infamous Lt. John Pike pepper-sprayed a group UC Davis student protestors while they were seated on the ground.

In the early period of the encampment, Occupy LA had been granted City Council approval. This official approval had resulted in a feeling of safety from imminent police raids or pointed harassment relative to other Occupy sites. This shared affect of (at least temporary) safety had been partly constituted in early city liaison meetings between a small group of organizers and city officials, including police force and mayor's office representatives. However, the assembly-movement nature of Occupy posed a new set of challenges to these experienced organizers and legal consultants. The encampment developed its own internal life in practices of consensus-building in both committee and general assembly contexts. LA Occupiers came to regard the General Assembly as the main decision-making body of the Occupation, and began to demonstrate mistrust in the fundamental assumptions of representation, coupled with a perceived lack of transparency and accountability to the assembly. Further, there were rumors and reports of shifting and mutable offers allegedly made and rescinded by the City, such as an office space, a piece of land for farming, and some emergency shelter beds for the homeless in exchange for evacuating City Hall Park.



Figure 55. Participants review Response text in breakout groups at the GA, Nov.23, 2011.

7.1 Multimediated Authorship

Goodwin (2012: 2) writes that combinatorial “action configurations typically occur within a public environment, specifically one in which separate parties can see and operate on the materials that provide structure for the organization of specific forms of action.” This property of the public nature of an environment that enables participants’ operations and informs their actions speaks to a macroscopic understanding of the assembly process. The assembly as a decision-making body must make public the stances of participants both sequentially and simultaneously. A study of the features of the assembly phenomenon in action can provide access into the socially constituted, sequential and simultaneous resources that are developed to engage in joint projects.

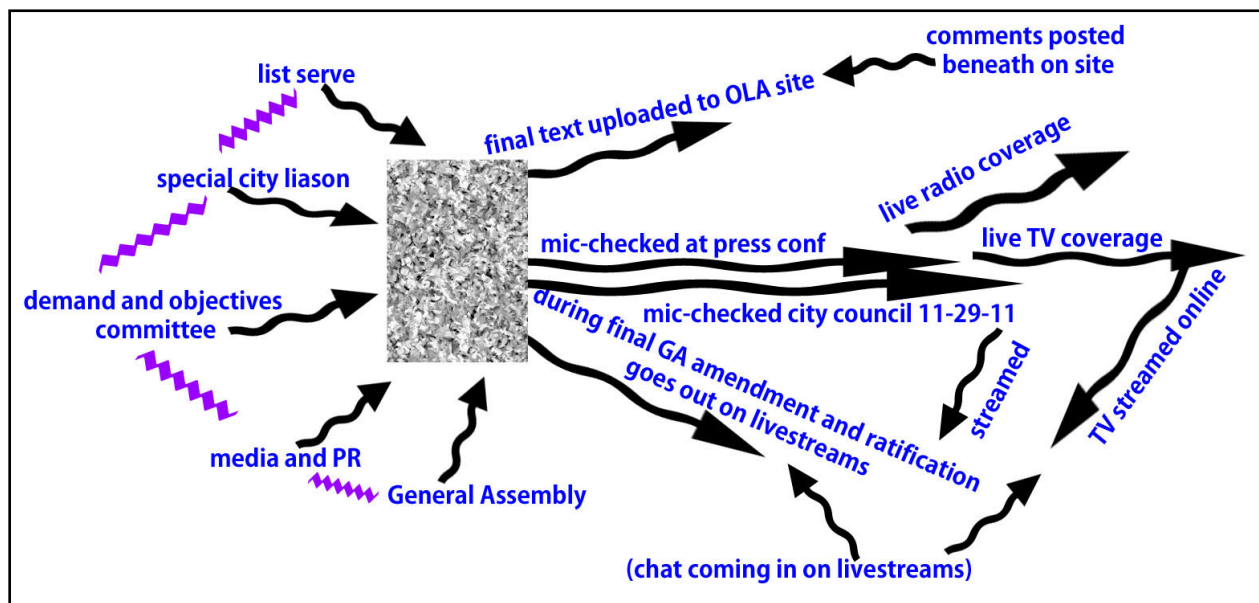


Figure 56. The multi-mediated creation and dissemination of the Response.

The joint project discussed here is the group-authored document “The General Assembly’s Response to the City of Los Angeles.” This document (referred to as the Response)

represents a self-defining moment in the story of Occupy Los Angeles and the Occupy movement nationwide. Its inscription through various media has determined the use of the word “document” to describe this collection of utterances, stances, and arguments which sedimented into the Response. Goodwin (2012:3) writes that humans possess “the ability to build action in concert with others while performing systematic operations on a substrate accumulated through historical sedimentation.” The map of the multi-mediated life of the Response below points to both the Response itself as a substrate emergent from historical sedimentation and subject to intervention as well as its connection in this capacity to the mediums that it passes through, including the contexts of discussion as social substrates.

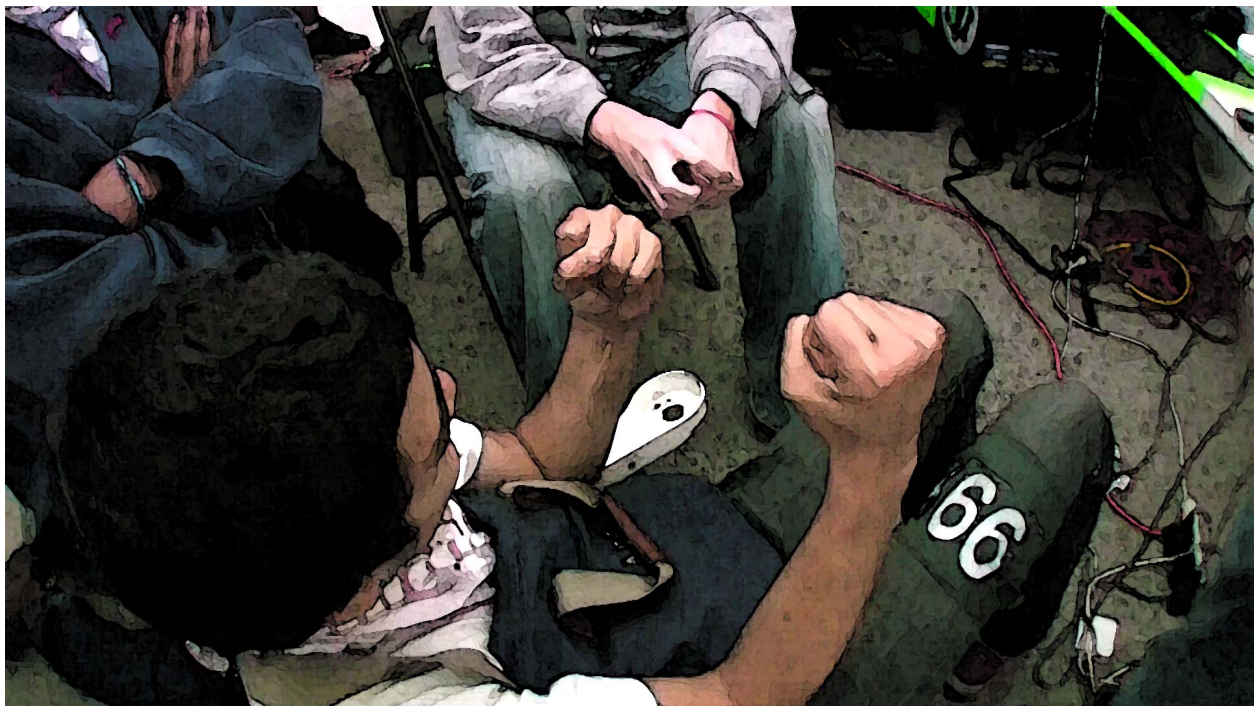


Figure 57. A participant reacts to the mic checking of the Mayor as he listens from outside City Hall in the OLA Media tent to the live FM radio coverage of the press conference.

A comprehensive and exhaustive description and analysis of the map of the multi-mediated life of the Response is not within the scope of this dissertation, but the graphic

visualization provides a snapshot of the multi-temporal, multi-party, and of course multi-mediated nature of the creation and dissemination of the Response. Instead this examination will focus on the last GA meeting in which the final version of the Response was discussed, amended and ratified. Before going into finer detail, three key ethnographic features of the Response should be mentioned. 1) The interactive, participatory, collaborative group authorship of the document and its ratification through a consensus process was realized by participants as a reaction and response to obscured political maneuvering as well as a conscious exemplar of radical inclusion and transparency 2) Apparent in the final text, discussion by participants strengthened and interdiscursively elaborated the stance of the local encampment in relation to contemporary and previous national and global social justice struggles; and 3) Associations between the occupation of outdoor space, occupation without permission, and ‘revolution’ were drawn against those of the utility of office space, legitimation by permission, and ‘reform’. These last were additionally colored by highly salient issues of access, homelessness, and business hours. The co-operative crafting of the Response itself can be viewed as a delayed but inevitable individuation process in which Occupy LA found its voice and inscribed its collective register.



Figure 58. OLA participants read from the proposed Response text.

7.2 Candidate Lamination

During the GA in which the final version of the Response was ratified, a proposed version (which had been compiled and created in multiple settings and mediums outlined in the map above) was read by members of the assembly. Participants organized themselves with different speakers in turn reading each portion of the proposed Response. Ninety-nine copies of the proposed form of the response were passed out to the crowd, but the assembly totaled well over 300, so most participants listened to this candidate lamination as it was read aloud. The proposed response can be referred to as a *candidate lamination* in that participants are enacting a co-operational process of consensus and ratification. Although any action, stance, or participant role can be said to be a lamination if it is indeed embodied, a candidate lamination can be detected by the way participants orient to its bearing on the “record.” The record in this case can function as a historically sedimented substrate in which parts, qualities, and implications for future action become relevant to current and future participants.

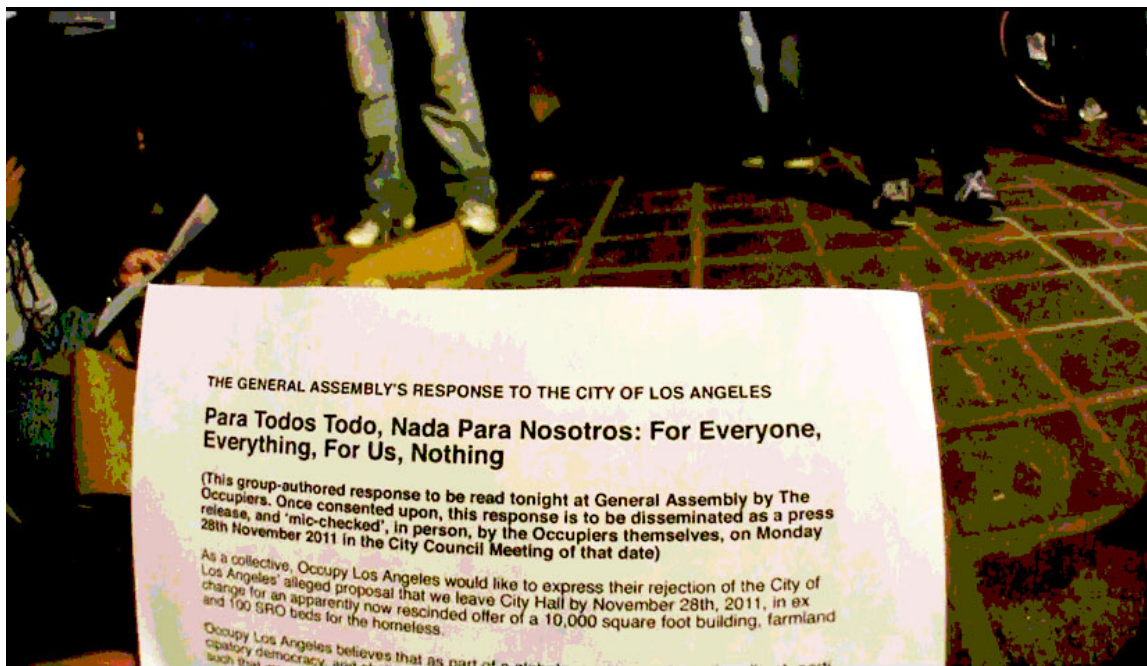


Figure 59. Proposed Response document, OLA GA Nov. 23, 2011.

Another explicit example of candidate laminations can be found in pedagogy, as “answers” given in the forms of utterances or physical actions can propose an agreement in the forms and functions of the historical substrate. As the entire proposed form of the Response brought to assembly on November 23 can be said to be a candidate lamination, so also can each proposed “amendment” to the form of the Response. After the proposed form was read aloud, several amendments to the wording and ideas contained therein were proposed. The emergent proposal and amendment process, which from the first day of the encampment underwent changes in its formal organization, can be said to itself be a historically sedimented substrate through which the substrate of the proposed Response could be acted upon. In this strip of action, participants oriented to the proposed form of the Response as a substrate that could be intervened upon through a process of candidate laminations and de-laminations. The following section will examine an instance of this co-operative process.

Joe comes before the assembly during a period which has been announced as open for questions and amendments. He positions his body in the “center stage” area of action. This area is typically characterized by a semi-circle comprised of members of the Facilitation Committee (Stackers, Co-Moderators, Peacekeepers) as well as current proposers if there is a proposal “on the table.” This semi-circle faces toward the larger part of the assembly. On this occasion, downstage (toward the audience) faced north toward the City Hall building, and assembly participants were largely seated on the steps of the building facing south. This arrangement was most typical of GAs during the OLA encampment period of 2011, as the south steps of City Hall provided amphitheater-like advantages: enabling participants to both see and be seen by Moderators, announcers, and proposers as well as facilitating ease of hearing. The first point is especially salient in this context as, even more intensely and actively than in formal theater

settings, the actors on stage in the assembly must be able to see the hand signals used by assembly participants. Thus by stepping into the tightly controlled center stage area, Joe performs several actions. Firstly, he indicates his intention to become the central speaker. The speaker selection process in the assembly contains two or even three stages with separate participation frameworks.

An aspiring speaker must approach a Stacker (or a Shadow Stacker, who assists the Stackers, if the assembly is very large) and have his or her name put on the list. This interaction takes place “in the wings” in order to facilitate the smooth operation of the central action, i.e. center stage. As an aspiring speaker interacts with a Stacker, he or she moves closer to the center stage area, and after being put on stack (the list), waits his or her turn. Often, in addition to providing a name, an aspiring speaker must provide an ascription of the action he or she wishes to perform on stage, e.g. a question, an amendment, a concern etc. (Interestingly, these ascriptions were often either intentionally or unintentionally mischaracterizations on the part of the aspiring speaker, and the assembly, led by Facilitation, became especially sensitive to these distinctions, as they had the potential to redirect the formal organization of proposal process.) The aspiring speaker’s turn is usually announced by the Moderator, who formally selects the aspiring speaker by calling his or her name, often followed by the attested ascription, as in “Now we have Gustavo with a question.” This formalized sequential system was initially partially borrowed (from assembly process in Spain and elsewhere) as well as spontaneous, and over time decomposed, reconstituted, sedimented, and progressively formalized and adapted to the local ecology. Joe’s turn, an amendment, escaped formal announcement by one of the co-Moderators (FC1 and FC2) partly because he stepped in front of the mods while they were leading a solidarity call-and-response chant. He had, however, been ratified a moment earlier by the

exchange of gaze and hand signals between the mods and a Stacker, who pointed to Joe as being next as Joe approached the stage. Often, unratified (by a Stacker) aspiring speakers would encounter resistance in their attempt to physically enter or remain in the center stage area. This phenomenon points to the participants' complex transformative co-operations on the flat plane of the concrete with the use of their bodies and participant roles. Center stage at the assembly exemplifies Goodwin's co-operative transformation zone in a number of ways. The physical space itself is created by participants' bodily orientations, transforming the flat plane of the concrete into a stage with a number of concentric participant frameworks. Additionally, the consensus process of proposal ratification takes place as an interaction between center stage actors and the assembly at large. The decisions reached in this manner are of consequence to the participants themselves and become part of the official record of the assembly's actions, inscribed and posted online as minutes and passed proposals. Thus the assembly itself could be referred to as a *body of consequence*. The locus of the historical sedimentation of group consensus is center stage at the assembly. The ideas expressed, negotiated, and ratified by the assembly form a substrate which creates and maintains group identity and the formation of new members while also allowing for the decomposition and re-interpretation of past process and actions.

Joe's amendment addressed one of the demands listed in the proposed form of the Response. This particular demand dealt with the South Central farm, a 14-acre piece of land that had been held by a co-operative of certain Los Angeles community members and used as a subsistence farm and cultural and political locus for them and their families between 1994 and 2006. After a long legal battle, the farmers were evicted by the Sheriff's department. The lot currently remains empty and fallow. Joe's amendment deals with specifying that the land be

returned to the same community members who previously farmed it, rather than simply giving it to “middle-class white kids” from Occupy LA. Joe comes to center stage with the paper on which is printed the proposed form of the Response. He holds this piece of paper in his hand throughout his amendment-making and often shakes the paper for emphasis. Thus the paper in Joe’s hand on which is inscribed the proposed form of the Response also becomes the symbol for the ideas contained therein and the substrate to be intervened on.

In the following strip, ASM refers to the assembly members in general, that is, a large proportion of them. ASX refers to a single participant out of the camera’s view. ASY refers to another out of frame participant. ASX and ASY only refer to consistent participants when they appear in close proximity either to themselves or each other in the transcript. Otherwise, they are used for any unidentifiable participant out of frame.

Excerpt 25 – OLA GA 11-23-2011 – Joe’s candidate lamination to the Response

10 Joe: I would like ta a:sk,
 11 ASM: I would like to ask.
 12 Joe: If you would modify number four,
 13 ASM: If you would modify number four,
 14 Joe: South Central Farm to be returned to the people of Los Angeles.
 15 ASM: South Central Farm to be returned to the people of Los Angeles.
 16 Joe: And specify:: thad=is to be re- (*NSS gesture to assembly*)
 17 ASM: And specify:,
 18 Joe: Thad=is to be retu:rned, [to the people, of the communities,
 19 ASX: [that it is to be returned
 20 Joe: of Los Angeles, that had it be↑fore,
 21 ASY: =Mic check (*in distance*)
 22 ASX: thad=it (.) [people that had it before
 23 ASM: the communities of Los Angel[es that had it before

In the strip above, Joe extracts a specific idea from the inscribed proposal, which he holds in his hand, as he reads a phrase from the page. His amendment contains a candidate lamination on the substrate of the proposed



Response which includes the key phrases “be returned,” “people,” “communities,” and “had it before.”

Much later in the transcript, even after the amendment is ratified, these elements are recycled.

However, in lines 51 and 56 these phrases no longer refer to a candidate lamination but a lamination which has become part of the record and successfully transformed the substrate of the proposed Response. In line 53, Joe is assured that the assembly has indeed ratified his proposed amendment. He acknowledges this in line 54 and leaves the stage area.

Excerpt 26 – OLA GA 11-23-2011 – Joe’s lamination transforms the Response

50 ASX: °Return to what? Whattis he saying?
51 ASY: [°Return to the people that (had it) befo:re.
52 Joe: [(to PP2) Would you (ta uh temperature about) that? (*gesture to wrist*)
53 PP2: They just said ye:s. [Everyone just said hh-hh-yea. (*arm raised twinkle*)
54 Joe: [°OK alright thank you (*walking away from stage*)
55 FC1: (...)[(to PP2, smiling *swings both arms up and down*)
56 ASY: [To the communities that had it befo[re,

The people’s mic is in use during this strip. It should be noted that in a sense the people’s mic could be regarded as a compound or combinatorial tool. Firstly, it is indeed a formalized tool which is built to address specific problems and needs in the local environment. Secondly, the tool requires the use of multiple bodies and semiotic resources. Further, this tool presumably was developed in a specific setting but has been historically sedimented and passed or shared between analogous ecologies. Multiple or *compound stance* can be achieved using the people’s mic and hand signals. The multimodal simultaneous use of hand signals and the people’s mic allows for double and possibly multiple stances to be realized through the body of a single participant.

In this strip one key feature related to the people’s mic is the way that Joe in line 16 orients both to himself and to the assembly. NSS refers to ‘next speaker selection’, and indeed

Joe's gesture selects the assembly to repeat the intact part of his utterance in 16. Joe accomplishes this by using the paper held up in his right hand and bringing it down and toward his torso. Thus the tool of inscription which he uses to refer to demand number four now becomes an extension of focus for his gestural selection of the assembly (as the people's mic) as next speaker.

Excerpt 27 - Joe selects assembly



- 16 Joe: And specify:: thad=is to be re- (*NSS gesture to assembly*)
17 ASM: And specify:,
18 Joe: Thad=is to be retu:rned,

Joe provides a brief story which serves as an account for his proposed amendment. The story deals with accusations he read on the internet. Joe is clear to distinguish in the story-telling that the sentiment he will convey is not his, that is, that he is not the Principal or Author of it. He does this explicitly invoking that he himself was shocked to see something on the internet. Then in line 34 he identifies himself as the messenger with the common expression “Don’t shoot the messenger.” As if to secure this lamination he follows this utterance with “Don’t shoot me.” Thus he recycles the “Don’t shoot” portion of the expression and changes the object from “the messenger” to “me”.

Excerpt 28 - Joe claims non-Principal status

24 Joe: The reason I say that,
25 ASM: The reason I say that.
26 Joe: Is I was loo:ki:ng (.) over the internet today,
27 Joe: [and saw something that
28 ASM: [I was looking over the internet today [and
29 FC1: [and saw something=
30 Joe: =that shocked me.
31 ASM: That shocked me.
32 Joe: And (0.8) a (0.5) po:sting that said, (.)
33 ASM: And a posting that said.
34 Joe: Now=don't=shoot=the=messenger.Don't=shoot=me.
35 ASM: Now don't shoot the messenger don't shoot me,
36 Joe: That the white middle class kids,
37 ASM: That the white middle class kids.
38 Joe: at Occupy Los Angeles,
39 ASM: at Occupy Los Angeles,
40 Joe: were trying to grab the farm for themselves.
41 ASM: were trying to grab the farm for themselves.

By anchoring and accounting for his proposed amendment with reference to internet allegations, Joe and the assembly act not only on the substrate of the proposed Response but on the substrate of online concerns of unnamed others who post on the internet. Goodwin (2003:327) writes that, “The speaker’s invocation of multiple settings thus creates the possibility for a dialogue of contexts.” This story brings together multiple actors, mediums, and time frames within the action at hand, i.e. the amendment.

7.3 Local intersubjectivity and international solidarity



Figure 60. Global solidarity banner hangs above a tent at Occupy Los Angeles.

As outlined above, the multiplicity of Speaker/Listener/Animator/Author participant roles afforded by the people's mic combined with the possibilities for multiple simultaneous stances afforded by hand signals have implications for the building of consensus and the embodied experience of intersubjectivity. The attested solidarity among participants at Occupy assemblies extends further toward an ongoing account of international solidarity. On October 15, 2011, demonstrators marched for International Solidarity in hundreds of locations globally. International solidarity is also expressed in ongoing discourse both online and in face-to-face interaction at Occupy assemblies and actions.



Figure 61. June 15, 2011, Syntagma Square, Greece. Participants perform one-armed agreement/applause hand signal while listening to a speaker.

One way in which international solidarity is expressed is through “shout-outs” to place names. The invocation of place names can be “analogical structures figuratively keyed to narrative modes” which “straddle multiple chronotopes of ‘that-there-then’ and ‘this-here-now,’ compressing the ‘elsewhere’ with the ‘here’ of the entextualized speech event itself” (Jackson 2008: 220). This compression or intercontextuality keyed by the invocation of multiple settings “creates the possibility for a dialogue of contexts” (Goodwin 2003:327). At Occupy Los Angeles, place names have been included in key documents authored by the General Assembly, as in *The General Assembly’s Response to the City of Los Angeles* discussed above, which refers to “episodes in Oakland, Boston, New York, Portland, UC Davis and San Francisco” as well as “those further afield, in Tahrir Square in Egypt, in Madrid, Greece, London and more.”



Figure 62. Emissaries from other U.S. Occupy sites join OLA's GA before impending raid.

The inscribed shout-outs in this document and other place name shout-outs made by speakers during assembly reaffirm the stance of Occupy LA as part of a global movement, placing itself both *in* and *across* time and place. Expressed relations between contexts through place names and other “public words” (Spitulnik 1996) index historical and current ongoing relationships to align with and more specifically superimpose or declare not just common cause but living (in the sense of being currently equally experienced elsewhere) analogue state or event. The subtitle of *The General Assembly's Response* is “Para Todos Todo, Para Nosotros Nada: For Everyone, Everything, For Us, Nothing.” This slogan from the Zapatista movement invokes and enacts an interdiscursivity that not only proclaims solidarity but conjoins identity. Just as letting voices into the body through the use of the people's mic reinforces group solidarity, cohesion, and intersubjectivity among local participants, the invocation of intercontextuality through the conflating or conjoining of identity is used to promote international solidarity. Responding to provocations attempting to discredit the Zapatista

movement over issues of sexual preferences, Subcomandante Marcos released the following communique:

Marcos is gay in San Francisco, a black person in South Africa, Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Isidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, an Indigenous person in the streets of San Cristóbal, a gang-member in Neza, a rocker on campus, a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman in the Department of Defense, a feminist in a political party...an underground editor, an unemployed worker, a doctor with no office, a non-conformist student, a dissident against neoliberalism, a writer without books or readers, and a Zapatista in the Mexican Southeast. In other words, Marcos is a human being in this world ... He is every untolerated group searching for a way to speak, their way to speak. Everything that makes power and the good consciences of those in power uncomfortable-this is Marcos. (EZLN 1994: 321)

What is interesting is the interplay between this conflation/conjoining of experience and the highlighting of stark difference and contrast between subjects. Naomi Klein writes of this communiqué:

Marcos, the quintessential anti-leader, insists that his black mask is a mirror, so that 'Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa... a Zapatista in the mountains'. In other words, he is simply us: we are the leader we've been looking for... This critique of hierarchies goes far beyond charismatic leadership. Many of the participants in the anti-corporate protest movements are equally suspicious of one-size-fits-all ideologies, political parties, indeed of any group that would centralize power and organize the parts of this movement into subordinate cells and locals. (Klein 2002: 3)

Rather than erasing distinctiveness in service to the uniformity that results from vertical and centralized hierarchy, Marcos' multiple personas represent the interplay between autonomy and identification. This form of mapping the other onto the self constitutes a type of dialogical practice of international solidarity and reflects the horizontal ideologies produced and reflected in the discursive practices of Occupy assemblies.



Figure 63 - Mural at Occupy LA depicting the octopus of corruption

Chapter 8 - Conclusion

Occupy Los Angeles is situated historically within the Occupy Wall Street movement, which is deeply interconnected with the square movements, people's uprisings, and occupations across the globe that have taken place in recent years, such as the Arab Spring, Greek movement and Spanish Indignados or 15M movement. Across these social movements, the re-appropriation of public space became a highly influential precondition for an emergent form of public, large-group deliberation. The General Assembly (GA) was a regular event at Occupy sites in the U.S. At Occupy Los Angeles (OLA), participants engaged in forms of direct democratic practice with attention to attested ideologies of horizontalism and egalitarian decision-making.

This dissertation has focused on specific aspects of the discursive practices of the General Assembly process at Occupy Los Angeles and analyzed how these practices respond to the interactional problems of a large multi-party speech exchange system. *Formality* can refer to the special practices developed to address interactional problems in multi-party settings, where special challenges emerge, such as problems with visibility, audibility, and turn-taking (Atkinson 1982). The General Assembly process involved the development and use of formal embodied and processual tools and practices to address multi-party interactional problems while simultaneously reflecting the attested horizontal and egalitarian ideologies of participants. These assembly tools and practices, including the use of space, the human mic, hand signals, and agendas and facilitators, were informed by some of the communicative practices of the Quakers, anti-war movement, and feminist movements, as well as Indignado practice. Each Occupy site adapted these received practices to best suit the participants and needs of the local ecology.

The local ecology is both adapted and adapted to with attention to speaker identification and visibility and the monitoring of hearers' displays of attentiveness, as well as the facilitation of hearers' monitoring of ongoing talk (Atkinson 1982). Thus the physical space within which meetings were held was a salient aspect of General Assembly practice.

At Occupy LA, embodied and geographic space was organized to facilitate participatory democratic assembly. The occupation and reterritorialization (Goutsos & Polymeneas in press) (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, 1994) of Los Angeles City Hall Park enabled participants to experiment with forms of open-air, large-group direct democratic deliberation that many had never previously experienced. Had the occupation of the public square not taken place, the open, deliberative practices of the General Assembly would not likely have emerged. Thus, public and open meeting space was a crucial pre-condition for deliberative democracy as practiced at OLA. The internal spatial work of deliberative democratic practice involved both the creation of a space in which participants could see and hear one another and the creation of embodied and processual systems that allowed for participation to take place. This was accomplished using the existing features of the park as well as creating embodied stage areas of focused action. The largest plaza at LA City Hall Park became the regular meeting place for the GA. In this plaza, participants could be seated on the rising south steps in order to create a sunken stage area and facilitate a sustained focused attention among participants. A sunken stage area was most practical and ideologically compatible with Occupy LA, as it was accessible to all, including those for whom climbing stairs posed a significant challenge, such as those using wheelchairs. This practical consideration ultimately affirms the ideological orientations of the movement, in that access becomes an observable feature of horizontal praxis. Whereas an elevated stage area

could promote the idea of hierarchy, the sunken stage reflects egalitarian practices and principles.

Stage space was not the only practical consideration in the facilitation of a large multi-party deliberative assembly. Open park space, with its ambient noise, presents special challenges for speakers and hearers. In responding to this challenge, participants at Occupy Wall Street in New York employed an embodied amplification practice known as the human mic or people's mic, wherein listeners would repeat the utterances of the speaker, thereby assisting the speaker in speaking to further crowds, and signaling uptake to the speaker. In turn, the speaker was able to continually monitor whether participants had heard the linguistic form of the utterance. Occupy LA also adopted this practice, which, besides amplifying speakers' utterances and helping to monitor listener uptake, additionally provides other communicative affordances, such as the exercise of personal and group agency, group solidarity, and intersubjectivity.

As described in Chapter 4, the human mic can be a challenging practice to employ. Specifically, to be intelligible via human mic, a speaker must be skilled in parsing sentences into short, rhythmic phrases that can be repeated easily. Speakers who failed to parse utterances in this way encountered difficulties in speaking to the assembled participants. Additionally, the use of the human mic can be exhausting and laborious, with messages taking far longer to complete than in everyday conversation. However, many participants expressed a feeling of increased solidarity with its use, claiming that the use of the people's mic energized participants and cultivated an "egalitarian attention" among participants (Schmidt 2011). This can be expressed as the reification of ratification, as, according to the practice, any and all speakers' utterances would be repeated, regardless of whether this individual repeating the utterance agreed with it or not. The group project itself, the assembly, and participants' right to express themselves within

it, was the ultimate object of ratification as the perspectives of others were literally embodied and reproduced by all.

The human mic additionally provided opportunities to examine layered and multiple participant roles (Goffman 1981) such as Animator, Author and Principal in embodied interaction. Participants acting as human mics (Animators) could laminate the utterances they repeated with material they provided as Authors, as “to animate another’s voice gives one a marvelous opportunity to comment on it subtly” (Irvine 1996:150). Thus, the people’s mic also allowed for the expression of listener assessment and personal agency. In constituting a practice of mutual inhabitation, the people’s mic contributed to the sequential intertelling of an arrest story, facilitating the expression of a state of interexperience among participants who had undergone traumatic experiences.

The transitive or subversive mic check presents a novel tool of protest whereby the human mic, originally a solution for large-group speaker audibility and monitoring, becomes instead a tool of dissent. The subversive mic check radically alters the participation framework at a scheduled event or in a place of business. The transitive mic check challenges the current speaker and often the event itself, often contesting the significant political, economic, or cultural capital of the official event and speaker. This practice is aimed at demonstrating the capital available among participants assembled in solidarity. By using the transitive, subversive mic check, participants self-select as speakers, and inscribe the event with utterances and voices not previously expected and, indeed, often unwanted. The transitive mic check addresses perceived power asymmetries and thereby reaffirms the broader ideology of horizontalism and egalitarianism. Thus, as participants addressed the interactional problems of multi-party communication with attention to full participation, productive embodied tools emerged which

further served the wider goals of the movement. This principle is also exemplified in the emergence and use of a repertoire of hand signals employed at the General Assembly.

The hand signals used at Occupy Los Angeles GAs, discussed in Chapter 5, represent an attempt to meet interactional challenges in a way that amplified listeners' stances and facilitated participation throughout the ongoing course of action. Hand signals contributed to the interactional realization of multi-party simultaneous horizontal dialogue in a way that enabled hearers to participate as fully as possible. The many hand signals at Occupy LA were visual displays that did not interrupt talk, and thus allowed for multiple streams of simultaneous communication to take place. Hand signals, such as those for agreement and disagreement, as well as other signals, such as critiques of assembly process, constituted amplified stance displays that hearers performed during ongoing action. These displays, visually available to the speaker as well as other participants, contributed to and affected the ongoing course of action. The hand signals at OLA exemplify the different kinds of consequential semiotic resources afforded by the body with which large audiences may actively participate without producing an auditory cacophony.

When the performance of the human mic is combined with the that of hand signals, a multiplicity of speaker/listener/ animator/author participant roles may be observed. This phenomenon of compound or multiple simultaneous stances was observed at OLA, further complicating notions of how these roles may be laminated within or across the body of a single participant. These multiple or compound simultaneous stances also have implications for embodied interexperience and intersubjectivity, as well as consensus building, which was the central project of the OLA General Assembly.

In the analyses of the practices of the human mic and hand signals, a pattern can be detected in which the group, faced with the practical interactive problems of facilitating multi-party horizontal communication, develops a praxis that reaffirms its broader ideologies. This pattern is also true of the larger processual organization of assembly, referred to as “the process.” The term “the process,” discussed in Chapter 6, describes the whole set of formal (Atkinson 1982) practices that developed in response to the challenges of a large, open-air, direct participatory democratic assembly. Central questions included how participants would manage turn-taking, how diverse voices would be heard, how formal interaction would be managed locally given attested horizontal ideologies, and how consensus would be reached within an open and shifting participant group. In the context of an egalitarian deliberative assembly in which participants are opposed to perceived inequities or hierarchies, the interactional problems common to multi-party settings must be addressed in specific ways.

The Facilitation team at Occupy LA was a key component of the assembly process. Responsible for planning the nightly GA agenda and interfacing with proposers, this team was tasked with facilitating a smooth running, efficient, and horizontal assembly, and especially helping to bring the assembly to consensus while also creating space for dissenting voices. The Facilitation team included specific roles such as: Moderator, Stacker, Timekeeper, Minute-Taker, and sometimes Peacekeeper. New volunteers were constantly sought to take on these roles. Each role was differentiated in its duties, with the Moderator (or Co-Moderators) performing the most labor-intensive role at the assembly.

The GA Moderator’s job was to create every opportunity for each willing participant to contribute to the discussion in a meaningful way. The role of Moderator, distinguished from that of a Chair, rotated among participants and did imbue the participant acting as Mod with any

special authority. A competent Moderator made sure that all participants had equal access to the floor and that all questions, concerns, and amendments regarding proposals were heard by the assembly. The process which determined the selection of next speaker and acquisition of floor time also involved the Stacker(s). The stack is the list of names of participants waiting for floor time. The Stacker keeps track of this list and delivers next speakers to the Moderator, who then introduces them to the assembly. However, at Occupy sites around the country, a system referred to as *progressive stacking* was adopted to mitigate the preponderance of speakers who seemed to dominate the floor and hence create asymmetries of access. *Progressive stack* is a system for ordering participant comments so as to facilitate the assembly's hearing the voices of women and people of color. This means that the stack, or list of names, will not necessarily be followed according to the order of the participants' requests for the floor. This system puts special pressure on the Stacker, whose role must be responsive to the ongoing course of action and the participation patterns observable moment by moment. The Stacker practicing progressive stacking exemplifies the special ways in which participation, realized as speaker selection, becomes a praxis for egalitarian deliberation and consensus building.

The process of seeking consensus in assembly rather than utilizing a majoritarian voting system is meant to foster inclusion, horizontalism, and participation in which "no one walks away feeling that their views have been totally ignored" (Graeber 2004: 89). However, this process can be difficult and draining and was often fraught with contention. Critiques of the process were often expressed through the call of "People over process!" This expression indexed frustration with a process sometimes regarded as stifling, rigid, and even classist. Some participants who did not participate in the GA but were occupying City Hall Park expressed disdain for the GA's proposals, claiming that they didn't represent them or their interests. The

General Assembly itself was called into question, concerns were voiced about whether it functioned as a kind of political theater in which Facilitation Committee members and various organizers and leaders of interested groups would manipulate discourse and consensus toward their agreed-upon ends. “People over process” became a tool for contesting the interactional formalizations of the General Assembly that had larger political consequences. In this way, horizontalism was tested through the lens of interaction at the General Assembly, and remediation was called for. Throughout these contestations, tensions between conceptions of formality and informality (Atkinson 1982) were tested through interactive assembly experimentation. In addition the face-to-face interaction observed at assembly, other mediums of communication had direct influence on the proceedings at the General Assembly and consequences for Occupy Los Angeles.

As discussed in Chapter 7, other mediums of communication that OLA participants and others employed had significant influence on the interaction observed at OLA. These mediums contributed to group projects and decision-making. The analysis of the creation of OLA’s group-authored *The General Assembly’s Response to the City of Los Angeles* (Response) document shows that online communication, such as list serves, were vital components in the organization of the OLA GA, facilitating general communication between participants, and the creation of documents and proposals. Electronic media influenced the actions that took place at the GA and also comprised alternative forms of group activity. Individual participants can operate upon shared public materials in order to transform them (Goodwin 2012). The multi-mediated Response document, shared and group-authored through electronic media and at various meetings, and then read aloud over the airwaves, exemplifies a public material emergent through

the actions of participants and their historical sedimentation, transformed and subject to intervention.

In its earlier stages, the proposed Response itself can be viewed as a *candidate lamination* that participants are, through group authorship, collaboration and consensus, committing to the inscribed historical record of Occupy Los Angeles. Once completed and consented to, this candidate lamination became oriented to by participants as being on “the record,” thus imbuing the document with a consequential representational force. This representation was tied to Occupy Los Angeles specifically but, though not speaking for them, extended itself to other Occupy sites and square movements internationally, thus indexing global solidarity.

The Response document refers to “episodes in Oakland, Boston, New York, Portland, UC Davis and San Francisco” as well as “those further afield, in Tahrir Square in Egypt, in Madrid, Greece, London and more.” Global solidarity, indexed through “shout-outs” to place names, was an important feature of the communicative practice at Occupy LA. The intercontextuality of shared struggle against similar conditions outside the local context reinforced an understanding of the central principles that were being fought for and promoted a different kind of orientation to globalization, one focused on the needs of the 99%.

One critique of the Occupy movement has been that it failed to make legible demands of the political sphere. These claims of illegibility are contingent upon the assumption that the emergent assembly movements occupy the traditional extrapolitical space of the public sphere. However this orientation is unstable and shifting. It is based on the implicit acceptance of representational politics, wherein opinions are expressed in the public sphere and then acted upon in legislation by some form of representative state agent. Contemporary assembly

movements are largely characterized by wholesale disenchantment with and rejection of representational politics. The perceived illegitimacy of political systems and actors that have systematically failed to be responsive to the expressed and apparent needs of the people has given rise to this politics of occupation. Direct, participatory, deliberative democracy, with its attention to local group process and shared decision-making power, provides an enticing contrast to these unresponsive political systems.

Occupation and assembly require first and foremost the physical gathering of bodies together in space. But far more than merely gathering, these assembly movements seek to enact a praxis that provides a view of a prefigurative politics of horizontality. This ideology manifests as embodied discursive experiments in direct participatory democracy. When participants assemble to practice direct participatory democracy, systems of physical multimodal communication must emerge to facilitate these aims. The chief practical concerns include: how participants mutually monitor one another; how they share sustained visual and auditory focus; how listeners' stances are amplified to reinforce egalitarian communicative relations; and how speakers' utterances are heard by all to maximize inclusiveness. In responding to these practical concerns for direct democratic practice, participants developed and adapted specific embodied tools for assembly use, including hand signals and the human mic. These embodied assembly tools, in addressing the practical problems of large group deliberation, developed a discursive praxis of egalitarianism within the context of a speech exchange system suited to a large outdoor deliberative body. These emergent discursive practices, shared internationally and adapted locally, embody and reflect the larger themes and goals of the movement on a global scale. Local assemblies are a distinctive feature of ongoing global protest movements. The processes and discursive practices of these new deliberative bodies are highly consequential in terms of

communicating and modeling, both internally and externally, a political and social form of practice that recognizes both collective and individual agency. These assemblies may be redefining and asserting a new type of *body of consequence* which has yet to be fully realized. The Occupy movement provided a first engagement in horizontal deliberative democratic practice for many of the participants involved. Forms of local assembly engaged in direct, participatory, deliberative democracy may yet play a larger role in future decision-making.

Appendix

APPENDIX: A short glossary of transcript symbols adapted from Jefferson (2004:24-31).

- [*A left bracket* indicates the point of overlap onset.
- = *Equal signs* indicate no break or gap. *A pair of equal signs*, one at the end of one line and one at the beginning of a next, indicate no break between the two lines.
- (0.0) *Numbers in parentheses* indicate elapsed time by tenths of seconds.
- (·) *A dot in parentheses* indicates a brief interval (\pm a tenth of a second) within or between utterances.
- :: *Colons* indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. The longer the colon row, the longer the prolongation.
- ↑↓ *Arrows* indicate shifts into especially high or low pitch.
- WORD *Upper case* indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
- *A dash* indicates a cut-off.
- >< *Right/left carats* bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicate that the bracketed material is speeded up, compared to the surrounding talk.
- <> *Left/right carats* bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicate that the bracketed material is slowed down, compared to the surrounding talk.
- hhh *A dot-prefixed row of 'h's* indicates an inbreath. Without the dot, the 'h's indicate an outbreath.
- (h) *Parenthesized 'h'* indicates plosiveness. This can be associated with laughter, crying, breathlessness, etc.

() *Empty parentheses* indicate that the transcriber was unable to get what was said. The length of the parenthesized space reflects the length of the ungotten talk.

(word) *Parenthesized words* contain transcriber's descriptions.

(()) *Doubled parentheses* indicate words and speaker designations are especially dubious.

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