

Why Occupy Bangkok is Working and Occupy Wall Street Didn't

Power flows from institutions and those without them have no power.

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Occupy Wall Street, ideologically speaking, could not have been any more universally appealing. It was the 99% against the 1% (or more accurately - the 99.9% vs. the 0.1%), with the realization that big money had taken over politics and society to the detriment of all, regardless of political affiliation.

With such a broadly appealing message, how come the movement fizzled?

Conversely, on the other side of the planet, "[Occupy Bangkok](#)" seeks to overthrow a regime propped up by Wall Street - that of billionaire despot Thaksin Shinawatra who for over a decade has served Western interests at great cost to the Southeast Asian nation of Thailand. Unlike Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Bangkok has been greatly successful. It has united unions, students, farmers, workers, business owners both big and small, against the corrosive influence of Thaksin Shinawatra and his Western backers.



Image: Occupy Bangkok has exposed and hobbled the Wall Street-backed regime of Thaksin Shinawatra. It has succeeded where Occupy Wall Street hasn't because it is backed by numerous,

influential institutions with wide and varied operational capacities. Tactically, economically, and politically, cornering, undermining or otherwise ending the protests have proved impossible for the regime.

Recent elections overseen by the regime unraveled in humiliation with less than half of the nation even choosing to vote. Of those that did, many defaced their ballots or checked “no vote” in protest. The protests which have been ongoing for months, have effectively hobbled the regime. Its collapse is now inevitable.

They have done so because they have institutions standing behind them, from media, [to military](#), to courts, and large, influential political parties, as well as genuine, indigenous NGOs – all combining and coordinating against the regime and its foreign backers to equal or best every move they make.

The regime has been unable to move police against them in fear of [provoking the military](#). They have been unable to financially cripple the protesters because of the large and diverse interests backing them through creative and ever shifting means. They have been unable to drown out the voice of the protesters because the protesters possess themselves large media platforms within Thailand, and alternative voices beyond, that are able to tell their side of the story.

None of this was present at Occupy Wall Street. The Western media was easily able to first turn it into a “left/right” wedge issue, then turn the “right” against the “left,” before labeling the protesters as “fringe left,” just before police swept protesters from the streets in swift, coordinated, and utterly unopposed operations across the country. The little political and institutional backing the movement did receive was merely superficial opportunism and theater to perpetuate America’s false “left/right” political paradigm – some backing from establishment institutions like George Soros’ Open Society, was designed in fact to undermine, not support the movement. .

Institutions Make the World Go Round

Power stems from organized institutions. Empires were not built by mere armies and navies – they also included financial, economic, and institutional power projected beyond their borders into their colonies and subjects of conquest.

Today, individuals, or groups of individuals with no operational capacity are merely mobs in the streets – like barbarian raiders of ancient times – with no real plan, manifesto, or potential. They may be able to temporarily seize territory from their opponents but have absolutely no means to fortify it, let alone project power beyond it.

Imagine an Occupy Wall Street that before taking to the streets, had local and regional institutions organized for producing media, handling local infrastructure and social services, security, finance, and even organizing economic activity. When protesters took over parts of their cities, they could have turned them into microcosms of what they planned to do with the country once they succeeded in their overall goals of putting Wall Street back in its place. A well organized movement able to expose the deficiencies of the ruling corporate-financier regime in America by example would have continuously expanded its success until it reached its goals.

A well organized movement with enumerated goals and operational capacity across a wide

range of fields would also be very difficult to marginalize or undermine.

And although Occupy Wall Street was an overall failure, there was one bright point that illustrates that operational institutions are the foundation upon which a successful protest must be based - that bright point was "[Occupy Sandy](#)." Hurricane Sandy wrought destruction across New York City, and as expected, the local and federal government's response was one of apathy and incompetence.

The organizers of Occupy Wall Street turned their political machinery into pragmatic networks that filled in the gaps left by the poor government response. In a single stroke, the movement was able to make the point that not only was the government incompetent, but that their movement was fully capable of doing better without it.

The lesson to be learned is that instead of taking a political movement and turning it pragmatic in response to desperation in a crisis - activists must build pragmatic networks able to displace the corporate-financier elites' networks, and from this newly taken territory, project power through protests backed by functional, local and regional institutions of, by, and for the people.

Some examples that come to mind are unions, cooperatives, hackerspaces/makerspaces, community agriculture projects [like Growing Power](#), alternative media networks, charity organizations, local educators, and even shooting clubs and volunteer emergency responders. All of these organizations may or may not see eye-to-eye politically, but pragmatically, they all seek to improve their local communities through hands-on pragmatic activism. While they may not be able to come together on wedge issues - the Occupy Wall Street movement with its universal appeal would have been a golden opportunity for them to come together and make an impact.

Thailand's Occupy Bangkok campaign proves that the real power of protests are to take territory from an unjust regime - but that territory must then be filled by the institutions backing the protests. If, like Occupy Wall Street, there are no such institutions, it is inevitable that the protests will eventually collapse. Occupy Wall Street, then, is not a failure, but a lesson to be learned from and built upon. The next time Americans take to the streets, hopefully they do so with their own indigenous institutions backing them.

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