Leaderlessness in Social Movements:

Advancing Space, Symbols, and Spectacle as Modes of "Leadership"

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Abstract

The emergence of the Occupy movements along with other social movements in 2011 elevated the idea of radically decentralized 'leaderless' social movement organizations. We argue that looking at such an alternative, horizontalist form of organizing presents an opportunity to reframe how we understand leadership. This paper illustrates how the coordination of the Occupy London movement was accomplished horizontally in the absence of formal organization, leadership or authority structures. Using an ethnographic approach, we show how this movement generated a 'multimodal' repertoire of protest that included: i) the politically effective occupation of urban *space*; ii) the ability to deploy *symbols* as compelling forms of aesthetic questioning; and iii) the creation of politically-charged *spectacles* that allowed the movement to appropriate the news agendas of established broadcast media. The findings of this paper challenge the language of leadership and contribute to understandings of feminist forms of leadership and leaderless organizing by explaining one way that 'leadership' occurs in horizontal organizational structures such as social movements. Namely, we demonstrate how the modes of space, symbols, and spectacles effectively replace the role of 'leader' in the absence of formal organizational structures.

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Introduction

The emergence of the Occupy movements in 2011 attracted considerable media, academic and political interest in the idea of radically decentralized 'leaderless' social movement organizations (SMOs). Some commentators saw the 2011 protests as the harbinger of an entirely new kind of political action for the digital era (Heimans & Timms, 2014), as a means to 'give voice' to underrepresented people (Vallee, 2017), or as a 'hybrid movement' (Leach, 2013). Others dismissed it as a 'moment' rather than a 'full service movement' (Gitlin, 2013), or claimed it as a transitory 'flash movement' whose revolutionary promise is yet unrealized (Plotke, 2012). Several scholars have examined the Occupy movements across the world, especially the Occupy movements in the United States and United Kingdom, where their focus was on non-hierarchical and decentralized nature of those movements and their mobilization patterns via social media and flexible networks (Castells, 2013; Gould-Wartofsky, 2015).

The years since 2011 have seen continued debate about the political or historical significance of the Occupy movements. These debates often focus on arguments that the horizontalist nature of the movement precluded it from being effective or sustainable. For example, Rojek (2017) argued that the movement did not have the structural attributes and leadership capabilities that would allow it to operate effectively in an organized way, suggesting it lacked the capacity for long term significance. These arguments have persisted despite the fact that the Occupy movement gained significance precisely because of its perceived leaderlessness and the participative democracy it followed for decision making. Despite these debates about the significance of the movements and the efficacy of their

structure, there is a large body of scholarship that sees value in horizontalist ways of organizing and leading (cf. Calhoun, 2013; Smith & Glidden, 2012). This literature places an emphasis on movement values and identities (Boggs, 1977; Breines, 1980) and rejects the vertical representation model of organizing by emphasizing values of participative democracy within horizontal networks (Maeckelbergh, 2012; Maeckelbergh, Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014).

Horizontalist ways of organizing are a relatively new concept in HRD. This approach to organizing dismisses the idea of hierarchical forms of governance by focusing on horizontal and decentralized networks, where "collective action can effectively be coordinated without the need for representation and hierarchy" (Kokkinidis, 2012, p. 238). Social movements are a classic representation of such a mode of organizing. Callahan (2012; 2013) was arguably the first in the field to contend that social movements could be considered organizations from which HRD professionals could learn and in which HRD professionals may engage. Baek and Kim (2017) echo this call in their analysis of Critical HRD theory, research, and practice. In her special issue of *Advances in Developing Human Resources* on social movement learning, Grenier (2019) notes that, to date, limited exploration of social movements in HRD has occurred. Yet, despite these repeated calls, little has been done in the field to explore practice, such as leadership, within social movements. This is problematic because social movements are rich places to study non-hierarchical ways of organizing which make more transparent inherently feminist forms of leading that are gaining power in redefining what constitutes 'good leadership' (Parker; 2019; Sinclair, 2014). As such, they open new possibilities for understanding how HRD professionals can teach 'leadership' and develop 'leaders.'

The field of HRD has long been interested in leadership and leadership development (Akdere & Egan, 2020). Typically, this interest is associated with increasing organizational

performance and, often, looks at leadership as an individual phenomenon directed vertically (cf. Herd, Alagaraja, & Cumberland, 2016; Park, Kim, & Song, 2015; Sims, Carter, & Moore De Peralta, 2021). The field has not, however, looked at leadership when it is not vested in identifiable individuals or organizational roles. Searches on keywords such as 'leaderless' (5), 'distributed leadership' (6), 'participatory leadership' (1), and 'collective leadership' (2) in this journal since its inception yielded few results, most of which did not address the phenomenon of a lack of an identifiable figure as leader (c.f., Thomas, 1999, which presented leaderless supervision as leadership geographically removed from followers).

This suggests the field continues to privilege forms of heroic leadership that reinforce masculinist forms of organizing (Sinclair, 2014) and enable hegemonic power hierarchies (Bierema, 2020). We argue that looking at an alternative, horizontalist form of organizing presents an opportunity to reframe how we understand leadership. Indeed, Sitrin (2011) argues that the horizontal nature of social movements such as OL not only criticizes hierarchy and authority but creates new structural relationships in which process is prioritized over individualistic means and ends. Here the key point of reference is that the very possibility of social organization is predicated not on formal categories of 'leadership' within socially constructed hierarchical roles, but on the practical accomplishments of local agents (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Kelly, 2008) through multimodal repertoires. Thus, this study addresses the following research question: What does 'leadership' look like in a leaderless organization such as the Occupy London social movement?

We begin this paper by setting the stage for social movements as alternative forms of organizing. We then discuss leadership by articulating how the literature now acknowledges space for the concept of leaderlessness and by conceptualizing leadership as modes of meaning making. We follow this review of the literature with our ethnographic study of leadership within a social movement. Informed by feminist theorizing of leadership, our

theoretical contribution is to refine understandings of leaderless organizing by explaining one way that 'leading' occurs in a horizontalist context. Namely, we demonstrate how repertoires of space, symbols, and spectacles effectively replace the role of 'leader' in the absence of formal organizational structures and provide new language for organizing activities often attributed to those labeled as 'leaders'. We conclude with implications for theoretical contributions and HRD practice.

Social Movements

Social movements are organized, collective, non-institutional challenges to authorities, ideologies, or cultures (Meyer, 2003, p. 30). The raison d'être of a social movement is to challenge dominant social values and cultural codes (Melucci, 1989). Although earlier studies on social movement leadership were based on social psychological studies that saw the social movements of the 18th century as uncoordinated, impulsive and irrational expressions of popular protest (Smelser, 1963), subsequent accounts of 'resource mobilization' (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) were underpinned by the assumption that protest movements would become progressively more 'organized' and hierarchical. But this was not universally so (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015).

By bringing Weberian theory of charisma and authority (Weber, 1921/1978) and Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy (Michels, 1915) to the fore, early social movement research attempted to conceptualize the 'leadership' aspects of social movements "in terms of record keeping, decision-making procedures, and division of labor" (Staggenborg, 2013, p. 160). Some groups within social movements are more noted for their organization and leadership style, such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International with their very structured, private company-type organizations and leadership, while others, such as the women's liberation movement, have decentralized and horizontal structures with no designated leadership roles.

Questions about leaders and leadership in decentralized and horizontal forms of organizing have been a subject of inquiry for both social movement and organizational theory scholars. Often citing Michels (1915) work, scholars have tried to illustrate their skepticism on the practicality of leadership within these forms of organization (Rojek, 2017; Rucht, 2006; Weber, 1921/1978). Others have criticized the normative nature of oligarchization, arguing that such an alternative form of organization demands a different lens of scrutiny (Diefenbach, 2018; Leach, 2005). The next section will explore the shift of organization theory from heroic and romanticized forms of leadership towards leaderlessness and how this concept has been studied.

The Emergence of Leaderlessness as a Concept

Traditional leadership theory has long been dominated by highly idealized conceptions of unitary command and control (Grint, 2000; Pearce & Manz, 2005). Some of the mainstream approaches to leadership that fit this masculinized and heroic vision of leadership include trait-based theories that focus on psychological attributes (Jenkins, 1947), behavioral approaches that ` ```focus on requisite leadership skills or attitudes (Fleishman & Peters, 1962; Halpin, 1957) and situational theories that posit relationships between leadership and particular circumstances (Fiedler, 1964; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). These accounts of leadership are typically underpinned by beliefs about the 'essence' or attributes of individuals (Grint, 2000).

The shift away from individualistic forms of leadership in the management literature can be traced to self-managing teams. Regardless of work settings, self-managing groups are more effective than traditionally managed groups (cf. Cohen & Ledford, 1994). Further, the application of complex adaptive system theory into management literature (cf. Dooley, 1997) and the popularity of agile organizations (Holbeche, 2018) led to a focus shift from individual

methods of performing work to group methods. This development invited reconsideration of how leadership occurred in these groups (Cleveland, 2002).

Instead of hierarchy, such group formations displayed a flatter structure that distributes power more evenly across a hierarchy of circles, which run according to detailed democratic procedures (Holbeche, 2018). In search of the leadership within these self-managing teams, the trend moved away from heroic and romanticized perspectives of leadership (Meindl, 1995) towards post-heroic collective leadership in pluralistic organizations. This led to an emphasis on concepts such as shared, distributed, participatory, or collaborative functions of leadership (cf. Brown & Gioia, 2002; Denis, Langley, & Sergi, 2012). Nevertheless, these new approaches to leadership often served as linguistic 'window dressing' (Sinclair, 2014) or a 'fig leaf' (Learmonth & Morrell, 2019) that simply obscured the reproduction of traditional forms of individualistic leading.

The assumptions that underpin most notions of 'leadership' have systematically ignored key issues of power, context or identity (Learmonth & Morrell, 2019). These underpinning assumptions also obscure a more feminist idea that so-called leadership activities might be actively constructed by local actors who may fall outside long-standing distinctions between 'leaders', 'followers' and formal organizational goals (Drath et al., 2008; Parker, 2019). The resistance by feminists to binaries of masculine and feminine (Connell, 2009) facilitated awareness of the linguistic masculinism (Calas & Smircich, 1991) and inherent gendered power asymmetries associated with the role of 'leader' (Learmonth & Morrell, 2019; Sinclair, 2014).

As a result, feminists began to conceptualize leadership as distinct from masculinized heroicism through their observations of women leaders (Pullen & Vachhani, 2020; Nixon & Sinclair, 2017). Although gender equity remains at the heart of feminist approaches, feminist forms of leadership do not simply reproduce gendered binaries associated with 'men' or

'women' leaders. Feminist forms of leadership are based in fundamental concepts such as transformation of patriarchal structures toward more equitable spaces, recognition of power and privilege, and commitment to non-hierarchical and relational forms of organizing (Sinclair, 2014; Pullen & Vachhani, 2020).

Consistent with Sinclair (2014) and Learmonth and Morrell (2019), Kelly (2008; 2014) noted that the intellectual starting point for this body of work is that received notions of 'leadership' have coalesced around a series of language games that have normalized hierarchical power disparities (Learmonth & Morrell, 2021). These language games are semantically unstable, inherently resistant to definition and likely to elude the most assiduous efforts to determine the underlying nature of 'leadership' as this is enacted within organizations (Kelly 2008, p. 775).

Whilst Kelly's analysis is centrally concerned with language and meaning, it is also framed by the view that non-discursive factors are important in understanding how particular forms of social organization are made possible (see also Iedema (2007) and Cornelissen, Oswick, Christensen, and Phillips (2008) for parallel commentaries). Language, far from defining the social world, is according to this view, stabilized by human action (see also Pondy 1978). A second element in Kelly's analysis is that the 'exhibited regularities' (Kelly 2008, p. 775) that emerge from social action can be understood as 'forms of life' that give structure to social and organizational formations. These forms are realized not through language (and still less through formal definitions of leadership), but through the locally realized 'practical accomplishments' of human participants. Kelly thus questions the idea that leadership can be understood or defined as a formal category.

Two features of Kelly's (2008) analysis are of particular relevance to our concern with 'leaderless' organizations. The first is that leadership research should concentrate not on leadership discourses but on understanding how 'leadership' – redefined to encapsulate the

practical accomplishments that underpin organizational life – is enacted by local agents. A second insight is that organizational life is underpinned not by formal categories or structural features that are attributed to the 'leadership' roles discharged by particular individuals or groups of individuals, but by a generalized capacity for communicative action. The implication for the present study is that researchers should avoid the 'category mistake' of traditional leadership studies and focus instead on the ways in which the process of leading is realized through collectively organized 'forms of life'.

Leadership as modes of meaning making

The everyday practices that create shared forms of life (Kelly, 2008; Reedy, King, & Coupland, 2016) can be conceptualized as 'modes.' Bezemer and Kress (2008, p. 171) define a mode as "a socially- and culturally-shaped resource for meaning making." Examples of modes that create meaning could include images, texts, movement, or speech. Each mode has "different meaning potentials … to realize different kinds of communicative work" (Jewitt, 2013, p. 251), such as leadership. In this way, modes are particularly helpful in gaining a more nuanced understanding of leadership because the traditional approach of labeling categories of individualized behavior may result in rendering the idea of leadership as unproblematically banal, relegated "to the level of the mundane" (Riley, 1988, p. 82), just as it simultaneously coalesces elite power (Learmonth & Morrell, 2021).

In resistance to such power, Tilly's (1978) notion that social movement organizations (SMOs) are constituted by repertoires of protest is consistent with the concept of modes. Multimodal ensembles serve as repertoires that are typically drawn from a relatively narrow range of tactics that support particular forms of collective action (Tilly, 1978) or civil disobedience (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015). Such repertoires could include, for example, petitions, demonstrations, marches, strikes, boycotts or occupations. These repertoires can be understood not simply as instruments of protest, but as reflections of particular social values

and activist orientations (Byrne, 2013). As such, the multimodal repertoires of protest within social movement organizations serve as fertile ground for studying more relational, collectivist, and feminist approaches to leadership.

By looking at modes instead of individualized behaviors, the point of scrutiny shifts to the emergent and spontaneous nature of the leadership *process*. Research might pay more attention to social network perspectives, to the dynamics of plural leadership and to the role of power (Denis et al., 2012). While mainstream organizational scholars focusing on plural leadership have discussed several aspects of such leadership, research in traditional organizational settings with defined roles can obscure the power of process-based modes of leadership. As a result, social movements, as alternative forms of organizing which frequently lack formal leadership structures, become important spaces for uncovering emergent forms of leadership not embodied in identifiable individuals or groups of individuals.

A key point of reference for more recent explorations into leadership of social movements is their tendency to investigate these informal organizations through interpersonal relationships where leaderlessness becomes leaderfulness (Raelin, 2011, 2016). As Fairhurst, Jackson, Foldy, and Ospina (2020) argue, scholars need to establish how leadership is made relevant in a collective setting, by collecting "attributional data to see how leadership, or the failure of leadership, enters into the vernacular of actors either in terms of individual or conjoint agency or both" (p. 607). Sutherland, Land, and Böhm (2014) argue that 'leaderless' movements are constituted as systems of meaning that render the movements entirely distinct from formal organizations. This resonates with Western's (2014) work in leaderless, anti-hierarchical emancipatory social movements which articulated a form of informal and distributed leadership that is both beyond and within all members of the group. Thus, the

focus of inquiry should not be on the leaders, but instead on the process of leading and how leadership is produced in leaderless (or leaderful) movements (Milkman, 2017).

Coming full circle back to the idea of modes, 'leading' in such movements can be manifested through artefacts of meaning making. In keeping with the concept of artefacts, or modes of meaning making, leadership is not static and reified within human entities but rather is co-created within in-the-moment relationships and performances by non-human entities (Daskalaki, 2018; Rosile, Boje, & Claw, 2018). Consistent with Daskalaki's (2018) argument of space as an organizing form, Ropo, Sauer, and Salovaara (2013) suggest that physical spaces serve as proxies for leaders because spaces can lead people by inciting sense-based experiences that create unique environments. The dynamic and egalitarian characteristics of such approaches to leadership moves away from hierarchy and privileges Stark's (2009) concept of heterarchy, a horizontal structure with lateral instead of vertical accountability.

Building upon such works, this paper advances discussions of the non-human world into the leadership literature by theorizing the Occupy London (OL) Movement's multimodal repertoire of protest actions—space, symbols, and spectacles— as multi-centered and nonhuman-centric phenomena that offer a more relational, collectivist, and, in particular, feminist view of what constitutes leadership.

Methodology

The present study used an ethnographic approach to understand leadership in the cultural context of OL (Glesne, 2016; Kozinets, 2015). As Ospina, Foldy, Fairhurst, and Jackson (2020) note, non-traditional forms of leadership require more nuanced approaches than traditional analytic methods offer. We provide an overview of the research site and how the first author gained entry and rapport, describe the multi-pronged data collection approach, and explain the analytic procedures we used.

Site

OL was initiated on October 15th, 2011, when a small group of anti-austerity protestors gathered outside St Paul's Cathedral. Following a number of failed attempts to occupy the buildings of the London Stock Exchange (Occupy LSX), a larger group of protesters began to gather on the steps that surround the cathedral. Up to 3000 protestors were involved in the early stages of the St Paul's protests. Within three days, the Occupiers built a small city by erecting tents, not only for overnight stays, but also for day-to-day activities. Amongst the first to be erected were tents for: first aid, "University", a library, cinema and recycling. They created different groups such as health and safety, political economy, media and so on, which facilitated discussions around the issues on hand to be reported back to the general assembly. They were actively engaging with social media platforms to showcase their presence at St Paul's steps, as well as the reason behind their occupation of the steps. They added another media dimension to their presence on St Paul's steps by wearing Guy Fawkes Masks, which made the Occupy London a trending topic on the news for months, well after the eviction as the working groups continued to operate. It was during this post-eviction time that fieldwork began, approximately ten months after the initial protests at St. Paul's.

Sampling and Rapport Building

Sampling was at first a challenge as initial attempts to secure interviews with protesters met with refusals from potential respondents. Two antecedent factors were of relevance here: first, there was a strong sense on the part of protesters that the events at St Paul's had been misrepresented by established news media. A second factor was that some protesters saw any discussion of leadership as an insidious threat to the collectivist values of the movement. In such a context, establishing rapport and trust (Glesne, 2016) is crucial.

Thus, over the course of seven months the first author engaged as a participant observer with programs and meetings, such as working groups, taking opportunities to contribute to open forums and discussion groups, many of which were focused on topics that were directly relevant to the research described in this paper (e.g., the OL political economy working group). This extended field work created the essential component of experience to hermeneutically contextualize the formal and informal interviews and netnographic data in analyses (Kozinets, 2015).

The established trust built during this time in the field created a chance to engage with some of the Occupiers in a more detailed conversation, using a semi-structured interview format. This "big ear" approach (Glaser, 2001, p. 175) allowed a deep dive into social and personal matters to affirm and clarify meaning that occurred in the movement (Bluhm, Harman, Lee, & Mitchell, 2011; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The field engagement presented opportunities for informal interviews, which lasted up to 30 minutes each, that allowed qualitative data to be gathered incrementally. This recalls the argument that 'conversational' interview material can be elicited from unstructured and open-ended chance encounters (Douglas, 1985). Thus, whilst the 'outsider' status of the researcher presented difficulties at the outset, close engagement with the protesters yielded important insights and meaningful data garnered from a variety of situations (Lofland, Lofland, Snow, & Anderson, 2006) that arose over the course of seven months spent in the field.

Data Collection

In the present study, we used formal semi-structured interviews, informal 'conversational' interviews, participant observation, and netnography (Kozinets, 2015) over the course of seven months of fieldwork in the OL community (see Table 1).

Table 1

Data collection strategies

Method	Date Range	Collection Strategy	Locations
Formal Semi-Structured Interviews	December 2012 – January 2013	Audio tapes	Friends House at Euston London Nero Coffee shop Euston London
Conversational Interviews	December 2012 – July 2013	Field notes	Friends House at Euston London Nero Coffee shop Euston London Global Skills Exchange workshop at the Friends House in London
Observation	December 2012 – July 2013	Field notes	Friends House at Euston London Nero Coffee shop Euston London Global Skills Exchange workshop at the Friends House in London
Netnographic data	2012-2013	Online review/download of material related to the Occupy movement timeline of October 2011 to February 2012	Press reporting, Occupy blogs, websites and Twitter feeds and other online group communication platforms such as Mumble, PiratePad, and TitanPad

Interviews. Milkman (2017) described the Occupy Wall Street's members mostly as Insiders, white, U.S.-born, and affluent, so we attempted to secure a more diverse group of participants. While we successfully engaged a gender diverse group, only three interview participants were Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). A total of 7 semi- structured interviews (Table 2), and 22 'conversational' interviews (Table 3) were conducted between early December 2012 and July 2013 at the Friends House in London, where Occupiers maintained operational space during and after the occupation. All participants were informed that the researcher was conducting a study of leadership in the Occupy London movement and participated voluntarily. Interestingly, the topic of the study was a significant reason for why there are more informal than formal interviews. As will be noted in the findings, participants did not want to continue formally discussing 'leadership' as a concept because of their commitment to being leaderless. They were happy with observations and conversational interviews.

The formal, semi-structured interviews took place at the Friends House at Euston London or at a nearby Coffee shop at Euston London and lasted from one hour to one and a half hours. These interviews were recorded, then transcribed using voice recognition software and manually reviewed for consistency, resulting in 115 single-spaced pages of transcripts. Following Tracy (2012), the informal, conversational interviews were conducted on occasions when people were waiting in a queue for coffee or during a lunch break, when they might welcome being interviewed to pass the time. These interviews took place at the Friends House during meeting breaks and the Nero Coffee Shop and lasted between 15-30 minutes. These conversational interviews were not recorded.

Pseudonyms are used for all of the participants (Kvale, 1996); gender, race, and age range are noted for each and those who gave semi-structured interviews have additional

demographics of education and occupation[1]. Both the formal and informal interviews focused

on how participants perceived the organization and leadership associated with Occupy.

Table 2

Semi-Structured Interview participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age range	Education	Occupation	Race/Ethnicity
Anna	Woman	30s	Bachelor's degree	Part time designer	White
Peter	Man	50s	Bachelor's degree	Part time teacher	White
Nick	Man	50s	No degree	Part time cashier	Black
Sarah	Woman	40s	No degree	Part time secretary	White
Kate	Woman	30s	Bachelor's degree	Part time carer	White
Cat	Woman	40s	No degree	Part time cashier	White
Phil	Man	50s	No degree	Concierge	White

Table 3

Conversational Interview participants

Participant	Pseudonym	Gender	Age range	Race/Ethnicity
1	John	Man	30s	White
2	Christine	Woman	20s	White
3	Ralph	Man	30s	BIPOC
4	Andy	Man	20s	White
5	Soraya	Woman	40s	White
6	James	Man	40s	BIPOC
7	Daniella	Woman	40s	White
8	Liz	Woman	40s	White
9	Jackie	Woman	40s	White
10	Rachel	Woman	20s	White
11	Paul	Man	40s	White
12	Simon	Man	20s	White
13	Sam	Man	30s	White
14	Andy	Man	20s	White
15	Rob	Man	40s	White
16	Patrick	Man	30s	White

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[1] We use the term Black in Table 2 because the formal nature of the interviews captured in that table enabled more specific demographics collection. We used BIPOC in Table 3 because the individuals in the conversational interviews did not specify their race beyond identifying as racially minoritized.

17	Liz	Woman	40s	White
18	Linda	Woman	30s	White
19	Ron	Man	40s	White
20	Jack	Man	20s	White
21	Ben	Man	30s	White
22	Sally	Woman	30s	BIPOC

Observations. At least twice monthly for eight months, the first author attended meetings and workshops at the Occupy headquarters in the Friends House in London and socialized with Occupy members at the Nero Coffee shop nearby. These interactions lasted from several hours to two days resulting in more than 70 hours of observation. During these periods, handwritten field notes served as the data collection method.

The note taking involved a three-step process. First, key words were jotted down as a reminder of important parts of the observation. Emerson and colleagues (2011) call such keywords 'headnotes', and they enable the researcher to focus on 'what is significant or unexpected' (p. 24) to document key events or incidents in a particular social world or setting. On some occasions, recording headnotes was insufficient, and it was necessary to record jottings, or a brief record of events and impressions captured in key words as quickly as possible (Emerson et al., 2011). The second step was to write down most of the observations shortly after they occurred, usually during the one-and-a half to two-hour train journey home from the site, expanding on the key words already jotted down in the first step of note taking.

As many of the exact words heard during the observations were recorded as possible. This step focused on recalling conversations and experiences, using the headnotes and jottings, and setting the scene for the final step. In the third and final step, the notes were reviewed the following morning to ensure that everything was coherent and nothing was missing from the field note data.

Netnographic Collection. The netnographic data was gathered organically through interaction with the virtual site and included photographs and other visual material relating to the encampment; Occupy blogs, Twitter feeds, and online platforms such as Mumble, TitanPad, Tmblr, and PiratePad also provided important archival material for context. The study also drew on a variety of press from October 2011 to the eviction of the St Paul's protesters in February 2012. These data provided context for understanding OL as a research context and also supported the findings from the interviews, thus informing the protest repertoires of space, symbols, and spectacle that supplanted formal leadership structures.

Data Analysis

Our primary analytic approach was hermeneutic in nature, as suggested by Kozinets (2015) for studies incorporating a netnographic approach. As such, we sought to understand the broad picture of the context through myriad data collected. We found that attempts to engage in traditional coding were mechanistic and inauthentic; thus, our process of analyzing the data took the form of a rhizomatic assemblage (Masny, 2016) as opposed to constrictive processes associated with traditional forms of qualitative analysis. New forms of post-coding qualitative analysis eschew the "givens" (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 721) of traditional structure and advocate for more abductive forms of making meaning from data (Brinkmann, 2014; Earl Rinehart, 2021; Masny, 2016). As recommended by Atkinson and Delamont (2005), we initiated analysis by seeking stable patterns or themes in the formal and informal interviews to generate stories about the context. Thus, our analysis was generated by abductively "reading and rereading, interpreting and reinterpreting, interpreting our interpretations, and reinterpreting our reinterpretations" (Kozinets, 2015, p. 205) to create an assemblage emerging from the interviews and netnographic material.

For the present study, the first author (who had experience within the OL movement) did the initial abductive analysis by engaging with, reflecting upon and writing about the 29

interviews through listening, reading and interpreting. The subsequent authors joined him in

the process of interpreting and reinterpreting through dialogue and writing. The narratives

from the participants revealed the cultural perceptions of leadership (or lack thereof) within

the OL movement. These, in turn, provided the foundation from which we were able to ask

questions (Brinkmann, 2014; Masny, 2016) of the ways in which leading was then

manifested within the seemingly leaderless OL. In this process, the netnographic material

revealed structuring patterns and recurrent representations to give meaning and support to the

stories told by the participants and experienced through participant observation.

Findings

"You won't find a leader here": Rejecting 'Leadership' in Occupy London

Participant observation and interviews suggested that those who were active in the St

Paul's encampment viewed the question of leadership in a wide variety of ways, whilst

consistently eschewing traditional, hierarchical notions of the concept. In an informal

interview, Paul contended that, "there is a level at which everybody has leadership and no

leadership." Some protesters argued that the movement was completely leaderless (e.g.

Linda), and others argued that the movement was quasi-leaderless (e.g. Andy, Anna, and

Nick). Several protesters (e.g., Ron and Peter) emphatically denied the presence of leadership

hierarchies within Occupy London, claiming that the movement was entirely structureless.

Two of the protestors (Soraya and Liz) argued that the movement included groups and

individuals who may have implicitly or explicitly influenced others.

While leadership related activities certainly occurred within OL, the concepts of

'leaders' and 'leadership' were anathema to the participants even if they believed both

existed. Observed heated discussions around leadership inevitably returned to the belief that

the movement's philosophy was more important than putting energy into examining whether

the movement had leaders or, if there were any, who they might be. The neon yellow banner

on the wall of one of the encampment tents collected as part of the netnographic work of this

study further supports this by proclaiming, "No Leader & Hierarchy; We by people, No for

People" (see Figure 1). At the very least, Andy said during a conversational interview,

"Occupy is a leaderless-ish movement." Nevertheless, a strong negative association with

leadership was prevalent, as Linda insisted, "You won't find a leader here, so why do you

want to ruin this?"

Figure 1. No Leader – Encampment Tent

From https://www.benrobertsphotography.com/work/occupied-spaces/#4701. Reprinted with
permission.

This manifested in participants' resistance to being called a 'leader' and suggesting

alternative identities. Simon said, "I'm just a thinker – a person who has ideas, who suggests

the way forward, how to harmonize." During a formal interview, another equated himself to

one of many stars in a constellation, "I am one of the stars of the network. Think of a three-

dimensional connected network, and some of those links are stronger and some of them are

weaker" (Phil). Other labels offered in lieu of 'leader' included facilitators, initiators, connectors, and organizers.

Ultimately, we suggest that while there were individuals who enacted leadership behaviors within the movement, their resistance to the role, title, and existence of leaders and commitment to the principles of egalitarianism within the movement led them to try to imbue the essence of leading into non-human proxies. Thus, we looked for the ways in which Occupy members found inspiration, direction, vision, community, and other hallmarks of leadership.

Replacing the 'leader'

The repertoire of protest actions associated with the OL Movement represented the wellspring of a 'leadership' that was more egalitarian and relational in nature. The core modes that emerged as being most salient as proxies for leadership were associated with space, symbols, and spectacle.

Space. Space, both physical and virtual, was a source of connection, direction, meaning, and community for OL members. The physical space was St Paul's Cathedral (one of the world's largest religious buildings and a major UK tourist attraction); it occupies a site adjacent to the medieval City whose walls define the present-day footprint of London's financial district. The virtual space pre-dated the establishment of the encampment at St Paul's and continued to serve as an important mode of influence all the way through to the post-eviction movement. The use of online spaces in tandem with physical spaces facilitated the shift to virtual operations after the eviction from St Paul's (see Figure 2).
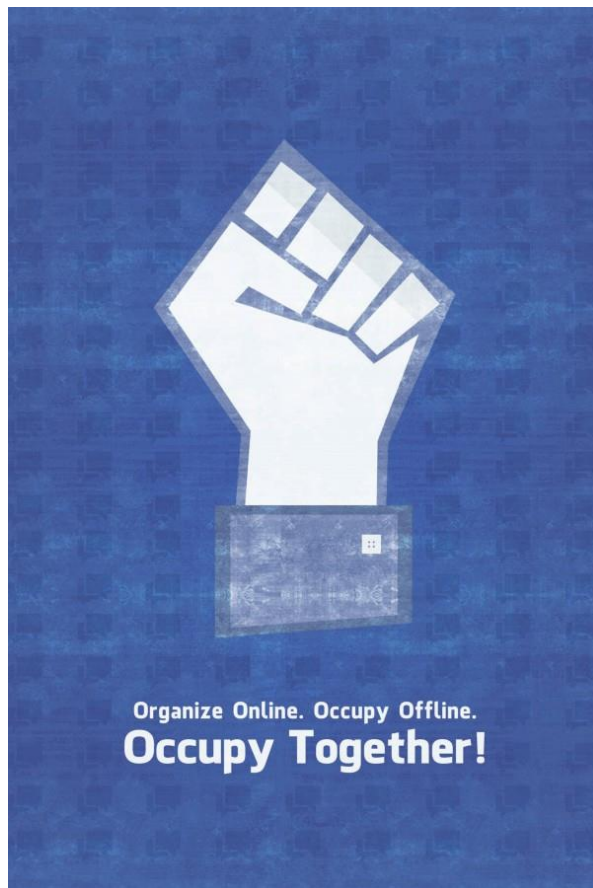
Figure 2. **'Organize online – Occupy offline' poster**
From http://www.visualnews.com/2011/12/02/occupy-movement-leveragesopen-source-art

The physical space of the St Paul's encampment represented the democratic and

egalitarian alternative to the neoliberal capitalist society the OL members were protesting:

"Within a few days, there was this entire village, hundreds of people, black and white, pink

and blue, old and young, and children and hippies and suits, scholars" (Liz). St Paul's was a

participatory space that offered mutuality and support (Nick), identity (Linda) and a conduit

for symbolic communication with the outside world (James). The encampment worked as a

participatory community in which protesters could access to free education, health services or

communal kitchens. Some participants (e.g., Ralph) spoke about the sense of ownership that

pervaded the site. This was apparent even amongst those who chose not to sleep overnight in

the camp (e.g., Christine and Sally).

When we had St Paul's steps, that was my home, even if I didn't sleep there overnight

because I needed to wash myself, and also my daughter who is only six. So, I was

there every day; it was my real home (Christine).

Another Occupier, reflecting on his experiences at St Paul's, said that they really missed the

space they had occupied for months:

Yeah! We miss it! Whenever, we talk about like what we need to do is; we need space

(laughing); it was traumatic. We didn't notice it that much until, you know, after a

month (Ralph).

Highlighting the importance of space for decision making and direction, Rob said in an

informal interview, "We used to have general assemblies [on the steps of St Paul's] every

single day. After the eviction, we had chaos for a while" until the virtual operations spaces

caught up. "It is quite curious," Ralph said, "the way that the Internet enables people in terms

of meetings, convergence of social and activist interests and political interests."

The online platforms used by the Occupiers were used both during the occupation and

after the eviction. Participant interviews show that protesters would leave physical meetings

at the Friends House, only to 'follow' the meeting on Facebook. During the fieldwork, the

first author often heard people say goodbye to each other saying 'See you on Facebook!'

because, for them, this was like a meeting point where they logged on to see each other and

have a coffee, just on their device screens rather than in person. Further, the virtual platforms

replicated the democratic participation of the general assemblies, as James noted:

We use PiratePad, so I'll be sending things, so there is a link, and there is a

Word document that people can modify, and you can see according to the

color who modified that, and the discussion goes on and on from that point.

And we use that for making – so when we have meetings online, we take the

minutes there, and we make the minutes collaboratively so each person could

write their bit.

The use of space was also a metaphor for how leading should manifest in democratic

and egalitarian ways. For example, during one observed workshop, the traditional circular

layout of meeting room chairs was altered to a square layout against the edges of the tent.

While this created more space for teaching demonstrations in the center of the tent, it meant

that line of sight was restricted for some participants. A latecomer to the workshop entered

the space and confusion registered on his face. He found a chair and participated, visibly

struggling to see everyone's faces as they engaged. Frustrated, he eventually registered a

complaint about the room's layout:

> It is like what's happening in the prisons and you want to control us! The
>
> layout is unusual and peculiar. We always use the round table layout so we
>
> can see each other's faces, but now I can't see some of the faces in this room. I
>
> won't stay in this room anymore!

Upon his departure, the remaining participants concurred that a round layout was preferable

to ensure that no individual had the appearance of having power over others in the group.

The protesters appropriated a politically and historically significant urban site,

transforming this into a political common and establishing a prefigurative free space

(Polletta, 1999). They then transferred this physical site into a collection of interconnected

virtual platforms. Thus, space became an important mode of distributing action and

information that would typically be associated with individuals assuming the role of 'leader.'

Symbols. Both physical and virtual symbols served as repertoires of protest that

represented proxies for leadership in the movement. The two most salient symbols were the

use of Guy Fawkes masks (also known as Anonymous masks) at St Paul's and hashtags in

social media.

Contemporary photographs, online communications, and TV news reports show the prominent place of the Guy Fawkes mask in the iconography of the protest (see Figure 3). Popularized by the movie 'V is for Vendetta' and adopted by other protest groups such as Anonymous (hence, the alternative name 'Anonymous Mask'), the masks were seen as symbols that obscured identities of any potential leader of the group. The Guy Fawkes mask was thus a symbol of leaderlessness and the desire for equality.

Figure 3. Protestor wearing a Guy Fawkes mask
From https://edwardthompson.co.uk/Occupy-London. Reprinted with permission.

Hashtags in social media were used to promote, inspire, communicate, and recruit. The circulation of the #occupyLSX (Occupy London Stock Exchange) hashtag on Twitter began in late September 2011 in solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street movement. The below tweets from our netnographic collection showed how hashtags were used to amplify calls to action and share photographs of what was happening at St Paul's Cathedral (see Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4. #OccupyLSX Call to Action

Figure 5. #OccupyLSX Sharing Photos

Hashtags also served another important symbolic purpose. Occupiers tried to solve the problem of unequal access to power associated with password control of movement social media accounts by using hashtags and the retweet facility of the Twitter account to tweet and be seen on Twitter. As Andy noted:

> We tried to overcome this problem using hashtags. So, just by adding #, for example, I had my Twitter account connected, and then when I added a hashtag, it automatically came up as Occupy London. So that helped a lot, so you didn't have to get the password to everyone, but you just 'activated' the account for them.

Spectacle. The events at St Paul's were infused with fragments of messages and images that served as 'spectacle' to inspire, or seduce, followers. Principally, we see this in

the slogans on social media and displayed in the camp and through the livestream videos distributed from the encampment.

Social media served as a powerful source for of not just symbolism through the hashtags, but also for spectacle. Several participants talked about a system that consisted of social networking sites as well as other Internet tools, such as the websites used to communicate and to get help within the movement:

> We had a system, you know, diary and posters everywhere, Facebook, all social
>
> media, everywhere possible. Then we started to unite with outside. You know, the
>
> Salvation Army was helping us, community service, churches, everybody was. (Sally)

By July 2013, the two Facebook pages related to Occupy London had approximately 96,000 fans and the Twitter account had approximately 46,600 fans. Messaging through social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter made the St Paul's site a trending location. Thus, these sites subverted capitalist marketing strategies to brand toward a followership that facilitated not only equality of access to voice, but also to create networks.

The slogan 'We are the 99 percent' is an example of a viral meme on social media that served the function of a spectacle. Brief, catchy, and quickly distributed, this slogan was quickly effective. A search for this phrase on the archived OL Tumblr page revealed that hundreds of both Occupiers and non-Occupiers who marched under this slogan had visited the webpage by July 2013. People posted photographs, noting why they thought they belonged to the 99-percent.

Messages of purpose and vision were also distributed silently through visual projection and banners. For example, projected above makeshift tents onto the wall of St Paul's Cathedral was a night-time message intended to inspire people toward an end of finding new and more sustainable work and political systems (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Spectacle Messaging at Night

From https://edwardthompson.co.uk/Occupy-London. Reprinted with permission.

Perhaps the most iconic spectacle associated with OL was livestreaming. While livestreaming occurred throughout the occupation, perhaps the most memorable was the penultimate eviction of the Occupiers. After months of dispute between the Church of England, the City of London, and the Occupiers, a High Court injunction was finally granted to the corporation of London on 22nd February. Special units of City of London police moved to evict the protesters on the night of 28th February 2012. TV cameras were not present during the overnight eviction operation and the closing stages of the St Paul's protest were not televised. Creating opportunity for spectacle themselves, the protesters livestreamed the eviction and the event received extensive print, radio and TV coverage later in the day with BBC news programs reporting that 'Riot police clearing the steps of St Paul's Cathedral was a terrible sight.' (Cooke, 2012) (See Figure 7).

Figure 7. Kneeling protestors removed from St Paul's

From https://edwardthompson.co.uk/Occupy-London. Reprinted with permission.

The spectacle of livestreaming was only possible because of the tools used and commitment displayed by Occupiers. During one interview, the interviewee was asked whether she could think of anything related to the Occupy London movement, and she pointed at her smartphone.

This [her smartphone] is definitely Occupy-related because I would never have this without Occupy. This [is] almost four months old, by the way – but the reason I bought this was because of a guy in Occupy who works full-time in a shop, mechanical shop, he was doing all the streaming by himself. I was so impressed. He was just every day, every meeting streaming, streaming, streaming. I told him, 'Look, I must help you. This is ridiculous.' (Cat).

In the OL movement, older electronic and print media as well as digital media played a

significant catalytic role in creating powerfully expressive spectacles that displaced fixed

meaning representations or news agendas.

Discussion

We suggest that 'leaderless' movements need to be understood not just as collections

of protesters who reject formalized authority structures, but also as systems that generate

particular forms of meaning. Our exploration of OL revealed that leadership in the movement

was effectively replaced by repertoires of protest that were manifested multimodally. The

image of a mask wearer at the St Paul's encampment in a photograph taken by Kristian Buus

epitomizes the modes of space, symbol, and spectacle (see Figure 8) and thus opens our

discussion.

Figure 8. Visually Capturing Space, Symbol, and Spectacle

From https://www.kristianbuus.com. IMG_3806.jpg. Reprinted with permission.

Showing each of the proxies for leadership, the image depicts a person in a man's

suit, carrying a broom, and wearing a Guy Fawkes mask walking through makeshift tents

within the St Paul's encampment (space). The suit marks the individual as a member of some

level of status in the white-collar corporate world, potentially even called a 'leader'. But the mask (symbol) hides their identity, making them the 'same' as others in the movement such that anyone could be a leader. Carrying the broom symbolically places the individual as willing to engage in manual labor inconsistent with their attire and consistent with the calls for democratic engagement in the community. The broom may also be connected to 'women's work' (Waring, 1988); the juxtaposition of perceived masculine attire and feminine work tools further symbolizes the desire to present (although perhaps not live), the principles of egalitarianism. The banner in the background further serves as a visual fragment of a reminder (spectacle) of the underlying OL mission of protesting neoliberal capitalist culture, "If our protest camps are boils, your mansions are a cancer."

Consistent with Kokkinidis' (2012) conceptions of workplace democracy, the interviewed individual protesters showed a generalized lack of interest in formal leadership, and they evinced collective responsibility and opposition to formal power structures. These responses show that protesters expressed a range of divergent (and often mutually contradictory) viewpoints on the question of how the movement was coordinated and controlled. However, we should also recall Kelly's (2008) point that leadership can be understood as a 'category mistake' whose definitional elasticity is likely to distract from the task of how organizational life is constructed around highly localized and collective practical accomplishments.

Statements about how 'leaderlessness' might be defined are, from this perspective, less important than demonstrations of how non-hierarchical forms of organization are enacted or performed. Our account is consistent with the idea that the movement was characterized by collaboration and knowledge sharing as argued by Sutherland et al. (2014). Our findings on OL corroborate that 'leaderless' movements are constituted as systems of meaning that render them different in kind from formal, hierarchical organizations. Our work also supports

that arguments contending that collaborative forms of control and coordination seen in 'leaderless' protest movements need to be supplanted by more formal structures are analytically blind to the idea that these systems of meaning sustain the practical accomplishments of the movement. The systems of meaning in OL took the form of multimodal repertoires that came to serve as replacements for any embodied 'leader'.

The capacity for securing symbolic and/or physical control of urban spaces (particularly those close to prominent centers of political or financial power) is a central feature of social movements (Feigenbaum, Frenzel, & McCurdy, 2013). Whilst radical protest and traditional institutions are often assumed to be antithetical, some scholars of SMOs have noted that churches, schools and other civic sites have often played a critical role in mobilizing and organizing communities (Haug, 2013; Polletta, 1999). Understanding the 'where' of an organization is fundamental to understanding how an organization is constructed and what it does or stands for (Crevani, 2019). The 'where' of OL was St Paul's Cathedral and, following Lefèbvre's (1991, p. 94) account of space as 'a social morphology', the St Paul's encampment can be understood as a site of ongoing social interaction.

As symbol, the mask functioned both as a representational challenge to the established order and as a (gendered) sensemaking device for the St Paul's protesters. According to Kaulingfreks & Kaulingfreks (2013), masks provide an instrumentally effective, collectively empowering means of maintaining anonymity in situations where individual protesters may be exposed to the gaze of police observers and surveillance cameras, offering a means of identity concealment, and an iconic representation of a movement whose identity and unity of purpose cohered around horizontality, radically decentralized rapid deployments and anonymity. The mask symbolized and projected the idea of 'collective horizontality', or what Werbner (2014, p. 294) calls 'hierarchy reversal', thus challenging the existing order of organizing and power structures. However, by adopting Guy

Fawkes as a symbol, the attempt to disembody leadership from any one individual re-embodied, in effect, the leadership default was a white man (Liu & Baker, 2016). As Pullen and Rhodes (2010) argue, wearing a mask transforms rather than just conceals identity, where bodies and aesthetics play a critical role in the social construction of leadership.

New digital technologies provided the protesters with radically decentralized forms of communication that could connect what had previously been the 'weak ties' of previously disparate groups of activists thus creating a powerful new constituency of activists and networks of protest (Castells, 2013; Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, & García-Albacete, 2015). Digital technology was used to create alternative narratives and coordinate agents on the ground. By using hashtag symbols such as #occupyLSX and #occupyLondon, the protestors circulated the spectacle vocabularies of protest such as 'we are the 99%' and 'no to capitalism' to the outside world.

The capacity to superimpose the subversiveness of symbols as spectacle on TV news broadcasts worked reciprocally with the physical occupation of the St Paul's space and with parallel campaigns against austerity that were pursued online. Debord (1994) contended that spectacles were 'the self-portrait of power in the age of power's totalitarian rule over the conditions of existence' (p. 19). The Occupiers tried to interrupt the monologue of the powerholders, by critiquing the current spectacle (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2004) and at the same time creating spectacles that challenged the fixed meanings representations as a strategy of detournement, which involves 'rerouting spectacular images, environments, ambiences, and events to reverse or subvert their meaning, thus reclaiming them' (Lasn, 2013, p. 103). Space, symbols, and spectacle thus worked hand-in-hand to generate identity, direction, community, followership, and more that are frequently ascribed to leaders.

Implications for HRD

Theoretical Contributions

Perhaps the most significant theoretical contribution this research offers is a new language to conceptualize the connotation of leadership. This new language advances the non-human world into the leadership literature (Daskalaki, 2018; Rosile, Boje, & Claw, 2018) by theorizing the Occupy London (OL) Movement's multimodal repertoire of protest actions—space, symbols, and spectacles—as phenomena that offer a more relational, collectivist, and feminist view of what is typically referred to as 'leadership.' The findings from this study suggest that these multimodal repertoires enable the co-creation of leadership within in-the-moment relationships (Rosile et al., 2018) amongst movement members as local agents (Kelly, 2008).

The trilogy of the modes of space, symbols, and spectacle provide a tangible alternative to "the usual (misleadingly) romantic, idealist and individualistic ideas about leadership" (Learmonth & Morrell, 2019, p. 130). As such, these modes offer a heuristic framework for feminist forms of leadership that do not assume that organizing is incumbent upon "a cadre of special people" (Parker, 2019, p. 209). They give heterarchical form to the kinds of tasks and functions often ascribed hierarchically to individuals in such cadres (Parker, 2019).

Our work also refines understandings of feminist forms of leadership by demonstrating how the interconnected relationality of this form of organizing can manifest without the explicit embodiment of a woman leader. In articulating a feminist leadership ethics, Pullen and Vachhani (2020) described the way a woman leader uses symbols to convey meaning, suggesting that symbols "carry agency which shifts the focus from the individual leader and the responsibility attributed to them, to what she can inspire collectively" (n.p.). This is consistent with how symbols manifested as leadership

mechanisms in our study where there were no identifiable leaders, offering support for the importance of modes when seeking to understand the nature of leading in organizations.

By articulating a multimodal structure for how the tasks and functions of leadership occur, the present study provides a challenge to underlying assumptions of organizing itself which rely on the hierarchical idea that "the autonomy of most people must be restricted in order that organisation [sic] can happen" (Parker, 2019, p. 211). Although some scholars have reported the tendency of these horizontal settings in reverting to traditional organizational forms (Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2014; King & Land, 2018), our findings illustrate how the practical accomplishments of local agents through the trilogy of space, symbols and spectacles reinforce different forms organizing. Our work thus furthers that by Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, and Parker (2020, p. 21) who emphasize the importance of the sense of agency and co-ownership in such settings which bring capacities to work collectively and self-sufficiently.

Practical Contributions

This theoretical reframing of the nature of leadership and organizing informs the way HRD professionals can both theorize and practice organization development and leadership development. By providing a new language and perspective for what traditionally is labeled as 'leadership', this study offers a new option for what Learmonth and Morrell (2019) referred to as "positive cynicism" (p. 130). In other words, conceptualizing leadership as space, symbols, and spectacle provides HRD professionals an opportunity to resist reproducing hierarchical structures and romanticized heroic (groups of) individuals by maintaining a "cynical distance" (Fleming & Spicer, 2003, as cited in Learmonth & Morrell, 2019) from language typically associated with leadership. There are several ways this may occur in HRD practice.

When an organization is seen as a heterarchy instead of a hierarchy, the collaborative approach of critical organization development (OD) interventions will be more effective than traditional performative consultancies (Bierema, 2010). Traditional HRD approaches have conceptualized OD as a performance system (e.g., Lynham, 2000) which is planned and controlled to optimize economic output for an organization. As the findings of this study show, horizontalist organizing resists such efforts as structural control. A critical OD, however, is "an intentional, systemic process of facilitating change to improve an organization's well-being" (Bierema, 2010, p. 27) which is consistent with the cooperative and relational goals of feminist leadership.

When leadership is conceptualized as a fluid, socially emergent, distributed, and dynamic phenomenon, the 'high potential' individualistic leadership development programs that tend toward developing loyalty to the organization (Carden & Callahan, 2007) hold less perceived value. The horizontalist form of organizing seen in OL rejects hierarchies that reproduce power structures and exclude diversity (Kokkinidis, 2012). Instead, such social movements create space for a feminist leadership which is inherently focused on the nature of change that a collective group of individuals can bring through processes of social action (Clover, Etmanski, & Reimer, 2017). This is important for HRD professionals because developing feminist leaders would not focus on techniques or processes of performativity traditionally addressed in leadership development programs (Learmonth & Morrell, 2019).

Developing leaders in horizontalist structures would focus on such topics as self-reflection, leveraging agency within a collective, cooperating and sharing, redistributing power, and developing 'knowledge authority' (Freire & Macedo, 1987) through practical accomplishments that underpin organizational life (Kelly, 2008). Much like Stead and Elliott's (2012) typology for relational and processual leadership development, the multi-

modal repertoire of space, symbols, and spectacle could form another type of boundary object that HRD professionals could use to teach feminist forms of leading.

Despite the natural affinity toward feminist and egalitarian approaches to leading and working in heterarchies, Occupy was not immune to struggles of patriarchy and oppression within the movement. Indeed, the concerns regarding gender and race within the Occupy movement, as noted by other scholars (Boler, Macdonald, Nitsou, & Harris, 2014; Gould-Wartofsky, 2015; Maharawal, 2013), appeared implicitly and symbolically in the present study. Hegemonic ideas of gendered and racialized leadership appeared despite the conscious effort to construct a culture of leaderlessness that would defy the embodiment of a heroic leader. Nevertheless, we argue that the space, symbols, and spectacles of the public sphere of the movement reveal a very real opportunity to enable marginalized people to be part of a co-equal decentered system of heterarchies (Kokkinidis, 2012; Rosile et al., 2018).

This is consistent with Karau and Eagly (1999) contention that leaderless groups with high social interaction are likely to encourage women to engage in leadership behavior. It is *within* such fluid structures that HRD professionals can implement creative organization development strategies that emphasize more radical approaches to equity, such as adopting into practice manifestos that challenge the patriarchal dividend (Gatto, 2020). It is *for* such horizontalist organizations that HRD professionals can better develop individuals to engage in leaderful activities that elevate marginalized groups (Bierema, 2020).

Conclusion

Our exploration of OL offers a multimodal repertoire of protest actions—space, symbols, and spectacles—that reveal how 'leadership' manifests in feminist forms within leaderless groups. As such, it provides a roadmap to reconstruct similar forms of self-organizing groups (Kociatkiewicz et al., 2020; Reedy & Learmonth, 2009) and practices of workplace democracy (Kokkinidis, 2012). Our work contributes to the literature by

demonstrating how a radically decentered 'leaderless' protest movement was organized and how proxies for 'leaders' and 'leadership' emerged. The 'alternative' that OL presents for HRD is a new way to conceptualize organization development and leadership which positions repertoires of protest (space, symbols, and spectacle) as the surrogates for leadership in leaderless groups and heterarchical or horizontal organizations.

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