Chapter Two

Introduction

As noted in chapter one of this book, at the heart of global inequities are neoliberal economic policies that continue to foster the increasing inequalities between the haves and have-nots by pushing forth policies of trade liberalization, privatization of resources, minimization of subsidies, and the minimization of state-based support for the poor across nation states. With globalization, the gaps between the rich and the poor have increased dramatically on a global scale, with the increasing concentration of economic resources in the hands of the rich (Dutta, 2008, 2011; Harvey, 2005). Simultaneously, the interpenetrating relationships between economically strong actors and political players have led to the further consolidation of power in the hands of the economically powerful. Communicative spheres have been increasingly concentrated in the hands of the dominant social, political, and economic actors, with limited opportunities for public participation and with increasingly intertwined relationships between privatized media public spheres, businesses, economic entities, and political actors. Mediated
spheres are owned by the same actors that own the economic spheres of production and exchange (McChesney, 1997, 1999). These limited communicative spheres then have carried out the structural violence on the margins through the deployment of communicative resources and processes to serve the interests of the rich, and simultaneously erasing the opportunities for public participation (Dutta, 2008, 2011).

Chapter two attends to the politics of resistance constituted globally in opposition to the inequitable economic policies, particularly paying attention to the concentration of power in the hands of the financial sector and the deep-seated interlink between the sites of global capital and the political realms of economic decision making. What are the alternative rationalities and forms of organizing that are put forth by these global movements of social change that are seeking to transform inequitable economic policies? Through the case of the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement in this chapter, I seek to offer conversational entry points into the voices of resistance that directly seek to transform economic policies and the political realms of decision making about global economic policies. Whereas OWS serves as the primary basis of this chapter, I will also refer to other movements of economic justice as they relate to OWS, depicting a global network of solidarity that seeks out alternative forms of global economic organizing.

**Occupying Communicative Spaces**

The privatization of the economic spheres of production is resisted through the physical occupation of spaces, which also is a reflection of the occupation of symbolic spaces. The OWS movement in the US began on September 17, 2011, with the occupation of Liberty Square in Manhattan’s Financial District. The initial Wall Street occupation in New York City sparked a number of occupations across cities and towns in the US and globally. The occupation of Wall Street in New York City as a space is both symbolic and material, being embodied in the slogan “Wall Street is our street.” In constructing Wall Street as the site of US and global economic decision making, OWS seeks to recapture the site, and through the process, challenge the privatized nature of US and global economic decision
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making. The material presence of the protestors at the financial center of the globe disrupts the hegemony of the logic of neoliberalism by interrogating its taken-for-granted assumptions about the privatized processes involved in economic decision making. In this sense, the privatization of the economy is resisted through the rupturing of the privatized spaces (such as Wall Street) where economic decisions take place. Here is the description of OWS on the website titled “Occupy Wall Street: The revolution continues worldwide!” (http://occupywallst.org/), which is connected to the link http://www.occupytogether.org/):

Occupy Wall Street is leaderless resistance movement with people of many colors [link to http://pococcupywallstreet.tumblr.com/], genders and political persuasions. The one thing we all have in common is that We Are The 99% [link to http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/] that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%. We are using the revolutionary Arab Spring [link to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Spring] tactic to achieve our ends and encourage the use of nonviolence to maximize the safety of all participants.

This #ows movement empowers real people to create real change from the bottom up. We want to see a general assembly [link to http://talkethesquare.net/2011/07/31/quick-guide-on-group-dynamics-in-peoples-assemblies/] in every backyard, on every street corner because we don’t need Wall Street and we don’t need politicians to build a better society.

The identity of the OWS collective as the 99% is positioned in opposition to the 1% that control resources and the decisions regarding how these resources are to be allocated. In voicing the power of real people to enact real change from the bottom up, the OWS movement seeks to resist what it terms as the greed and the corruption of the 1%. The localized general assemblies, with their local textures and avenues of participation, become the global relics of symbolic resistance as avenues for the voicing of oppositional narratives that interrogate the taken-for-granted assumptions of neoliberal governmentality, seeking to render redundant the traditional structures of decision making in the globalized political economy, namely Wall Street and politicians. Central to OWS, therefore, is the occupation of
the public sphere as the site of decision making, at once rendering it impure by questioning the taken-for-granted logics that constitute neoliberal configurations of public spheres where decisions are made by experts through expert-based and expert-driven processes, and simultaneously opening up the discursive sites of public spheres to alternative modes and processes of voicing that serve as avenues for listening to the concerns and thoughts of the 99%. This grassroots occupation of communicative spaces is constituted in resistance to the top-down forms of decision making embodied in neoliberal structures, where communicative processes and discursive spaces have been continuously constrained in the hands of the powerful elite. The “About” section describing the OWS movement on the Occupy Wall Street website (http://occupywallst.org/about/) states that:

Occupy Wall Street is a people-powered movement that began on September 17, 2011 in Liberty Square in Manhattan’s Financial District, and has spread to over 100 cities in the United States and actions in over 1,500 cities globally. #ows is fighting back against the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations. The movement is inspired by popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, and aims to fight back against the richest 1% of people that are writing the rules of an unfair global economy that is foreclosing on our future.

The symbolic occupation of physical spaces in Manhattan’s Financial District is a communicative act, one that seeks to draw attention to the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations in shaping political processes. In voicing its resistance to the rules and processes that are dictated by the richest 1% of the globe in fostering an unfair and unequal global economy, OWS seeks to rewrite the rules of neoliberal governmentality that have fostered the inequities.

Simultaneously, the building of interconnected networks at the grassroots lies at the heart of OWS, and this is accomplished through multiple synergistic linkages of solidarity, evident in the multiple hyperlinks to outside resources that are presented within the Occupy posts, and that simultaneously draw upon OWS posts and concepts to build the network
of grassroots communicative spaces. For instance, the description of the OWS movement refers to the Arab Spring and to movements elsewhere globally. In offering peaceful, nonviolent general assemblies as communicative spaces of decision-making, it offers a link to the “Take the square” website, specifically pointing to a text prepared by the Commission for Group Dynamics in Assemblies of the Puerta del Sol Protest Camp in Madrid, that sets up guidelines for how to conduct general assemblies:

This text has been prepared by the Commission for Group Dynamics in Assemblies of the Puerta del Sol Protest Camp (Madrid). It is based on different texts and summaries which reached consensus in the internal Assemblies of this Commission (and which will be made available on the official webs of the 15th May Movement) and from the experiences gained in the General Assemblies held in this Protest Camp up until 31st May 2011. (http://takethesquare.net/2011/07/31/quick-guide-on-group-dynamics-in-peoples-assemblies/)

The grassroots-driven nature of communication articulated in the voices of resistance also means that the procedures and processes of conducting general assemblies are organically developed, incorporating learning curves and flexibility as general assemblies locally work out their communicative practices and processes for setting up collective decision making. This point is further elucidated in the description of the quick guide:

The purpose of this Quick Guide is to facilitate and encourage the development of the different Popular Assemblies which have been created since the beginning of the 15th May Movement. This Quick Guide will be periodically revised and updated. On no account is it to be considered a closed model which cannot be adapted through consensus by any given Assembly. From the Commission for Group Dynamics in Assemblies of the Puerta del Sol Protest Camp we invite our friends and comrades to attend and take part in the meetings, work plans and internal Assemblies of this Commission, which are open to anyone who wants to come to them and actively participate in maintaining, perfecting and developing them. (http://takethesquare.net/2011/07/31/quick-guide-on-group-dynamics-in-peoples-assemblies/)
Worth noting here is the working out of the processes and procedures of the general assemblies on the principles of collective decision making. The processes and principles, however, are themselves organic, attending to the grassroots nature of decision making through which frameworks for participation and collective decision making emerge. Once again, in addition to the communicative messages that are directly put forth in resistance to the dominant structures of neoliberal governmentality, what is pivotal in the voicing of resistance here is the fundamental resistance in the articulation of collective-based thinking and decision making, positioned as an open-ended, adaptive, and changing process based on the participation of grassroots social actors. Under the heading “Open Reflection on Collective Thinking,” the introduction to the general assembly guide states the following:

While we would like to share our impressions so far, we encourage you to continue to reflect on and debate these impressions as we feel that Collective Thinking is an essential part of our movement.

To our understanding, Collective Thinking is diametrically opposed to the kind of thinking propounded by the present system. This makes it difficult to assimilate and apply. Time is needed, as it involves a long process. When faced with a decision, the normal response of two people with differing opinions tends to be confrontational. They each defend their opinions with the aim of convincing their opponent, until their opinion has won or, at most, a compromise has been reached.

The aim of Collective Thinking, on the other hand, is to construct. That is to say, two people with differing ideas work together to build something new. The onus is therefore not on my idea or yours; rather it is the notion that two ideas together will produce something new, something that neither of us had envisaged beforehand. This focus requires of us that we actively listen, rather than merely be preoccupied with preparing our response.

Collective Thinking is born when we understand that all opinions, be these opinions our own or others’, need to be considered when generating consensus and that an idea, once it has been constructed
indirectly, can transform us. Do not be discouraged: we are learning; we’ll get there: all that’s needed is time. (http://takethesquare.net/2011/07/31/quick-guide-on-group-dynamics-in-peoples-assemblies/)

At the heart of the process of solidarity building is the emphasis on collective thinking. Collective thinking, which is the goal of the general assemblies, is positioned in opposition to top-down decision making that constitutes political and economic decision-making processes under neoliberalism. The competition-based framework of argumentation in communicative processes is displaced by an alternative narrative of collaboration and consensus. Articulating collective thinking as oppositional to the thinking that constitutes the present system, the general assembly guidelines offer the framework of collaboration as the basis of communication. The voicing of collective thinking then points to the notion that communication can be built on the foundation of active listening, seeking to build something new through communication rather than being framed within a confrontational framework where the participants focus on preparing their responses to each other. Also worth noting is the intertextuality articulated above as the “Take the square” website links to the OWS website under a “Do It Yourself” section, both offering information on the OWS as well as sharing strategies learned from the OWS.

The occupation is a symbolic marker of resistance that disrupts the hegemony of neoliberalism and its economic assumptions. Consider the following posting by Chris on the OWS website under the heading “Why,” seeking to offer a rationale for the movement:

Contemporary society is commodified society, where the economic transaction has become the dominant way of relating to the culture and artifacts of human civilization, over and above all other means of understanding, with any exceptions being considered merely a temporary holdout as the market swiftly works on ways to monetize those few things which stubbornly remain untouched. Perhaps the most pernicious aspect of this current setup is that it has long ago co-opted the very means of survival within itself, making our existence not an inherent right endowed to us by the simple fact of our humanity but
a matter of how much we’re all worth—the mere act of being alive has a price tag. Some pay it easily. Others pay for it with their submission. Others still can’t pay it at all. Regardless, though, like cars, TVs and barrels of oil, our lives are commodities to be bought and sold on the open market amid the culture of ruthlessness and desperation that has arisen to accommodate it. This is the natural consequence of a society built around entities whose purpose it is to always, always minimize costs and maximize profits. It is the philosophy of growth for the sake of growth, the same ideology that drives a cancer cell. An economy in a steady state is not healthy. It needs to expand, constantly, perpetually . . .

The people coming to Wall Street on September 17 come for a variety of reasons, but what unites them all is the opposition to the principle that has come to dominate not only our economic lives but our entire lives: profit over and above all else. Those that do not embrace this principle: prepare to be out-competed. They will lose the race to the bottom and the vulture will swoop down to feast. It is indicative of a deep spiritual sickness that has gripped civilization, a sickness that drives the vast deprivation, oppression and despoliation that has come to cover the world.

The world does not have to be this way. A society of ruthlessness and isolation can be confronted and replaced with a society of cooperation and community. Cynics will tell us this world is not possible. That the forces arrayed against us have won and will always win and, perhaps, should always win. But they are not gods. They are human beings, just like us. They are a product of a society that rewards the behavior that has led us to where we are today. They can be confronted. What’s more, they can be reached. They just need to see us. See beyond the price tags we carry. (http://occupywallst.org/article/why/)

As the movement spread, web resources started being created and shared that addressed different aspects of occupations, providing resources for collectives locally to organize their occupations. Here is an example of a collective resource hosted at a website titled “How to Occupy: Grassroots practices for global change”: 
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*HowToCamp/HowToOccupy* is conceived to promote and spread the methods, techniques and knowledge about peaceful occupation of public spaces while developing sustainable ways of living based on participatory democracy. We are an open community *based on free information*, we believe in the power of synergy applied to creative commons and copyleft for the benefit of the many.

Our goal is to establish an universal and accessible database made up of documents related to peaceful civil disobedience and grassroots practices, spreading it physically and on-line to the very assemblies, occupations and groups around the whole world.

We hope to put together all the experiences the older camps have had in order to put them to the service of new occupations in a successive way, creating a collaborative chain of information. These are necessary tools for a peaceful rising up.

We plan to install more features to this platform soon, as we develop and unite. (http://occupycentral.wordpress.com/2011/12/17/how-to-camp-for-a-global-revolution-just-another-take-the-square-sites-site/)

The website provides a variety of resources on occupations, thus offering guidance for collective action and for the physical occupation of spaces. The broader objectives of the site are to serve as resources for learning about the methods and techniques for occupations, as well as establishing databases that draw upon lessons from older camps. In establishing a universal and accessible database comprised of documents on civil disobedience and grassroots practices, the OWS website seeks to develop into a resource or a repository on occupying tactics and strategies, sharing tools for strategies of peaceful rising up.

Consider for instance the following post with the heading “10 days until #OCCUPYWALLSTREET”:

#OCCUPYWALLSTREET is all about breaking up that cosy relationship between money and politics and bringing the perpetrators of the financial crash of 2008 to justice.
On September 17, 20,000 of us will descend on Wall Street, the iconic financial center of America, set up a peaceful encampment, hold a people’s assembly to decide what our one demand will be, and carry out an agenda of full-spectrum, absolutely nonviolent civil disobedience the likes of which the country has not seen since the freedom marches of the 1960s.

From our encampment we will launch daily smart mob forays all over lower Manhattan . . . peaceful, creative happenings in front of Goldman Sachs; the SEC; the Federal Reserve; the New York Stock Exchange . . . and maybe even, if we can figure out where they’re being held, at the sites of Obama’s private $38,500 per person fundraising events happening somewhere in Manhattan on Sept. 19 and 20.

Our strategy will be that of the master strategist Sun Tzu: “appear at points which the enemy must hasten to defend; march swiftly to places where you are not expected.” With a bit of luck, and if fate is on our side, we may be able to turn all of lower Manhattan into a site of passionate democratic contestation—an American Tahrir Square.

We will do all this with peace in our hearts. Our unshakable commitment to nonviolence will give us the spiritual strength we need to inspire the nation and to ultimately triumph in the weeks and maybe months of struggle that will unfold after September 17. (http://occupywallst.org/article/adbusters-ten-days-until-occupywallstreet/)

In discussing the strategies of resistance, OWS voices the importance of occupying the very sites of the corporate-government nexus, thus disrupting the taken-for-granted assumptions that underlie that relationship and at the same time, making this nexus evident within the public discursive space. The symbolic occupation of Wall Street, the financial capital of America, is articulated as the right of the public to have a voice in shaping economic policies that affect their lives. The launching of smart mob forays in front of the sites of corporate capitalism embodied in the forms of Goldman Sachs, the SEC, the Federal Reserve, the New York Stock Exchange, among others, is seen as an act of rupturing the logic of privatiza-
tion of communicative spaces and the deployment of these spaces to serve the economic and political interests of the dominant power structures. For instance, the envisioning of smart mob forays at the sites of Obama’s private $38,500 per person fundraising events happening in Manhattan offers an alternative narrative that seeks to disrupt the corporate-political nexus in the US.

As noted earlier in this section, the occupation of public spaces as symbolic spaces of protest against privatization is central to the message of OWS. In a post titled “Occupy Wall Street Test Run (Video),” a video of the police harassment of protestors (http://youtu.be/ayUGOgFaCs8) is accompanied by the following message:

On Thursday, Sept. 1st, a small group of demonstrators were met with police intimidation while performing a peaceful and legal occupation of a public sidewalk on Wall Street for a single night. Nine were arrested for disorderly conduct and later released without charge. One
demonstrator was held for 24 hours because he was unable to provide proof of residency.

This demonstration was intended to serve as a one night test run for the September 17th occupation using the “legal encampment” strategy. According to a federal court ruling in 2000, the use of “public sleeping as a means of symbolic expression” is allowed on public sidewalks in New York City. (METROPOLITAN COUNCIL, INC., Plaintiff, -against- HOWARD SAFIR, Commissioner of the New York City Police Department, et al., June 12, 2000 [99 F. Supp. 2d 438; 2000 U.S. Dist.]). The demonstrators of Bloombergville also employed this tactic for an occupation that lasted a few weeks.

Despite fully obeying the law, demonstrators were still met with police harassment and intimidation. This event serves to remind us that we’re living in a police state with absolutely no respect for the right of the people to peacefully assemble and exercise their constitutional free speech. But we will not be scared away or deterred. This abuse of authority by the NYPD only serves to strengthen our resolve and reinforce our belief that corruption and injustice in America must be fought.

More will be coming September 17th. (http://occupywallst.org/article/occupy-wall-street-test-run-video/)

Once again, evident in this narrative of resistance is the performance of public sleeping as a means of symbolic expression. The interaction with the police as depicted in the video is constituted around the occupation of public spaces around the movement, with the movement participants drawing attention to their right to freely assemble and to constitutional free speech. The depiction of police harassment and intimidation draws attention to the state-police-privatization linkage in neoliberalism, and serves as an argument for the reason why corruption and injustice in America needs to be fought, thus serving to mobilize public participation and support for OWS.
The Narrative of Greed

The voices of resistance against economic injustices continually point toward the greed of the rich underlying the large-scale economic inequities and economic inaccess. In a piece titled “OWS Snapshot” posted on the one-month anniversary of the Occupy movement, resisting corporate greed is defined at the core of the movement:

OWS vibrates with activity. In every corner of Liberty Square people are organizing against corporate greed, refusing to be afraid, to be silenced. The local community center, the nearby atrium, the surrounding parks and cafes pulse with working groups planning actions, coordinating with community groups, engaging with the press, supporting each other, and strengthening solidarity within the movement. We are growing change in the shadow of the wealth, greed, and thievery that is Wall Street. (http://occupywallst.org/archive/Oct-19-2011/page-1/)

The vibrancy of activity against economic injustices is positioned in relationship to greed. The organizing of people at Liberty Square is set in motion in resistance to corporate greed. Pointing to the hegemonic nature of corporate greed and its role in silencing voices of dissent, OWS is built on the notion of resistance. In other words, the resistive voices in OWS exist in a dialectical relationship with the structural oppressions and corruptions of corporations. OWS finds meaning through the articulation of the frame of corruption. The change that defines the character of the OWS movement exists in the broader backdrop of corporate corruption, greed, and wealth. The post further continues under the subheading “No Hate”:

No Hate: Many people from different places have been affected by the greed of the 1% and by the false solutions of corporate greed, union busting, and the slashing and privatization of social services. The 99% is varied and broad—but we have principles of solidarity, and we are working together to make a better world—a world of inclusion, dignity, love and respect. #OWS has no space for racism, sexism, trans-phobia, anti-immigrant hatred, xenophobia, and hatred in general. (http://occupywallst.org/archive/Oct-19-2011/page-1/)
The fabric of solidarity of OWS is made up of collective experiences of marginalization experienced by people from different places. These experiences of marginalization are noted as having been produced by the false solutions proposed by corporations. The solidarity of the movement is articulated in resistance to the neoliberal solutions of union busting, privatization, and the minimization of social resources. The post further goes on to note the following:

Demands: A group claiming to be on the verge of issuing demands for #OWS has gotten the attention of a story hungry media. We are our demands. #OWS is conversation, organization, and action focused on ending the tyranny of the 1%. On Saturday we marched in solidarity against corrupt banking systems, against war, and against foreclosure. We discussed how to break up the “too big to fail” financial companies and end excessive wall street executive bonuses, we were arrested [link to http://youtu.be/fdeuuzXS_sY] while trying to remove our money from the grasp of these dangerous institutions, we occupied the boardrooms of the 1% [link to http://www.occupytheboardroom.org/] so they wouldn’t feel so sad and alone, we occupied foreclosure court rooms [link to http://www.o4onyc.org/] where they use a broken system to legally steal the homes of the 99%, rallied in front of military recruitment centers demanding an end to US wars, and tens of thousands of us marched into the times square, the neon heart of consumerism, demanding economic justice.

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The greed of the 1% is set as the framework within which the resistance of the OWS movement is organized. In noting the issues that constitute the organizing of OWS, the post refers to fighting the corrosive power concentrated in the hands of banks and multinational corporations. In solidarity with other movements globally, the OWS takes as its agenda the fighting of corporate greed. In seeking to change the rules of economic organizing in the US and globally, the OWS movement aims to make visible the rules of the neoliberal agenda that are written by the richest 1% people and are driven by the goals of the richest 1% to accumulate wealth while simultaneously depriving the 99%. The post also utilizes the frame of greed to refer to the role of Wall Street in bringing about the economic collapse in the US.

Specific strategies that refer to the framework of greed are then outlined around the notion of fighting both corporate and consumerist greed. They include actions such as removing personal money from greedy financial institutions, occupying the boardrooms of the 1%, occupying foreclosure courtrooms, rallying in front of military recruitment centers, and protesting in front of Times Square—the heart of consumerism. Each of these strategic actions is accompanied by a hyperlink to actual demonstrations and reports of these actions shared through text, video, and audio. For instance, the reference to occupation of foreclosure courtrooms links to the “Organizing for Occupation” (O4O) website, which describes the movement as constituted around the human right to safe and affordable housing. Similarly, the reference to the occupying of the boardrooms is linked to the “Occupy the Board Room” website at http://www.occupytheboardroom.org/, which serves as a resource for communicating back to the top 1%, providing information and resources on Wall Street elites, and also serving as an avenue for delivering messages to Wall Street elites through demonstrations, performances, direct delivery of mail, and other activities.

Not only does greed emerge in collective acts of protest against the structures of greed in neoliberalism, but also through calls for changes in lifestyles that are founded on greed and consumption. The framing of Black Friday as “Buy Nothing Day” draws on the narrative of greed:
You’ve been sleeping on the streets for two months pleading peacefully for a new spirit in economics. And just as your camps are raided, your eyes pepper sprayed and your head’s knocked in, another group of people are preparing to camp-out. Only these people aren’t here to support occupy Wall Street, they’re here to secure their spot in line for a Black Friday bargain at Super Target and Macy’s.

Occupy gave the world a new way of thinking about the fat cats and financial pirates on Wall Street. Now let’s give them a new way of thinking about the holidays, about our own consumption habits. Let’s use the coming 20th annual Buy Nothing Day to launch an all-out offensive to unseat the corporate kings on the holiday throne.

This year’s Black Friday will be the first campaign of the holiday season where we set the tone for a new type of holiday culminating with #OCCUPYXMAS. As the global protests of the 99% against corporate greed and casino capitalism continues, let’s take the opportunity to hit the empire where it really hurts . . . the wallet.

On Nov 25/26th we escape the mayhem and unease of the biggest shopping day in North America and put the breaks on rabid consumerism for 24 hours. Flash mobs, consumer fasts, mall sit-ins, community events, credit card-ups, whirly-marts and jams, jams, jams! We don’t camp on the sidewalk for a reduced price tag on a flat screen TV or psycho-killer video game. Instead, we occupy the very paradigm that is fueling our eco, social and political decline.

Historically, Buy Nothing Day has been about fasting from hyper consumerism—a break from the cash register and reflecting on how dependent we really are on conspicuous consumption. On this 20th anniversary of Buy Nothing Day, we take it to the next level, marrying it with the message of #occupy . . . (http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd)

The greed of the fat cats and pirates on Wall Street offers a broader framework for articulating alternative ways of living in resistance. By questioning individual consumption habits, the OWS movement urges community
members to use the Buy Nothing Day to enact their protest against corporate greed and casino capitalism. Flash mobs, mall sit-ins, and community events become means for re-occupying the framework of greed embodied in the consumerist occupations of sidewalks to secure a spot in line for a Black Friday bargain.

The Stories of Suffering
The narratives of greed that point toward the concentration of global material resources in the hands of the few are accompanied by the stories of suffering and deprivation being experienced by Americans as a result of the economic policies dictated and determined by the top 1% of US society. Participants in the movement discuss their personal experiences of loss; these stories of loss offer a framework for depicting the lack of access to basic resources experienced by the 99%, and constitute the basis for action. These narratives of loss and suffering offer a platform for constituting the identity of the 99% as a collective, serving as the entry points for organizing against social injustices and for seeking to bring about transformations in the US political, economic, and cultural systems.

In discussing the experiences of the 99% under the heading “We are the 99 percent” (http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/), the OWS movement seeks to resist the greed and corruption of the richest 1%. The “We are the 99 percent” site becomes the space for narrating the experiences of the disenfranchised majority at the hands of oppressive policies that serve the interests of the powerful sections of the US society. The site offers collections of voices narrating the specific experiences of oppression and suffering in the hands of the global economic policies. Each story is accompanied by an image of the person narrating her or his story. Usually, the narrative is written by hand on a piece of paper, and the author holds the narrative in front of her/him like a placard, often completely or partially covering her/his face. The narratives disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions and discourses of trickle-down neoliberal economics and an economically solvent middle class by bringing forth the experiences of suffering connected to the material absences of resources and economic op-
opportunities for everyday Americans. Consider for instance the story of her experience of disenfranchisement as articulated by a 24-year-old woman:

I am 24 years old. I have lived in the U.S. since I was 10. I am $30K in debt because one day I went to the doctor . . . He could not tell me why I was sick. I attend community college full time and have a 4.0 . . . I struggle to pay for tuition, books and my living expenses. I bartend in the evenings and make about $17K each year. In 2 years my Green Card expires, citizenship costs about $600 (sometimes more). I can’t afford this (and this is home). I also do not know if my American Education is enough for me to pass the citizenship test . . . I AM THE 99% (http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/post/14430766470/i-am-24-years-old-i-have-lived-in-the-u-s-since)

In this instance, the experience of suffering is constituted amidst the high cost of health care that put patients in debt. For this participant, going for a visit to the doctor ended up with $30,000 in debt. Similarly, consider the following story:

I am 27 yrs old. I have a Bachelors of Social work and have about $50,000 in student loans. I also have a spinal injury from 8 years ago. Since I could not afford health insurance for most of those 8 years, I was not able to seek treatment for my back. I now have chronic back pain and my pain has forced me to pay out of pocket for treatment.

My weekly medical bills and my monthly student loan payments add up to an amount that makes it hard for me to cover my daily living costs of food, much less anything else I should be enjoying in life at this moment and yet I make too much to qualify for food stamps.

I am currently applying to grad school so that I can further my education and hopefully obtain a better paying job. But I am horrified that I will not be able to afford grad school or will go further into debt from any loans I have to take. (http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/post/14353066977/i-am-27-yrs-old-i-have-a-bachelors-of-social-work)

In this narrative, the participant discusses her $50,000 debt in student loans. Her suffering is further enunciated by her inability to seek out treat-
ment for spinal injury because she could not afford health insurance. As a result, the chronic back pain she experiences has forced her to pay out of pocket for treatment. Due to her high medical bills and student loan payments, the participant is barely able to make a living, unable to cover the expenses of food. This inaccess to food is juxtaposed in the backdrop of the notion that she makes too much money to qualify for food stamps. Her desire to go to grad school is interrupted by the high cost of education and by her doubts regarding her (in)ability to pay for graduate school.

The stories of suffering provide the personal reasons for the occupation. Consider the following story that is narrated by Akuabba:

I grew up in a single parent home in a basement apartment. The government has refused to give my family any type of financial help since ‘95. My playgrounds were surrounded by rapists. My schools were filled with drug dealers. My apartment building was taken over by gang-bangers. And many of my friends have been shot/murdered. I am an African-American female. I have been told that I am at ‘the bottom of the list’ . . . as in the government’s list of concerns. My family has never been on vacation and we still can not afford a car. BUT THAT HAS NOT STOPPED US! My mother has been ill for almost 10 years, but that has not stopped her. My brother and I have made it to college because they can’t stop us. Even now, my mother is unemployed and can’t afford our education . . . but guess what? THAT WILL NOT STOP US! I am 19 and have been denied jobs because my name is Akuabba. I am the 99% looking for change. Until I am able to pay off my mother’s piling medical bills, take care of my tuition bills and take my mother on a two week vacation, I will not stop occupying Chicago. (http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/post/14025883007/i-grew-up-in-a-single-parent-home-in-a-basement)

In Akuabba’s story, we hear about her struggles. She voices the oppressive environment in which she grew up, with no government support for her family since 1995. She notes that her mother has been ill for the last two years, is currently unemployed, and therefore is unable to pay for Akuabba’s education. It is in this backdrop of the fundamental lack of resources and the suffering that is caused amidst this absence of the bare minimum that Akuabba discusses her and her family’s resilience, phrased in the
statement “they can’t stop us.” She notes that she will not stop occupying Chicago until she is able to take care of her mother’s medical bills, take care of her tuition bills, and take her mother on a two-week vacation. The metaphor of the occupation offers a frame for her articulation of social justice by disrupting the hegemony of neoliberalism through her personal narrative. The individual story of suffering experienced by Akuabba becomes the centerpiece of her struggle and her desire to occupy.

Occupation, therefore, emerges as a disruption of the structural violence embodied in the status quo. Here is a “We are the 99 percent” post from a man with dependents: “I am the father of two children. They have health insurance, but I can’t afford insurance myself. I’m afraid of getting sick and losing my home. I am the 99%” (http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/). Here is another post from October 24, 2011:

I am a 21 year old Army wife. $20,000 in debt for an education I can’t use. I worked in College, but I just couldn’t afford it. My husband was forced to join the army to make a future for us. I’ve been homeless for almost a year. I slept in a ghetto motel with prostitutes and drug addicts for 4 months. We’ve taken out several loans to fix the engine in our car. We just moved into an apartment and we’re barely making it. My husband fights for your freedom . . . I fight for our lives. We ARE the 99%.

The image of the handwritten note on the website is accompanied by the following text:

I was forced to dropout of college halfway through because I couldn’t even afford the gas to get there and back. All of my loans have defaulted and there’s nothing I can do. We’ve lived in this apartment for a month and we just got a bed a couple days ago. We don’t have a tv, not even a can opener . . . but I guess that would only matter if we could afford food in the first place. I’m going job hunting this weekend . . . wish me luck. My husband fights for the freedom of the 1%, but where are they when we needed them? (http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/)

Evident in the voicing of the resistance of the participants who share their stories of suffering are the dramatic inequalities between the haves and
have-nots in US society. The narratives rupture the assumptions of neoliberalism by bringing forth questions of justice and equity in the backdrop of the neoliberal rhetoric of trickle-down economics. In this instance, for the 21-year-old Army wife, the assumptions of the inequities find meanings amidst her everyday struggles to make a living and find a job. She notes that although her husband fights for the freedom of the 1%, the 1% don’t offer safety nets and protection for her family. The voicing of inequalities and the unfair practices that relate to the inequities in distributions of power are also central to the following post:

Since 6/15/2003. I am a striker at the Congress Hotel in Chicago. I’ve been on strike 8 years and 4 months where a millionaire stole my pay and benefits and those of my coworkers. We are the 99%. (http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/)

In another post, a Union striker notes:

I am a striker, and until now I feel forgotten and that we are important to noone. Clearly the powerful help each other but to us poor they use us. I feel like the 99% and for the fault of the 1% I can’t give a better life to my family. I don’t have the luxury of good food, I barely have food and the guilty are the 1%. I want my job and insurance and dignified pay, for a better future, and I know that with Union Local 1 we will win it with hope and faith. (http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/)

Central to this narrative that foregrounds the inequities between the 99% and the 1% is the dialectical tension between the need for workers to require minimum resources to simply make a living and the need for the 1% to use/exploit the poor. In this narrative, the locus of the structural inequities and deprivations faced by the 99% are connected to the oppressive and exploitative practices of the richest 1%, thus creating a frame around the organizing for social justice.

This framework of inequities in material resources and in access to structures of decision making serves as the basis of the organizing for resistance in OWS. Videos posted throughout the OWS website as well as on sister websites document the everyday experiences of suffering by everyday Americans. For instance, the O4O website links to stories of people being
evicted from their homes. Links are provided to other Occupy movements across the US that depict the structural violence experienced by average Americans and articulate possibilities of resistance. Here is one example from the Occupy Atlanta movement under the title “Occupy our Homes in Atlanta victory” (http://occupywallst.org/archive/Dec-20-2011/page-1/):

On Tuesday December 20th State Senator Vincent Fort, Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient and Dean of the civil rights movement Rev. Dr. Joseph Lowery, civil rights leader Joe Beasley, and other members of the Occupy Atlanta family will be present at Brigitte Walker’s house at 2607 South Hills Dr. Riverdale, GA at 11am to announce a major development not only for the local Atlanta Occupations, but for the “Occupy Our Homes” movement across the country.

Brigitte Walker is a former Army Staff Sergeant and decorated Iraq War veteran. When she was medically discharged in 2007, her income was cut in half. Since then she has struggled not only with her wounds received in service to her country, but also with paying her mortgage. Occupy Atlanta finds this situation outrageous and hopes her story will bring light to the many other similar stories unfolding across America.

Banks have been found, over and over again, to be breaking laws while they take our homes. We've got a new kind of bank robber—banks robbing our homes. Americans across the country are standing up. We're defending our homes. We've decided to stand up and fight for what's ours.

More Background:

. . . The sad reality is that countless families in Georgia have their homes auctioned off at county court houses every month. Many believe that homes auctioned on the court house steps are unoccupied. This is not true; Occupy Atlanta has seen multiple families begging auctioneers not to sell their homes. For many, this auction is the last nail in the coffin of their American dream, their home. Let’s not get it twisted, the auctioning of occupied foreclosed homes in Georgia is nasty business.
In Georgia, the foreclosure process can begin after just one missed payment. The lender then sets a sale date for that home to be auctioned off, and publishes the sale notice in the county paper. They are only required to give the homeowner 30 days’ notice, and there is no requirement that the homeowner receives the notice, only that it is sent. If the sale goes through, there is no right of redemption in Georgia, meaning there is no way for a homeowner to reclaim their home. Disrupting the auction of a home literally gives a family one more month of housing, and in some cases one more chance to save their home.

A six to nine month moratorium on evictions and foreclosures would allow time for bank inflated home values to be re-assessed to realistic payable levels. The banks’ irresponsible practices played a huge role in our current crisis. In their time of need we bailed them out. Now it’s their turn to do the right thing, to stop holding our economy hostage.

After two press conferences on her lawn, a national call in day, and direct action on Chase Bank, Occupy Atlanta did what Brigitte Walker couldn’t do in years, get a loan modification. If it weren’t for Occupy Atlanta and Brigitte Walker’s willingness to resist Chase Banks she would have had her American Dream auctioned off on the Fulton county court house steps. Instead Brigitte Walker and her family can breathe easy knowing they can continue to live the American dream of home ownership.

Winning Brigitte’s home is a win for the people. It should be a call for Georgians to fight for their homes, and fight for their neighbors’ homes. Let’s not forget, we outnumber the bank executives.

Here’s video of the original press conference at Brigitte Walker’s home with Occupy Atlanta (linked to http://youtu.be/j_jz93CJ1Jo)

The story of Brigitte Walker’s suffering is turned into a mobilizing call for social justice, pointing to the unjust practices of the banks, the inequitable communicative processes within which these practices are constituted, and the abuse of state-judiciary-banking power to evict everyday Americans.
from their homes. Brigitte’s story returns the gaze of the banking industry, responding specifically to Chase and more broadly to the banking industry as a whole. Through the narrative of Walker’s suffering, the Occupation movement disrupts the hegemony of the banking sector in working through its powerful nexus with state and judiciary structures to carry out violence on average Americans. In demanding for six- to nine-month loan moratoriums, for reassessment of loans, and for loan modifications, the Occupy movement creates alternative rationalities for re-conceptualizing economies and economic principles of organizing (more on this later). These stories of suffering and the corresponding calls for resistance circulate in interconnected local-global linkages of resistance.

**Local-Global Linkages**

In articulating its resistance against neoliberal economic policies, the OWS movement defines its identity within the interpenetrating relationship be-
between the local and the global. The local nature of the OWS movement in New York connects to a broader OWS agenda that is globally constituted, drawing its lessons from other global social justice movements as well as sharing its lessons with other movements worldwide. The interconnected web of resistance on a global scale is constituted around global economic injustices that manifest themselves in locally situated oppressive and exploitative effects. Under the title “Who We Are,” the movement website offers the following narrative:

On July 13, 2011, “Culture Jammers HQ” at Adbusters issued a call to action: Occupy Wall Street! The goal stated is to gather 20,000 people to Wall Street, in New York, NY on September 17, 2011, beginning a popular occupation of that space for two months and more. Inspired by the popular assemblies of Egypt, Spain, Oaxaca and worldwide, those gathered will work to find a common voice in one clear, unified demand. (http://occupywallst.org/article/who_we_are/)

The local call to action to gather 20,000 people to occupy Wall Street in New York City is juxtaposed in relationship with the popular assemblies of Egypt, Spain, Oaxaca, and worldwide. These local voices are interlinked in a global unity that seeks to work in solidarity, coming together to craft a unified voice raising a unified demand at Wall Street, the symbolic and material heart of global capital. Simultaneously, the OWS movement emerges as a mobilizing force for connecting other movements of social justice globally. On November 17, 2011, in response to Mayor Bloomberg’s attempt to evict the OWS movement from Liberty Square, several protests across the globe and in the US organized solidarity actions (see http://occupywallst.org/article/world-us-occupy-lives/).

This network of solidarity at the global level is evident in the tagline “Occupy Wall Street: The revolution continues worldwide.” The reference to worldwide revolution connects to the “Occupy Together” site (http://www.occupytogether.org/) that offers information and resources for globally dispersed local occupation movements across several regions and countries, strategies for planning solidarity actions in local areas, and regular updates from various Occupy movements that have started building
across several local sites. The site also offers information and planning re-
sources for “Mass Days of Action,” and a link to recent Twitter activity. At
the top of “Occupy Together,” the following buttons are offered: “Occupy
Wall St.,” “Actions & Directory,” “InterOccupy,” “#HowToOccupy,” “Post-
ers,” “Discuss,” “FAQ,” and “Contact.” The “Actions & Directory” button
leads to Occupy Together meet-ups in several cities across the globe (the
number was at 1,465 at the time of the writing on December 25, 2011).
The hyperlink to the name of each Occupy city connects to a meet-up link
with a callout for action.

The “Actions & Directory” button also provides individual entries
about each local Occupy movement including name, state/country, city,
website address [website, blog, Facebook page, meet-up page], and Twitter
account information. The 1,465 local Occupy movements cover the span
of the globe from Spain to Moscow to local cities like Indianapolis, Seattle,
Pittsburgh, and Hong Kong. The link to the meet-up site on the “Actions &
Directory” page offers information on the several meet-up communities
of the Occupy movement spread throughout the globe (on December 25,
2011, the number of Occupy links at the meet-up site was listed at 2,560
cities with 21,841 occupiers). The meet-up site for the Occupy movement
(http://www.meetup.com/occupytogether/) opens with a world map with
pushpin links for each of the local Occupy sites spread throughout the
globe. The meet-up site serves as a planning and mobilizing tool for local
Occupy meet-ups, giving individuals and groups the capacity to put to-
gether a local meet-up call. The representation of the various Occupy sites
under one platform serves as an entry point for global solidarity building
among local sites of resistance. Furthermore, the meet-up site serves as a
repository for mobilizing local communities for Occupy actions and for
planning local meet-ups.

The “#HowToOccupy” link connects to the “How to Occupy: Grass-
roots practices for global change” website discussed earlier in this chapter,
which in turn, offers a variety of resources under the broader subheadings
of assemblies (how to conduct general assemblies), camping (setting up
camps), civil disobedience (nonviolent resistance and strategies for con-
ducting nonviolent resistance), Internet (strategic uses of Internet tools
such as voice chats, Internet Relay Chats (IRCs), mailing lists, and Listservs), legal (legal strategies and legal infrastructures such as the American National Lawyers Guild Mass Defense), police (how to interact with the police during question and answer, how to stay legal while protesting, mobile tactics for peaceful protests), revolution (strategies of resistance and revolution), and building a new world (alternative modes of organizing knowledge and material resources, such as ourproject at http://ourproject.org, a cooperative effort for generating free knowledge and free software for a free society). Worth noting here is the circular pattern of networks and linkages on the different sites of the OWS movement, each pointing to the other and thus building a global network of connected resources on the different aspects of mobilizing for social change.

The thematic of interconnected networks also becomes evident under the “InterOccupy” button, which leads to a site that describes its mission in the following words:

We at InterOccupy seek to foster communication between individuals, Working Groups and local General Assemblies, across the movement. We do this in the spirit of the Occupy Movement and general assemblies which use direct democratic and horizontal decision-making processes in service to the interests of the 99%.

We are currently hosting weekly conference calls using the Maestro conference call technology that allows up to 500 people to interact productively on phones. Maestro allows for smaller group breakout sessions so people with shared interests can connect in the middle of a large call. Our Weekly General Call is every Monday night. (http://interoccupy.org/about-io-post/)

InterOccupy emerges as a network of networks, connecting the local networks of action into a global network. Using the Maestro conference call technology, the InterOccupy site becomes a space for sharing resources, building local capacities, and generating global knowledge foundations for action based on the local lessons learned in the movements. The site offers opportunities for Occupy members from different local sites to register themselves for the conference call, to add agenda items (which is a Google
docs working document that is collectively created by participants), and also to add announcements from their local sites (which is another collaborative Google docs working document titled “Announcements from across the land”). Here is the call for announcements that opens up the Google doc:

This page is for the myriad of announcements that occupations and work groups across the country would like to make), whether you also made them on one of the InterOccupy national calls or not. It is a way to reach the widest possible audience. Make your announcement immediately below the blue double dashed lines directly under this paragraph so the most recent entry is always on top. Begin with the date you enter the announcement. When finished, put 20 “equal” signs across the top of your announcement so the next entry can go above it. (https://docs.google.com/document/d/12E17Wi431siEYgh7Kx1Epw5zagdwj1jqMen87D94nQ/edit#)

Therefore, the document itself becomes a collaboration, one that is created together nationally/globally by various local group members participating in the Occupy movement, thus serving as a growing repository of information on Occupy movements from across various global sites. Similarly, the InterOccupy site becomes the collaborative space for conversations and collaborations among the various local Occupy movements on issues, actions, as well as specific communicative processes, decision-making processes, and processes of collaboration. In this sense, the InterOccupy space itself becomes a space that co-constructs the processes, structures, and procedures of communication and participation. What it takes to participate, the procedures and processes of participation, and the development of decision-making structures become subjects of open-ended participatory processes, articulated through open-ended and dynamic nodes of communication among participants from several local Occupy movements spread across the globe.

Take, for instance, the InterOccupy teamwork on developing collaborations on lessons learned from facilitating meetings. Here is a link to the meeting announcement that is titled as “IO Facilitation/GA Conference Call”: 
PURPOSE: This call is to better assist and support area’s General Assemblies facilitators and to discuss everything involved with facilitating meetings. This group will have no decision making authority, and will only discuss all different proposal(s) and/or options, the results of which will be latter presented the area’s General Assemblies. It is optional for any area Assemblies to participate. (https://docs.google.com/document/d/12E17Wi431siEYgh7Kx1Epw5zagdwj1JmqMen87D94nQ/edit#)

It is important to underscore here the goal of the meeting to discuss processes and issues involved in the facilitation of meetings. The discussion group is presented as an open-ended group with no decision-making authority but only with the goal of discussing different proposals and options, with the goal of bringing the results of the discussion back to the local general assemblies. Learning and resources related to learning, therefore, are themselves constituted within collaborative processes. The description is followed by links to a collaborative public pad where participants/facilitators collaborate in co-creating process-based descriptions of facilitation and participation processes in the general assemblies. Embedded within the public pad are additional open resources, such as the Google docs link to “Online Resources for People’s Assemblies” (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gM1bHAg_n7dpbx3nv4cJ-Dh3SXcH7CJUXQdqx0joWKS/edit?hl=en_US#). Also embedded within the resources shared regarding the facilitation of general assemblies are international links, such as “Global Assemblies” (http://www.generalassemblies.info/). Here is the description of the global assemblies:

The purpose a Global Assembly Meeting is to better assist and support local General Assemblies and communication at every level between them. This meeting will have no authority to make decisions, and only is here to facilitate communication and help build broader consensus on global proposals. It is completely optional for any local/regional/national Assemblies to participate. There may be multiple global meetings that get scheduled, we see no problem with that, but everyone who gives there contact information will receive notice of any Global Assembly Meeting we hear about, not just this one. So
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if you know of one, let us know. (ga(at)wc.tc) The language of this meeting will be Fluent English. You can always change your preference at anytime simply by filling out this form again. (http://www.generalassemblies.info)

The InterOccupy site provides information for call-ins with details about the specific steps to be taken by callers from international locations to join the meetings via Skype (http://interoccupy.org/international-call-in-info/). Carrying out the local-global network theme, the InterOccupy site also becomes a space for planning global mass actions, coordinating synchronized mass actions on specific global sites of protest. For example, at http://occupyglobal.net, an OWS working group seeks to coordinate events and mass media tools to create a unified, cohesive voice for the Global Occupy movement, with the First Global General Assembly held on December 31, 2011. In this sense, while on one hand, OWS seeks to learn from the local movements elsewhere in the globe that have raised voices against economic, political, and social injustices, on the other hand, it seeks to become the conduit for a unified global voice that brings to the forefront the issues of economic inequalities and injustices, serving as a network of these various local movements coordinated and organized around the issue of global economic justice.

To the above post on OWS on July 13, 2011, which called for global solidarity, one of the commenters named Wedemay posted the following:

Because if we don't the entire planet will die. This is not about politics, this is about the survival of the country and the evolution of pan global culture of responsibility and accountability. Service to the community is either towards peace and equality or war and violence that drain our economy and further conflict around the world. We need our nations resources and troops lives used to save our own country, not the corporations assets. Change is difficult, challenging and without it we will die in billions under the blind heel of corporate totalitarianism. (http://occupywallst.org/article/who_we_are/)

The survival of the country and the evolution of the pan global culture of responsibility and accountability are juxtaposed beside each other, inter-
linked with the broader question of sustenance of the planet. The questions of national security and national allocation of resources are positioned in relationship to issues of global conflict and global sustainability; the urgency of change is positioned in terms of the global impact of corporate totalitarianism. Saving the country is positioned in opposition to protecting the assets of corporations through war. The interconnectedness of global issues is well captured in the following post under the heading “Boycott ‘Black Friday!’ Solidarity with Striking Chinese Workers!”

This Black Friday, as millions of Americans scramble to find the “best deals” on consumer goods, thousands of Chinese manufacturing workers are striking to demand livable wages, job security, and other basic rights. In Huangjiang alone, 8,000 striking shoe factory workers took the streets Thursday, blocking roads and standing down lines of riot police. Their factory, owned Yue Yuen Industrial Holdings, is a major provider to the sportswear company New Balance.

It seems fair to say these workers are striking for a “new balance” with their management, and the system of global exploitation that management serves. Facing police repression and media censorship, striking Chinese workers are standing up against the same unfair economic system we are fighting on Wall Street and across the world. Today, Occupiers everywhere are standing up to Boycott Black Friday in an effort to raise awareness about the exploitation and inequalities that produce the goods Americans purchase. (http://occupywallst.org/article/solidarity-striking-chinese-workers/)

The “Black Friday” culture of consumption in the US is placed alongside the struggles of workers in China who are demanding livable wages, job security, and other basic human rights to produce the goods that Americans purchase. The commodity culture of Black Friday is resisted through the depiction of an alternative frame that presents the stories of the workers. The resistance of Chinese manufacturing workers in the Huangjiang province of China offers a framework of resistance against unfair economic systems that are also the sites of resistance for the OWS movement. The post then further goes on to discuss a series of resistive acts on Black Friday across several Occupy sites in the US:
Meanwhile, Occupy Atlanta, including many former employees of large retailers, mic-checked crowds (VIDEO) [linked to http://youtu.be/43q4IAlf7SI] of Black Friday shoppers around midnight last night, while Occupy Portland and surrounding cities planned to Occupy a Wal-Mart (but not buy anything) [linked to http://occupywallst.org/article/occupy-seattle-occupies-wal-mart/] today. Occupy Boston, Occupy DC, and other cities are hosting “Really Really Free Markets” to share goods with whomever needs them, proving that another world—and an economy where we take care of one another’s needs instead of corporate profits—is possible. Here in New York, there is a march leaving at 2pm from Liberty Square to Foley Square to mark Black Friday.

Workers in China, in the U.S., and everywhere deserve fair compensation and an equal share in the prosperity our labor produces. In a season defined by consumption and consumerism, we stand in soli-

Figure 2.3. Uploaded by “OccupyAtlantaAction.” http://youtu.be/43q4IAlf7SI
darity with the workers of China, and with all those who rise up for the global 99%! (http://occupywallst.org/article/solidarity-striking-chinese-workers/)

Once again, worth noting here are the interconnected linkages between the conditions of the workers in China and the practices of resistance articulated throughout several occupy movements across the US. The cultures of consumption and consumerism are resisted through the local organizing of events, such as “Really Really Free Markets,” where people share goods with whoever needs them based on the principle of caring (more on this in the next section). The post is accompanied by a picture of the protests of Chinese workers in the Huangjiang province and an image of local protestors with banners, creating an avenue for the enactment of solidarity in support of the workers in China who are resisting to secure access to their fundamental human rights as workers.

Also important in the local-global linkages of OWS are the networks of solidarity. As Occupy movements started developing all across the US, lessons for these movements were shared on the OWS website as well as multiple sister websites. The “Occupy Together” site has emerged as a repository that connects to other sites and provides news updates about Occupy movements globally. Simultaneously, several Occupy movements started growing globally at various sites, sharing stories and mobilizing support for each other through the cross-posting of messages. In this sense, the new media presence of the OWS movement created an entry point for building and coordinating global solidarity and for bringing forth in unison the voices of resistance across the globe.

Along these lines of global-local linkages, posts on the OWS website are continually written by participants from around the world. Consider for instance the following posting by Aarohini from India:
	his is great news. as a sufferer of global financial hegemony in distant India and not being able to do much through organising in our country to counter the evil emanating from Wall Street, I have often wondered what the american public is doing given that it too is suffering tremendously from the greed of the Wall Street financiers. at last
there is now going to be a massive mobilisation against Wall Street. I wish you all the best for your efforts and let’s hope that this signals the beginning of the end for the kleptocracy that rules the USA and with its cronies elsewhere, the whole world. There should be enough preparation to tackle the state as it will invariably try to suppress this uprising. (http://occupywallst.org/article/who_we_are/)

In this instance, Aarohini commends the positive role of OWS in taking up the issue of global economic justice right at the heart of perpetuation of this economic injustice, Wall Street. She points out the difficulties in organizing against Wall Street in India and therefore commends OWS for its local resistance at the very site of global capitalist hegemony. She notes her hope that OWS signals the beginning of the end of kleptocracy in the US and globally. The OWS call for protests on Wall Street in New York City is accompanied by calls for and reports of similar protests at various other globally dispersed local sites:

S17 occupations of financial districts are also being planned in Milan, Madrid, Valencia, London, Lisbon, Athens, San Francisco and hopefully many other cities still to be announced. S17 could well be the catalyst that ushers in a new global economic order. (http://occupywallst.org/archive/Sep-8-2011/page-1/)

In this post by OWS on September 7, 2011, commenters articulated specific strategies of occupation in relationship to what was learned from the Arab Spring. Here is what Strengthinthenumbers posted:

I don’t know if this has been promoted before, I wrote a standard message and sent it to many of my friends on Facebook. One of the main reasons the Arab Spring in Egypt was successful was because of Facebook. (http://occupywallst.org/article/who_we_are/)

In this instance, the specific approach proposed is modelled after the strategy of using Facebook as an active model of participation and recruitment in the Arab Spring in Egypt. Even as the Occupy movement developed through the lessons learned from the Arab Spring to resist the neoliberal policies in the US and globally, it also dynamically emerged into a site of solidarity for movements elsewhere in the globe. For instance, in response
to the violence enacted on female protestors on Tahrir Square in Egypt, the OWS movement issued a call for solidarity, holding local protests across the US, marching on the Egyptian consulate, and performing Occupy events in front of Combined Systems International, the supplier of tear gas to the Egyptian military junta, in solidarity with the global call for resistance issued by the activists in Egypt (http://occupywallst.org/article/answering-egypts-call-solidarity/).

The Stories of Global Spaces and Alternative Rationalities

In foregrounding spaces of resistance to the global concentration of power in the hands of financial capital and transnational corporations (TNCs), OWS seeks to foster communicative spaces for the articulations of alternatives to the oppressive structures of neoliberalism that minimize the opportunities for grassroots participation. For instance, OWS calls for a general assembly of all those who have been marginalized, oppressed, and excluded by the current global health, housing, food, employment, and economic policies (see Figure 2.4).

What is foregrounded in this call for the “Health Action Assembly” is the invitation for the marginalized, oppressed, and excluded to find a voice within the discursive space. Disrupting the assumptions regarding what constitutes communication in neoliberal structures of policy making and decision making, the call urges those who have been placed at the margins by the neoliberal system to come out and share their stories of marginalization and articulate their imaginations for solutions of change. At the heart of the Occupy movement is the alternative meta-narrative of communication. Based on the notion that the marginalization of the 99% has been carried out through top-down decisions that have been made by the richest 1%, the alternative narrative of the Occupy movement is based on the articulation of a horizontal movement structure that is leaderless and is based on the principles of cooperation, consensus, mutual respect, and horizontal decision making. In describing the OWS movement, the websites that have emerged articulate the organic, dynamic, leaderless, and horizontal structure of the movement, highlighting the distributed and networked nature of collective organizing. Affinity support groups such
as those found on occupywallst.org emerge as online and technical support resources for resistance movements across the globe. The depiction of OWS on occupywallst.org, for instance, discusses the empowerment of local people to create change from the bottom up.

Slogans such as “This is what democracy looks like,” “Students united shall never be divided,” “You can’t evict an idea whose time has come,” and “Whose street? Our street” offer alternative visions of organizing societies and cultures. The depiction of democracy, by referring to the partici-
Voices of Resistance

The participation of everyday people, stands in resistance to the political economy of decision making in neoliberal, democratic structures where political processes, structures, and decisions are deeply intertwined with the economic interests of the rich. Similarly, slogans such as “Whose street? Our street” re-occupies the idea of the street as a public site, thus re-narrating the privatization of public spaces to serve corporate interests under neoliberalism. Fighting the corrosive power of global banks and the oppressive practices of the richest 1% offer the foundations for the co-creation of the alternative narratives of solidarity. Specific actions such as “Occupy Walmart” and “Occupy Black Friday” are constituted around offering alternative logics to the broader narratives of consumption that have fed the inequitable structures of neoliberalism. The story of consumption of narratives is resisted with an alternative narrative of a “really, really free market” where goods are given out generously for those that are truly in need. The basic values of selfishness, personal property, and individualized consumption are resisted with alternative narratives of compassion, caring, and cooperation.

Alternative rationalities disrupt taken-for-granted notions about the US democracy within neoliberalism, pointing toward the role of the police and the military in maintaining the interests of the rich and the powerful within the US. Live videos, recordings, audio files, and written texts are utilized in order to bring forth the exercise of police violence on peaceful protestors, thus demonstrating the limits to the language of democracy under neoliberalism and laying bare the nexus of politics and economics in utilizing police force to subvert possibilities of resistance (see, for instance, http://youtu.be/FNsG1szQPqo). Video recordings of police violence and aggression return the gaze of the dominant structures of neoliberal violence by materially documenting the acts of aggression and circulating the images and videos in the public sphere. In response to the acts of police violence, occupiers chant “The whole world is watching” (http://occupywallst.org/article/nypd-swarming-liberty-square-bloody-assault-all-ex/). Posts such as “Police: Whom do you serve?” offer video captures of police attacks on peaceful Occupy protestors, and simultaneously raise questions about the role of the police in serving the interests of powerful
political and economic actors, simultaneously minimizing the opportunities of resistance (http://occupywallst.org/article/whom-do-you-serve/). Here is an excerpt from the post:

Such incidents are unfortunately common. Brutal repression has long been a daily reality for people of color, trans and queer people, criminalized drug users, sex workers, and other marginalized communities. But now that the 99% and the Occupy movement are standing up for social and economic justice, we all are subject to those same violent tactics of repression. How can the police protect and serve the public, when they repeatedly assault the public in the interest of the 1%? What exactly are the police defending—our right to free speech and peaceful assembly, or broken financial and government institutions?

In resistance to the police violence on Occupy protests across the US, occupywallst.org posted the following narrative of resistance on December 10, 2011:
Following last week’s raid on Justin Herman Plaza, San Francisco police evicted Occupy SF from their last camp, in front of the Federal Reserve, at 4am this morning. 55 people were arrested. Occupy Pittsburgh is also facing an eviction deadline today, continuing an escalating trend of harassment and eviction of nonviolent protesters across the country and the world.

... Occupations across the country have found creative ways to persist, resist, and rebuild. We aren’t giving up our public spaces. Last we checked, tents still stand in DC, Chicago, Boise, Oklahoma City, Buffalo, Miami, Chapel Hill, Cleveland, Providence, Baltimore, Orlando, Nashville, Pittsburgh, Pensacola, Lexington, Newark, Gainesville, Peoria, Eugene, Rochester, Orlando, Tacoma, Reno, Charlotte, Raleigh, New Haven, Houston, Austin, Tampa, Louisville, and elsewhere. In Anchorage, they even have igloos. On their two month anniversary, Occupy Minnesota will gather at The People's Plaza to reclaim their space and continue the fight for equality and justice.

... We are also disrupting business-as-usual from Wall Street to K Street. We have brought the festivity of Broadway into the streets. We mic check corrupt politicians and 1%ers everywhere they go. We have moved homeless families into empty foreclosed homes. We have spread our message by occupying the highway. In DC, Oakland, Santa Cruz, London, and Seattle we have liberated buildings from the banks and greedy corporations and begun to turn them into vibrant community centers.

While maintaining our nonpartisan focus on economic inequality and connecting a diversity of issues that impact the 99%, Occupations have begun to refine and hone our messaging around the big banks, foreclosures, evictions, and housing. Foreclosure auctions have been disrupted in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Bremerton, Reno, and New Orleans. Occupiers foreclosed on bank offices in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, Buffalo and elsewhere. Today, a few weeks after Occupiers took over the Washington State Capital, Occupy Providence is marching on their State house to “ask this house for homes!” After the recent Day of Action to Occupy Our Homes,
many cities continue to support families, especially in communities of color, as they fight back against unfair evictions. In Atlanta, Cleveland, Oakland, Chicago, Detroit, Philly, Rochester, New York, and Oakland, Occupiers are helping homeless families find shelter and resist eviction.

In solidarity with all oppressed communities, we are actively supporting the many social movements that comprise the global revolution. We have marched on U.S.-companies that supply teargas to the Egyptian government to support our comrades in Tahir Square; with immigrants rights activists against deportation, detention and wage-theft in Birmingham and New York; with seniors to advocate for social services; with students against tuition-hikes, with workers and unions for jobs, better working conditions, and fair wages; and with farmers fighting for food justice. Occupations in solidarity with OWS have arisen in Manila, Auckland, London, Amsterdam, South Africa and beyond. We’ve marched to draw attention to the connections between the corrupt banking system and issues like the prison industrial complex and climate change . . . (http://occupywallst.org/article/occupy-will-never-die-evict-us-we-multiply/)

Evident in the narrative presented above is the representation of the persistence of the Occupy movement in spite of top-down efforts at thwarting the undertaking through the use of force. The efforts of dominant political structures to evict the movement physically are resisted by the presentation of the Occupy movement as an idea, as a way of thought, and as a principle. The occupiers launched hunger strikes with the goal of liberating outdoor space and securing the right of people to protest (see, for instance, http://occupywallst.org/article/ows-hunger-strike-new-outdoor-occupation/). Similarly, the alternative rationality of OWS draws attention to the ironies in US government responses to the movement locally while rhetorically supporting other movements globally (see, for instance, http://youtu.be/S880UldxB1o). Irony also emerges consistently as a theme through the articulations of the incongruence between the rhetoric of democracy and the actual violence unleashed on peaceful protests. In a protest at Lincoln Center outside the final performance of Satyagraha, an opera on the life of
Gandhi, Occupy protestors drew attention to the hypocrisies in rhetoric that celebrates nonviolent resistance on one hand, and on the other hand, uses violence to silence nonviolent resistance locally. Here is an excerpt from a post on the protest:

It’s also a striking irony that Bloomberg L.P is one of the Lincoln Center’s leading corporate sponsors. Mayor Michael Bloomberg has stifled free speech, free press, and freedom of assembly in an aggressive campaign against Occupy Wall Street protestors in New York City that has influenced a crackdown on the protests nationally. The juxtaposition is stark: while Bloomberg funds the representation of Gandhi’s pioneering tactics of nonviolent civil disobedience in the Metropolitan Opera House, he simultaneously orders a paramilitary-style raid of the peaceful public occupation of Liberty Park, blacking out the media, while protestors are beaten, tear-gassed, and violently arrested. (http://occupywallst.org/article/occupy-museums-goes-lincoln-center/)

Figure 2.6. Uploaded by “scottmcfann.” http://youtu.be/S880UldxB1o
Alternative rationalities articulated through OWS also draw upon solidarity networks to point toward the injustices that are carried out through unfair housing policies. The mortgage-based housing industry that has been at the root of the foreclosures is interrogated through the framing of the issues of housing within the umbrella of the right of human beings to housing. OWS provides links to and organizes in relationship with the O4O movement, issuing calls that then connect with the O4O in seeking to take over foreclosed homes and fighting for the right of community members to their homes. Consider, for instance, the following post of the O4O movement under the title “Last O4O General Meeting of 2011 and Holiday Construction Drive”:

In the five months since our inaugural conference, O4O has blockaded an eviction, shut down a foreclosure auction, and mobilized for a national housing day of action. Our actions have succeed because of the work of our committed volunteers, and the support of so many of you. Now, as the temperature drops, the urgency of our actions is even greater. O4O is dedicating our energies to moving families off the cold winter streets and into vacant homes. We’ve identified a suitable home to occupy; we’re working a family who is committed to O4O’s mission; and we’re prepared to defend their new home.

All we need are tools to make the house a livable home.

Help us build and occupy a home for the holidays! Our goal is to raise $2,000 by Christmas so we can purchase the construction tools and materials to get the job done. (http://www.o4onyc.org/2011/12/15/last-o4o-general-meeting-of-2011-holiday-construction-drive/)

Similarly, the broader occupying foreclosed homes movement interrogates the assumptions of neoliberalism that have treated home mortgages as commodities to be traded in the market. Instead, the narration of the right to a home as a basic human right re-frames the issue of home ownership into one of social justice. The logics of neoliberalism are resisted through the construction of resistance against the oppressive decisions of banks to foreclose homes, working in conjunction with the judiciary and police. The
knowledge structures of neoliberalism are resisted by offering alternative knowledge structures that are rooted in alternative values.

Figure 2.7. General Assembly at Occupy Wall Street.

Alternative mediated sites such as the Global Revolution (http://www.livestream.com/globalrevolution) and WEvolution (http://www.wevolutiontv.org/) serve as the spaces for co-constructing these voices of resistance from the grassroots into global discursive sites. In doing so, the livestreaming of mediated depictions of localized resistance offer alternative narratives to the neoliberal agendas of mainstream media, re-narrating neoliberal agendas by occupying them and offering alternative discursive entry points. On the WEvolution site, for instance, individual stories of Americans disrupt the narratives of neoliberalism by interrogating the assumptions underlying the large-scale inequalities within the US and globally. Occupying, therefore, becomes the framework for offering alternative structures around issues and topics that have traditionally been narrated through the hegemonic interests of mainstream media. Local meanings emerging from the participation of individuals and communities at the
local level weave together into alternative global narratives of resistance. Accompanying the livestreaming videos at the Occupy sites are parallel chat windows where community members participate online to discuss their views and ideas, offering another entry point into grassroots narratives. Livestreaming sites such as http://www.livestream.com/occupynyc and http://occupystreams.org/item/occupy-london-stock-exchange are interlinked under the broader umbrella of Occupy Streams at http://occupystreams.org/. Ultimately, these alternative values narrated through the networks of solidarity across the Occupy movements offer the pathways of hope in resisting the global hegemony of neoliberal organizing of the economic sector.

Discussion

In summary, throughout this chapter we paid attention to the various aspects of discourses and discursive processes through which voices of resistance seek to bring about transformations in social, political, and economic structures that perpetuate global inequities under neoliberal hegemony. In order to depict the voices of resistance within the broader backdrop of economic justice, we read the case study of the Occupy Wall Street movement. The singular emphasis on OWS for the purposes of this chapter was meant to throw additional insights into the communicative processes and strategies through which local and global voices of resistance interrogate the assumptions and the hegemonic control of neoliberalism. OWS is an exemplar of a movement that connects local and global voices of resistance in global spheres of solidarity. The resistive voices narrated within the broader framework of the Occupy movements growing globally also point toward the interconnected spheres and issues of resistive politics, connecting several spheres of resistance within the broader umbrella of resistance against neoliberal policies and its hegemonic influence over various aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural life. The theme of neoliberalism and its economic effects emerge as key themes in the Arab Spring, with the protests in Tunisia and Egypt having strong undercurrents of resistance against economic policies that have generated large-scale unemployment and rising food prices.
Furthermore, as the neoliberal agendas are played out in several state responses across the US in passing “right to work” bills, localized forms of resistance, emerging in solidarity with national and global movements of economic justice, raise their voices in solidarity with the voices of workers seeking the legitimacy to organize through unions. The resistance against the “right to work” bill in Indiana is performed in solidarity among workers and Occupy protestors (Bhattacharya, 2012). Consider, for instance, the following depiction of solidarity between the union movement and the Occupy movement, depicted in the backdrop of the organizing to “Occupy the Superbowl” in Indiana:

In the coming days, it will be important to continue to build this fight in the streets. If we are to push the politicians into putting the right-to-work law on an upcoming ballot, then we need collective solidarity actions up and down the state, not just letter writing and call-in campaigns to representatives. Occupy activists in every town need to reach out to their local unions in order to plan and build actions, and unions need to encourage and support the Occupy activists.

The 1 percent builds partnerships with corporations and political thugs to break our movements. As the 99 percent, we need to build our own solidarities. A strong alliance between organized labor and the Occupy movement is needed to stand up to this attack on workers’ rights. (Bhattacharya, 2012)

The voices of resistance put forth in the context of the rights of unions are joined in solidarity with the voices of resistance in the Occupy movement. In Wisconsin, large-scale direct action and political resistance emerged in response to Governor Walker’s proposal to pass a “budget repair” bill (see, for instance, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/wisconsin-protests/). Through direct action, the occupation of the state capitol, processions, protest marches, songs, and slogans, the protestors carry on their voices of resistance against the anti-union agendas of the Walker administration; images of the videos and protests are circulated on YouTube and on protest-mobilization sites on Facebook. Spoof performances, such as a phone call by a journalist to governor Scott Walker pretending to be Da-
vid Koch, exposes the underlying agendas of neoliberalization carried on by the state; the video spread virally, mobilizing entry points of resistance at several sites across the US. The Wisconsin protests, in their solidarity with the protests in Tunisia and Egypt, also depict the frameworks of solidarity that connect local-global politics. Consider the following excerpt (Shapiro, 2011):

On Friday, February 11, at the same hour that the world watched the former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak resign his post, the newly appointed Republican Governor of Wisconsin quietly launched a ferocious attack on public sector unions—and the very notion of organized labor in America.

For nearly fifty years unions have sought to safeguard and advance their rights through a process known as collective bargaining, which is the most powerful tool labor has for peacefully resolving disputes and ensuring workers a voice in negotiations on everything from fair wages to safety conditions and sick leave.

The bill championed by Wisconsin’s governor takes dead aim at this process by stripping most state workers of many of their collective bargaining rights. Union leaders have responded uproariously, claiming that the bill effectively guts public unions of their most critical asset in a state that pioneered many of the fundamental fights for worker’s rights.

The voices of workers offer the narratives of resistance that challenge the constraining agendas of the policy:

“We want to say loud and clear: it is not about those concessions,” said Mary Bell, president of WEAC. “For my members, it’s about retaining a voice in their professions.”

...“I think what people need to see in this is that it’s not just an attack on public service unions. It’s really a concerted attack by powerful interests that really want to see working class people be brought down,” said Rick Badger, the executive director of AFSCME’s Wisconsin 40 council. “Walker claims there’s nothing to bargain with. The message
we need to get out there is that this could not be further from the truth.” (Shapiro, 2011)

The depiction of the bill is situated in the backdrop of the wider global protests. The resignation of Hosni Mubarak is juxtaposed in the backdrop of the agendas of the state in minimizing the spaces for state workers to have a voice in discursive spaces. The voices of the union workers and union leaders in the discursive space highlight the attack of liberalization policies on the rights of workers to have a voice and to have a say in the realms of decision making.

As these issue-networks of resistance depict, matters of economic justice are intertwined with the consolidation of power in the hands of TNCs, thus shaping the communicative processes and logics of participation by concentrating political power in the hands of the few. As a result, although this chapter is organized specifically around questions of economic justice, what the narratives point toward are the interconnected spheres of political and economic decision making in agriculture, health, poverty, environment, and development that offer a broader framework of global organizing around neoliberalism. Therefore, as we move through the next chapters, we will specifically refer back to the OWS movement in examining nodes and linkages of global solidarity, especially as these entry points to solidarity offer both historical reference points as well as contemporary entry points for organizing resistance against neoliberalism.