Ventriloquist Democracy

Exploring the Democratic Potential of Online Populist Movements

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0.1 **Abstract**

The last decade has witnessed a rapid upsurge of public protests, transpiring across the globe. From the Global Justice Movement and the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street, these movements seem to signal a novel way for ordinary citizens to participate in politics. Instead of participating through conventional means, these movements allow citizens to influence politics while bypassing traditional institutions of liberal democracy. By utilizing the vast potential of Web 2.0 applications, such as Facebook and Twitter, these movements are today capable of unifying thousands of citizens around political causes in no time. Accordingly, a circle of scholars have suggested than we broaden our perception of democracy to include this kind of participation. In fact, the conventional knowledge, provided by this circle of scholars, even claims that these movements embody the very future of participatory politics and, hence, democracy as a whole.

This thesis sets out to explore and challenge the conventional knowledge. By employing Occupy Wall Street on Facebook (OWS) as a case, the thesis shows how Ernesto Laclau's concept of 'populism' can be applied to this kind of online movement, which henceforth is referred to as an 'online populist movement'. The concept of populism is, furthermore, used to show how such movements' internal discourse can become undemocratic when mediated by Facebook as a medium. The thesis' over-all claim is that populist movements are (and have always been) an important way for citizens to participate in democracy. However, when these movements substitute their offline activities for purely online undertakings, their democratic potential is lost.

This claim is based on two separate analyses. The first analysis, which is a qualitative content analysis of nearly 1400 posts at the movement's Facebook page, shows how the populism of OWS has risen concomitantly with the movement's transformation from a predominantly *offline* movement to a purely *online* movement. Following this transformation, OWS' internal dialogue has likewise moved online. The thesis' second analysis sets out to analyze the democratic potential of this dialogue. By extracting the normative requirements of three alternative theories of democracy (deliberative, agonistic and cosmopolitan democracy), the thesis embarks on a virtual ethnography. Through this ethnography, the thesis explores how members of OWS react to 12 critical comments based on these alternative theories of democracy.

The conclusion of the thesis is that OWS on Facebook is capable of sustaining none of the requirements for democratic dialogue, as proposed by the three theories. In the end, however, this might be a consequence of Facebook's technological affordances, rather than of OWS itself. With this conclusion, the thesis encourages the reader to reconsider the role we, as a society, ascribe to Web 2.0 in relation to the future of democracy.

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The iconic 'clenched fist', displayed on the thesis' cover page, is a frequently used symbol by Occupy Wall Street. Since the protests of 1968, the symbol has mainly been made to signify rebellion (Cushing 2006). The picture on the cover the thesis is borrowed from Occupy Orange County's homepage.

CHAPTER I
Introduction

”At present, the established democratic institutions seem remakably incapable of dealing effectively with the pressing social issues of our time. There is widespread disillusionment, apathy, and a sense of powerlessness. There are also active social movemets vying for our attention and pressing for change with a striking vitality. I believe that it is with these movements that the hope for democracy rests”

Ian Angus
Emergent Publics, 2001

1. CAN DEMOCRACY BE SAVED?

Within recent years, an array of public protests has swept the globe with remarkable force: From the Global Justice Movement, and the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street, and the current uprisings in Thailand and Ukraine. Besides providing an effective outlet for ordinary citizens to express long felt frustration and discontent, these protests likewise signal a shift in the way we conceive of public participation in politics. Instead of participating through conventional means, citizens are now able to bypass fundamental institutions of liberal democracy, and engage in contemporary politics through extra-institutional activities (della Porta 2014). Accordingly, scholars and commentators alike have argued that we need to broaden our perception of democracy (e.g. West 2013; Whitely 2012; Hands 2010; Zukin et al. 2006). No longer should we think of the ballot box and political parties as the only point of access to political processes. Instead, we should direct our attention towards this new form of civic engagement, since this is where the future of democracy rests, as Ian Angus (2001) proclaims in the opening quote of this chapter.

To be sure, public protest is not a new phenomenon. As Tilly and Wood (2012) have shown, this kind of civic engagement can be traced back to the middle of the 18th century. However, those protests that have come and gone within the last decade are in many ways distinct from those occurring almost 300 years ago. Not only are their demands and objectives disparate, they are likewise organized and mobilized very differently. Ever since the so-called 'Battle of Seattle' during the WTO summit in 1999, various information and communication technologies have played a crucial role in enabling activists to marshal support for political causes in almost no time (Garrett 2006; Van Aelst & Walgrave 2002). Especially the socio-technical phenomenon of Web 2.0 has forever altered the nature of contemporary protests. By utilizing the vast potential of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, activists now seems capable of mobilizing and uniting thousands of citizens in only a matter of hours (Bennett & Segerberg 2011).

Such protests have been called many things, and most people refer to them as 'social movements'. However, since the term 'social movements' tells us very little about this unique kind of civic engagement, I have chosen another term for this thesis, namely, 'populist movements'. Despite the negative connotations commonly associated with the word 'populism', this thesis will employ a much more productive understanding of the word, as proposed by Ernesto Laclau. This, however, I will return to in chapter 2. For now, it suffices to say that 'populism', in itself, does not denote something negative, but rather a distinct way of organizing certain public protests. Hence, when I speak of 'online populist movements', it is a way for me to encapsulate certain dynamics of public protests, when these are mediated by the infrastructure of Web 2.0.

The term 'Web 2.0' was popularized in 2004 by media commentator Tim O'Reilly (2005, p. 5), as a way of describing the emergence of a new online *"architecture of participation"*. In Web 2.0, content is created and distributed through horizontal collaborations between authors and readers. This is what Bruns (2008) has referred to as 'produsage': A process where the boundary between producer and consumer is blurred. Accordingly, it no longer makes sense to speak of neither producers nor consumers as stable entities, since most online users today participate in the mutual 'produsage' of content. Allegedly, it is due to this architecture of participations, and the era of produsage, that we should begin to broaden our perception of democracy. In the words of Bruns (2008, p. 10): *"citizens now have a chance to claim a greater share of participation – they have a renewed chance to become active participants in the produsage of democracy."*

Following Bruns' argument, a circle of scholars have determinedly labored to establish a body of conventional knowledge about Web 2.0, populist movements and democracy, which so far has remained rather unchallenged. This conventional knowledge claims that through Web 2.0's architecture of participation, ordinary citizens are finally able to participate in the co-construction of democracy, especially if they engage with online populist movements. Below, I have highlighted a mere fraction of the literature constituting this body of conventional knowledge. With this thesis, however, I strive to challenge these claims. My argument is that populist movements are (and have always been) a much-needed way for citizens to participate in democracy. However, when these movements abandon their offline activities and substitute them for purely online endeavors, something is lost. It is this 'something' that I will explore throughout this thesis. But let us now turn to a brief review of the conventional knowledge.

1.1 Brief Literature Review

The title for the thesis' first chapter is taken from a recent book called *"Can democracy be saved?"*, by Donatella della Porta (2013). I chose this title, because it displays an important assumption. The assumption is, obviously, that democracy needs saving. Seemingly, our current model of liberal democracy does not meet the requirements for participatory politics, and we thus need to go beyond its traditional institutions to save democracy (ibid, p. 2). It is the same assumption that underpins Angus' quote above. Not only do Angus and della Porta depart from the same assumption about democracy, they likewise arrive at the same conclusion: Yes, democracy can be saved, but only through the democratic potential of (online) populist movements.

As mentioned, a circle of scholars align themselves with this assumption and its concomitant solution. For instance, by referring to applications of Web 2.0 as 'democratic media' (Carroll &

Hackett 2006), 'radical media' (Downing 2003) or even 'liberation technology' (Diamond 2010), these scholars have persistently sought to emphasize the democratic potential of populist movements and Web 2.0. One example is Kahn and Kellner, who argue that the Internet provides promising possibilities for oppositional politics to materialize. Especially the act of blogging is considered vital for what they call 'virtual democracy'. In this way, they conclude that whether the Internet is used to participate in global movements of dissent, or if it is used to encourage democratic debate, Web 2.0 applications *"are indeed revolutionary"* (Kahn & Kellner 2004, p. 93). Along similar lines, Juris (2005, p. 205) argues that the Internet allows populist movements to develop new cultural practices and political imaginaries, which centers on horizontal collaboration and open participation. And furthermore, Siapera (2012, p. 95) claims that:

> *"Applications such as blogs, wikis and more broadly the so-called social media, led to the hope for a more participatory, and hence more democratic model of politics. In this manner, Web 2.0 takes over the role of the public sphere as a space for communication, deliberation and communal thinking, and in this manner democratizing politics; here we should also place the role of Web 2.0 in enabling direct political action, bypassing traditional political institutions and changing the face of protest and activism"*

Another example is Manuel Castells, who in his book 'Networks of Outrage and Hope' explains why the Internet is crucial to contemporary populist movements and democratic change. In the book, Castells argues that even though Web 2.0 is no source of social causation, the Internet is still fundamental for these movements: *"The social networks based on the Internet and wireless platforms are decisive tools for mobilizing, for organizing, for deliberating, for coordination and for deciding"*, he argues. For Castells, however, the role played by the Internet goes beyond instrumentality: *"It creates conditions for a form of shared practice that allows leaderless movements to survive, deliberate, coordinate and expand"* (Castells 2012, p. 229).

Castells point is that the networked structure of the Internet enables populist movements to live out their own horizontal and leaderless structure in a way that was not possible prior to Web 2.0. In a similar vein, Hardt and Negri propose that social media play a crucial role for contemporary populist movements in their struggle for 'real democracy', as they call it. This is the case, they claim, because social media platforms *"correspond in some sense to the horizontal network structure and democratic experiment of the movements themselves"* (Hardt & Negri 2011, p. 2). Once again, focus is directed at the participatory and collaborative structure of both Web 2.0 and populist movements, which seems to be a convergence that will enable democracy's revival.

The last example that I will highlight here is Lincoln Dahlberg, who argues that new media (especially online technologies) entail a radical renewal of politics in general. There are three

reasons for this, Dahlberg (2001) claims. First, the Internet 'democratizes' both the production and dissemination of information, which is the same argument that fuels Bruns' idea of 'produsage'. Second, online technologies offer new and promising avenues for participation and mobilization of ordinary citizens. And lastly, Web 2.0 offers a whole new infrastructure for dialogue and deliberation, which is paramount to most ideas of democracy.

In this thesis, I set out to explore and challenge the conventional knowledge, which is promoted by the above-mentioned circle of scholars. Their main argument seems to be that Web 2.0 allows online populist movements to perform democratic practices, such as participation and collaboration, through the so-called 'architecture of participation'. At the heart of this argument is the idea of deliberation, or democratic dialogue. Supposedly, these movements live out their own vision of 'real' or 'radical' democracy through open and inclusive dialogues on various Web 2.0 applications. It is especially this last claim about 'democratic dialogue' that I seek to challenge in the thesis. I will do so by asking: How can the internal discourse of online populist movements be considered democratic? And if we recognize the internal discourse of online populist movements as democratic, what idea of democracy is then guiding our analytic gaze? I will strive to answer these questions by conducting two separate analyses of the perhaps most famous populist movements of our time, namely, Occupy Wall Street (OWS).

Through first a qualitative content analysis and then a virtual ethnography of the movement's Facebook page, I will analyze OWS' internal discourse in an effort to examine how (and according to what perception of democracy) OWS on Facebook might be considered democratic. This objective then leads me to the following three research questions.

1.1.1 **Research questions**

Q1. How can online populist movements, exemplified by Occupy Wall Street on Facebook, be perceived as alternative platforms for radical democratic dialogue?

In order for me to answer this over-all research question, I will first have to address the following two sub-questions:

Q2. How can Occupy Wall Street on Facebook be perceived as an example of an online populist movement?

Q3. How might the internal discourse of Occupy Wall Street on Facebook be thought of as radical democratic?

To get a picture of the structure of my argument, I have written a reader's guide to the thesis. This guide will serve to outline the entire structure of the thesis.

1.1.2 **Reader's guide to the thesis**

However, before describing the entire structure of thesis' four chapters, the reader should note that this thesis is not structured according to traditional thesis structures. Instead of going through the conventional structure of 'introduction', 'theory', 'method', 'analytic strategy', 'analysis' and 'conclusion', the traditional structure is doubled in this thesis, since both chapter 2 and chapter 3 contain the conventional structure. This I have done to emphasize the fact that I am investigating two very different aspects of OWS: Whereas chapter 2 is about the (populist) *nature* of OWS on Facebook, chapter 3 is about the (democratic) *potential* of the movement. In this way, the second chapter relates to the present, while the third chapter relates to possible futures. Due to this, I have chosen to construct the first analysis (chapter 2), and the second analysis (chapter 3) in a separate manner, which in my opinion works best when the two chapters embody their own conventional structure. Hence, the reader should not be confused by the introduction of e.g. theory on more than one occasion: This is all part of the plan to disseminate my argument as best as possible. But let us now turn to the structure of the four chapters.

As hopefully became clear during the preceding sections, *chapter 1* attempts to flesh out the body of conventional knowledge that this thesis seeks to challenge. I started by questioning the common knowledge that Web 2.0 facilitates an 'architecture of participation', which populist movements can benefit from in the attempt to save democracy. I did so by asking: How, and according to what conception of democracy, can online populist movements be considered democratic? This fundamental pondering led my to propose three research questions. The first research question is the over-all question, which will be answered by the end of the thesis. The second research question relates specifically to chapter 2, while the third research question is targeted at chapter 3.

Chapter 2 of the thesis is labeled 'first analysis'. This I have done, because it serves to set the stage for the 'second analysis', which will be conducted in chapter 3. As mentioned, chapter 2 is about the current *nature* of OWS on Facebook. What internal dynamics constitute OWS, and how do these relate to the concept of 'populism'? To answer this, I draw on Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism. By conducting a qualitative content analysis of the interactions at OWS' Facebook page, I attempt to show that the movement constitutes a primary example of an online populist movement. The conclusion of chapter 2 will show that concurrently with the movement's transformation from an offline to an online movement, the level of populism has risen. This then

sets the stage for chapter 3, because along with the increase in populism, OWS began to use its Facebook page in a different way. Instead of merely using the page for mobilization purposes, OWS began to perform its democratic dialogue and discussion on Facebook.

It is exactly this democratic dialogue that *chapter 3* sets out to explore. In trying to answer the third research question, this chapter will investigate how the movement's internal discourse can be considered democratic. By employing the method of experimental (virtual) ethnography, I expose the movement to 12 experiments with radical democratic dialogue. These experiments, I have conducted on the basis of three alternative theories of democracy: Deliberative democracy, agonistic democracy and cosmopolitan democracy. By extracting the theories' normative requirements for democratic dialogue, I have constructed four experiments for each theory. This I have done to record how (and if) the participants of OWS responded to the exposure of radical democratic dialogue. The conclusion of chapter 3 is that OWS on Facebook is not capable of sustaining the three theories' requirements for democratic dialogue. However, the movement does exhibit certain dynamics that relate quite well to especially agonistic democracy. Despite this, however, OWS falls short of being a true example of an alternative platform for radical democratic dialogue, which in the end might have to do with the technological infrastructure of Facebook as an application of Web 2.0.

Chapter 4 sets out, first of all, to summarize the most prominent conclusions of the thesis. After doing so, I will provide some reflections on the conclusions. These reflections have, in fact, given name to the entire thesis, since they complete my overall argument. 'Ventriloquist democracy', I have entitled both the thesis and these reflections. The main idea behind this term is to signify those technological affordances of Facebook that, as far as I am concerned, constrain the democratic potential of not only OWS, but most likely also online populist movements in general. By highlighting these affordances, it is my intention to make the reader think about the role we, as a society, ascribe to Web 2.0 in relation to the issue of democracy's revival. After all, Facebook might not constitute a primary example of 'democratic media' or 'liberation technology', as the previously mentioned circle of scholars seem to suggest.

After this brief run-through of the four chapters, the time has come to attend to some of the most fundamental choices and demarcations in relation to theoretical framework and empirical data.

1.1.2 **Theoretical demarcations**

The theoretical framework of this thesis falls within two groups: Theory related to the concept of populism (chapter 2), and theory related to different conceptions of democracy (chapter 3). I

borrow the concept of populism from Ernesto Laclau (2005a; 2005b; 2007). This I do, because Laclau is the first scholar to treat the concept in a genuinely progressive manner. Other accounts are often characterized by fundamental vagueness, as they tend to define the concept in purely negative terms (see e.g. Canovan 1981; Ionescu & Gellner 1969). The difference is that whereas these accounts perceive populism as the mere absence of conventional political practices, Laclau adds a positive element to the concept. Hence, instead of perceiving populism as a vaguely defined type of *ideology*, Laclau frames the concept as a fundamental type of *organization* inherent to most popular movements (Laclau 2005a, p. 14).

In chapter 3, I strive to explore the internal discourse of OWS to see how (and if) this dialogue can be considered democratic. I have done so by choosing three alternative conceptions of democracy. I have labeled these theories 'radical democracies', even though this name is most commonly associated with the second model, agonistic democracy. The reason for this is that all three models strive to provide a radical, normative solution to what they perceive as the grave democratic deficits of liberal democracy. In this way, the word 'radical' should be understood in the original Latin sense, meaning 'root'. This is to say that all three models attempt to provide more fundamental theories of democracy based on their respective interpretations of the word's etymological meaning, namely, 'the rule of the common people'. Arguably, I could have chosen other theories, which could also be labeled 'radical democratic'. One example of this is Hardt and Negri's (2005) concept of 'multitude'. When I chose to omit such theory from this thesis, it is not only due to a lack of space. It is likewise because the three chosen theories cover the spectrum of radical democracy quite well.

The main opposition-pair in this spectrum is deliberative democracy and agonistic democracy. To some extent, these two theories constitute two poles on a continuum. This mainly has to do with the theories philosophical inheritance: Whereas deliberative democrats often trace their thoughts back to Immanuel Kant's ideas about rationality and human morality (e.g. Habermas 2009, p. 171), agonistic democrats generally draw on Friedrich Nietzsche's anti-humanist philosophy (e.g. Mouffe 2009, p. 129). This opposition is incredibly fruitful for studying different enactments of radical democracy, since the two theories value quite contradictory practices. Hence, including these two conceptions in this thesis is almost self-evident. When I likewise choose to include cosmopolitan democracy in the analysis, rather than e.g. 'multitude democracy', it is because the idea of cosmopolitanism emphasizes an alternative aspect of radical democracy. Whereas deliberative and agonistic democrats tend to focus on the *practices* of democracy, cosmopolitan democrats focus on the *scope* of democracy (e.g. Held 2010, p. 14). This diverging point of view separates cosmopolitanism from many other theories of radical democracy, which in my opinion

qualifies the theory for this analysis. During the second analysis, I shall return to this demarcation, and show why cosmopolitan democracy is a theory especially suited for the case of OWS.

1.1.3 **Empirical demarcations**

In terms of empirical demarcations, it is my objective to say something in general about populist movements on the Internet – and the democratic potential of these. However, as mentioned previously, I will conduct the thesis' two analyses on the basis of a single case, namely, that of OWS on Facebook. Such a choice demands some reflections about the generalization of single case-study research: How can one articulate general conclusions of the basis of a single case? And how come I choose to focus on OWS, and not another populist movement?

The answers to both questions have to do with my approach to case studies, which I borrow from Bent Flyvbjerg (2006). As Flyvbjerg explains, the conventional wisdom about case study research is that one cannot generalize on the basis of a single case. According to this established conviction, single case studies embody a *"total absence of control"* and are thus *"of almost no scientific value"* (Campbell & Stanley 1966, p. 6-7). However, as Flyvbjerg argues, this is an oversimplified misunderstanding. For instance, single case studies can be very productive for identifying so-called 'black swans'. The metaphor of the black swans is a way of exemplifying Karl Popper's famous idea of 'falsification' as a powerful tool to dismantle conventional knowledge: Swans are always white, the conventional knowledge claimed. However, when black swans were found in Western Australia, this generalized idea was dismantled (Taleb 2008).

The conventional knowledge about populist movements and the Internet is that the participatory and collaborative infrastructure of Web 2.0 signals the revival of 'real' or 'radical' democracy. This knowledge, I will try to explore and dismantle throughout this thesis. As we shall see, my argument is that the technological affordances of Facebook amplifies certain undemocratic dynamics of populist movements, and thus constrain these movements' democratic potential. In this way, one could argue that this whole thesis serves to falsify the conventional knowledge about online populist movements and democracy.

But why then choose exactly OWS and not another populist movement, such as the Global Justice Movement, the Arab Spring, or the current uprisings in Ukraine or Thailand? Once again, I base my argument on Flyvbjerg's insight. Not only does he claim that, when treated appropriately, single case studies can be used to generalize about social phenomena, he likewise holds that one can select a strategic case, which proves a specific point. In relation to this thesis and its overall argument, I have chosen OWS, because it constitutes a so-called 'most likely critical case'

(Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 231). Such cases are perceived to be 'most likely', because they most likely exemplify the point that I wish to make. Some may claim this to be unscientific. However, as Flyvbjerg notes, 'most likely cases' are well suited for falsification purposes. This is due to the nature of falsification: It only takes one case to dismantle generalized wisdom.

OWS is a 'most likely' case here for three reasons. First, OWS constitutes a populist movement *par excellence*, as it openly proclaims to have no stable core of political demands (Graeber 2013, p. 88). This point, I shall further visualize in chapter 2. Second, OWS clearly perceives itself as an alternative platform for democratic dialogue, which fits right into the conventional wisdom about online populist movements and democracy (Miller 2012, p. 173). Finally, OWS is a movement that was born offline and later moved online, which chapter 2 will likewise show. These three reasons were thus paramount for me in choosing OWS as the single case for this thesis.

After this description of theoretical and empirical demarcations, the time has now come to move on to the first analysis, in which I will try to analyze the populist nature of OWS. At the end of chapter 2, the stage will hopefully be set for the second analysis of chapter 3.

CHAPTER II
First Analysis

”As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: That the future of the human race requires the coorperation of its members; that a democratic government derives its just powers from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power. We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and opression over equality, run our governments. We have peaceably assembled here, as is our right, to let these facts be known”

Occupy Wall Street
Declaration of the Occupation of New York City, 2011

2. THE POPULISM OF OCCUPY WALL STREET

On September 17, 2011, a demonstration was scheduled to take place in New York's financial district. A Canadian activist group called 'Adbusters' had arranged the demonstration as a protest against what they called 'corporatocracy'. The purpose of the demonstration was to show the world what 'real' democracy looks like (Adbusters 2011). Utilizing the mobilizing potential of Web 2.0, the group encouraged everyone with a feeling of injustice to join the occupation of the (in)famous Wall Street. And people listened. Thousands of people poured into Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan, each with their own personal version of injustice. This occupation, which in a matter of days turned into a global movement, quickly became known as Occupy Wall Street. Uniting around the signifier of 'the 99%', the ordinary people of OWS joined forces in what today probably is the most well known example of a populist movement.

For almost two months, determined activists occupied Zuccotti Park in an effort to simulate a miniature model of 'real' democracy. Discussion groups, general assemblies, libraries, media groups, and plenty of similar initiatives were established, in order to facilitate a truly democratic environment. Every initiative was thoroughly discussed by the OWS' participants, and no decisions were taken until full consensus had been established (Graeber 2012, p. 52). This miniature democracy endured until November 15, when New York City's then Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, decided to force the protesters out of Zuccotti Park (Long & Dobnik 2011). The movement continued to stage occupations of different public spaces all around the city, but around spring 2012, the movement seemed to loose momentum. Instead of dissolving completely, however, OWS found another space, in which they could continue the experiment with 'real' democracy, namely, the online world. In the realm of Web 2.0, the movement found a space where the kind of democratic dialogue, which they had previously practiced in the streets of lower Manhattan, could be revived. As we shall see in the following analysis, OWS slowly began to use their Facebook page as a platform for democratic dialogue. Today, 501.714 users inhabit OWS' Facebook page, and even more people participate in the daily interactions at the page by either 'liking', 'sharing' or 'commenting' its content.

The second chapter of the thesis centers on this activity. By employing a qualitative content analysis, this first analysis will explore how OWS can be perceived as a populist movement. To inform the discussion of what exactly constitutes a populist movement, I will engage with the theory of populism, as proposed by Ernesto Laclau. The task of this chapter will thus be to answer the thesis' second research question. In order to do so, I will start by outlining Laclau's theory of populism. Hereafter, I will describe the method and analytic strategy guiding the first analysis and, finally, I will conduct the analysis of OWS on Facebook as an online populist movement.

2.1 Laclau's Theory of Populism

Instead of explaining Ernesto Laclau's entire theoretical framework, for the purpose of this thesis, it will suffice to introduce a few concepts that will guide my understanding of populism as a social phenomenon. However, some of the more fundamental concepts of Laclau's post-structuralism are nonetheless paramount to grasping the meaning of populism. Hence, I will start by outlining the concepts of 'discourse', 'dislocation' and 'articulation'. After doing so, I will proceed by explaining four concepts that relate more directly to Laclau's notion of populism, namely, 'social demands', 'chains of equivalence', 'empty signifiers' and 'hegemony'.

2.1.1 Post-structuralist foundations

Most post-structuralists (Laclau included) can be said to embody significant traits of traditional structuralism (Esmark et al., 2005). On several occasions, Laclau himself refer directly to the father of linguistic structuralism, Ferdinand Saussure, as his writings are the key to understanding the theoretical foundations of Laclau's work (Laclau 2005a, p 67). In his theory of general linguistics, Saussure argues that there are no positive terms in language, only differences (Saussure 1916). By this, Saussure intended to explain how no words in our language embody essential and naturally constituted cores. Instead, linguistic elements are attributed meaning only through their relations to other elements. The so-called 'value' of words is thus relational, since it is solely constituted by something external to itself (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 113).

This observation immediately leads us to Laclau's understanding of the concept of 'discourse'. Even though the concept is most commonly associated with actual writing or speech, Laclau's idea of discourse is much broader. In fact, discourse should be understood as *"any complex of elements in which relations play a constitutive role"* (Laclau 2005a, p. 67). Not only words and expressions, but also more composite aspects of social reality such as culture or technology can be considered parts of prevailing discourses. As long as these elements are constitutive, they are discursive.

Following this argument, Laclau's idea of discourse suddenly seems to embody ontological traits. This is, however, not the case. Post-structuralists operate with a so-called 'empty ontology', which is a way of describing the always-contingent nature of the social (Andersen 2009). There is no natural objectivity, which can be described as ontological. There is, on the other hand, plenty of social objectivity, which is constructed through the use of discourse. This is why Laclau and his partner, Chantal Mouffe, refer to the 'field of discursivity', which is a floating field of non-constituted surplus meaning, as the ontological level of the social (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 111). In this sense, the concept of 'discourse' falls somewhere in-between the 'field of discursivity' and

social objectivity (Hansen 2005, p. 190). Hence, everything that is constituted is discourse.

Most post-structuralist accounts focus on written or spoken statements, as these are the most tangible examples of discourse. In the first analysis, and the second analysis of chapter 3, I will likewise focus on written statements. These statements take the shape of Facebook posts by OWS. In Laclaudian terms, one could say that what I am looking for is written articulations and modifications of meaning, posted on Facebook by the subjects of the movement. This brings us to the concepts of 'articulation' and, consequently, the idea of 'dislocation'.

In the etymological sense, the word 'dislocation' signifies something, which is out of place. In Laclau's discourse theory, the word is used to describe moments where the linguistic structure permits re-articulations of certain elements (Laclau 1990). Put in a less theoretical way, dislocations happen when elements of our language are opened up for re-definition. We shall later see how terms such as 'capitalism' and, even more so, 'the people' are opened up for re-articulation by OWS. According to Laclau, the prerequisite for such re-articulations is dislocation. Accordingly, this must entail that the social objectivity, which previously fixated the entire idea of e.g. 'the people', has been dislocated at some point in time, which is why we today see a vigorous struggle to re-fixate the term through articulations. Hence, to answer the previous question: Discourse is materialized through articulations (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 105).

2.1.2 **Populism and emptiness**

In relation to the question of populism, Laclau operates with a relatively tangible smallest unit of discourse, namely, 'social demands' (Laclau 2005a, p. 73). According to Laclau, two types of social demands can be identified: Democratic demands and popular demands. The former type is characterized as demands that remain isolated from other demands. That is, demands that are treated independently. The latter type, on the other hand, is characterized as demands that are bundled together with other demands. In the case of populism, we will focus on the second category, popular demands, as these are defining features of populist movements (Ibid, p. 74).

In the following analysis, we will see how OWS connects one popular demand (say, anti-capitalism) to another demand (say, anti-global warming), which then again is tied to a third demand (say, anti-racism) and so on. In this way, these multiple popular demands are connected in what Laclau calls 'chains of equivalence', with the opposition to the established system as their only common denominator (Laclau 2007, p. 36). What makes these chains of popular demands equivalent is the somewhat universalistic correlation between them, which exists despite crucial differences in particular content. In this sense, 'equivalence' means to surrender some

particularity in the quest for universality (Laclau 2005a, p. 78). In plainer English, one could say that e.g. the demand of 'anti-capitalism' must surrender some of what made it particular, in order for it to be unified with other particular demands; and this surrendering is the most fundamental prerequisite for populism.

The above implies that instead of being a purely negative term, 'populism' for Laclau is nothing but a specific circumstance inherent to some instances of social reality. Whereas democratic demands are constituted through their difference to other particular demands, popular demands are constituted through their difference to the established system. The difference between different popular demands is thus sacrificed for the cause of unification (Laclau 2005b).

Now, such unification requires representation, not just by human representatives, but also through signification. This is where the concept of 'empty signifiers' is introduced to Laclau's theory. Empty signifiers are particular elements/demands discursively deprived of meaning and elevated to a universal level (Laclau 2007). By emptying these elements of particular content, they can be made to represent (or signify) entire chains of popular demands. The signifier's emptiness enables various particular demands to be signified by the signifier, as no particular attribution of meaning prevents this (Ibid, p. 36). A classic empty signifier in relation to populism is that of 'the people'. In the following two analyses, we will accordingly see how this signifier is used on various occasions, though often in the shape of the well-known OWS construct, 'the 99%'. In this sense, the empty signifier called 'the 99%' is made to represent/signify a wide range of popular demands, as no particular meaning is attributed to the signifier itself.

Before closing this section on Laclau's theory of populism, it is necessary to say a few words about the concept of 'hegemony'. To put it briefly, hegemony is a concept that signifies the fixation of empty signifiers. When the distance between the particular and the universal (the empty signifier) is erased, the hegemonic process is fulfilled (Ibid, p. 42). I will limit myself to this brief explanation of the term, since it will not play a grand part in the following analyses. The primary thing to note about the concept of hegemony is that the process of attributing meaning to the empty signifier is called a 'hegemonic struggle'. And whenever there is an effort to apply particular meaning to something universal, a hegemonic process is in place (Hansen 2005, p. 182).

To sum up, populism is for Laclau nothing but the unification of multiple particular demands under the heading of the same empty signifier. The only thing connecting these demands is their common opposition to the hegemonic order, for which they are made to sacrifice some of their particular meaning. When the process of emptying the signifier is reversed, and particular meaning suddenly is attributed to the universal representative, the process itself becomes

hegemonic. Bearing these things in mind, we are now in a position to move on to the methodological dispositions guiding the first analysis of OWS as a populist movement.

2.2 Method and Analytic Strategies: First Analysis

The method guiding the first analysis is, on the one hand, a somewhat regular quantitative mapping-exercise where things are aggregated and numbers are displayed statistically. On the other hand, however, the first analysis falls well within a qualitative methodological tradition, since the analysis strives to provide an answer to the second research question, which clearly demands analytic interpretations beyond the inference power of quantities. In this sense, the method employed here could be described as a mixed method, where the empirical data is quantitative, while the actual analysis is qualitative. More concretely, the first analysis is perhaps best labeled as a qualitative 'content analysis'. In traditional content analyses, the aim is to code a large amount of e.g. textual data in order to systematize and categorize certain empirical findings. After coding the data, the objective for the content researcher is to interpret the result (Stemler 2001). The keywords here are thus coding and interpretation.

2.2.1 Summative content analysis

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) outline three approaches to content analysis: Conventional, direct and summative. It is the latter, which will be employed in the first analysis. In the conventional analysis, the researcher derives her codes and categories from the text itself, while in the direct approach, the researcher approaches the empirical data with preconceived categories, derived from theoretical literature. In the summative content analysis, on the other hand, the idea is to extract certain elements from the text, and make them the object of study. In this sense, the summative approach resembles the conventional. Contrary to the conventional approach, however, the summative approach is (at first) not so much about exploring the *meaning* of these discursive elements, but rather to explore their *usage* (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, p. 1283).

The fundamental idea of summative content analysis is thus to aggregate chosen elements of the data and to compare their frequency. Accordingly, throughout the first analysis, I will first examine the frequency by which various popular demands are presented on Facebook by the OWS leadership. Secondly, I will focus on the frequency of 'likes', 'sharings' and 'comments' at the page. And thirdly, I will focus on the character of the posts at the page.

The first thing I did when approaching my empirical data was, as suggested by the summative approach, to extract important elements from the 'text'. As mentioned above, I chose to focus on

1) popular demands; 2) the practices of 'liking', 'sharing' and 'commenting'; and 3) the character of posts. First, the choice of focusing on popular demands is evident: If one wants to show how a movement can be considered populist in Laclaudian terms, the obvious thing to do is to aggregate the frequency, by which diverging popular demands surface in the movement's discourse. As was shown in the theory section, Laclau perceives populism as nothing but the unification of particular demands connected in chains of equivalence; and this is thus what the first part of the content analysis will strive to show in OWS.

Second, the choice of focusing on the practices of 'liking', 'sharing' and 'commenting' is more ambiguous. What I intend to show by focusing on these three practices is that the technology behind Facebook affords a certain set of practices, which coincides with basic dynamics of populist movements. These dynamics will, however, not be introduced until the actual analysis. As for now, it suffices to say that the populism of OWS is somewhat amplified through these practices; and this is what the second focus of the first analysis will strive to show. However, the focus on 'likes', 'sharings' and 'comments' demands some further clarification in terms of how these practices can be considered valid data for a content analysis. How can the practice of e.g. 'liking' something be considered part of the movement's discourse? To grasp this, we must once again consult Laclau's idea of discourse. As was explained in the theory section, not only writing and speech is considered discursive. All elements of the social, in which relations play a constitutive role, are discursive. By keeping this in mind, it becomes clear how the practices of 'liking', 'sharing' and 'commenting' are highly discursive. These actions are, namely, the only way for ordinary members of OWS to alter the relationship between themselves and post. Hence, these three practices, however simple they may seem, are to be viewed as nothing less than highly dense articulations (Zhao et al. 2008).

In this sense, a duality present itself between the first two focuses of the first analysis. First, I focus on articulations by the movement's leadership (the popular demands), and then I focus on individual member's articulatory reaction to these articulations ('likes', 'sharings' and 'comments'). The third focus falls somewhere in between this duality. The purpose of the third focus is, namely, to set the stage for the second analysis of chapter 3. Here, I will strive to show how the character of posts on OWS' Facebook page has shifted in connection to OWS' transformation from an offline to an online movement. How such a shift sets the stage for an exploration of the democratic potential of online populist movements will hopefully become clear at the end of the first analysis.

2.2.2 **Mapping Occupy Wall Street on Facebook**

When conducting a summative content analysis, the first thing one must do is to demarcate the empirical field (Heering 2004). In doing so, I chose time to be the limiting factor. Scattered over the first year of OWS' lifetime, I demarcated three timeslots of each two months, so as to cover as much as possible of the movement's first year. I thus mapped and aggregated the activity at OWS' Facebook page from September 20th – November 20th 2011, and again from March 20th – May 20th 2012, and finally from September 20th – November 20th 2012. These three timeslots constitute the empirical domain of the first analysis.

In terms of the first focus of the analysis, I coded and counted all the post published at the page within the three timeslots. This I did, as mentioned, to examine how numerous popular demands are connected under the umbrella of OWS. I constructed the coding system by reading through the post to extract the individual demands from the discourse at the page. As we shall see, these demands range from 'anti-capitalism' and 'anti-global warming' to 'anti-racism' and 'anti-war'. I then categorized these articulations according to the demand they were promoting, and aggregated the number of times the various demands had been articulated by the OWS leadership. I categorized a post as being representative of a certain demand, if the post contained pictures or statements that advocated for a certain cause.

In terms of the second focus of the first analysis, I counted the number of 'likes', 'sharings' and 'comments' within the 20 most active posts in each timeslot. This I did to examine the reactions of ordinary members to the leadership's articulation of popular demands. Which of the three is the most common practice? And how does the frequency of these practices change over time? In relation to this examination, I defined 'high activity' as the level of response to a given post. The 20 most active posts are thus the posts that received the highest number of 'likes', 'sharings' and 'comments' combined.

In terms of the third focus of the first analysis, I divided the total number of posts into two categories: 1) Those posts that involved some kind of physical mobilization or call to action (e.g. events or happenings), and 2) those posts that were purely political (e.g. critical statements about capitalism). This I did to show how the character of posts at OWS' Facebook page has changed in connection to the decline in the movement's offline activities.

Now, having described the basic method of summative content analysis, the time has now come for this section to turn to the analytic strategies of the first analysis. In doing so, I will outline the inference power of the analysis, and the analytical blind-spots that accompanies it. By 'inference power', I refer to the analytical weight and reach of my forthcoming conclusions. And by 'blind-

spots', I intend to describe the exactly opposite, namely, the parts of the social domain that escape the analytic gaze.

2.2.3 **Inference power and blind-spots: Qualifying quantities**

Mix methods research is an often-disputed area, since it involved the combination of two quite distinct research traditions. Not only does quantitative and qualitative research differ on general assumptions about social research (e.g. what counts as valid data), the two traditions are likewise often used to answer quite different research questions. As Punch (2005, p. 16) argues: *"Quantitative research has typically been more directed at theory verification, while qualitative research has typically been more concerned with theory generation."* However true this may be historically, it is (as Punch later argues) not a perfect correlation. Quantitative research can, of course, be used to generate theory and visa verse. Nonetheless, in relation to this thesis, the somewhat stereotypical distinction comes in handy.

While the mapping-exercise, which constitutes first part of the first analysis, is concerned with verifying a theory (Laclau's theory of populism), the subsequent content analysis lays the ground for the drafting of a theory. This draft of a theory, which I have entitled 'ventriloquist democracy', will hopefully appear from the closing pages of this thesis. A major advantage of mixed methods research is thus that it allows the researcher to answer both confirmatory and exploratory research questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2002). This is why I have chosen a mixed method. However, a few blind-spots follow from such a choice.

The first blind-spot, which should be mentioned here, is that by constructing categories and coding the empirical data accordingly, I naturally miss some aspects of the data. By first focusing on a series of popular demands, and then focusing on the practices of 'liking', 'sharing' and 'commenting', I create a somewhat myopic analytic gaze. I have done this, as mentioned before, because the quantitative part of the content analysis is confirmatory. By utilizing Laclau's theory of populism, I beforehand know what it takes for a movement to be 'populist'. This means that I approach the empirical data with a preconceived objective of looking for articulations of popular demands. Even though the particularity of these demands is not preconceived, the analytic gaze is. This is a blind-spot in the first analysis. The result of this blind-spot can be perceived quite clearly in the data, presented in the first focus. Here, I have constructed a category called 'other posts'. These posts are articulations that could not be recognized as neither 'political' nor 'mobilizing' posts. It is thus worth considering that through the lens of another analytic strategy, these posts might have been crucial. In this analysis, however, they are not.

In the second focus of the first analysis, I focus on ordinary members' reaction to posts by the OWS leadership. This could have been done in several ways. However, since my errand is to analyze the *relationship* between the practices of 'liking', 'sharing' and 'commenting', I have constructed a basis on which these three practices are easily comparable. This means that I only look at the *act* of e.g. 'commenting' or 'sharing', and by quantifying these acts, I construct a basis for comparison. Hence, in the first analysis, I do not look at the actual content of 'comments' or 'sharings'. In doing so, I undoubtedly miss some aspects of the discussion on 'inverse representation', which will be introduced later.

These two blind-spots are arguably the most influential blind-spots in the process of qualifying quantities, and they thus greatly impact the inference power of the first analysis. Since the first analysis only focuses on the *relationships* between the frequencies of 1) different popular demands 2) 'likes', 'sharings' and 'comments' and 3) 'mobilizing' and 'political' posts, these relationships are the only aspect of the social, captured by the analysis. Accordingly, I will limit myself to suggest conclusions based of these relationships.

After outlining the method and analytic strategies guiding the first analysis, we are now in a position to actually commence the thesis' first analysis.

2.3 **The First Analysis**

One way of exploring the populist patterns of OWS is, as I shall do here, to analyze how numerous popular demands are connected in chains of equivalence. Another way, which is slightly superficial, but also quite telling, is to read through the so-called 'Declaration of the Occupation of New York City'. This declaration is the one quoted on the cover page of this chapter, and it can be viewed by accessing the 'about' section at the movement's Facebook page. Drafted by a large group of ordinary members in Zuccotti Park in New York City on the 17th of September 2011 and accepted at a general assembly 12 days later, the declaration is the first written statement by the group as a unified movement (Graeber 2013). The beginning lines of this declaration tell the story of *"one people united"*, who have assembled in lower Manhattan to tell the world that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members. The important thing to note here is the linguistic use of 'the people'. Even though the construction of 'the people', as a universal signifier, is a prerequisite for most populist movements (Laclau 2005a, p. 74), the populism of OWS is even further exposed later in the declaration, where a series of popular demands are listed. Below is an extract of this listing (OWS 2011, p. 1):

> *"They have taken bailouts from taxpayers with impunity, and continue to give Executives exorbitant bonuses. They have perpetuated inequality and discrimination in the workplace based on age, the color of one's skin, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation (…) They have profited off of the torture, confinement, and cruel treatment of countless animals, and actively hide these practices (…) They have purposely covered up oil spills, accidents, faulty bookkeeping, and inactive ingredients in pursuit of profit (…) They have perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad. They have participated in the torture and murder of innocent civilians overseas."*

At least two points are crucial in relation to this quote. The first point is the very explicit unification of multiple demands under the same umbrella. One of the demands listed above is about the federal bailouts of banks and large corporations, which took place during the first years of the financial crisis. Another demand involves the cruel treatment of animals, while yet a third demand focuses on colonialism. In total, 21 clearly separated demands are highlighted throughout the declaration. While the case of corporate bailouts may have no *particular* connection to animal rights, the two demands share a very *universal* connection, namely, the common opposition to the hegemonic order, represented by the established system. This is one of the most fundamental traits of populist movements; and it is indeed very clearly displayed in the quote above.

This leads us to the second point, which involves this exact opposition between 'the people' and the establishment. All the demands presented in the declaration starts by the articulation of an unspecified antagonist called 'they'. Without specifying what 'they' represents, it is clear that 'they' is the universal signifier of the established system. In this way, a fundamental frontier is erected between the two universal subjects of 'they' and 'the people'. Later, we shall get to know this frontier as the opposition between the '1%' and the '99%'. Following the first point about the unification of popular demands, the important thing to note is not the particularity of the two subjects, but instead the universality. It is not so important what particular meaning is attributed to neither side of the frontier. The important thing is the opposition in itself. In a very post-structuralist sense, it is not the essence, but the difference that matters.

These two points, made visible by the quote above, underpins the initial populism of OWS in Laclaudian terms. First of all, we see how several popular demands are unified under the same signifier. As we know, in populist movements, such demands are connected in chains of equivalence, which means that their relation to the hegemonic order is equivalent. All OWS' 21 demands are opposed to the hegemonic order, which is exactly what unifies them. On this basis, one could be tempted to conclude that the populism of OWS is already established. However, a more thorough analysis is required, if we intend to explore the issue thoroughly. Hence, let us move on to the three focuses of the first analysis.

2.3.1 **Focus one: Unifying popular demands**

As mentioned in the method section, the first focus of this first analysis centers on the mapping of popular demands at OWS' Facebook page in three timeslots from the fall of 2011 and one year ahead. In total, I counted, categorized and aggregated 1.395 posts. 48% of these posts were 'purely political', while 46% were 'mobilizing' or contained explicit calls to action. 6% of the posts could not be categorized. These numbers are, of course, averages of the three timeslots combined, and as will become evident during the third focus, this relationship changes drastically throughout the first year of OWS' life. For now, however, let us turn to the particular content of the many popular demands. The table below shows the development in the articulation of different popular demands during the three timeslots.

	Fall 2011	**Spring 2012**	**Fall 2012**
Anti-Capitalism	29	91	77
Anti-Corrupt politicians	12	12	30
Anti-Climate change	1	10	64
Anti-War	4	5	11
Anti-Racism	1	1	7
Anti-Police	64	66	21
Anti-Prison system	0	0	5
Better democracy	5	13	10
Workers' rights	0	24	42
Mobilizing posts	391	262	50
Other posts	27	36	24
Total number of posts	**534**	**520**	**341**

Table 1: Number of posts articulating different popular demands.

First of all, it is clear how these numbers immediately confirm the pattern, which was detected in the OWS declaration. Without jumping to conclusions, we can argue that in terms of the unification of popular demands, OWS on Facebook clearly constitutes a populist movement.

Through these numbers, we see how the posts published by the OWS leadership focuses on a wide range of particular issues. While 29 of the posts in the fall of 2011 focused on the deficits of capitalism, 12 concerned the corporate takeover of politics, and 64 involved criticism of police violence etc. This tendency is further extended as time goes by. By observing the difference between the fall of 2011 and the fall of 2012, we see a much more even distribution of popular demands. While no posts concerned workers' rights in 2011, as much as 42 posts centered on that topic a year later. The same goes for the issues of climate change, war and racism. The articulation of all these demands has increased rapidly throughout the three timeslots. What these numbers signal is that instead of focusing on a few major demands, OWS has developed into an even broader movement during its first year.

From being a predominantly anti-capitalist movement, OWS has within a year transformed into a truly populist movement that represents a huge span of popular demands. On Facebook, at least, there seems to be no popular demand too small or specific for OWS to represent it; and this is exactly what makes the movement populist. Instead of promoting a few uniquely defines causes, OWS now constitutes an endless chain of equivalent demands.

While mapping the content of OWS' posts, it likewise occurred to me how the movement seemed to adapt quite smoothly to the political events of the year. For example, one reason why the number of posts focusing on anti-climate change reached such high levels during the fall of 2012 was that the U.S. was hit by the devastating destruction of Hurricane Sandy in late October. In response to this natural catastrophe, OWS morphed into some kind of relief agency called 'Occupy Sandy'. In doing so, OWS used their Facebook page as a medium for drawing attention to the horrible downsides of climate change and, furthermore, as a way of mobilizing relief to those in need. The curious thing about this line of events is not only that OWS suddenly transformed into a spontaneous relief agency, while for a moment abandoning all other demands, but also the way these efforts were framed discursively.

The transformation of OWS into a relief agency is interesting because it emphasizes the non-particularity of the movement. Had OWS been constituted by chains of difference, where particular demands are treated independently, then it probably would not have made sense for a predominantly anti-capitalist movement to provide emergency relief to hurricane victims. However, since the movement, as we have seen, is constituted by chains of equivalence, where particular demands are treated at a universal level, it makes good sense for OWS to respond to the anti-climate change agenda. As long as a demand stands in opposition to the hegemonic order, it is a legitimate cause for populist movements.

Furthermore, the very name 'Occupy Sandy' is interesting as well because it underscores the antagonistic nature of populist movements, like OWS. The word 'Occupy' is, namely, not only a well-known brand for the movement; it is also a way of signifying a common opposition. Just as all the demands listed in the table above are framed as 'anti', the word 'Occupy' signifies the same opposition. When the movement chose to call itself 'Occupy Wall Street', it was not only because it originated close to Wall Street's geographical location, but also because it wanted to articulate itself as being in opposition to the universal subject of Wall Street. It is a way of saying: *"You do not represent us"* (Greenberg 2012, p. 272). Accordingly, when the movement chose to momentarily rename itself as 'Occupy Sandy', it was a clever way of instituting a discursive difference between 1) the destruction brought about by the hurricane, and 2) the climate change that brought about the hurricane. One could thus argue that the 'Occupy' signifier could be applied to all of the popular demands articulated by OWS: From Occupy Wall Street to Occupy Sandy to Occupy War to Occupy Racism to Occupy Police Violence etc.

Now, after coding and interpreting the particular content of the 1.395 posts, the first focus of the analysis is completed. In this focus, I sought to analyze and discuss how OWS could be perceived as a populist movement in Laclaudian terms. Showing how a somewhat endless chain of equivalent demands constitutes the movement was thus the aim of the preceding section. Furthermore, we saw how the many popular demands articulated by OWS are connected through their universal opposition to the hegemonic order. Following this conclusion, we are now ready to move on to the second focus of the first analysis.

2.3.2 **Focus two: Inverse representation**

If the first focus of the analysis centered on articulations posted on Facebook by the OWS leadership, the second focus is about ordinary members' reaction to these articulations. By 'liking', 'sharing' and 'commenting', ordinary members of OWS are able to respond to the articulations made by the leadership. As part of this second focus, I have counted the number of 'likes', 'sharings' and 'comments' at the 20 most active posts during the three timeslots. This, I have done in an effort to compare the three practices, and to say something about the populist dynamics that might become visible through such a comparison.

However, before proceeding with the actual numbers, a further methodological note is required. Comparing 'likes', 'sharings' and 'comments' is to some extent like comparing apples and oranges. Each practice embodies certain features that might be more or less appealing to Facebook users. While 'liking' is an enormously easy and harmless way of signaling one's preferences, 'sharing' certainly involves another level of commitment, which is why this practice often plays a

significant part in online identity constructions (Zhao et al. 2008). 'Commenting', on the other hand, is a far more time consuming practice, and it furthermore requires more articulatory skills than the two other practices. In this sense, it is perhaps not so odd that most posts received far more 'likes' and 'sharings' than 'comments'. Despite these differences, however, it still makes sense to make the comparison. This is because the whole inequality of these practices embodies an analytical point in itself. This point, however, I will return to at the end of this section.

Below, I have inserted a diagram showing the development in the frequency of practices throughout the three timeslots. Since comparing these practices is the aim of this section, I have displayed the frequency of practices in percentage. The objective is not to compare the total number of e.g. 'likes' but to compare the frequency of 'likes' in relation to the two other practices.

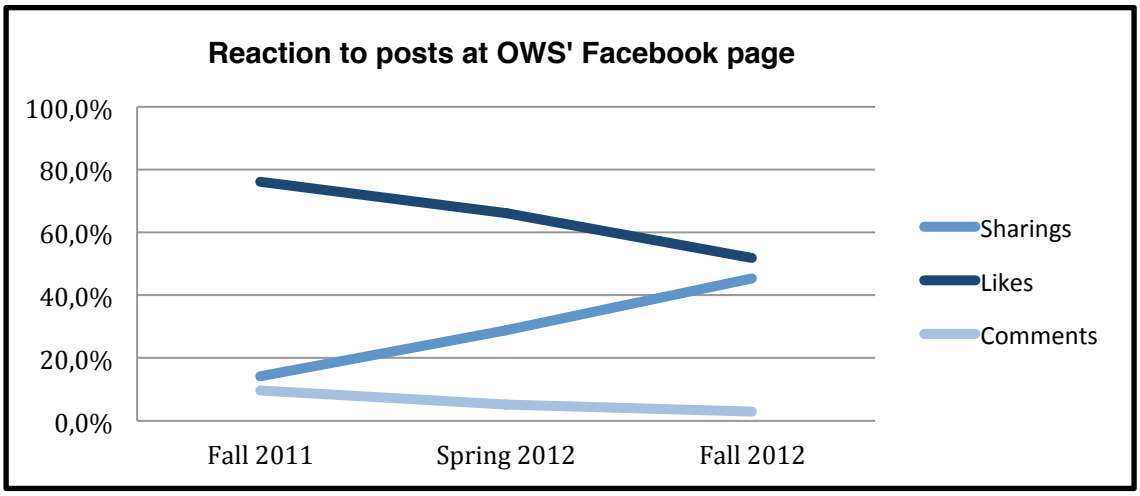

Figure 1: Reactions to highly active posts by ordinary members of OWS' Facebook page.

As can be seen in this quantitative visualization, a clear tendency is detectable: The percentage of 'likes' and 'comments' has steadily *decreased* throughout the timespan, while the percentage of 'sharings' has *increased* drastically. Note how the changes happen in an almost linear fashion. From a level of 76% in 2011, the percentage of 'likes' has decreased to merely 52% in the fall of 2012. Opposing this trend is the increase in 'sharings', which have gone from constituting no more than 14% of the entire user activity in fall 2011 to 29% in spring 2012 and 45% in fall 2012.

The conclusion seems to be that as of late 2012, ordinary members of OWS' Facebook page almost equally prefer the practices of 'liking' and 'sharing'. 'Comments', on the other hand, remain a less frequent practice. As mentioned, this might have a lot to do with the time consuming nature of drafting a comment. However, we still see a relatively sharp decline in comments throughout OWS' first year: From 10% in the first timeslot to 3% in the third. In real numbers, this decline

seems even more drastic: From an average of 535 comments per post in fall 2011 to no more than 216 comments per post in fall 2012. In many ways, this very decline in 'comments' is quite telling of the populist patterns that emerge from these figures.

As we have seen so far, two tendencies confirm the populist patterns of OWS on Facebook. One is the unification of popular demands, the other is the common opposition to the hegemonic order, represented by the established system. According to Laclau, however, there is a third trait, which characterizes populist movements – or rather, a consequence that stems from populism. This is what he refers to as 'inverse representation'. Representation of political identities, Laclau argues, is not merely a one-way street. Ideas and demands do not only travel from represented to representative, as is often argued by proponents of liberal democracy. In order to apply the ideas of the represented to a context of realpolitik, the representative will inevitably transform the demands and thus create new ideas. As Laclau (2005a, p. 158) puts it:

> *"It is in the nature of representation that the representative is not merely a passive agent but has to add something to the interests he represents. This addition, in turn, is reflected in the identity of the represented, which changes as a result of the very process of representation. Thus, representation is a two-way process: A movement from represented to representative, and a correlative one from representative to represented."*

The represented, Laclau argues, is thus dependent on the representative for the constitution of her identity (Ibid). This point is important, because based on the quantitative data of this first analysis, I will argue that what we see happening at OWS' page is the amplification of this exact dynamic. As we saw previously, the populism of OWS has increased within the movement's first year, in the sense that the plurality of popular demands has increased. More diverse demands are articulated more frequently in 2012 than in 2011, and the particularity of OWS as an anti-capitalist movement is thus sacrificed for the universal cause of 'anti-system'. Following this development very tightly is the sharp *decline* in 'comments', and the drastic *rise* in 'sharings'. In fact, if one compares the development, the connection between the increase in plurality, the increase in 'sharings' and the decrease in 'comments' correlates strikingly well.

But how is this correlation to be interpreted? One conclusion, which these figures suggest, is that the increased populism of OWS entails an increase in inverse representation. In other words, the less particular the movements gets, the more affirmative its members become. This tendency is especially made visible by the explosion of 'sharings' from 2011 to 2012. This practice is arguably the most committing and affirmatory practice on Facebook. By 'sharing' a post from OWS, ordinary member do not only affirm the message (which would be the act of 'liking'), they furthermore share it with they own network, and thus make it part of their own online identity

construction (Zhao et al. 2008). It is striking how almost 50% of the user activity at OWS' page is constituted by 'sharings', and this tendency suggests that representation in OWS not only runs from ordinary members to the representative, but certainly also the other way around; and this is an important consequence of populist dynamics, which should be kept in mind.

As I will return to this discussion of inverse representation in chapter 4, we will leave the topic for now. What remains for this first analysis is the third and last focus.

2.3.3 **Focus three: From 'mobilizing' to 'political' content**

The point that I wish to make in this third focus has already been briefly touched upon. In the first focus, I mentioned that the relationship between 'mobilizing' and 'political' content in OWS' posts has changed drastically throughout the three timeslots. As became visible from table 1, the total number of posts containing purely 'political' content in the fall of 2011 reached 116. In percentages this constitutes 22% of all posts uploaded by the OWS leadership during the first timeslot. In contrast, the fall of 2012 saw 267 'political' posts, which constitutes as much as 78% of all posts. This is a relative increase of 56 percentage points in purely 'political' posts in only one year. This development is illustrated in the figure below.

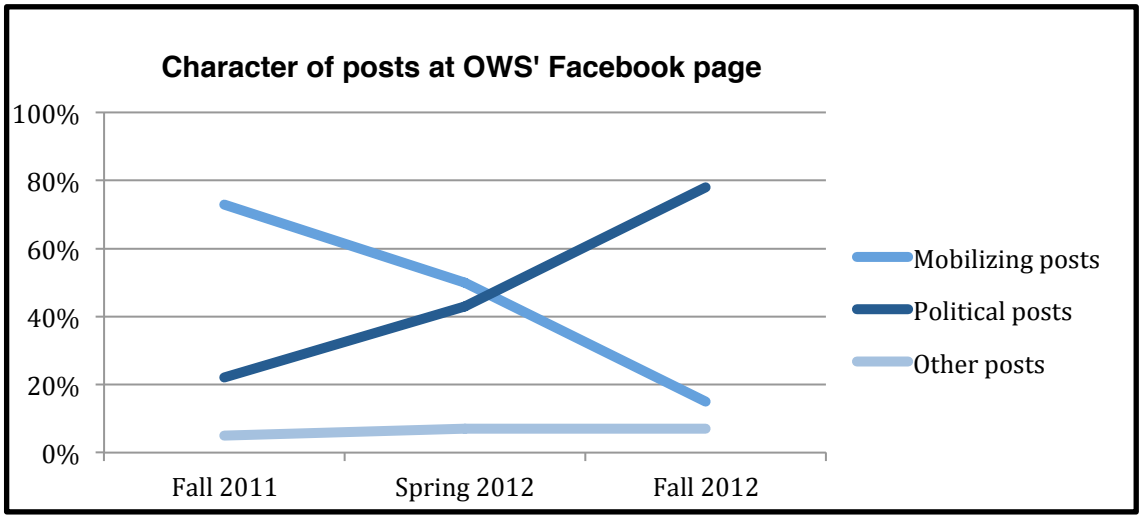

Figure 2: Character of posts at OWS' Facebook page.

Before interpreting these numbers, a few words must be said about the distinction between 'political' and 'mobilizing' posts. An obvious criticism of this would be that, in Laclaudian terms, there is no such thing as a non-political OWS post. As we shall see in the later discussion of agonistic democracy (chapter 3), Laclau and Mouffe insist that the ontological level of the social is inherently political. As we shall return to this discussion later, it suffices to say that all discourse,

which strives to fixate certain dislocations by articulating antagonistic relationships, are political (Laclau 1990). Since, as we have already seen, the entire foundation of OWS is build upon the frontier between 'they' and 'the people', or the '1%' and the '99%', it is hard to imagine OWS posts that are non-political. As a consequence of this, the distinction between 'political' and 'mobilizing' posts are not defined in terms of the positive *presence* of political content, but rather as the negative *absence* of mobilization. This means that the categorization of purely 'political' posts is based of the absence of calls to physical mobilization. Hence, the political status of 'mobilizing' posts is not disputed. It is, on the other hand, the non-mobilizing character of the 'political' posts that defines the distinction.

Moving on to the interpretation of the relationship between 'political' and 'mobilizing' posts. In OWS' first months, ordinary members of the Facebook page were exposed to a large proportion of 'mobilizing' posts that sought to get people out in the streets. By constantly organizing rallies and meetings, the OWS leadership primarily used their Facebook page to mobilize people in the offline world. In the fall of 2011, Facebook thus served the purpose as a medium for mobilization. However, as the offline presence of OWS stated to decrease during 2012, the number of 'mobilizing' posts naturally diminished. Hence, the explanation for the decrease in 'mobilizing' posts is arguably that physical mobilization was no longer required.

This decrease, however, does not stand alone, as it coincides with the stark increase in purely 'political' posts. A possible explanation for this is that the withdrawal of OWS' offline presence brought along the need for a new place for political deliberation. In the process of diminishing the number of rallies, general assemblies and other physical gatherings, the movement lost the internal sphere for dialogue and discussion, which previously made OWS a celebrated phenomenon amongst advocates for increased public deliberation (Miller 2012, p. 173). The solution to this lack of space for dialogue and deliberation became Web 2.0. Instead of discussing various political issues in general assemblies or at rallies, OWS decided to use especially their Facebook page as a medium for democratic dialogue. The interpretation of the change in relationship between 'mobilizing' and 'political' posts is thus that the previously offline dialogue has moved online; and this will be a guiding assumption for the remaining parts of the thesis.

2.3.4 **Concluding the first analysis**

First of all, we saw how OWS on Facebook can be perceived as an online populist movement, as an endless chain of equivalent demands seems to constitute the movement. What unifies the movement is thus not particular content, but rather a universal opposition to the hegemonic order, illustrated by the establishing of an antagonistic frontier between 'they' and 'the people'.

Second, we saw how the logic of inverse representation has been intensified throughout OWS' first year. A drastic increase in 'sharings', coinciding with a rapid decrease in 'comments' signifies this development. Finally, we just saw how the democratic dialogue, which previously made OWS a celebrated example of 'real' or 'radical' democracy, has now moved online. Today, Facebook constitutes OWS' main domain for democratic dialogue.

Hence, by answering the thesis' second research question, we are now in a position to commence the exploration of the third question: *How might the internal dialogue of Occupy Wall Street on Facebook be thought of as radical democratic?* Answering this question will be the primary task for the following chapter and the thesis' second analysis.

CHAPTER III
Second Analysis

”If we attend to the course of conversation in mixed companies consisting not merely of scholars and subtle reasoners but also of business people and women, we notice that besides storytelling and jesting they have another entertainment, namely, arguing”

Immanuel Kant
Critique of Practical Reason, 1788

3. **Democratic Dialogue in Occupy Wall Street**

Before commencing the thesis' third chapter, let us briefly recall the very last conclusion of chapter 2: The democratic dialogue, which OWS previously performed in the streets of New York City and other metropolises, has today moved online. Since the middle of 2012, OWS has utilized especially their Facebook page, in an effort to continue the movement's experiment with 'real' or 'radical' democracy. Offline activities have been abandoned and replaced by Web 2.0's 'architecture of participation', where content is created in a collaborative and participatory fashion, according to a circle of scholars. In the light of this conclusion, the thesis' third research question resurfaces: How can the internal discourse of OWS on Facebook be perceived as an example of radical democracy? And if we claim that online populist movements, such as OWS on Facebook, do epitomize democratic potential, what understanding of democracy is then guiding our observation? Exploring the answer to these questions will be the task for this chapter.

My answer to these questions will be based on the findings of the second analysis. As mentioned in the introduction, the second analysis is an ethnographic study, through which I will explore the democratic discourse of OWS on Facebook. However, as I will explain later, this ethnographic study is – like most other parts of this thesis – quite alternative. Instead of conducting a conventional (virtual) ethnography, I will employ the method of experimental ethnography, which to some extend is a method designed specifically for this thesis. I will use this method to 'test' the internal discourse of OWS, to see how far it can be stretched towards the ideals of radical democratic dialogue. This I will do by extracting the normative requirements for democratic dialogue, as proposed by three theories of radical democracy: Deliberative democracy, agonistic democracy and cosmopolitan democracy. After doing so, I will expose the members of OWS on Facebook to comments based on these requirements.

However, before reaching the actual second analysis, some further considerations in terms of theory, methodology and analytic strategy are necessary. I will start by describing the three theories of radical democracy. First, I will outline the theory of deliberative democracy, as proposed by e.g. Jürgen Habermas and John Dryzek. Next, I will describe mainly Chantal Mouffe's understanding of agonistic democracy. And finally, I will outline the more recent theory of cosmopolitan democracy, developed by scholars such as David Held and Daniele Archibugi. After doing so, I will introduce the method of experimental ethnography, which immediately will lead me to some fundamental questions about analytic strategy. By clarifying these questions, the thesis will be in a position to commence the actual second analysis. But let us first of all turn to the theory section and, hence, the first model of radical democracy, namely, deliberative democracy.

3.1 Deliberative Democracy

Even though the normative ideals guiding the concept of 'deliberative democracy' were born long ago with the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) and John Stuart Mill (1859), the term itself did not materialize until 1980, where Joseph Bessette coined it as a proposed solution to the seemingly undemocratic traits of majority rule in republican governments (Bessette 1980). Since then, scholars such as Jürgen Habermas and John Dryzek have served to mature the theory, which today serves as a framework of thought for a variety of sub-concepts such as 'discursive democracy' and 'participatory democracy'. And in a way, exactly those two sub-concepts signify deliberative democracy's main features, namely, dialogue and participation.

According to Dryzek (2000, p. 1), the deliberative turn in democratic theory represents a *"renewed concern with the authenticity of democracy"*, where the quality of citizen participation in politics is the main issue at stake. The theory is concerned with qualifying and legitimizing political processes through critical and rational deliberation. To deliberate is to consider different facts and viewpoints, and to converse as a way of enlarging perspectives, opinions and understandings (Torres 2006). Hence, the quality of democracy should, according to deliberative democrats, no longer be measured by the aggregation of votes at popular referendums, but rather by the degree to which substantial citizen participation is practiced in various spheres of society. In sum, deliberative democracy presents a normative model of political autonomy and self-governance, based on the practical and rational reasoning by competent citizens (Bohman & Rehg 2007). What 'rational reasoning', 'competent citizens' and 'participation' exactly means, and what this entails for online populist movements, is what this section sets out to explore.

3.1.1 Critical roots for a critical theory

Deliberative democracy's modern roots are to be found in the thoughts of the 20th century's critical theorists, who offered new ways of thinking about societal structures, rational enlightenment and human emancipation (Adorno & Horkheimer 1944; Horkheimer 1947); and it is thus in the perhaps most prominent critical theorist of our time, Jürgen Habermas, that we find deliberative democracy's main protagonist. Habermas' contribution to the line of thought that emerged with the Frankfurt School during the 1940's and 1950's was, namely, to show how a revival of the so-called 'bourgeois public sphere' could lead to increased emancipation for human beings in contemporary capitalist society (Habermas 2009; Habermas 1996). It is through this idea of the public sphere, in which rational arguments would be the sole arbiter of any political issue, that the notion of deliberative democracy enters Habermas' writings (Calhoun 1993).

The problem with liberal democracy, according to Habermas, is that the once so vigorous and

inclusive environment for political debate and deliberation has vanished completely from the private sphere of life. The bourgeois public sphere, which Habermas hails as a unique but short-lived feature of democracy, existed in Europe around the 1700th century (Habermas 2009, 115). It was a domain of the private 'lifeworld' that was enacted through inclusive political debates in coffee houses, newspapers, libraries and journals. Everyone could participate, and the better argument was allegedly the main driver in this type of deliberation. However, due to the prevalence of capitalism and the capitalist mode of production in the centuries following the French Revolution, the two once separate spheres of life (the private and the public) started to merge. Modern society witnessed a privatization of the public sphere and a politization of the private sphere; and in this dialectic process, the bourgeois public sphere was supposedly lost. In Habermas' famous wording, the lifeworld got colonized by systems (Habermas 2009, p. 301).

The competent citizen that previously participated in political dialogues by engaging in the bourgeois public sphere has been transformed from citizen to consumer. Instead of thinking and deliberating about public issues, modern citizens have been turned into private entities concerned only with private consumption in its widest definition: Consumption of goods and services, but also consumption of political identities. This has, according to Habermas and other deliberative democrats (e.g. Dryzek 2000), concentrated political influence within a small circuit of power consisting of political parties, large corporations, interest lobbies, experts etc.: *"The pubic as such is included only sporadically in this circuit of power, and even then it is brought in only to contribute its acclamation"* (Habermas 1989, p. 176). Hence, the transformation of the bourgeois public sphere has served only to alienate the public further from the world of politics by removing the conditions for proper deliberation (Fishkin 1993).

The transformation of a 'culture-debating public' to a 'culture-consuming public' seems to be the starting point of most discussions on deliberative democracy (Held 2006; Habermas 2009, p. 239). From this perspective, liberal democracy is perceived as a political marketplace, where the consumer can shop to satisfy her private interest. In essence, this dynamic founds democracy on the aggregation of private interest, which, according to deliberative democrats, is an unfortunate basis for any political system. This is due to the idea that consumer choices only affect oneself, while political choices also affect others (Elster 1998). Hence, increased citizen participation seems to be the way to revive democracy, and this is where populist movements enter the picture. However, not all kinds of participation will do. As we shall see, participation, in itself, is not a sufficient response to public alienation. Instead, democratic participation must be based on *"informed debate, public use of reason and the impartial pursuit of truth"* (Held 2006, p. 232).

3.1.2 **Ideal speech and consensus**

According to deliberative democracy, dialogue is at the heart of participation. Not only because dialogue is a way to understand and incorporate the preferences of others, but also because dialogue is a way of engaging in a learning process. By participating, we learn to participate, and by learning to participate, we also learn how to comprehend and take into account the preferences of others (Dryzek 2000). The source of legitimacy for deliberative democrats is thus not the predetermined will of individuals, but rather the process of shaping people's preferences.

As most people know, a dialogue is not a one-way street. Engaging in dialogue requires *listening* as well as *uttering*. However obvious this may sound, the dangers of non-reciprocity are curiously present in most discussions of deliberative democracy (della Porta 2013, p. 62). In such discussions, Habermas' old theory of the public sphere often seems to resurface. Even though Habermas finds the resurrection of the public sphere impossible, he does nonetheless list an alternative way for liberal democracy: The internal democratization of society's institutions (Habermas 2009). This democratization utopia, which has become known as 'the long march through the institutions', is based on the notion of communicative action, or 'ideal speech'. It is Habermas' theory that democracy can be revived if societal institutions establish internal environments for ideal speech, through which the public once again will be allowed to participate in the circuit of power (Calhoun 1993, p. 28). Without ever dwelling on how to reach that goal, Habermas goes to great lengths to describe the characteristics of 'ideal speech'. The ideal speech situation is a somewhat utopian situation, where all participants in a dialogue embody a particular set of discourse ethics, by which the 'better argument' will be allowed to establish consensus on a given matter (Flyvbjerg 1998). The idea is that if five key processual requirements are present in a dialogue, the participants will all end up affirming the best argument. The requirements are as follows (Habermas 1996, p. 65):

1. *Generality*: No party affected by the debated issue should be excluded from the dialogue.
2. *Autonomy*: All participants should have equal opportunity to present validity claims for and against the arguments offered in the dialogue.
3. *Ideal role taking*: All participants should be willing and able to emphasize with those validity claims presented by other participants.
4. *Power neutrality*: Differences in power and influence between participants should be neutralized, so that such differences have no effect on the formation of consensus.
5. *Transparency*: Participants must openly state their goals and intentions and in doing so desist from any strategic action throughout the dialogue.

Even though the prospects of applying these requirements to any kind of real-life dialogue seems incredibly daunting, they have nonetheless been used countless times to asses the democratic nature of various institutions and domains, including particularly online environments (e.g. Poor 2005; Dahlberg 2001; Papacharissi 2002). Today, it is clear that Habermas never intended to describe anything but a utopia, and that the distant future proposed in his writings on the structural transformation of the public sphere will forever be a way of thinking about society, rather than an actually achievable goal for society (Habermas 2009, introduction). However, the utopia of the public sphere and the ideal speech situation is nonetheless most deliberative democrats' utopia for a revived democracy, and this is why the following discussion of online populist movements' deliberative democratic potential will be held against these standards.

When considering the characteristics of deliberative democracy, one must also recognize the result of such dialogical dynamics. The outcome that, according to deliberative democrats, naturally follows a rational dialogue based on Habermas' discourse ethics must logically be consensus: If the 'better argument' is allowed to prevail, and if all participant are willing to genuinely pursue 'truth' and 'reason', consensus will naturally follow (Heysse 2006).

Amongst the normative requirements of deliberative democracy, it is especially important to recognize the theory's pursuit for consensus, since this is the main divide between deliberative democracy and agonistic democracy. As we shall see in the following section, deliberative democrats' constant focus on consensus embodies some democratic deficits, which they quite often neglect. For instance, how do we ensure that consensus is established through ideal speech situations and not by more coercive means? This uncertainty, agonistic democrats argue, is in fact so grave that it undermines the entire possibility for pluralism to thrive. How agonistic democrats reach such conclusions, and how they come up with solutions to this problem, shall be the focus of the following section.

3.2 **Agonistic Democracy**

Just like the advocates for deliberative democracy, proponents of agonistic democracy are concerned with dialogue and participation. It is likewise the primary argument of agonistic democrats that the institutions of liberal democracy alienate ordinary citizens from the world of politics, and that an enhanced focus on pluralism and diversity is the way forward for contemporary democracy (Bond 2011). Even though these assumptions sound strikingly similar to those of deliberative democrats, the roads to emancipation differ significantly. Because, where deliberative democrats emphasize rationality and consensus in democratic dialogue, agonistic

democrats champion passion and conflict (Erman 2009). Especially the divide between consensus and conflict has caused much debate over the purpose of democracy, which for agonistic democrats is to reintroduce passion and rigor to today's political dialogues, while at the same time taming the basic principle of political communities, namely, antagonism (Mouffe 2005).

The simplest definition of agonistic democracy is this: *"It is the theory of the practice of democratic political contestation"* (Finlayson 2009, p. 13). This definition and the very name of the theory, which is derived from the ancient Greek word 'agon', meaning contest or strife, testify to the central position conflict or disagreement occupies in the theory (Wenman 2013, p. 7). However, to fully grasp why conflict is such an important feature of agonistic democracy, we must first consult the ontological assumptions underpinning the theory developed by post-structuralists such as Chantal Mouffe, Bonnie Honig and William E. Connolly.

3.2.1 **Politics and the political**

Is safe to say that agonistic democracy's primary advocate is Chantal Mouffe; and it is thus Mouffe's writings that lay the ground for this thesis' understanding of agonistic democracy. By reviving Carl Schmitt's conception of 'the political' (Schmitt 1932), Mouffe makes a clear distinction between 'politics' and 'the political'. This distinction is the clue to understanding why agonistic democrats reject consensus-driven theories and hail democratic contestation (Mouffe 2005). The main difference is that whereas 'the political' signifies the ontological base of human nature, 'politics' denotes those democratic institutions and practices that organize human co-existence. Politics is thus the enactment or realization of our ontological dispositions (the political) through conventional politics (Mouffe 2003). To put it in Heidegger's terms, 'the political' exists at the ontological level, while 'politics' operate at the ontic (Mouffe 2005, p. 8).

Hence, if we want to re-invigorate democracy and democratic dialogue, we must engage with the political, and not just politics. According to Mouffe, the political foundation of the social is a place of permanent contestation and antagonism. This is due to Mouffe's post-structuralist inheritance, by which she completely rejects the notion of social objectivity, as we saw in the chapter 2. To recapitulate briefly, it is Laclau and Mouffe's conviction that any object always embodies something other than itself: A constitutive outside, in Derrida's terms (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). This means that things are only attributed meaning or identity relatively to other things, and that the social as such has no essence in itself. Following that argument, this entails that any kind of social objectivity is a temporary result of provisional hegemony, which always involves some kind of exclusion (Mouffe 2009, p. 108). Hence, if no impartial truth exists and if efforts to objectify something always involve exclusion, then social objectivity must accordingly be constituted

through acts of power (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). And it is these conflicting acts of power that make 'the political' a place of permanent contestation. When deliberative democrats claim to champion the *"impartial pursuit of truth"*, agonistic democrats argue, they do not take into account the always-contingent nature of the social's ontological/political level. Instead, they engage with the ontic level of politics, in which social objectivity may exist within the perimeter of the hegemonic order; and as long as we remain on the ontic level, we will never fully allow for pluralism to thrive. Such rejection of antagonistic relations allegedly poses a great threat to democratic institutions, according to agonistic democrats (Mouffe 1999; Honig 1993).

3.2.2 The passion of 'us and them'

Agonistic and deliberative democrats often accuse each other of threatening the future of democracy, by promoting conflict and consensus respectively. In the section on deliberative democracy, we saw how one of Habermas' five requirements for ideal speech was 'ideal role taking'. Through this requirement, Habermas envisioned an ideal dialogue where all participants make it their objective to emphasize with the claims of others. According to that line of thought, conscious efforts to draw up frontiers between 'them' and 'us' are seen as both anti-systemic and undemocratic (Flyvbjerg 1998). Contrary to this argument, Mouffe argues *"that the blurring of frontiers between left and right, far from being an advance in a democratic direction, is jeopardizing the future of democracy"* (Mouffe 2009, p. 7).

To grasp why Mouffe perceives the blurring of frontiers as a threat to the future of democracy and why she opposes *"consensus at the centre"* (Mouffe 2009, p. 6), we must once again consolidate the ontological premise of 'the political'. It is the claim of agonistic democrats that if the construction of social objectivity is a hegemonic power-game, then these constructions must accordingly suppress alternative claims to objectivity (Mouffe 2005). Now, these different claims to objectivity are, in a very post-structuralist sense, always seen as serving to construct democratic identities. All articulations of political claims embody constructions of democratic identities, as they promote and shape the identity of one group and suppress and differentiate the identity of another. The political and the question of identity are thus intrinsically connected through articulation and differences (Connolly 2002). Hence, when political claims are suppressed, democratic identities are too. And since this suppression can only be seen as an act of exclusion and antagonism, it is only natural that the political is divided into constantly reinterpreted relations of 'us' and 'them' (Mouffe 2005, p. 35).

In this environment of political contestation, the question of pluralism resurfaces. Pluralism is a basic principle of society, but so are hegemonies. What this means is that pluralism is always

present, but can be suppressed through construction of hegemonies (Mouffe 2009). Hence, if we want to allow for pluralism to thrive, we must not accept social objectivities to be constituted as essential truths, but instead be willing to contest and challenge them. What in Mouffe's view endangers democracy is thus not conflict or agonism, but instead liberal and deliberative democracy's tendency to take for granted the 'fact of pluralism' (Mouffe 1999, p. 746). 'The fact of pluralism' is Mouffe's way of describing liberal and deliberative democrats efforts to create 'us' without 'them'. According to agonistic democrats, this is not only a naïve perception of political relationships, but also a dangerous approach to democracy, as it turns a blind eye to suppressed identities. As Connolly (2002) argues, coming to terms with the differences of identities is an act of 'agonistic respect', and that kind of respect is fundamental to radical democracy.

The separation of 'them' and 'us' in political debates is thus not a dangerous tendency, as many liberal democrats would argue. It is on the contrary a natural consequence of hegemonic struggles, and it is instead the disregard of counter-hegemonic identities that constitute a dangerous tendency. Therefore a democratic society must encourage these discursive divisions of 'the people' into politically opposing groups. One way to do so, Mouffe argues, is to reintroduce passion and emotions to democratic politics. As she famously argues: *"What we need is a politics of emotions"* (Mouffe 2009, p. 15). According to Mouffe, the consensus-driven character of liberal democracy, in which it is argued that politics can be neutral and unbiased, has not just served to alienate the public from governments and politicians, but also made them increasingly uninterested in politics as a whole.

Through this argument, the dualism of 'the political' is revealed: On the one hand, democratic societies must embrace pluralism and diversity, while on the other hand encourage a separation of 'them' and 'us' based on the principle of antagonism. Managing this balancing act is the key task for democratic societies. According to agonistic democrats, there is only one way to solve that task, which is to transform the principle of antagonism into that of agonism.

Agonism, not antagonism

When Carl Schmitt wrote 'Das Begriff des Politischen', he based his writings on a false dilemma, according to Mouffe (2009, p. 38). 'The people', Schmitt argued, need not only to be constituted and united politically through the exclusion but also the *eradication* of its antagonistic counterpart (Schmitt 1932). Even though Mouffe agrees with Schmitt in arguing that political unity ('us') can only be constituted through the exclusion of opposing political identities ('them'), she rejects Schmitt's emphasis on the impossibility of opposing identities' co-existence (Mouffe 2009). What for Mouffe constitutes a false dilemma is thus Schmitt's emphasis on the importance of

antagonistic identities' extinction in order for a hegemonic project to prevail. On the contrary, Mouffe proposes that a democratic society must be able to imagine and enable a transformation of Schmitt's concept of opposing identities as 'enemies' into that of 'adversaries'. In doing so, the dynamics of antagonism is turned into agonism, which is a state of political opposition that is not based on eradication, but on contestation and struggle (Mouffe 2005, p. 19).

Much like the infamous misquotation of Voltaire: *"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to death your right to say it"* (Hall 2009), agonistic democracy is based on the drawing of a political frontier between competing hegemonic projects. While in antagonism, we have enemies who try to destroy each other, in agonism, we have adversaries who oppose but respect each other's opinions. Hence, it might be that agonistic democracy is based of political contestation and rejects the common pursuit of consensus, but in no way does this mean that opposing ideas are not respected. The ideal for democratic dialogue in agonistic democracy is therefore not rational and (pseudo) inclusive, but rather emotional and exclusive. This is where deliberative democracy and agonistic democracy part ways: Is full inclusion possible without compromising plurality? Deliberative democrats believe so, agonistic democrats do not.

We have now concluded the description of the two most opposing ideas of radical democracy. Even though the third and final model is often portrayed as a mere extension of the first model (deliberative democracy at a broader scale), the theory of cosmopolitan democracy has a lot more to offer. Rather than following Habermas processual interpretation of reason and universal morality, as some cosmopolitans do, this thesis will apply a more pragmatist understanding of these ideas. And instead of focusing on the *practice* of democratic dialogue, as deliberative and agonistic democrats do, we will now turn our attention to the *scope* of democratic dialogue.

3.3 **Cosmopolitan Democracy**

Derived from the Greek word *kosmopolitēs*, the idea of 'the cosmopolitan' as an identity marque, which signifies a world (kosmo) citizen (politēs), has been used in a variety of contexts. In accordance, the notion of 'cosmopolitanism', as a way of perceiving the world, often denotes something both encompassing and unifying, namely, a universal morality shared between fellow citizens of the human race (Held 2010). Cosmopolitans assume that human beings share the same moral obligation to one another, which exists independent of race, culture, religion or national affiliation (Brown & Held 2010). What this assumption entails is the necessity for all human beings to regard each other as fellow citizens of the world and, in doing so, to broaden the scope of democracy and democratic dialogue. This is the reason why the main objective for

cosmopolitan democrats is to include those actors affected *by* politics *in* politics (Archbugi 2004, p. 443). Following this argument, one could argue that the normative focus for cosmopolitan democrats is not so much whether democratic dialogue should be rational or emotional, consensus-driven or conflict-ridden. Rather, focus is on the inclusion of the world's citizens in the decision-making processes of global governance (Archibugi 2008).

Arguments for cosmopolitan democracy are often based on a shared general assumption: That nation-states are *de jure* sovereign, but *de facto* non-autonomous (Held 2006, p. 304). This assumption, caused by the globalization of world politics, entails that nation-states no longer are able to provide the kind of self-government required by modern democracy. Hence, what the world face today, is a mounting democratic deficit, and the theory of cosmopolitan democracy should therefore be understood as a response to this deficit (Archibugi 2004). In an age where decisions-makers increasingly are removed physically and habitually from their constituencies, the objective for cosmopolitan democrats is to *"ameliorate the disjunction between the exercise of transnational public power and the preferences of citizens who are affected"* (Kuyper 2012, p. 30). Even though cosmopolitan democracy today encompasses a variety of normative ideas for the enhancement of democracy, this thesis will primarily draw on the strand that advocates for increased global dialogue through the internationalization of 'civic public spheres'. This strand has been given names such as *dialogic cosmopolitanism* (Linklater 1998) and *civic cosmopolitanism* (Brown & Held 2010).

3.3.1 Including citizens bottom-up

In essence, cosmopolitan democracy is about inclusion. Here, however, inclusion should be understood slightly different than in the case of the two former models of radical democracy. Even though cosmopolitan democrats champion dialogue and participation, and despite the fact that cosmopolitans (like deliberative democrats) believe that rational argumentation and consensus-driven dialogue is essential (Held 2006), the views on inclusion differ. 'Inclusion' as a democratic concept does, in the cosmopolitan sense, not only signify the process of giving citizens a voice, as a way of legitimizing and deliberating public policy. The aim for many cosmopolitan democrats is often more instrumental. It is not enough to be heard; citizens of the world must be allowed to influence political decision-making more directly (Fraser 1990).

Generally speaking, the ideas surrounding cosmopolitan democracy can be divided into two strands: Those who advocate a top-down approach, and those who advocate a bottom-up approach to the realization of cosmopolitanism (Cochran 2002). In the former case, scholars such as David Held and Daniele Archibugi have argued that transnational organizations such as the UN,

WTO and IMF need to be reformed democratically by, e.g. distributing influence between member states on account of population size (Held 2006, p. 308). This is an example of democratization from the top and down. Here, the initiative rests with the transnational organizations, and it is thus their obligation to include citizens in the political equation. In the latter case, scholars like Andrew Linklater and Molly Cochran have argued that we need to focus on the citizens and not the organizations. One way of doing so is to establish so-called 'international public spheres' (Cochran 2002) or 'universal communication communities' (Linklater 1998). This is democratization from the bottom-up. Here, the initiative is given to citizens, since it is their deliberation that must be institutionalized. As Cochran (2002, p 519) claims:

> *"Cosmopolitan democrats must theorize the democratic potential of bottom-up processes, but in particular, how IPSs* [international public spheres] *and their members — individuals — come together, work to resolve indeterminacies, and make their views authoritative in international decision-making."*

In this quote, the difference between the two strands is illuminated. Whereas the top-down approach assumes that as a consequence of globalization, nation-states will automatically reconfigure their democratic focus towards individuals rather than states, the bottom-up approach claims that the initiative must come from below. Nation-states cannot, according to this strand, be expected to automatically shift focus and include ordinary citizens in the political equation, just because globalization encourages them to do so (Bohman 1999). Instead, the inclusion of citizens in formal decision-making must begin with deliberation at the level of citizens. And this can, as mentioned, best happen through the formation of 'bottom level' institutions such as international public spheres, which can take the shape of communities such as NGOs and populist movements (Cochran 2002). As a consequence of this difference in the perception of public spheres, the bottom-up strand assumes that international public spheres have the capacity to act as institutions. This means that these spheres have the power to influence democratic will-formation and ultimately influence decision-making through publicity, advocacy and networking. Here deliberative and cosmopolitan democrats also disagree. Whereas deliberative democrats see public spheres as 'audiences' that merely allow citizens to deliberate rationally about policy issues, cosmopolitan democrats view public spheres as more than just addressees for public opinion (Cochran 2002, p. 533).

3.3.2 **The public and world citizenship**

The reason for this difference is to be found in the theoretical lenses, through which the two strands perceive the idea of international public spheres. As we saw previously, deliberative democrats build their understanding of the public sphere on the writings of Jürgen Habermas. In

opposition to this, bottom-up cosmopolitans trace their inheritance back to the American pragmatist John Dewey. Recalling Habermas' notion of the bourgeois public sphere, we see how such communicative domains belong to the private lifeworld, which back then was separated from the public world. Hence, deliberation is, for Habermas, a public matter conducted by private individuals (Habermas 2009, p. 134). In this conception of the public sphere, there is no direct claim to rule, as focus is on inclusion in the non-instrumental sense, as argued previously. Private individuals discuss politics, but they never strive to make their claims authoritative.

In the pragmatist understanding, however, public spheres are perceived as domains in which 'the public' deliberate about politics. Dewey uses the concept of 'the public' to describe a community of public individuals (not private) who come together to debate various issues. What makes deliberation a public matter for Dewey is the fact that the issues debated in such communities tend to affect others than those directly engaged in the deliberation. And when discussions affect others, Dewey claims, they make an indirect claim to rule (Deweay 1954). Here, the difference between the deliberative (Habermas) and the pragmatist (Dewey) conception of international public spheres is exposed: Whereas deliberative democrats see international public spheres as private domains of dialogue, cosmopolitan pragmatists see them as places where 'the public' exercise discursive influence over others (Cochran 2002).

Drawing on Dewey's conception of 'the public' is thus what allows cosmopolitan democrats to perceive international public spheres as institutions rather than just audiences (Cochran 2002, p. 532). Here we see how the pragmatist strand of cosmopolitan democracy links up with Kant's (1795) idea of 'the universal state of humanity'. Kant envisioned a shared morality between all citizens of the world that would require fellow human beings to exercise a moral concern for each other. To be sure, Habermas and other deliberative democrats likewise trace their argumentation back to Kant. But whereas deliberative democrats tend to focus on Kant's understanding of rationality as a shared epistemological framework, approachable through sound reasoning (Habermas 2009), cosmopolitan democrats often draw on Kant's idea of a shared obligation to care for the future of the entire human race (Held 2010). This has led many cosmopolitan democrats to idealize the notion of 'world citizenship' as a way of describing a moral obligation to fellow citizens that extends beyond national borders. This idea of world citizenship will thus be a central principle in the following discussion of online populist movements' democratic potential.

The interpretation of the concept of 'world citizenship' employed by this thesis is proposed by Linklater (1998), who advocates for an extension of the Kantian approach to world citizenship. Whereas Kant argued for universal concern or compassion for fellow human beings, Linkater

(1998, p. 33) argues that what we need is to *"create new communities of discourse which bring citizens and aliens together as co-legislators."* The difference once again lies in the instrumental focus of cosmopolitan democrats. In this sense, the keyword is 'co-legislators'. Where top-down cosmopolitans, drawing on Kant, primarily advocate the existence of a moral concern for citizens and aliens alike, bottom-up cosmopolitans argue that merely relying on a moral concern or compassion for others is not enough. Citizens of the world need to join forces and take hold of their own life by exercising discursive co-legislation. Hence, what this thesis is looking for in populist movements are moments, in which the movements' dialogues take into account the preferences and well-being of fellow human beings (without privileging co-nationals) with the intention of directly affecting existing political processes.

By placing emphasis on the notion of worldwide co-legislation, we can now conclude this section on cosmopolitan democracy. Hence, the description of the three models of radical democracy has been performed, and the thesis can now move on to the second analysis. However, before doing so, the following section will provide a synthesis on radical democracy, through which the reader hopefully will get a clearer picture of the similarities and differences between the three models.

3.4 **Synthesis of Radical Democracy**

As has hopefully become clear through the previous pages, these three theories have a lot in common, but they certainly also differ in significant ways. Before going into details, however, it is worth emphasizing some initial considerations about the comparison of such theories. First of all, it is worth noticing that the three models could be perceived as incommensurable. Through the so-called 'incommensurability thesis', Thomas Kuhn (1962) argued that theories rooted in a certain scientific paradigm cannot be seen as more truthful or more scientific than theories from diverging scientific paradigms. Such theories differ on basic assumption, which is why they cannot be judged on a common scale. The theories of deliberative, agonistic and cosmopolitan democracy are based on contradictory assumptions and use different methods to highlight different aspects of democracy. They are thus somewhat incommensurable. Hence, we cannot use the following discussion to take a stand on which theory is the better. However, as Kuhn (1970) also noticed, incommensurability does not necessarily mean that comparisons are impossible or insignificant. It merely implies that one must take into account the basic assumptions that make the theories incommensurable; and this is what I will strive to do.

Whereas deliberative democracy and cosmopolitan democracy are theories based on realist ontology, agonistic democracy stems from a post-structuralist line of thought. In the former case,

we see how both deliberative democrats and cosmopolitans champion democratic dialogues that are impartial, rational and truthful. This pursuit of truth and rationality is clearly based on a realist ontology, in which certain phenomena embody essential characteristics (Bond 2001). If we believe that truth is something we can all relate to and pursue commonly through dialogue, then we perceive truth as something that exists beyond individual perceptions and social constructions (Erman 2009). In this way, truth has an essential or *real* existence. With this assumption in mind, it makes a good sense to emphasize e.g. ideal speech situations as something worth fighting for.

If we, on the other hand, believe that truth is constructed socially through hegemonic power acts, then ideal speech situations does not make much sense. This is the case for agonistic democrats. As shown in chapter 2, Laclau and Mouffe base their theoretical project on a so-called empty ontology. What this implies is that no phenomenon, not even truth, embodies essential meaning or social objectivity beyond the articulation of such. Bearing this in mind, it is clear that it is nonsensical for a post-structuralist theory to argue for the pursuit of truth and consensus. If truth is depended on a contingent order, then democracy should be about contesting this truth, not affirming it. Accordingly, hegemonies must constantly be challenged in a democratic society.

This is one reason why we cannot compare the three theories in order to find the better model of radical democracy. The best model is a result of our way of thinking about the world. However, what we *can* use this comparison for is to explore which democratic theory is most applicable to the internal discourse of online populist movement.

3.4.1 Similarities and differences in radical democracy

As already specified in chapter 1, the three theories of radical democracy are chosen for this analysis, because they share the same overriding dissatisfaction with liberal democracy, and because they pose different, normative solutions to this discontent. The main commonality present in all three models is the focus on inclusion of ordinary citizens. All three models list buzzwords such as participation, involvement, pluralism and diversity as main traits of radical democracy. What this suggests is that the bottom line for radical democracy is the inclusion of ordinary citizens in democracy. However, while deliberative democracy and agonistic democracy employ a processual focus on inclusion, cosmopolitan democrats often engage in more instrumental discussions about the scope of democracy.

Another point that I wish to emphasize here is the theories' relationship to power. As we have seen in the examinations of the realist perceptions of democracy (deliberative and cosmopolitan), both models are concerned with changing the power relationships in democratic dialogues.

Whereas deliberative democracy focuses on neutralizing power, as we have seen in the case of e.g. Habermas' five requirements for ideal speech situations, cosmopolitan democrats strive to hold power accountable through a redistribution of instrumental influence (Held 2006, p. 308). This position on changing patterns of power is naturally derived from the realist/essentialist ontology, upon which the two theories are founded. If communicative acts of power are perceived as obstacles in the pursuit of truth and consensus, then such acts must naturally be neutralized or at least held accountable. Such consequences of certain ontological assumptions are likewise why the aim for agonistic democrats is not to neutralize power, since such objective is without purpose in a post-structuralist worldview. Instead, agonistic democrats seek to acknowledge the power-relationships appearing from all articulations of political demands. Some political identities are excluded, while others are included. According to agonists, this is not something to avoid, since such exclusive dynamics are unavoidable. Instead, the right thing to do for a theory of democracy is to acknowledge power and its influence on pluralism (Mouffe 2005).

Below, I have inserted my own schematic comparison of the three models. Hopefully, the scheme serves to clarify the main similarities and differences across the spectrum of radical democracy, which will be used to inform the second analysis.

	Deliberative democracy	**Agonistic democracy**	**Cosmopolitan democracy**
Objective	*Consensus*	*Conflict*	*Co-legislation*
Method	*Rational dialogue*	*Passionate dialogue*	*Inclusive dialogue*
Focus	*Process*	*Process*	*Scope*
Demos	*Local, inclusive*	*Local, exclusive*	*Global, inclusive*
Ideal	*The Public Sphere*	*Political frontiers*	*International public spheres*
View on power	*Neutralize power*	*Acknowledge power*	*Hold power accountable*
Ontology	*Realist*	*Post-structuralist*	*Realist/pragmatist*
Inheritance	*Immanuel Kant*	*Friedrich Nietzsche*	*Immanuel Kant/John Dewey*

Table 2: Overview of the three models of radical democracy.

Accordingly, what I will look for in the second analysis varies from model to model. Through the model of deliberative democracy, I will examine OWS' internal discourse to look for moments in which rational, well-grounded and consensus-driven dialogues take place. In the case of agonistic democracy, I will, on the other hand, look for moments where the dialogues take a more passionate and conflict-ridden turn, and where political frontiers between 'them' and 'us' are established. An important point here, however, will be to examine whether political frontiers are established on the basis of friend-enemy or friend-adversary relations. Whereas the latter is a sign of agonistic democratic dialogue, the former is not. By applying the final model of cosmopolitan

democracy, I will examine OWS' internal discourse to look for moments where appeals are made to worldwide causes, and where the preferences and well-being of 'world citizens' are taken into account. Another important feature in relation to cosmopolitan democracy is the instrumental focus on direct influence through the notion of co-legislation.

With these theoretical foundations in mind, the path is now almost cleared for the methodological considerations to commence. However, the above-mentioned focuses still need some further clarifications, in terms of the conditioning of concepts. Because, how can we be sure what is meant by e.g. 'rational' or 'passionate' dialogue? In other words, what constitutes rationality and passion for this thesis? These uncertainties clearly demand some attention.

In terms of deliberative democracy, I will look for 'rational' and consensus-driven dialogue. To me, this means looking for moments, where the argumentation is both detailed and well documented. *External sources*, *elaborate claims* and some kind of *justification* should be employed for the discourse to be considered 'rational'. Furthermore, the discourse should be *tolerant* and *accommodating* towards diverging viewpoints, as this signals a preference for consensus. If the discourse fails to meet these prerequisites, it might be considered 'passionate'. As mentioned, this is one of the things I will be looking for in the analysis of agnostic democratic dialogue. By passion, I thus refer to moments that are somewhat 'irrational', which of course should be understood as the opposite of the thesis' conception of 'rationality'. Hence, *prompt* and *undocumented* statements that, furthermore, employ an *intolerant* (though not hostile) language towards diverging viewpoints, is thus what I consider 'passionate' in the context of this analysis. This likewise fits well with the conflict-ridden nature of agonistic dialogue, as such a discourse most likely will strive to establish relations of *'us and them'* based on the friend-adversary distinction. Lastly, the main focus points of cosmopolitan democracy are more straightforward. As mentioned, I will look for moments where the discourse appeals to *universal causes*, instead of domestic ones, and where the notion of *'world citizen'* can be identified. Furthermore, I will identify the idea of co-legislation as moments, where the members of OWS try to *directly influence* people who are external to the movement (e.g. politicians or other decision-makers).

Keeping this brief conditioning of concepts in mind, the thesis is now ready to move on to the section on method and analytic strategies.

3.5 **Method and Analytic Strategies: Second Analysis**

The scientific method underpinning the principal analysis takes the academic discipline of virtual ethnography, or netnography, as its starting point. The method is 'virtual' because the fieldwork is

conducted in an online community, and it is 'ethnographic' because the research design involves observation and participation in group-activities (Saville-Troike 2003, p. 3). However, traditional ethnographers would probably frown at the approach to ethnographic fieldwork that I employ here, as it so obviously violates some of the basic rules of classic ethnography. For one, I do not approach the research site completely open-minded with the intention of recording whatever is available. Instead, I approach the site with predetermined objectives of 'testing' three types of democratic dialogue. Such an approach is normally at odds with traditional ethnography, where the goal usually is to provide rich accounts entire communities (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007).

In this sense, the following analysis falls within the category of reasoning that Ian Hacking (2002) has labeled 'laboratory style reasoning'. Here, the aim is to isolate and purify certain aspects of a given phenomenon. In this analysis, I strive to isolate and purify chosen interactions to see how far they stretch towards democratic dialogue. I will be referring to this almost natural scientific method as 'experimental ethnography'. Even though the word 'experiment' does not sound very ethnographic, the strength of ethnographic research is the very flexibility of the method (Hine 2000). Ethnography is not a fixed discipline, and there are thus numerous ways of engaging with ethnographic research. Ethnography can be described as a 'lived craft' that is very much influenced by 1) the research site, and 2) the researcher conducting the study (Rachel 1996). The purpose of this section is thus to explain how OWS' Facebook page and I influenced the following analysis. Further, I will strive to explain and justify the use of experiments to acquire knowledge about OWS, and finally, I will outline the inference power and blind-spots of such inquiries.

3.5.1 **Experimental ethnography**

As was outlined in chapter 1, the objective for this thesis is to explore and possibly falsify the conventional knowledge about populist movements, Web 2.0 and democracy. Due to the sceptical nature of the thesis, the method of experimental ethnography seems to constitute a fertile source for exploring the legitimacy of such scepticism. This is mainly due to what Bruno Latour (2000) has referred to as allowing things to *"strike back".* By presenting individual members of OWS' Facebook page with three types of democratic dialogue and afterwards analysing their responses, I allowed them to lead the exploration of democratic potential by striking back.

This is a somewhat similar approach to reasoning, as when natural scientists experiment in a laboratory: I constructed an experiment by adding one component (democratic discourse) to another (an online populist movement), and then I waited for the reaction. Almost like testing a natural scientific hypothesis, I tested the democratic potential of OWS. There is, however, one crucial difference between my experiments and those of natural scientists. There are, namely, no

right or wrong responses in the following analysis, since there is no hypothesis to either confirm or discard. My twelve experiments will instead be used to inform a more nuanced discussion of online populist movements, than the one depicted in the chapter 1. This is why I have labelled my method experimental *ethnography*. There are no 'right' responses in ethnographies, and the responses will thus not be evaluated as such. Even though laboratory style reasoning often appears in positivist-based studies, also this part of the thesis is firmly grounded in a qualitative tradition. Hence, the responses should not be seen as binary answers to the question of whether or not OWS on Facebook can sustain democratic dialogue. Instead, the experiments should be viewed as qualitative sources of data suggesting certain patterns in the discourse at the page.

The first thing I did was to extract the models' normative requirements for democratic dialogic practice. I then used these normative standards as a basis for experimenting with OWS. What I did more concretely was to wait for posts that related to issues of interest to the three models. I did not, however, just respond to any interesting post, since the OWS leadership publishes somewhere around five posts per day. Instead, I established three requirements that needed to be fulfilled for me to use the posts as valid data for my experiments. This I did to ensure that as many people as possible were exposed to my comments, and that they hopefully found it relevant to respond. The three requirements were as follows:

- Relevance: The posts had to be relevant for the given model of radical democracy.
- High activity: The posts had to receive close to 1000 likes.
- News value: The posts could not be more than 24 hours old at the time of my experiment.

When I encountered posts that met these requirements, I authored comments that applied the normative requirements for the respective models of radical democracy. I authored four comments for each model, which can all be found in the appendix. In the case of deliberative democracy (Experiment #1, #2, #3 and #4), I wrote four comments that applied rational and consensus-driven argumentation, while in the case of agonistic democracy (Experiment #5, #6, #7 and #8), I applied a more passionate and conflict-ridden argumentation. In relation to cosmopolitan democracy (Experiment #9, #10, #11 and #12), I used many of the same requirements as with deliberative democracy, but placed greater emphasis on democratic scope and direct influence. Furthermore, I made sure to write my comments at different times of the day to ensure that people living in different time zones were all exposed to my experiments.

Now, when conducting virtual ethnographies there are general issues that the ethnographer needs to consider. One such issue is the question of participation: Should the ethnographer actively engage with the research site and thus become a part of the fieldwork data, or should she

rather remain 'invisible' and conduct the research as a silent observer? In the case of my twelve experiments, I chose the former. There are several reasons for this choice. One reason is that the very nature of my experiments made it necessary for me to participate. I wrote the twelve comments, posted them on OWS' page, and I replied to the few responses that I received. In this sense, the entire idea of experimental ethnography relies on active participation. There are, however, two more reasons for me to choose participation rather than only observation.

The first reason is that by participating in the experiments, I allowed some of the agenda to be set by the research site. This point is related to the idea of letting things 'strike back'. By delegating agency to individuals at the site, I tried to facilitate a more accurate social explanation of the discourse at OWS Facebook page (Latour 2000, p. 112). Had I chosen the opposite path by being a silent observer, I would perhaps have been more inclined to focus on the tendencies that confirmed my scepticism. Since this would have been both unscientific and pretty tedious, I chose to participate. The second reason for participation is that the very act of participating involves a great deal of learning. When the ethnographer participates, she experiences the practices of the research site herself, and these experiences provide a strong basis for learning (Hine 2000). By interacting with the research subjects, I thus allowed myself to remain open to being taken by surprise, and to use this openness as a path to unexpected realizations (Hine 2000, p. 47).

The question of participation is, however, not the only issue the ethnographer must consider when engaging with virtual ethnography. The character of the communication at the site must also be considered. In classic discussions of online communication, scholars often speak of two different types of communication: Synchronous and asynchronous (Siapera 2012). While asynchronous communication involves a time lag, synchronous communication is instant. An example of the former is e-mail correspondences, while chat-forums are examples of the latter. In e-mail correspondences the communication can be perceived as texts or 'packaged interactions', while in chat-forums the communication is structured as something resembling face-to-face interactions (Hine 200, p. 50). The difference is to be found in the notion of presence: How present does the individuals in online communities have to be in order for the communication to be synchronous? A survey conducted in 2013 concluded that the average Facebook user spends more than half an hour each day being present at Facebook (Browser Media 2013). This suggests that even though Facebook cannot be thought of as an actual chat-forum, the users of Facebook are present quite often. Furthermore, it is safe to assume that the people actively contributing to the Facebook discourses are more present than the average user. Adding to this is the fact that Facebook notifies its users of new developments in 'conversations' that they participate in via e-mails, smart phone notifications, instant massager programs and other applications.

Due to these applications, and the overall time spent on Facebook, I will argue that the communication at Facebook should be perceived as interaction rather than text. As Hine (2000, p. 50) puts it, the difference is most clearly felt in cases where clarification is needed. If the reader cannot readily ask the author what is meant, the communication embodies the characteristics of a text. On this basis, it might sound misplaced to perceive Facebook communication as interactions. But as we shall see in the second analysis, users who participate in the discourse at OWS' Facebook page respond quite rapidly. It is a question of minutes rather than of hours before someone replies to a comment. This, I believe, qualifies Facebook as a medium in which interaction-based ethnography can be conducted. Furthermore, the fact that Facebook itself labels these discourses as 'conversations' adds to this conclusion. However, we must not confuse Facebook with chat-forums, since the communication is not entirely instant. Facebook should instead, I believe, be perceived as a text-based medium, which has turned into an interactive communication technology due to its widespread and omnipresent use in contemporary society.

What the perception of Facebook as an interactive medium entails for my experimental ethnography is primarily that the interpretation of my data becomes a shared effort between me and the members of OWS' Facebook page. Instead of me doing all the interpretative work, I allowed the research subjects to play a lead role. Once again, we are back to the discussion of distributing agency to the research subject. This choice would not have been (as) possible in a text-based environment. In this sense, the idea of participation and delegation rests firmly on the perception of Facebook as an interactive medium. Only by treating Facebook communication as interactive, was I able to employ the approach of experimental ethnography.

3.5.2 **Inference power and blind-spots: Questions of reality**

Having described the basic method of experimental ethnography, the time has now come for this section to turn to the analytic strategies of the second analysis. I find it constructive to do so by posing some general questions about experimental ethnography. These questions all have to do with the 'reality' of the method. In other words: How real is the outcome of my experiments?

The method of experimental ethnography begs some obvious questions about reality and the construction of such. For, how can this thesis claim to fully represent reality, when its method involves constructing small and purified experiments, isolated from reality as a whole? The answer is quite simple: It cannot. The scientific tradition, to which this method owes a lot, certainly does not claim to represent reality as a whole. However barren this may sound, there are some good reason why it still makes sense to employ such an approach. In relation to the discipline of social psychology, the tradition of isolating and purifying certain social dynamics has

previously proven incredibly useful. One only needs to think of Stanley Milgram's (in)famous experiment with people's obedience to authority, or Phillip Zimbardo's troubling prison experiment at Stanford University to recall the impact of such studies. Lezaun et al. (2012, p. 278) label this approach 'provocative containment', to underscore the kind of reality that such studies bring forth, namely, a *"provoked reality".*

By relating the idea of provocative containment to this thesis, we see that it fits nicely with the method guiding the second analysis. The method of experimental ethnography is in this case certainly provocative, as it involves posting comments that are highly critical to the consensual way of doing things at OWS' Facebook page. As Lezaun et al. (2012, p. 279) claim, to provoke is to trigger an effect; and this is what I have tried to do. Throughout the 12 experiments, I strove to provoke the members of OWS' Facebook page into responding to my comments. This I did by repeatedly challenging general assumptions of OWS. The members' response was the effect I was trying to trigger. Hence, my method is clearly provocative.

If we get back to the discussion of reality, the next question surfaces: If the reality that I am triggering is provoked, how real is then provoked reality? We can all agree that there is *something* real about the interactions taking place in my experiments. However, it is likewise clear that the experiments do not fully represent reality, since they are artificial situations, constructed with the purpose of triggering an effect. One might thus say that the experiments are not *real*, but that they are *realistic*. Even though they do not represent reality as such, they constitute a *realization* of certain aspects of social life, which would otherwise be 'hidden'. Only through provocation will these aspects of social life be made real. To use the language of provocative containment, we can thus say that each experiment is *"factitious: It is artificial, visibly made up, but made up in such a fashion that it carries with it an irreducible element of reality – in other words, the situation cannot be dismissed as simply fictitious"* (Lezaun et al. 2012, p. 279).

Being factitious, however, does not render these types of experiments irrelevant. On the contrary, they serve as excellent epistemic tools that allow us to grasp the extent to which reality can be stretch. Stretched, as in exploring how far the consensual version of reality can be expanded, before it breaks. How much (democratic) challenging can a self-proclaimed democratic movement sustain, before another version of reality presents itself? In this sense, these questions of reality are no doubt vital, because they highlight some important points about the inference power and blind-spots of the second analysis: The forthcoming conclusions cannot say anything about the democratic *reality* of OWS, or online populist movements in general. This is why I have used the wording 'democratic potential' throughout the thesis. I am not looking to explore the current state

of affairs in such movements, I am on the other hand striving to explore the *potential* – something related to possible futures, which can be realized through provocation.

With this recognition, we can now conclude the section of analytic strategies. The forthcoming conclusions will not be able to say anything about the current reality of OWS on Facebook. Hence, this is indeed a blind-spot in the second analysis, which other methods might have covered. Instead, the conclusions will hopefully say a great deal about the extent to which different kinds of radical democratic dialogue can be realized in online populist movements through provocation.

Before commencing the analysis of OWS' internal discourse, it should be noted that the following analysis takes into consideration some moments of (un)democratic discourse, which appears outside the 12 experiments. This means that the experiments will not constitute the only source of data for the analysis. I draw on these 'external' moments as a way to further exemplify the tendencies, which appear in the experiments. In this way, I use the 12 experiments to detect certain dynamics, which I then later apply to the broader discourse to look for similar tendencies. That being said, let us now turn to the thesis' second analysis.

3.6 **The Second Analysis**

As mentioned in the previous section, I am grounding my inquiries into the democratic potential of online populist movements on a series of ethnographic experiments at OWS' Facebook page. In the appendix, I have listed the 12 experiments and displayed the feedback that I received from these. During the cause of my 12 comments on highly active posts, I only received feedback on two occasions. The first feedback I got was in the shape of one single like (Experiment #1). The second, and surely more interesting, feedback came during Experiment #8, where I in fact managed to initiate a (agonistic) dialogue with two fellow members of OWS' Facebook page.

However, if we for a second forget about Experiment #8 and focus on the remaining experiments, the prospects for democratic dialogue in online populist movements seem bleak. No one responded to my comments by either liking or replying. Hence, the too hasty conclusion is clear: OWS on Facebook as an online populist movement is capable of sustaining none of the three theories of democracy; and as an experiment with radical democracy, the movement has indeed failed. However, rushing to such conclusions at this point of the analysis would be both unscientific and unfair to OWS. Hence, we must examine the feedback that I *did* receive and the additional discourse at the Facebook page more thoroughly to get an idea of the kind of dialogue, online populist movements, in fact, do sustain. Let us begin with the feedback I received.

On the 21st of October, I wrote a comment to a post entitled: *"Time to take a stand".* The post contained a picture of a packed food stand in an unknown American supermarket. Accompanying this picture was a text saying: *"Stealing food is against the law. Yet, letting someone starve to death, while you have an entire warehouse of food is completely legal: Abolish capitalism"* (Experiment #8). While a lot of people commenting on this post seemed to affirm the message by writing remarks like *"property is theft"* (Mark Schulman, member of OWS); *"capitalism is the problem"* (Gilbert Rose, member of OWS) and *"capitalism ALWAYS leads to inequality"* (April Stephens, member of OWS), quite a large proportion of the members commenting on the post seemed to oppose the idea of abolishing capitalism entirely. This was one reason why I thought it interesting to intervene in exactly this post. Since my 8th experiment had to be based on an agonistic way of arguing, I wrote an undocumented comment that appealed to emotions, while simultaneously drawing up frontiers between 'them' and 'us'. The following screen dump displays the conversation that my comment invigorated.

Figure 3: Screen dumps of the 'exclusive' dialogue between my critics and I during Experiment #8.

At Facebook, when someone wishes to respond to a comment from a fellow member, they can either chose to do so directly or indirectly. What this means is that one can either choose to respond directly by initiating a separate dialogue related to the comment, or they can choose to write another comment in the long line of additional comments. Before March 2013, it was only possible to respond 'indirectly' to comments, which made it incredibly hard to figure out if someone had responded to one's comment (Lavrusik 2013). Now, however, it is possible to engage in a separate and initially 'exclusive' dialogue. In this case, a little note appears under the

given comment saying e.g. '4 replies'. In that case other members following the commentary can see that a separate dialogue has been started, but they cannot see the content of this dialogue, before pressing the little button saying 'replies'. Facebook hails this as an *"improvement of conversations"* (ibid, p. 1), but in reality, the effects of this functionality are more ambiguous. The conversations are surely made more manageable, but other members of the Facebook page likewise risk missing important comments, because they cannot view these immediately.

In the case of my 8th experiment, a man called Doug Hoskisson started an exclusive conversation with me. After some hours, a girl named April Stephens (mentioned previously) joined the dialogue. What started out as a somewhat confusing dialogue with the 501.713 other members of OWS' Facebook page, suddenly turned into an exclusive conversation between the three of us. Everyone else could, of course, follow and join the conversation by pressing the 'replies' button, but did they do so? If nothing else, I could see that four people had liked my comment, and that two people had liked Doug's reply. So these people must have been following the conversation in some way. But was that it?

3.6.1 **Occupy's political frontiers**

Turning to the content of our conversation, it is clear that my critics reflected my initial approach to the dialogue. Agonism was certainly thriving in the conversation, which to some extend might be a consequence of my agonistic criticism of the OWS post, or it might just be a reflection of the general approach to dialogues embodied by the movement. Not only were my fellow members and I appealing to emotions throughout our argumentation, we also based our arguments on the establishment of political frontiers. The way I chose to draw up political frontiers in my comment was by reinvigorating the usual OWS-construct known as 'the 99%'. The beauty of this community-construction is that it already embodies its own opposition (the 1%), which from the onset is a remarkably stable signifier embodying certain characteristics such as wealth, power and political influence (Graeber 2013, p. 40). In this way, one does not have to bother with articulating the deficits of the adversary, since these are already known. Hence, when I in my comment wrote *"Let's instead try to change the capitalist system from within, so that we the 99% can benefit from the merits of such system",* I explicitly sought to align myself with the 99% as a community in opposition of the wealthy and powerful. The reason for me to do so was because I wanted to see whether I would be denied the possibility of placing myself on that side of the political frontier, or if I could actually use this community-construct to articulate criticism of the movement itself. The former unfortunately turned out to be the case. Doug and April of the OWS community quickly informed me that if I believed that capitalism had proven successful, and that

the current system could be reformed to the better, I was either *"not paying attention"* (Doug Hoskisson), *"not serious"* or simply just *"delusional"* (April Stephens).

What this short conversation shows is not that the empty signifier of 'the 99%' has become stable, and cannot be contested. On the contrary, this signifier is still very empty, and this is not why I was accused of being delusional. What was 'wrong' with my comment was most likely that I interfered with the construction of the movement's adversary; and this, the movement cannot sustain. Everyone is still free to define the 'the 99%' as they please, as long as they do not redefine its opposition. As we saw in chapter 2, the common opposition to the established system, which in the case of my comment is represented by the word 'capitalism', is the only stable thing keeping the many popular demands together under the umbrella of the '99%' in chains of equivalence.

Especially April Stephen's reply reflects this dynamic. First of all, April labors to re-establish the movement's adversary (capitalists) by stating: *"This system has failed miserably and created horrible poverty in other nations. And to think that the rich are going to share the wealth with the people they are busy eliminating, you are delusional".* In this way, April tries to ensure that the signifier 'capitalism' is kept in place, so that the movement's existence is justified. Next, through the very last part of April's reply, she articulates how no sane person can be on the same side as the '99%' and still think that the current system is changeable. April's reply is in this sense a two-folded move: First she re-establishes the original frontiers between the '99%' and 'the rich', and then she makes sure that no one thinks that these oppositions will ever change. By doing so, she articulates the narrative that seems to fuel OWS. If the established system can, in fact, be reformed to benefit the poor and powerless, nothing suddenly keeps OWS' demands together. And if there is no common opposition to unite the movement, it will inevitably fall apart.

If we then go on to examine similar articulations of political frontiers in Experiment #8, we see how other OWS members bring up the same frontiers on various occasions. The most 'liked' comment to the post of Experiment #8 is a comment by a guy called Johnny Hansson. In total, 83 people chose to like Johnny's comment, which is quite a high number for comments by ordinary members at the OWS page. *"Our form of capitalism is like giving the wasps control of the bug spray. I want the bug spray back in the hands of the people",* Johnny wrote. Here we see how the usual suspects are brought in to make out the society's major political frontiers. Capitalists, in the shape of bugs, are articulated as being adversaries of 'the people'. In this sense, there is really not much new about the way Johnny structured his comment. However, what does make this particular comment interesting is that Johnny actually go on to argue that *"capitalism can be good if it is heavily regulated. To achieve that, money must be taken out of politics."* What is most striking about

this is that Johnny's comment promotes the exact same argument as my comment. Where Johnny claimed that capitalism is good when money is taken out of politics, I argued that capitalism could be successful if we avoid the corporate takeover of politics. Same-same, but very different. Because, in contrast to what I did, Johnny made sure to begin his comment by affirming the only political frontier that keeps OWS together: The capitalists vs. the people. While Johnny affirmed the frontiers, and then made his point, I merely made my point.

This idea is crucial to understanding the dialogical dynamics of OWS on Facebook. If one wishes to critique certain political demands, put forth by the movement's leadership, the experiments in this thesis seem to suggest that it is prerequisite first to affirm the 'us and them' relations, upon which the movement is founded, and then move on to the critique. When the class-based frontiers between rich and poor, powerful and powerless are agreed upon, one can easily move on to criticize specific demands. If one, on the other hand, moves straight to a critique of the movement, the critique is immediately discarded. To use the theoretical language of Michel Callon (1986), the recognition of these politically binary oppositions seems to constitute an 'obligatory passage point', through which actors must pass in order to provide a legitimate critique of the movement. Members who do not manage to pass through the passage point often face the same fate as I did. An example of this is a conversation initiated by a woman called Mariah Dunsmore, who on the 5th of September 2013 replied to a comment that was written in response to a picture of the unlawful arrest of Walmart employees protesting against low wages and poor working conditions. In response to this post, another member called Mark Campbell wrote a comment stating that the picture *"proves the cops work for the elite",* which 50 people chose to 'like'. Mariah replied by saying that not all cops work for the elite. Below is a screen shot of the interaction that followed:

Figure 4: Screen dumps of the reactions to Mariah Dunsmore's questioning of political frontiers.

In less than one hour, Mariah received six replies completely discarding her argument. What is particularly interesting is the fact that none of these people replying seemed willing to engage in actual dialogue with Mariah. No one asked why she thought all cops do not work for the elite, and no one bothered to explain why they oppose her message. The only explanation provided is that there somehow is a *"structural inevitability"* underpinning the argument, as PK Bang explains. What this inevitability is, and how it works, is never explicated. In this way, the six ordinary members all labor to keep Mariah from questioning the movement's fundamental assumptions about political frontiers. Cops *"ALWAYS"* work for the elite, as Kenn Belanger claims. Period. No discussion is allowed, which is a fact confirmed when Mariah does not reply back to her critics.

This incident is quite telling of the way interactions are structured at OWS' Facebook page. One only needs to briefly scroll through the commentary to see the way in which efforts to invigorate critical dialogue is often discarded. The question is, however, if conversations as the one initiated by Mariah, and the one involving Experiment #8, can be characterized as proper democratic dialogues – or, in fact, dialogues at all. Recalling della Porta's (2013) point that dialogues require both *uttering* and *listening*, it is safe to say that not all discourse at OWS' page meets the requirements for actual dialogue. The following sections will deal with this question. By drawing on my 12 experiments and the descriptions of deliberative, agonistic and cosmopolitan democracy, respectively, I will analyze how the discourse at OWS' page meets the standards for democratic dialogue, as proposed by these three models of radical democracy.

3.6.2 **Occupy Wall Street and deliberative democracy**

The first four experiments conducted at OWS' Facebook page were, as mentioned, structured upon the basic requirements for deliberative democratic dialogue. One example of how I articulated my deliberative democratic comments is Experiment #3. On the 26th of September (in the middle of the U.S. government shutdown), I wrote a comment to a post entitled *"Maybe we could avoid gov't shutdown, if the United States Congress focused on the right things".* Accompanying this message was a fictitious graph showing the little time Congress allegedly spends *"doing the people's work"* and the incredibly large amount of time Congress, according to OWS, spends *"kissing corporate ass"*. A few things immediately clash with the deliberative democratic standards for reasoning. For one, there is no real data supporting the accusations. These are all purely made-up and in a way quite nonsensical. Another thing was that the OWS leadership in no way bothered to explain what constitutes people's work, and corporate ass-kissing, for that matter. Furthermore, it might have been interesting to discuss why these two activities never overlap. Such discussions, however, where simply not present at the post. Hence, the prospects for me initiating a rational dialogue, based on external sources and elaborate

reasoning, seemed bleak. However, as my method required me to test the basis for deliberative democratic dialogue at OWS' page, I wrote the following:

> *"Is it just me, or is there not something wrong with the way we tend to measure the quality of work conducted by Congress men and women? A recent report published by the House Clerk's Office shows that the number of laws passed by Congress is at its lowest since 1947. This combined with the fact that Congress dispose of 239 'vacation days' per year is often proposed as an argument for the dysfunctional character of the U.S. Congress. Why so? Why do we adduce such a quantitative and causal approach to the work done by our politicians? Do politicians serve the common good just by passing a high amount of laws? Why not look into the quality and essence of the laws passed and the time spent outside Congress?"*

To be fair, it did seem a little alarming that the U.S. Congress disposes of 239 vacation days annually, but I still considered the discussion of quality measurement relevant. As expected, however, I never received any feedback from the other members of OWS' page. No one liked my comment, and no one bothered to discuss it. Other people, on the other hand, had greater success with gaining feedback on their comments. A girl named Lisa Elaine Baker received 16 likes for writing: *"For the people by the people… maybe what we need is lots of people like you to remind us",* while Jo Greene received five likes for commenting: *"Ain't that the truth".* OWS' leadership itself received 1517 likes for the post and 899 sharings, which seemed to indicate that people clearly affirmed the overall message in the post.

Throughout my four experiments with deliberative democratic dialogue, the picture never changed. I only received one like for my very first experiment, and that was it. No additional likes, and no comments whatsoever. Below is a summary of the total response I received from my deliberative democratic experiments.

Experiment #1 *What is our one demand?*	**Experiment #2** *Definitions*	**Experiment #3** *Time spent in Congress*	**Experiment #4** *Campaign Cash*
Sep. 18th, 10.23 1 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies	**Sep. 21th, 09.54** 0 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies	**Sep. 26th, 16.40** 0 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies	**Sep. 30th, 23.02** 0 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies

Table 3: Summary of response from the four experiments based on deliberative democracy.

On this basis it seems straightforward to conclude that OWS on Facebook cannot sustain deliberative democratic dialogue. Rational, sound and elaborate comments simply do not attract responses from OWS members. However, more points need to be analyzed to make such

conclusions. In the rest of this section, I will thus try to explain why OWS and deliberative democracy are somewhat incompatible. As mentioned in the theory section on deliberative democracy, Habermas' notion of ideal speech situations often form a standard for judging various online forums as deliberative democratic or not. However, since such speech situations increasingly are recognized as utopian visions for the future of democracy, I will employ a slightly modified version to discuss the deliberative democratic potential of OWS on Facebook.

In an effort to revise Habermas' processual requirements for the public sphere, Gerard Hauser (1999) proposes five new requirements for what he called 'the rhetorical public sphere'. This re-configuration of Habermas old theory takes as it starting point that public spheres are not all-inclusive institutional frameworks, but rather more loosely coupled spheres of dialogue, arising in relation to specific issues. Such spheres, Hauser argues, often appears in and around e.g. populist movements (Hauser 1999, p. 90). As OWS, at first sight, seems to constitute such a sphere, I will employ Hauser's conception for the following discussion.

The five requirements for Hauser's rhetorical public sphere are as follows (Hauser 1999, p. 77-80): 1. *Permeable boundaries* (people can easily enter the sphere from outside); 2. *Activity* (people do not passively applaud messages, but instead discuss them actively); 3. *Contextualized language* (people adhere to a contextualized language); 4. *Believable appearance* (the sphere must appear credible to members and outsiders); 5. *Tolerance* (diverging opinions must be tolerated by all participants in the sphere).

The first requirement seems relatively easy to affirm. Due to the permeable boundaries of Facebook as a medium, everyone can in theory participate in the discourses of OWS. In this way, nothing is hindering individuals from entering and engaging in OWS' page. However, this might be a simplistic way of approaching Hauser's first requirement. One thing is to formally enter a Facebook page; another thing is to engage in the commentary. In discussions of online dialogues, scholars tend to neglect traditional theories of communicative power-relations, because people have a tendency to think relatively instrumentally about participation in online forums (Dahlgren 2005). Just because everyone potentially *can* participate, it does not mean that everyone actually *will*. There might be a wide variety of reason why theories of communicative power-relationship should be re-framed to fit online spheres, but one reason is certainly the tendency to discard criticism without discussing the matter, which we examined previously through the examples of Mariah Dunsmore and my 8th experiment. If participants beforehand know that their criticism will be labeled as e.g. *"delusional" or "not serious"*, then the incentives to engage in dialogue might not be that appealing. But more about this in requirement number five.

Moving on to the second requirement, we immediately approach perhaps the biggest shortcoming in the discourse at OWS' page. Recalling focus two in chapter 1, we see how there is an obvious disproportion between the activity of 'liking' and 'sharing' and that of 'commenting'. Only 2,9% of the activity at OWS' page during fall of 2012 involved commenting; 97,1% of the activity, on the other hand, involved affirming and spreading the messages proposed by OWS' leadership. This signals a clear tendency towards a passive and affirmative environment. When most people engage in activities of 'liking' and 'sharing', they labor to affirm and spread the messages proposed hierarchically; and this sort of activity can in no way be constitutive of any variation of the public sphere. If we then move on to examine the affirmative environment more qualitatively, we likewise see how individual members of the page labor to shut down criticism and affirm the leadership's agenda. Again, we can draw on the examples of Experiment #8 and Mariah Dunsmore. In these cases, we see how no one engages in actual dialogue (understood as both uttering and listening), but instead seek to shut down efforts to engage in such interactions.

Requirement three, which involves the kind of language employed by members of the sphere, is also an interesting feature to examine in relation to OWS' deliberative democratic potential. It is clear that a certain language is preferred at OWS' page. People often write short sentences with a lower LIX than I used to write my deliberative democratic experiments. Methodologically, this might be a mistake on my part, as I am the one who steps outside the language of the sphere. In that case, one could argue that I am the one failing the requirements for Hauser's public sphere. However, I will argue that the opposite could likewise be the case. If the OWS page is to be considered a public sphere with permeable boundaries that outsider can easily penetrate, then the language employed by participants in the sphere should be one understood by as many as possible. Even though my comments might have a higher LIX than in the case of the most popular comments, I will still argue that my language is approachable by more people than the common language at the page. Throughout my comments, I never used hard-to-grasp technical or academic terms (perhaps beside the word 'quantitative'). I furthermore made sure not to include academic references, which might be alien to most people. Especially the point about technical references, I will argue, is were the OWS on Facebook fails the requirements for a rhetorical public sphere. The language used at the page is not hard to understand in itself, since e.g. the LIX is often quite low. However, the members engaging in posts and commentaries often use specific insider-references (e.g. hashtags and abbreviations) that might be difficult for outsiders to comprehend.

Hauser's fourth requirement involves the extent to which the public sphere appears credible to members and outsiders. As this requirement does not so much center on the dialogical practice of public spheres, I will omit it in this discussion. However, the fourth requirement will resurface in a

slightly different shape in relation to the later analysis of cosmopolitan democracy, as the last model of radical democracy puts great emphasis on direct influence; and in relation to discussions of public sphere's direct influence on political processes, the question of appearance is crucial.

Together with the second requirement, the fifth requirement regarding tolerance is probably where OWS on Facebook fails the most as a rhetorical public sphere. In a sense, both requirements are interconnected through what I have been referring to as the affirmative environment at OWS' page. As we have seen through the quantitative data informing the first analysis, most activity from individual members go into affirming the leadership's messages. In itself, this naturally does not qualify as intolerant acts. However, members' tendencies to not only affirm the hierarchically proposed demands, but to also completely discard criticism of the movement's overall agenda without discussion, is what makes the environment both affirmative *and* intolerant. Through the examples highlighted above, it becomes clear how opposing opinions are not immediately welcome at OWS' Facebook page – at least not those opinions that do not spring from the affirmation of the movement's fundamental political frontiers.

It is, of course, hard to discuss the level of tolerance on the basis of my deliberative experiments, since I never received feedback on these. However, the silence following these experiments could perhaps be interpreted as a lack of tolerance towards opposing opinions: A way of silencing criticism. If we revisit Experiment #8, which constitutes my only source of feedback, Dough Hoskisson frames the intolerance of OWS' page quite elegantly: *"If you think it* [capitalism] *has proven successful, you're not paying attention".* The obvious interpretation of Dough's reply is that I am not paying attention to the effects of capitalism. However, reframing this interpretation, one might argue that what I am not paying attention to has got little to do with capitalism. Instead, it has got a lot to do with the fundamental assumptions of OWS. Since I argue that capitalism has proven successful, I am clearly not paying attention to OWS' hegemonic project. Hence, my criticism is intolerable and thus discarded.

Concluding this discussion on OWS' Facebook page as a rhetorical public sphere in many ways also serves to conclude the discussion about deliberative democratic dialogue at the page. At least, we can conclude that OWS' failings at requirement two and five, and the movement's partial shortcomings at requirement one and three goes a long way to seal the deal for OWS' deliberative democratic potential. The main issue at stake, which pulls the movement away from the ideal of the public sphere, is its lack of so-called rational dialogue. As we saw in the section on deliberative democracy, rational dialogue is about presenting and listening to diverging arguments with the objective of allowing the better argument to establish consensus. This is indeed not the case for

the current discourse at OWS' Facebook page. People instead use this community to articulate OWS' hegemonic view on various issues, with no pre-given intention of listening to and incorporating the preferences of those who hold diverging opinions. Criticism – however rational it may be – is more often than not discarded on a prejudiced basis, and the hegemonic perceptions are thus allowed to remain hegemonic.

In this way, one might argue that consensus is established, since almost no one succeeds in challenging the hegemony. However, consensus is in this case not established through sound reasoning, and with the better argument as the sole arbiter. Instead, consensus is enforced upon the community in a more coercive fashion: Criticism is discarded, and pluralism is suppressed. If we now recall Chantal Mouffe's criticism of deliberative democracy, we suddenly see how she might have a point in relation to the way the general pursuit for consensus functions in public spheres. If everyone has to agree on the same assumption about the world and the same political demands, then pluralism is suppressed. This recollection of agonistic democracy's main criticism of deliberative democracy naturally leads us to the next section of the principal analysis. Because, if OWS is not capable of sustaining deliberative democratic dialogue, then perhaps the movement is able to allow for a more conflict-ridden and passionate way of conversing.

3.6.3 **Occupy Wall Street and agonistic democracy**

Last year, the word 'shitstorm' entered the most popular German dictionary, Der Duden. The reason for this entry was that the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, had used it to describe the recent increase in raucous expressions of outrage on social media platforms. According to the German philosopher, Byung-Chul Han, the frequency of shitstorms in contemporary society has increased drastically with the advent of social media. Through these mediums, users are now able to verbally flatten everything and everyone without ever translating these articulations into actual political actions. Social media has increased the physical and psychological distance between us, which has served to remove the need for virtues such as respect and rationality. This distance and the consequential superfluity of social restraints thus make it impossible for users of social media to establish durable communities (Han 2013).

Now, if we recall the main argument proposed by agonistic democrats, we see how Han's argument is firmly rooted in the deliberative democratic tradition. Whereas Han sees irrationality and passion as hindrances of community-constructions, agonists see it as the very essence of such groupings. It is utopian, Mouffe argues, to envision full harmony and consensus in a pluralist society, which is why political communities must be grounded in relations of 'them and us'; and such relations can only be established by allowing passion to thrive in political dialogues

(Mouffe 2003). In this sense, one might argue that 'shitstorms' are exactly what is needed for political communities to arise in the realm of social media. Below is an example of such emotional and somewhat hostile utterance.

Figure 5: Screen dumps of Joseph Mcwee's reaction to a post by OWS about vacant homes and homeless people.

The comment that Joseph Mcwee wrote on the 2nd of November 2013 was a response to OWS' post displayed in Experiment #12 about the number of vacant homes in the United States. Even though this post is not representative of the general level of argumentation at the page, it is still telling that an emotional and angry comment like this can ignite eight likes and ten replies, when much more rational and respectful argumentation cannot. This fact immediately appeals to the conclusion that OWS' Facebook page indeed is able to sustain some kind of democratic dialogue, namely, agonistic democratic dialogue. However, if we are to make such conclusion, we must first examine these moments of outrage and conflict in more detail to find out if these people are in fact engaged in real dialogues, or if they, on the hand, only engage in the act of uttering.

Hence, if we turn our attention to the four experiments in this thesis, which are based on agonistic democratic dialogue, we accordingly see how my agonistic comments were the only ones igniting responses from other members of OWS' Facebook page. While no one responded to my deliberative democratic experiments, two people replied and four people liked one of my agonistic democratic experiments. This might signal a tendency for members of online populist movements to react to expressions of passion and conflict, rather than to those of rationality and reconciliation. Below is a table showing the feedback I received from my agonistic experiments.

Experiment #5 *Wars in the Middle East*	**Experiment #6** *Paul Ryan*	**Experiment #7** *Columbus lost at sea*	**Experiment #8** *Abolish capitalism*
Oct. 9th, 17.02 0 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies	**Oct. 13th, 20.27** 0 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies	**Oct. 15th, 09.38** 0 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies	**Oct. 21st, 21.15** 4 likes / 2 direct replies / 0 indirect replies

Table 4: Summary of response from the four experiments based on agonistic democracy.

However interesting it may be that I received (agonistic) feedback from one of my agonistic experiments, it is nonetheless still striking how no one responded to Experiment #5, #6 and #7. Even though I structured all four comments in a passionate way, and despite my on-going focus on political frontiers, I did not succeed in establishing any kind of democratic dialogue through 3/4 of my agonistic experiments. A possible explanation for this might be, as I have already touched upon, that only in Experiment #8 did I dare to challenge the fundamental assumptions of OWS. The political frontiers that I appealed to through the first three experiments were classics at OWS' page. In Experiment #5, I referred to the *"sleazy proponents of casino capitalism"* as the main antagonists, while in Experiment #6 I claimed *"the filthy rich"* to be the adversary of the 99%. In Experiment #7, I likewise tried to challenge the purpose of a post, by appealing to *"the current system of plutocracy"* as something to unite against. That did not work either. Only when I in Experiment #8 challenged the most fundamental assumption (that the current system of capitalism is fundamentally wicked), did I receive response. Below is an example of how I tried, in vain, to ignite response from a post about the budget for military expenses vs. the budget for healthcare. 3084 people liked OWS' post, while as much as 3306 people shared the message with their own Facebook network. Only 131 people, on the other hand, decided to comment on the post. I was one of them (Experiment #5).

> *"Guys, let's focus! We have got to know our enemy. Today's battle is not against all those warmongers that want to intervene in Syria, but against the sleazy proponents of casino capitalism. Shutting down the empire doesn't mean ending all military activity abroad – it means striking the empire at its core: At Wall Street!"*

Note the immediate change in language from the deliberative democratic interventions to those of agonistic democracy. Not only did I in these four experiments try to draw-up political frontiers, I likewise sought to employ a much more passionate language, which resembled the language most commonly used at the page. Instead of basing my comments on sound argumentation and external references, I based it on expressions of emotions.

If we then go on to examine other people's comments at OWS' page to look for agonistic democratic utterances, we need not look for long. A relatively simplistic and passionate language based on relations of 'them and us' often characterizes the most popular statements at the page. If we explore the most liked comments during the my twelve experiments, we see how none of them contain references to external sources or classic models of argumentations, in which features such as valid data, rhetorical backings and qualifying assertions are key elements (e.g. Toulmin 2003). Instead, the most liked comments are often short but powerful outbursts of either outrage or appraisal. A small sample of these is pasted below.

Figure 6: Screen dumps of most 'liked' comments in Experiment #1, #3, #6 and #11.

Naturally, some comments take different shapes, and a small number of comments even employ classic structures of argumentation. Most comments are, however, structured in the way exemplified above. Even those comments that take the shape of longer statements rarely provide external sources or rhetorical backings. The question for this section is now to analyze whether these types of utterances qualify as components of agonistic democratic dialogues.

If we examine the series of replies ignited by the four comments above, it quickly strikes how these 'conversations' take the shape of utterances rather than dialogues. None of the people replying to these agonistic comments engage in arguments for or against the proposed message. And furthermore, the authors of these most popular comments never return to respond to the replies by justifying, elaborating or extending their argumentation. To take the example of Experiment #6, none of the 34 people liking or the five people replying to Kerry Thompson's comment about Reaganomics ever posted questions such as: Why did Ronald Reagan's financial policies not work? Or, what does it entail for a financial policy to 'work'? Instead, people chose to respond by uttering their own expressions of outrage, such as: *"That trickle down you feel on your face [...] are rivers of piss from Ronald Reagan's rotten legacy."*

Through such examples, it becomes clear how the discourses at OWS' Facebook page fail to qualify as agonistic democratic dialogues, as envisioned by Mouffe and others. Even though the comments and replies posted on the page use passionate language and often draw-up political frontiers, they consistently fail to qualify as dialogues. Indeed, most comments seem to be agonistic utterances, but they certainly are not democratic dialogues. There are two reasons for drawing this conclusion. One is the obvious reason: Hardly anyone at OWS' page seems interested in dialoguing (as in the act of uttering *and* listening). People purely engage in passionate outbursts of outrage or appraisal, with no intention of maturing the conversation in any sense. The second, and subtler reason, involves the way political frontiers are established – and here, I myself actually made the mistake of stepping outside the perimeters of agonistic dialogue.

Recalling Experiment #5, which was highlighted previously, I made a comment about intervening with military force in Syria. In that comment, I used the phrase *"let's know our enemy".* The reason for me to do so was that I sought to appeal to relations of 'us and them'. The problem with such a phrase is, however, that I quite clearly ended up articulating *"the warmongers"* as an enemy rather than an adversary. And in doing so, I betrayed the agonistic language that should have been guiding my fifth experiment.

This is, of course, a methodological flaw on my part, and I immediately regretted it after posting the comment. I should not have labored to establish antagonistic relations, only agonistic frontiers. Retrospectively, however, I will argue that we can learn a lot from such an incident. My comment was not a result of me deliberately thinking in antagonistic terms, as this would have been to exceed my methodological restrictions. On the other hand, it was a result of a momentary slip – not a Freudian slip, but an antagonistic slip. The kind of group dynamics that thrive in populist movements can, evidently, be incredibly strong, and during Experiment #5, I quite simply got carried away. The common language at OWS' page is often loaded with references to antagonistic relations. People or organizations that position themselves in opposition to OWS' fundamental assumptions are frequently articulated as being enemies of 'the people'. In this sense, such conflicting opinions are not respected in the sense 'agree to disagree', but rather perceived as hostile identities that need to be eliminated. Hence, one could argue that the discourse at OWS' page embodies some kind of slipstream-effect, by which one is encouraged to perform antagonistic utterances, rather than agonistic articulations.

Through this analysis of OWS and agonistic democracy, we can now see that even though OWS claims to be a democratic platform, where ordinary people can express diverging opinions, it is clear that the movement's Facebook page does not sustain this claim. Conflicting opinions are not respected, and no one tries to confront conflicting opinions with counter-arguments. Instead, conflicting opinions are perceived as being held by enemies (and not adversaries) of 'the people'. And this is exactly where the discourse at OWS' page fails as agonistic democratic dialogue.

Based on the preceding sections, we can now conclude that OWS' Facebook page does facilitate neither deliberative democratic dialogue nor agonistic democratic dialogue. More the latter than the former, but none of the two models of radical democracy seem to fit entirely well with the internal discourse at OWS' page. We do, however, have one model left. In the following section, I will accordingly analyze whether the movement can sustain cosmopolitan democratic dialogue. OWS does, after all, claim to be a universal movement, so perhaps a shared sense of union at a global scale is what OWS is all about.

3.6.4 **Occupy Wall Street and cosmopolitan democracy**

When one is introduced to OWS' Facebook page, the first thing that meets the eye is the following statement: *"Occupy Wall Street is a people-powered movement that began on September 17, 2011 in Liberty Square and has spread to over 1.500 cities globally."* This statement is written under the 'about' section, which is where the most basic information about the movement is provided. The important thing to note in connection to the analysis of cosmopolitan democracy is the emphasis on the movement spreading to over 1.500 cities globally. Immediately after this statement, readers are confronted with the previously mentioned 'Declaration of the Occupation of New York City', which highlights the long list of popular demands represented by OWS.

Whether statements written in the 'about' section serve as accurate descriptions of the movement is, of course, very hard to tell – and also quite uninteresting. What is interesting for this analysis, however, is the fact that the text can be viewed as the movement's auto-communication. Since the information provided in the 'about' section is written by the movement and for the movement (and others), it can thus be said to be representative of the movement's perception of itself. In relation to the issue of cosmopolitan democracy, the part of the text that constitutes the 'declaration' is a good starting point for our analysis. What the declaration claims is, namely, that the movement has a global reach. OWS might have its origins in New York City, but today, the movement represents 'the 99%' globally. This is made clear through articulations such as *"one people, united", "the future of the human race"* and the word *"governments"* in plural. There is thus no doubt that the movement perceives itself as being cosmopolitan.

If we proceed with the four experiments, conducted on the basis of cosmopolitan democracy, it is again striking how these comments yielded no response whatsoever. In all four experiments, I tried to make broad appeals to more global understandings of issues raised by the OWS leadership. A large proportion of the posts center on domestic issues related to the United States. However, these issues normally have a broader impact on global society, which was the argument that I often tried to emphasize in my cosmopolitan experiments. Below is a table outlining the feedback that I received from my four experiments based on cosmopolitan democracy.

Experiment #9 *When fascism comes*	**Experiment #10** *Average teacher salary*	**Experiment #11** *Capitalism has failed*	**Experiment #12** *Vacant homes*
Oct. 22nd, 20.15 0 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies	**Oct. 27th, 09.46** 0 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies	**Oct. 30th, 15.52** 0 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies	**Nov. 3rd, 11.35** 0 like / 0 direct replies / 0 indirect replies

Table 5: Summary of response from the four experiments based on agonistic democracy.

If we recall the objective of cosmopolitans, we see that whereas agonistic democrats advocate for passionate and conflict-ridden dialogues, cosmopolitans tend to agree with deliberative democrats in their focus on rational and consensus-driven democratic dialogues. In this way, one could argue that cosmopolitan democracy has the same objective in terms of communicative practice as deliberative democrats, but a wider perspective in terms of scope. There is however more that separates the two theories, namely, the instrumental focus of cosmopolitans, which was outlined in the theory sections. Especially the focus on broad scope, but also the focus on direct influence informed my cosmopolitan comments. Experiment #12 is an example of such a comment. In this experiment, I commented on a post about vacant homes in the United States. The post argued that if the United States government decided to allow homeless people to inhabit the millions of homes that have been left disserted, due to e.g. forced foreclosures, there would be as many as six houses per homeless American.

Now, in a cosmopolitan perspective, this is not only a very domestic framing of the global issue of homelessness, it is furthermore an incredibly nationalistic way of proposing a solution to this issue. Neither the problem statement nor the solution takes into account the level of homelessness existing at a global scale. Since this is one of the greatest issues for international organizations such as the UN, I found it interesting to experiment with the movements' perception of its own scope. Were members of the OWS willing to change priorities and consider the global issue more important than the domestic? Despite the relevance of such a question for a movement, which articulates itself as being global, I never got an answer. No one responded to my 12th experiment, which can be seen below. Despite this, 2014 people liked the leadership's post, and even more people shared it.

> *"On a global scale, more than 100 million people are currently homeless, according to UNHCR. This means that the United States only face 3,1% of perhaps one of mankind's biggest issues. Since the U.S. in 1948 signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which it states that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being (…) including food, clothing, housing and medical care", perhaps it is time for this movement to change focus. The issues that the U.S. face (such as inequality, corporate greed, corrupt politicians, poverty and homelessness) are often felt twice as much elsewhere in the world. So, unless you plan on advocating for foreigners to come and live in your vacant homes, it is incredibly USA-centric to state that every homeless person could have six homes. Why does this movement insist on dealing with universal issues on a domestic level? Do people honestly feel more concern for fellow U.S. citizens than for the rest of mankind? If so, this movement is certainly not for me."*

At least, one would expect someone to react to the comment's latter statement: If the OWS movement solely focuses on American issues, then this movement is not for me. Usually, when people make such drastic claims, other members of the community quickly replies by affirming or

discarding their criticism. Though in this case, no one labored to either keep me in the community or push me further away. However odd this may be, there might in fact be a quite reasonable explanation for this, which first of all has to do with the structure of my above mentioned comment, and secondly, with the affordances of Facebook as an information and communication technology.

If we start with the first reason, one could argue that the same tendencies that failed OWS' Facebook page as a platform for deliberative democratic dialogue, is likewise failing my cosmopolitan experiments. These comments are simply too long and comprehensive (and perhaps boring) to invigorate dialogue between members of the OWS community. As we have previously seen, the most popular comments at OWS' page are short expressions of outrage or appraisal. On this basis, my cosmopolitan experiments can certainly not be characterized as popular comments. Furthermore, comments such as the one in Experiment #12 do not depart from OWS' political frontiers, which often take the shape of antagonistic relations between the '1%' and the '99%'. My cosmopolitan experiments are based on the consensus-driven perception of democratic dialogue. However, as previously argued, the most popular comments at OWS' page employ a much more conflict-ridden approach to democratic discourse; and this might be the main reason why my four cosmopolitan interventions did not yield any response. They did not contain any relations of 'them and us' through which political unity could be established.

If we then proceed to the second reason why my cosmopolitan experiments might not have received any feedback, we face the issue of 'affordances'. I will go into further depths with this concept in chapter 4. Right now, it is enough to state that in relation to information and communication technologies, affordances can be described as those technological functionalities of e.g. social media, which promote certain forms of interaction between participants and constrain other (Hutchby 2001, p. 32). In the case of my elaborate and lengthy comments based on cosmopolitan democracy, Facebook's affordances diminish the success of my argument by visually hiding almost 3/4 of my comment. Below is a screen dump that illustrates this point.

Figure 7: Screen dump of Experiment #12 showing one consequence of Facebook's affordances.

The small blue text saying "se mere", which means "view more" in Danish, functions as a button that needs to be pressed in order to view the rest of the comment. What this entails is, basically, that one has to convey the argument to the rest of the Facebook community within the first five and a half lines. As if the comment was part of an advertisement and not a democratic dialogue, Facebook's affordances force people to structure their comments in a way that encourages other people to keep on reading. The comment must have appeal right from the start, otherwise it risks not being read by anyone else but the author herself. As Experiment #12 is structured in a sound and well-documented, but nonetheless quite boring way, it is likely that only a few people have read more than the first couple of lines. This might, in the end, prove to be the best explanation for why no one responded to these experiments; they simply did not sell the message quickly enough.

Since technological matters related to the notion of affordances possibly are to blame for much of my lacking feedback, it makes sense to further explore other and shorter comments to get a sense of OWS' cosmopolitan democratic potential. However, if we consult the most popular comment at Experiment #12, we are immediately forced to reconsider the statement proposed only one sentence ago. Because, despite the claim that lengthy comments do not attract attention from other OWS members, a fairly long argument by a guy called Daniel Levitre has gained as much as 95 likes and seven replies, which is quite a remarkable achievement at OWS' page. In the comment, Levitre argues that the retraction of American President, Franklin D. Rosevelt's, New Deal policies has forced ordinary Americans to labor at alarmingly low wages. This is a quite 'rational' argument. But how come this comment suddenly received almost 100 likes? Did we not just conclude that only short and powerful outbursts of either outrage or appraisal receive feedback from the OWS community?

Once again, we need to look to the rhetorical establishment of political frontiers for the answer. However rational Levitre's argument might be, it is still build upon relations of 'them and us'. As he writes towards the end of the comment: *"Americans today (…) have part time employment working for the Waltons, at an unlivable wage. That's the future that is being created by the power elite. This get a job s*** really needs to be phased out, its ignorant and short sighted."* In this part of Levitre's comment, we see how he deviates from the sound and respectful tone that characterizes the first part of his argument. On the one side of the frontiers, 'the Waltons' (the owners of the Walmart chain), as members of *"the power elite",* are articulated as being in stark opposition to the other side of the frontier, which is constituted by *"Americans today".* In this way, the argument is structured upon the basis of OWS' fundamental frontiers, which might be a key to understanding the success of Levitre's comment. Another reason is probably the passionate character of his

comment. Phrases such as *"S***"* and *"ignorant"* clearly appeals to the common language of OWS' page, as we have previously seen.

Concluding on the case of Levitre's comment, one could argue that lengthy comments are not always discarded. If they are structured upon the classic political frontiers and employ a passionate language, they clearly stand a chance of igniting dialogue. This example, however, does not bring us closer to concluding that OWS on Facebook embodies a global reach. In fact, the opposite is more likely the case. Levitre's comment does – along with most other comments – only dwell on issues related to the United States. But as OWS' own declaration reminds us, the movement is global, not local. So let us explore the rest of my 12 experiments to get an idea of OWS' cosmopolitan democratic potential.

Looking through these experiments, it would indeed be an overstatement to conclude that OWS does not privilege American issues, since a very large part of the posts published center on the United States' political environment. Out of the 12 posts making out the data of the second analysis, we find no less than nine posts with domestic focus. That being said, moments of cosmopolitanism can indeed be located, if one takes a closer look at the various commentaries. Examples of this can e.g. be found in Experiment #11, where I commented on a post, which claimed that *"capitalism has failed women in the United States".* The focus that I sought to employ in this comment was that capitalism not only fails women in the U.S., but that it fails all of mankind. Even though I did not receive any replies or likes, other people did. One such person is Khairi Isa Bhafc, who wrote a comment stating that he is *"so sorry for the Americans, that's the reason more Americans leave the country for better lives."* In response to this, a man named Alex Barlow replied: *"We have to fix the country. What the U.S. does affects the entire world."*

Despite the fact that the post of Experiment #11 centers on a domestic issue, members of the OWS community seem to exercise some kind of universal moral concern. Problems in the U.S. spill over to other countries around the world, and this is why the movement needs a domestic focus. This seems to be an important OWS argument, and from a cosmopolitan point of view, it certainly makes sense. If we recall David Held's argument from the section on cosmopolitan democracy, we see that this model of radical democracy is firmly based on the assumption that nation-states are *de jure* sovereign but *de facto* non-autonomous. And what informs this assumption is exactly empirical data supporting the argument of Alex Barlow: What the U.S. does affect the entire world.

If we further recall the only experiment that yielded response, namely, Experiment #8, we likewise see how April Stephens, in replying to my comment about capitalism being the only feasible system, exercises a moral concern for citizens around the world: *"This system has failed*

miserably and created the horrible poverty in other nations", she claimed. Not only is this claim quite reasonable, it is also founded on a cosmopolitan way of perceiving political issues. Through this comment, April Stephens escapes the trap of focusing solely on fellow national citizens, and in this sense, she can be characterized as a cosmopolitan, in the way Immanuel Kant used the word. And if we look further through the discourse at OWS' Facebook page, we see how many people embody this way of thinking about politics. Hence, large parts of OWS on Facebook can be said to embody some sense of cosmopolitanism. Even though it might not be directly present in the posts published by the OWS leadership, appeals to universal issues still resonate indirectly within the community: If we fix the U.S., we can fix the world.

Can OWS then be said to take the shape of a cosmopolitan democratic movement? If we forget about the failure of deliberative democratic dialogue, which to some extend is a prerequisite for cosmopolitan democracy, the answer is: Yes and no. Yes, because members of the community seems to exercise some kind of universal moral concern for the entire human race, however indirect it may be. No, because amongst the many claims proposed by the OWS leadership and ordinary members, not many strive to become authoritative and gain influence. This, we learned from Molly Cochran, is essential to the pragmatist strand to cosmopolitan democracy. Previously, I argued that the bottom-up approach to cosmopolitanism encourages international public spheres, such as populist movements, to facilitate some kind of discursive co-legislation, in which 'the public' can make their claims authoritative through acts of networking, advocacy and publicity. This, however, is rarely the case for the discourse at OWS' page. As we have seen through various examples, the discourse at the page is most often intended for the movement itself. Ever since the movement moved online, the attempts to influence decision-making processes has diminished drastically. Previously, the movement organized happenings and rallies that actively sought to influence political processes. This is no more the case. Today, the interaction at OWS' Facebook page is internal and only meant to influence the movement's own members.

With this conclusion, the time has come to gather-up the conclusions proposed during the second analysis. In doing so, I will strive to clarify the tendencies that can be said to fail OWS as a platform for radical democratic dialogue. However, the intention with the following section is not only to discard online populist movements as undemocratic. The intention is likewise to remind the reader of the moments, where online populist movements actually do hold democratic potential.

3.6.5 **Concluding the second analysis**

The preceding analysis of OWS on Facebook has illuminated some tendencies that provide us with a telling image of the radical democratic potential of online populist movements. Even though the

following conclusions might sound rather gloomy in the light of the high hopes attributed to online populist movements, we need to recognize that such movements in fact do embody some democratic tendencies – just not tendencies that fit entirely into the three models of radical democracy. OWS' Facebook page serves as an example of a civic community that displays an eclectic image of radical democracy: Significant parts of the democratic dynamics of OWS on Facebook resonate with agonistic democracy, while fewer resonates with cosmopolitan democracy. The grand loser in this analysis, however, is deliberative democracy. It hardly needs to be said that nothing, except the permeable boundaries of Facebook, qualifies online populist movements as platforms for deliberative democratic dialogue. But let us take the first things first.

If we start by concluding on some overall tendencies from the analysis, the first conclusion is the fact that hardly anyone responded to my experiments. Only Experiment #8 received feedback in the shape of replies. As I see it, there are two ways of explaining the lacking feedback. The first has to do with the affordances of Facebook, and the second has to do with the affirmative and intolerant environment at OWS' page. As we saw in the analysis, Facebook limits the visibility of lengthy comments, so that one has to actively press another button to view comments of more than approximately 40 words. This inevitably limits the possibility for rational and well-documented dialogues to arise, which is essential for both deliberative and cosmopolitan democracy. About the second explanation for the lacking feedback, we have seen how the members of OWS' Facebook page often remain hostile towards criticism or alternative viewpoints. Only by affirming the fundamental Occupy frontiers of the '99%' vs. the '1%', are alternative viewpoints welcome at the page. Otherwise, criticism is discarded through means of hostile replies or by simply ignoring the comment. This brings us to the second overall conclusion.

The tendency for OWS members to discard criticism without dialogue has a lot to do with OWS' political frontiers. As explained in the section on agonistic democracy, political frontiers are not necessarily an evil, since they serve as excellent ways of invigorating democratic dialogue. Hence, the establishment of these frontiers is probably why so many participants act so passionate in relation to populist movements. However, an important point for agonistic democrats is that such relationships are founded on relations of friend-adversary, not friend-enemy. Unfortunately, the latter is the case at OWS Facebook page. As the analysis showed, the Occupy frontiers invigorate antagonistic relations, in which opposing political viewpoints are seen as enemies to be neutralized or, at best, ignored. There is no 'agreeing to disagree' at the page, which is what make the Occupy frontiers intolerant and undemocratic.

The third and last overall conclusion, which in a sense is all encompassing, is the fact that very little of the OWS discourse on Facebook takes the shape of actual dialogue. Understood as the act of both uttering *and* listening, dialogue is rarely present in online populist movements, as exemplified by OWS. This is perhaps such movements' biggest democratic shortfall. Without dialogue, there can be no radical democracy. In this sense, one might argue that online populist movements fail the test of being an alternative platform for democratic dialogue, where all members of the '99%' are allowed a voice. However, it is now important to gather the loose ends, to see what elements of deliberative, agonistic and cosmopolitan democracy that are actually sustained by online populist movements, such as OWS on Facebook.

Deliberative democratic potential: Except for the permeable boundaries of Facebook, there is not much positive to be said about online populist movements' deliberative democratic potential. Deliberative democracy is a theory that hails rational and consensus-driven dialogue, and none of these three elements (rational, consensus-driven and dialogue) seems to be sustained by OWS. Naturally, some kind of consensus prevails at the page, but the force of the better argument does certainly not establish this consensus. On the other hand, consensus is established at OWS' page due to the very dynamics that deliberative democrats so vigorously seek to neutralize: Power, intolerance and passive affirmation. Online populist movements, exemplified by OWS, certainly do not constitute the public sphere that many hoped for. One could perhaps argue that online populist movements constitute an audience, where individual citizens can let off political steam. That, however, is far from the ideal that deliberative democrats advocate for.

Agonistic democratic potential: There is indeed a lot more positive about the agonistic character of online populist movements. The relations of 'them and us', which agonists hail as a democratic good, thrive at OWS' page. The only problem with this is that these relations have a tendency of becoming antagonistic rather than agonistic. Diverging viewpoints are not allowed in the community, except if the critic adheres to the movement's fundamental assumptions, that is, the Occupy frontiers. These frontiers thus serve as obligatory passage points, which critics of the overall discourse at OWS' Facebook page must pass through in order to provide legitimate critique of the movement and its demands. If one does not pass through this discursive funnel, one's critique will immediately be discarded or ignored. In this way, the community does not allow for conflict, since that would require a more open and tolerant approach to criticism. Since this is a fundamental prerequisite for agonistic democracy to prevail, online populist movements likewise seem to fail in this respect. On the other hand, there is a clear element of passionate discourse at OWS' page. This is good, since it serves to limit the powerlessness and alienation of citizens from politics. In this respect, online populist movements do sustain agonistic dialogue.

Hence, if only antagonism can be transformed to agonism, and if dialogue can replace pure utterances, then online populist movements would come a long way in constituting a platform for agonistic democratic dialogue. And herein lies perhaps the biggest potential for these movements.

Cosmopolitan democratic potential: At first, it seems obvious to argue that deliberative democracy takes cosmopolitan democracy down with it. The elements that constitute deliberative democracy should be in place for cosmopolitan democracy to thrive. True. However, online populist movements seem to embody some cosmopolitan traits that, nonetheless, are worth dwelling upon. First of all, this thesis has shown that members of the OWS' Facebook page often exercise a moral concern for fellow citizens of the human race. Sometimes this happens directly, but most of the time, the concern is indirect: We need to fix the domestic problems, since these spill-over to other nations. In this sense, top-down cosmopolitans would perhaps be relatively satisfied with the cosmopolitanism of OWS. Bottom-up cosmopolitans, on the other hand, would most likely be dissatisfied with the purely online enactment of populist movements. Whereas the top-down approach sees populist movements as 'audiences', where citizens can deliberate global issues, the bottom-up approach sees them as 'institutions' that make their claims authoritative. When populist movements remain online, they tend to only exercise influence over their own members, and not the wider public. This is the difference in the two cosmopolitanisms, and this (to some extent) decides whether online populist movements embody cosmopolitan democratic potential.

CHAPTER IV
Conclusions and Reflections

”The process of the politically relevant exercise and equilibrium of power now takes place directly between the private bureaucracies, special-interest associations, and public administrations. The public as such is included only sporadically in the curcuit of power, and even then it is brought in only to contribute its acclamation”

Jürgen Habermas
The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, 1962

4. VENTRILOQUIST DEMOCRACY

The thesis is now slowly coming to an end, and the time has thus come to draw up the preceding pages' major conclusions. Throughout the first and the second analysis, the aim has been to investigate how (and if) online populist movements could be perceived as alternative platforms for democratic dialogue. By employing OWS on Facebook as a most-likely case, the thesis explored the internal discourse of the movement, in an effort to propose broader conclusions about the democratic potential of online populist movements in general. After summarizing these conclusions, I will provide some significant reflections. By introducing the term 'ventriloquist democracy', it is my intention to advance an alternative explanation for the conclusions, which is rooted in the concept of 'affordances'. But let us now, first of all, turn to the thesis' conclusions.

4.1 Conclusions

In the beginning of chapter 1, a body of conventional knowledge regarding populist movements, Web 2.0, and democracy was described. Here, we saw how a circle of scholars claim online populist movements to be alternative platforms for 'real' or 'radical' democratic dialogue or deliberation. Their main argument is that the participatory and collaborative architecture of Web 2.0 allows ordinary citizens to participate in the so-called 'produsage of democracy' through extra-institutional activities, such as online populist movements. In fact, many of these scholars even argue that these movements embody the very future of democracy. By employing Flyvbjerg's (2006) framework for challenging conventional wisdom through case studies, I set out to explore the validity of such claims. This I did by proposing three research questions, which have been guiding the thesis all the way through. While the first research question was an overall question, the second question related to chapter 2, and the third question related to chapter 3.

In chapter 2, I began by introducing the term 'populism', as proposed by Ernesto Laclau. By labeling certain online enactments of public protests as 'online populist movements', I not only sought to highlight certain dynamics of such movements, I likewise pursued a positive definition of them. Instead of defining online populist movements in terms of their lack of conventional political practices, I employed a definition, which defined them as the unification of multiple popular demands in so-called 'chains of equivalence'. This definition then led me to the thesis' first analysis, which aimed at analyzing the populism of OWS on Facebook.

The first analysis had three focuses, which were all based on the method of qualitative content analysis. In the first focus, I showed how OWS on Facebook could be perceived as an online populist movement. This I did by displaying how multiple demands are tied together in OWS, with

the opposition to the hegemonic order as their only common denominator. Through the quantitative data guiding the analysis, I likewise showed how the populism of OWS has risen concurrently with OWS' transformation from a predominantly *offline* movement to an exclusively *online* movement. In the second focus, I emphasized the connection between the stark increase in 'sharings', and the drastic decrease in 'comments' at OWS' Facebook page, which coincided with the overall rise in populism. The conclusion of the second focus was that the more populist the movement got, the more affirmative its members apparently became. This led me to argue that the level of 'inverse representation', which is a consequence of certain populist dynamics, could be perceived as relatively high in OWS on Facebook. The third and last focus centered on the character of posts at OWS' page. Here, the idea was to show that the democratic dialogue, which was previously performed through offline activities, such as general assemblies and discussion groups, has moved online. Today, OWS no longer uses its Facebook page for mobilization purposes only, but instead primarily as a medium for actual democratic dialogue.

By exploring the populism of OWS on Facebook, the stage was set for the second analysis of chapter 3. Here, the aim was to explore the democratic potential of the movement's internal discourse. I did so by extracting the normative requirements for democratic dialogue, as proposed by three models of radical democracy: Deliberative, agonistic and cosmopolitan democracy. Through 12 so-called 'ethnographic experiments', I investigated how OWS' internal discourse could be perceived as democratic. By stretching the reality of the movement towards three different ideals for democratic dialogue, I analyzed how the movement's participants responded to my experiments. A few pages ago, I summarized these findings in detail. To recapitulate briefly, however, the main conclusion was that OWS on Facebook is able to sustain none of the requirements for democratic dialogue, proposed by the three models. This primarily has to do with the fact that members of OWS' page hardly ever engage in actual dialogue, understood as the act of uttering *and* listening. Furthermore, the discourse at the page seems both highly affirmative towards the movement's fundamental assumptions, and highly intolerant towards diverging viewpoints. The fundamental assumptions guiding the movement (e.g. the frontier between the 1% and the 99%) seems to serve as 'obligatory passage points', through which people must pass in order to articulate legitimate criticism of OWS, and present diverging viewpoints.

That being said, however, there certainly seems to be possibilities for online populist movements to become alternative platforms for democratic dialogue. Even though OWS on Facebook is quite far away from sustaining deliberative democratic dialogue, the movement gets very close to exhibiting the normative requirements of agonistic democracy. Passionate and conflict-ridden utterances are frequently articulated, and frontiers between 'us' and 'them' are often erected. On

two points, however, does the movement fail as a platform for agonistic dialogue: First of all, the intolerant and affirmative discourse of the movement seems to thwart the agonistic spirit of OWS, which of course is an overall problem. And second, the frontiers between 'us' and 'them' are often based on antagonistic, rather than agonistic, relations. There is simply no room for a 'them' within OWS, and that is a serious shortfall in terms of the movement's agonistic democratic potential. In the case of cosmopolitan democracy, we likewise encountered some potential. Even though the processual requirements for cosmopolitan dialogue were not met, OWS still seems to embody a spirit of cosmopolitanism. However, this spirit is well hidden away behind the affirmative and intolerant discourse, which currently constitutes OWS on Facebook.

Accordingly, the answer to the thesis' overall research question is that online populist movements, such as OWS on Facebook, are not (in their current condition) capable of assuming the role as alternative platforms for democratic dialogue. Hence, if we intend to broaden our scope of democracy, to include this kind of extra-institutional activity, then online populist movements must undertake a range of fundamental adjustments, in order to become truly democratic. Nonetheless, there surely are many good things to be said about these movements, and they even do exhibit several moments of democratic discourse, though such moments never reaches the high standards for democratic dialogue, as proposed by deliberative, agonistic or cosmopolitan democracy. However, before closing the thesis on this rather gloomy conclusion, it is certainly tempting to ask: What affords this undemocratic discourse – the movements or the medium? Is it the movements, in themselves, that exhibit these undemocratic traits, or is it rather Facebook as an information and communication technology, that promotes these undemocratic practices? These questions, I will try to provide an answer to in the following section.

4.2 **Reflections**

Until now, the focus throughout the thesis has been directed at the *practices* of OWS' participants. This I have done to highlight the way ordinary citizens labor to perform an online populist movement, such as OWS on Facebook. However, by choosing such a focus, I have omitted an important aspect from the analysis, namely, technological *affordances*. If the word 'practices' signifies the actions conducted by human beings, the word 'affordances' signify the technological infrastructure that guides these practices (Hutchby 2001). The role played by technology is by no means to be underestimated in contemporary society, and especially not when exploring a digital environment like Facebook. In online spaces, social dynamics are changed, relationships are reconfigured and dialogues are transformed (Siapera 2012). This is indeed also the case with OWS on Facebook, and this is why the forthcoming reflections are no less than crucial to this thesis.

To put it brief, the concept of technological 'affordances' can best be described as those attributes of any given technology, which makes certain practices possible and constrain other practices (Hutchby 2001). When a traffic light turns red, motorists are encouraged to stop. In that case, the traffic light's red light affords the practice of stopping. Hence, the word 'affording' should therefore be understood as 'promoting' or 'guiding' something. In relation to information and communication technologies, affordances are those features of e.g. Facebook that *"promote certain forms of interaction between participants"* and constrain other (Hutchby 2001, p. 32). Hence, the concept of affordances applies to those moments, where Facebook's technological infrastructure influences OWS' internal discourse by promoting certain practices.

One example of moments where Facebook exercises such influence over OWS has already been highlighted during the analysis of cosmopolitan democratic dialogue. Here, I showed how only a fraction of long comments are made visible to members of OWS' Facebook page. Due to this, I concluded that Facebook to a large extent constrains especially deliberative democratic and cosmopolitan democratic dialogue, as deliberative and cosmopolitan articulations tend to be both lengthy and elaborate. By hiding comments that exceed approximately 40 words, Facebook thus promotes relatively short comments, and constrains long and exhaustive comments.

If we then connect this conclusion to the overall conclusion that most interactions at OWS' Facebook page fail to be recognized as actual dialogue, then an alternative explanation surfaces. If we shift focus from practices to affordances, then perhaps the tendency for OWS' members to merely articulate short outbursts could be perceived as a consequence of Facebook's technological affordances, rather than as a consequence of the actual unwillingness of OWS' members to engage in democratic dialogue. If Facebook visually hides efforts to engage in extensive dialogues, then one could argue that the technology behind Facebook affords the practice of short outbursts, since such comments stand a better chance of actually being read.

Another example of moments where Facebook interferes with OWS' internal discourse is found within the commentary of each post. The most popular posts (those liked the most) will appear at the very top of any given post's commentary, while less popular posts will appear further down the line of comments. Instead of listing comments in a chronological order, Facebook privileges those comments that users find most likable. On one hand, this technological prioritization may seem quite harmless, or perhaps even useful, since the purpose of the prioritization arguably is to ensure that as many users as possible get to read the 'good' comments. However, one could also argue that this prioritization privileges those comments that are easy to relate to, and thwarts the more complex comments.

Once again, we are back to the short but powerful outbursts of either outrage or appraisal. Comments like the one that initiated the so-called case of Mariah Dunsmore are productive for emphasizing this point. If we recall that case, a man commented on a picture of an unlawful police arrest by saying: *"Proves that all cops work for the elite".* This short but powerful outburst of outrage received 50 likes, while other much more elaborate comments received few (if any) likes. Now, one explanation for this could be that OWS' members simply cannot be bothered to read long and elaborate comments. This, however, would be a myopic explanation exclusively based on individual practices. An alternative explanation, on the other hand, is that Facebook's technological affordances encourage the practice of reading and liking those short outbursts. By listing those comments that receives most likes at the top of the commentary, Facebook ensures that all users viewing the post will see the most likable comments, which, in the end, increases the number of people liking them.

The last example that I will highlight here presents itself through one of the most basic functionalities of Facebook. For years now, social media experts have discussed the merits of a so-called 'dislike' button (Guarini 2013). So far, it has been concluded that *"Facebook tend to focus on positive social interactions"*, and that it should remain this way (ibid, p. 1). Whereas e.g. YouTube has got a 'dislike' button, which allows users to quickly distance themselves from certain articulations, Facebook only permits users to distance themselves through comments.

If we then go back to the discussion of Facebook's affordances, we immediately see how an explicit promotion of positive interaction seems to be embedded in the Facebook technology. Instead of allowing for equally positive and negative interactions, Facebook affords a generally positive environment. This undoubtedly influences the democratic dialogue at OWS' Facebook page. If we recall the conclusion that OWS' page is rather hostile towards alternative viewpoints, and that the page's discourse in general seems to embody affirmative traits, then the concept of affordances once again provides us with an alternative explanation. Because, perhaps the movement's affirmative discourse is not solely caused by the previously described dynamics of inverse representation, or by the general intolerance of OWS' members, but likewise by the affordances of Facebook. At least, we can say that members seeking to challenge the articulations, posted by the OWS leadership, never get a chance to express themselves in a clearly quantifiable way. While affirmative practices are recorded and explicated by Facebook through the 'like' and 'share' buttons, challenging practices are hidden in the commentary. Members are immediately presented with the aggregated number of likes and sharings that a certain post has yielded, while the aggregation of challenging or opposing statements is nowhere to be seen.

To a large extent this last example sums up the way in which Facebook's technological affordances interferes with the discourse at OWS' Facebook page. Most of the tendencies that I, throughout the first and second analysis, have recorded as being 'undemocratic' are – if not caused by – then certainly intensified by the affordances of Facebook. Whether it is the tendency for OWS' members to practice short outbursts rather than lengthy dialogues, or if it is the affirmative discourse of OWS, then the affordances of Facebook seems to play a significant role in intensifying these dynamics. The consequences that this might have for the democratic potential of online populist movements will be the focus on the final pages of this thesis. Here, I will introduce my own concept of 'ventriloquist democracy' as a way of describing how certain Web 2.0 applications may constrain the democratic potential of populist movements.

4.2.1 **Introducing 'ventriloquist democracy'**

According to the Kernerman English Multilingual Dictionary (2013), the word 'ventriloquist' is described as a noun that signifies someone *"who can speak so that his voice seems to come from some other person or place."* If we for a second forget the picture of a man with a wooden dummy on his hand, but hold on to the notion of someone speaking through someone or somebody, the term 'ventriloquist' seems productive for explaining the current dynamics of online populist movements, as explored in this thesis. To understand why this is the case, we must consider the previous discussion of Facebook's technological affordances.

As we saw in the conclusion of chapter 3, OWS on Facebook comes quite close to demonstrating the fundamental requirements of especially agonistic democracy. However, there are still certain dynamics, which tend to fail the movement as a platform for agonistic democratic dialogue. Now, if we consult the insight gained from the brief discussion on Facebook's technological affordances, we see how Facebook, as a medium, intensifies many of these undemocratic tendencies. This argument is, as I see it, a clear indicator that something has been lost along the way, as OWS transformed itself from a predominantly offline movement into an exclusively online movement; and that 'something' clearly has to do with those dynamics that made OWS a celebrated experiment with radical democracy. As was mentioned in the introduction to chapter 2, the offline enactment of OWS was based on a whole series of mechanisms contributing to the internally democratic environment of the movement. Through procedures such as advanced voting techniques, consensus based discussions, innovative systems of hand signals, and the so-called 'Human Microphone', OWS became an example of the democratic society that the members themselves wanted to live in (Graeber 2013, p. 23).

However, when the movement faded away in the offline world, it started to thrive in the online world. As was shown in chapter 2, the democratic dialogue was transported from the streets of New York City and into the world of Web 2.0. Since the middle of 2012, OWS no longer used Facebook as a medium for mobilizing and organizing their offline happenings; they likewise started to engage in political deliberation at their Facebook page. The problem with this displacement of democratic dialogue (from offline to online) is that those procedures that were meant to ensure the dialogue's democratic character (voting, hand signals, People's Microphone) did not accompany the displacement. In the realm of Facebook, there are no procedures – or technological affordances – to ensure the democratic discourse that characterized the offline version of OWS. To fully understand the consequences of this displacement, let us take the example of the Human Microphone.

The Human Microphone is a technology, which, in fact, was borne out of the absence of classic technology. When the New York City authorities prohibited OWS from using loudspeakers or other tools for *"amplifying sound",* the movement made up its own people-powered technology (Wanenchack 2011, p. 1). During an assembly, when someone wanted to speak, they simply shouted: *"Mic check".* When the rest of the assembly heard this, they replied: *"Mic check".* Then, the speaker knew that the Human Microphone was 'on'. Hereafter, the speaker could proceed with her message. She would stop after every sentence to let the assembly amplify her words, and in this way, the technology of the Human Microphone ensured that everyone got their voice heard.

If we now take the analogy of the Human Microphone and apply it to OWS' Facebook page, we see that the Human Microphone, ironically, can be used to describe the opposite dynamic. Instead of amplifying the voice of ordinary people, which the offline Human Microphone did, the members of OWS' Facebook page now labor intensely to only amplify the voice of the leadership. If we recall figure 1 in chapter 2, we see that the practice of 'sharing' increased by no less than 34 percentage points during the first year of OWS. Since 'sharing' involves distribution a post to ones own personal network, this practice could very well be interpreted as an act of amplification: A way to allow more people to see/hear the message. The democratic problem, which this example constitutes, is that no one shares the articulations of ordinary people. It is in fact not even possible to share ordinary members' comments on Facebook. Hence, the name of a technology that from the outset was designed to allow everyone a voice, should now been re-interpreted, since Facebook's technological affordances allow only the voice of the leadership to be amplified.

This is where I believe the concept of 'ventriloquist democracy' becomes useful. Instead of ordinary people participating in the co-construction of content, as they did through the offline

assemblies in OWS, they now only participate in the amplification of content. This can best be described as a drift from *participation* to *amplification.* In this sense, the leadership employs OWS' own members as a gigantic Human Microphone, constituted by more than half a million people. And in that process, the radical democratic dialogue is lost. Hence, by installing the leadership as the 'ventriloquist' and the movement's ordinary members as the 'wooden dummy', Facebook's affordances, in fact, constrain what Bruns (2008) referred to as 'the produsage of democracy'.

The final conclusion that I am reaching is indeed that Facebook, as an application of Web 2.0, is not a democratic medium. Never has it been the purpose of Facebook to be used as a platform for democratic dialogue, and nor should it be used that way. Populist movements, such as OWS, embody a wide range of especially agonistic democratic virtues, and it is thus incredibly discouraging to see these virtues be constrained by Facebook's efforts to promote an affirmative environment for *"positive social interactions"*. Facebook is, without a doubt, a highly effective tool for mobilizing and organizing counter-hegemonic movements in only a matter of hours, but as a sphere for democratic dialogue, it fails miserably.

Even though this thesis might be interpreted as suggesting otherwise, it is my clear conviction that the future of democracy still rests with the populist movements of our time, as Ian Angus proposed at the cover page of chapter 1. It might even be with the *online* populist movements that we should place our faith in democracy's revival. However, as long as these movements keep employing hierarchically controlled mediums, such as Facebook, which explicitly promote positive and affirmative interactions, then we are most likely stuck with politics as usual, or perhaps even worse: Ventriloquist democracy.

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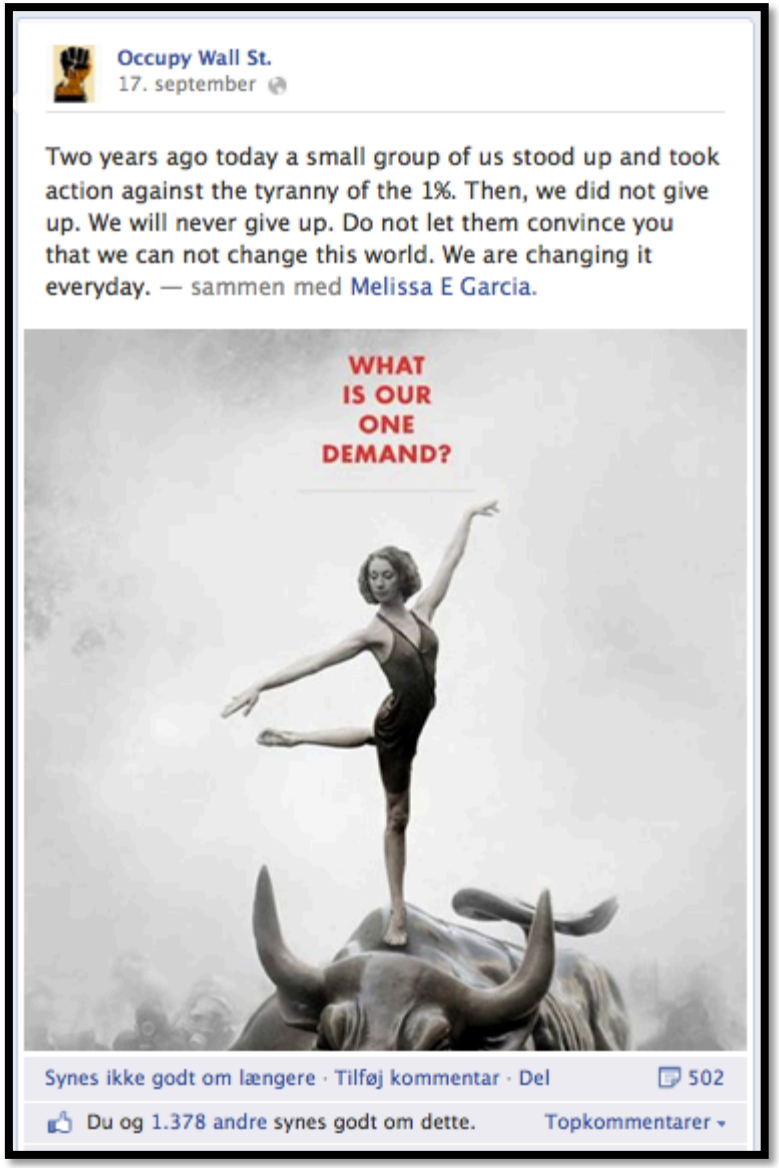
6. **Ethnographic Experiments**

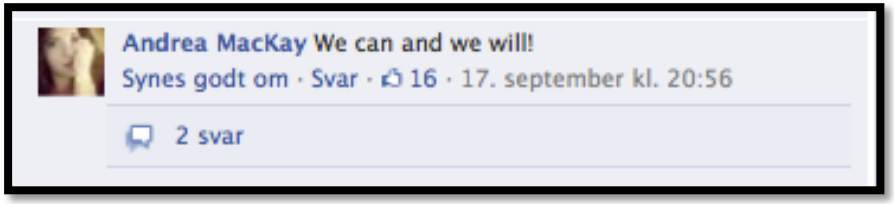
On the following pages, I have inserted screen dumps of all 12 experiments, conducted in relation to the thesis' second analysis. Each page represents an experiment, and the screen dumps inserted illustrate 1) the post published by the OWS leadership, 2) the most liked comments at the post, and 3) my deliberative, agonistic or cosmopolitan comments. As explained in the method section of chapter 3, Experiment #1, #2, #3 and #4 represent the deliberative democratic comments, while Experiment #5, #6, #7 and #8 represent the agonistic democratic comments. And finally, Experiment #9, #10, #11 and #12 represent the cosmopolitan democratic comments.

Below, I have inserted a table showing the total feedback from the 12 experiments.

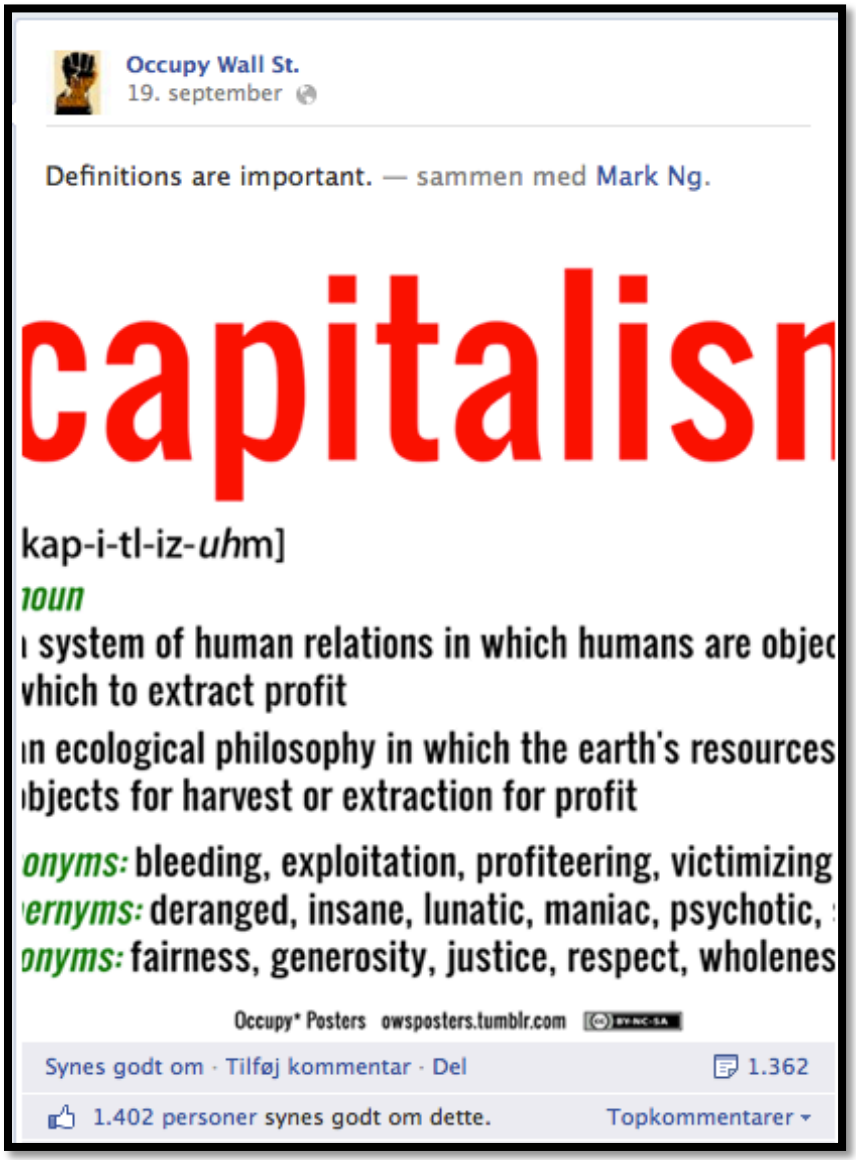
	Deliberative		Agonistic		Cosmopolitan
1st Experiment *What is our one demand?*	**Sep. 18th, 10.23** 1 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments	**5th Experiment** *Wars in the Middle East*	**Oct. 9th, 17.02** 0 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments	**9th Experiment** *When fascism comes America*	**Oct. 22nd, 20.15** 0 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments
2nd Experiment *Definitions are important*	**Sep. 21th, 09.54** 0 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments	**6th Experiment** *Paul Ryan*	**Oct. 13th, 20.27** 0 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments	**10th Experiment** *Average teacher salary*	**Oct. 27th, 09.46** 0 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments
3rd Experiment *Time spend in Congress*	**Sep. 26th, 16.40** 0 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments	**7th Experiment** *Columbus lost at sea*	**Oct. 15th, 09.38** 0 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments	**11th Experiment** *Capitalism has failed women*	**Oct. 30th, 15.52** 0 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments
4th Experiment *Campaign Cash*	**Sep. 30th, 23.02** 0 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments	**8th Experiment** *Abolish capitalism*	**Oct. 21st, 21.15** 6 like / 2 direct comments / 0 indirect comments	**12th Experiment** *Vacant homes*	**Nov. 3rd, 11.35** 0 like / 0 direct comments / 0 indirect comments

Experiment #1: ”What is our one demand”, September 18th, 10.23

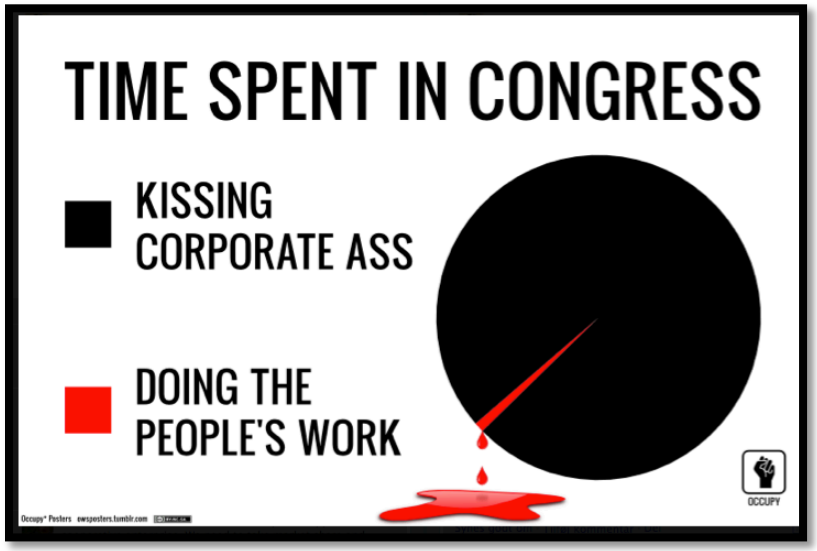


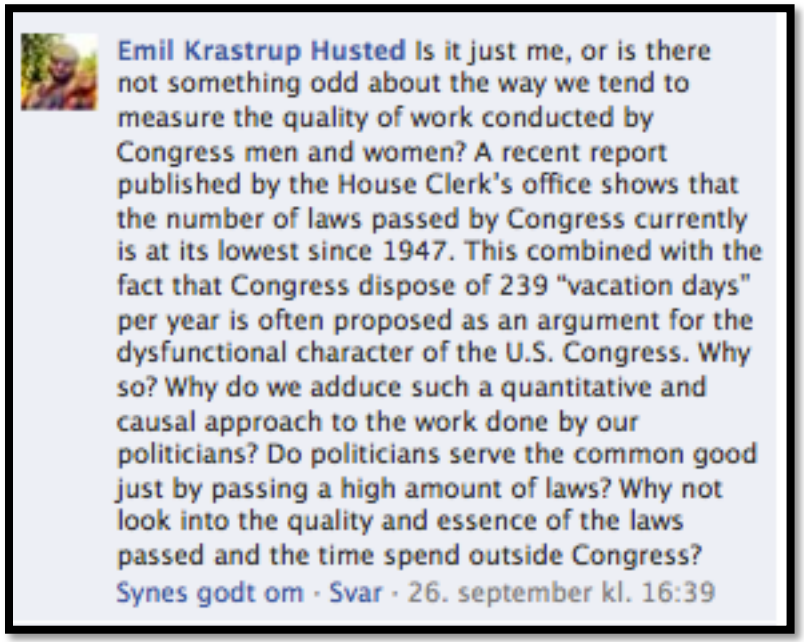


Experiment #2: ”Definitions”, September 21sr, 09.54

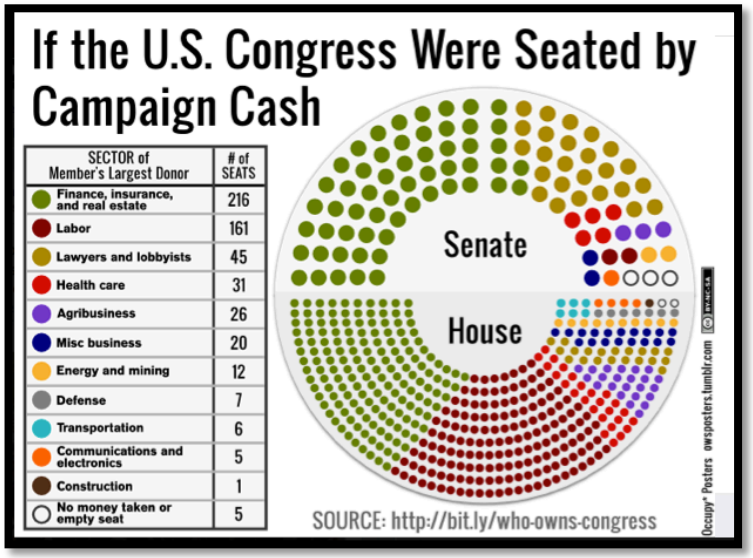


Experiment #3: ”Time spent in Congress”, September 26th, 16.39

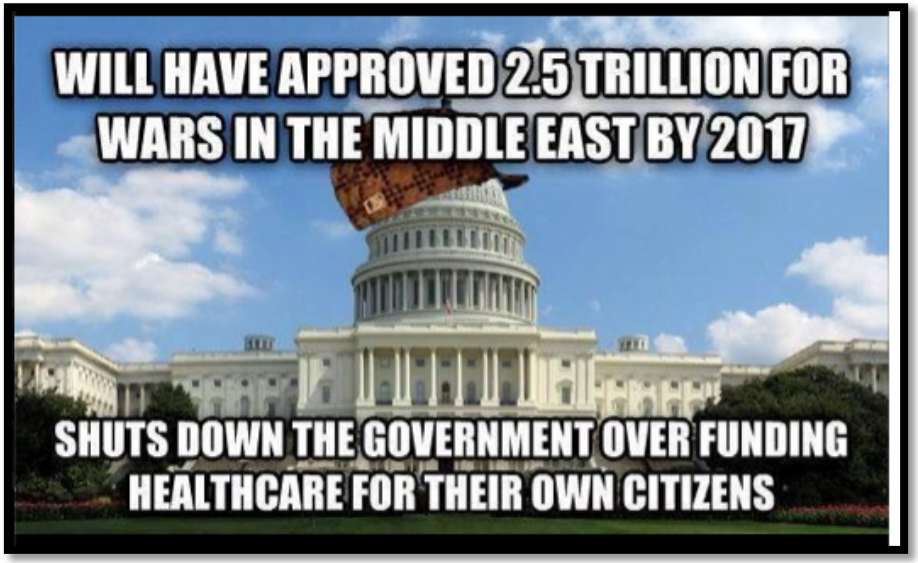


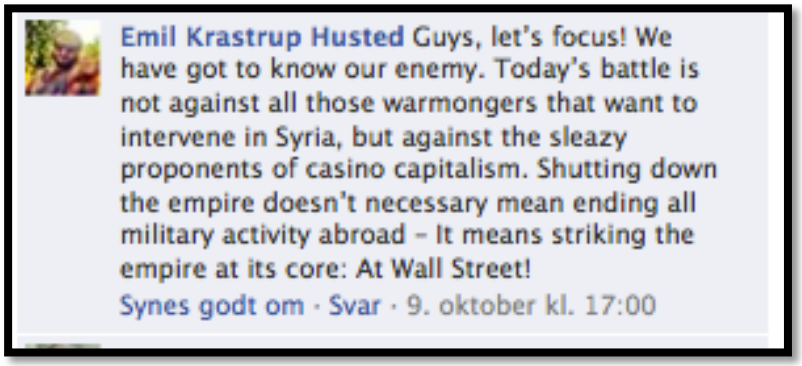


Experiment #4: ”Campaign Cash”, September 30th, 23.02

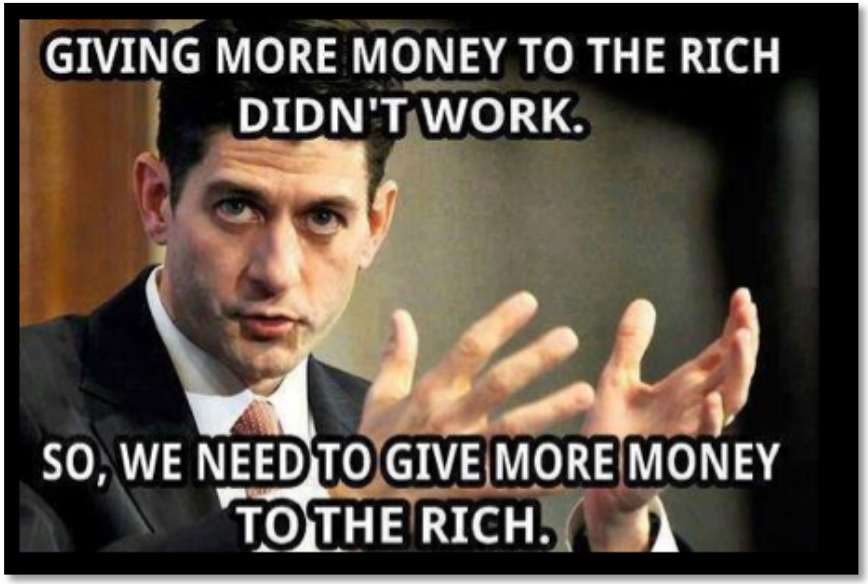


Experiment #5: ”Wars in the Middle East”, October 9th, 17.02

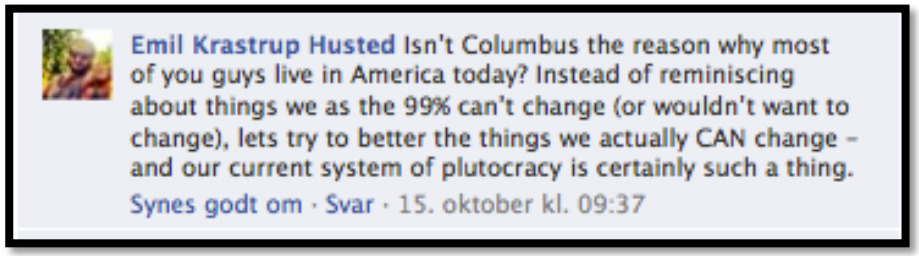




Experiment #6: ”Paul Ryan”, October 13th, 20.27



Experiment #7: ”Columbus lost at sea”, October 15th, 09.37



Experiment #8: ”Abolish capitalism”, October 21st, 21.15

Experiment #9: ”When fascism comes to America”, October 22nd, 20.50

When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in a flag and carrying a cross.

-Sinclair Lewis

Occupy Wall St.
Synes godt om · 22. oktober

When fascism arrives, it comes wrapped in a flag and carrying religious symbols. – sammen med Louise Roy.

Synes godt om · Tilføj kommentar · Del

1.670 personer synes godt om dette. Topkommentarer

771 delinger

Emil Krastrup Husted So now we're against religion as well? The amount of causes this movement encompasses never seizes to amaze me. In an age where global capitalism, with all its deficits, leaves no country, no region, no culture untouched, we cannot afford to take a stand against religious extremism too. And furthermore, the causal connection between fascism and religion is not very well grounded. In fact, a great deal of dictatorships arising in the 20th century has been secular (Stalin, Mao Tse-Dong, Pol Pot, Nasser etc.). The kind of fascism, we as ordinary citizens of the world should be opposing, does not come wrapped in anything particular. On the contrary, today's fascist empire is upheld by transnational flows of capital that in a very subtle way aspire to suppress the average working people all over the world – also those of religious beliefs.

Synes godt om · Svar · 22. oktober kl. 20:15

Jake W Turner When fascism comes to America it will be wearing a smiley face t-shirt and new pair of Nikes- George Carlin

Synes godt om · Svar · 47 · 22. oktober kl. 03:59 via mobil

Chris Botts I really don't get the extremism coming out against the affordable care act. Seems to me to be the one good thing Obama has done. All the healthiest countries in the world have a more extreme version of this

Synes godt om · Svar · 33 · 22. oktober kl. 03:42 via mobil

9 svar

Tyris D. Maxey When! This post is 250 years late lol

Synes godt om · Svar · 2 · 22. oktober kl. 04:48 via mobil

Experiment #10: ”Average teacher salary”, October 27th, 09.37

Emil Krastrup Husted Why do this movement keep focusing solely on issues in the U.S.? Sure, salaries for public servants are higher in Europe than in the States, but this surely does not mean that issues related to workers' rights are not relevant in Europe. Under the empire of flexible capitalism, all workers are being exploited. Hence, in order for us to tackle issues of financial capitalism and corporate greed, we civil society to unite at a global scale. I believe (as Marx did) that workers of the world need to unite and not dwell on issues of purely domestic character. The occupy movement should be global, not local.
Synes godt om · Svar · 27. oktober kl. 09:46

Occupy Wall St.
Synes godt om · 26. oktober · Redigeret

Imagine if we moved the $ spent on the #NSA to #education http://money.cnn.com/2013/06/07/news/economy/nsa-surveillance-cost/ via Occupy Posters – sammen med Paul Pabon og Ann Marie Bogart.

Synes godt om · Tilføj kommentar · Del

1.486 personer synes godt om dette. Topkommentarer

826 delinger

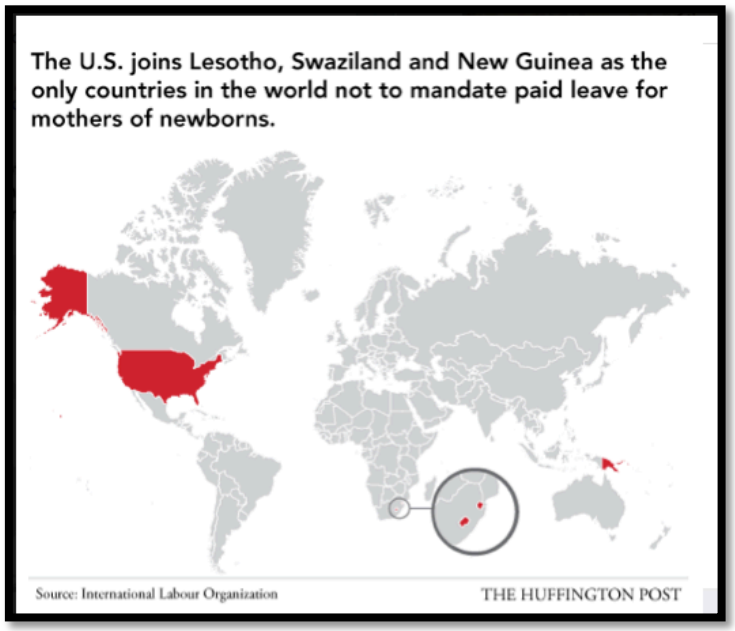
Seán Lynch Imagine if the most fundamental notion of economics, GDP, wasn't based on an infinite growth paradigm but instead included things like quality of life and happiness.
Synes godt om · Svar · 89 · 26. oktober kl. 15:22

4 svar

Cory Elliott This wouldn't make a difference in the US because by the time the allocated money gets to where it's actually needed, it's only a fraction of what was allocated because every lobbyist, senator, congressmen, union rep, governor along the way gets to take a piece of the action first.. Our system is broke, throwing more money at a broken corrupted system will not work.
Synes godt om · Svar · 35 · 26. oktober kl. 15:30 via mobil

6 svar

Experiment #11: ”Capitalism has failed women”, October 30th, 15.52



Experiment #12: ”Vacant homes”, November 3rd, 11.35