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# Mental Environmentalism: The True Goal of the Occupy Wall Street Movement

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MENTAL ENVIRONMENTALISM:  
THE TRUE GOAL OF THE OCCUPY WALL STREET MOVEMENT

By

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of the Requirements for  
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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to expose the actual goal behind the Occupy Wall Street Movement. The paper discusses the criticism behind the Occupy Wall Street movement for its apparent lack of goals. It then takes a retrospective look back to the establishment and founding organization, Adbusters, for answers on a “one demand” or goal. From here it will discuss the founding body, Adbusters, and its philosophical and political ideology. After this, the paper will tie facets of the Occupy Wall Street movement back to Adbusters and their philosophy of mental environmentalism in order to show that mental environmentalism was the goal of the movement all along. The paper uses newspaper sources for historical events and relies heavily on Adbusters’ founder Kalle Lasn and senior editors of the Adbusters magazine for information on mental environmentalism. It also references Kalle Lasn’s book “Culture Jam” throughout the paper. The book Culture Jam is Adbusters founder Kalle Lasn’s quasi-manifesto on how to enact a culture jamming movement, and how this alleviates the mental environment. Being that Adbusters made the call for the movement and coined the name “Occupy Wall Street,” Kalle Lasn’s book is a major part of drawing the connections between Adbusters’ goal which ultimately is the same goal as the movement.

**MENTAL ENVIRONMENTALISM:  
THE TRUE GOAL OF THE OCCUPY WALL STREET MOVEMENT**

The Occupy Wall Street<sup>1</sup> movement that started in 2011 in New York City, has been praised for its innovation and ridiculed for its seemingly goalless nature. The movement became a spectacle as it gathered followers from many aspects of life. United under common ideas such as “We are the 99%,” people occupied parks and other public spaces. However, when questioned about their objectives, there seemed to be no one goal or demand. This aspect of the Occupy movement gathered more curiosity and coverage. The more people that came into attendance, the more coverage it received. While Adbusters made the original call, to “bring a tent” and asking “what is our one demand,” never was there stated one single demand or goal.

The movement was not demand-less or goalless by any means. In fact, the movement was preplanned years in the making. In this paper I will show that the movement used the idea of a “one demand,” to create a meme war that’s ultimate goal was to start a new movement for the mental environment. I will tie the foundation of the movement with Adbusters Magazine, their philosophy, their creator Kalle Lasn, and ultimately tie the movement with all of the aforementioned ideas regarding the mental environment. I will conclude by also showing that not only does Occupy Wall Street philosophically align with facets of mental environmentalism, but was also preplanned by Kalle Lasn years prior. All of this will thus prove that the goal was to jam the culture and make a move towards alleviating infotoxins in the mental environment.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on history or OWS or political trends and events leading up to the movement you can read articles in “The Occupy Handbook” Hachette Book Group. 2012. or “This Changes Everything: OCCUPY WALLSTREET and the 99% Movement” Berrett-Koehler Publishers. 2011

The foundation of Adbusters serves to show the transformation between the environmentalist movement and the environmentalist movement of the mind. Through explaining the creation of Adbusters I will give a foundation to further explain more facets of mental environmentalism and ultimately tie aspects from the creation of Adbusters and mental environmentalism back to the core tenet of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

The history of Adbusters Magazine has its roots in environmental activism. What started as a group of environmental activists combating the logging industry in Canada, quickly transformed into a debate of the right to own public airspace. In 1989 Kalle Lasn, the founder of Adbusters, was living in British Columbia. It was during this year that logging companies started airing ads about how the industry were managing the forest and that they were not harming the environment. The part that stuck out the most to Lasn, and ultimately had him and his partners springing into action, was the ending slogan that the citizens of British Columbia would have “Forest Forever.” Lasn and a group of environmentalists believed that the companies were clear cutting too quickly and killing off the region’s salmon runs.<sup>2</sup>

In response to these advertisements, which according to the environmentalists were lies and a form of PR green washing, Lasn and his group made a counter commercial. Their commercial titled “Mystical Forests” portrayed the logging industry as a destructive force that was failing to uphold their promises. It also gave the caveat that the industry would end forestry in the region if it was not confronted immediately. However, no matter where Lasn tried to buy airtime, he was refused. Stations such as the

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<sup>2</sup> Lasn. pg. 30 Culture Jam: How to Reverse America’s Suicidal Culture Binge- And Why We Must

Canadian Broadcasting Company refused to sell him airtime, stating that it was a conflict of interest with the logging industry, whose ads they aired.<sup>3</sup>

Lasn and his group then started to contact newspapers, magazines, radio shows, and TV news stations, informing them of their inability to buy airtime. This then brought their issues with the logging industry to the forefront of political conversation, whilst simultaneously raising questions about the freedom of citizens to purchase airtime to voice their own ideas and thoughts.<sup>4</sup> While the fight for the protection of the logging industry was accomplished, Lasn voiced how hard it was for him to compete with big business through public means. Micah White, a senior writer for Adbusters said this of the event:

“That was the founding event of Adbusters: the realization that while corporations can lie to us via the airwaves, we are unable to respond using the same means.”<sup>5</sup>

It was this idea that changed the organization’s focus from the physical environment to the mental environment. In 2001, Adbusters writer Bill McKibben wrote an article titled “The Mental Environment: Where our fate as humans will be decided.” In this piece, he put to paper the first clear understanding of Adbusters’ philosophy of the mental environment, what it is was, and what role advertisements play to our mental state.<sup>6</sup> To explain in its simplest form, where pollution negatively impact the earthly environment, similarly advertisements and constant media messaging negatively affects

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid pg. 30-31

<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> Micah White. “What is Mental Environmentalism? The Future of Activism.”

<sup>6</sup> McKibben. The Mental Environment: Where our fate as humans will be decided.

the mental health of the populace. However to fully understand this idea of mental environmentalism, first one must understand what is this environment of the mind, what the pollutions are to the mind, where they come from, the harms of these mental pollutions, and what evidence mental environmentalists use to explain their theory.

McKibben started off his article with this purposefully exaggerated analogy:

“Your mind, a clear mountain stream running burbling through the rocks. Until Pepsi stands up, unzips its billion-dollar ad budget, and takes a leak, staining it forever brown. Your brain, a verdant old-growth forest, until it dies the death of a thousand swooshes. Your soul, filled with the crystal fresh air of early morning, until Philip Morris blows in a cloud of its seductive smoke.”

McKibben’s description is unrealistic and exaggerated which is precisely the point. In order for one to begin exploring the mental environment, one must collect information and ideas and weigh their truth values. McKibben knows that the environment is not a pristine wilderness, rather it is a combination of all sorts of natural and manmade systems. Similarly the mental environment is not a fully unique ecosystem but rather the interplay between the individual’s ideas and thoughts and the overarching culture. And just as there are physical pollution and toxins in the natural environment, there exist toxins to the mental environment. McKibben’s point he is trying to make from his opening analogy is that one must first question all information so that they can ultimately weed out the toxins present in the mental environment.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> ibid



Whether it be smog over Los Angeles or sludge byproducts dumped into the rivers, in the physical environment it is becoming easier to spot pollution and toxic material. But what are the toxins that McKibben and Adbusters speak of when referencing the mental environment? These toxins are not tangible. According to mental environmentalists, these toxins are blatant lie or ideas that create false perceptions of reality.

Infotoxin is the name given to this idea of the pollution that corrupts the mental environment. Infotoxins are pieces of information that either give false information, alter information, or create a false sense of reality. For example they are seen in advertisements like the “Forest Forever” ad, which according to Lasn gave false information. Lasn believed that, while the logging companies said they were not harming the environment and using that motto to gain support, they were actually harming the salmon runs and forests. Also according to Lasn, Infotoxins are seen in PR spins that stretch or alter the truth and in White House press conferences that omit information.<sup>8</sup>

According to mental environmentalists there is evidence that can be seen that prove that there is harm being done to our mental environment. However, before one can start to delve into the evidence, one must first accept one core tenet. According to Micah White “our minds influence reality and reality influences our mind.”<sup>9</sup> Only by first accepting this idea that our mental environment can affect our physical reality can a person process the mental environmentalist’s evidence that mental pollution has its ramifications in the physical world. Micah White, Bill McKibben, and Kalle Lasn point to three areas of life in which they believe show that our mental environment and its well-

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<sup>8</sup> Lasn. Culture Jam pg.24

<sup>9</sup> Micah White. “What is Mental Environmentalism- The future of activism.”

being are tied into physical reality. These are most expressed in their beliefs that the mental environment's effects can be seen in mental health, political action, and in the actual status of the natural environment.

The magazine *Adbusters* was founded under the notion of revealing truths behind corporate advertisements. They never say advertising is wrong, but the content quality and quantity become infotoxins that, according to *Adbusters*, pollute the mental environment. In McKibben's article, in a day's worth of TV he watched all the latest commercials, advertisements, and videos and he tried to boil all these consumer messages down to the core elements. His claim is that advertisements sell the idea that each consumer is of the most importance to society and after selling you on that they tie in a product. So by associating hyperindividualism with a product, the underlying message is that the consumer is so important that they need to have this product.<sup>10</sup>

Why would consumers fall into this media trap? It is due to the "plentitude," as Lasn calls it, of the advertisements. Lasn believes that it is the combination of quantity accompanied by the false perception portrayed in these commercials pollutes the mental environment.<sup>11</sup> *Adbusters* believes that these media messages have created a "demand-generation"<sup>12</sup> and has a name for this type of consumer: the Manchurian Consumer.<sup>13</sup> When Lasn's Manchurian Consumer is thirsty they need a name brand Coke<sup>14</sup>, when he needs sunglasses he buy Raybans<sup>15</sup>, and when shopping does not make him happy he needs Prozac.<sup>16</sup> Mental environmentalists believe that this need to own name brands and

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<sup>10</sup> Bill McKibben. What is Mental Environmentalism? Where our fate as humans will be decided.

<sup>11</sup> Kalle Lasn. "Culture Jam." Pg. 11

<sup>12</sup> Micah White. "What is Mental Environmentalism- The future of activism."

<sup>13</sup> Kalle Lasn. "Culture Jam" pg. 37

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. pg 38

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. pg.39

<sup>16</sup> Ibid pg. 40

the ultimate failure for products to fulfill peoples desires for happiness, is the main toxin of the American consumer culture.

Mental environmentalists believe that the growing number of mood disorders are the result of unfulfilled media promises as seen through these constant absorption of advertisements. Environmentalists, such as Lasn, do not believe that the media is the only reason for the rise of mood disorders in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they also point to environmental pollutions.<sup>17</sup> However, Adbusters still points to the interplay between pollutants and state of the mental environment to issues with politics and the physical environment as the deterioration of both.

White says “there is a connection between the level of pollution in our minds and the prevalence of pollution in our world.” If people are not questioning businesses and methods of production, and their impact on nature, then people cannot progress to better methods of accomplishing the same tasks. Mental environmentalist point to extinction of certain animals as an indicator of the state of the mental environment and its prevalence in the physical world. White uses the example of the passenger pigeon to make this case. Simply put, the reason that the passenger pigeon became extinct was a combination of physical and mental problems. New technologies such as nets, guns, and pollution had their hand in the extinction of the animals. But mental environmentalists claim that since no one was questioning and combating the values of these new technologies, it allowed for the extinction of the animal to occur.<sup>18</sup>

Mood disorders, physical pollution, and extinctions are quantifiable evidence that these activists use. The general discourse of politics can also be used by mental

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid pgs 9-10

<sup>18</sup> White. “What is Mental Environmentalism? The Future of Activism.”

environmentalists as evidence of the state of the mental environment. During the 9/11 attacks, White describes the time and events as a global spectacle. According to him, the best action would have been to wait and not take immediate response. However, according to White immediate response was taken under false pretenses of combatting terror and finding weapons of mass destruction. Ultimately, White claims that the populace was so easily sucked into this spectacle because they were unable to question the mainstream thoughts and imagine alternate possibilities.<sup>19</sup>

When people begin to realize that there are toxins affecting their mental environment, this leads to “rage.” Lasn finds that the pivotal turning point for any mental environmentalist is the realization that they are not attaining certain levels of happiness from corporate infotoxins or that they are being fed false information from some media or government source. When they start to come to this conclusion that they are unhappy, they can use the anger that is created from this lack of fulfillment towards constructively alleviating the mental environment.<sup>20</sup>

This anger, Lasn believes, is the most important tool that mental environmentalist have towards weeding out the infotoxins in the mental environment. Lasn says that “there’s an anger, rage-driven defiance, that is healthy, ethical, and empowering [and] learning how to jam our culture with this rage may be one of the few ways left to feel truly among the quick in the Huxleyan mindscape of the new millennium capitalism.”<sup>21</sup> Finding ways to incite this type of anger and frustration in the populace is a key goal of mental environmentalists.

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<sup>19</sup> White. “The Adolescence of Mental Environmentalism.”

<sup>20</sup> Lasn. “Culture Jam.” Pgs. 139-43

<sup>21</sup> Lasn. “Culture Jam” pg. 143

According to Adbusters' Kalle Lasn, the most effective way to break the mental control of consumerist control and incite anger from it, one must become a "culture jammer." Lasn's devotes an entire work titled "Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Culture Binge- And Why We Must" to explaining the goals of the culture jammers and common ways to "jam culture."<sup>22</sup> The goal of the culture jammer is to disrupt the flow of thoughts and ideas (i.e. the culture) long enough to make people question what they think.<sup>23</sup>

By having people question, culture jammers believe that they can expose mental toxins to the populace, who upon reevaluating these toxins could have the potential to experience "satori." This satori, is a buddhist term used by Lasn to explain a moment of enlightenment or an epiphany. By doing this culture jammers get people questioning, thinking, and reacting to what they believe to be infotoxins in the culture. Only then, when the jammers expose to the people that there is indeed false information in the mental environment, can a collective mind shift clean the mental environment by correcting this information. Culture jammers have to first clean the mental environment before changes in the physical can take place.<sup>24</sup>

The primary modes of culture jamming are known as anti-advertising and meme warfare. Anti-advertising can be as easy as altering or vandalizing a billboard in such a way that it creates an anti-consumer message.<sup>25</sup> The best example Lasn provides of this is the alteration of a Tiger Woods billboard in which his smile is replaced with a Nike sign.

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<sup>22</sup> Lasn. "Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America."

<sup>23</sup> For more information on culture jamming, visit [Adbusters.org](http://Adbusters.org)

<sup>24</sup> White. Adbusters. "What is mental environmentalism?: a brief history of 'the journal of mental environmentalism.'"

<sup>25</sup> Lasn. "Culture Jam" pg. 149

This alludes to an idea that Tiger Woods is really an employee of Nike and as Adbusters' sees it, a corporate guinea pig.<sup>26</sup>

The other method of jamming the culture is through meme warfare.<sup>27</sup> A meme is a small unit of information that conveys a cultural message. They can be simply words, images, or a combination of the two. An example of meme warfare would be Adbusters' anti-smoking advertisements, also known as subvertisements. In one it depicts Joe the Camel in the hospital, presumably with cancer, and the subtext "Joe Chemo."<sup>28</sup> The image and words, taken individually, both play off a common smoking cultural figure, Joe the Camel. They take the happy Camel's smoking icon and alter it into something negative and macabre. While this is similar to anti-advertising it is slightly different. Memes can act as product flags, but not always. The goal of meme warfare is to create a slogan, word, or image that reverberates with the viewer, while anti-advertising aims to have the viewer question a product through altering it visually.

Previously I have used the term "mental environmentalist." There is a method that is commonly practiced by mental environmentalists, it is called culture jamming. For the sake of the rest of this paper, I will be using both the terms mental environmentalist and culture jammer interchangeably. They are not mutually exclusive and share the same goal of exposing mental toxins in the mental environment. Culture jamming is a practice of exposing infotoxins to the populace. Culture jammers are mental environmentalists, the distinction being that they are ones who use culture jamming as their modus operandi.

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<sup>26</sup> Thuncher, Jennifer. "Fairview: Adbusters occupies a place in the history books Magazine emphasizes activism over revenue." *Vancourier*. Web. 27 Apr. 2014.

<sup>27</sup> For more information on meme warfare, refer to Kalle Lasn's book "Meme Warfare." For information on "memes" refer to Dr. Richard Dawkins 1976 book "The Selfish Gene" in which he coins the term.

<sup>28</sup> Yardley. The New York Times. "The Branding of Occupy Wall Street."

Now I will segue into the movement itself, after which I will tie back the goals of the movement to that of the mental environmentalists.

Much of the criticism that Occupiers faced came mainly from their lack of clear demands and proposals before and during the movement. When the original call came from Adbusters in an issue for their magazine, it showed the iconic Bull at the head of Wall Street with a ballerina on top with riot police in the background. Above these figures was the question “, What is our one demand?” It then stated below the planned date to march, September 17<sup>th</sup> 2011, and said to “bring a tent.”<sup>29</sup> However, as time progressed and the movement was underway, it was clear that there was not a “one demand.”

Adbusters came up with the place, time, and name for the protest. They then went onto join forces with New Yorkers Against Budget cuts, who together created the archetypical governing body of occupy movements, the General Assembly. The General Assembly allowed everyone a chance to speak and consensus had to be met in order for action to proceed. This purely democratic form of governing made it to where no one person was a leader.

This method however made decision making long and tedious. With students, union workers, and culture jammers convening and bringing in different aspirations for the movement, it became clear that there was no one clear demand. Everyone came in with something different. They also felt that making a clear list of demands would hinder progress. Typically a protest has a set group with set ideas and a proposal for what actions they would like see happen. However, the NYCGA<sup>30</sup> decided to try a new

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<sup>29</sup> Adbusters. July/August 2011.

<sup>30</sup> NYCGA is an acronym I will use from here on out for the “New York City General Assembly”

method, in which they had many demands and just wanted to gain support, occupy, and discuss. From this, they hoped to provoke questions and a new way of thinking that would ultimately bring enough support and questioning from the populace, that action would subsequently take place.<sup>31</sup>

The media reasonably sought to explain this strange new movement with no particular set demands or goals. Logically, media outlets looked to Kalle Lasn for answers for just about everything. When asked in multiple interviews about what people wanted to see happen with policies he responded with the proposals of Robin Hood taxes, regulations on flash trading and wall street transactions in general.<sup>32</sup> Regardless of what Lasn wanted to see happen, he was careful in his interviews to not speak as a leader of the movement, just the founder. Therefore, it created a revolving door of confusion for media sources as to what were the goals of the movement.

In the early stages of the movement, after the initial march on September 17<sup>th</sup>, it appeared that everyone had a different goal in mind. Occupiers listed issues that they wanted to be addressed as far ranging from the initial stimulus of Wall Street bailouts to policies concerning death penalty, healthcare, and immigration. Occupiers would create cardboard signs and line them along the north end of the plaza with slogans and demands. Sometimes they would be simple demands of what they wanted see change, other times they would be slogans meant to pique the interest of passersby and media outlets. Two common slogans were “People Before Profits,” and “We are the 99%.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Schneider. “Occupy Wall Street: FAQ”

<sup>32</sup>Rapoza. “The Brains Behind ‘Occupy Wallstreet’”

Flock. Occupy Wall Street: An interview with the man behind it all.

White. Lasn. “The Call to occupy Wall Street resonates around the world.”

<sup>33</sup> Schneider. “Occupy Wall Street: FAQ”



As the movement progressed, the diversity of the members and goals widened. On September 27<sup>th</sup>, Occupiers went to support the postal service union with their protest of shortening the delivery week.<sup>34</sup> On the same day, union airline pilots were seen protesting the entry wages of pilots. The pilots used similar tactics of sign making with demands and slogans.<sup>35</sup> The next day, NYC Transit Union joined forces with Occupy and publicly claimed support of the movement.<sup>36</sup> By the end of the month, the movement was growing to include unions, students, anarchists, and just about anyone who needed to vent their anger and frustration.

The decentralization of power and lack of goals led to confusion and frustration with the movement. As seen in this excerpt from a New York Times article:

“The group’s lack of cohesion and its apparent wish to pantomime progressivism rather than practice it knowledgeably is unsettling and in the face of challenges so many of its generation face—finding work, repaying student loans, figuring out ways to finish college when money runs out. But what were the chances that its members were going to receive the attention they so richly deserve carrying signs like ‘Even if the world were to end tomorrow I’d still plant a tree today’?”<sup>37</sup>

The catchy slogans of the movement, such as “We are the 99%,” and “people before profits,” were memes for the movement. To a culture jammer and mental environmentalist, a meme is “a unit of information [such as] a catchphrase, a concept, a

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<sup>34</sup> Webster. The Nation. “‘Occupy Wall St.’ joins postal workers in budget protest”

<sup>35</sup> Kain. Forbes. “Union Pilots Occupy Wall Street.”

<sup>36</sup> Sledge. Huffington Post. “NYC Transit Union Joins Occupy Wall Street.”

<sup>37</sup> Bellafante. The New York Times. “Gunning for Wall Street with Faulty Aims.”

tune, a notion of fashion, philosophy or politics.” Lasn tells these activists that “potent memes can change minds, alter behavior, catalyze collective mindshift and transform cultures.”<sup>38</sup>

The original call to “Occupy Wall Street” was sent out by Adbusters in their July issue in 2011. It stated “what is our one demand?”<sup>39</sup> Adbusters followed their published call for the Occupy movement with a tweet reading, “what is our one demand? OCCUPYWALLSTREET.”<sup>40</sup> However, there was no demand mentioned. There continued to be no “one demand” that arose before or during the movement.

The lack of centralized definite goals was in fact a hidden goal all along. By not entertaining the idea of starting a movement with a centralized goal, Adbusters effectively jammed the culture. Many times, leaders of the movement said that attempting to make one demand, or a list of demands prior to the beginning of the movement was getting in the way of having the protest actually happen. Therefore, the NYCGA decided to protest without a definite goal, and allow them to develop over time.<sup>41</sup>

This understandably led to much media attention, because it was a protest without a demand and with many potential causes. However, it was actually an extremely well organized and preplanned act to jam the culture. By accepting this as the true goal of the Occupy Wall Street movement, then the goalless and demand less movement begins to appear as a movement for the mental environment.

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<sup>38</sup> Lasn. Culture Jam. Pg. 123

<sup>39</sup> Adbusters Magazine. July 2011

<sup>40</sup> Lasn, Kalle. (@AdbustersI). “What is our one demand? #OCCUPYWALLSTREET.” 14 July 2011. Tweet.

<sup>41</sup> Schieder. The Nation “Occupy Wall Street FAQ”

The absorption of many groups with different goals and mind sets into the movement was a move towards creating info diversity.<sup>42</sup> By bringing in different groups and protests, the occupiers were increasing their info diversity within the movement and directing it to the media. To clarify, I am not saying that they were bringing in people that disagreed with them, as in the right wing left wing political thinking. Rather, they were bringing in other protest with different issues and problems so that they could gain airtime in order to proclaim their grievances. By allowing groups such as the teachers, transits, and airplane unions to voice their opinions and grievances on the air, the occupiers were creating info diversity in national conversation with each of the perspective issues. When there is info diversity, there is the possibility to clean the mental environment.

Ideally when culture is jammed by a meme it is replicated enough so that it fills significant space in the mental environment. Once it is replicated enough, it has the possibility to pollute or clean the mental environment. Therefore creating memes, is also theoretically creating info diversity. Using this mental environmentalist's perspective on info diversity, the absorption of many labor unions and protest groups seems to be a move in favor of the mental environment.

Additionally, the cardboard signs such as "people before profits," posted around the park were culture jammer memes. "People before profits" and "We are the 99%" were retweeted, and duplicated thousands of times on all types of media sources. These memes were not only creating info diversity but also jamming the culture. For instance, by using the two aforementioned slogans, the movement gained more people. While impossible to quantify that these two memes were the cause, there are many articles in

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<sup>42</sup> Lasn. "Culture Jam" pgs. 25-26

which people, including Lasn say that people were uniting around the common idea of corporate greed.<sup>43</sup>

Some protesters mentioned that they did not want to call for action, because they believed that the system itself was the problem.<sup>44</sup> The first step for the mental environmentalist would be to raise the question of whether or not the system was broken and what things need fixing. First the mental environmentalist has to expose the problems and create a collective shift in thought in order for the problem in the physical world to even begin to be resolved. For this reason, the General Assembly was itself an incredibly mental environmentalist tool. It was a form of pure democracy that requires consensus. Therefore, each problem must first be discussed thoroughly in order to weed out all the conflicting thoughts and ideas before action can be taken. Referring back to mental environmentalism, there must be a change in the mental environment before physical change can take place.

For the mental environmentalist, raising the questions and presenting them on air was in itself an accomplishment. This explains why some people were ecstatic and believed that the movement was already a success without even having a set of goals and demands.<sup>45</sup> Ultimately though, this was the goal, to address many issues and have them evaluated by the populace. This, according to mental environmentalism, is the first step towards purifying the mental environment.

The meme “what is our one demand” was a tool in order to jam the culture. Common practice with regards to activism is to have a goal in mind and a set of demands. Occupy wall street gained much attention due to its lack of these. Therefore, their lack of

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<sup>43</sup> Yardley. New York Times. “Branding of the Occupy Wall Street movement.”

<sup>44</sup> Schnieder, Nathan. The Nation. "Occupy Wall Street: FAQ"

<sup>45</sup>ibid

goals and demands was a meme in itself. By creating this jam, they gathered more attention and intrigue. This allowed them to use the airspace and media outlets to create additional memes. The more groups and ideas they gathered, the more memes they could replicate into the mental environment. The end goal being that the more they expressed everyone's frustration and continued to expose issues in multiple layers, they would get the people more involved with political issues in the physical world. To restate a piece from earlier, mental environmentalists believe "our minds influence reality and reality influences our mind."<sup>46</sup>

From a philosophical perspective the movement would be successful if physical reality was altered as a consequence of a mind shift from the movement. It is impossible to quantify and qualify a shift in the collective thought. It is also nearly impossible to take every issue and discover which local and national governing bodies addressed specific issues and alter laws because of the movement. However, through continuing to raise questions and points without making demands, the movement was able to affect the physical world. The movement gained acknowledgement from stars, politicians, and even the President. All of whom came to admit there were issues in many areas, mainly Wall Street that led to the present affairs.<sup>47</sup> Whether in favor or not of the movement, they forced local and national governments, and people of all classes to questions just about everything they brought up.

However, this paper is not attempting to say whether the movement was a success or not. Ultimately, questions were raised through the use of memes, the culture was jammed through altering the standard practice of protest, and a conversation started about

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<sup>46</sup> Micah White. "What is Mental Environmentalism- The future of activism."

<sup>47</sup> France-Presse. The Raw Story. "Occupy Wall Street's demands? No demands"

a plethora of issues. Wall Street was a scapegoat, a means to an end. Lasn and Adbusters used Wall Street as an excuse to gather people, express frustration, start a dialogue, and create a new movement for the mental environment.

Kalle Lasn's book "Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Culture Binge- And Why We Must," not only acts to explain culture jamming and how to start a culture jamming movement, preordains events in the Occupy Wall Street Movement. From the starting of the movement to creation of goals to memes, Kalle Lasn explains how to make a culture jamming movement that could reverse consumer culture and alleviate the mental environment. At this section I will point to parts of his book and interviews about this work as evidence of Occupy's mental environmental goals.

Lasn states that the new age movements will center around information. According to Lasn, "meme warfare has become the geopolitical battle of our information age. Whoever has the memes has the power."<sup>48</sup> Lasn's new movement would be a battle over information and replicating and duplicating memes.

Lasn discusses the downfall of normal movements. According to Lasn, the standard movement has become a spectacle, that is short lived. He describes them as "spectacles with radium half-lives." So how does one create a new movement that garners attention, instead of being a news flash? Lasn says that the new movements will "force corporations and industries to rethink their agendas [which will] now take place in your head."<sup>49</sup>

The new age movement, known as mental environmentalism and culture jamming, has to break the normal structure of the standard movement and become a

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<sup>48</sup> Kalle Lasn. "Culture Jam-How to Reverse America's Suicidal Culture Binge- And Why We Must" pg. 123

<sup>49</sup> ibid

different kind of spectacle. In the epilogue to “Culture Jam,” Lasn explains how culture jammers will start the movement and what kinds of events they will rally around. He then explains how they can learn from the Situationist movement in Paris from 1968, as an example of how to proceed with this culture jamming movement.

Lasn declares that the movement needs “an influential minority, that [] pulls off a set of well-coordinated social marketing strategies. We just need a level of collective disillusionment and then [] ‘first’ nations of the world to fumble a world crisis like a stock market crash...”<sup>50</sup> Lasn stated that “instead of figuring [memes or goals] out in advance, I think we should stop analyzing and just live it - create it as we go.”<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, this movement would be more about provoking anger and less about a goal. This is the anger that Lasn mentions in his book that is so pivotal towards a successful movement. Without a healthy dose of “rage” Lasn does not believe that a movement can really take off. This is a major factor to the Occupy movement, that people voiced anger.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, Lasn believes that he is a product of the hippy and Situationist movements. As such, the next part of the movement would revolve around rioting. Much like the Situationist, Lasn’s culture jamming movement would bring in “first students, then workers, then professors, nurses, doctors, bus drivers, and a piecemeal of artists, [and] anarchists.” Just like Situationist, they would create slogans that would reverberate in the culture.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid pg. 212

<sup>51</sup> Hadl. Kyoto Journal. “Culture Jammer’s Guide to Enlightenment.”

<sup>52</sup> Lasn. “Culture Jam” pg. 143

<sup>53</sup> Ibid pg. 213

## Conclusion

It is no coincidence that this series of events ties closely with the Occupy Wall Street Movement. Kalle Lasn wrote his quasi-manifesto on culture jamming in 1999. The marketing that Lasn speaks of was fulfilled by Adbusters, they coined the catchy name and sent out the posters. The memes were fulfilled by just about anyone that wanted to write on a piece of cardboard and put it along the walls of the park. And the movement was mainly started by students, but gathered people from everywhere, and created ideas as it went. Because they did all of these things, contrary to the norm, they created a mass spectacle. The Occupiers focused mainly on gaining supporters and voicing anger, instead of demanding actions. Ultimately they were fulfilling the guidelines set by Lasn for making a culture jamming movement. This was the goal of the movement all along, create a culture jamming movement that 1) jams the culture 2) allows for the possibility to alleviate the mental environment.



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