The TERRITORY: Occupy Wall Street

the SITUATION: In the context of the “Occupy Wall Street” protests, it has become apparent that our economic and governmental models are not working. People are sick of the corporate corruption that has been pushing bad economic legislation at the federal level with their lobbying and stealing money, creating an economic climate that was doomed to collapse as it has. Walking down Wall Street in New York, one is slapped in the face with the symbols of power and wealth. The glass skyscraper exudes power just by its sheer size. There are faux stone Greek column references that make us all think “institution” and “important”. But the real “power” is still with the 99%, and the street is where they can show that power, in numbers, in their organization, in their peaceful demonstration, in the act of displacing the once transitory space and transforming it into a stage of contestation, demonstration. Zuccotti park which has become the grounds for the protest has become a mini-civilization in and of itself, with a religious/sacred space, a medical space, and places where food and clothing is distributed.1

the PLAYERS: Public (the corporation) vs. Private interests(the people/government). Can the two ever match up and be in equal power? Or has the power balance shifted from nations to global economic capital and the corporation as suggested in Saskia Sassen’s Losing Control? Are governments capitulating to their corporate sugar daddies? Specifically to the sites, the players include the status quo, and the disruption, or protest space. Nowadays is the most visible, approachable and available space- the unconditionally public space of the street and its parks.

the DEFINITION: Space of diplomacy in this case refers to the street and its capacity to disrupt the status quo when being misused as a stage for demonstrations and protests. The activity initiates a conflict, calling for change. The interest is in the transformation of the space in its relation to the activity. Architectural examples of this may reach far beyond park spaces converted into protest space, and may also include any type of space converted from one use to the other, negotiating architectural elements like structure and HVAC systems distributions to accommodate new uses.

the SCALE: The scale is that of a city street, park or discrete building at which there has been a transformation from one use to another. How does the space of the street create power for the people or cause, or vice versa? How does the

possible PRECEDENT STUDIES: Any number of the 900 cities that the protests have spread to. Specifically the public spaces that are chosen, how they are transformed and organized.

Kresge Foundation- converted from a pastoral barn and farmhouse to a philanthropic institution headquarters. Valerio Dewalt and Train of Chicago, IL

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