

## **Erasing the Material Base of Occupy Wall Street: When Soft Means Fail**

KOME – An International Journal of Pure  
Communication Inquiry  
Volume 3 Issue 2, p. 44-63.  
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kome@komejournal.com  
Published by the Hungarian Communication  
Studies Association  
DOI: 10.17646/KOME.2015.24

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**Abstract:** When Occupy Wall Street proved able to reach mass circulation in 2011, it registered as a threat to the status quo in the United States, where corporate entities with close relation to government normally control the flow of discourse. The Occupy encampments, therefore, were intolerable, not merely an annoyance that could be ignored or ridiculed. Once Occupy’s anti-corporate rhetoric had spread widely, the mainstream media took steps to derail the mass appeal of Occupy’s oppositional discourse through accusations of incoherence and indecency. However, such “soft” means of organizing consent from the public were very weak in 2011 because of the 2008 economic collapse which had been provoked by Wall Street. With instruments of soft persuasion weak, the dominant group turned to instruments of hard persuasion — arrests, harassments, beatings, random grabs, and finally the orchestrated assault carried out on November 15<sup>th</sup>, an operation that saw the media censored and sequestered, at night, in the dark, with no filmed images, and all subway stations and street access blocked.

**Keywords:** surveillance, information control, policing, citizen movements, Occupy Wall Street