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Occupy 'x' arrives in Ireland with Occupy Dame street

Andrew Flood

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The 'Occupy X' movement arrived in Ireland over the weekend when a core group of around 50 people set up camp at the Central Bank Plaza on Dame street. Numbers grew to a few hundred at times over the next days and nights as supporters came down to join in for a while and the curious stopped to see what was going on. Issues highlighted by participants included the bank bail out, IMF intervention & the ongoing Great Oil & Gas Giveaway.

The immediate trigger of the current round of camps is the example set in New York by Occupy Wall Street four weeks ago. Despite police repressions that has seen the use of baton's and peppery spray as well as the arrests of 700 people that demonstration has been ongoing and has seen as many as 15,000 taking part at times. Copy cat demonstrations rapidly spread to dozens of American cities, more police repressions was unleashed hours ago against Occupy Boston with around 100 people being arrested during an attempt to violently evict the camp there.

The camp movement is older than the New York example and goes back to the M15/DRY movement that occupied the mains

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squares of Spanish cities in the summer which also spread to cities in Greece and Italy. This also saw solidarity demonstrations in Ireland which involved up to 500 people but which didn't get as far as holding day and night camp outs. But that movement in turn was obviously influenced by the 'Arab Spring' and in particular the Tahir Square occupation which led to the revolution in Egypt.

The 'Occupy X' movement isn't some sort of international organisation or even network but rather a locally organised but globally spontaneous expression of people's deep unhappiness with the way the costs of the global capitalist financial crisis are being dumped on their shoulders while its bonuses as usual for the bankers. There isn't much of a common understanding of the causes or solutions to the crisis, this is part of the reason that so much of the movement is characterized by long assemblies dealing with both immediate organisational issues and often meandering individual contributions as to these causes and solution.

The other common point of departure is a rejection of the organised left and union leadership, the Dublin demonstration like many of the others asks people not to bring left or union flags or banners. We intend to publish some opinion pieces in the next few days from WSM members who have been involved exploring this aspect in more detail but our approach to date has been to respect this request and to help out with organisational details and publicity.

The hope of the organizers is that this movement can have an appeal much broader than that of the existing left. To date this has not manifested itself, the numbers coming out to support these demonstrations have been similar to any of the other recent anti-cuts protests organised by left factions and only a tiny fraction of the tens of thousands the unions have mobilized. But the hope is that unlike those 'turn up and listen to a speech' protests that active participation element of the assemblies will engage people and encourage them to go and organize in turn. In the current context

this is a goal that can not be faulted even if the program of this emerging movement has yet to be defined.